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Introduction to Current Empirical Research

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Three path-breaking articles make up the Current Empirical Research section in this volume, articles that employ rigorous empirical methods to examine issues critical to organizational behavior. The first, by Joardar and Matthews, explores the notion of group acceptance of newcomers, and how a newcomer's perceived personality (as measured by the Big Five dimensions) affects whether the group will accept a newcomer. Studies of groups and teams have flourished in organizational behavior, yet much of the complexity of how group members become part of in- versus out-groups has yet to be explored. This study begins that exploration by focusing on the part newcomer personality may play in determining group acceptance. Joardar and Matthews find that newcomers who are thought to be higher in certain traits, such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, are more likely to receive task-based and relationship-based group acceptance, while those perceived to be higher in neuroticism receive less acceptance. Surprisingly, newcomer extraversion was related to task-based, but not relationship-based, acceptance, contrary to expectations. The study uses an innovative "policy capturing" approach, wherein MBA respondents are presented with a range of profiles about a potential group member, and judge the degree to which they would accept this hypothetical person into their existing group. This method allows a wider variety of personality dimensions to be tested in different combinations, an interesting approach to gaining insights into the area of newcomer socialization.

The Clerkin and Lee article is a meticulously designed and executed piece of research to examine the nature of three different approaches in initial contacts between executives and search firms, and their impact on career success. The key finding is not necessarily surprising: the authors find that search firm initiated contact is predictive of career success. But this finding is based on a rigorous empirical approach that contrasted the importance of search firm initiated contacts against two other types of initial contacts, executive initiated and mutual contacts between executives and search firms. The study design is consistent with the expected rigor of academic research (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003) and provides a first empirical foundation in determining how search firm initiation contact contrasts to other types of contacts, and how this matters in career growth. This study contributes research rigor to an area where publications are largely focused on practice and marketing needs (Finlay and Coverdill, 2002), and at

the same time, extends the argument that search firms can be sponsors of career success (Judge *et al.*, 1995). Readers will find the scale development and analyses a refreshing reminder of the importance of academic rigor in a relatively unexplored business area.

The Kirkhaug article makes the counterintuitive prediction that formal working conditions, such as rules and routines, will contribute to employees attributing charisma to their leaders, above and beyond the perceived effects of "softer" aspects, such as perceived organizational and group belonging. The notion that Kirkhaug explores is that employees, especially in professional, relatively autonomous environments, will value the structure provided by rules and routines and appreciate leaders who are strong in providing these structural boundaries. A message to leaders seeking to instill charisma in your followers: Pay as much attention to providing rules and routines as you do to being persuasive and inspirational. A further intriguing aspect of this article is that Kirkhaug uses members of the Norwegian clergy as respondents, arguing that perceptions of charisma are especially important in this environment. Whether or not you agree that the clergy are a ripe setting for charismatic leaders, you'll be intrigued by Kirkhaug's finding (using confirmatory factor analysis and regression models) that charisma may be as much about the leader's creation of appropriate working conditions as it is about the personal traits or gifts of the leader.

Many thanks to Alvin Hwang who served as Action Editor on the Clerkin and Lee article.

For these and other insights, read on!

References

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