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## Selecting for Fit: A Direct Test of Schneider's Selection Proposition

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### Abstract

This paper reports an empirical test of Schneider's (1987) selection proposition that organizations select people who share the organization's values. The values of 412 applicants to nine utility companies in the United Kingdom were captured and their fit to (1) the values of the organization as viewed by members of the Top Team (P-OV fit), (2) the values of the recruiting departments as viewed by employees within those departments (P-DV fit), and (3) the values of people working in those recruiting departments (P-P fit) was calculated. The results show that selection outcomes are positively associated with P-P fit, negatively associated with P-DV fit, and not associated at all with P-OV fit. Selection effects for fit were small and only present when there was some form of face-to-face contact between applicants and selectors. At the end of the paper, a conclusion discusses the implications of these findings for the fit literature in general and Schneider's selection proposition in particular. Some managerial implications are also considered.

Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) theory (Schneider, 1983a, 1983b, 1985, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995; Schneider, Smith & Goldstein, 2000; Schneider, Smith, Taylor & Fleenor, 1998) is one of the main theoretic foundations of the person-organization fit literature. It posits that as organizations mature they are increasingly occupied by people who are similar to each other. This homogeneity happens as a result of three phases of the ASA cycle. Namely, organizations *attract* people to them who share their values. Organizations *select* those people who share their values. And finally, there is *attrition* from those people who find they do not share the organization's values (i.e. they chose to leave). Schneider (1987) argues that the homogeneity that results from the ASA cycle is potentially very dangerous for organizations as they will become increasingly ingrown and resistant to change.

A number of studies have tested the homogeneity hypothesis and produced evidence to demonstrate that the employees in organizations become similar over time (e.g. Denton, 1999; Jackson, Brett, Sessa, Cooper, Julin & Peyronnin, 1991; Jordan, Herriot & Chalmers, 1991; Schneider et al, 1998). There are a much larger number of studies that have explored the attrition phase of the cycle and demonstrated its effect in producing similarity between

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people (e.g. Boxx, Odom & Dunn 1991; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Ostroff & Rothausen, 1997; Posner, 1992; Posner, Kouzes & Schmidt, 1985; Van Vianen, 2000; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Much less work has been carried out to test Schneider's attraction and selection propositions, although there are, of course, many indirectly associated studies of each phase of the cycle which convey strong intuitive support for the framework. The present study makes a contribution to the literature by reporting a direct test of Schneider's selection proposition that organizations select people who share their values.

### The 'similar-to-me' effect

Schneider's selection proposition is built on the premise that similarity leads to attraction. This attraction leads to decisions by organizational representatives to offer jobs to people who have similar values to those of the recruiting organizations. There are many research findings supporting the idea that people select people like themselves. An example of this research is the study conducted by Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres and Lewis (1996). These researchers looked at promotion interviews of police officers in an American metropolitan police department. The researchers were able to monitor the effects of race (Black and White) on ratings in situational interviews. They found that interviewees who were similar to interviewers with respect to their race received higher ratings. Both Black and White raters gave higher ratings to candidates of their own race. This study adds support to the 'similar-to-me' effect (Rand & Wexley, 1975) which has been demonstrated in many similar studies (e.g. Krainger & Ford, 1985; Lin, Dobbins & Farh 1992; Peters & Terborg, 1975).

The 'similar-to-me' effect is not just limited to race. Laboratory experiments have shown that it also applies to gender (e.g. Binning, Goldstein, Garcia & Scattaregia, 1988; Gallois, Callan & Palmer, 1992; Wiley & Eskilson, 1985), but field studies (e.g. Graves & Powell, 1996) have produced mixed results. In a field study by Graves and Powell, the researchers found that male recruiters were not affected by sex similarity (or were able to suppress its influence), but that female recruiters sometimes are. Graves and Powell (1996) also found that female recruiters reported better interview experiences with female applicants and evaluated them more favorably.

The similar-to-me effect is not confined to race and gender effects. Orpen (1984) examined the interview decisions of interviewers for sales positions in four large South African insurance companies. He found that the interviewers' personal liking, actual similarity and perceived similarity to the interviewees were all directly related to the selection decision.

Findings of this sort merely confirm what is already known: selection is not a perfect science and individuals make 'similar-to-me' assessments (Herriot, 1989a). As a result, legislation has emerged over the past forty years to protect those groups of people who are disadvantaged and who have been able to influence legislators about the needs of their case. Hence, most countries now have laws to protect genders from unfair discrimination. Many countries have laws to protect races and religions. The trend is towards legislation to protect other groups disadvantaged during selection such as the disabled and the elderly (Hogarth, 1992). With such weight of evidence pointing towards the similarity effect in selection, Schneider's selection proposition has a strong intuitive appeal.

### Selecting for P-O fit

P-O fit research after Schneider's original proposition provides support that organizations want to select people who hold the values of the organization. For example, Rynes and

Gerhart (1990) examined the recruiting decisions of managers interviewing MBA graduates from an Ivy League business school for positions in mainly financial and general management. They separated out three different ways in which interviewers form their impressions of P–O fit. The first way is congruence between the values of the applicant and the recruiter. In other words, the recruiter makes the selection decision on fit based on a 'similar-to-me' judgment. The researchers termed this form of fit 'idiosyncratic fit' (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990, p. 16) because it is individual to each recruiter. They did not regard this form of fit as a form of P–O fit because it was about fit to an individual rather than fit to an organization. The second type of fit assessment that recruiters make is to compare applicants to some form of agreed notion of the characteristics needed to fit a particular organization. This is a 'similar to us' judgment and they termed this form of fit, 'firm-specific employability' (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990, p. 15). The third form of fit that recruiters might make is to compare applicants to a non-firm-specific form of work suitability. In other words, some people might be better fitted to work in all organizations than others are; this is a form of general employability (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990, p. 15). The researchers found that interviewers of different organizations made different selection decisions regarding firm-specific employability, i.e. every organization has a different set of requirements when assessing candidates for this form of employability, and that the interviewers were more stringent in their assessments of firm-specific employability than of general employability. In other words, interviewers seem to be more concerned to assess whether candidates are suited to the organization than they are to assess whether candidates are more broadly suited for the type of work.

Bowen, Ledford and Nathan (1991) reviewed the recruitment and selection processes of three 'high involvement' organizations. The three organizations they concentrated on, AFG, Sun Microsystems and Toyota, all sought to recruit "self-motivated, committed people" (Bowen et al, 1991, p. 37) who share the values of the organization. Although these organizations may not be typical, it is interesting to note the length they are prepared to go to in order to recruit 'whole people' in the organization's image. Toyota, for example, screens 50,000 applications for 3,000 jobs and "each employee hired invests at least eighteen hours in a selection process that includes a general knowledge exam, a test of attitudes toward work, an interpersonal skills assessment centre, a manufacturing exercise designed to provide a realistic job preview of assembly work, an extensive personal interview, and a physical exam" (Bowen et al, 1991, p. 36). The authors conclude by suggesting that the recruitment of individuals who fit the organization's culture is a vital supplement to recruitment on grounds of person–job fit because it helps organizations create a distinctive culture which is maintained by people sharing the organization's values and goals. In an organizational environment characterized by rapid and regular change, transition and development, the authors argue that recruiting 'whole people' who fit the overall organization, rather than those who fit a fixed set of task demands, is the only solution.

Anecdotal evidence for selectors' desire to select for fit and to seek homogeneity as an outcome of the recruitment process comes from Judge and Ferris (1992). In their review of selection in the 1970s and 1980s, these researchers captured references in the literature when organizational recruiters have expressed a desire to recruit for fit. Amongst the companies mentioned are Sears Roebuck, General Motors, and Hewlett-Packard. These corporations employed very different methods to make these fit assessments of applicants. Sears Roebuck used height as an indicator as an important staffing criterion, which seems inappropriate today. General Motors looked at employees' interpersonal behavior as a guide to their fit and suitability for promotion. Hewlett-Packard relied on interviews to assess fit.

These three studies demonstrate that some organizational recruiters are keen to select applicants who are 'similar to us': i.e. they want to select people who share the values of the

organization. However, whilst these organizations have the intention to select people in this way, these studies do not explore Schneider's selection proposition directly; i.e. whether or not they actually manage to select for fit.

### Tests of Schneider's selection proposition

There have been very few studies of the selection phase of Schneider's ASA framework. As mentioned earlier, most P-O fit studies relevant to Schneider's framework have focused on the outcomes of P-O fit and examined people in employment, rather than people looking for employment. Two studies were found that investigated Schneider's selection proposition, namely Adkins, Russell and Werbel (1994) and Cable and Judge (1997). These two studies follow the leads of Schneider (1987) and Chatman (1989) and use value congruence as the currency to explore the fit between applicants and the recruiting organization.

The study by Adkins et al (1994) explored Rynes and Gerhart's (1990) finding that firm-specific employability (i.e. P-O fit) is more important to recruiters than general employability or idiosyncratic fit. Rynes and Gerhart's earlier study had not delineated the components or currency of this firm-specific employability; it had just found the effect. The study of Adkins et al (1994) used Chatman's (1989, 1991) assertion that value congruence is central to fit to explore the nature of firm-specific employability. They investigated whether or not the congruence between applicants' work values and those of the organization contribute to recruiters' judgments of P-O fit. The researchers studied the interview decisions of corporate recruiters during the 'milk round' using the Comparative Emphasis Scale (CES: Ravlin and Meglino, 1987a, 1987b, 1989). Recruiters completed the CES twice; once for their own personal work values and once for their perceptions of the organizations' work values. After each interview, the recruiters were asked to rate each applicant on P-O fit and general employability. Adkins et al (1994) replicated Rynes and Gerhart's (1990) finding that it is possible to distinguish between firm-specific and general employability. These researchers also found that the recruiters' assessment of the fit of applicants to the organization is significantly correlated with the recruiters' own values, albeit weakly ( $r=.11$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Their results also suggest that congruence between applicants and the organization, as judged by the interviewer, did not influence recruiting organizations' selection decisions, which is contrary to Schneider's selection proposition. However, it is not a refutation of Schneider's selection proposition for two reasons. First, the CES has its limitations as a P-O fit instrument as it captures just an abbreviated form of fit (Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989). Second, this study was concerned with recruiters' perceptions of applicants' fit. Hence, it does not measure whether or not applicants actually fit with organizations' values, but rather measures selectors' perceptions of that fit, which might be incorrect.

The most extensive examination of P-O fit during selection was carried out by Cable and Judge (1997). These researchers considered the P-O fit assessments of interviewers during selection interviews. Building on the work of Schneider (1987), Rynes and Gerhart (1990), Bowen et al (1991) and Adkins et al (1994), they hypothesized that (1) interviewers' perceptions of the P-O fit of their interviewees would be associated with their actual P-O fit, (2) these perceptions would positively affect their subjective assessments of P-O fit, (3) these perceptions would also positively affect their hiring recommendations, and (4) these hiring recommendations would influence their organizations' hiring decisions. These four sequential hypotheses produce a model that they tested this model by looking at the decisions of 38 interviewers recruiting on the college 'milk round' in an American university. Their main measure was the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP; O'Reilly et al, 1991), from which they removed items that were "too similar" (Cable & Judge, 1997, p. 550), which reduced the OCP from 54 to 40 items. Interviewers were asked to complete the 'card sort' as a 'paper and

pencil' test, ranking the 40 items in order of "most characteristic of my organization" to "least characteristic of my organization". In addition, interviewers were asked to assess every person they interviewed using the same tool, but with the prompt being "to what degree is this a characteristic of the applicant I interviewed?" Interviewees were also asked to complete the same tool, but the prompt was changed to "how characteristic is this attribute of me?" In addition, the researchers asked the interviewers for their subjective assessment of every candidate they interviewed with a single item "to what degree does this applicant match or fit your organization and the current employees in your organization?" The researchers also had items for interviewers to report their impressions of the physical attractiveness and their 'liking' of every applicant. The results supported all four hypotheses and the model. In addition, the researchers found that interviewees who were personally liked by the interviewers were more likely to be recommended for hire than less-liked interviewees were.

Cable and Judge's study is interesting because their findings support Schneider's selection proposition. These findings suggest that interviewers base their P-O fit evaluations on the congruence between their perceptions of applicants' values and their perception of the organization's values. In addition, these P-O fit evaluations are significantly related to their selection decisions and those of their organizations, although their subjective P-O fit assessments (i.e. their gut feel about the applicants) are more influential than their assessment of actual value congruence (i.e. a calculation of fit based on the interviewee's self-reported values and interviewers' perceptions of the values of their organization). This is evidence that adds weight to the proposition that values are an important component of P-O fit.

Despite the support these findings offer to Schneider's selection proposition, this study is not a direct test of the proposition. Briefly stated, Schneider's proposition says that organizations select people who share the values of the organization. In the Cable and Judge (1997) study, the source of the organizational values is the interviewers. These are not 'checked' or agreed with other organizational representatives. This is important because it is generally accepted that measures of the organizational values must capture communal agreement, rather than the views of individuals (Chatman, 1989, 1991; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). It is interesting to understand how interviewers' perceptions of their organizations' values influences their assessments of P-O fit because of the central role of interviewers in selection decisions (Dipboye, 1992), but the interviewers' assessment of their organizations' values might be at variance with how other people in the organization view their organizations' values. In effect, it is a form of what Rynes and Gerhart (1990) call 'idiosyncratic fit'. Even though corporate interviewers tend to be organizations' 'great and good' (Dipboye, 1992; Schneider 1987), these are still idiosyncratic perceptions of their organizations' values.

A second reason why the Cable and Judge (1997) study cannot be considered a direct test of Schneider's selection proposition is that it only considers one variable in the selection decision. As mentioned above, interviewers' decisions are important, but they are not the only factor. Other factors might include the decisions of other interviewers, applicants' own decisions about whether to continue their interest in the position, other selection tests and filters some of which involve other individuals and others that do not, people conducting job analyses, and the impact of trade unions and other bodies. All of these factors might influence decisions about which applicants organizations select.

Hence, the Cable and Judge (1997) study offers insights about a central process in the making of the selection decision and these insights are in-line with Schneider's proposition, but it does not address the main proposition directly. A more direct test of Schneider's selection proposition would be to measure the congruence between the values of applicants and organizations, thereby removing the surrogate role that interviewers' values play.

From this review, the following hypothesis would form a direct test of Schneider's

selection proposition:

*The value congruence between applicants and organizational members will predict applicants' performance in the selection process.*

### Measurement of values

Previous researchers have used the OCP to assess hypotheses associated with Schneider's selection proposition (e.g. Chatman, 1991). However, the original card sort is impractical when there are a large number of remote and geographically dispersed respondents (Block, 1978; Kerlinger, 1986; Nunnally, 1978). To combat the impracticalities of card sorts in such circumstances, Cable and Judge (1996) transformed the OCP into a reduced paper and pencil sort that they argue replicates the ranking process of the Q-sort without the need to use cards. Unfortunately for the present study, their revised version of the OCP has been criticized by Barber and Wesson (1998) who examined the way people completed the instrument using concurrent verbal protocol analysis. They built and compared two questionnaires based on the items on the OCP. The first of these replicated Cable and Judge's (1996, 1997) tool in which respondents are asked to place the items in order of their desirability. The second of these questionnaires employed a Likert-scale and each respondent was asked to indicate the desirability of each of the items. The researchers found that the paper and pencil version of the OCP card sort (1) failed to replicate the cognitive processes of the original card sort, (2) contained items the respondents did not understand, (3) forced respondents to guess, and (4) caused respondents to ask for clarification about the instructions. The Likert-scaled version, on the other hand, presented none of these problems.

Barber and Wesson's (1998) conclusion contained some strong views on the appropriateness of the paper and pencil sort as a substitute to the card sort. 'These results lead us to conclude that the construct validity of the component parts of the OCP may be compromised by use of a paper and pencil Q-sort, and that the rating version presents far fewer concerns' (Barber & Wesson, 1998, p. 98). '[W]e believe that the behavioral consequences of the frustration experienced by the Q-sort participants are probably understated. Furthermore, it did appear that the more demanding Q-sort task generated substantially different thought processes than did the rating task. [... A] pencil and paper sorting approach has significant drawbacks and no significant advantages relative to a rating approach. We strongly encourage adoption of a rating format of the OCP when actual card sorts cannot be used' (Barber & Wesson, 1998, p. 99).

When the OCP was being developed in the late-1980s, it was generally agreed that a person's values were hierarchically organized according to their salience to the individual. Since this time, the values literature has moved on significantly and there is now much less unanimity about whether values are hierarchically organized or independently held (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Indeed, a main thrust of this literature is now suggesting that values are held independently of each other (Stackman, Pinder & Connor, 2000). Although the values literature is now divided between the two schools of thought, the general thrust of recent research points towards a view that values are held independently of each other. Accordingly, there is theoretical support to justify Barber and Wesson's (1998) suggestion of a paper and pencil rating version of the OCP (i.e. a version that asks respondents to rate each value independently of others). This is the approach taken in the present study. However, it must be noted that the accepted view of values within the P-O fit literature strongly holds that values are hierarchically structured.

In their study of the OCP, Barber and Wesson (1998) noted the difficulty that respondents had understanding the items in the set. Whilst most items were understood by

respondents, several items stood out. Initial trials of the OCP items at the sites chosen for the present study supported this view with many people having considerable trouble with their abstract nature. The OCP authors assert that the 54 items are "a comprehensive set of values that could be used to characterize both individuals and organizations" (O'Reilly et al., 1991, p. 495). The items that emerged are short value statements, mostly two or three word statements. Predominantly they are phrased as instrumental values, although some terminal values appear (Stackman et al., 2000). By phrasing the items in a conceptual way, the authors allowed respondents to interpret each value in ways specific to themselves. This idiographic interpretation creates concerns both about the commensurability of individuals' responses to other respondents and creates potential difficulties for respondents' understanding each of the values, as highlighted by Barber and Wesson's (1998) findings. For example, take the OCP value "flexibility". Does it mean that (1) individuals are flexible? (2) cultures are flexible? (3) managers are flexible? (4) staff are flexible? (5) values are flexible? or something else such as managerial rhetoric for "exploitation"? (Sisson, 1994).

Resolving the issue of the appropriate phrasing of values is not isolated to the OCP. Schwartz (1992), for example, has categorized values at a conceptual or universal level extending the work of Rokeach (1973). Although his focus is on universal values, he acknowledges that these are too abstract to be used at the operational level (i.e. in questionnaires, card sorts etc.). In a later paper (Schwartz, 1994) he recommends that values be expressed in terms relating to behaviors suited to the specific environment in which the research instrument is being used. This is important, he argues, because not all universal values are suited to every situation and phrasing them in context-specific terms improves construct validity. Schwab (1980), who also conceptualized values at the conceptual and operational levels, supports this view.

## Method

### Measure development

For the reasons outlined above, it was decided to rephrase the OCP items in terms describing the value as it might be observed in an organizational setting. For example, "flexibility" was changed to "people are flexible in their approach to work" and "tolerance" was changed to "people tolerate the mistakes of others". The values underpinning each of the reworked items are still transparent, but by expressing them in terms of the behavior of individuals in organizations (or modes of conduct), the concerns of Schwab (1980), Schwartz (1992, 1994) and Stackman et al (2000) were addressed. In reworking the items, it was possible to produce many different items relating to each original item in the OCP; the number of reworked items was limited only by the researcher's imagination. In choosing a selection to be tested in subsequent studies, those items that seemed the most direct operationalization of the original OCP item were chosen. An additional factor that influenced the selection was the desire to produce a varied set of items to make completion of the measure less repetitive.

Following trials of different scales and anchors, a seven-point Likert-scale was adopted with an off-centre neutral point. In response to the prompt, "*How characteristic of your organization's culture are the following items?*", the following anchored scale was adopted: (1) 'very uncharacteristic', (2) 'uncharacteristic', (3) 'neutral', (4) 'sometimes found', (5) 'characteristic', (6) 'very characteristic', and (7) 'a defining characteristic'. In response to the prompt, "*How desirable is it for each of the following items to be a part of the organization you work for?*", the following anchored scale was adopted: (1) 'very



undesirable', (2) 'undesirable', (3) 'neutral', (4) 'desirable', (5) 'very desirable', (6) 'important', and (7) 'essential'.

A sample of 1,004 managers from a broad cross-section of British companies completed the questionnaire so that some of its psychometric properties could be explored. These respondents completed the questionnaire to report both their own values and the values of their employer. Analysis of the results yielded 23 items that were common to both individual and organizational values. (Full details of this development work are available from the author and are the subject of a separate paper, which is currently under review elsewhere.) The 23 values used in this questionnaire appear in the Appendix.

## Sample

*Site.* The graduate entry to managerial posts in nine utility companies in the United Kingdom was chosen as the site of the present study. Utility companies do not have the strong associations with particular professions or vocations that accountancy firms, banks, hospitals and other such organizations do, which is a problem associated with previous studies such as Chatman (1991) and Sheridan (1992). Instead, they employ a wide cross-section of people in a wide variety of jobs. For example, they employ clerical and administrative staff, shop assistants, sales and marketing people, engineers, human resources staff, cleaners, customer care staff, and some professional staff such as accountants and lawyers. Each of these companies was functionally structured. Only a small number of departments in each company sought graduate entrants. These functional departments included finance, marketing and sales, engineering, information technology, and human resources. In total, 19 different departments spread across the nine utility companies sought graduates.

*Applicants.* Research questionnaires were sent to applicants by staff in the Human Resources department. The procedure was as follows. If someone was interested in applying to the organization they would get a brochure containing an application form from their university's careers centre, at a corporate presentation during the milk round, or by phoning the organization to request one. Every application was acknowledged with a letter. It was with these acknowledgement letters that the research questionnaire was sent to applicants. To reinforce the point that the questionnaire was only being used for academic purposes, applicants were asked to send their completed questionnaires to the researcher at a university address in a pre-paid, pre-addressed envelope.

In total, the companies received applications from 825 different people. Of these, 621 applicants returned completed questionnaires, which is a response rate of 72.3%. Due to issues of internal politics, selection data was only available for 412 applicants. In total, therefore, the sample represents 49.9% of the total applicants. 54% were male and 46% female. Some 68% of applicants had had full-time work and 76% had had part-work. The mean length of time that applicants report they had been in full-time work was 21 months. The mean length of time that applicants report they had been in part-time work was 23 months. The average age of applicants was 23 years and 6 months with a standard deviation of 4 years and 5 months. The youngest applicant was 19 years and the oldest was 49 years and six months.

*Corporate values.* Three sets of values were gathered from organizational members. The first and second set of values came from employees in recruiting departments who were asked to report their own values and the values of their department. The third set of values came from the members of the top team of each utility. These people were asked to report the values of their organization. They were not asked to report their own values as the people granting access were uncomfortable asking for information from senior managers. In all

circumstances, where there was evidence that the department members or senior managers did not agree on the nature of values of their department or organization, i.e. when reliability coefficients fell below 0.7 (George & Mallery, 1995), the department or organization was removed from all subsequent analysis.

*Selection data.* The selection procedure was uniform across the business units and departments with four stages of selection: shortlisting, first interview, some form of test or tests and/or a final interview. This data has been coded categorically in the following way:

- '1' failure at the shortlisting stage
- '2' failure after first interview
- '3' failure after other selection tests or second interview
- '4' offer of work (One person was offered a job and rejected it. This person has been treated as an outlier and removed from the set.)

This selection was conducted in each of the business units with various degrees of help from staff in the corporate office. Conversations with corporate office Human Resources staff revealed a high degree of professionalism in selection procedures. For example, everyone involved in interviewing underwent extensive training. Staff in the corporate office's Human Resources department coordinated results and supplied information on selection outcomes.

#### Types of fit

The design of the study means that three types of fit can be calculated for every applicant. First, their fit to top team members' assessments of the corporate values can be assessed. This form of fit is termed person-organization values fit from hereon (P-OV fit). The second type of fit is to departmental members' assessments of their departments' values. This form of fit is termed person-department values from hereon (P-DV fit). The third type of fit that can be calculated is to department members' own values. From hereon, this form of fit is termed person-people fit (P-P fit). Consequently, three different hypotheses can be derived from the original hypothesis:

- H1: The congruence between applicants' values and Top Team members' assessment of the organization's values will predict applicants' performance in the selection process.*
- H2: The congruence between applicants' values and recruiting department members' assessment of the department's values will predict applicants' performance in the selection process.*
- H3: The congruence between applicants' values and recruiting department members' values will predict applicants' performance in the selection process.*

Fit was calculated using the sum of absolute differences method. Difference scores have their critics (e.g. Edwards, 1993; Nunnally, 1978). Edwards (1993, 1994) argues that there is conceptual ambiguity inherent to difference scores because they hide the relative contributions of the person and the organization to the overall score, although they do produce information on the size of the congruence. Edwards is also concerned that many forms of difference scores ignore the direction of difference. However, whilst these are important concerns, they are largely irrelevant when the researcher's interest is in the degree of fit. In such situations, the researcher wants to measure the congruence of people and

organizations. The comparative importance of the strength of the person and organization variables are of secondary interest to the measure of fit, and the direction of fit is irrelevant because it is the degree of fit, rather than particular types of fit, that is of theoretical interest (Tisak & Smith, 1994a, 1994b).

## Results

To investigate whether there is a selection effect, a correlation using Spearman's Rho correlations were calculated between selection outcome (i.e. selected vs. not selected) and applicants' three types of fits (P-OV fit, P-DV fit, and P-P fit). A Spearman's Rho was used because the data that forms the selection outcome variable is ordinal. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Type of Fit	N	RHO	Sig. (1-tailed)
P-OV fit	331	.027	.310
P-DV fit	264	-.059	.169
P-P fit	233	.115	.040

Table 1 *Correlation of selection outcome (selected vs. not selected) with three different types of fit*

The data in Table 1 suggest a small relationship for P-P fit and selection outcome (selected vs. not selected), but no relationship between P-OV and P-DV fits and a similar selection outcome. To explore this further, the selection outcome was changed so that rather than looking at selected vs. not selected, it captured progress through the selection process. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Type of Fit	N	RHO	Sig. (1-tailed)
P-OV fit	331	-.041	.228
P-DV fit	264	-.110	.038
P-P fit	233	.033	.311

Table 2 *Correlation of selection outcome (how far applicants got through the process) with three different types of fit*

The data in Table 2 show that there is no relationship between P-OV fit and selection outcomes or between P-P fit and selection outcome. The data does suggest a small negative

relationship between P–DV fit and selection outcome although it is in the opposite direction to the hypothesis. The contradictory nature of this data is highlighted in Table 3, which contains summary statistics for applicants who reached different levels of the selection process.

Selection Outcome	P–OV fit			P–DV fit			P–P fit		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Applicants not interviewed	111	-32.96	6.39	137	-32.12	6.12	113	-23.18	5.04
Interviewed applicants not progressing	186	-32.74	6.75	97	-33.10	6.76	89	-23.19	5.14
Applicants reaching the second stage	33	-35.51	7.93	30	-34.50	7.16	31	-22.42	5.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>-33.09</b>	<b>6.79</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>-32.75</b>	<b>6.50</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>-23.08</b>	<b>5.08</b>

Table 3 *Means and standard deviations of fit by selection outcome and type of fit*

The data in Table 3 shows that applicants with *weaker* P–O fit (both to the organization and the department) get further in the process, especially at the first interview. However, applicants with *higher* P–P fit are more successful at the interview. These results for P–O fit are contrary to the predictions made in the hypotheses. To investigate whether or not the differences in fit between those successful and unsuccessful at the first interview are significant, independent-samples t-tests were run. The results are reported in Table 4.

Type of Fit	Status	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig. (1-tailed)
P–OV fit	Unsuccessful interviewees	186	-32.74	6.75	2.114	.018
	Successful interviewees	33	-35.51	7.93		
P–DV fit	Unsuccessful interviewees	97	-33.10	6.76	.978	.165
	Successful interviewees	30	-34.50	7.16		
P–P fit	Unsuccessful interviewees	89	-23.19	5.14	-.717	.238
	Successful interviewees	31	-22.42	5.13		

Table 4 *Comparison of the P–OV fit, the P–DV fit, and the P–P fit of unsuccessful and successful candidates at the first interview.*

The results in Table 4 indicate that only the difference in means for P-OV fit is significantly different meaning that these interviewers selected applicants with *poorer* P-OV fit than those they rejected. In summary, these univariate tests provide data that suggest that there is something going on. But the results are very unclear. There are findings that indicate that P-O fit works in reverse with applicants with poorer fit getting selected. There are also findings to suggest that applicants with higher P-P fit get selected.

Discriminant analysis predicts membership to two (two-group discriminant analysis) or more (multiple discriminant analysis) mutually exclusive groups. It works by analysing existing data so that a formula that maximally differentiates between the groups is arrived at. Most uses of discriminant analyses are to develop a formula to predict the group membership of new data (George & Mallery, 1995), but it is also useful in explaining effects and influences in multivariate data sets. Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) state that discriminant analysis can also be used for '(1) determining whether statistically significant differences exist between the average score profiles on a set of variables for two (or more) a priori defined groups' and '(2) determining which of the independent variables account the most for the differences in the average score profiles of the two or more groups' (p. 256). These are the reasons for using discriminant analysis with the present data: it is (1) to determine whether the three types of fit exhibit statistically significant effects on selection outcomes, and (2) to derive a formula that captures how the three types of fit combine to predict membership of different categories of selection outcome (i.e. straight reject, reject after a first interview, progress to the second stage). In doing so, discriminant analysis reveals how fit predicts selection outcomes, if indeed it does. With three selection outcomes, multiple discriminant analysis is required for the current data set, rather than two-group discriminant analysis.

Table 5 contains the results of the multiple discriminant analysis with progress through the selection process (three stages – not shortlisted, rejected after interview, progress to second interview) as the dependent variable and the three types of fit (P-OV fit, P-DV fit, and P-P fit) as the independent variables. The means, standard deviations, and number of cases of these variables were reported in Table 4. The multiple discriminant analysis yielded two canonical discriminant functions. The first function accounted for 98.3% of the variance and has a canonical correlation of .218 ( $p < .01$ ). The second function accounted for the remaining 1.7% of variance and has a canonical correlation of .029 ( $p = n.s.$ ). Hence, the first function dominates the analysis and the non significance of the canonical correlation of the second function (with selection outcome) means that it can be ignored (Field, 2000).

The unstandardized coefficients are important because they are used with raw scores to produce a function score for applicants. However, they do not give a good guide to the relative importance of the variables because the means and standard deviations of the P-O fit and P-P fit scores do differ markedly (with the method of calculation used in the present study, P-O fit scores are about 50% larger than P-P fit scores). To obtain a guide to the relative importance of the factors, the standardized coefficients have to be considered. These show that the most powerful predictor of selection outcome in this sample is P-DV fit, which is more than twice as important as P-P fit, and more than seven times more important than P-OV fit.

	% of variance	Canonical correlation
Function 1	98.3	.218 (p < .01)
Function 2	1.7	.029 (p = .44)

  

Factor matrix	Function 1	Function 2
P-OV fit	.533	.810*
P-DV fit	.881*	.144
P-P fit	-.116*	.086

\* largest absolute correlation between each variable and any discriminant function

  

Variables	Unstandardized discriminant function coefficient	Unstandardized discriminant function coefficient
P-OV fit	-.024	.210
P-DV fit	.118	-.134
P-P fit	-.095	.007
(Constant)	3.404	2.536

  

Variables	Standardized discriminant function coefficient	Standardized discriminant function coefficient
P-OV fit	-.154	1.377
P-DV fit	1.163	-.828
P-P fit	-.491	.037

Table 5 *Multiple discriminant analysis of selection outcome by type of fit.*

It is important to consider the signs of the variables. SPSS assigns signs in multiple discriminant analysis by awarding a positive sign to the largest variable. Accordingly, P-DV fit receives a positive sign in function 1. The fact that department P-P fit and P-OV fit have negative signs is important as these indicate an opposite effect to P-DV fit. So, whilst P-DV fit influences selection outcome in one direction, P-P fit and P-OV fit are influencing it in the opposite direction. To discover which way around the effects work, the means of the variable must be consulted. Table 3 shows that P-DV fit worsens through the selection process, whilst P-P fit improves. Consequently, a positive sign for a coefficient is negatively associated with selection outcome, whilst a negative sign is positively associated with selection outcome. By reversing the signs, an equation to predict selection outcome can be derived from the multiple discriminant analysis thus:

$$(.095 \times P-P \text{ fit}) + (.024 \times P-OV \text{ fit}) - (.188 \times P-DV \text{ fit}) - 3.404$$

This equation correctly predicted 41.1% of outcomes into their original groups against a chance prediction of 33.3%. When this equation was applied to applicants in the present sample, the Spearman Rho correlation of this function to the selection outcome (with the three selection outcomes as used in the multiple discriminant analysis) was .18 ( $r = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 175$ ). This means that this equation predicts selection outcome, but only moderately.

Within the equation are several interesting features. First, it indicates that P-OV fit is a very weak influence on selection decisions. The equation offers a correlation of .18 with selection outcome. Squaring the correlation of .18 produces a figure of just 3.24%, which is an indication of how much the equation explains the selection outcome. P-OV fit makes up

approximately 8.5% of this effect ( $.154 / 1.808$ ), i.e. 0.28% of the total variance in selection outcome is accounted for by P–OV fit. Both P–DV and P–P fit are larger, but still very small as 96% of the total variance in selection outcome is not accounted for by this equation.

The second feature of this equation worthy of comment is the appearance of both positive and negative signs for the variables. There are positive signs for P–OV fit and P–P fit and a negative sign for P–OV fit. Dropping out the P–OV fit due to its comparative small size, the contradictory signs mean that people are selected who fit with the values of people *in* the department but do not fit with the values *of* the department. Being careful not to assign causation and noting that the selectors were predominantly department members, in other words this means that selectors selected people who shared their values when these people did not fit the departments' values. There are many possible explanations of this effect, but unfortunately these fall beyond the scope of this study.

Returning to Schneider's selection propositions, these results suggest that selection is more complex than anticipated. Drawing on the t-tests and deconstructing the equation, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that P–P fit is positively associated with selection outcome, but the hypothesis that P–O fit is positively associated with selection outcome is rejected. This data set provides evidence that suggests that different types of fit interact to influence the selection outcome, but that the overall effect of P–O and P–P fit to influence selection decisions is quite weak.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on function 1 to investigate whether or not there are significant differences between the three selection outcomes. The between-groups results ( $F = 4.306$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $df = 2$ ) demonstrate that there are statistically significant differences between the three selection outcomes. This result suggests one final piece of analysis. As the multiple discriminant analysis contained three groups, it involves two choice points: (1) whether or not applicants are offered a first interview, and (2) whether or not applicants are successful at the first interview. These two decisions are very different. Shortlisting is conducted from a desk review of applicants' application forms and covering letters. Interviewing is a face-to-face encounter between organizational representatives and applicants. The findings of Cable (1995) and Cable and Judge (1997), which show that the perceived fit between interviewer and interviewee predicted interview outcome, suggest that the interview stage will show an effect for fit. Unfortunately, there has been no work reported in the P–O fit literature on shortlisting. Given that the shortlisting involves no personal contact, it seems unlikely that shortlisting will exhibit an effect for fit.

To investigate the shortlisting issue, t-tests were conducted to compare the fit of those shortlisted and those applicants not shortlisted. Across all the recruiting departments on only one occasion was a statistically significant finding between shortlisted and not shortlisted applicants observed. Once a Bonferroni correction is applied to counter the danger of Type 1 error (Hair et al, 1998), this result also became non-significant. Consequently, the results suggest that neither P–O nor P–P fit have any influence over shortlisting. Instead, the results highlight the face-to-face encounters of the interviews and assessment centers as the locations where the fit effects occur.

## Discussion

This study looked at whether the value congruence between applicants and the recruiting organization predicts performance in the selection process. Three types of fit were considered: (1) fit between applicants' values and the values of the organization as perceived by members of the Top Team (P–OV fit); (2) fit between applicants' values and the values of the recruiting department as perceived by members of the recruiting department (P–DV fit);

and (3) fit between applicants' values and the values of people in the recruiting department (P-P fit). The results showed that the first type of fit (P-OV fit) was largely inconsequential as an explanation of selection decisions. The study demonstrated that the people who got through the selection process and were offered jobs were more likely to share the values of employees (P-P fit) than those people who did not.

When the analysis was conducted to explore whether or not fit predicts how far through the selection process applicants get, the results were more complex. It showed that those applicants with the best fit with the values of employees are more likely to get further through the process. However, this effect is quite small. These results provide partial support for Schneider's selection hypothesis. It is interesting that it is P-P fit, rather than P-O fit, that is positively associated with selection outcomes and that P-O fit appears to be negatively associated with selection outcomes in some instances. This accords with Schneider's homogeneity hypothesis, which focuses attention on the similarity of people, rather than the similarity of people and business environments.

Schneider's selection proposition has a strong intuitive appeal to it. Hence, the finding of only a very small complex interaction effect with P-O fit being negatively associated with selection outcome requires some explanation. The key to this might be found in the work of Cable and his colleagues (Cable, 1995; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996, 1997; Judge & Cable, 1997; Parsons, Cable & Liden, 1999). Cable's work has focused on perceived P-O fit in the selection phase of the ASA cycle. As the name suggests, perceived fit differs from actual fit in that it is concerned with peoples' impressions and perceptions of their fit, rather than the underlying values, goals, personality and so forth, all of which influence perceptions (Parsons, et al, 1999). Usually perceived fit is captured as a generalized measure (Kristof, 1996).

Cable and Judge (1997) measured interviewers' perceptions of interviewees' fit, the actual P-O fit between interviewees and interviewers, and selection outcome. Difficulties with their method of capturing P-O fit were discussed earlier. Nevertheless, the correlations between these three variables are very interesting. The correlation between perceived and actual P-O fit was .23 ( $p < .05$ ,  $N = 93$ ), suggesting only a moderate association. Whereas actual P-O fit was weakly associated with interviewers' hiring recommendations ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $N = 93$ ), perceived P-O fit was strongly associated with interviewers' hiring recommendations ( $r = .64$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $N = 93$ ). Perhaps these findings explain the intuitive appeal of Schneider's selection proposition. People know that they make selection decisions based on fit and therefore Schneider's proposition feels right. However, Cable and Judge's (1997) findings supply the explanation: interviewers do make decisions based on their perceptions of how they think applicants will fit their organization, but the weak associations between perceived and actual P-O fit and between actual P-O fit and interview decision suggest that these perceptions of fit are only weakly associated. In other words, in selection environments, people's perceptions of fit are a poor guide to actual fit as assessed by these methods. Cable and DeRue (2002) argue that perceptions of fit influence choices because they are proximal to the decision; i.e. formed during the decision-making process and directly relate to that decision. Values, in contrast, take time to develop and are robust and long-lived (Chatman, 1989). They are likely to form prior to the recruitment and selection process as a consequence of other experiences (Stackman et al, 2000; Wachtel, 1977). Hence, they are likely to be distal to selection decisions and thereby exert less influence over them.

The proximal-distal distinction might also be relevant with levels of fit. In the present study, P-OV fit was shown to be virtually inconsequential in its effect over selection. One explanation of why this might be the case is the separation of Top Team members from the recruitment and selection process. The values used to create the profile of the business units' values came from members of each business unit's Top Team. These people only had the



most fleeting interaction with applicants, if at all. By and large, selection interviewing and running assessment centers was conducted by lower and middle managers who are located in departments. Hence, it is people at the departmental level that applicants interact with and take their cue from about the values of people and the organization. In addition, the applicants are going to be recruited to do jobs similar to those of the managers that are interviewing and assessing them. They want to assess these people to see if they fit with them and they are keen to understand how these people view the organizational environment. And the same would be true in reverse: selectors are keen to judge how people will fit in and how they will adapt to the values of the work environment, which are viewed through the eyes of department members.

Adding to this problem is a methodological issue centering on the collection of values. When Top Team members were asked to report the values of their organization, in effect, they were being asked to create an average or generalized view of people's work values in the organization. Top Team members can be strategic and detached from the day-to-day operation of the organization (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2002; Hambrick & Mason, 1984) and, as a result, they observe behaviors. In contrast, department members are, by definition, involved in the day-to-day work of the organization and thereby intimately exposed to, familiar with, and proximal to work values. Their assessments of work values are likely to be grounded in the realism of actual work that they experience and interact with on a daily basis. Hence, the difference between business unit and department P-O fit might be a difference between observed and experienced work behaviors. If this is the case, then the work values produced by Top Team members might be less relevant to applicants.

There is one way in which selection is very different to the other phases of the ASA cycle. Primarily, but not exclusively, selection is carried out by organizations (cf. Herriot 1989a, 1989b; Wanous, 1992). Organizations choose whom to employ. This is how Schneider refers to selection in his papers (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al, 1995). The other two phases place more emphasis on the decisions of the individual – whether to apply and whether to stick around – although clearly the organization does play some role in these processes. All three processes involve interactions, but the emphasis in selection is different. This is an important consideration because whereas individuals' behavior in recruitment, selection and continuance decisions is largely free from legal constraint (except in some contractual situations), organizational behavior is tightly constrained, especially in the selection domain. As mentioned earlier, most countries now have legislation protecting groups that have historically been disadvantaged during selection.

In addition to the legal constraints placed on organizational selectors, there appears to be much greater professionalism in organizational selection and greater knowledge about research findings (Robertson & Makin, 1986; Shackleton & Newell, 1991, 1994). Although the interview still dominates selection, other forms of selection are more commonplace (increased usage of psychometrics and assessment centers) and the rigor of the interview itself has been tightened with the emergence of more structure and behavioral and situational questions.

These two dimensions – legal constraints and greater professionalism and knowledge – have contributed to the greater prevalence of selector training (Henley & Bawtree, 1993). The idea of 'recruiting for fit' (i.e. fit to the organization) is regarded by many as a 'bit dodgy', possibly a relic of unstructured interviews, and tantamount to unfair discrimination (Harris, 2000). Hence, much selection training centers on avoiding unfair discrimination with a focus on matching people to the knowledge, skills, and other abilities required to perform the job tasks (Schmitt & Chan, 1998). In such an environment, it might be expected that organizational selectors would curb their desire to select people whom they believe will fit the organization thereby reducing the strength of any selection effect in the ASA cycle.

## Managerial implications

The present study has remained neutral on Schneider's fears (Schneider, 1987, Schneider et al, 1995, 1998, 2000) that greater homogeneity of workforces leads to organizational dysfunction. It has simply explored whether or not the attraction phase of the proposed ASA cycle contributes towards organizational homogeneity. Consequently, no views can be offered on whether or not it is right for organizations to recruit and select for fit. However, some ideas can be offered to those organizations that have decided that they do, or do not, wish to do so.

Perhaps the greatest surprise in the results of the present study is the finding that P-P fit, rather than P-O fit, influenced selection decisions in a positive way. This seems important because the fit that influences selection decisions is between people's values, not between applicants' values and the values of the organization. Unfortunately the values of interviewers and other people involved in the selection process were not identifiable in the present study, although they are likely to have been included in the sample of people from each recruiting department. As a result, it is just a short inferential leap to suggest that the P-P fit between applicant and selector would predict selection outcome. If further research demonstrates that the actual P-P fit between applicants and selectors predicts selection outcomes, and Cable and Judge (1997) have already demonstrated that the perceived fit between interviewers and interviewees is predictive of selection outcomes, then organizations would be advised to select their selectors very carefully.

There is a danger that the above two points on actual fit and selection outcomes might be overplayed as actual fit was shown to have just a small influence over selection decisions. As noted earlier, this is in marked contrast to the findings of Cable and his colleagues (Cable, 1995; Cable & Judge, 1996, 1997; Judge & Cable, 1997) who have found that perceived fit exerts a much stronger influence over selection decisions. The comparison of these findings suggests that the selection domain is one dominated by quickly formed, short-lived perceptions (Cable and DeRue, 2002). The correlation between actual and perceived fit appears to be quite weak. This finding should serve as a warning to selectors that their subjective perceptions of fit might not be grounded in actual value congruence.

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## Appendix

### *Conversion of OCP items*

Original OCP Item	Reworked Item
Being innovative	Staff are continually being innovative
Being quick to take advantage of opportunities	People are quick to take advantage of opportunities
A willingness to experiment	Staff experiment with new ways of doing things
Respect for the individual's rights	People have respect for the rights of others
Action oriented	Employees are very busy at work
Developing friends at work	People develop friendships at work
Working in collaboration with others	People work in collaboration with others
Working long hours	People work long hours
Risk taking	Employees take risks
Autonomy	Staff have a lot of autonomy
Paying attention to detail	Staff pay attention to detail
Taking initiative	People act on their own initiative
Being demanding	Staff have considerable demands made of them
Offers praise for good performance	Employees are given praise for good performance
Fitting in	People try to fit in
An emphasis on quality	People make quality a priority
Being results oriented	People focus on profits
Being precise	Staff are precise
Fairness	Being fair is a priority for people in the organisation
Being people oriented	Managers are concerned that people are treated well
Opportunities for professional growth	There are opportunities for growth and development
Being highly organised	Staff approach their work in a very organised manner
Being competitive	People are competitive