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## Current Empirical Research

# An empirical investigation of group acceptance using the Big Five personality domains

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### Abstract

In this paper, we examine task-based and relationship-based group acceptances of a newcomer from the perspective of personality theory. We used policy-capturing with an MBA student sample for our study. As predicted, our findings indicated that task-based group acceptance was affected by a newcomer's perceived conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, and extraversion, while relationship-based group acceptance was influenced by his/her perceived openness, neuroticism, and agreeableness. However, we failed to find support for the effect of perceived extraversion on relationship-based group acceptance. The implications for groups and suggestions for future research directions are discussed.

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**Keywords:** group acceptance; personality; newcomer

### Introduction

*Group acceptance* refers to a group's recognition of a newcomer as one of them whereby the group members value the individual for both his/her task ability and establishing interpersonal relationships (Joardar *et al.*, 2007). Joardar *et al.* (2007) examined the group acceptance of a foreign newcomer joining a local workgroup and argued that a newcomer will be able to gain group acceptance if the group perceives the newcomer as sincerely identifying with and getting acculturated to the local workgroup. Thus, the authors identified certain newcomer attributes such as a newcomer's socially attractive behaviors and contextual factors (e.g., cultural similarity between a foreign newcomer and local group; the newcomer's reputation of establishing valuable relationship with his/her host) as antecedents of group acceptance. In this paper, we build on prior research to examine the effect of a newcomer's personality on group acceptance. The study conducted by Joardar *et al.* (2007) looked at the special case where a newcomer is from a culture different from that of the remaining group. As such, it enhances the difference between the culturally homogeneous old group members (in-group) and the foreign newcomer (out-group) and necessitates acculturation by the newcomer to gain group acceptance. Consequently, they used Social Identity Theory and Acculturation theory to explain the underlying mechanisms.

It is important to have a thorough understanding of group acceptance in the context of foreign newcomers joining workgroups



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because the presence of new members from a different culture could lead to relationship conflict because of the resulting heterogeneity. Since relationship conflict affects interpersonal relationships negatively, it may have an adverse impact on within-group cohesion and increase turnover intentions (Jehn, 1995; De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Whiteoak, 2007). While we acknowledge that group acceptance is more difficult in a cross-cultural setting than in a culturally homogeneous environment, we feel the need to emphasize its significance in groups that are less culturally diverse as well. Any time there is a newcomer joining an existing group, it raises the question of whether the group members will be willing to accept the newcomer as one of them. A newcomer's identification with a group will cause the other members to feel comfortable with the newcomer, without experiencing any anxiety of rejection (Smith *et al.*, 1999). Prior research has suggested a possible relationship between group cohesiveness and performance (e.g. Mullen and Copper, 1994). So, if a newcomer identifies with a group, it will cause the members to be comfortable with him/her without fear of rejection and strengthen the cohesion in the newly defined group. This, in turn, will have an impact on group performance.

We argue that while identification with the group is necessary to facilitate group acceptance of a newcomer, it is not sufficient by itself. Since group acceptance enables complete integration of all its members, it is important to understand the various factors that influence it. Given that group acceptance is indicative of a group's collective cognitive and affective states, it is appropriate to draw from the psychology literature to help explain it. More specifically, we feel the need to examine this issue from the perspective of personality theory. Deep-level composition variables such as personality can have a significant effect on team outcomes (Bell, 2007; O'Neill and Kline, 2008) by influencing group members' attitude towards each other. Since group acceptance is an indicator of such attitudes, it is important to study these relationships. Hence, our primary research objective is *to obtain insight into the effect of a newcomer's personality on group acceptance of him/her*.

### Literature review

While the study of newcomer entry has been a topic of considerable interest to the academic

community and has been researched heavily (e.g., Ashford and Black, 1996; Cable and Judge, 1997; Riordan *et al.*, 2001), most previous research has focused on the individual's perspective by examining a newcomer's socialization and adjustment (Feldman, 1981; Chatman, 1991; Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Bauer and Green, 1998; Cable and Parsons, 2001). And yet, as noted by Joardar *et al.* (2007), for a team to function smoothly as a social entity, it is not only imperative that the newcomer be satisfied and well-adjusted in the group, but also that the group values the person and is willing to accept the newcomer. Drawing from Social Identity Theory to explain the underlying mechanism, Joardar *et al.* (2007) argued that a newcomer will gain easy acceptance into a group if the newcomer helps the group members to derive favorable comparison between in-group and out-group members, thereby maintaining a positive social identity (Abrams and Brown, 1989; Brown, 2000). Observable surface-level diversity emphasizes their differences and contributes to a newcomer's challenges in gaining group acceptance. There is also evidence that greater similarity in other attributes or characteristics of people results in greater attraction among them, at least initially (Milliken and Martins, 1996; Feldstein *et al.*, 2001). To extend this concept, we examine the effects of an important newcomer characteristic, personality, on his/her group acceptance.

As noted by Mount *et al.* (2005), personality research has received much attention in widely diverse fields of studies such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology. This paper draws from Cattell's (1965) definition of personality and accordingly, the term is used to refer to unique characteristics of people and the way in which these characteristics facilitate or hinder their adjustment under various conditions (Dessler, 1995). As noted by O'Neill and Kline (2008), the Big Five model has dominated personality studies in psychological research (e.g., Costa and McCrae, 1988; Digman, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000; Mount *et al.*, 2005; Ekehammar and Akrami, 2007). The five domains of this model that are aimed at depicting the various aspects of personality are as follows – Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Agreeableness (Costa and McCrae, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 2003).

Researchers have studied personality in the business setting for better workforce outcomes. In the interest of parsimony, we will focus on select studies that will help establish the context for the

current study. For instance, Judge *et al.* (1999) found significant effects of personality on intrinsic career success like job satisfaction as well as extrinsic career success such as income and occupational status. An interesting meta-analysis by Bono and Judge (2004) that explored the connection between personality and transformational leadership found some evidence of disposition underlying the success of transformational leadership. Prior literature found support for positive relationship between personality and job performance (Thoresen *et al.*, 2004). Ekehammar and Akrami (2007) examined the relationship between core personality and prejudice and found evidence of agreeableness and openness negatively affecting prejudice, thereby suggesting a link between personality and attitude.

It should be noted that evidence of existence of Big Five personality domains has been found across cultures, thereby implying that the domains are generalizable as well as stable across most cultures (Judge *et al.*, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002). For instance, internal traits of the Big Five were found to be more important in individualistic cultures while external ones were more significant in collectivistic cultures (Triandis and Suh, 2002). Caligiuri (2000) found that Big Five personality domains have significant effects on expatriates' desire to end their foreign assignment. While our paper does not focus on culture, these studies reaffirm the relevance of the Big Five personality domains across cultures and that the model is recognized as having significant impact on personality research in the business context (Lievens *et al.*, 2003; Mount *et al.*, 2005). Since this study examines personality in a work setting by looking at its impact on group acceptance, we feel justified in using the Big Five personality domains.

Workgroups have increasingly been gaining significance in organizational settings. Consequently, some recent studies focus on personality in the context of workgroups. For instance, Tan and Tan (2008) examined the role of personality on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and social loafing and concluded that using the personality variable of conscientiousness as a differentiating criterion will lead to selection of personnel who are more likely to engage in OCB and low tendency to engage in negative behaviors. O'Neill and Kline (2008) conducted a study to identify personality variables predicting team performance. They suggested the importance of both task-related and social activities for high team performance and

found that while there were no significant effects of extraversion and conscientiousness, neuroticism (referred to as emotional stability) affected task performance and agreeableness predicted cohesion (O'Neill and Kline, 2008). Kline and O'Grady (2009) studied the relationships between personality traits and the more context-specific predisposition to want to work in teams and found extraversion and agreeableness to be positively related to being a team player. We build on this stream of research and use personality theory to investigate group acceptance.

Although there is lack of sufficient research on group acceptance specifically, there is evidence of prior research making distinctions between task and relational aspects in group settings. For example, conflict literature distinguishes between conflicts arising from task-related issues and socio-emotional or relationship conflicts resulting from interpersonal disagreements (Jehn, 1995; De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Bell (2007) studied the effect of personality on team performance, in which teams were evaluated both in terms of task completion as well as navigation of team processes that reflected the relational aspects. These studies support the need to recognize both task and relational aspects of group phenomena. Accordingly, we conceive of the two components of group acceptance as task-based group acceptance and relationship-based group acceptance (Joardar *et al.*, 2007).

Drawing from Social Identity Theory and Acculturation Theory, Joardar *et al.* (2007) argued that a workgroup will value the addition of a new member from a foreign culture if the newcomer identifies with the group and gets acculturated to it. Consequently, the group will be willing to accept such an individual as one of them. It is quite possible for a person to be valued for his/her task ability without being considered valuable for establishing a relationship with him/her, thus facilitating task-based acceptance but not relationship-based acceptance. Alternatively, an individual may appear desirable for establishing a social relationship with him/her but not valued for his/her task contributions, thereby facilitating only relationship-based group acceptance. Hence, it is important to make the distinction between task-based and relationship-based group acceptance. We argue that a newcomer's personality will have different effects on such task-based and relationship-based group acceptances. We draw from the five-factor model of personality to explain the various proposed relationships.



## Hypotheses

In this paper, we attempt to contribute to the existing field of research on personality and attitude by examining the effect of a newcomer's personality as perceived by his/her workgroup members on the attitude of a workgroup towards him/her. A group's attitude towards a newcomer is considered to be favorable when the group values the individual as one of them and is willing to accept him/her into the group while it is unfavorable when the group shows unwillingness to accept the individual (Joardar *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, a group's attitude towards an individual may vary with regard to the individual's task and relationship-building ability. In the following sections, we analyze the different effects of the various personality domains on both task- and relationship-based group acceptances.

### Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness suggests an individual's active involvement in the process of planning, organizing, and performing any given task (Costa and McCrae, 1992). A conscientious person will, therefore, take his/her responsibility seriously and work hard and in an organized manner to achieve the task objectives. Such a person will be competent, dependable, dutiful, ordered, and achievement-oriented (Barrick and Mount, 1993; Costa and McCrae, 1995; McCrae and Costa, 2003).

Conscientious people are less likely to withhold effort and indulge in work behaviors that compromise performance (Tan and Tan, 2008). Hence, a group will perceive a conscientious individual as having the potential to make a valuable contribution to the team and be willing to identify with him/her for his/her task ability. So, perceived conscientiousness of a newcomer will facilitate task-based group acceptance. However, if a newcomer appears to lack this trait, he/she will communicate to the group that the individual is not likely to make valuable contribution to the group's task, even if he/she has the knowledge and the expertise required to do it. Consequently, the group will believe that the individual will not add value to the team's task, thus making it difficult for him/her to gain task-based group acceptance. But conscientiousness towards one's task does not reflect a person's ability to build relationships. Therefore, we argue that even if a newcomer is perceived to be conscientious, it will not have any direct effect on whether the group values establishing a relationship with such an individual. So, it is

not expected to affect relationship-based group acceptance. Hence, we hypothesize that

**H1a:** A newcomer's perceived conscientiousness will have a positive effect on the individual's task-based group acceptance.

**H1b:** A newcomer's perceived conscientiousness will have no effect on the individual's relationship-based group acceptance.

### Openness

Openness refers to an individual's curiosity towards and receptiveness of new ideas, experiences, and unconventional values (Costa and McCrae, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 2003). Individuals who show greater tendency towards openness are typically intellectual, artistically sensitive, exhibit greater flexibility of thoughts, and are more inclined towards the novel than closed people (Digman, 1990; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Barrick and Mount, 1993; McCrae and Costa, 2003).

A newcomer is likely to be unfamiliar with the norms and practices of an existing workgroup. Such unfamiliarity may cause the person to violate the group norms unintentionally, thereby making it difficult for the newcomer to gain acceptance into a workgroup. This difficulty may be further enhanced if the individual is perceived as being closed to any new experience. A newcomer's unwillingness to embrace new ideas of the group will communicate to the group that the individual does not identify with it. Lack of such openness will prevent the newcomer from putting any effort to get acculturated into the workgroup. If a newcomer is closed to anything new and refuses to learn the workgroup's practices, it will affect the individual's task ability negatively, thus having a damaging effect on his/her task-based group acceptance. However, if a newcomer is open to new experiences, he/she will learn the group's ways and adopt its practices more easily than someone who is not comfortable with unfamiliar things. This kind of acculturation to the group's ways may enable the individual to function effectively as a member of the group, thereby making him/her appear valuable to the group and facilitating task-based group acceptance. So, we hypothesize that

**H2a:** A newcomer's perceived openness will have a positive effect on task-based group acceptance.

We predict a similar effect of perception of newcomer's openness on relationship-based group

acceptance. If a newcomer is open to different ideas and practices, he/she is likely to recognize potential differences that will exist between him/her and the group's practices and norms without becoming judgmental. On the contrary, such a person will put in the effort to understand the workgroup's values and possibly adopt some of its ideas and practices. This will communicate to the workgroup members that the individual is trying to get acculturated and identify with them, making the group value relationship with such a person. As a result, the newcomer's perceived openness will have a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance. But if a newcomer appears to be closed to a workgroup's norms and practices because he/she is unfamiliar with it, the workgroup may interpret it as unwillingness to identify with them, thus perceiving the individual to pose threat to their group identity. Consequently, they will be reluctant to establish a relationship with him/her, making it difficult for the individual to gain relationship-based group acceptance. So, we hypothesize that

**H2b:** A newcomer's perceived openness will have a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance.

### Neuroticism

Neuroticism, also referred to as negative emotionality (e.g. Harkness *et al.*, 1995), reflects an individual's tendency to experience negative emotions and disturbing thoughts, thereby affecting emotional stability of a person (Digman, 1990; Costa and McCrae, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 2003). Individuals scoring high on neuroticism are likely to experience anxiety while those scoring low tend to have a relatively calm temperament and are able to cope with stressful situations without getting upset.

We argue that group acceptance will be negatively affected by perceived neuroticism of a newcomer. A neurotic personality is associated with anxiety, nervousness, fear, excitability, etc. (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Because of the implied lack of emotional stability, others will expect it to be difficult for a seemingly neurotic person to concentrate on his/her task and get it done efficiently. As a result, such an individual will not be perceived as valuable for achieving the group's task objectives, thereby making it difficult for him/her to gain task-based group acceptance. But if a newcomer is perceived to be low on neuroticism, the group will expect him/her as having a calm and clear thinking mind, thus expecting the individual to be able to

make valuable contributions to the team's task. Hence, we hypothesize that

**H3a:** A newcomer's perceived neuroticism will have a negative effect on task-based group acceptance.

We predict that not only will a newcomer's perceived neuroticism have an inverse relationship with task-based group acceptance, but also with relationship-based group acceptance. If an individual displays negative emotions, then the group will be unwilling to build a relationship and accept an individual they think is neurotic as one of them, thus making it difficult for the newcomer to gain relationship-based group acceptance. However, if the newcomer scores low on perceived neuroticism, the group will value a relationship with such a person, thereby facilitating relationship-based group acceptance. So, we hypothesize that

**H3b:** A newcomer's perceived neuroticism will have a negative effect on relationship-based group acceptance.

### Extraversion

Extraversion refers to an individual's preference for social interactions (McCrae and Costa, 2003). Extraverts tend to be active, forceful, determined, enthusiastic, and to have a generally cheerful disposition (Costa and McCrae, 1992).

We argue that perceived extraversion due to a person's assertiveness will facilitate his/her group acceptance. In particular, it will have a positive effect on task-based group acceptance. An assertive newcomer will be perceived as having confidence in his/her abilities. This will cause the group members also to respond by valuing the newcomer's task abilities. Group members may feel that an assertive and determined person is more likely to get work done competently. Consequently, it will have a positive effect on his/her task-based group acceptance. Moreover, since extraversion suggests a preference for positive social interactions, we argue that group members will value building relationship with a newcomer who does not appear to be afraid of asserting himself/herself to others. Hence, it will also have a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance. So, we hypothesize that

**H4a:** A newcomer's perceived extraversion will have a positive effect on task-based group acceptance.

**H4b:** A newcomer's perceived extraversion will have a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance.

### Agreeableness

Agreeableness is the fifth domain of personality that reflects a selfless concern for others and trusting sentiments (McCrae and Costa, 2003). It encompasses characteristics like altruism, nurturance, tolerance, gentle nature, etc. (Digman, 1990; Costa and McCrae, 1992). We argue that agreeableness will endear people scoring high on this domain to a group, thus facilitating their acceptance into the group.

An agreeable person will express concern for others, be compassionate and willing to lend a helping hand (Costa and McCrae, 1992, 1995). These tendencies in a person will cause others to value relationship with him/her, thereby having a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance. However, if an individual does not appear to care for others, then the resulting perceived indifference will make that person less appealing to others. As a result, it is unlikely that the group will value relationship with such a person. Consequently, it will be difficult for a person low on perceived agreeableness to gain relationship-based group acceptance. As noted by Costa and McCrae (1992), this personality trait reflects a person's interpersonal tendencies. It does not give any indication of how others are likely to perceive the individual's task ability and hence, is not expected

to affect task-based group acceptance. So, the next hypothesis is stated as

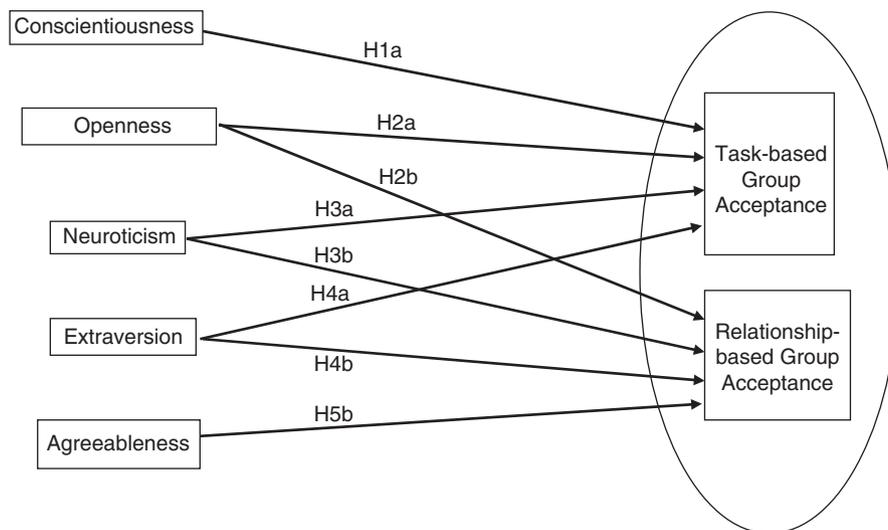
**H5a:** A newcomer's perceived agreeableness will have no effect on the individual's task-based group acceptance.

**H5b:** A newcomer's perceived agreeableness will have a positive effect on the individual's relationship-based group acceptance.

Figure 1 presents the complete model of group acceptance.

### Method

In this study, we examined the relative importance of a group's perception of a newcomer's personality traits on his/her group acceptance using policy-capturing. Policy-capturing is a regression-based methodology that asks respondents to indicate their decisions in response to a series of scenarios presented to them (Sanchez and Levine, 1989; York, 1989; Judge and Bretz, 1992; Graham and Cable, 2001; Aiman-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). It is an appropriate technique for studying a group's attitude towards an individual since it is not susceptible to social desirability effects (Madden, 1981; Webster and Trevino, 1995). Consistent with Joardar *et al.* (2007), we asked groups of respondents to make decisions for each scenario to capture the group decisions rather than aggregate the individual responses. As noted by Weick and Roberts (1993), although individuals



**Figure 1** The model of group acceptance.

contribute to collective mind, the latter is distinct from individual minds. In these types of group studies, data obtained at the group level are more appropriate than at the individual level (O'Neill and Kline, 2008). So, during the administration of the instruments, groups were specifically instructed to make decisions regarding each hypothetical newcomer together. In the following sections, we discuss our sampling, profile development, procedure for data collection, and analysis.

**Sample**

The data for our study were collected from graduate business students of a southern research university in the US. These types of student samples have been used in prior research to study teams in a controlled environment (e.g., O'Neill and Kline, 2008; Kline and O'Grady, 2009). These students were already working in permanent groups on class projects. Thus, we used real groups rather than create artificial groups for the purpose of the study. A total of 36 students, representing 12 groups, participated in this study. Since policy-capturing involves responses to a series of profiles by the subjects that increase the number of data-points for analysis, relatively smaller numbers of respondents can still yield a sufficiently large number of data-points for the analysis. Of the respondents, 36.1% were females; 77.8% were Hispanic, while the remaining were White (16.7%) and Asian (5.5%); 88.9% were in the age group of 21–35 years while the remaining were older.

**Research design**

We used Costa and McCrae's (1992) five personality domains in this study. Thus, cue variables were created to reflect a hypothetical newcomer's personality on each of these domains. Our cues were derived from the conceptualization of each of the personality domains as described below (Costa and McCrae, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 2003). While previous research proposed multiple facets of each domain, having cues to manipulate every single facet at two different levels and then combining

them with each other to have a complete set of profiles would have resulted in a very large number of profiles ( $2^{30}=1,073,741,824$ ). To control for the number of profiles, we chose one facet to represent each personality domain. The criteria that we used for selecting the facets as cues were – (1) they should be able to capture the essence of the respective personality domains, and (2) they should be the most relevant in the work context. Hence, the following cues were used to represent the personality domains – dutiful (conscientiousness), open to new ideas (openness), anxious (neuroticism), assertiveness (extraversion), and helping others (agreeableness). We decided to use assertiveness as a cue for extraversion instead of the other facets because it indicates how people interact with one another (Mount *et al.*, 2005; Bell, 2007; O'Neill and Kline, 2008) and this facet is especially relevant in a work setting. But at the same time, it clearly distinguishes extraversion from the other domains. Consistent with prior research on policy-capturing, we manipulated the cues at high and low levels (Sanchez and Levine, 1989; York, 1989; Judge and Bretz, 1992; Graham and Cable, 2001; Aiman-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002; Joardar *et al.*, 2007). We conducted a pre-test to check whether the cues reflected the appropriate personality domain and the desired manipulation was achieved or not. Our result indicated that the high and low manipulations of the various cues were significant at the 0.05 level of significance (Table 1), thus indicating that the desired manipulations were achieved.

Once the cues were developed, all the profiles were combined with each other at the two levels to obtain the various cue combinations (see example under dependent variable measure below). This yielded a total number of  $2^5(=32)$  profiles. One of the limitations of policy-capturing studies is the large number of scenarios involved that can cause fatigue in respondents, resulting in poor quality data and reduced response rate. To address this problem, we used incomplete block designs (Graham and Cable, 2001). We randomly split the

**Table 1** Manipulation check

Personality cues	High mean	Low mean	Mean difference (Significance)
Conscientiousness	4.10	2.85	1.25 (0.031)
Openness	5.85	1.75	4.10 (0.000)
Neuroticism	5.05	2.65	2.40 (0.000)
Extraversion	4.60	2.65	1.95 (0.002)
Agreeableness	4.05	2.40	1.65 (0.006)

scenarios into two halves. Then we administered one set of scenarios to half the respondents and the other set to the remaining respondents. This design enabled the total universe of scenarios to be considered without overwhelming the respondents and is consistent with prior research on group acceptance (Joardar *et al.*, 2007). Thus, while each group had to respond to only 16 profiles, all the combinations of scenarios were included in the study.

**Dependent variable measure.** The scale developed by Joardar *et al.* (2007) was used to operationalize the dependent variable. Specifically, group acceptance was measured using a 10-item scale – five for task-based and the remaining for relationship-based group acceptance. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to see if a correlated two-factor model provided a significantly better fit than a single factor model (Richard *et al.*, 2004). Our result showed that this was indeed so (GFI=0.45 and CFI=0.77 for one-factor model; GFI=0.86 and CFI=0.97 for correlated two-factor model). This provides evidence supporting the predicted two-dimensional model of group acceptance.

An example of a profile is as follows:

Mr. X is not a very dutiful person.  
He is open to new ideas.  
He does not get anxious easily.  
He does not come across as being assertive.  
He goes out of his way to help others.

Each group of respondents was provided with a set of profiles like the one above. The description of Mr. X in the profile was immediately followed by a scale. In the scale, the group was asked to focus on Mr. X's ability to contribute to the group task or think about their relationship with Mr. X outside the sphere of work and rate him on task-based and relationship-based group acceptances, respectively. It was very important to ensure that the responses reflected the collective decisions of the groups rather than a simple aggregate of individuals' decisions. Researchers present at the site also monitored the process to ensure that group decisions were actually being made.

We considered the possibility that a diverse group may form an attitude towards a newcomer that is significantly different from that of a relatively more homogeneous group. Given this, we controlled for diversity. There was a random distribution of men and women in the groups. Although we used real groups, these groups typically did not last more

than a few months (i.e., the duration of a semester). We argue that the participants are more likely to be conscious of their easily identifiable surface-level diversity in this time frame rather than their deep-level diversity (Harrison *et al.*, 1998). So, we controlled for surface-level diversity (like variation in age and gender) in which there was significant spread within the groups, as well as ethnic diversity. This was computed by the formula  $\sqrt{1/n \sum_{j=1}^n (S_i - S_j)^2}$  where  $S_i$  represents the target variable (i.e., age, gender or ethnicity) of the  $i$ th member and  $S_j$  represents the corresponding variable of the  $j$ th group member and  $n$  represents the group size (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1989; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui *et al.*, 1992).

The technique of policy-capturing typically involves the following two-step analysis (Sanchez and Levine, 1989; York, 1989; Judge and Bretz, 1992; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). First, within-subjects regression is performed. Then, between-subjects analysis is conducted. Following this approach, since we collected data at the group level, we ran *within-group* regressions to capture the judgment policies of the groups. Then, we conducted *between-group* regression to estimate the effect of the personality factors on group acceptance across the groups. Since there were 12 groups judging 16 profiles each, it yielded a total of 192 observations.

## Results

We report the correlation matrix of the between-subjects variables in Table 2. The result indicates that task-based group acceptance had a strong correlation with all the domains of personality. Relationship-based group acceptance had strong correlations with all, except extraversion domain of personality.

### Within-group regression

We conducted regression across the various profiles of each group in order to determine how the groups varied in their acceptance decisions. The within-group regression results for the groups are presented in Table 3. We found that the  $R^2$  for task-based group acceptance ranged from 0.64 to 0.95 and that of relationship-based group acceptance ranged from 0.30 to 0.97. Thus, there appeared to be considerable variation in how the within-group variables, that is, the personality domains, predicted group acceptance, particularly relationship-based group acceptance, in each group (Judge and Bretz, 1992). The average squared multiple

**Table 2** Between-subjects correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender distribution	—									
2. Age distribution	-0.585** (0.000)	—								
3. Ethnic distribution	0.395** (0.000)	-0.273** (0.000)	—							
4. Conscientiousness	0.007 (0.919)	0.018 (0.808)	0.019 (0.797)	—						
5. Openness	-0.052 (0.477)	0.041 (0.570)	-0.033 (0.654)	-0.022 (0.765)	—					
6. Neuroticism	-0.133 (0.067)	0.079 (0.278)	-0.154* (0.033)	-0.051 (0.478)	0.053 (0.461)	—				
7. Extraversion	-0.066 (0.361)	0.042 (0.567)	-0.070 (0.336)	0.011 (0.879)	-0.051 (0.484)	-0.064 (0.381)	—			
8. Agreeableness	-0.140 (0.053)	0.083 (0.250)	-0.117 (0.107)	-0.009 (0.898)	-0.113 (0.120)	0.019 (0.791)	-0.002 (0.982)	—		
9. Task-based acceptance	-0.025 (0.733)	-0.005 (0.950)	-0.087 (0.230)	0.512** (0.000)	0.360** (0.000)	-0.155* (0.032)	0.152* (0.035)	0.296** (0.000)	—	
10. Relationship-based acceptance	-0.125 (0.085)	0.055 (0.451)	-0.187** (0.009)	0.230** (0.001)	0.383** (0.000)	-0.191** (0.008)	0.007 (0.920)	0.397** (0.000)	0.806** (0.000)	—

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

**Table 3** Within-group regression result

Group	Task-based group acceptance					Relationship-based group acceptance				
	C	O	N	E	A	C	O	N	E	A
1	4.35** (0.001)	1.90* (0.044)	1.04 (0.201)	3.09* (0.010)	2.18* (0.037)	-1.18 (0.106)	1.40 (0.059)	0.47 (0.321)	1.42 (0.076)	5.43** (0.000)
2	6.44** (0.000)	2.03** (0.004)	-1.12 (0.061)	2.68** (0.000)	1.54* (0.016)	1.10* (0.030)	3.50** (0.000)	-2.18** (0.001)	1.59** (0.005)	7.07** (0.000)
3	2.52* (0.035)	1.53 (0.121)	-2.95* (0.026)	3.20* (0.012)	4.73** (0.001)	2.24 (0.068)	2.89* (0.030)	-3.49* (0.020)	1.88 (0.096)	3.71* (0.011)
4	5.06** (0.001)	3.30* (0.012)	-0.76 (0.285)	1.15 (0.192)	3.06* (0.014)	3.81** (0.006)	2.83* (0.021)	-0.378 (0.386)	0.071 (0.478)	3.28** (0.009)
5	5.62** (0.000)	3.08** (0.001)	-2.77** (0.005)	-3.15** (0.001)	2.19* (0.011)	3.98** (0.000)	3.17** (0.003)	-2.99** (0.006)	-4.37** (0.000)	2.86** (0.005)
6	4.42* (0.021)	6.54** (0.002)	-2.50 (0.122)	3.60* (0.038)	4.48* (0.014)	1.86 (0.153)	8.49** (0.000)	-4.08* (0.025)	1.70 (0.164)	4.33* (0.010)
7	5.85** (0.003)	3.08* (0.044)	0.62 (0.375)	1.36 (0.233)	3.79* (0.023)	2.97 (0.083)	0.81 (0.340)	-0.86 (0.353)	0.86 (0.345)	1.83 (0.184)
8	3.13** (0.001)	2.15** (0.007)	-0.17 (0.420)	2.55** (0.005)	0.472 (0.268)	1.58* (0.024)	1.92** (0.008)	-0.046 (0.477)	0.905 (0.126)	2.13** (0.005)
9	4.13** (0.000)	1.90** (0.003)	-4.56** (0.000)	-0.64 (0.158)	4.28** (0.000)	1.53* (0.014)	3.01** (0.000)	-3.45** (0.000)	0.09 (0.444)	3.48** (0.000)
10	5.49** (0.000)	7.56** (0.000)	-0.16 (0.443)	0.41 (0.351)	5.54** (0.000)	4.08 (0.056)	11.33** (0.000)	-1.03 (0.344)	-1.25 (0.301)	8.22** (0.002)
11	4.30** (0.000)	4.10** (0.000)	-1.36 (0.072)	-1.10 (0.103)	2.64** (0.002)	3.69** (0.007)	4.44** (0.002)	-0.80 (0.282)	-2.75* (0.033)	2.95* (0.018)
12	3.84** (0.002)	5.74** (0.000)	-1.73 (0.084)	1.19 (0.165)	2.19** (0.007)	3.73** (0.001)	4.68** (0.000)	-1.73 (0.063)	2.02* (0.040)	3.93** (0.000)

(C=Conscientiousness; O=Openness; N=Neuroticism; E=Extraversion; A=Agreeableness).

One-tailed significance.

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01.

correlations were 0.83 and 0.77 while the standard deviations were 0.09 and 0.17 for task-based and relationship-based group acceptances, respectively.

The percentage coefficients that were statistically significant at  $P < 0.05$  are as follows – (1) for task-based group acceptance, conscientiousness was significant in all groups, openness in 91.6% groups, neuroticism in 25% groups, extraversion in 50% groups, and agreeableness in 91.6% of the groups; and (2) for relationship-based group acceptance, conscientiousness was significant in 58.3% groups, openness in 83.3% groups, neuroticism in 41.7% groups, extraversion in 33.3% groups, and agreeableness in 91.6% of the groups.

We found hypotheses H1a, H2a, H2b, and H5b to be supported for the majority of the groups (over 80%). The other hypotheses showed more mixed results. H1b, H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, and H5a were supported in only 41.7, 25, 41.7, 50, 33.3, and 8.3% of groups, respectively. In one of the groups (Group 5) however, the effects of extraversion on both task-based and relationship-based group acceptances were significant, but in the opposite direction to what was hypothesized.

**Between-group regression**

Between-group factors included between-group variables like variation in gender, age and ethnicity within groups, the cue manipulations of personality domains, and group acceptance decisions, thereby yielding a total of 192 data points. Tables 4a and 4b report the results of the regression analyses for task-based and relationship-based group acceptances respectively, after controlling for the effects of variation in age, gender, and ethnicity.

We found that a perception of conscientiousness had a significant positive effect on task-based group acceptance ( $\beta=4.30$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ), thus obtaining strong support for *Hypothesis 1a*. Additionally, it had a strong positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance ( $\beta=2.07$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ). As a result, *Hypothesis 1b*, which predicted no effect of perceived conscientiousness on relationship-based group acceptance, was *not supported*. Perceived openness was found to have strong positive effects on task-based and relationship-based group acceptances ( $\beta=3.56$ ;  $P < 0.001$  and  $\beta=3.91$ ;  $P < 0.001$  respectively), thus providing *support* for both *Hypotheses 2a and 2b*. Perceived neuroticism had significant negative effects on both task-based and relationship-based group acceptances ( $\beta=-1.26$ ;  $P < 0.005$  and  $\beta=-2.09$ ;  $P < 0.001$  respectively).

**Table 4a** Regression result for task-based group acceptance

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Diversity in age	-0.05 (0.348)	-0.08 (0.157)
Diversity in gender	-0.09 (0.464)	0.33 (0.312)
Diversity in ethnicity	-1.27 (0.120)	-1.13 (0.060)
Conscientiousness		4.30** (0.000)
Openness		3.56** (0.000)
Neuroticism		-1.26* (0.001)
Extraversion		1.31** (0.000)
Agreeableness		2.93** (0.000)
F	0.536	31.171
R <sup>2</sup>	0.008	0.577
$\Delta R^2$		0.568
F for $\Delta R^2$		49.139

One-tailed tests.  
N=192 for all models.  
\* $P < 0.05$ ; \*\* $P < 0.001$ .

**Table 4b** Regression result for relationship-based group acceptance

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Diversity in age	-0.05 (0.333)	-0.07 (0.209)
Diversity in gender	-0.93 (0.189)	-0.48 (0.275)
Diversity in ethnicity	-2.40 (0.017)	-2.34 (0.003)
Conscientiousness		2.07** (0.003)
Openness		3.91** (0.000)
Neuroticism		-2.09** (0.000)
Extraversion		0.01 (0.491)
Agreeableness		3.83** (0.000)
F	2.55	20.65
R <sup>2</sup>	0.039	0.474
$\Delta R^2$		0.435
F for $\Delta R^2$		30.820

One-tailed tests.  
N=192 for all models.  
\*\* $P < 0.001$ .

Consequently, we found *Hypotheses 3a and 3b* to be supported as well. Perceived extraversion had a significant positive effect on task-based group acceptance ( $\beta=1.31$ ;  $P<0.001$ ). As a result, *Hypothesis 4a* was supported. However, perceived extraversion was not found to have a significant effect on relationship-based group acceptance ( $\beta=0.01$ ; NS). Consequently, *Hypothesis 4b*, which predicted that perceived extraversion will have a positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance, was not supported. Moreover, agreeableness had a strong positive effect on task-based group acceptance ( $\beta=2.93$ ;  $P<0.001$ ), thereby indicating that *Hypothesis 5a*, which stated that agreeableness will not have a direct effect on task-based group acceptance, was not supported. We also found support for *Hypothesis 5b* since perceived agreeableness had a strong positive effect on relationship-based group acceptance ( $\beta=3.83$ ;  $P<0.001$ ). In summary, seven (*Hypotheses 1a, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, and 5b*) of the 10 hypotheses were found to be supported while three of them (*Hypotheses 1b, 4b, and 5a*) were not supported.

### Discussion

In this paper, we examined the effects of a newcomer's perceived personality on the attitude of a group that he/she joins using the Big Five personality domains. We proposed that a group's acceptance of a newcomer will be affected by the group's perception of the individual's conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness. We found that as predicted, perception of conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion positively affected task-based group acceptance, openness and agreeableness had positive effects on relationship-based group acceptance, while neuroticism had negative impacts on both task- and relationship-based group acceptances. However, interestingly enough, the results did not indicate a significant effect of perceived extraversion on relationship-based group acceptance.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that use of assertiveness as a cue for extraversion led to this unexpected result. Some groups may not want to establish a relationship with people they perceive as being assertive. We used this cue to capture extraversion in our study for the reasons stated earlier. However, future studies should investigate the effect of extraversion on group acceptance by operationalizing it differently.

Contrary to expectation, we found that both task-based and relationship-based group acceptances were highly affected by perceived agreeableness and conscientiousness respectively. A straightforward

and trusting person may be perceived as a valuable group member for getting the job done, thus explaining the positive effect of agreeableness on task-based group acceptance. The significant positive effect of perceived conscientiousness on relationship-based group acceptance is a little more difficult to explain. However, this could be attributed to the workgroup setting, which was the context in which the study was conducted. It could be that the members wanted to identify with conscientious people in the work setting and hence, wanted to establish relationships with such a person. However, future studies investigating such unexpected relationships need to be conducted. It should be noted that while the paper examined the effect of perceived newcomer personality on group acceptance, it was operationalized by using cues for each of the personality domains and examining their impact on group acceptance.

O'Neill and Kline (2008) noted that there are still many questions regarding the impact of personality factors on team outcomes. Our paper attempted to contribute to this body of literature by investigating how an individual's personality can potentially affect his/her group acceptance. Joardar *et al.* (2007) introduced the concept of group acceptance of a foreign newcomer. They found that certain newcomer attributes as well as contextual factors could facilitate group acceptance of a foreign newcomer, provided a group perceived a newcomer to be identifying with and getting acculturated to the workgroup. Lewis *et al.* (2007) noted the lack of sufficient understanding as to how groups can take advantage of a newcomer's knowledge to improve their performance. In order to do so, they have to first accept the individual as one of the group members. In this paper, we built on and contributed to the research on group acceptance by taking a different perspective using the personality theory. Often, an individual's personality causes others to respond favorably or unfavorably to them. We tried to examine the effects of personality traits on group acceptance in a systematic manner, thereby addressing a gap in the body of literature integrating personality and group phenomena. In the process of doing so, the paper made another important contribution, that is, proposed how the effects of perceived personality on task-based and relationship-based group acceptances differ.

The entry of a newcomer required redefinition of the group boundary whereby the newcomer went



through a transition phase from being an out-group to an in-group member. As argued earlier, people perceived as demonstrating desirable personality characteristics would be valued by their group members. Such favorable perceptions of their group members would help in positive in-group evaluations. Since people want to be identified with others so that it favored in-group evaluation (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Hogg and Terry, 2000), the attitude of group members towards a newcomer becomes particularly relevant in determining whether they would identify with him/her or not. So, we focused on group acceptance of a newcomer in this paper. However, it has broader implications for any group member since personality can potentially determine the attitude of the group towards the rest of the group members as well.

This paper also has practical implications. It attempted to explain how the perceived personality of an individual would affect his/her acceptance into an existing group. This has implications for the selection of a new group member. It is very important that a chosen candidate was not only technically competent at the task, but also that his/her group members valued him/her and wanted to establish relationships with that person in order for the group to function effectively.

In this paper, we took a static perspective towards group acceptance and examined the combined effects of a newcomer's perceived personality on the *initial* group acceptance of the newcomer. In doing so, we created a boundary condition that did not account for changes in group acceptance over time. Moreover, we did not account for the effects of group's task type (technical vs managerial) or group size. Although they could potentially affect group acceptance, they were beyond the scope of our paper. Future extensions of this study should investigate the relative effects of personality on acceptance, when moderated by these factors.

A limitation of our research design was the use of a student sample in an artificial setting to evaluate hypothetical individuals. While this enabled us to control for various factors mentioned earlier, it underplayed the importance of certain potential factors like group tenure at the time of a newcomer's entry and variation in perception of group members towards newcomer. However, the groups used were real groups who had been working together for a certain time period. Thus, although the newcomer was hypothetical, the groups had

established their norms and expectations by the time of the study. Moreover, this helped us control the perception of the newcomer's personality. Besides, such student samples have been used to examine the effect of personality on workgroup phenomena by past researchers as well (e.g. O'Neill and Kline, 2008; Kline and O'Grady, 2009). Still, it raised questions regarding the generalizability of the findings. Future studies using field data need to be conducted. While the policy-capturing technique has advantages like allowing greater control on the sample and various factors affecting the study, this type of method implied that manipulated cues reflect various personality domains instead of actually measuring them. This limitation should also be addressed in future studies in field settings in which personality is actually measured.

Another limitation pertained to the level of simplicity of the profiles. The cues did not reflect the level of details that would be desirable for understanding a person's personality and this is a constraint of using policy-capturing. But since there were no actual newcomers to be evaluated, this type of cues allowed more profiles of hypothetical newcomers to be presented. However, future studies need to be designed so as to be able to capture some of the complexities of personality.

Another question that needed to be investigated is whether either of the group acceptance dimensions had temporal precedence over the other. For instance, if a group realized the value of a newcomer's task ability, would it consequently lead to the members valuing relationship with the newcomer as well? While this was beyond the scope of this paper, future research should try to answer this question.

To summarize, we proposed that the perceived personality of an individual could affect a group's attitude towards him/her. It provided some important insights into the phenomenon of group acceptance. Intuitively, it seemed likely that group acceptance would affect team performance, thereby signifying the importance of the construct. It would be interesting to verify if group acceptance really had the expected effect on performance in subsequent research.

### Note

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that although within-group analysis indicated mixed results for some of the hypotheses (H1b, H3a, H3b, H4a, H4b, and H5a), the conclusion was much clearer for the between-group regression. Such wide variation in the results is



not uncommon for within-group regressions (e.g., Bretz and Judge, 1994; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002) since there can be considerable differences in how each subject operates. Moreover, the regression was

conducted using a relatively small data set (16 profiles) in the within-group analysis. But the between-group regression pooled the data, and hence, yields comparatively stable results.

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