

Person-Organization Fit, Organizational Citizenship, and Social-Cognitive Motivational Mechanisms

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Previous research has demonstrated that person-organization (P-O) fit is associated with positive outcomes for both employees (i.e., satisfaction; performance) and employers (i.e., job acceptance decisions, commitment; see Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Enhanced motivation is thought to be one important outcome of P-O fit (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1994; Mitchell, 1997). In particular, people who fit their employing organization well tend to be motivated to be good organizational citizens (e.g., Cable & DeRue, 2002). However, there has been little examination of the psychological mechanisms that explain why P-O fit is related to organizational citizenship.

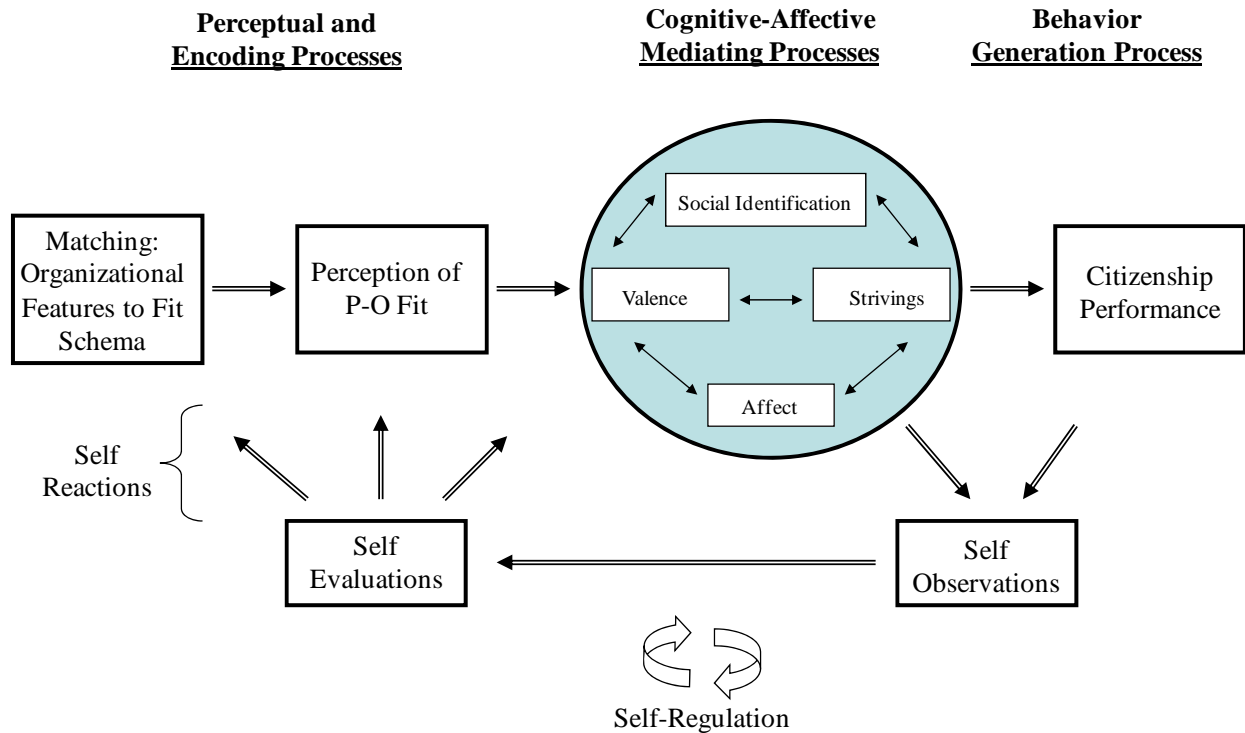
The purpose of this proposed chapter is to present a social-cognitive theoretical model explicating the psychological processes that occur when a person fits an organization, and which then motivate that person to engage in citizenship performance. We begin by suggesting that Mischel and Shoda's (1995) cognitive-affective personality system (CAPS) theory provides insights into the psychological processes linking P-O fit and citizenship. Next, we present our proposed model and briefly explain ten propositions to guide future theory and research. The full chapter will present a more comprehensive examination of each proposition and discuss the implications of the proposed model.

According to CAPS theory, people attend to different features of their environments, and the recognition of important situational features begins an encoding process, which then activates a series of five interrelated cognitive-affective mediating units that ultimately generate behaviour. First, *encoding* describes the process of matching characteristics of the situation to representations of the self or possible selves. Second, *expectancies* refer to beliefs about outcomes of behaviour in particular situations. Third, *affect* refers to the emotional reactions to the situation. Fourth, *goals* and *values* represent the desired outcomes that people pursue. Finally, Mischel and Shoda refer to competencies and self-regulatory plans as *strategies*, *potential behaviours*, and *scripts* that organize action and generate behaviour. According to Mischel and Shoda, the process of activation or deactivation of cognitive and affective units explains why people act similarly in similar situations and differently in different situations.

We propose that P-O fit triggers a similar psychological process involving the activation of processing dispositions that ultimately generate citizenship performance. This process is summarized graphically in Figure 1 and begins with an individual matching psychosocial features of the organization to fit schemas, and then making a determination of the extent to which he/she fits the situation. This determination then activates four cognitive-affective processes, including the incorporation (or blocking) of organizational membership into one's social identity, attributing enhanced valence to organizational rewards and success, experiencing positive affective states, and forming motivational strivings. These processes lead to the engagement in citizenship performance. Further, we suggest that self-regulation

processes create a series of feedback loops that lead to cognitive-affective reactions, the adjustment of fit perceptions, and the ability to recognize organizational features that signal fit.

Figure 1



Proposition 1: People develop fit schemas containing unique psychosocial features of organizational environments for which they are a good fit and a poor fit. People use selective attention to focus on these specific features to determine their degree of fit with the organization.

Proposition 2: Work experience is positively related to the complexity of the content of fit schemas; experienced workers are able to more quickly and accurately determine their degree of fit with an organization than are less experienced workers.

Through social identification, people integrate membership in various social groups into their self-concept and thus define themselves in terms of membership in these social groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1985). We propose that P-O fit leads to the integration of organizational membership into the self-concept. Organizational identification is a form of social identification in which people define themselves in terms of their membership in a particular organization (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989). People who believe they are a good fit with the organizations for which they work may define themselves in terms of their membership in those organizations (Saks & Ashforth, 1997) and perceive that their fate is intertwined with the organization's fate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Proposition 3: The degree of perceived fit with an organization is positively related to social identification with the organization and the integration of

organizational membership into the working self-concept, such that being an employee of the organization is a salient and important aspect of a one's self identity.

We also propose that P-O fit is related to the valence component of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Valence refers to the importance, attractiveness, desirability, and anticipated satisfaction people attach to outcomes of their efforts. People who fit well with their employing organization are likely to view organizational outcomes and rewards (e.g., promotion, status, etc.) as important, and engage in behaviours that help the organization to be successful.

Proposition 4: The degree of perceived fit with an organization is positively related to (a) the valence of organizational success, (b) experiencing organizational success as self-enhancing, and (c) the valence of non-monetary organizational rewards.

Mischel and Shoda (1995) noted that a person is likely to experience positive affective states in situations that are viewed as favourable, and these emotions contribute to the motivation to engage in certain actions. A substantial amount of literature indicates that positive affect is associated with pro-social behaviours that are similar to citizenship performance (e.g., cooperation; Isen & Baron, 1991). Because P-O fit involve a belief that the person is compatible with the organization, these perceptions should induce positive affective states experiences that lead a person to act favourably toward the organization and its members.

Proposition 5: The degree of perceived fit with an organization is positively related to the frequency and duration of positive affective states concerning the organization, co-workers, and employment with the company.

We depart momentarily from the CAPS theory elements of competencies and self-regulatory plans by focusing our model on intentions and motivational strivings as the final mediating unit. Intentions—which are cognitive representations “of both the *objective* (or goal) one is striving for and the *action plan* one intends to use to reach that objective” (Tubbs & Ekeberg, 1991, p. 181)—are a primary factor in planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Barrick, Stewart, and Piotrowski (2002) suggested that intentions are reflected in the things for which people strive. They proposed that different types of strivings motivate different types of behaviour and discussed three motivational strivings likely to be found across work settings: *communion striving*, *status striving*, and *accomplishment striving*. When people perceive that they are a good fit with their organization, they will likely strive to facilitate cooperation among members and get along well with co-workers. Therefore, perceptions of fit will likely influence communion striving intentions. With a desire to maintain membership in an organization, people may strive to obtain positions of prominence, and thus develop status striving intentions. Further, the success of the organization is likely to enhance the self-image, and people will then likely be willing to strive to help the organization be successful. Therefore, fit perceptions should also influence achievement striving and organizational striving intentions.

Proposition 6: The degree of perceived fit with an organization is positively related to the formation of: (a) communion strivings, (b) status strivings, (c) achievement strivings, and (d) organizational strivings.

Mischel and Shoda (1995) went on to note that people develop processing dispositions, which

refer to patterns of relationships among these cognitive and affective units that are triggered when key situational features are recognized. In the context of our model, we propose that individuals enact a similar processing disposition in organizations where they are a good fit. The outcome of these cognitive and affective processes is that a person will engage in actions that enhance the success of the organization. That is, we propose that the relationship between perceived P-O fit and citizenship performance occurs because fit perceptions trigger these cognitive and affective reactions, which in turn lead to citizenship performance.

Proposition 7: People who perceive that they fit an organization well form a processing disposition that involves the activation of each of the four cognitive-affective units, which in turn, lead to engagement in citizenship performance.

Proposition 8: The degree of perceived fit with an organization is positively related to the magnitude of the inter-relations: (a) between perceived P-O fit and each of the cognitive-affective units, and (b) among the cognitive-affective units. The magnitude of the inter-relations is positively related to citizenship performance.

Self-regulation is also likely to play a role linking fit perceptions to citizenship performance. Self-regulation refers to “the self-governing cognitive mechanisms that determine the transformation of motivational force into behavior and performance” (Kanfer, 1990, p. 82). Bandura (1991) contended that self-regulatory processes provide the foundation for purposeful action, and outlined three important sub-processes: self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reactions. Individuals’ observations of their citizenship, strivings, beliefs about the organization, and affective states while at work provide important self-relevant information. This information can be used to evaluate personal performance, progress, well-being, and beliefs. In turn, these evaluations will lead to self-reactions in the form of enhanced: (a) cognitive and affective processes, (b) perceptions of fit with the organization, and (c) ability to recognize critical organizational features that indicate fit.

Proposition 9: Through self-regulatory processes individuals engage in self-observations of their citizenship performance, strivings, affective states, valance of organizational success, and social identification with the organization. These self-observations trigger self-evaluations of: (a) fit with the organization, and (b) cognitive-affective states about the organization.

Proposition 10: Through self-regulatory processes, self-evaluations lead to self-reactions that include adjustments to: (a) fit schema content, (b) P-O fit perceptions, (c) social identification assessments, (d) valance perceptions, (e) affective states, and (f) motivational strivings.

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