

Abstract

This article is part of the 50th anniversary issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior (JVB)*, with a focus on Person-environment (P-E) fit. P-E fit has been a central research area in vocational and organizational psychology. With a focus on highly influential work in both fields, this article aims to synthesize P-E fit literature and develop theoretical models to guide future research. First, we summarize key perspectives and the state of the art in the general P-E fit literature. Second, based on a succinct review of P-E fit papers published in *JVB*, we take an interdisciplinary approach to critically discuss the conceptual and methodical ambiguities in this area. Third, we integrate identity and social exchange theories to present an Identity-Capability-Reward (ICR) model to conceptualize P-E fit across job roles and work entities at different levels. Fourth, we draw upon self-regulation and life-span development perspectives to propose a cybernetic development model that theorizes the self-regulated changes of fit experiences across time. We conclude with recommendations for an integrative, dynamic, and developmental approach to advance the P-E fit theories.

Keywords: Person-Environment fit, Person-Organization fit, Person-Job fit, supplementary fit, complementary fit

Theorizing Person-Environment Fit in a Changing Career World:

Interdisciplinary Integration and Future Directions

The original list of invited papers for the 50th anniversary issue of *JVB* was collectively decided by the editorial team through a Delphi poll. Although P-E fit didn't rise to the top in the poll, authors of this article believe that a theoretical analysis of this important area will not only complement other papers in this issue, but also help to stimulate new research. P-E fit is generally defined as the similarity, match, or congruence between the person and environment (e.g., Caplan, 1983; Chatman 1989; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Edwards et al., 1998; French et al., 1982; Holland, 1959, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Pervin, 1968, 1987; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006; Rounds et al., 1987; Schneider, 1987a, 1987b; Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Despite its centrality in vocational and organizational research, the study of fit has been criticized for (1) its vague conceptualization and operationalization that may "obscure the meaning of P-E fit and its relationship with other constructs" (Edwards, 2008, p.169), (2) the overlook of new issues of P-E fit emerging from the fast-changing career world (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Ashford et al., 2018; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Schneider, 2001), and (3) the incomplete understanding of the changes of fit across life-span career development (e.g., Follmer et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2013; Kooij et al., 2020; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Zacher & Froidevaux, in press). In this article, we adopt an interdisciplinary approach to summarize and evaluate P-E fit papers published in *JVB*, present new models that address these conceptual issues, and provide an agenda for future research.

1. P-E Fit Research in Vocational and Organizational Psychology

The earliest theorizing about P-E fit is often credited to Parsons (1909), who proposed a three-step model on how to make vocational choices based on the match between personal attributes and environmental characteristics. Since then thousands of P-E fit studies have been

done in vocational psychology (Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2019; Mobley & Slaney, 1996; Nye et al., 2018a, 2018b; Nye et al., 2017; Reardon & Lenz, 1999; Rounds & Tracey, 1990; Su, 2020; Su et al., 2015; Tinsley, 2000a; Tokar et al., 1998; Tranberg et al., 1993; Walsh et al., 2000) and organizational psychology (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019; Cable & Judge, 1997; Chapman & Piasentin, 2006; Edwards, 2008; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Ostroff & Judge, 2007; Schneider, 2001; van Vianen, 2018; Verquer et al., 2003). To bridge the different streams of research, Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) categorized P-E fit in two major types: supplementary fit (i.e., a person “supplements, embellishes, or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals in this environment”, p. 269) and complementary fit (i.e., “weakness or need of the environment is offset by the strength of the individual, and vice versa”, p. 271). Complementary fit is further differentiated into needs–supplies fit (N-S fit, whether individuals’ needs are fulfilled by the environment), or demands–abilities fit (D-A fit, whether the demands of the environment are met by incumbents’ capabilities; e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; French et al., 1982; Kristof, 1996). Fit has also been conceptualized at different levels, such as person-vocation (P-V) fit, person-organization (P-O) fit, person-group (P-G) fit, person-person (P-P) fit, and person-job (P-J) fit (e.g., Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Kristof, 1996; Su et al., 2015).

P-E fit can be operationalized by direct or indirect measures (Edwards, 1991, 1993; Edwards et al., 2006; Edwards & Parry, 1993; Kristof, 1996). Direct measures tap into individuals’ overall perceptions of fit or discrepancy between personal and environmental characteristics (Edwards et al., 2006). Indirect measures separately capture the perceived person and environment using either self-report, other-rating methods, or objective information (Edwards et al., 2006; Kristof, 1996; Verquer et al., 2003). Fit scores have been calculated in diverse ways, such as ranking congruence (e.g., the similarity of the highest-ranked interest type; e.g., Holland,

1997), difference scores (e.g., Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991), profile correlations (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 1991), and polynomial regression (e.g., Edwards, 1993; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

P-E fit has important implications. Recent meta-analyses and reviews have shown that congruence in vocational interests facilitates the process of career choices (Hanna & Rounds, 2020), and leads to higher job/career satisfaction, more persistence, and better task performance (Hoff et al., 2020; Nye et al., 2018a, 2018b; Nye et al., 2017; Su, 2020; Van Iddekinge et al., 2011). Similarly, organizational studies have associated P-E fit with a wide range of well-being, attitudinal, and effectiveness outcomes (Arthur et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2005; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014; Saks et al., 2007; Verquer et al., 2003). The effects of P-E fit depend on many contingency factors, such as the choices of fit dimensions and outcomes, individual differences (e.g., personality), and contextual features (e.g., culture, Oh et al., 2014). After outlining the general state of the literature, we then specifically focus on P-E fit papers in *JVB*.

2. A Brief Review of P-E Fit Papers in *JVB*

We searched Web of Science for *JVB* articles focusing on P-E fit since its first issue in 1971 with the following terms: “*Journal of Vocational Behavior*” under Publication Name; “fit” OR “misfit” OR “congruence” OR “incongruence” OR “match” OR “mismatch” under Topic. Our search in January 2021 yielded 461 articles. As the focus of this paper is P-E fit, we excluded studies pertaining to general person-environment interactions (e.g., the interaction of personal and situational factors in predicting outcome variables) and studies only investigating personal attributes (e.g., the structure of vocational interests) or environment characteristics (e.g., characteristics of occupations). The final sample contained 156 eligible articles.

2.1 Summary of search results and highly influential papers

We classified these articles into two categories: (a) original empirical papers (N = 109); (b)

other P-E fit articles ($N = 47$, i.e., qualitative/quantitative reviews, commentaries, editorials, theoretical papers, and methodological papers). To illustrate the trend of P-E fit research in *JVB*, we plotted the number of publications in each category over the past 50 years in Figure 1. The number of publications, especially original empirical papers, is steadily increasing. To highlight the influential work among these papers, we identified the top 5 highly cited papers for each decade across the two categories (see Table 1 and Table 2).

In the first decade, a few original empirical studies were conducted to examine how esteem and social class (Healy, 1973), and career changes (Robbins, et al., 1978) may influence P-E congruence; how P-E congruence predicts university adaptation (Spokane et al., 1979; Spokane et al., 1978) and employee satisfaction (Mount & Muchinsky, 1978). In the second decade, researchers examined other predictors of congruence, such as exploration (Grotevant et al., 1986), traditionality and sex-role identification (Wolfe & Betz, 1981), as well as its work-related outcomes (e.g., Blau, 1987; Rounds et al., 1987; Swaney & Prediger, 1985). The next decade witnessed the publications of several highly influential papers, focusing on P-E fit in performance (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999), work adjustment and career success (Judge, 1994), recruitment process (Rynes & Gerhart, 1993), and the methods of calculating congruence (Brown, 1994; Camp & Chartrand, 1992). In the fourth decade, research started to explore different levels/aspects of P-E fit (e.g., Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; Saks, 2006; Vogel & Feldman, 2009), more comprehensive indices of fit (e.g., Euclidean distance and angular agreement; Tracey & Robbins, 2006), and the mediating role of P-E congruence in explaining other relationships (e.g., self-efficacy and successful school-to-work transition; Pinguart et al., 2003). In the most recent decade, researchers used P-E fit to understand withdrawal behavior (Tak, 2011) and organizational attractiveness (Carpenter et al., 2012), and examined how career adaptability (Guan et al., 2013) and proactive behaviors such as job crafting (Lu et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2016) help

individuals achieve P-E fit.

The other category consists of many papers that make fundamental theoretical contributions to this area. For example, in 1987, a special issue in *JVB* consolidated several groundbreaking articles that transformed the understanding of P-E fit. For example, the supplementary vs. complementary fit framework proposed by Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) has become a milestone. Caplan (1987) provided insights into the possible mechanisms underpinning the complicated effects of P-E (mis)fit. Kulik et al. (1987) adopted a work design perspective to analyze P-E fit. Two review papers on Holland's congruence model (e.g., Assouline & Meir, 1987; Spoke, 1985) were published, which stimulated more subsequent work on this important topic. In the third decade, scholarly attention was still primarily paid to Holland's congruence model, and there were heated debates about the conceptualization issues and utility of this model in predicting career outcomes (e.g., Mobley & Slaney, 1996; Reardon & Lenz, 1999; Tinsley, 2000a; Tokar et al., 1998; Tranberg et al., 1993). In the fourth decade, two review papers examined the consequences of P-E fit (e.g., Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003). Chapman and Piasentin (2006) reviewed the measurement issues of P-O fit and shed new light on its conceptualization. Saks et al. (2007) reviewed how socialization tactics can facilitate newcomer P-E fit and adjustment. Tinsley (2001) concluded that P-E fit is among the most important vocational psychology areas. In the most recent decade, two review papers (e.g., Nye et al., 2018b; Nye et al., 2017) provided evidence for the beneficial effects of interest congruence on performance and vocational choices. Another review paper (Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2019) examined the implications of dark traits for P-E fit. In addition, the dynamic views of P-E fit were discussed in some theoretical papers: Hesketh et al.'s (2011) Retirement Transition and Adjustment Framework (RTAF) explains intra-individual changes over time; Woods et al.'s (2019) Demands-affordances Transactional (DATA) model considers P-E fit the main mechanism

for personality change at work.

2.2 Conceptualization and measurement of P-E fit in *JVB*

We now focus on the 109 empirical studies and provide a summary based on the levels of fit (e.g., P-V fit, P-J fit, P-O fit, and P-G fit) and measurement (see Table 3). The empirical studies published in *JVB* have a strong focus on P-V fit, followed by P-J fit and P-O fit. In contrast, there has been little research in the more nascent area of P-G fit. Some researchers examined person-culture fit (e.g., Holtschlag et al., 2013), person-community fit (e.g., Meir & Hasson, 1982), and work-life interaction fit (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Moen et al., 2008). There are also studies simultaneously examining multiple levels of fit (e.g., Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001).

As for the measurement, most of the P-V fit studies adopt indirect measures while P-J fit and P-O fit studies primarily utilize direct measures. Six methods are often used in indirect measures, such as interest congruence indices (i.e., the similarity of the high-point codes; e.g., Brown & Gore, 1994; Young et al., 1998), difference scores (i.e., the discrepancy between the commensurate measures of P and E; e.g., Rounds et al., 1987), profile correlation (i.e., the correlation between the commensurate measures of P and E; e.g., Allen & Robbins, 2010; Tracey et al., 2012), Euclidean distance or angular agreement (i.e., calculation of entire profiles of scores; e.g., Tracey & Robbins, 2006; Tracey et al., 2012), polynomial regression using three-dimensional response surface analysis (e.g., Nye et al., 2018c; Wiegand et al., 2021), and interaction term (i.e., interaction between the P and E terms; e.g., Blau, 1987; Hesketh & Gardner, 1993; Porfeli & Mortimer, 2010). The trend shows more advanced measurement approaches (e.g., polynomial regression) are gaining popularity.

2.3 P-E fit effects

Although early primary studies and meta-analyses (e.g., Assouline & Meir, 1987; Tranberg et al., 1993; Tsabari et al., 2005) and empirical studies (e.g., Donohue, 2006; Oleski & Subich,

1996) generated mixed results, recent research adopting more sophisticated methods generally supported the role of interest fit in positive career outcomes (Hoff et al., 2020; Nye et al., 2018b, Nye et al., 2017; Su, 2020). Moreover, the use of polynomial regression allowed us to identify the distinct effects of different forms (e.g., High-P-Low-E vs. Low-P-High-E misfit) of interest misfit (e.g., Nye et al., 2018c; Wiegand et al., 2021).

Research on P-J and P-O fit that used direct measures often support their beneficial effects on job involvement (e.g., Blau, 1987), job/organizational attitudes (e.g., Arvan et al., 2019; Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011), performance (e.g., Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Gustafson & Mumford, 1995), tenure (e.g., De Cooman et al., 2009; Hesketh et al., 1992), and psychological well-being (e.g., Rodrigues et al., 2020). There also seemed a consensus that P-J and P-O misfit is generally detrimental. However, research applying polynomial regressions revealed that the consequences of P-J misfit in the forms of High-P-Low-E and Low-P-High-E are not symmetrical (e.g., Ford, 2012; Porfeli & Mortimer, 2010). In summary, despite the high number of publications, only a small proportion of studies published in *JVB* responded to the call for using advanced methods to better understand the effects of P-E (mis)fit (see also Su et al., 2019).

2.4 Antecedents of P-E fit

Most studies have focused on personal factors or behaviors as predictors of P-E fit. Research based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) has found that educational attainment leads to a higher level of P-V fit through increased self-efficacy and freedom of choice (Glosenberget al., 2019). Saks (2006) found that job seekers with higher levels of job search self-efficacy are more likely to achieve high P-J fit. Based on Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000), Sortheix et al. (2015) found that intrinsic work values are concurrently and longitudinally positively related to P-J fit. Drawing upon Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), it has been found that career adaptability significantly predicts

university students' job search success and pre-entry P-E fit (Guan et al., 2013) as well as employees' P-E fit (Jiang, 2016). In addition, Vogel and Feldman (2009) found that P-O fit and P-J fit fully mediate the relations between P-V fit and job satisfaction, subjective career success, and performance.

In addition, it has been found that individuals' career exploration behaviors (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), rational and intuitive decision-making strategies (Singh & Greenhaus, 2004), voluntary mobility behaviors (Breedon, 1993; Rigotti et al., 2014), and job crafting behaviors (Deng & Yao, 2020; Lu et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2016) are important predictors for P-E fit. On the other hand, a few studies have investigated contextual predictors such as organizational mentoring (Egan & Song, 2008) and socialization tactics (Saks et al., 2007).

3. Critical evaluations, theoretical integration, and future directions

The above review shows that *JVB* has contributed significant amounts of influential work to the P-E fit research, and there are growing interests in this important area. Despite the significant progress in both vocational and organizational fields, several important questions still remain in the P-E fit research.

First, although individuals' subjective fit is rooted in objective characteristics of themselves and the environment, objective and subjective aspects of fit are not always well aligned (Caplan, 1983, 1987; Edwards et al., 2006; French et al., 1982; Harrison, 1978, 1985). Researchers have proposed affective and motivational accounts to explain this misalignment (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Yu, 2009, 2013), but not much work has been done to systematically examine this important question. Moreover, there is an urgent need to build a coherent theoretical framework to organize the meanings and functions of different forms of fit (e.g., Edwards, 2008; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Judge & Ferris, 1992; Su et al., 2015). Second, while the different patterns of misfit (e.g., High-P-Low-E, Low-P-High-E) and fit (e.g., High-P-High-E, Low-P-Low-

E) have been proposed to produce distinct effects (e.g., Caplan, 1983, 1987; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Edwards, 1991; Edwards et al., 1998; French et al., 1982; Harrison, 1978, 1985; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987b), an overarching framework on how they work is still lacking (Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Shipp, 2007). Third, although researchers have started to examine changes of fit by using a self-regulation perspective (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2004; Deng & Yao, 2020; Follmer et al., 2018), a better understanding of the full cycle of the specific self-regulation processes underpinning the fit experiences in life-span career development is needed (Kooij et al., 2020; Zacher & Froidevaux, in press).

3.1 Reconceptualization of P-E fit: A model of identities, capabilities, and rewards (ICR)

P-E fit is manifested in one's interactions with various roles (e.g., job role, leadership role) and work entities (e.g., teams, organizations). These interactions not only provide self-defining information that influences the person's career identity, but also involve intensive social exchanges of needs and supplies (Edwards, 2008; Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). These analyses suggest that identity and social exchange theories can be viable theoretical frameworks to refine the conceptualization of P-E fit.

In line with vocational identity (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Holland, 1997; Marcia, 1966, 1980; Meijers, 1998), role identity (Burke, 1980, 1991; Stryker 1968, 1987) and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) theories, career identity is part of self-concept that reflects one's personal attributes (e.g., values, interests) in relation to work roles and entities. The meaning and functions of supplementary fit can be effectively explained by an identity management perspective because fundamentally, it is a source of information on whether a job role or group membership in the environment matches self-defining characteristics or prototypes (see also Lord et al., 2020). Therefore, the reason why supplementary fit is beneficial is that it provides a coherent and fulfilling career identity that meets several basic psychological needs, such as the

need for belonging (i.e., to be connected to others and feel accepted), need for self-enhancement (i.e., to build a positive self-image), need for self-expression (i.e., to display authentic self), need for continuity (i.e., to have self-consistency over time), need for self-verification (i.e., to be understood by others in the same way as one understands oneself), and need for distinctiveness (i.e., to be unique and distinctive from others) (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Brewer, 1991; Vignoles et al., 2006; see also Yu, 2009, 2013).

While the identity management process underpins supplementary fit, complementary fit entails the transactional or social exchange processes between individuals and their roles and social entities (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). The two types of complementary fit (D-A fit and N-S fit) serve as important indicators for the quality and favorability of such exchanges. Specifically, individuals are required to develop and utilize relevant capabilities (e.g., knowledge, skills, and abilities) to fulfill their role expectations and work obligations (i.e., D-A fit); in the meantime, individuals expect to receive favorable conditions and rewards from the environment that they desire as a return (i.e., N-S fit). A social exchange perspective lends itself well to explain the meanings and effects of D-A fit and N-S fit (Blau, 1963, 1964; Flynn, 2005).

Taken together, the two dimensions of fit (supplementary vs. complementary) each map onto an identity management process and a social exchange process in relation to the work environment (see Figure 2 for the complete model). Future research may use these theoretical perspectives to better understand the mechanisms underlying the effects of fit. Our theorizing also informs research on career management (Greenhaus, 1987): it suggests that to achieve P-E fit, an individual should pay attention to the management of identities (I), capabilities (C), and rewards (R) in their interactions with the environment. Although the individual components of these three factors have been mentioned in the existing career management models (Hall et al., 2018; Hirschi, 2012; Hirschi, in press), there has been no theory emphasizing the synergistic integration between

them under a fit framework.

This model helps to understand how individuals may manage their fit experiences in a career world characterized by frequent boundary-crossing activities (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019), unstable employment relations (De Vos, in press; Drenzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Guan et al., 2019), and increasing alternative employment such as gig economy work (Allan, in press; Ashford et al., 2018). From an identity-capability-reward (ICR) perspective, these changes bring fit challenges. For example, frequent transitions cause diffused and disrupted identities and thus supplementary misfit (e.g., Petriglieri et al., 2019); the shortage of capabilities for novel tasks and the increased job demands may lead to D-A misfit (e.g., Ashford et al., 2018; Guan et al., 2019); job insecurity decreases bargaining power for rewards and may result in N-S misfit (e.g., Fouad & Bynner, 2008). By helping us see clearly where misfit may come from, this model thus enables us to pursue P-E fit in the fast-changing environment. These discussions also suggest that individuals' self-complexity may be increased as a result of managing the wide range of identities, capabilities, and rewards in their fitting processes (Linville, 1985). The self-complexity approach seems particularly valuable for understanding career management in an increasingly boundaryless and ill-defined career world (e.g., Lord et al., 2011).

The identity theories and social exchange theories underpinning the ICR model are also useful in guiding individuals to manage the dynamics of fit across roles and social entities (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; see also Epitropaki et al., 2017). For example, following optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), although supplementary fit with a work entity (e.g., organizations) fulfills people's need for belonging, the high similarity with others may threaten their need for distinctiveness (e.g., Guan et al., 2011). To solve this dilemma, employees may resort to fit with other roles or entities (e.g., group or professional identity) to fulfill the need for

distinctiveness. In addition, individuals can leverage their capabilities and rewards in the social exchange processes across roles or entities for more favorable outcomes. For instance, overqualified employees who suffer D-A misfit can direct their effort to other aspects of social exchanges (e.g., interpersonal social exchange) to improve their overall P-E fit (e.g., Deng et al., 2018). Future research can incorporate these perspectives when examining the dynamics of P-E fit across roles, entities, and levels (Deng et al., 2011; Edwards, 2008; Follmer et al., 2018; Guan et al., 2010; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006).

The identity and social exchange perspectives underpinning the ICR model illuminate why different patterns of (mis)fit generate different effects. For example, the identity management perspective (Burke, 1991; Turner et al. 1987) can explain why a high-high P-E fit in which highly self-defining attributes (indicated by High-P) are verified by environmental characteristics (High-E) yields more fulfilling experiences than a low-low fit with peripheral attributes (Low-P) in congruence with the environment (Low-E). The reason is that the former situation constitutes stronger self-concept verification from the environment. Moreover, the identity perspective suggests that the relative impact of excess (High-P-Low-E) and deficiency (Low-P-High-E) misfit may depend on the salience of specific identity motives (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Vignoles et al., 2006; Yu, 2009, 2013). While excess misfit may hurt individuals' need for self-expression and need for belonging, it potentially fulfills their need for distinctiveness and has positive effects under certain circumstances (Brewer, 1991; Guan et al., 2011). On the other hand, the deficiency misfit could be an eye-opening opportunity that inspires individuals to set higher goals and push their limits. Research on newcomer adjustment provides some evidence for this possibility (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Saks et al., 2007). Similarly, a social change analysis of N-S fit can be particularly helpful. For example, research on equity theory shows that while individuals have a general tendency to maintain a balance between their needs and supplies (N-S fit), they

tend to respond more negatively towards High-P-Low-E than Low-P-High-E N-S misfit (e.g., Adams, 1965; Lambert, et al., 2003).

3.2 The stability and changes of fit experiences: A cybernetic developmental model

Another important objective of this paper is to integrate the self-regulation model and life-span development perspective to provide a comprehensive account for the stability and changes of fit across time and career transitions. Fit experience is a process that evolves over time and changes across career transitions (Super, 1953, 1957, 1980). Therefore, it is important to understand how self-regulation cycles guided by long-term career goals influence the changes of fit (Deng et al., 2016; Kooij et al., 2020; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Zacher & Froidevaux, in press). Drawing upon a self-regulation perspective (Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1998; Lord et al., 2010; Powers, 1973), Johnson et al. (2013) consider P-E misfit as a discrepancy between individuals' ideal standards and actual experiences and the striving for fit as a dynamic goal-pursuit process that involves inputs (e.g., perceived misfit), comparators, feedback loops and outputs, and discrepancy-reduction results (e.g., P-E fit). The goals and feedback loops are interconnected and organized in a hierarchical structure. Individuals need to prioritize the short-term goals to direct their self-regulation effort to a specific aspect of P-E misfit.

According to the motivational theory of life-span development (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018; Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995), the constraints of time, opportunities, and resources require individuals to strategically plan, prioritize, and coordinate the pursuit of multiple goals in both short-term and long-term time horizons. Long-term career goals (e.g., developing strong capabilities) usually represent the ideal standards based on the premise of attaining a series of short-term goals (e.g., completing university education). Which goal should be prioritized depends on a variety of factors, such as whether the timing is best and whether it facilitates the completion of other important goals (Heckhausen et al., 2019).

Following the above discussions, individuals' perceptions of P-E fit (i.e., supplementary fit, N-S fit, and D-A fit) are inputs to get self-regulation off the ground. The comparison between the current state and long-term standards of fit results in perceived discrepancies on multiple aspects. These discrepancies will be evaluated and prioritized to generate short-term fit-pursuit goals that set self-regulation in motion (Kooij et al., 2020; Neal et al., 2017; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Zacher & Froidevaux, in press). This stage often involves multiple-goal pursuits (e.g., identity management, capability management, reward management) and the adoption of various types of strategies (e.g., resolution, relief, or resignation; Follmer et al., 2018). These strategies may directly improve the status quo by changing personal or environmental characteristics or altering individuals' appraisal of the situation (Follmer et al., 2018; Yu, 2009; 2013). Results of the regulation will provide new information to reassess P-E fit states and adjust long-term standards of fit (Guan et al., 2017; Heckhausen et al., 2019; Kooij et al., 2020; Lord et al., 2015; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). In addition, these processes are influenced by the opportunities, resources, and constraints individuals have, and are subject to the personal and situational changes across the life-span (see Figure 3).

4. Conclusion

A decade ago, scholars recognized that despite the empirical progress and advancements of methods, many theoretical ambiguities existed in the P-E literature (Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). Unfortunately, this evaluation still stays true today. We believe that improving the clarity and power of P-E fit theories will be best accomplished by taking an interdisciplinary approach that synthesizes relevant theoretical frameworks, advanced methods, and complementary perspectives from other areas. In the current paper, we present two new models – the identity-capability-reward (ICR) model and the cybernetic development model – in the hope of stimulating curiosity and innovation from future researchers on P-E fit.

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Table 1*The Top 5 Highly Cited Original Empirical P-E Fit Articles for Each Decade (JVB)*

Period	Author	Title	Citation
1971-1980	Mount & Muchinsky (1978)	Person-environment congruence and employee job satisfaction: A test of Holland's theory	63
	Robbins et al. (1978)	Career change and congruence of personality type: An examination of DOT-derived work environment designations	21
	Spokane & Derby (1979)	Congruence, personality pattern, and satisfaction in college women	12
	Spokane et al. (1978)	Consistent curricular choice and congruence of subsequent changes	8
	Healy (1973)	The relation of esteem and social class to self-occupational congruence	4
1981-1990	Rounds et al. (1987)	Measurement of person-environment fit and prediction of satisfaction in the theory of work adjustment	92
	Blau (1987)	Using a person-environment fit model to predict job involvement and organizational commitment	82
	Wolfe & Betz (1981)	Traditionality of choice and sex-role identification as moderators of the congruence of occupational choice in college women	47
	Swaney & Prediger (1985)	The relationship between interest-occupation congruence and job satisfaction	47
	Grotevant et al. (1986)	Exploration as a predictor of congruence in adolescents' career choices	40
1991-2000	Judge (1994)	Person-organization fit and the theory of work adjustment: Implications for satisfaction, tenure, and career success	307
	Goodman & Svyantek (1999)	Person-organization fit and contextual performance: Do shared values matter	264
	Brown & Gore (1994)	An evaluation of interest congruence indices: Distribution characteristics and measurement properties	124

Period	Author	Title	Citation
	Rynes & Gerhart (1993)	Recruiter perceptions of applicant fit: Implications for individual career preparation and job search behavior	82
	Camp & Chartrand (1992)	A comparison and evaluation of interest congruence indices	68
2001-2010	Lauver & Kristof-Brown (2001)	Distinguishing between employees' perceptions of person–job and person– organization fit	313
	Pinquart et al. (2003)	Self-efficacy and successful school-to-work transition: A longitudinal study	109
	Vogel & Feldman (2009)	Integrating the levels of person-environment fit: The roles of vocational fit and group fit	102
	Saks (2006)	Multiple predictors and criteria of job search success	99
	Tracey & Robbins (2006)	The interest–major congruence and college success relation: A longitudinal study	92
2011-2020	Tims et al. (2016)	Job crafting and its relationships with person– job fit and meaningfulness: A three-wave study	167
	Lu et al. (2014)	Does work engagement increase person–job fit? The role of job crafting and job insecurity	120
	Guan et al. (2013)	Career adaptability, job search self-efficacy and outcomes: A three-wave investigation among Chinese university graduates	104
	Tak (2011)	Relationships between various person– environment fit types and employee withdrawal behavior: A longitudinal study	50
	Carpenter et al. (2012)	Public service motivation as a predictor of attraction to the public sector	50

Note. Numbers of citations according to Web of Science (as of 4 February 2021).

Table 2*The Top 5 Highly Cited Other P-E Fit Articles for Each Decade (JVB)*

Period	Author	Title	Citation
1981-1990	Muchinsky & Monahan (1987)	What is person-environment congruence? Supplementary versus complementary models of fit	354
	Caplan (1987)	Person-environment fit theory and organizations: Commensurate dimensions, time perspectives, and mechanisms	258
	Spokane (1985)	A review of research on person- environment congruence in Holland's theory of careers	210
	Assouline & Meir (1987)	Meta-analysis of the relationship between congruence and well-being measures	206
	Kulik et al. (1987)	Work design as an approach to person- environment fit	123
1991-2000	Tokar et al. (1998)	Personality and vocational behavior: A selective review of the literature, 1993– 1997	201
	Tranberg et al. (1993)	The relation between interest congruence and satisfaction: A metaanalysis	147
	Tinsley (2000)	The congruence myth: An analysis of the efficacy of the person–environment fit model	136
	Reardon & Lenz (1999)	Holland's theory and career assessment	37
	Mobley & Slaney (1996)	Holland's theory: Its relevance for lesbian women and gay men	29
2001-2010	Verquer et al. (2003)	A meta-analysis of relations between person–organization fit and work attitudes	460
	Hoffman & Woehr (2006)	A quantitative review of the relationship between person–organization fit and behavioral outcomes	285
	Saks et al. (2007)	Socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment: A meta-analytic review and test of a model	220
	Piasentin & Chapman (2006)	Subjective person–organization fit: Bridging the gap between conceptualization and measurement	67
	Tinsley (2001)	Marginalization of vocational psychology	18

Period	Author	Title	Citation
2011-2020	Nye et al. (2017)	Interest congruence and performance: Revisiting recent meta-analytic findings	41
	Hesketh et al. (2011)	A future-oriented retirement transition adjustment framework	37
	Woods et al. (2019)	The influence of work on personality trait development: The demands- affordances TrAnsactional (DATA) model, an integrative review, and research agenda	11
	Hirschfeld & James Van Scotter (2019)	Vocational behavior from the dark side	4
	Nye et al. (2018)	Do ornithologists flock together? Examining the homogeneity of interests in occupations	2

Note. Numbers of citations according to Web of Science (as of 4 February 2021).

Table 3*P-E Fit Articles Adopting Different P-E Fit Types, Measures, and Methods (JVB)*

Type	Measure	Number	Method						
			M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	Other M
P-V fit (N=59)	Direct measure	3							
	Indirect measure	52	33	6	4	10	3		1
	Combined measure	4	3		1				
P-J fit (N=24)	Direct measure	12							
	Indirect measure	11		3	3		2	3	6
	Combined measure	1		1					
P-O fit (N=12)	Direct measure	8							
	Indirect measure	3		1			2		
	Combined measure	1		1					
P-G fit (N=1)	Direct measure	0							
	Indirect measure	1							1
	Combined measure	0							
Combined P-E fit (N=9)	Direct measure	9							
	Indirect measure	0							
	Combined measure	0							
Other P-E fit (N=4)	Direct measure	1							
	Indirect measure	3	1					1	1
	Combined measure	0							

Note. Combined P-E fit represents multiple levels of P-E fit that were tested simultaneously; Other P-E fit represents P-E fit that cannot be classified into the above types of P-E fit; Combined measure represents adopting both direct and indirect measures; M1 represents interest congruence indices; M2 represents difference scores; M3 represents profile correlation; M4 represents Euclidean distance or angular agreement; M5 represents polynomial regression; M6 represents interaction term; Other M represents methods that cannot be classified into the six types of methods; different methods may be adopted simultaneously in the same study.

Figure 1

P-E Fit Articles Published in JVB (1971-2020)

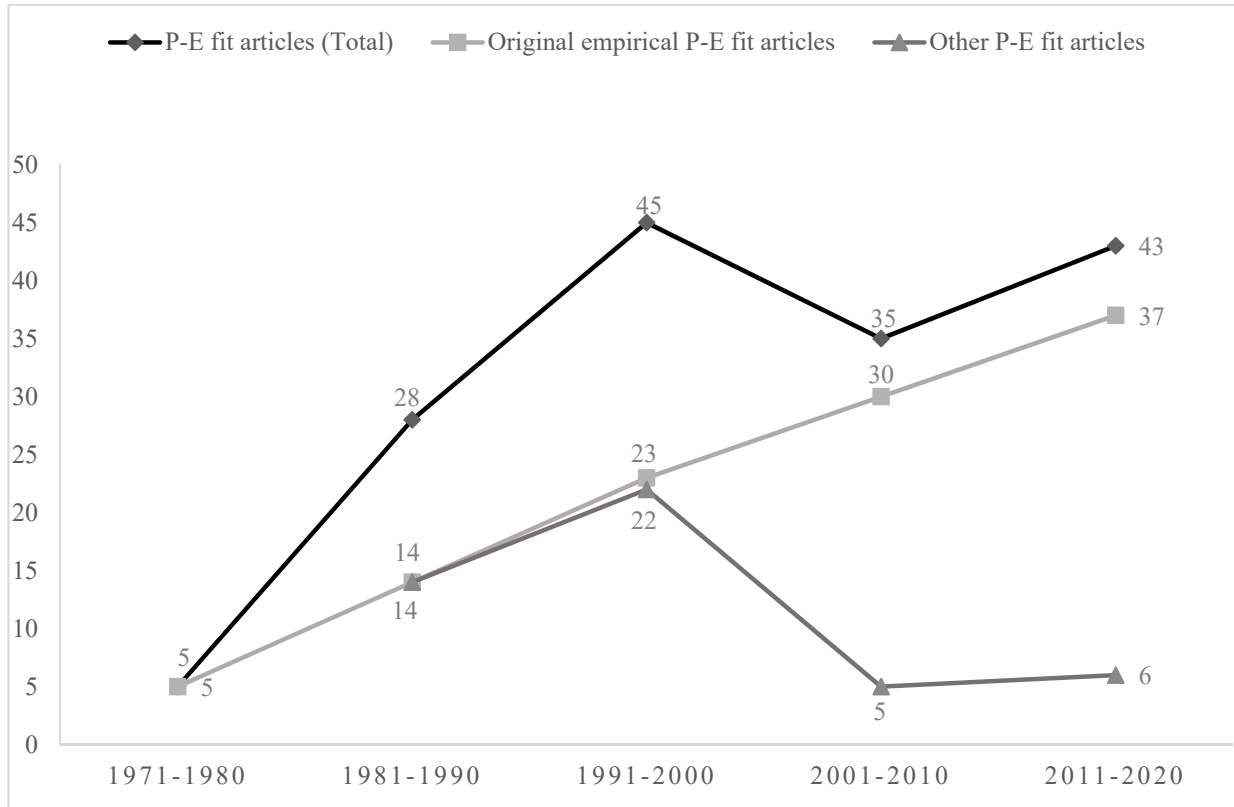
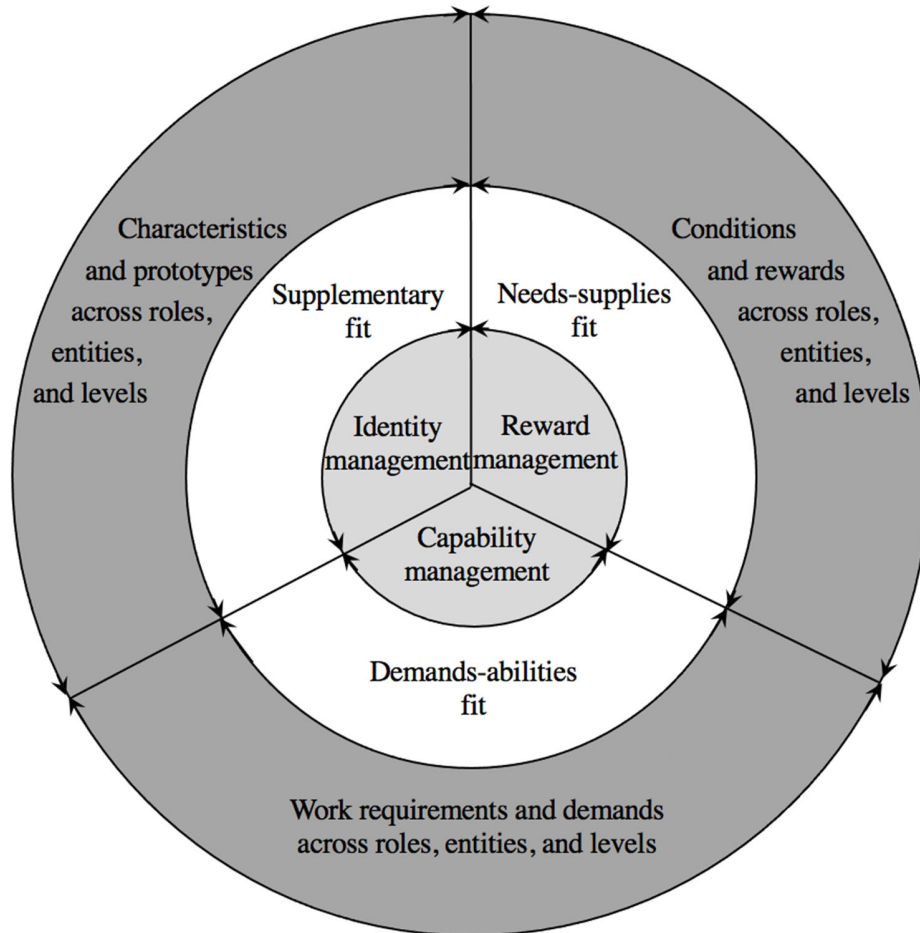


Figure 2

The Identity-Capability-Reward (ICR) Model of P-E Fit



Note. The inner circle (light gray area) represents the person and the outer circle (dark gray area) represents the environment (roles and entities at different levels). The interplay between the person and the environment shapes different kinds of P-E fit.

Figure 3

The Cybernetic Development Model of P-E Fit

