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Roles Affect Individuals' Preferences for Organizations: A Values Perspective

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People are guided by the roles they assume in their everyday lives. Roles are cognitive schemas that are associated with specific goals and expectations that organize and guide individuals' perception and preferences. The social roles individuals assume affect their goals, which in turn affect their point of view and preferences. We propose and show that role schemas are malleable, allowing individuals to shift from one schema to another depending on the role they assume at the moment of judgment. Drawing on role theory and theories of espoused organizational values, we show that matching between the goals derived from a specific role and espoused organizational values influence the preferences of individuals toward an organization. An experiment with 476 working adults and students in three countries, found that individual assumed role (as a potential employee or an investor) and espoused organizational values (embeddedness–autonomy, egalitarianism–hierarchy, and mastery–harmony) affected individuals' preferences to invest or work in organizations. Our findings suggest that role-specific goals are important drivers of how individuals perceive organizations, and that individuals seek "fit" between organizational values and their role-specific goals. Finally, we discuss supplementary analyses testing the classical notion of value-based person-organization fit.

Public Significance Statement

In this research we show that the role individuals assume when coming across organizations (e.g., work candidates, investors or consumers) influences their preferences for organizations. For example, although investors prefer highly competitive organizations, work candidates prefer organizations that highlight sensitivity to the social and physical surrounding. This research reveals the power of espoused organizational values in creating a desired image for the organization.

Keywords: social roles, role-specific goals, organizational values, espoused values

Impression formation is a dynamic process influenced by the interaction between the perceiver and the environment (e.g., Turnley & Bolino, 2001; Wayne & Liden, 1995). In this research, we investigate how the roles that individuals may assume when interacting with organizations shape and influence their preferences for organizations. Individuals come across multiple organizations as part of their everyday experiences. They will deepen their relationships with some of these organizations, depending, among others, on the congruency between their individual goals and the goals of the organization. Ample research focused on the relationships between organizations and their members, pointing to the advantage of matching between individuals and organizations (e.g., Berson & Halevy, 2014; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Individual–organizational relationships, however, can also occur externally, with individuals outside the organization. For example, individuals may develop a relationship with an organization based on their usage of the organization's

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products or based on their will to invest in an organization. These external individual–organizational relationships can also be highly dynamic with individuals switching between roles. For example, an individual can have a relationship with an organization as a consumer, which could be involved into developing a relationship with the same organization as an investor.

Organizations engage in routine impression management aiming to deliberately shape the way they are presented, through the mass media (e.g., advertising and press release) or organizational artifacts (e.g., annual reports, websites, Arfin, 1993; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Mohamed, Gardner, & Paolillo, 1999). Organizations are aware of the agendas and goals of different external constituents, and frame their self-presentation attempts accordingly. These presentations to different outsiders are designed to achieve important organizational outcomes, such as attracting appropriate job candidates, appealing to a broad-base of consumers who buy their products or use their services, and gaining the confidence of investors. Thus, for example, in many official websites, organizations convey multiple messages directed to various external constituents: They may emphasize equality when addressing potential employees, report excellent financial accomplishments when addressing investors, or highlight warmth and friendliness when addressing customers.

In this article, we examine how organizations' routine communication and discourse about their values and goals influence individuals' preferences to enter into relationships with the organization. In particular, drawing on role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and espoused organizational values (e.g., Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995), we aim to show that matching between the goals derived from a specific role and espoused organizational values impact the preferences of individuals toward an organization. We argue and show that impression formation is a dynamic process, influenced by the specific role individuals assume at the moment of judgment. Hence, when individuals shift from one role to another (e.g., a consumer who considers investing in an organization) they may also change their point of view and their preference for the organization. We thus aim to deepen our understanding of the impact of social roles on the formation of preference and choice and to shed new light on the complex relationships between organizations and their external constituents.

Individual Roles and Organizational Values

Roles

People are guided by the roles they assume in their everyday lives. *Roles* are "specific forms of behavior associated with given positions" (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Researchers studied social roles and their consequences for attitudes, behaviors, and performance of individuals (see reviews in Biddle, 1986, 2013; Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985). In essence, roles are cognitive schemas that are associated with specific goals and expectations that organize and guide individuals' perception and preferences. Thus, when a cognitive schema of a particular role is activated, the individual tends to view and interpret the world through the lens of this role (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Neisser, 1976). Individuals occupy multiple roles, and depending of which role is made salient, different goals dominate. For example, individuals can transition from goals associated with one role (e.g., spending time with their children when taking on the role of "parent") to vastly different goals associated with another role (e.g., completing a work project when taking on the role of "employee"; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003).

Roles are important in shaping the relationships between individuals and organizations. Individuals interact with organizations while taking on a multitude of roles. For example, individuals work in organizations while taking the role of employees, or they invest their money in organizations while taking the role of shareholders. We thus argue that such roles affect individuals' preferences for organizations. Based on role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), we posit that individuals enter into relationships with organizations to fulfill specific goals, and depending on their role, these goals will differ. As such, individuals will prefer to interact with organizations espousing values that are aligned with their role-based goals. In the section below, we review the literature describing the different values organizations typically espouse, and then discuss how role-based goals impact preferences for these values.

Espoused Organizational Values

Organizations engage in impression management to influence external constituents, such as attracting appropriate job candidates, appealing to a broad base of consumers, gaining the confidence of investors, currying favor with regulators, or even undermining their competitors (Lee, Peterson, & Tiedens, 2004). One tactic that organizations use to influence external constituents is through espousing their values. *Organizational values* are shared, abstract, and stable goals that serve as guiding principles for the organization (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013; Cameron, 2005; Chatman, 1989; House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001; Schein, 1985). They are often communicated through written discourse such as internal memos, press releases, brochures, websites, or annual reports (Arfin, 1993; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Mohamed et al., 1999; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993; Schein, 1985). Organizational values that are communicated as such have been shown to be effective tools of social influence that affect individuals' preferences for organizations. For example, Judge and Bretz (1992) found that organizations that communicated values of achievement, concern for others, honesty, and fairness in their employment brochures were perceived as more attractive to potential employees. These espoused organizational values were more predictive of individual preferences than objective characteristics of the organization or the job, such as salary or promotional opportunities.

There are multiple taxonomies in the literature that list and categorize organizational values (e.g., Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Chatman, 1989; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2001; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007; Schein, 1985). By and large, these taxonomies overlap theoretically and empirically with each other, and they can be summarized in three bipolar dimensions as proposed by Schwartz (1999, 2010): (a) *embeddedness* (valuing individuals as integral parts of the collective that strive to attain the organization's goals) versus *autonomy* (valuing individuals as autonomous entities that seek to fulfill their personal interests and goals); (b) *egalitarianism* (valuing all human beings as moral equals who are entitled to the same, basic rights) versus *hierarchy* (valuing ascribed chains of authority and unequal distribution of resources); and (c) *mastery* (valuing striving toward objective, bottom-line

Table 1
Three Value Dimensions

Value dimension	Value definition	Organizational practices	Similar value concepts
Embeddedness vs. autonomy	*Embeddedness*: Individuals are viewed as embedded in the organization and are expected to work towards organizational goals.	*Embeddedness*: Organizations regard their members as extended families with whom the organization has long-term relationships.	Collectivism/Individualism (Hofstede, 1980, 2001)
	Autonomy: Individuals are viewed as autonomous entities who strive to fulfill their personal interests, preferences, and motives.	*Autonomy*: Relationships with employees are contractual, and organizational members are encouraged to generate and act upon their own ideas.	Institutional collectivism (House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001) Groupism (Schein, 1985) Adhocracy (Cameron & Quinn, 1999)
Egalitarianism vs. hierarchy	*Egalitarianism:* Human beings are moral equals who are entitled to basic human rights.	*Egalitarianism:* Organizations consider inequality undesirable and illegitimate. They encourage diversity and caring about the welfare of all.	Power distance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001)
	Hierarchy: An emphasis on chains of authority. Unequal distribution of resources is seen as legitimate.	*Hierarchy*: Employees have ascribed roles that are assigned from above, and are expected to comply with the obligations associated with their roles.	Diversity (Schein, 1985)
Mastery vs. harmony	*Mastery*: Focus on self-assertion towards personal and organizational accomplishments. An active attempt to master, change and exploit the environment.	*Mastery*: Organizations are competitive and oriented towards bottom-line success.	Masculinity (Hofstede, 1980, 2001)
	Harmony: An emphasis on fitting into the environment and learning from the surrounding world rather than exploiting or changing it.	*Harmony*: Organizations acknowledge the importance of having multiple goals in addition to bottom-line financial outcomes.	Market culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999)

success, in order to master and change the world) versus *harmony* (valuing fitting into and understanding the surrounding world rather than changing it).[1] Table 1 presents, for each organizational value dimension, Schwartz's definition, relevant organizational practices, and equivalent values in other taxonomies.

Role-Based Preferences for Espoused Organizational Values

As mentioned earlier, roles serve as cognitive schemas that contain particular sets of goals. These goals are activated once a specific role (e.g., an investor or an employee) is assumed, shaping individuals' preferences for organizational values. Current theories primarily suggest that individuals prefer organizations that espouse values that mirror their own, personal values (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Our role-based perspective extends current theories by suggesting that individuals also seek "fit" between organizational values that align with their role-based goals. In this article, we focus on the effect of two external roles—investors and potential employees—on preferences. The preferences of individuals in these roles are particularly significant for organizations. Investors' preferences drive their buying and selling behaviors, which in turn drive the organization's stock price, a key barometer of organizational success (Lee et al., 2004). Potential employees' preferences affect the organization's ability to recruit the best and brightest human capital (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). The goals associated with the investor and potential employee roles, and how these roles affect value preferences are outlined below.

Role of Investor: Goals and Value Preferences

The role of investor is associated with very specific goals. In particular, investors are interested in making a financial profit through their investments, and in the various psychological by-products that come with monetary success (e.g., status, prestige; Brealey & Myers, 1996). Thus, we expect individuals in the role of investors to prefer organizations that espouse values that are directly related to bottom-line, organizational-level financial performance. This is first and foremost reflected in mastery values. These values are oriented toward success, achievement, and bottom-line performance, outcomes that are highly compatible with investors' goals. Thus, we hypothesize that:

> *H1a:* Assuming an investor role will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse mastery (as opposed to harmony) values.

Individuals in the role of investors are also more likely to prefer organizations that endorse embeddedness values. Investors are first and foremost interested in the organization's well-being, and as such will prefer organizations that espouse values that prioritize organizational goals over the goals of individuals. In short, we hypothesize that:

> *H1b:* Assuming an investor role will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse embeddedness (as opposed to autonomy) values.

Role of Potential Employees: Goals and Value Preferences

Studies of actual organizational employees—or internal individual–organization relationships—have shown that individuals are

[1] Note that Schwartz's definition of mastery should not be confused with other constructs termed *mastery* in the psychological literature (such as Dweck's definition of mastery learning-orientation; Dweck, 1986).

drawn to organizations that fit or match their personal values and goals (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). For example, individuals who value achievement and success will also prefer organizations that espouse similar values such as mastery. However, the same may not be true in external individual–organization relationships. Indeed, *potential* employees differ from actual employees in significant ways. Unlike actual employees, potential employees are not yet members within an organization, and, as such, their own identities, or beliefs about who they are, are not yet wedded to that of the organization (Ibarra, 1999). As a result, potential employees are less likely to internalize organizational goals as their own and more likely to prioritize their own, personal goals (Ashforth, 1998; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

We suggest that, rather than seeking congruence between personal and organizational values, individuals in the role of potential employees will seek out organizations that allow them to pursue their own personal goals. Organizations that endorse autonomy tend to view their employees as independent actors and encourage them to pursue their own aspirations and goals. These organizations are more likely to encourage employees to craft their tasks and to pursue their own ideas. In contrast, organizations that emphasize embeddedness expect their members to strive dutifully toward the attainment of organizational goals. We therefore hypothesize that individuals in the role of potential employees will prefer organizations that endorse autonomy; specifically:

> *H2a:* Assuming a potential employee role will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse autonomy (as opposed to embeddedness) values.

For the same reason, we expect individuals in the role of potential employees to prefer organizations that espouse egalitarianism (vs. hierarchy) values. Egalitarian values regard all people as moral equals who share fundamental human rights. Organizations that emphasize these values express commitment to and appreciation for the many different attributes that individuals may bring into the organization. In contrast, organizations that endorse hierarchy values expect their members to fit in their organizational positions, and the inequality associated with these positions is considered necessary and legitimate. As potential employees have yet to assume membership with an organization, they are less likely to subordinate their own rights and individual differences to fixed organizational positions. Individuals in the role of potential employees are therefore likely to prefer organizations that espouse egalitarianism rather than hierarchy values. We hypothesize that:

> *H2b:* Assuming a potential employee role will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse egalitarianism (as opposed to hierarchy) values.

Further, we propose that individuals in the role of potential employees are likely to prefer organizations that espouse harmony values. Beyond the bottom-line performance, harmony values endorse organizational goals associated with fitting in the larger society, community, and environment. As potential employees' identities are not wedded to the organization, they will focus on the goals of these larger social groups to which they belong, rather than success and performance of the organization alone. In short, we hypothesize that:

> *H2c:* Assuming a potential employee role will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse harmony (as opposed to mastery) values.

Investor Versus Potential Employee Role Comparisons

The hypotheses above focus on within-role comparisons between organizational values at different ends of the three value dimensions. Using the same arguments above, we developed related hypotheses directly comparing value preferences between the investor and potential employee roles:

> *H3a:* Compared to the role of potential employees, assuming the role of investors will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse values of mastery.

> *H3b:* Compared to the role of potential employees, assuming the role of investors will lead to higher preferences for organizations that espouse values of embeddedness.

> *H3c:* Compared to the role of potential employees, assuming the role of investors will lead to lower preferences for organizations that espouse values of autonomy.

> *H3d:* Compared to the role of potential employees, assuming the role of investors will lead to lower preferences for organizations that espouse values of egalitarianism.

> *H3e:* Compared to the role of potential employees, assuming the role of investors will lead to lower preferences for organizations that espouse values of harmony.

For exploratory reasons we also investigated the role of a consumer. We did not have clear expectations or hypotheses regarding the preferences under this role, because consumers may hold diverse goals (e.g., Ligas, 2000). In addition, we investigated whether person–organization value fit and culture–organization value fit impact preferences for organizations. Although many researchers studied person–organization fit among members of an organization (e.g., employees), we aimed to investigate if this pattern of associations holds also for external constituents, such as investors and potential employees.

To examine the effect of role schemas on individuals' preferences for organizations we used an experimental design in which we manipulated the assumed role as an employee or as an investor and investigated the resulting preferences for organizations that differed solely in their espoused values. We used an experimental vignette methodology with the aim of enhancing experimental realism, and at the same time allowing for manipulating and controlling of independent variables (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). In choosing this approach, we draw on past research showing that experimental vignettes can recreate effects found in real-life settings. For example, a recent research on tourists' experience (Barasch, Zauberman, & Diehl, 2018) has studied the impact of taking pictures on enjoyment from traveling. The researchers found the same pattern of results when studying real-life settings such as tourists while traveling (Study 1) or students in a Christmas break (Study 2), and when studying participants in the lab who were asked to assume the role of tourists while responding to the research materials (Studies 3–5). In another example, the type of information about a product (e.g., positive only vs. positive plus weakly negative) affected consumers' dispositions toward it. The same effect was found in a laboratory study featuring a fictitious product and measuring purchase intentions of the participants (Study 1) and in a study involving a real product and measuring actual purchase of consumers (Study 2; Ein-Gar, Shiv, & Tormala, 2012).

Experimental vignette methodology fits the goals of the current research more than conducting a field study: First, while providing external validity, field research does not enable establishing causal inferences for organizational preferences. Second, the experimental approach we adopted makes it possible to compare preferences for organizations that differ solely in their espoused values while keeping other organizational attributes (e.g., industry, size, or structure) fixed. Finally, we used a within-subjects experimental design that enabled investigating the extent to which role schemas are malleable, allowing individuals to shift from one role schema to another.

Method

Participants

The participants included 476 individuals (41% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 26.84$) recruited through social media, personal contacts, posted fliers, and subject pools in universities within the United States and Israel. They were either entered into a lottery to win a prize or received course credit. Participants completed paper-and-pencil versions of the study. The data was collected in four samples: (a) American undergraduates in a public university in the United States ($n = 139$), (b) Israeli undergraduates in a public university in Israel ($n = 89$), (c) American working MBAs in the same public university in the United States ($n = 122$), and (d) working adults living in Spain ($n = 152$). The combined sample was equally divided between students (Samples 1–2, 48%) and working adults (Samples 3–4, 52%). Of the participants, 218 were American citizens, 36 were European citizens, 80 were citizens of East Asian countries, and 89 were Israeli citizens (the remainder circled "other").

Procedure

The study included two parts, a survey measuring personal values and an experiment testing the associations between espoused organizational values, assumed roles, and preferences to invest and work in the organization. The participants in Samples 1 and 4 completed the two parts consecutively on the same occasion, in a counterbalanced order. The participants in Samples 2 and 3 completed the value survey either a week before or a week after the experiment. To test causal links between espoused organizational values, assumed roles, and preferences, we used a 3 (role: potential employee, investor, consumer) × 3 (organizational values: autonomy vs. embeddedness, egalitarianism vs. hierarchy, mastery vs. harmony) within-subjects design. We manipulated the participants' assumed roles and the organizational espoused values.

Participants read eight fictitious annual reports where different organizations provide a narrative summary of their performance over the last year. Each report represents espoused values varying along the three dimensions of embeddedness–autonomy, egalitarianism–hierarchy, and mastery–harmony (see Bettman & Weitz, 1983; Lee et al., 2004; Salancik & Meindl, 1984; Staw, 1983; for studies that analyzed espoused organizational values in actual annual reports). In the *Measures* section below, we provide further information on the content and validity of these reports.

After reading each annual report, the participants were asked to assume the role of a potential employee, an investor, and a consumer. The participants were asked about their preferences regarding all three roles for each organization. The order of roles was fixed, with the three questions presented consecutively. Preferences were measured with (a) ratings of the extent to which they would want to engage with each company (i.e., work, invest or purchase a product) using a 7-point Likert scale, (b) rankings of the eight companies based on their preferences for the three roles, and (c) distributing $100,000 investment dollars between the eight companies.[2] The order in which the annual reports were presented was randomized. The procedure obtained approval from an institutional ethic committee.

Measures

Annual reports espousing different organizational values. To measure preferences toward organizations we developed mocked annual reports. Fictitious materials simulating real-world organizations and managerial scenarios are widely used in social science research in general, and in management research in particular (e.g., Adams, Licht, & Sagiv, 2011; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; McFadden et al., 2005). We took a novel approach by deriving the mocked annual reports from reports of real-life organizations (for a similar approach, see Adams et al., 2011). Typically, annual reports reflect an optimistic perception, glorifying the organization and its actions and highlighting its competitive advantage. They begin with a paragraph focusing on the firm's accomplishments in the last year and conclude with an optimistic prediction for the subsequent year. In developing the mocked reports used in our study, we adopted these conventions.

To cover all optional combinations between the three organizational value dimensions (2 × 2 × 2) eight annual reports were developed, each consisting of five short paragraphs. The first and last paragraphs were similar across the eight reports, stating that the last fiscal year was successful and expressed confidence that the next year would also be successful. The middle three paragraphs each presented one anchor of one of the three value dimensions (i.e., one paragraph illustrated either embeddedness or autonomy, one paragraph illustrated either egalitarianism or hierarchy, and one paragraph illustrated either mastery or harmony). To validate that the reports accurately represented the intended value differences, two independent coders read the eight annual reports and identified which of the six anchors (embeddedness, autonomy, egalitarianism, hierarchy, mastery, and harmony) were represented in each report. Both coders correctly identified all the value anchors related to each of the eight reports. Each annual report was similar in length and devoid of identifying information such as the name of the organiza-

[2] To provide an incentive and better simulate real-life investment, some of the participants were told that a monetary prize will be given to the participant who made the "best" investment decision portfolio. Subsequent analyses showed that whether or not participants were promised an incentive did not affect any of our findings.

tion, the industry in which the company operates, or its country of origin. See the Appendix for examples of these paragraphs.

Personal values and value fit. Participants filled in the Schwartz Value Survey (57-item version, Schwartz, 1992). We created composites of personal values that mirror the three organizational value dimensions of embeddedness–autonomy, egalitarianism–hierarchy, and mastery–harmony. *Embeddedness* corresponds to individual values that focus on the well-being of the larger group rather than those of individuals: this includes self-discipline, honoring parents, obedience, social order, national security, family security, reciprocation of favors, politeness, and cleanliness ($\alpha = .74$). *Autonomy* corresponds to individual values that focus on the interests of individuals: this includes freedom, creativity, curiosity, independence, choosing own goals, varied life, exciting life, and being daring ($\alpha = .75$). *Egalitarianism* corresponds to the individual level values that focus on maintaining equality: this includes helpfulness, honesty, loyalty, responsibility, and forgiveness ($\alpha = .71$). *Hierarchy* corresponds to individual values that focus on differences between individuals: this includes social power, wealth, and authority ($\alpha = .71$). *Mastery* corresponds to individual values that focus on competitiveness: this includes ambition, capability, influence, and success ($\alpha = .75$). *Harmony* corresponds to individual values that focus on fitting in—this includes world peace, unity with nature, wisdom, world of beauty, social justice, protecting the environment, and broadmindedness ($\alpha = .76$).

Results

Participants provided three measures of preferences: ratings of the eight companies, rankings of the eight companies, and distribution of the investment money across the eight companies. We analyzed the data using each of these variables as dependent variables. The results were virtually identical. For the sake of conciseness, we only report the results based on the preference ratings. We further conducted all our analyses separately for student and working adult samples. Again, the findings were very similar across these samples. As such, we only report aggregated data.

Preferences in the Investor Role

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of participants' rated preferences of the eight organizations when taking on the role of investors. We conducted a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with three value dimensions as the within-subjects independent variables. We found that participants preferred organizations that espoused mastery values ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.93$) over those that espoused harmony values ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.93$), $F(1, 466) = 19.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. We also found that participants preferred organizations that espoused embeddedness values ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.94$) over those that espoused autonomy values ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.88$), $F(1, 466) = 11.81$, $p < .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$. These findings support Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Although not hypothesized, we found that participants preferred organizations that espoused egalitarianism ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 0.89$) over those that espoused hierarchy values ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 0.91$), $F(1, 466) = 27.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$.

Preferences in the Potential Employee Role

We conducted the same analyses reported above, focusing on participants' rated preferences when taking on the role of potential employee. The results indicated that participants preferred organizations that espoused egalitarianism ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 0.89$) over those that espoused hierarchy values ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.94$), $F(1, 467) = 433.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .48$. Participants also preferred organizations that espoused harmony values ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.84$) over those that espoused mastery values ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.96$), $F(1, 467) = 348.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .43$. There were no differences in preferences between organizations that espoused autonomy values versus embeddedness values ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.88$ vs. $M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.94$), $F(1, 467) = .96$, *ns*. Thus, only Hypotheses 2b and 2c were confirmed.

Investor Versus Potential Employee Role Comparisons

To compare preferences between the investor and potential-employee role conditions, we conducted a repeated-measures analysis of variance with the three value dimensions as within-subjects independent variables, and the role (investor vs. potential employee) as an additional within-subjects independent variable. The analyses indicated that role significantly moderated the preferences toward espoused organizational values, $F(1, 466) = 23.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, for autonomy versus embeddedness; $F(1, 466) = 204.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$ for hierarchy versus egalitarianism; and $F(1, 466) = 463.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .50$, for mastery versus harmony.

Table 2
Values Profile of the Eight Organizations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Preferences to Work in the Organization, Buy Its Products, and Invest in Its Shares

	Organizational value profile			Preferences to . . .		
Firm name	Autonomy vs. embeddedness	Egalitarianism vs. hierarchy	Mastery vs. harmony	Work	Invest	Invest (of $100,000)
ABC	Autonomy	Egalitarianism	Mastery	4.77 (1.54)	5.14 (1.45)	14,409
DEF	Autonomy	Egalitarianism	Harmony	5.49 (1.42)	4.40 (1.59)	9,164
GHI	Autonomy	Hierarchy	Mastery	3.23 (1.69)	4.59 (1.69)	7,973
JKL	Autonomy	Hierarchy	Harmony	5.11 (1.35)	4.91 (1.44)	11,730
MNO	Embeddedness	Hierarchy	Mastery	3.72 (1.79)	4.75 (1.70)	10,906
PQR	Embeddedness	Egalitarianism	Mastery	4.86 (1.55)	5.42 (1.44)	18,023
STU	Embeddedness	Hierarchy	Harmony	4.25 (1.65)	4.61 (1.46)	8,379
VWX	Embeddedness	Egalitarianism	Harmony	5.56 (1.35)	4.89 (1.60)	16,221

Unfolding the interaction terms revealed that participants were more likely to prefer organizations that espoused mastery values in the investor role ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.93$) than in the potential employee role ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.96$), $t(475) = 19.01$, $p < .001$, $d = .84$. Similarly, participants were more likely to prefer organizations that espoused embeddedness values in the investor role ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.94$) than in the potential employee role ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.94$), $t(476) = 8.06$, $p < .001$, $d = .33$. In contrast, participants were less likely to prefer organizations that espoused egalitarian and harmony values in the investor role than in the potential employee role—egalitarianism: $M = 5.18$, $SD = 0.89$ vs. $M = 4.97$, $SD = 0.89$, $t(476) = 5.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .24$; harmony: $M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.84$ vs. $M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.93$, $t(476) = 10.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .44$. Thus, Hypotheses 3a, 3b, 3d, and 3e are supported. Roles did not affect the preferences for espoused autonomy values, thus Hypothesis 3c was not supported.

Supplementary Analyses

Preferences in the consumer role. We included the role of consumer for exploratory reasons with no clear expectations. We conducted a repeated measures MANOVA with the three value dimensions as the within-subjects independent variables. When assuming the role of a consumer participants preferred companies that expressed harmony values ($M = 5.03$, $SD = .85$) more than those that expressed mastery values ($M = 4.81$, $SD = .84$), $F(1, 467) = 21.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. They also preferred companies that expressed egalitarianism ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.85$) more than those that preferred hierarchy ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.80$), $F(1, 467) = 65.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$, and companies that espoused autonomy ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 0.84$) more than companies that expressed embeddedness values ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.85$), $F(1, 467) = 5.98$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Person–organization value fit? As mentioned in the introduction, there is evidence showing that employees prefer organizations that espouse the same values as they do themselves (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). We next aimed to explore whether this holds when individuals assume potential employee, investor, or consumer roles.

A MANOVA was conducted with rated preferences in an investor, a potential employee and a consumer role as the dependent variables. To assess person–organizational fit, we examined the interaction between personal values and espoused organizational values in predicting preferences. Of the three person–organizational value interactions, none had a significant effect on preferences in the potential employee role condition. One interaction was significant on preferences in the investor and in the consumer roles: Participants who emphasized individual-level values compatible with mastery also showed a greater preference for organizations that espoused mastery rather than harmony values—investor, $F(1, 438) = 12.17$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and consumer, $F(1, 439) = 8.02$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

The person–organization fit hypothesis is independent of role, as the values of individuals are stable across time and situations (Sagiv, Roccas, Cieciuch, & Schwartz, 2017). We therefore conducted an additional analysis in which the dependent variable was the average rated preferences across the three roles (preference to invest in, work in, or buy from). Here again, the only significant effect that emerged was for the mastery–harmony interaction, $F(1, 439) = 8.09$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

Culture–organization fit. Finally, we explored whether participants preferred organizations that espoused values that were congruent with values emphasized in their culture of origin. We therefore examined whether participants from Eastern and Western cultures differed in their preferences for organizations that espoused different cultural values. We first divided the participants into two groups depending on their culture of origin: (a) participants from Asian cultures (in the present sample, these were Asian Americans living or working in the United States) and (b) participants from Western cultures (in the present sample, these included Western-Europeans, Israelis and non-Asian participants from the United States). Note that the cultural values in Israel are highly similar to those of the United States and Western European countries (Arieli & Sagiv, 2018; Oyserman, 1993; Schwartz, 1999). Then, we conducted a MANOVA. The dependent variables were the average rated preferences across the three roles (preference to invest in, work in, or buy from) for each of the eight companies. The between-subjects factor was the participants' culture of origin (East Asian vs. Western) and the within-subjects factors were the three organizational value dimensions (embeddedness vs. autonomy, egalitarianism vs. hierarchy, mastery vs. harmony). A cultural effect would be reflected in an interaction between culture of origin and organizational values.

The findings showed that participants from Asian cultures preferred organizations that espoused embeddedness ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 0.71$) over those that espoused autonomy ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.72$), whereas participants from Western cultures showed the opposing pattern ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.82$ vs. $M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.79$, for embeddedness and autonomy respectively). The interaction effect was significant, $F(1, 415) = 10.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$. This finding dovetails with past research showing that, compared to Asian cultures, Western cultures emphasize autonomy values more and embeddedness values less (Sagiv, Schwartz, & Arieli, 2010; Schwartz, 1999). As such, when considering embeddedness (vs. autonomy) values, it appeared that participants preferred espoused values that were congruent with the values emphasized by their cultures of origin. The interactions between culture and the other two dimensions of values were not significant (Fs < 2.92, *ns*).

Discussion

The present study found that roles and espoused organizational values affected individuals' preferences for organizations. We showed that role schemas are malleable and that individuals can shift between them, expressing different role-based goals. Thus, individual preferences are driven by the congruency between espoused organizational values and transient, dynamic role-based goals. Indeed, our findings indicated that individual preferences for organizational values differed across roles: For example, when taking on the role of investors, the participants preferred organizations that espoused mastery over harmony values, but the opposite pattern emerged when taking on the role of potential employees. Thus, the same organizational value may be highly attractive when people assume one role but be unattractive when they assume a different role.

In addition, our findings show that even when a specific value is consistently perceived as desirable across roles, the relative importance attributed to this value may differ, depending on the role assumed. Consider the case of egalitarianism: Participants preferred egalitarianism over hierarchy values in both investor and potential employee roles. This finding is consistent with past research showing that egalitarianism values are consistently ranked as the most important across nations and professions (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Such a broadly endorsed value may be less subject to the influence of role expectations. Notwithstanding, the different role schemas influenced the extent to which egalitarianism was emphasized: Assuming the role of potential employees yielded higher preferences for this value than assuming the role of investors.

These findings advance our understanding of role schemas and the process through which they shape perception and evaluation. In addition, these findings shed light on the interplay between role schemas and organizations. We examined preferences of individuals taking on roles that exist external to the organization, rather than roles that exist within the organization such as employees. When we focused on external roles, we found little evidence suggesting that individuals' preferences are driven by fit between espoused organizational values and their own personal, stable values. Rather, our findings show that individual preferences are driven mainly by fit between espoused organizational values and role-based goals.

Contrary to our expectations (H2a and H3c), participants who assumed the role of potential employee did not prioritize organizations that espoused autonomy values. These findings may imply that the pursuit for autonomy at work may be affected by other factors. Our supplementary analysis of culture–organization fit has shown that Westerners expressed higher preference to work in organizations that espoused autonomy (vs. embeddedness) than East Asians. Autonomy at work may apply more to individuals in Western cultures where independence, individualism and expression of free choice are emphasized, than in East-Asian cultures, where interdependence, collectivism and adhering to social norms are emphasized.

Implications for Organizations

Our finding that individuals in different roles have different value preferences has important practical implication for organizational practices of impression management. Although research predominantly addressed organizational impression management during crisis situations, this research shows that organization's routine, everyday discourse—espousing values in annual reports—are also important for influencing the preferences of external constituents. Our findings suggest that organizations that need to influence different groups of external constituents may have to prioritize their goals. For example, if stock performance is given a higher priority, it may be a reasonable trade-off to emphasize mastery values to attract investors, even if it means that the organization will appear less attractive to potential employees. Or, organizations can espouse different values in materials addressed to different individuals in different roles. For example, financial reports are more likely to be read by investors, and organizations may emphasize mastery values more in these documents. Meanwhile, in materials that are more likely to be read by potential employees—such as employment brochures—the same organization may downplay mastery values and focus more on harmony values.

Limitations and Future Research

Our experimental design allowed us to explore causal relationships between roles, organizational values, and preferences, but also imposed some limitations. First, the research materials held constant (or did not specify) important information about the organizations represented in the annual reports, such as their size, structure, or industry. In reality, these variables may also affect individual preferences. Second, we used a within-subjects design, where all the participants were asked to assume all three roles and the roles were presented in a constant order. Replicating the results in a between-subjects design, in which participants in each condition are asked to assume only one role throughout the experiment, could strengthen the validity of the findings. Finally, we used a vignette experimental approach, asking participants to imagine themselves in different role conditions and make hypothetical decisions. In using this approach we drew on past research that found similar patterns of results in studies conducted in the field—among participants in real-life roles, and studies conducted in the lab—in which participants were asked to assume a fictitious role and responded to experimental materials mimicking real-life experiences (e.g., in research on consumers' behavior such as Barasch et al., 2018; Ein-Gar et al., 2012). Relying solely on vignettes is a notable limitation of the current research, however. Future research could strengthen the validity of the current research by investigating the effect of role on preferences for organizational values in real-life settings.

Our study raises new questions for future research. Whereas our study focuses on investor and potential employee roles, we also explored the role of consumers. Past research found that the role of consumer is associated with goals such as gaining utility from their purchases, or having their purchases reflect "environmental" or "sustainability" values (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Webb, Mohr, & Harris, 2008; Straughan & Roberts, 1999). This latter goal, in particular, is aligned with organizational values related to harmony, or values that advocate accepting the surrounding natural and social world. Consistently, our exploratory findings indicated that when assuming the role of a consumer, participants preferred organizations whose espoused values emphasized harmony (vs. mastery) and egalitarianism (vs. hierarchy). Future research could investigate additional roles such as vendors who make decisions about whether to provide materials and services to support an organization's operations, and regulators who make decisions about whether to sanction organizations for their practices. These roles are also associated with goals that may affect individual preferences for espoused organizational values.

Finally, the research literatures on individual–organizational relationships are highly segmented, with some researchers focusing on employees (typically industrial/organizational psychologists), others on consumers (typically marketing, consumer behavior, and decision-making researchers), and still others on investors (typically researchers in finance and behavioral economics). Our research suggests that much can be gained by combining these perspectives, allowing for meaningful comparison between roles. Indeed, employees, investors, and consumers, vendors, or regulators are not necessarily different individuals. For example, it is not uncommon for an individual to purchase a product made by an organization and also invest in the organization, thereby taking on the roles of consumer and investor at the same time. Or, an individual may own products in an organization they are working for, thereby taking on the roles of investor and employee at the same time. Interdisciplinary work that simultaneously draws on research from the different fields above can fruitfully examine how dynamic role changes can influence the individual-organization relationship.

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Appendix

Examples of Text Illustrating Different Organizational Values in the Mock Annual Reports

The productivity gains we have made are the result of the innovation and creativity of many of our employees. As part of the process of decentralizing our operations we have provided our employees with some individualism in locating and establishing ways to improve production and cut costs. This process has most successfully contributed to the improved operation of our various units around the world. (High autonomy)

The success of STU is not a success of a few people, but the success of the organization as a whole. The hard work of STU people, in all organizational units, has made it possible for STU to prosper. Traditionally, STU has taken upon itself to take care of the needs of its people, who are, in return, loyal and devoted to the organization and its goals. In this year, as in the past, this organizational solidarity has proved fruitful. (High embeddedness) The management and employees of ABC are dedicated to provide our consumers with the best possible product. ABC also recognizes and fulfills its commitment as a responsible [public] citizen of the world. Through both the ABC foundation and employee volunteerism, ABC contributes to philanthropic programs and organization of education and health. (High egalitarianism)

Another source of strength of STU relies on its clear and efficient structure. STU functions like a great machine which consists of many parts, each of which complies entirely with its tasks and obligations. We believe that top management is the key for our organizational success. The centralized organizational structure we created allows management to carry out the organizational missions in the best possible way. (High hierarchy) We at STU are committed to creating value for our share holders. Thus, we continue to straighten the company, so that it has the focus, resources, and capabilities to achieve our mission to be the most productive, best value-growth company in our industry. We have implemented economic value-based performance measurements and incentive compensation that we believe align the interests of management and shareholders. (High mastery)

The last few years have brought with them several developments in environmental protection, among them changes in laws, and in governmental regulations. STU embraces this new policy and is committed to finding safe and harmless ways to develop our products. As an organization, we strive to work harmoniously within our natural environment. (High harmony)

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