

## Towards a composite map of organisational person–environment fit<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper explores the concept of person–organisation fit to extend the existing literature by revealing organisational members' sense of fit. This was achieved by using causal mapping and storytelling. These techniques provoked individuals to describe the factors relating to their sense of fit and their causal attributions of these factors utilising specific examples and explanatory narratives. One outcome of this study is the generation of a composite map of factors influencing people's fit which represents a substantial development of our understanding of how different forms of person–environment fit combine. The findings of the study suggest that respondents' sense of fit is influenced by five main factors: job, people, organisation, employment and work/life balance. A further thirteen sub-dimensions relating to these factors are also outlined in the paper. The importance of fit and misfit as independent variables in the explanation of specific work-related behavioural outcomes are discussed.

The determinants of people's behaviour have been the interest of much conceptual and empirical research (Bowers, 1973; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Pervin, 1978). After years of debate there is now general agreement that individual characteristics, aspects of the situation, and, crucially, the interaction of person and situational variables combine to explain behaviour (Krahé, 1992). In the domain of work, the power of interactions to shape behaviour has been shown in many ways. Holland (1985), for example, has demonstrated that people choose vocations based on the fit of their personality to their perceptions of the profession. Chatman's (1991) work demonstrated that new recruits become socialized to their new employer based on the congruence of individual and organisational values, and Caldwell and O'Reilly (1990) have shown that job performance and satisfaction are strongly related to the

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congruence of people to the required job competencies.

In her integrative review of the person–organisation (P–O) fit literature, Kristof (1996) identified several different forms of interaction between people and their work environments. In addition to the focus of her study on P–O fit, she reviewed the research that explored person–vocation (P–V) fit, person–group (P–G) fit, and person–job (P–J) fit. These four different types of person–work environment fit have been supplemented more recently by Van Vianen’s (2000) exploration of person–people (P–P) fit. In all of these domains, researchers have found person–environment interactions influencing some form of behaviour at work. However, what we do not know is how all these ‘fits’ fit together. The prevailing view is that the various forms of fit are distinct from each other (see Figure 1: Judge & Ferris, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 1997, 2000). Given the interdependency of the various aspects of the work environment – e.g. the design of jobs is a reflection of organisational culture – some important questions are raised: Are these different types of fit aspects of the same overall sense of fit? Or, are they separate forms of fit that are independent of each other?

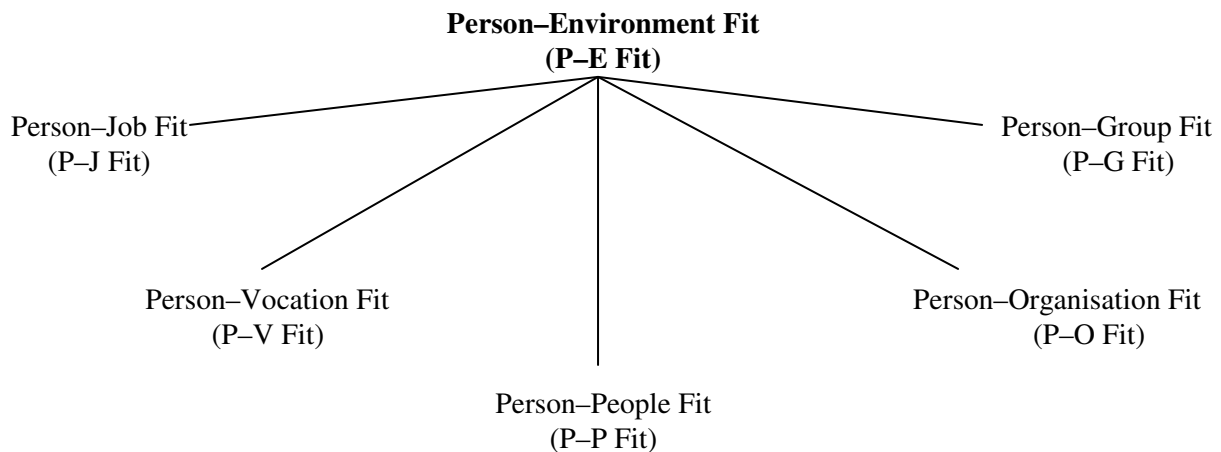


Figure 1 *Current map of work environment fit*

Moreover, whether these forms of fit are discrete or not, we do not know if this list is complete. This may be due to the way researchers have explored the domain. So far, they have considered fit from three angles. First, fears of anthropomorphism led some to conceptualize fit between people and organisations according to the language and currency of organisations. For example, the most commonly used tool to capture P–O fit, the Organisational Culture Profile (O’Reilly et al., 1991), was developed following a review of the organisational culture literature. Those values that had relevance to individuals were retained to form the instrument. Second, some researchers have explored a narrow segment of fit in accordance with their interests. Turban and Keon (1993), for example, were interested in the congruence between individual’s motivational preferences and organizational structures. The third way that researchers have approached the study of fit was to explore homogeneity between individuals using extant individual-level constructs. Schneider, Smith, Taylor and Fleenor (1998), for example, consider the congruence of personalities in organisations.

The purpose of our study was to explore organisational members’ perceptions of fit at work in a non-directive way. In particular, we looked at whether the current list of person–work environment fit domains is complete by constructing a taxonomy of people’s fit at work. In what follows, the extant knowledge concerning individuals’ sense of fit is reviewed before moving on to describe the methodology and a composite map of organisational

members' sense of fit. We conclude with a discussion of the various insights gained into the concept of fit, focusing in particular on differences between fit and misfit. In summary, in this paper we extend current knowledge about P–O fit by exploring individuals' own sense of fit in a non-directive way. This allows us to position P–O fit amongst other types of person–environment (P–E) fit so that the causation of human behavior in work environments might be better understood.

### **The antecedents of individuals' sense of fit**

The literature suggests that a range of factors have a bearing on people's sense of fit. For instance, Kristof (1996) includes financial, physical and psychological resources and task-related and interpersonal opportunities in her categorization of what employers expect organisations to supply. On the other hand, organisations demand that their employees supply skills, knowledge, effort, commitment etc. These needs–supplies and demands–abilities relationship models of P–O fit add to the supplementary model based on similarity. According to the supplementary approach fit stems from similarity between individual and organisational qualities such as values and goals. Hence, it is argued that a key antecedent of P–O fit is the alignment of individual and organisational values (Chatman, 1989, 1991; O'Reilly et al, 1991). At present we do not know whether these models and factors offer a complete picture of peoples' sense of fit. Moreover, there is little understanding about how the different types of work P–E fit combine and whether our list of types of work P–E fit is complete. We suggest that an exploratory design, free from external prompts, is required to provide some clarity on these matters.

Bretz et al. (1993) have advocated the use of non-directive research methods to investigate fit. They noted that the domain of fit was largely uncharted and the use of researcher-generated scales and similar methods may generate biased responses. They asked respondents to articulate their own conceptualization of fit, specifically requesting that they identify good- and poor-fitting candidates and critical incidents that produced these impressions. Their method helped the participants describe the fit in explicit terms and in words pertinent to themselves. This type of study is compelling as it explores people's perceptions of fit and focuses on the impact of these. Another benefit is that researchers' intervention is limited. However, this approach is not problem-free. By mediating the assessment of fit through a third party, there is an underlying assumption that what someone identifies in others is the same as that which is found within them, which might not be the case. Given this, in an initial exploration of organisational members' sense of fit it may be prudent to use methods that focus on the respondent's own sense of fit.

### **Methodology**

A method of causal mapping combined with storytelling as developed by Billsberry et al (2005) was considered to be an appropriate technique for exploring peoples' sense of fit. Causal mapping is an oft-used method to elicit perceptions, tacitly held beliefs and taken for granted assumptions (Daniels et al, 1995; Huff, 1990).

In the method they advocated, a participant is asked to think of the things that influence their fit and to unpack any factors that may arise. During the unpacking, the participant is asked to relay stories, critical incidents and anecdotes related to the point. These stories provide help the participant to make sense of their experience (Boje and Dennehy, 1993; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996; Gabriel, 2000) and encourage the participant to say more than one would normally say (Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993). The advantage of using both

methods is that they facilitate the capture of context specific factors, such as fit, and they help draw a fine-grained picture of the concept.

#### Sample

The sample consisted of a randomized broad cross-section of staff (75 were approached and 84% agreed to participate, therefore  $N = 63$ ) in the Open University, UK. Despite the relatively small number of students on campus (approximately 700), it is one of the largest employers in the city and employs 4,600 people.

The sample included junior and senior people through all levels and types of jobs. Only 19% of the participants occupied (or had occupied) academic jobs, which mirrored the overall percentage of academics as a percentage of the workforce. Names of participants were randomly selected from the university telephone directory. An initial selection of fifty names was made and 41 people participated. We added three members of senior staff (the Vice-Chancellor, a Pro-Vice Chancellor and the University Secretary) to the sample to capture the highest level of staff. Once the fit of these forty-four people had been mapped, the researchers agreed that new ideas and insights were emerging and a further 22 people were randomly selected and nineteen people agreed to partake. At this point, few new insights were generated indicating data saturation.

The range of posts of the participants included senior managers and administrators, academics, department managers, customer service staff, editors, secretarial staff, computer programmers, warehouse staff, and gardeners, all aged between 24 and 64 ( $\bar{x} = 49.7$ ,  $sd = 9.1$ ).

An experienced organisational qualitative researcher conducted the mapping sessions. The average duration of each session was 95 minutes and each was tape recorded and transcribed. Participants were assured of their anonymity.

#### Analysis of maps

The maps were analyzed using an adapted form of Eden's composite technique (Eden, 1989; Eden et al., 1992; Eden et al., 1979). Three researchers constructed a composite map by first individually studying the 63 maps and compiled a list of concepts, then agree on the content of each map. When there was disagreement or uncertainty, the transcript was consulted. Finally, the number of occasions each domain of fit appeared on someone's map was counted. Given the largely unconscious nature of fit perceptions (Wachtel, 1987), any concept or domain that appeared on more than 20% of maps was included. Once the composite map was constructed, it was shown to the participants individually to assess its validity.

#### A taxonomy of fit

Five domains typically emerged as primary concepts linked directly to the central construct of 'fit'. These five domains are the participants' perceptions of their fit with (1) the people they work with, (2) the requirements of the job, (3) organisational level matters, (4) the conditions of employment, and (5) work/life balance. Whereas the first three of these categories are recognized by the literature as P-P, P-J and P-O fits, the last two have received relatively little attention. From the maps and the associated transcripts, these five domains were broken down into thirteen subdomains, representing both supplementary and complementary forms of fit.

The five domains of fit provide a different split of workplace P-E fit to that currently found in the fit literature. P-O, P-J, and P-P fit all appeared as main domains of fit, but the P-V domain surfaced in our study as a subdomain of P-J fit. The people who included P-V

fit on their maps indicated that their vocation defines the type of work they do and the skills and knowledge they require to do the work. Hence, in all cases it emerged as a causal factor within the job domain. Very few of the participants mentioned their fit to *groups* of people, although fit to manager and colleagues was mentioned. This may suggest that people think about their fit to ‘actual’ individuals rather than ‘abstract’ groups.

Two new other types of fit emerged: People’s fit to their employer’s conditions of employment and to their perceptions of their work/life balance. That said, the literature of job embeddedness, which is concerned with the forces that keep employees from leaving their jobs, includes ‘fit’ as one of three constructs influencing the strength of embeddedness. The construct of fit is divided into on-the-job and off-the-job domains (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mitchell et al., 2001). Clearly, the work/life balance domain surfaced in this study aligns with this split and adds weight to the notion that work/life balance influences employees’ fit. The following section will describe the 13 subdomains in more detail.

### A composite map

The five domains can be placed together on a composite map (See Figure 2). It shows how these participants categorized their fit into the five domains and the thirteen subdomains. In addition, dotted lines show closely related domains and sub-domains. Table 1 indicates the number of participants who included each domain on their map.

Domain	Included on maps	
	Number	Percentage
Job	43	75%
People	41	72%
Employment	24	42%
Organisation	22	39%
Work/life balance	14	25%

N = 57

Table 1 *Inclusions of domains on maps*

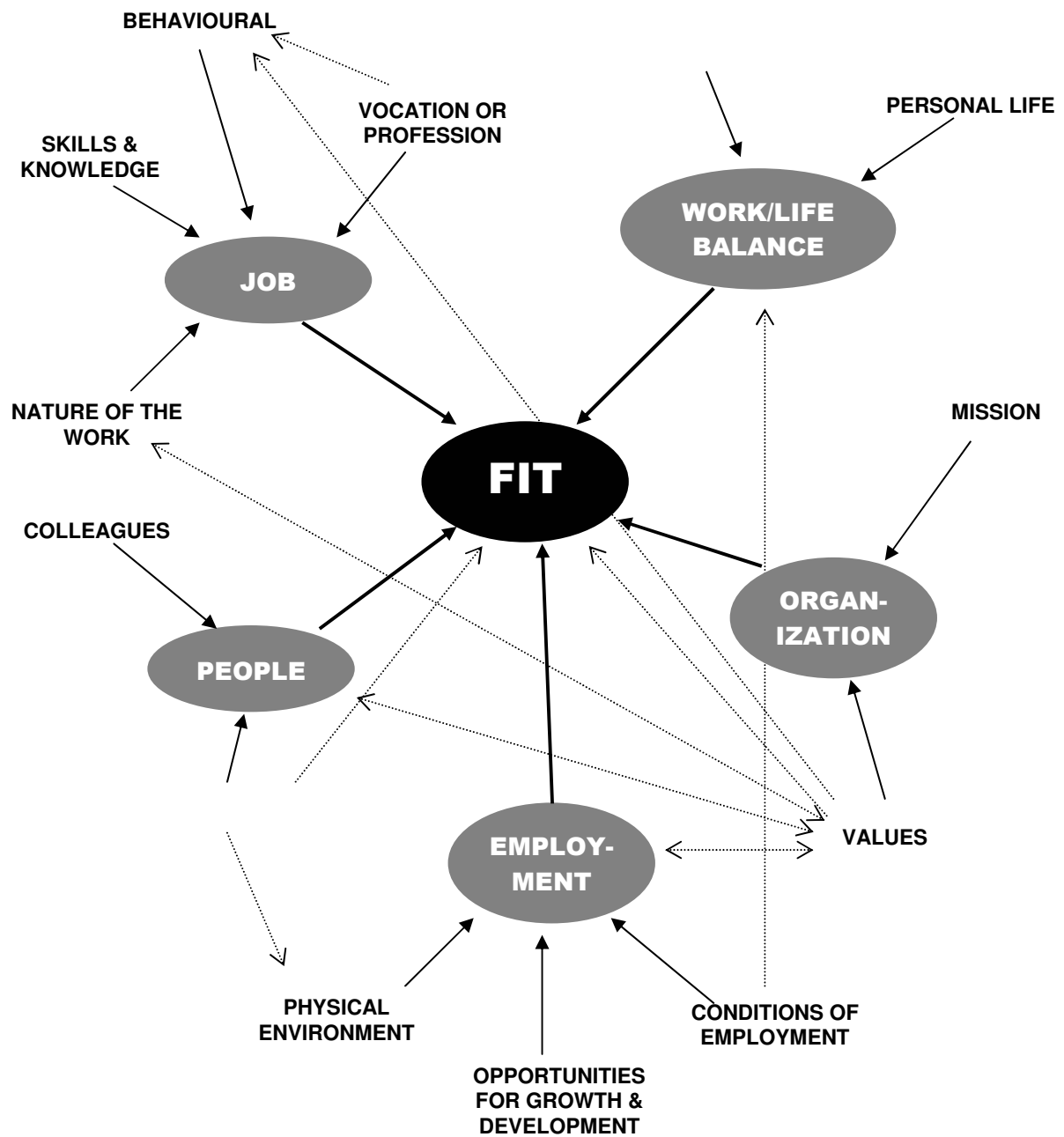


Figure 2 A composite map of organisational members' sense of fit

**Job domain**

This was the most commonly mentioned domain with approximately three-quarters of the participants including it on their maps. Whilst there have been many P–J fit studies, there is disagreement over the definition of the 'J' (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990 ; Edwards, 1991;

Holland, 1985; Kristof, 1996). In particular, Kristof (1996) advocates that P–J fit should be judged relative to the tasks that people perform and that P–J fit is conceptually distinct from other types of work-related fit. Participants' separation of the job domain from other domains in our study supports this conceptual distinctiveness. Moreover, they also clustered together a range of different subdomains comprising the more general domain of P–J fit. They also enlarged upon Kristof's task-driven definition of P–J fit by including their fit with the required skills and knowledge, i.e., how their 'experience' enabled them to fit the requirements of their employer. This, as discussed below, appears to be a form of emotion and behaviour fit, and people's fit to their profession or vocation, as regularly occurring subdomains linked to the domain of the job.

*Skills and knowledge fit.* The most commonly mentioned subdomain is skills and knowledge fit. Amongst the terms often used were 'skills', 'knowledge', 'competence', 'ability', 'cognitive powers', 'qualified', 'conversant with', and 'expertise', frequently prefaced with qualifiers to produce phrases like 'people skills', or 'finance knowledge'. What unites this variety of expressions is that they all focus on the skills and knowledge the participants believe are important for them to have in order to perform the duties of their jobs.

*Work fit.* The second most commonly mentioned subdomain is fit to the nature of the work. This includes fit to tasks, duties, and responsibilities. Whereas in the job fit domain people referred to their own skills and knowledge, in this subdomain people talked about the characteristics and fondness of the job and the tasks they are required to perform. Although the association with skills and knowledge fit is very strong – a common problem in this domain of fit (Kristof, 1996) – it refers to a different side of Caldwell and O'Reilly's (1990) competency alignment definition of P–J fit where experience fits the requirements of employer. Whereas skills and knowledge fit aligns with the competency side of their fit equation, work fit aligns with the job requirements side of the same interaction. Interestingly, the participants teased out the two sides of the equation and expanded both from Caldwell and O'Reilly's (1990) original definition.

*Behavioural fit.* This new type of fit captures emotional maturity, judgment, common-sense, savvy and a cluster of other behavioural dimensions. Four of the participants made dotted links to the profession or vocation subdomain or to the culture subdomain. These cross-links highlight Kristof's (1996) concern that whilst jobs and organisational values are of separate interest to researchers, there is a circular relationship between the two: the way that jobs are designed reflects the organisation's culture and the nature of the organisation influences the type of jobs it contains (Schneider, 1987). Although our participants term this subdomain 'experience', it is probably more informatively termed 'behavioural' because it has been shaped by past behaviour.

*Vocation fit.* Although ties to people's vocation or profession (the two words are herein used interchangeably to indicate the family of jobs that people belong to) were frequently mentioned, only three of the participants (academia) indicated that vocation or profession influenced their fit. In each case, it appeared as a subdomain within the job domain.

## **People domain**

The second most commonly occurring domain on the participants' maps is their fit to the people that they encounter on a day-to-day basis at work. People external to the organisation (e.g., customers, suppliers, students or end users) and relationships with subordinates were rarely mentioned in the participants' stories. The latter omission might reflect the hierarchical structures commonplace in the organisation, which indicates that participants' fit was not influenced by their interactions with subordinates.

*Colleague fit.* This subdomain was the only one that more than half of the participants mentioned as being crucial to their sense of fit. It seemed not an objective assessment of fit to particular skills and abilities, but a subjective fit that embodies their sense of interacting with people on a day-to-day basis. Towards the end of the session, we asked people how well they thought they fitted the organisation. In almost every case, the tenor of their responses to colleague fit (if they mentioned this type of fit) predicted their overall sense of fit.

*Manager fit.* Whilst colleague fit appeared to be the most influential factor influencing these people's sense of fit, the most intense was manager fit. This specific type of people fit was mentioned by the majority of people during their sessions. Importantly, a poor fit with a line manager was, by far, the most common reason cited for poor fit. Manager fit seems to become an intensified form of fit when things turn sour. One way in which manager fit differs to other forms is that it is the only one where another individual's perceptions of the organisational member's sense of fit matters. Manager fit can act as a trigger for change. The fragility of fit, the complexity of people's fit perceptions, and the central role of the line manager in shaping fit became apparent as years of socialization can be undone with one change in the environment.

### **Employment domain**

The employment domain relates to the subdomains of the physical working environment, the conditions of work, and opportunities for growth and development. The first two of these subdomains were only mentioned by four people in managerial or professional jobs, whereas almost every participant in non-managerial, clerical or ancillary jobs included these subdomains on their maps. Moreover, the non-managerial members of the sample tended to discuss these two subdomains at length suggesting that they have considerable influence on their sense of fit. Inclusions of the subdomain opportunities for growth and development on the participants' maps were more evenly spread across the sample.

*Physical environment fit.* Dividing the participants into two halves according to seniority (assessed by salary), produces a finding that only 21% of the more senior people included their physical work environment on their maps, whereas 69% of the less senior people included the same subdomain. For these more junior people, the nature of the physical working environment was central to their sense of fit and usually in a negative way. In many stories the interconnection of line manager and working environment was strong.

*Conditions of work fit.* In this subdomain, the participants clustered together factors linked to their terms and conditions of employment such as the hours, pay, pension, holidays, and location. Although strongly linked to other domains, it has been retained as a separate subdomain as 23% of the sample included this subdomain on their maps. One of the most common links was to the manager subdomain. Here the participants described how their formal contract of employment was interpreted by their managers. Our conclusion is that this subdomain is less concerned with employees' sense of fit with the conditions in their formal contracts of employment, and more concerned with employees' sense of fit with how their contracts of employment are experienced.

*Opportunities for growth and development fit.* The third subdomain was included on 21% of the maps and was mentioned by all types of respondents. It was almost exclusively mentioned by people who perceived their fit to be strong, who appeared to be confident and ambitious, and for whom their current job was a rung on a ladder whilst they were learning and developing in their roles. Once participants stopped developing, they would be looking to leave for more challenging roles.

## Organisation domain

This domain aligns with the P–O fit literature and the idea that people’s sense of fit is greatly influenced by factors at an organisational level. There is considerable debate in the P–O fit literature about the currency of fit: Values, goals, personality, preferences, impressions, and many other things have been advocated as a suitable currency with which to measure and capture P–O fit. Our participants exhibited similar disagreement with their perceptions of their interactions with the organisation. Nevertheless, two separate clusters of interaction (values and mission) capture participants’ perceptions of their fit to their employer. Values are defined as beliefs about how people should or ought to behave (Ravlin, 1995). Mission is defined as the overall purpose of the organisation (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

*Values fit.* Given the centrality of values to the P–O fit literature (Chatman, 1989) and their conceptual nature (Schwartz, 1994; Stackman et al., 2000), probing for stories revealed that participants defined values as acceptable and unacceptable behaviours that relate to way that people (most notably themselves) are treated. In addition, some people described some positive behaviours that the university seeks to stimulate such as creativity, teamwork, open communication, and respect for others. This subdomain tended to polarize the participants to two extremes: those that feel positive and those that feel negative towards their employer. Such is the strength of the polarization that it qualitatively divides the people who mentioned values into ‘fits’ and ‘misfits’.

By defining values in terms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, the participants commonly linked this subdomain with other subdomains. In particular, their discussion of how the organisation’s values influenced their fit linked it to the job subdomains of behaviour and the nature of work and other domains of people and employment. When reflecting on the nature of work and employment in the university, the participants interwove values into their descriptions. For example, one academic was frustrated that the University’s values of openness (towards students) meant that he had to listen to all opinions in internal meetings regardless of how trivial or ill-informed they were; everyone had a right to have their say. When linked with emotion and people (e.g., other people’s behaviours contradicted a participant’s sense of the organisation’s values), very strong feelings were revealed. For example, a middle manager caught up in a reorganisation of a call centre reflected on the process of change in a call centre that was perceived as alienating the workforce, destroy morale and causing loss of vital skill base. This manager helped the workers in the call centre to organise protests. What made staff angry was the use of management styles that were alien to the university’s values. He further explained how the call centre employee’s inability to give students a good service, due to the poor redesign of their jobs and conditions of work, resulted in additional frustration. Furthermore, he indicated that all of these events culminated in poor fit (in him and others around him), and that this led to continual protests, anger, departure, and difficulties recruiting staff for the department. This illustrates how challenges to people’s perceptions of the organisation’s values (e.g. high quality, good support of students, open communications etc.) can led to strong emotional feelings (i.e. protests and loss of staff) and poor fit.

*Mission fit.* This subdomain has particular relevance to the university that acted as the site of the study as it is a university that was very publicly set-up by the socialist Wilson Government in the 1960s with a political mission to help people who had missed out on education. It is well-known for its reforming mission of making education available to the masses. As a result, it has attracted and selected staff that share this mission. However, there was a lot of anxiety related to people’s descriptions of the university’s mission. The research was conducted at a time when the Vice Chancellor’s period of office was ending; a new

person was being sought and there was increasing unease about the way the university was drifting away from its founding mission. It is no surprise, therefore, that mission fit appeared so prominently in the maps. Whether it would do so in an organisation with a less prominent mission is a matter for further research.

### **Work/life balance domain**

24% of the participants mentioned the way that their fit was influenced by matters outside of work. Two subdomains were included on the maps: family life and personal life. Most of the references to these subdomains referred to the way that the job or the organisation gave them 'space' to pursue family or personal interests. Issues of hours of work, flexi-time, holidays, pay, and other rewards are commonly linked to this domain. As a result, this domain is closely associated with the conditions of work subdomain. This domain shares another trait with the employment domain in that the participants could be split by level in their references to family and personal life. Only two of the most senior participants mentioned that the issues in this domain were relevant to their fit, whereas, twelve of the more junior included it. This split does not mean that more senior people in this organisation have less regard to their family and other interests (actually, the transcripts revealed that these people had very active non-work lives), just that it does not appear to be an important factor influencing their sense of fit.

*Family life fit.* As the name suggests, this subdomain is concerned with how someone's sense of fit is influenced by their capacity to live as full a family life as could be reasonably expected. In particular, the people who mentioned family life fit said that they liked flexi-time, compassionate leave, managers being sensitive to family problems and many other such 'family-friendly' policies. There were no comments of poor fit resulting from problems linked with this subdomain.

*Personal life fit.* This subdomain is very similar to the previous one with the obvious difference that rather than fit to family life, the participants were concerned with fit to their personal life. This included sports and recreational activities, hobbies, private consultancy work, voluntary and charity work, and spiritual interests. No reports of poor fit were attributed to this subdomain.

### **Orphans**

As explained earlier, any items on maps that were not mentioned by at least 20% of participants were treated as orphans and not included on the composite map. Most of these items appeared to be particular to the individual or of a conceptually different nature (such as a consequence of fit or a synonym for fit). One of these orphans, i.e., 'challenge', stood out as it was deemed as essential by nine different participants. The participants' comments suggest that it is linked to the nature of the job, the line manager, and the organisation's values, and it appears to be at a causal factor influencing people's perceptions of their fit in these subdomains.

### **Consequences of fit**

Most of the participants described the consequences of fit. The qualitatively different responses of 'fits' and 'misfits' place emphasis on the trigger events that switch people from good fit to poor fit (there were no accounts of the reverse occurring). Once the trigger event is experienced, it appears that a process is set in train that is similar to the breach of psychological contracts mentioned earlier (Rousseau, 1995); the individual recalls many related negative experiences and these reinforce the sense of misfit. In reviewing the trigger

events, we noted three commonalities. First, they appear very trivial to the outsider (e.g. not being allowed to listen to music whilst working, a move to open plan offices, a change of manager, or a new person joins an established team). Second, the trigger events concern changes in behaviours that participants believe are contrary to the organisation's values. Third, the participants' line manager was mentioned as playing a key role in every trigger event.

The second and third of these commonalities highlight the irony of the misfit; these are strong fits who are upset when managers do things that contravene the organisation's values as viewed by the misfit. They have become misfits because they care about the organisation's values and have internalized them (either before or after joining the organisation) possibly due to the deep-rooted, fundamental and enduring nature of values (Chatman, 1989).

### **Conclusion**

This paper differs from previous studies in the fit literature in that it focuses on organisational member's sense of fit free from preconceptions about the nature of fit. Our goal was to find out how organisational members perceive their own fit and to gain some understanding of the causal factors. In particular, we wanted to develop a taxonomy of factors influencing fit and we were interested in the interconnections between different types of fit. The results of the study indicate that organisational members' sense of fit is influenced by five domains that are qualitatively different to each other. These five domains are job, people, organisation, employment, and work/life balance and 13 additional subdomains were identified.

Although all of these domains and subdomains appear relevant to people's sense of fit, two stand out as being particularly important, i.e., the line manager and organisational values. Both of these subdomains were mentioned whenever someone described the events causing them to become a misfit. Interestingly, none of the participants reported becoming a 'fit' having been a misfit and it can be assumed that when people join organisations they do so not being a misfit; they are either a 'fit' or appear neutral when appointed (cf. Schneider, 1987). A misfit is something one becomes. One way to explore the influence of the line manager further would be to employ social network analysis techniques (e.g. Scott, 1991). Such an approach could tease out the influence of fit to the line manager from the fit to colleagues.

In addition to producing a taxonomy of fit from the organisational member's perspective and reflections on fit and misfit, this study also demonstrated that although fit is a concept relevant to all types of employee, different factors appear to influence different types of employees. Employees who have greater seniority and status in the organisation appear to perceive their fit through the domains of job, people and organisation, whereas people with lower seniority and status are also influenced by the employment and work/life balance domains. This is an interesting finding given that most of the studies reported in the fit literature have focused on managers and those people who might become managers. As a result, these studies may have underplayed the roles of the employment and work/life balance domains in shaping people's fit.

This study has demonstrated how complex people's sense of fit is. In addition to the 13 subdomains, we were able to recognize some frequently occurring linkages between domains and subdomains. People used supplementary and complementary (Kristof, 1996) forms of fit. Other people seemed to use the word 'fit' as a synonym for words such as satisfaction, commitment, contentment, fondness, liking, and compatibility. The next stage of this avenue of research would seem to be the development of a quantitative instrument based

on the taxonomy that could be used to explore some of the complexities described. Such an instrument should be able to confirm or refute the composite map and its linkages and allow comparison to other constructs (satisfaction, commitment etc).

Initially, another research objective was to explore the effects of high levels of fit on employees and the organisation. Particularly of interest was Schneider's (1987) provocative assertion that high levels of fit would lead to organisational dysfunction with the employees occupying an increasingly narrow ecological niche. However, it became apparent to us that high levels of fit were not the matter of concern. Every person's fit was idiosyncratically different and people were not strongly aware of their fit when they fitted well. People with high levels of fit commented similarly on the way their fit affected them to people with (apparently) lower levels of good fit. Good fit was something that contributed to a sense of satisfaction, commitment, comfort and stability and this in turn led to efficient working and a willingness to contribute positively. Instead, the prime matter of concern was the misfits. In a university with good terms of employment, these people tended to stay with the organisation, rather than leave (cf. Bretz & Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly et al, 1991; Posner, 1992; Van Vianen, 2000). They remained, acting as centres of rebellion, disaffection, and malcontent. These were people who had fitted well, but who no longer do so. From a managerial perspective, it was these misfits that created the greatest concern. Hence, the data in this study prompts several further avenues for future empirical research. First, we need to establish whether or not fit and misfit are polar opposites on a linear continuum, or if they relate in another way, or if they are unconnected concepts. Second, if they are unconnected what are the antecedent and consequent factors of each concept? Answers to questions such as these would bring further clarity to the fit domain and provide answers to some key managerial questions.

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