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**Abstract**

This study assessed the longitudinal relationship between perceived fit (i.e., person-organization fit, person-job fit) and affect-based variables (i.e., job satisfaction, negative affect, positive affect) using momentary (i.e., within-person level) and stable (i.e., between-person level) assessments of both sets of variables. In doing so, we tested 3 theoretical models of the perceived fit and work affect relationship (i.e., fit preceding affect; affect preceding fit; reciprocal fit-affect relations) to determine (a) the antecedents and consequences of fit perceptions, (b) whether fit perceptions exhibit meaningful within-person variability, and (c) if direct fit perceptions are simply the result of affect/job satisfaction at work or can influence such work experiences. In addition, we examined whether the relationships between affect/job satisfaction and fit perceptions were homologous (i.e., similar) across the 2 levels of analysis (i.e., within-person and between-person). Results indicated that fit primarily preceded affect and job satisfaction at both levels of analysis, though some specific relationships exhibited reciprocal causality and others supported affect as an antecedent of fit perceptions. Our findings paint a complex picture of the causal relationship between perceived fit and work affect.

The study of person–environment (P–E) fit has a long-standing tradition in organizational research, with person–organization fit (P–O fit; e.g., the congruence of organizational and personal values) and person–job fit (P–J fit; e.g., the complement between job demands and personal characteristics) being among the most commonly investigated fit perceptions (Kristof, 1996). A key finding from this research is that fit perceptions positively relate to employee attitudes and well-being. For example, the meta-analytic correlations of P–O fit and P–J fit with job satisfaction are .44 and .56, respectively (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), suggesting that employees' happiness at work closely corresponds to the degree to which they experience fit with their organization and job.

In theorizing about the relationship between fit and affective/attitudinal variables, much previous work has argued for the causal precedence of fit perceptions. That is, constructs such as job satisfaction and affect are thought to be the result of individuals' evaluations of how well they fit with the work environment (e.g., "I fit, therefore I am happy"; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007). However, some authors (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009) suggest that the causal flow might go from work-based affect and attitudes to fit such that the level of perceived fit depends on how an employee feels (e.g., "I feel good, therefore I must fit"). Related to the idea that affect precedes fit, some authors (e.g., Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006; Ostroff, 2012) argue that direct fit perceptions represent nothing more than work affect. As such, determining whether perceived fit causes affect/job satisfaction or affect/job satisfaction causes perceived fit has implications for understanding the nomological network of fit perceptions and may shed light on whether fit perceptions are substantively meaningful beyond affect or job satisfaction evaluations. Finally, there also is the potential for affect/job satisfaction and fit to reciprocally influence each another (Yu, 2009; for a similar point, see Jansen & Shipp, 2013). In light of these different perspectives, the primary purpose of this study was to tease apart the causal direction by utilizing a longitudinal research design that assesses both fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction at multiple time points.

A second purpose was to examine whether direct fit perceptions exhibit within-person variability using experience sampling methodology. Almost all of the research on fit perceptions has been conducted at the between-person level of analysis, which implicitly ignores the possibility of substantive within-person changes (see DeRue & Morgeson, 2007, as an exception). This lack of research attention on within-person changes in fit perceptions is surprising, given that the theoretical components of fit perceptions, namely employee attributes and work environment perceptions, have been shown to vary substantively over time (Fleeson, 2004; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). As such, it stands to reason that perceptions of the congruence between oneself and the environment also likely vary over time. This variability may result from natural fluctuations in the work environment or the person, as well as active attempts by individuals to alter the environment or themselves with the goal of impacting their fit (Yu, 2013). Consistent with suggestions by Jansen and Shipp (2013), we empirically examined the within-person variability in P–O and P–J fit perceptions using experience sampling methodology (ESM) to capture up to 50 momentary ratings over 2 work weeks (i.e., 10 consecutive work days). We then examined whether within-person variability in fit perceptions was associated with job satisfaction, positive affect, and/or negative affect, with the specific goal of isolating the causal direction of effects.

Given our focus on the within-person level of analysis, we were cognizant of the need to avoid committing an ecological fallacy (Robinson, 1950), which occurs when researchers make inferences about the nature of the relationship among variables at one level of analysis (e.g., between-person level) when the data are only available at another level of analysis (e.g., within-person level). Focusing solely on the within-person tests of the relationships would not allow us to draw conclusions about the nature of these relationships at the more commonly investigated between-person level of analysis. In an attempt to proactively address this concern, we adopted Chen, Bliese, and Mathieu's (2005) approach for testing multilevel homology (i.e., similarity in relationships) by testing the causal effects using data collected at both levels of analysis.

In sum, this investigation contributes to the fit literature in several key ways. First, it provides a test of the causal precedence of fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction by utilizing a longitudinal design with data collected at the within-person and between-person levels of analysis. Second, this study is the first to use ESM to capture momentary fit perceptions and empirically test the within-person dynamics of such perceptions. Third, by focusing on direct fit perceptions, this study adds clarity to the debate on the meaning of fit perceptions and whether they are substantively meaningful or simply affective or attitudinal evaluations. Finally, by examining the dynamic and causal links of P–O and P–J fit with job satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect, we test our ideas using the most common operationalizations of fit and affect in the literature. In the following sections, we build on established research from a variety of domains to develop theory in support of adopting a dynamic within-person conceptualization of fit perceptions as well as testing the presence of links between momentary fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction.

**Person–Environment Fit**

Although many types of fit have been identified, P–O fit and P–J fit are the two most commonly examined (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). Perceived P–O fit represents the match between oneself and the organization, often reflecting the degree of value congruence between the two entities (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Perceived P–J fit represents the match between the person and the job, often operationalized as the perception that one has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the demands of the job (also known as demands–abilities fit; Cable & DeRue, 2002). P–J fit also refers to whether the job supplies what the employee needs (also known as needs–supplies fit; Cable & DeRue, 2002), such as whether the job provides the amount of money, benefits, or schedule flexibility that a person requires. In this study, we focused on P–J fit as the perceived match between demands and abilities for two reasons. First, demands–abilities fit perceptions are more distinct from P–O fit than perceptions of needs–supplies fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Second, we expected that demands–abilities fit might exhibit more within-person variability (i.e., work demands/abilities may fluctuate more over time, within a single working day, etc.) than needs–supplies fit.

An additional issue to be made in fit research is whether to measure it indirectly (i.e., employees separately report on each attribute and researchers statistically combine them to determine fit) or directly (i.e., employees directly report on their perceived level of fit; Edwards et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). We focused on direct fit because the perception of fit should be more proximal to individual decision making, behavior, and well-being, an idea that is consistent with the finding that direct fit perceptions more strongly predict employee outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). One possible explanation for these findings is that "perceived fit allows the greatest level of cognitive manipulation because the assessment is all done in the head of the respondents, allowing them to apply their own weighting scheme to various aspects of the environment" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, pp. 291–292). In addition, we focused on perceived fit because we hoped to contribute to the discussion of the meaning of direct fit perceptions. Edwards et al. (2006) showed that direct and indirect fit do not exhibit close correspondence, leading the authors to conclude that direct fit perceptions may primarily reflect affective judgments. Specifically, Edwards et al. argued that "when people indicate that they fit the environment, they are not reporting the result of a comparison process but instead are effectively saying they are satisfied with the environment" (p. 822). Such a conclusion suggests that fit perceptions are the result of work affect/job satisfaction and leave little room for the possibility that fit perceptions are distinct and can have a generative causal influence that is independent of affect and/or job satisfaction. However, others (e.g., Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013) have argued that perceived fit is a valid construct that is independent of work affect. Thus, in the process of examining the causal precedence of fit and affect/job satisfaction, we contribute to the discussion about the meaning and effects of direct fit perceptions.

A relatively unexplored issue in fit research is whether fit perceptions exhibit within-person variability (Jansen & Shipp, 2013). Indeed, fit seems to be most often characterized and measured as a relatively static construct (e.g., Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). However, an emerging body of research considers fit as something that develops over time (Yu, 2009, 2013), suggesting that fit is likely to vary within persons over time. Further, there is growing evidence that self-perceptions and evaluations of the environment, which comprise the components of a fit judgment, exhibit substantial within-person variability (e.g., Fleeson, 2004; Fleeson et al., 2002; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). As such, it stands to reason that, as individuals and contexts at work change, direct fit perceptions also change (e.g., feeling more skilled in one domain versus another; perceiving more similar values with the organization in one situation compared to another). We expect that fit will exhibit within-person variability and that this variability can be systematically and causally linked to affect/job satisfaction.

## Causal Direction in the Work Affect/Job Satisfaction and Fit Perceptions Relationship

Several studies observed that fitting with one's environment is associated with positive attitudes and emotional reactions (e.g., Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chatman, 1989; Lyons & O'Brien, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), with the general assumption being that fit causes affect/job satisfaction (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Lyons & O'Brien, 2006; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Resick et al., 2007; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). However, in recent years, and consistent with Kristof-Brown et al.'s (2005) call to "understand the mechanisms that stimulate fit" (p. 321), researchers have noted that affect/job satisfaction may be an antecedent of fit (Yu, 2009). Moreover, some authors (Jansen & Shipp, 2013; Yu, 2009) suggest that the fit and affect/job satisfaction relationship may be reciprocally causal. Below, we articulate and extend each of these theoretical perspectives.

## Fit Perceptions as an Antecedent of Work Affect and Job Satisfaction

Conventional wisdom in the fit literature dictates that fit determines satisfaction and affective reactions (Yu, 2009). For example, the theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) states that both the environment and the individual have requirements (e.g., organizational demands, personal abilities, values from both entities) and that correspondence between the individual and the environment (i.e., "fitting") leads to positive outcomes, including better work attitudes and affect on the part of employee (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Fit theorists (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Resick et al., 2007) suggest that the belief that one fits well with the environment enhances satisfaction, well-being, and happiness because individuals feel that their goals can be met (e.g., Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Indeed, research indicates that fit relates to more positive work attitudes via the satisfaction of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are universal requirements for human growth and effective functioning (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009).

Theory on basic emotional processes also suggests that fit should shape affective states. For instance, appraisal theories of emotion (Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Scherer, 1999) suggest that the cognitive evaluation of one's circumstance (e.g., relevance to one's goals, threat vs. opportunity, coping ability) produces affective responses. These evaluations likely stem from the perception that one fits with or has values that are congruent with the situation at hand (e.g., "I value fairness, but have been treated unfairly. My values do not align with the company's values. Not fitting makes me unhappy."). The perception of fitting or not is similar to perceiving a discrepancy in self-regulatory models of affect and behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Perceived discrepancies subsequently produce affective reactions, with large discrepancies producing negative reactions and no discrepancy or small discrepancies producing positive reactions (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gabriel, Diefendorff, & Erickson, 2011; Henkel & Hinsz, 2004; Ilies & Judge, 2005). Applied to fit perceptions, the experience of fitting

with the organization or job is analogous to perceiving little or no discrepancy, resulting in positive affect and job satisfaction. In contrast, perceiving misfit is analogous to perceiving a discrepancy, which has been shown to produce negative affect (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Therefore, consistent with traditional fit theories and theories pertaining to basic emotion processes, we expect that perceiving fit with the organization and the job leads to higher positive affect and job satisfaction and lower negative affect.

*Hypothesis 1*: Perceived P–O fit relates positively to subsequent (a) positive affect and (b) job satisfaction, but (c) negatively to subsequent negative affect.

*Hypothesis 2*: Perceived P–J fit relates positively to subsequent (a) positive affect and (b) job satisfaction, but (c) negatively to subsequent negative affect.

**Work Affect and Job Satisfaction as Antecedents of Fit Perceptions**

Some recent research has lamented the fact that little work has been done on the antecedents of fit (e.g., DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In response, fit researchers have begun to theorize about the antecedents of fit perceptions, with some suggesting that affect may produce the subjective experience of fitting (Edwards et al., 2006; Yu, 2009). In addition, Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007) argued that feelings of negative (positive) affect could lead to misfit (fit) with the work environment. Further, similar ideas have been invoked when criticizing the use of direct fit perceptions, noting that evaluations of whether one fits with the job may reflect nothing more than affective reactions (Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012).

In developing the affect-to-fit theoretical perspective, we draw from theories of emotion processes. Yu (2009) invoked theories pertaining to affective consistency (e.g., "I feel good; I must be experiencing fit on the job"; Zajonc, 1984) and hedonism (e.g., "I feel good, so I do not need to change myself or the environment to fit better"; Diener, 2000) to describe how affect might shape fit. Similarly, Schwarz and Clore's (1983) mood as information model suggests that one's current affective state is diagnostic about an object or event, which can influence subsequent judgments pertaining to the object or event. As an example, a person in a positive mood may evaluate the match between oneself and the environment more favorably than someone in a negative mood. Importantly, this affective state need not be related to the actual judgment being made (e.g., affect due to weather or an unrelated event; Albarracín & Kumkale, 2003) for it to influence the evaluations.

Similarly, the affective primacy perspective (Zajonc, 1984) argues that affect can occur prior to cognition, suggesting that it can influence cognitive evaluations. Drawing again from self-regulation theories, affective states have been shown to influence discrepancy perceptions such that discrepancies are evaluated as smaller when one is in a good mood compared to a bad mood (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Such a finding suggests that affect impacts the assessment of a match, with positive affect and job satisfaction being more likely to produce favorable fit perceptions (e.g., "I feel positive, so my abilities must be fitting with the demands of the job") and negative affect producing less favorable perceptions (e.g., "I feel negative, so my values must not be aligned with the organization's values"). Therefore, we propose an alternative causal order in which work affect and job satisfaction may causally shape fit perceptions.

*Hypothesis 3*: Positive affect relates positively to subsequent perceptions of (a) P–O fit and (b) P–J fit.

*Hypothesis 4*: Job satisfaction relates positively to subsequent perceptions of (a) P–O fit and (b) P–J fit.

*Hypothesis 5*: Negative affect relates negatively to subsequent perceptions of (a) P–O fit and (b) P–J fit.

**Reciprocal Relationships Between Fit Perceptions and Work Affect/Job Satisfaction**

Our earlier hypotheses may be construed as competing expectations about the causal precedence of perceived fit and affect/job satisfaction, or as part of a larger model that acknowledges both perspectives and the potential for reciprocally causal effects. A reciprocal model in which fit and affect/job satisfaction influence one another is consistent with the idea that fit and affect/job satisfaction fluctuate over time and shape each other in a cyclical fashion. According to Yu (2009), "this idea of a feedback loop and reciprocal relationship involving work-based affect and P–E fit brings attention to the complex processes governing the dynamic relationship between the two constructs" (p. 1221). Similarly, Jansen and Shipp's (2013) idea of "fit spirals" suggests that the experience of fitting may produce states (e.g., satisfaction) that lead individuals to behave in ways and to attend to aspects of themselves and situations that result in further experiences of fit. Thus, individuals may experience fit and feel happy about it, which results in a bias toward perceiving fit in the future as well as the enacting of behaviors and pursuing emotional states aimed at achieving subsequent fit.

The idea that perceptual and attitudinal/affective constructs may exhibit reciprocally causal effects is not uncommon in the organizational psychology literature. For example, Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001) presented a model arguing that job satisfaction and job performance reciprocally influence one another. Likewise, Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build model of positive emotions suggests that "the broadened attention and cognition triggered by earlier experiences of positive emotion should facilitate coping with adversity, and this improved coping should in turn predict future experiences of positive emotion" (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002, p. 172). Finally, the self-regulatory perspective previously noted inherently accounts for a reciprocally causal relationship between affect and discrepancy perceptions (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Such views suggest that the causal flow simultaneously goes in both directions. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 6*: The relationships between fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction are reciprocal, such that affect predicts fit perceptions and fit perceptions predict affect.

**Moving Across Levels: Homologous or Emergent Effects?**

In addition to theorizing about the relations between fit and affect/job satisfaction, it is important to consider whether the proposed effects are fundamentally the same across levels of analysis. Empirically, the fit literature primarily emphasizes the person level of analysis, though many of the theoretical ideas may be construed as describing within-person processes (e.g., DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Schmitt, Oswald, Friede, Imus, & Merritt, 2008). As such, up to this point our focus has primarily been on understanding within-person variation and within-person relationships among constructs. However, as argued by Bliese, Chan, and Ployhart (2007), when researchers move across levels of analysis (e.g., within- to between-person), it may be incorrectly assumed that the nature of the relationship will be the same. As Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, and Hulin (2009) emphasize, it is imprudent to assume that the nature of observed relations at one level of analysis will take the same form at another level of analysis (see Vancouver, Thompson, & Williams, 2001, as an example). Therefore, scholars should explicitly test whether effects observed at one level of analysis are replicated at other levels, which has been referred to as tests of multilevel homology (e.g., Bliese et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2005).

Tests of multilevel homology are relevant to the current research question given the novelty of looking at the within-person level of analysis in fit research and the potential that any observed effects pertaining to the relative causal order of fit and affect/job satisfaction could be unique to the within-person level of analysis. As such, we tested the relationships between fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction at the within-person and between-persons levels of analysis to evaluate whether the causal direction between fit and affect is the same (i.e., homologous) across levels. We expect that the nature of the relationships between affect/job satisfaction and fit

perceptions should be the same, though nuances of the theoretical underpinnings are likely to differ somewhat. For instance, experiencing high positive affect at a given moment should lead a person to evaluate his/her situation more favorably and result in higher perceived P–O fit, compared to when the person experiences low levels of positive affect (consistent with mood as information theory; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Similarly, individuals who tend to experience high stable levels of positive affect should tend to evaluate their work situations more favorably and report higher levels of perceived P–O fit, on average, than individuals who tend to experience low levels of positive affectivity. Thus, we propose:

*Hypothesis 7*: The affect/job satisfaction and perceived fit relationships are homologous across within-person and between-person levels of analysis.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Administrative assistant employees from a large Midwestern university participated in this study. The sample ($n$ = 142) was predominately female (88%) and Caucasian (89%), with an average age of 42.66 years ($SD$ = 12.5) and job tenure of 9 years ($SD$ = 7.9). Participants worked an average of 38.87 hours per week ($SD$ = 9.6).

Data collection was conducted in a four-stage process. Upon agreeing to participate and before completing any ESM measures, participants were emailed a link to an online survey assessing demographics and person-level measures (Stage 1). Next, participants attended a 1-hour training session (Stage 2) where they were taught how to operate the personal digital assistant (PDA) devices that were used to administer ESM surveys. The Purdue Momentary Assessment Tool software (Weiss, Beal, Lucy, & MacDermid, 2004) was used to deliver the surveys on the PDAs. ESM data collection (Stage 3) began the first workday following training. Participants were signaled five times a day for 10 consecutive working days (2 work weeks), soliciting 50 surveys per participant. This duration and frequency of sampling was selected based upon previous experience sampling research (e.g., Fleeson & Gallagher, 2009; Ilies, Dimotakis, & Watson, 2010) and recommendations for not overburdening participants (Christiansen, Barrett, Bliss-Moreau, Lebo, & Kaschub, 2003). Surveys were presented at semirandom times (at least 75 minutes apart) during normal working hours. Participants were contacted via email twice and via phone once throughout the survey period to encourage participation. After the 10 days, participants attended a 30-minute debriefing session (Stage 4). Participants were compensated a maximum of $60 for completing the initial survey, attending the training session, completing the ESM surveys, and attending the debriefing session. In total, we received 5,842 momentary-level responses for an average of 41.1 responses per person (82.3% response rate).

### Initial Between-Person Measures

Responses to measures at both the person and event levels were made on a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree,* unless indicated otherwise.

### Positive and negative affect

Dispositional positive affect and negative affect were measured on the initial survey with 10 items each from the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Participants were asked to rate the

frequency with which they felt each emotion *in general*. Sample items include enthusiastic (positive affect) and upset (negative affect). Cronbach's alpha was .87 and .84, respectively.

**Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was measured on the initial survey with the three-item scale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983). These items asked participants the extent to which they felt satisfied with their job *in general*. An example item is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." Cronbach's alpha was .84.

**Perceived P–O fit**

Perceived P–O fit was measured on the initial survey with the three-item scale developed Cable and DeRue (2002). This scale measures the extent to which the values of an organization match a participant's values *in general*. An example item is, "The things I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values." Cronbach's alpha was .92.

**Perceived P–J fit**

Perceived P–J fit was measured on the initial survey with the three-item demands–abilities fit scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). This scale measures the extent to which the abilities of a participant match the demands of a job and participants were asked to respond to the items *in general*. An example item is, "The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills." Cronbach's alpha was .88.

**Experience Sampled Within-Person Measures**

All momentary measures were adapted from the same or similar person-level measures with two modifications: shifting the timeframe from "in general" to "at this moment" (i.e., assessing each construct in the current moment, regardless of previous experience) and reducing the number of items in an attempt to minimize participant survey fatigue (and increase participation). In addition, the experience-sampled scores for each scale were averaged across observations to arrive at the Time 2 dependent variables for all between-person analyses.

**Positive and negative affect**

Positive affect (four items) and negative affect (four items) were measured using high-activation items from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). Items asked participants the extent to which they *currently* felt each emotion. Sample items are joyful and happy (positive affect) and anxious and frustrated (negative affect). Estimated average Cronbach's alphas were .84 and .71, respectively.

**Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was measured with two items from the Cammann et al. (1983) scale identified above but reworded to refer to the present. Both items asked how satisfied participants felt about their jobs *in the current moment*. A sample item is, "At this moment, I am satisfied with my job." Estimated average Cronbach's alpha was .74.

**Perceived P–O fit**

Perceived P–O fit was measured with two items from the Cable and DeRue (2002) scale but reworded to focus on *the current moment*. An example item is, "At this moment, what I value is similar to what my organization values." Estimated average Cronbach's alpha was .76.

**Perceived P–J fit**

Perceived P–J fit was measured with two items from the Cable and DeRue (2002) scale but reworded to focus on *the current moment*. An example item is, "At this moment, the match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills." Estimated average Cronbach's alpha was .76.

**Analytic Approach**

Because of our use of a longitudinal research design, we attempted to tease apart the causal order among fit and affect/job satisfaction by modeling lagged values of the independent and dependent variables. At the within-person level, this meant that the current ($t$) value of the dependent variable was predicted by the prior ($t-1$) value of the independent variable while controlling for the prior ($t-1$) value of the dependent variable. At the between-person level, the average value of the momentary dependent variable ($t$) was predicted by the pretest value of the independent variable ($t-1$) while controlling for the pretest value of the dependent variable ($t-1$). Separating the independent and dependent variables in time while statistically controlling for the previous level of the dependent variable (assessed at the same time as the independent variable) allowed us to isolate whether the independent variable uniquely influenced subsequent levels of the dependent variable, which helps to isolate the causal flow of effects.

For our within-person analyses, we examined effects that were lagged within day but did not model effects that were lagged across days (e.g., the last observation from yesterday predicting the first observation from today). In addition, based on recommendations made by Beal and Weiss (2003), in all within-person analyses we modeled three time-based covariates (e.g., trend, signal in day, day of week) to remove any artifacts attributable to time. Trend refers to the survey number completed by a participant (e.g., Survey 6 out of 50), signal in day refers to the survey number completed within a given day (e.g., Survey 2 out of 5), and day of week is the day of the week the survey was completed (e.g., Thursday). As stated by Beal and Weiss, time could be a common cause of the independent and dependent variables, resulting in significant relationships that are spurious because of the common influence of time.

For the between-person analyses, regression was used. Dependent variables were the average of the momentary-level responses and the independent variables were person-level measures collected in the pretest. For the within-person analyses, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM 6.0, Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; i.e., multilevel random coefficient modeling) was used to model the effects of current momentary-level responses on subsequent momentary-level responses. Based on the recommendations of Enders and Tofighi (2007), the Level-1 independent variables were within-person centered. To examine the issue of homology, we followed guidelines from Chen et al. (2005) and examined configural similarity in the coefficients across the two levels of analysis (i.e., whether effects exhibited the same pattern of significance across the two levels).

Table 1 provides the within-person and between-person variance estimates and the percentage of total variance that was within persons (ranging from 22.05% to 60.00%). Thus, both fit perceptions and affect had ample within-person and between-person variability, supporting our focus on both levels of analysis. These values provide the first known documentation of within-person variability in momentary perceptions of P–O fit and P–J fit.

Table 1. HLM Estimates of Null Models

| Dependent variable | Pooled intercept ($\gamma_{00}$) | Within-person variance ($\sigma^2$) | Between-person variance ($\tau_{00}$) | % of total variance that is within persons (ICC1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P–O fit perceptions | 3.50*** | .28 | .99 | 22.05 |
| P–J fit perceptions | 3.98*** | .35 | .73 | 32.41 |
| Positive affect | 3.14*** | .47 | .65 | 41.96 |
| Negative affect | 1.47*** | .33 | .22 | 60.00 |
| Job satisfaction | 3.81*** | .25 | .54 | 31.65 |

Note: % of total variance that is within-person was computed using the formula $\sigma^2/(\sigma^2 + \tau_{00})$. P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job. ***$p < .001$.

## Results

Table 2 presents the correlations for momentary-level variables; Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for person-level variables. Significant relationships were found between fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction measures at the within-person level (Table 2) and between-person level of analysis (Table 3), fitting with past research focusing on between-person tests (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Table 2. Within-Person Reliabilities and Correlations of Study Variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. P–O fit perceptions | (.76) | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. P–J fit perceptions | .43 | (.76) | | | | | | | | |
| 3. PA | .34 | .29 | (.84) | | | | | | | |
| 4. NA | −.20 | −.21 | −.39 | (.71) | | | | | | |
| 5. JS | .42 | .33 | .44 | −.37 | (.74) | | | | | |
| 6. Lagged P–O fit perceptions | .34 | .15 | .15 | −.05 | .19 | — | | | | |
| 7. Lagged P–J fit perceptions | .20 | .30 | .11 | −.06 | .13 | .43 | — | | | |
| 8. Lagged PA | .12 | .13 | .31 | −.13 | .16 | .34 | .29 | — | | |
| 9. Lagged NA | −.08 | −.09 | −.15 | .28 | −.15 | −.21 | −.20 | −.39 | — | |
| 10. Lagged JS | .18 | .14 | .17 | −.13 | .29 | .42 | .37 | .43 | −.38 | — |

Note: All correlations are at the within-person level of analysis ($n = 5{,}842$) and significant. Reliabilities are along the diagonal. P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction.

Table 3. Between-Person Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations of Study Variables

| Variables | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. P–O fit perceptions | 3.52 | .82 | (.92) | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. P–J fit perceptions | 3.99 | .75 | .22** | (.88) | | | | | | | | |
| 3. PA | 3.52 | .67 | .36** | .32** | (.87) | | | | | | | |
| 4. NA | 1.56 | .53 | −.31** | −.18** | −.27* | (.87) | | | | | | |
| 5. JS | 3.89 | .90 | .42** | .48** | .55** | −.35** | (.84) | | | | | |
| 6. Avg. event P–O fit perceptions | 3.50 | 1.01 | .55** | .29** | .39** | −.34** | .57** | — | | | | |
| 7. Avg. event P–J fit perceptions | 3.97 | .87 | .17** | .54** | .33** | −.37** | .38** | .53** | — | | | |
| 8. Avg. event PA | 3.01 | .81 | .39** | .16 | .43** | −.27** | .37** | .51** | .31** | — | | |
| 9. Avg. event NA | 1.48 | .49 | −.03 | −.03 | −.07 | .41** | −.16 | −.28** | −.28** | −.30** | — | |
| 10. Avg. event JS | 3.82 | .73 | .42** | .47** | .42** | −.36** | .73** | .77** | .60** | .47** | −.38** | — |

Note: All correlations, means, and standard deviations are at the person level of analysis ($n = 142$). Reliabilities are along the diagonal. P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction; Avg. = average.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

**Fit Perceptions Predicting Work Affect and Job Satisfaction**

Hypotheses 1 and 2 proposed that perceived P–O fit and perceived P–J fit, respectively, would positively relate to subsequent (a) positive affect and (b) job satisfaction, and negatively relate to (c) negative affect (see Table 4 for within-person and Table 5 for between-person analyses). Two models were tested at the within-person level, with the three time-based covariates (i.e., trend, signal in day, day of week) and lagged affect as predictors of current affect/job satisfaction in Model 1. In Model 2, lagged values of fit perceptions were added as predictors. Two models also were tested at the between-person level: Model 1 included pretest (lagged) affect as a predictor of average momentary-level affect, and Model 2 added pretest (lagged) fit perceptions as predictors.

In testing Hypothesis 1, at the within-person level of analysis (see Table 4), lagged momentary P–O fit perceptions predicted subsequent positive affect ($\gamma = .07$, $p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($\gamma = .07$, $p < .01$). The same pattern of results was found at the person level of analysis, with pretest P–O fit predicting average momentary positive affect ($b = .27$, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($b = .12$, $p < .05$; see Table 5). Thus, P–O fit perceptions exhibited causal precedence over positive affect and job satisfaction supporting Hypotheses 1a and 1b but not over negative affect, failing to support Hypothesis 1c. For Hypothesis 2, lagged P–J fit perceptions related to subsequent job satisfaction at the within-person level of analysis ($\gamma = .03$, $p < .05$), and pretest P–J fit was related to averaged momentary job satisfaction at the between-person level of analysis ($b = .15$, $p < .05$; see Tables 4 and 5, respectively), supporting Hypothesis 2b. P–J fit did not predict subsequent positive affect or negative affect at either level, failing to support Hypotheses 2a and 2c.

Table 4. Multilevel Random Coefficient Model Predicting Affect

| | **DV: Momentary-Level Positive Affect** | |
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 3.07*** (.07) | 3.07*** (.07) |
| Trend | −.00 (.00) | −.00 (.00) |
| Signal in day | −.03** (.01) | −.03** (.01) |
| Day of week | .01 (.01) | .01 (.01) |
| Lagged (T-1) PA | .29*** (.02) | .26*** (.02) |
| T-1 P–O fit perceptions | | .07** (.02) |
| T-1 P–J fit perceptions | | .00 (.02) |
| W/P variance | 13.73% | 14.60% |
| | **DV: Momentary-Level Job Satisfaction** | |
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 3.88*** (.07) | 3.88*** (.07) |
| Trend | .00 (.00) | .00 (.00) |
| Signal in day | −.01* (.01) | −.01* (.01) |
| Day of week | −.00 (.01) | −.00 (.01) |
| Lagged (T-1) JS | .24*** (.02) | .19*** (.02) |
| T-1 P–O fit perceptions | | .07** (.02) |
| T-1 P–J fit perceptions | | .03* (.01) |
| W/P variance | 17.43% | 19.71% |
| | **DV: Momentary-Level Negative Affect** | |
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 1.41*** (.04) | 1.41*** (.04) |
| Trend | .00 (.00) | .00 (.00) |
| Signal in day | .01 (.01) | .01 (.01) |
| Day of week | .02* (.01) | .02* (.01) |
| Lagged (T-1) NA | .18*** (.03) | .19*** (.03) |
| T-1 P–O fit perceptions | | .01 (.02) |
| T-1 P–J fit perceptions | | −.01 (.02) |
| W/P variance | 16.58% | 17.26% |

**Note**

Momentary-level data ($n$ = 5,842). Values in parentheses are robust standard errors. DV = dependent variable; P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction; W/P = total within-person variance accounted for.

*$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.

Table 5. Regression Models of Person-Level Fit Perceptions Predicting Average Momentary-Level Affect

|  | **DV: Average Momentary-Level Positive Affect** | |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 1.20*** (.33) | .68 (.42) |
| Pretest PA | .52*** (.09) | .40*** (.10) |
| Pretest P–O fit perceptions |  | .27*** (.08) |
| Pretest P–J fit perceptions |  | −.01 (.09) |
| $R^2$ | .18 | .24 |

|  | **DV: Average Momentary-Level Job Satisfaction** | |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 1.52*** (.19) | .92*** (.26) |
| Pretest JS | .59*** (.05) | .48*** (.06) |
| Pretest P–O fit perceptions |  | .12* (.06) |
| Pretest P–J fit perceptions |  | .15* (.06) |
| $R^2$ | .53 | .56 |

|  | **DV: Average Momentary-Level Negative Affect** | |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | .90*** (.12) | .59 (.30) |
| Pretest NA | .37*** (.07) | .40*** (.07) |
| Pretest P–O fit perceptions |  | .06 (.05) |
| Pretest P–J fit perceptions |  | .02 (.05) |
| $R^2$ | .17 | .18 |

Note: Person-level data ($n = 142$). Coefficients are unstandardized. Values in parentheses are standard errors. DV = dependent variable; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction; P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job.

*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

Overall, at the within-person level (controlling for lagged affect and time covariates), lagged fit perceptions accounted for an increment of .87% of the within-person variance in positive affect, 2.28% of the within-person variance in job satisfaction, and .68% of the within-person variance in negative affect (Table 4). At the between-person level, pretest fit perceptions accounted for 6% of the variance in averaged momentary positive affect, 3% of the variance in averaged momentary job satisfaction, and 1% of the variance in averaged momentary negative affect, controlling for pretest levels of affect (Table 5).

**Work Affect and Job Satisfaction Predicting Fit Perceptions**

Hypotheses 3–5 proposed positive effects of positive affect (Hypothesis 3) and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4), and negative effects of negative affect (Hypothesis 5) on subsequent (a) perceived P–O fit and (b) perceived P–J fit. Hypotheses were tested at the within-person level (Table 6) and between-person level (Table 7) of analysis using the same approach used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 6. Multilevel Random Coefficient Model Predicting Fit Perceptions

| | DV: Momentary-Level Person–Organization Fit Perceptions | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 3.51*** (.09) | 3.51*** (.09) |
| Trend | .01* (.00) | .01* (.00) |
| Signal in day | −.02* (.01) | −.02* (.01) |
| Day of week | −.01 (.01) | −.01 (.01) |
| Lagged (T-1) P–O fit perceptions | .24*** (.03) | .21*** (.03) |
| T-1 PA | | .01 (.02) |
| T-1 NA | | .01 (.02) |
| T-1 JS | | .06** (.02) |
| W/P variance | 24.70% | 27.49% |
| | DV: Momentary-Level Person–Job Fit Perceptions | |
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 4.02*** (.08) | 4.01*** (.08) |
| Trend | .00 (.00) | .00 (.00) |
| Signal in day | −.01 (.01) | −.01* (.01) |
| Day of week | .00 (.01) | .00 (.01) |
| Lagged (T-1) P–J fit perceptions | .19*** (.02) | .17*** (.02) |
| T-1 PA | | .03* (.01) |
| T-1 NA | | −.01 (.02) |
| T-1 JS | | .04 (.02) |
| W/P variance | 17.22% | 19.04% |

Note: Momentary-level data ($n = 5,842$). Values in parentheses are robust standard errors. DV = dependent variable; P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction; W/P = total within-person variance accounted for.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 7. Regression Models of Person-Level Affect Measures Predicting Average Momentary-Level Fit Perceptions

| | DV: Average Momentary-Level Person–Organization Fit Perceptions | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 1.51*** (.41) | .54 (.52) |
| Pre P–O fit perceptions | .66*** (.09) | .41*** (.09) |
| Pre PA | | .05 (.11) |
| Pre JS | | .41*** (.09) |
| Pre NA | | −.17 (.13) |
| $R^2$ | .30 | .45 |

| | DV: Average Momentary-Level Person–Job Fit Perceptions | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model 1** | **Model 2** |
| Intercept | 1.55*** (.33) | 2.04*** (.48) |
| Pre P–J fit perceptions | .61*** (.08) | .51*** (.09) |
| Pre PA | | .14 (.10) |
| Pre JS | | .02 (.09) |
| Pre NA | | −.40** (.12) |
| $R^2$ | .29 | .38 |

Note: Person-level data ($n = 142$). Coefficients are unstandardized. Values in parentheses are standard errors. DV = dependent variable; PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; JS = job satisfaction; P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job.

**p < .01. ***p < .001.

Starting with Hypothesis 3, at the momentary level, lagged positive affect predicted subsequent P–J fit perceptions ($\gamma = .03$, $p < .05$; see Table 6) but not P–O fit perceptions. At the person level, pretest positive affect did not predict average momentary P–O or P–J fit perceptions (see Table 7). These results supported Hypothesis 3b at the within-person level only, whereas there was no support for Hypothesis 3a at either level of analysis. For Hypothesis 4, at the within-person level, lagged momentary job satisfaction predicted subsequent P–O fit perceptions ($\gamma = .06$, $p < .01$) but not P–J fit perceptions (see Table 6). At the between-person level, pretest job satisfaction predicted average momentary P–O fit perceptions ($b = .41$, $p < .001$) but not average momentary P–J fit perceptions (see Table 7). Thus, Hypothesis 4a was fully supported at both levels of analysis, whereas Hypothesis 4b was not supported.[1]

Finally, for Hypothesis 5, within-person lagged negative affect did not predict subsequent perceived P–O or P–J fit perceptions (see Table 6). At the between-person level, an effect was found for pretest negative affect

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[1] When time covariates were removed from our within-person analyses, momentary job satisfaction significantly predicted subsequent P–J fit perceptions ($\gamma = .05$, $p < .05$). However, we believed that a more conservative test (i.e., including time covariates) was appropriate given that it allowed us to rule out time variables as underlying causes of spurious relationships among fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction variables (e.g., Beal & Weiss, 2003).

negatively predicting average momentary P–J fit perceptions ($b = -.40$, $p < .01$) but not for predicting average momentary P–O fit perceptions (Table 7). These results provide mixed support for Hypothesis 5b, with no support being garnered for Hypothesis 5a (P–O fit perceptions).

Overall, at the within-person level, lagged affect/job satisfaction accounted for an additional 2.79% of the within-person variance in subsequent perceived P–O fit and an additional 1.82% of the within-person variance in subsequent P–J fit perceptions controlling for lagged fit and time-based covariates (Table 6). At the between-person level, pretest affect/job satisfaction accounted for 15% and 9% of the incremental variance in averaged momentary P–O and P–J fit perceptions, respectively, controlling for pretest levels of fit perceptions (Table 7).

## Reciprocal Relationships Between Fit Perceptions and Work Affect/Job Satisfaction

Hypothesis 6 proposed reciprocal relationships between fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction. Table 8 summarizes findings from Hypotheses 1–5 across both levels of analysis. We found only one reciprocal relationship, with P–O fit perceptions and job satisfaction predicting each other across both levels of analysis. Thus, the links of fit with positive and negative affect appeared to be unidirectional, with the relationship more often being from fit to affect, though some affect-to-fit links were observed.

Table 8. Summary of Results From Momentary and Person Levels of Analysis

| | Momentary level | Person level | Reciprocal effects? (H6) | Homologous effects? (H7) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P–O fit perceptions → Positive affect (H1a) | Supported | Supported | No | Yes |
| Positive affect → P–O fit perceptions (H3a) | Not supported | Not supported | | Yes |
| P–O fit perceptions → Job satisfaction (H1b) | Supported | Supported | Yes | Yes |
| Job satisfaction → P–O fit perceptions (H4a) | Supported | Supported | | Yes |
| P–O fit perceptions → Negative affect (H1c) | Not supported | Not supported | No | Yes |
| Negative affect → P–O fit perceptions (H5a) | Not supported | Not supported | | Yes |
| P–J fit perceptions → Positive affect (H2a) | Not supported | Not supported | No | Yes |
| Positive Affect → P–J Fit Perceptions (H3b) | Supported | Not Supported | | No |
| P–J fit perceptions → Job satisfaction (H2b) | Supported | Supported | No | Yes |
| Job Satisfaction → P–J Fit Perceptions (H4b) | Not Supported | Not Supported | | Yes |
| P–J fit perceptions → Negative affect (H2c) | Not supported | Not supported | No | Yes |
| Negative affect → P–J fit perceptions (H5b) | Not supported | Supported | | No |

Note: Reciprocal effects were found if the results were significant in both directions (for momentary and person levels of analysis). Homologous effects were observed if the same result was found at the momentary and person levels of analysis. The contents of the parentheses indicate the hypothesis being tested. P–O = person–organization; P–J = person–job.

**Homologous Effects across Levels of Analysis**

For Hypothesis 7, we considered whether results were homologous (consistent) across levels of analysis. As stated by Chen et al. (2005), configural similarity involves researchers testing "the significance levels of parameter estimates at each relevant level of analysis [in order to] compare the relative 'hit rate'" (p. 387). Thus, the focus is on the significance and direction of effects as opposed to the magnitude (see Table 8). With two exceptions, our results were consistent across the within-person and between-person levels of analysis. The only discrepancies across levels were for positive affect predicting P–J fit perceptions (significant at the within-person level but not at the between-person level) and negative affect predicting P–J fit perceptions (nonsignificant at the within-person level but significant at the between-person level). By and large, multilevel homology was observed across the two levels of analysis.

**Discussion**

Research examining the links of fit perceptions with work affect/job satisfaction has not focused on the causal direction of these relationships. This study attempted to address this gap in the literature by utilizing a longitudinal research design that isolated the relative causal influence of these variables at both the within- and between-person levels of analysis. Further, this study is the first to use ESM to examine the extent to which fit perceptions vary within-person over time and link this variability to work affect and job satisfaction. Results revealed a fairly complex picture of the fit–affect/job satisfaction relationship, with support for an affect-to-fit model, a fit-to-affect model, and a reciprocal influence model emerging for specific relationships across the two levels of analysis.

**Reciprocal or Unidirectional Effects?**

Only the relationship between perceived P–O fit and job satisfaction conformed to a reciprocal causality model. Further, this reciprocally causal relationship was observed at the within- and between-persons levels of analysis, suggesting that this pattern of effects was homologous and not unique to one level of analysis. Thus, the experience of job satisfaction (at the moment or in general) influenced subsequent perceptions of P–O fit (controlling for prior P–O fit), and perceptions of P–O fit (momentary or in general) influenced subsequent levels of job satisfaction (controlling for prior job satisfaction). This set of findings provides compelling evidence that perceived P–O fit and job satisfaction are closely tied to one another and that both have a generative causal influence on each other (e.g., Jansen & Shipp, 2013; Yu, 2009) at both stable, between-person and dynamic, within-person levels of analysis.

The remaining five affect–fit relationships did not conform to a reciprocal model at either level of analysis. For two of the links, fit perceptions demonstrated causal precedence at both levels of analysis. Specifically, P–O fit perceptions predicted subsequent positive affect and P–J fit perceptions predicted subsequent job satisfaction, with no evidence for a causal influence in the other direction. Further, these directional relationships were homologous, meaning that they were similar at both the within- and between-person levels of analysis. Thus, experiencing good fit with the organization (momentarily or "in general") seemed to produce increases in subsequent high activation positive affect at work, and experiencing good fit with the job (momentarily or "in general") was associated with subsequent increases in satisfaction with the work.

For two of the other relationships, there was evidence for affect exhibiting causal precedence over fit, but in each case it was only at one level of analysis, meaning the effect was not homologous. At the within-person level,

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momentary positive affect predicted subsequent perceptions of P–J fit; at the between-person level, stable negative affect predicted P–J fit perceptions averaged over the next 2 weeks. Thus, only P–J fit perceptions (and not P–O fit perceptions) were unidirectionally affected by positive and negative affect, with these effects being constrained to one level of analysis. The one relationship that did not exhibit a significant relationship was between P–O fit perceptions and negative affect. Taken together, the most consistent causal direction was from perceived fit to subsequent affect/job satisfaction, suggesting that fit perceptions may be more of an antecedent of affect/job satisfaction than an outcome. But, for the P–O fit perceptions and job satisfaction relationship, a reciprocally causal model was most representative.

**Implications for Understanding Perceptions of Fit and Work Affect/Job Satisfaction**

Our results have several implications for understanding fit perceptions. This study is the first to demonstrate within-person variability in P–E fit perceptions, consistent with a growing body of findings showing that many organizational psychology constructs exhibit meaningful variability over time (Dalal & Hulin, 2008). As such, studies that focus only on person-level fit perceptions may be missing important variability in fit perceptions at the within-person level of analysis. Our results revealed that dynamic within-person fit perceptions were more likely to predict affect (i.e., P–O fit → positive affect, P–O fit → job satisfaction, P–J fit → job satisfaction) than be a consequence of it (i.e., job satisfaction → P–O fit, positive affect → P–J fit). At the stable, between-person level of analysis, there was more support for the idea that fit perceptions precede work affect (i.e., P–O fit → positive affect, P–O fit → job satisfaction, P–J fit → job satisfaction) than for the idea that work affect precedes fit perceptions (i.e., job satisfaction → P–O fit, negative affect → P–J fit). Combined, these results are not consistent with the view that direct fit perceptions merely reflect affect (Edwards et al., 2006). Therefore, as scholars continue to develop and test theories of P–E fit perceptions, it is reasonable to position perceived fit as an antecedent of affect and satisfaction. More theorizing about the dynamic nature of perceived fit is needed and can build on the recent work of Jansen and Shipp (2013) and Yu (2009, 2013).

It is worth noting that negative affect was only related to fit perceptions in one out of eight tests across levels, suggesting that fitting or not fitting with the organization or job is not closely tied to the experience of high-activation negative emotions and the associated aversive or avoidance motivation system. These findings suggest that fit perceptions primarily impact and are impacted by approach-based positive affect (as opposed to avoidance-based negative affect) that is grounded in the appetitive motivation system (e.g., Elliot, 2006; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000). As such, it may be that the experience of fitting may be more similar to the experience of striving for a desired (i.e., approach oriented) goal than the experience of avoiding an undesired goal. A possible explanation for the lack of results for negative affect may be that the experience of "misfit"—which theoretically should be unpleasant and trigger negative affect—may be distinct from the experience of low levels of perceived fit (e.g., Billsberry, 2009; Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, 2010; Wheeler, Coleman-Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablynski, 2007). Experiencing misfit may operate under a different process or on a different timescale than the experience of fit, with misfit being a relatively rare event across people that occurs in the context of a developmental process that takes longer to unfold than the 10 days examined in this study. Echoing the sentiment of Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010), we suggest that the concept of misfit should be separated from that of fit and suspect that the experience of negative affect may be more integrally tied to perceptions of misfit.

In comparing perceptions of P–O fit to P–J fit, it is worth noting that P–O fit perceptions influenced both job satisfaction and positive affect, whereas P–J fit perceptions only influenced job satisfaction. This pattern of results suggests that the influence of P–O fit perceptions may be broader and more pervasive than that of P–J fit perceptions. Alternately, P–J fit perceptions may be more contextualized and have narrower effects than that of P–O fit perceptions, with assessments of fit with the job directly shaping job satisfaction instead of more general

feelings of positive affect. More research is needed to better understand the alignment of distinct fit perceptions with specific affective states, including the possibility of examining the links with discrete emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, quiescence, or happiness.

**Practical Implications**

Our findings demonstrate that perceived fit is an antecedent of job satisfaction and positive emotions at work, consistent with traditional views on the effects of fit (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). Thus, an avenue for achieving satisfaction and happiness in employees may be to initiate programs or work initiatives aimed at increasing perceptions of P–O and P–J fit. This may be done by actually improving the components of fit (i.e., the person or environment), by improving perceptions of the fit components (e.g., Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), or by enhancing the direct assessment of fit. The process of actually enhancing fit may begin with the improved recruitment and selection processes that aim to enhance employee fit with the job and organization (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 1995). Once on the job, managers may institute policies and practices grounded in socialization, training, continuous learning, and culture development with the goal of improving the actual and perceived fit of employees. If such practices can better align employees' skills with the job and values with the organization, employees should perceive fewer discrepancies with their environment and experience higher levels of positive affect and job satisfaction.

Our results suggest that research considering work-based interventions to influence fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction is warranted. Regularly assessing fit perceptions via ESM procedures could enable managers and researchers to understand when and why fit perceptions fluctuate, with the possibility of tying these fluctuations to changes in the work situation. Such an approach may also help employees become more aware of the ways in which they match aspects of their work environment, to become more appreciative of this congruence, and to take steps to address ways in which they do not match, all of which may improve their well-being and happiness at work. This idea is similar to the approach described by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) that highlighted how the practice of writing down three good things that happened during the work day or in writing down ways they can use their strengths can improve individual well-being. Applied to our findings, having employees write down three ways their abilities match demands on the job or ways they can use their strengths to align with the job demands or organizational values could make employees more aware of their circumstances and result in better appreciation for their situation and more positive affective states at work. Of course, some of our findings also suggest that perceived fit may be enhanced by the experience of satisfaction and positive emotions; as such, attempts to directly improve satisfaction (e.g., Proudfoot, Corr, Guest, & Dunn, 2009) may enhance fit perceptions, resulting in an upward spiral of increasingly positive fit perceptions and positive affect/job satisfaction (e.g., Jansen & Shipp, 2013).

Given that fit perceptions vary over time, employees and managers alike may benefit from awareness of this fluctuation. Both employees and managers could play an active role in managing fit perceptions by choosing tasks or environments that enhance momentary fit perceptions (i.e., tasks where abilities match demands, partaking in activities that support individual values). Similarly, it may be possible to alter circumstances in which fit is not perceived by considering ways of restructuring work situations/events to enhance the experience of congruence with the job and organization. Doing so could ultimately enhance job satisfaction and positive affect.

Finally, our person-level findings demonstrate that dispositional negative affect hinders P–J fit perceptions, consistent with other work showing that negative affectivity has a negative effect on work perceptions (e.g., Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, & Haynes, 2009; Spector & O'Connell, 1994). This finding suggests that some individuals may be more or less inclined to experience P–J fit by virtue of their dispositional tendency to experience negative emotions. However, momentary P–J fit perceptions were shaped by positive affect,

suggesting that both forms of affect matter for shaping P–J fit perceptions, with different effects occurring over timescales for negative affect (stable) and positive affect (dynamic). Nonetheless, interventions that target stable levels of negative affect and momentary levels of positive affect may have implications for whether employees perceive that their abilities are a good match with their job demands.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Although we were able to capture fit and affect/job satisfaction ratings at multiple-time points, a limitation of this approach was that all of the data was obtained from a single source. Future research should consider linking ESM fit perceptions collected from employees to data obtained from other sources, such as coworkers or supervisors (e.g., performance, citizenship). In addition, though we sampled employees over the course of 10 consecutive working days, this timeframe may not have been long enough to capture the full range of emotional experiences or fit perceptions that occur on the job (e.g., negative affective experiences may be less frequent, misfit may be relatively rare). As such, scholars may want to consider longer timeframes in future studies of fit and affect (e.g., daily diaries collected over 4–6 work weeks), and situations in which the work situation is more dynamic or in greater flux (e.g., different occupations, during a merger). Moreover, in this study, we chose to randomly signal participants; another approach would be to utilize event-contingent experience sampling (i.e., having employees respond to surveys after specific types of events) in which surveys are completed only when specific types of events occur. Doing so would allow researchers to capture specific work events/processes that directly impact fit perceptions and affect/job satisfaction, an idea that is consistent with suggestions from Jansen and Shipp (2013).

Given our ESM design, we used abbreviated scales to assess our constructs, which may have reduced the scale reliabilities. Though the general pattern of results was largely replicated at the person level of analysis, future research might consider utilizing the full scales in the ESM assessments. Moreover, scholars may want to consider the dynamic nature of other fit perceptions (e.g., person–workgroup fit, person–supervisor fit; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005); perhaps fit perceptions tied to social targets at work will exhibit even stronger links with work affect and job satisfaction. It also may be useful to examine indirect assessments of fit using ESM procedures to determine how the components of fit dynamically relate to affect and job satisfaction. As another possible measurement choice, Jansen and Shipp (2013) argued that researchers should consider other conceptualizations of time in dynamic fit research, such as clock time (i.e., what was used in this study) or psychological time (i.e., a measure that allows individuals to reevaluate and integrate past, present, and future states of fit). The use of psychological time can capture the idea that individuals carry "temporal baggage" that can impact momentary fit experiences (Jansen & Shipp, 2013; Shipp & Edwards, 2005). Perceptions of psychological time could be assessed with ESM assessments (i.e., evaluating past fit experiences, anticipating future fit experiences) and could be integrated into the current model linking past-, present-, and future-fit perceptions to current affective states.

Finally, though some of our effect sizes were small, we adopted a very conservative approach to testing our hypotheses by modeling lagged values of the dependent variables and including time covariates. As such, these results enabled us to make stronger inferences about the causal direction effects while ruling out some alternative explanations for these results. Further, though the effects at the within-person level were small, even small statistical effects can have important practical implications (Cascio & Boudreau, 2008).

## Conclusion

The fit literature has been at a theoretical crossroads, with numerous authors arguing for more dynamic tests of the fit to outcome (e.g., affect, job satisfaction) relationship (e.g., Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009, 2013). Our study is the first to demonstrate that fit perceptions fluctuate within-persons over time via ESM techniques and to show that fit precedes affect at both levels of analysis. However, there were exceptions to this pattern, with strong support found for a reciprocal relationship between P–O fit perceptions and job satisfaction, and some less consistent findings for affect preceding fit perceptions. Further, by conducting analyses at the person and momentary levels of analysis, we found that the fit-to-affect relations were generally homologous (e.g., Bliese et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2005). Practitioners seeking ways to improve the affect and satisfaction of their workforce may consider doing so by improving the actual and perceived fit of their employees with the job and organization.

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