The Effects of Personality Dissimilarity on Mission Readiness

DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Dr. Richard Oliver Hope Human Relations Research Center
Directed by Dr. Daniel P. McDonald, Executive Director
366 Tuskegee Airmen Drive Patrick AFB, FL 32925
321-494-2747

Prepared by
Lawrence A. Witt, Ph.D., Office of Naval Research Contractor
Summer Research Fellow

Amanda Palmer, University of Houston

Daniel P. McDonald, Ph.D., Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute

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Abstract

Emotional exhaustion and organizational commitment are factors that have an impact on mission readiness. In a study of 8,906 uniformed Department of Defense (DOD) personnel, the authors proposed and tested a conditional process model that describes a psychological process in which (a) personality dissimilarity in terms of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability affects organizational commitment indirectly through emotional exhaustion, and (b) a favorable unit diversity climate—an aspect of the command climate—reduce s the negative impact of personality dissimilarity on mission readiness. Hence, it (a) describes *how* personality dissimilarity affects emotional exhaustion and organizational commitment, and (b) identifies a contextual factor affected by unit leadership that determines for *whom* this process is most important. These results point to the importance of creating and sustaining a strong and favorable diversity climate in the work unit and therefore suggest opportunities for the development of leaders in the DOD.

The Effects of Personality Dissimilarity on Mission Readiness

Diversity trainers typically focus on demographic factors (Loden, 1996). However, as reflected in the bestseller *Working With You is Killing Me* (Crowley & Elster, 2006), personality dissimilarity, like demographic dissimilarity, has a potential for being a source of coworker angst (Perry, Dubin, & Witt, 2010). Organizational scientists are increasingly attending to the effect of coworker characteristics—surface-level (i.e., easily observable demographics) and deep-level (e.g., personality and values)—on interpersonal interactions in the workplace (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Emerging literature suggests that deep-level dissimilarity has a greater impact on work-related outcomes than surface-level dissimilarity (Guillaume, Brodbeck, & Riketta, 2012). In the Department of Defense (DOD), effective interpersonal relationships are critical to mission readiness.

In line with intergroup anxiety theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) and work by Perry et al. (2010), we argue that personality dissimilarity (i.e., being different from the prevailing personality predispositions in the work unit) affects well-being. Such dissimilarity likely creates uncertainty and insecurity from a sense of not belonging or not fitting in. With the present study, we aimed to inform theory and leadership practice by proposing and testing a psychological process in which (a) personality dissimilarity yields emotional exhaustion and (b) personnel react to the emotional exhaustion with less loyalty to the organization (i.e., organizational commitment). Furthermore, we argue that an aspect of the command climate—diversity climate—acts to diminish the negative impact of personality dissimilarity. That is, when personnel see differences acting as a source of conflict and unit members treated with disrespect, personality dissimilarity likely matters a lot. In contrast, when personnel see differences valued and unit members treated with respect, personality dissimilarity likely matters very little. Hence,

we suggest that diversity climate is a boundary condition of the psychological process of personality dissimilarity affecting organizational commitment through emotional exhaustion.

Mission Readiness

Organizational commitment is a job-related attitude with both cognitive and affective components that reflects (a) the involvement that an individual has with the organization and (b) the individual's acceptance of the organization's core values (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Steers, 1977). Meta-analytic studies indicate that commitment predicts multiple aspects of withdrawal behavior and performance (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Riketta, 2002). Hence, we suggest that commitment is an element of mission readiness.

Antecedents of organizational commitment include both individual and situational characteristics (Meyer et al., 2002). An individual-level characteristic that is affected by the environment, emotional exhaustion is a strong predictor of commitment (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Kemp, Kopp, & Kemp, 2013; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). One of the three dimensions of job burnout, emotional exhaustion refers to a lack of energy and feeling unable to accomplish tasks (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Of the three dimensions, emotional exhaustion has received the most attention because of its association with work-related outcomes, such as performance, job attitudes, and withdrawal (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Halbesleben, 2010; Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Emotional exhaustion is critical for mission readiness among DOD personnel (Ouma, Chappelle, & Salinas, 2011). Scholars have explained the effects of emotional exhaustion on organizational commitment in terms of conservation of resources (COR; Hobfoll, 1988) and social exchange theories (Blau, 1964).

Advocates of COR theory (e.g., Wright & Hobfoll, 2004) suggest that (a) individuals possess a limited set of personal resources (e.g., time, money, mental energy, physical energy, and emotional energy); (b) people are motivated to avoid spending personal resources and build a bank of reserves; (c) the spending of personal resources or the threat of spending of personal resources is a source of strain; and (d) a depletion of personal resources yields emotional exhaustion. When aspects of the workplace require the spending of personal resources, individuals are likely to conserve resources in other ways so as to avoid depletion. We suggest that when experiencing strain on the job at and approaching emotional exhaustion, individuals are likely to withhold investing personal resources and hence manifest low levels of commitment to the organization.

Advocates of social exchange theory (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2003) emphasize the understood psychological contracts that social people form with their employers. The argument is that there is an expectation that the organization will supply the individual with resources in exchange for diligence, hard work, and loyalty. When the expectations are not met (i.e., the perception of inequity), the individual is likely to respond with reduced effort in order to "right" the exchange. Hence, the relationship between emotional exhaustion and commitment might be viewed as individuals in stressful work environments "paying back" the organization by forming unfavorable job attitudes and reducing effort.

Work by Kemp and colleagues (2013) found effects of role conflict on commitment through emotional exhaustion. Perry et al. (2010) found that extroversion dissimilarity (i.e., individuals having extroversion levels different from their coworkers) was positively related to emotional exhaustion (Perry et al., 2010). Building on the results of two studies, we suggest that relationships with coworkers—relationships that are likely affected by personality

dissimilarity—affect (a) emotional exhaustion and (b) commitment through emotional

exhaustion. We aimed with the present study to test this notion. In doing so, we sought to extend

the previous work by considering the three Big Five traits—agreeableness, conscientiousness,

and emotional stability—that constitute the meta-trait of sociability or stability (Digman, 1997;

DeYoung, 2006). According to DeYoung, Peterson, and Higgins (2002), these three personality

dimensions reflect consistency with regard to the emotional, social, and motivational aspects of

situations; they are linked to conformity. Therefore, we considered agreeableness,

conscientiousness, and emotional stability as most relevant in the context of work units when

explaining such work outcomes as organizational commitment and emotional exhaustion.

Personality Dissimilarity

Dissimilarity reflects the extent to which a focal person is different from coworkers; this

continuum of similarity to difference can be at both surface and deep levels (Williams &

O'Reilly, 1998; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Whereas surface-level characteristics

include easily noticeable attributes, including age, gender, and race, deep-level characteristics

include less obvious features, such as personality, value systems, and knowledge.

Surface-level dissimilarity predicts organizational commitment, job satisfaction,

relationship quality, and withdrawal behavior (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007;

Cunningham, 2007; Ibarra, 1992; Liao et al., 2004; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; Ng &

Feldman, 2009; Sacco & Schmitt, 2005; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Verkuyten, de Jong, &

Masson, 1993). These effects may be a function of individuals inferring that people who are

superficially different likely differ in more meaningful ways (Chuang, Church, & Zikic, 2004;

Tsui, Xin, & Egan, 1995). As noted by Harrison, Price, and Bell (1998), initial attributions based on demographic characteristics are replaced over time with knowledge about deep-level similarity.

Emerging literature suggests that deep-level dissimilarities may be more relevant than surface-level dissimilarities to unit members (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002; Riordan, 2000; Lepine, Buckman, Crawford, & Methot, 2011; Tsui & Gutek, 1999; Turban & Jones, 1988). Deep-level dissimilarity predicts team satisfaction (Keinan & Koren, 2002), promotions (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002), deviance (Liao et al., 2004), withdrawal, helping behavior, and intention to leave (Liao, Chuang, & Joshi, 2008).

Identifying the most parsimonious model to describe personality has long been a goal among personality scholars. The Big Five model of personality consisting of agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extroversion, and openness to experience has been the most widely accepted model (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990). However, Digman (1997) found support for a two-factor model consisting of Factor Alpha (conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness) and Factor Beta (openness to experience and extraversion). DeYoung et al. (2002) replicated Digman's (1997) findings and renamed them Stability and Plasticity, respectively, with the intention to point toward their biological origins. We argue that the traits reflecting Factor Alpha/Stability—traits that focus on responsibility, group interactions, and social relationships—are particularly relevant for research questions involving work units. Whereas the Factor Beta/Plasticity traits reflect a concern for differentiation and self interests, the Factor Alpha/Stability traits reflect conformity and social status (Digman, 1997; DeYoung et al., 2002). Accordingly, we focused on individual dissimilarity in terms of conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness.

How does personality dissimilarity yield strain? In explaining intergroup anxiety theory, Stephan and Stephan (1985) argued that individuals sometimes experience strain when in situations with dissimilar others. Explanations for this angst include uncertainty, mistreatment, intensified self-awareness, and a fear of judgment (Mahonen et al., 2011; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). This angst is a function of both expected and actual differences. Stephan and Stephan (1985) described three paths to intergroup anxiety: (a) prior cognitions regarding the dissimilar group, (b) actual experiences with individuals in the dissimilar group, and (c) the situational characteristics of the current interaction. We argue that personality dissimilarity likely leads to emotional exhaustion and then to decreased organizational commitment through emotional exhaustion as a result of each of these three pathways.

Following Finchilescu (2010), we anticipated that perceptions regarding others with certain personality traits (i.e., types of people) occurring prior to achieving familiarity provokes an anxiety experience. How might disapproving personality stereotypes develop? Whereas some traits may position people for success on the job (Barrick & Mount, 2005), there seems to be a consensus that there are no "good" or "bad" personality traits, per se. In line with preferences for social comparisons favoring one's own group (Brewer, 1979), however, individuals are likely to develop favorable evaluations about themselves and similar others and unfavorable evaluations about dissimilar others (Chattopadhyay, 1999; Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001; Frey & Tropp, 2006; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002; Tsui et al., 1992; Vorauer et al., 1998). We invite the reader to consider how persons high in conscientiousness are likely to view themselves. We imagine that they view themselves as prepared and responsible and dissimilar others (i.e., individuals low in conscientiousness) as unreliable and sloppy. In contrast, workers low in conscientiousness might perceive themselves as being focused on the big picture and laid back and perceive dissimilar

others (i.e., individuals high in conscientiousness) as anal-retentive and obsessive. Such preconceptions likely position individuals to presuppose that they will dislike and be disliked by dissimilar others (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Gonzales, Davis, Loney, LuKena, & Junghans, 1983). Ruminating about unfavorable expectations about being judged predicts anxiety (Plant, 2004; Shelton, Richeson, & Vorauer, 2006).

Intergroup anxiety may also yield awkward and uncomfortable experiences when interacting with dissimilar coworkers, such as squirming, vocal tension, and personal spacing (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005; Weitz, 1972). Perhaps more important is that persons with personality dissimilarity are likely to have manifestly different behavioral patterns (Cuperman & Ickes, 2008; Funder & Sneed, 1993). As Stephan and Stephan (1985) emphasized, "Intergroup anxiety often has a basis in reality. People do make embarrassing mistakes, are taken advantage of, and are rejected by ingroup or outgroup members in intergroup interactions" (p. 160).

For example, persons high in agreeableness likely experience strain when individuals low in agreeableness burden them with extra tasks, anticipating that they have difficulty saying "no." Consistent with this second path of intergroup anxiety, we know that dissimilarity yields low levels of respect, support, communication clarity, feelings of belonging, and inclusion (Canales, 2000; Hobman et al., 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, 1996). Dissimilarity also reduces cooperation and increases conflict because of different behavioral styles (Pelled et al., 2001; Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002; Trimmer, Domino, & Blanton, 2002). These difficulties yield strained relations and may leave unit members feeling emotionally exhausted (Dijkstra, Beersma, & Evers, 2011; Raeve, Jansen, van den Brandt, Vasse, & Kant, 2009).

We suggest that personality dissimilarity also travels along the third path to intergroup anxiety—aspects related to the context of the interaction. Stephan and Stephan (1985) argued that greater intergroup anxiety is most likely in situations of interdependency (vs. units in which personnel work individually or in competition with one another). Hence, we suggest that DOD units are fertile grounds for personality dissimilarity to have such effects.

Intergroup anxiety is strong when the ratio of outgroup to ingroup members is high. Hence, emotional exhaustion is likely to occur when dissimilar members are statistical minorities (McGuire & McGuire, 1982). In such situations, individuals are likely to experience stereotype threat—unwelcome outcomes experienced by persons in negatively stereotyped categories (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Higgins & King, 1981; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wooten, 1995). Individuals among the few in a unit belonging to a particular category tend to be very cognizant of their minority status (McGuire & McGuire, 1981; Pichevin & Hurtif, 1996). Stereotype threat resulting from being distinctive (i.e., dissimilar) is mentally, emotionally, and physically taxing (Beaton, Tougas, Rinfret, Huard, & Delisle, 2007).

Thus, we believe that emotional exhaustion and organizational commitment occur as a result of angst from cognitions prior to, experiences during, and the environment surrounding encounters with coworkers who have dissimilar personalities. With this study, we aimed to expand work in intergroup anxiety theory in at least two ways. First, whereas we know that intergroup anxiety predicts both attitudes about dissimilar others (Binder et al., 2009; Brown et al., 2001; Ho & Jackson, 2001; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Mahonen et al., 2011; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Voci & Hewstone, 2003) and a desire to avoid contact with them (Plant & Devine, 2003), its effects on attitudes about the organization, to our knowledge, remains to be identified. Second, whereas most of the intergroup anxiety literature and the emerging work

examining the dissimilarity-burnout link have focused on differences in racioethnicity (Siegall &

McDonald, 2004; Wesolowski & Mossholder, 1997), we focused on deep-level dissimilarity.

Below, we describe how each of the three forms of personality dissimilarity affect organizational

commitment through emotional exhaustion.

Agreeableness Dissimilarity

Individuals high in agreeableness like others and want to be liked by others; moreover,

they tend to be cooperative, caring, and harmonious. High-agreeableness people are cheerful,

express warmth, and smile and laugh frequently (Cuperman & Ickes, 2008; Funder & Sneed,

1993). In contrast, low-agreeableness individuals tend to be defiant, inconsiderate, and

disinterested in accommodating others (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Digman, 1990). These

differences have implications for social interaction. Low-agreeableness individuals likely view

high-agreeableness personnel as annoyingly nice, targets of whom to take advantage, and/or

disingenuously friendly (Day & Bedeian, 1995). In contrast, high-agreeableness individuals

likely view low-agreeableness personnel as rude, overly competitive, and uncooperative.

Empirical work has indicated that agreeableness dissimilarity affects (a) job performance (Day &

Bedeian, 1995), (b) organizational deviance (Liao et al., 2004), and (c) satisfaction with

coworkers (Liao et al., 2004). High-agreeableness individuals surrounded by low-agreeableness

individuals might have to spend mental and physical resources to accomplish tasks and

emotional resources to cope with low-agreeableness personnel. Low-agreeableness individuals

surrounded by high-agreeableness individuals might only have to spend emotional resources to

cope with high-agreeableness personnel. Thus, we argue that agreeableness dissimilarity requires

personnel to spend personal resources and thus approach or develop emotional exhaustion, which

over time, positions individuals to psychologically withdraw from the organization (i.e., low organizational commitment). Accordingly, we proposed the following:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional exhaustion mediates the effect of agreeableness dissimilarity on organizational commitment.

Conscientiousness Dissimilarity

Whereas individuals high in conscientiousness tend to be detail-oriented, achievement-oriented, organized, and reliable, personnel low in conscientiousness are disorganized, unreliable, sloppy, and inefficient (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1993). In terms of social interaction, personnel high in conscientiousness engage in eye contact and make an effort to appear interested in what others are saying (Cuperman & Ickes, 2008; Funder & Sneed, 1993). Gevers and Peeters (2009) found that conscientiousness dissimilarity negatively predicts satisfaction with the team. Low-conscientiousness individuals likely view high-conscientiousness personnel as rate-busters or brown-nosers. In contrast, high-conscientiousness individuals likely view low-conscientiousness personnel as lazy and apathetic; they might be likely to (a) criticize them for their low sense of urgency and compliance with performance norms, (b) become frustrated over time with their lack of accountability, and (c) grow tired of having to do most of the work themselves. Given the well-documented relationship between conscientiousness and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), we anticipated that conscientiousness dissimilarity yields task conflict and exhaustion over time. In contrast, when unit members are similar in conscientiousness, implicitly understood work norms are followed, and collaborations function efficiently. However, personnel experiencing conscientiousness dissimilarity are likely to experience interpersonal conflict and frustration resulting from limited coordination and misunderstandings. High-conscientiousness individuals surrounded by low-

conscientiousness individuals might have to spend mental and physical resources to accomplish

tasks and emotional resources to cope with low-conscientiousness personnel. Low-

conscientiousness individuals surrounded by high-conscientiousness individuals might only have

to spend emotional resources to cope with high-conscientiousness personnel, as they are

relatively uninterested in task accomplishment. Thus, we argue that conscientiousness

dissimilarity requires personnel to spend personal resources and thus approach or develop

emotional exhaustion, which over time, positions individuals to psychologically withdraw from

the organization (i.e., low organizational commitment).

> Hypothesis 2: Emotional exhaustion mediates the effect of conscientiousness
>
> dissimilarity on organizational commitment.

Emotional Stability Dissimilarity

Personnel high in emotional stability tend to be resilient in the face of hindrances and

challenges and maintain their composure across most situations. In contrast, individuals low in

emotional stability tend to experience anxiety, anger, and pessimism; they are likely to change

moods quickly (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & John, 1992), have an awkward interpersonal

style, and express insecurity and/or sensitivity (Cuperman & Ickes, 2008; Funder & Sneed,

1993). Low-emotional stability individuals likely view high-emotional stability personnel as

insensitive, cold, and uncaring. In contrast, high-emotional stability individuals likely view low-

emotional stability personnel as irrational, hyper-sensitive, and hostile (if extroverted) or

withdrawn (if introverted). Personnel experiencing emotional stability dissimilarity are likely to

experience interpersonal conflict and frustration resulting from different (emotional) capabilities

to perform work tasks and address emerging challenges. High-emotional stability individuals

surrounded by low-emotional stability individuals might have to spend (a) mental and physical

resources to accomplish tasks, as their emotionally unstable coworkers are focused on

ruminating about their issues rather than work tasks; (b) mental resources to avoid creating

situations that cause angst among their emotionally unstable coworkers; and (c) emotional

resources to cope with the seemingly unending complaints espoused by low-emotional stability

personnel. Low-emotional stability individuals surrounded by high-emotional stability

individuals might have to spend considerable mental, physical, and emotional resources to cope

with high-emotional stability personnel whose emotional availability positions them to create

work opportunities unwanted by the low-emotional stability personnel. Thus, we argue that

emotional stability dissimilarity requires personnel to spend personal resources and thus

approach or develop emotional exhaustion, which over time, positions individuals to

psychologically withdraw from the organization (i.e., low organizational commitment).

Hypothesis 3: Emotional exhaustion mediates the effect of emotional stability

dissimilarity on organizational commitment.

Unit Diversity Climate as a Boundary Condition

Whereas *psychological climate* refers to an individual's perceptions of the work

environment, *organizational climate* (or unit climate) refers to individuals' shared perceptions of

the work environment (Reicher & Scheider, 1990). Examples of climate perceptions include the

level of support provided by the organization (Eisenberger, Hungtington, Hutchison, & Sowa,

1986) and the degree to which it is family friendly (Allen, 2001). An aspect of climate of

particular importance in the DOD is diversity climate, which refers perceptions regarding the

organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion and manifested by fair policies and

practices and appropriate interpersonal treatment (Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; McKay et

al., 2008). The perception of a favorable diversity climate means that individuals believe that

agents of the organization value them regardless of their demographic and personal

characteristics (Kossek & Zonia, 1993). Antecedents of a favorable diversity climate include

unit- and workforce-level demographic heterogeneity and diversity-conscious hiring practices

(Avery & McKay, 2006; Highhouse et al., 1999; Kim & Gelfand, 2003; Kossek et al., 2003;

Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Roberson & Stevens, 2006).

Favorable diversity climates yield high customer satisfaction (McKay et. al., 2011), low

turnover rates (McKay et al., 2007), and high performance (McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2007).

McKay, Avery, and Morris (2008, 2009) reported that diversity climate not only reduced

racial/ethnic group disparities in objective performance but also produced increases in sales

performance over time. How does diversity climate have these effects? The situational context

influences the saliency of individual differences and, therefore, how individuals perceive and

react to each other (Chatman et al., 1998; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Schaubrock & Lam, 2002;

Trice & Beyer, 1993). Gonzalez and Denisi (2009) demonstrated that diversity climate

moderated the relationships between (a) ethnic dissimilarity and performance and (b) gender

dissimilarity and performance. Hobman, Bodois, and Gallois (2004) found that surface-level

dissimilarity among nurses decreased workgroup involvement. However, perceived unit

openness to diversity moderated this relationship: Dissimilarity and involvement were unrelated

among individuals in workgroups open to diversity. Similarly, Ries et al. found that appreciation

for age diversity attenuated the impact of age dissimilarity on team outcomes (Wegge, 2012, p.

5149). Hobman, Bordia, and Gallois (2003) reported that individuals in units with unfavorable

diversity climates experienced more task conflict in the face of dissimilarity, while those in

favorable diversity climates experienced less task conflict. Collectively, these findings suggest

that diversity climate impacts the extent to which dissimilar individuals experience inclusion.

Following Gonzalez and Denisi (2009), we suggest that the negative impact of personality dissimilarity within work units is lower among individuals in units that value diversity because they hinder biases that yield negative categorization processes, while it is greater in units that do not value diversity. Moreover, favorable diversity climates tend to enhance the safety of expressing disparate opinions (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hobman et al., 2003; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992). According to Hobman et al. (2003), "The degree to which an individual perceives their group values diversity may contribute to the effective integration of dissimilar individuals in a work team" (p. 309). Enhanced integration decreases both task and interpersonal conflict, which in turn, likely yield low levels of emotional exhaustion and high levels of organizational commitment—even among dissimilar individuals. Hence, we argue that a favorable unit-level diversity climate (i.e., reflecting perceptions shared across all members of the unit regarding how diversity is valued in the unit) influences the indirect effect of personality dissimilarity on organizational commitment at stage one of the mediation—the relationship between personality dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion. Accordingly, we proposed the following:

Hypothesis 4a: Diversity climate moderates the relationship between agreeableness dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals in units with unfavorable diversity climates and weaker among those in units with favorable diversity climates.

Hypothesis 4b: Diversity climate moderates the relationship between conscientiousness dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion, such that the relationship is stronger among individuals in units with unfavorable diversity climates and weaker among those in units with favorable diversity climates.

Hypothesis 4c: Diversity climate moderates the relationship between emotional

dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion, such that the relationship is stronger

among individuals in units with unfavorable diversity climates and weaker among

those in units with favorable diversity climates.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from 8,906 of approximately 14,843 (60%) active duty United States

DOD personnel in 546 units. The commanding officers of the units sent memoranda to personnel

requesting participation. Depending on the availability of access to the Internet, participants were

provided with either a confidential unique access code with which to complete the survey online

or a paper copy of the survey and a response sheet. As our hypotheses required level two

analyses (i.e., at the level of the unit), we removed cases (i.e., units) with fewer than four survey

participants (*M* number of participants per unit = 15). This yielded a total sample size of 8,197

individuals. Of these, 83% were male and about half were between 22 and 30 years old.

Personality Dissimilarity. We measured agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional

stability using the Big Five Factor Markers of the International Personality Item Pool

(International Personality Item Pool, 2008). Three items assessed each trait—agreeableness (α =

.70; e.g., "I feel little concern for others at work" (reverse scored)), conscientiousness (α = .82;

e.g., "I am almost always prepared at work"), and emotional stability (α = .63; e.g., "I am relaxed

most of the time"). We computed each individual's dissimilarity from others in the work unit

using Euclidean distance.

Diversity Climate. We used the four-item (α = .86; e.g., "I trust my supervisor to deal

fairly with issues of equal treatment at my workplace") Rubino, Avery, McKay, and Wilson

(2010) diversity climate scale to assess diversity climate. Items were presented on a 5-point,

Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

      Organizational Commitment. We assessed organizational commitment with five items

presented on a 5-point, Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .84$)

from the organizational commitment questionnaire (Mowday, Steers, Porter, & Boulian, 1974;

e.g., "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization").

      Emotional Exhaustion. We assessed emotional exhaustion with the 5-item emotional

exhaustion scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson,

1996; e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work"). Items were presented on a 5-point,

Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .92$).

Preliminary Analyses

      Prior to testing hypotheses and aggregating diversity climate scores at the level of the

unit, we assessed intraclass correlations 1 and 2 [*ICC(1)* and *ICC(2)*] and within group

agreement (e.g., r_{wg}). Our intention was to determine if *ICC(1)* was statistically significant,

ICC(2) was greater than the commonly accepted .7 minimum, and the mean r_{wg} was statistically

significant. The *ICC(1)* value was statistically significant for diversity climate (*ICC(1)* = .07,

$F(545, 7650) = 2.24$, $p < .001$), and the *ICC(2)* value was .55. We emphasize that although this

reliability is low, it is common in organizational science (Bliese, 2000) and actually enhances the

difficulty with which to detect significant effects for higher-level constructs. In addition, the

mean r_{wg} (.74) exceeded the critical threshold of significance (Dunlap, Burke, & Smith-Crowe,

2003).

Tests of Hypotheses

We present the means, standard deviations, and correlations in Table 1. In testing the hypotheses and as consistent with prior studies (e.g., Liao et al., 2004), we controlled for personality in order to parse out the effects of simple personality from personality dissimilarity. We employed multilevel modeling to test the first three hypotheses, which predicted negative indirect effects of personality dissimilarity on organizational commitment through emotional exhaustion. We present the results in Table 2. We took this approach for two reasons. First, it permitted accounting emotional exhaustion's ($ICC = .15$; $F(545, 7650) = 3.08$, $p < .001$) and organizational commitment's ($ICC = .18$; $F(545, 7650) = 4.41$, $p < .001$) demonstrated significant cluster (unit-level) effects. Second, we were able to simultaneously examine the effects of variables at both the individual (level one) and unit level (level two) of analysis.

To determine the significance of the indirect effects and the differences between the conditional indirect effects, we employed the Monte Carlo method with 40,000 repetitions. This approach (a) accounted for the random and fixed components of multilevel indirect effects, (b) performed similarly to other established methods of testing indirect effects (e.g., nonparametric bootstrapping, delta method), and (c) was less problematic for using with multilevel data than bootstrapping (Preacher & Selig, 2012). This procedure involved simulating the indirect effects 40,000 times based on parameters—fixed coefficients for the independent variable-mediator and mediator-dependent variable paths, the variances and covariance of the fixed effects of those two paths, the covariance between the random effects of those two paths, and the sampling variance of the covariance estimate of the fixed effects of the two paths—from the actual data. We used the 40,000 estimates to create confidence intervals for the indirect effect and the difference between the conditional indirect effects.

We residualized the mediator and dependent variables after accounting for the personality variables and then used the residualized variables in the multilevel analyses. This permitted us to control for the simple effects of personality. We found effects of agreeableness ($\gamma = .12$, $t = 4.86$, $p < .01$) and conscientiousness ($\gamma = -.13$, $t = -4.33$, $p < .01$) but not of emotional stability dissimilarity ($\gamma = -.00$, $t = -.14$, $p = .89$) on emotional exhaustion. We found that emotional exhaustion predicted commitment ($\gamma = -.28$, $p < .01$). We emphasize that when the predictor, mediator, and criterion variables involve random effects and are at level one, the indirect effect is not simply the product of the stages one and two of the mediation; indeed, it is necessary to add the covariance between the stage one and stage two random effects (Bauer, Preacher, & Gil, 2006). We found a random indirect effect only for agreeableness dissimilarity (indirect effect = -.039, 95% CI [-.072, -.005]). Agreeableness dissimilarity was positively related to emotional exhaustion and negatively related to commitment. Despite the significant effects at stages one and two, the random indirect effect of conscientiousness dissimilarity was not significant (indirect effect = .035, 95% CI [-.004, .074]). Thus, the results were consistent with the first hypothesis and inconsistent with the second and third hypotheses.

With the fourth hypothesis, we predicted that the proposed psychological processes described in presenting hypotheses one, two, and three is moderated by unit-level diversity climate (i.e., a conditional, indirect model). That is, we expected that the effects of personality dissimilarity on emotional exhaustion at stage one would be stronger among individuals in units with unfavorable diversity climates and weaker among those in units with favorable diversity climates. We present the proposed conceptual model in Figure 1. Following Edwards and Lambert (2007), we employed the Monte Carlo approach to simultaneously estimate the effects at stages one and two in order to ascertain if the indirect effects of personality dissimilarity on

commitment through emotional exhaustion differed as a function of diversity climate. We

present the results in Table 3. Consistent with Hypotheses 4a and 4b, we found conditional

indirect effects for conscientiousness dissimilarity (*difference* = .062, 95% CI [.008, .120]) and

agreeableness dissimilarity (*difference* = .046, 95% CI [.003, .101]). The effects of both

agreeableness (indirect = .063, 95% CI [.024, .103]) and conscientiousness dissimilarity (indirect

= .046, 95% CI [.003, .101]) were significant among individuals in unfavorable diversity

climates. In contrast, both were non-significant among individuals in favorable diversity climates

(agreeableness dissimilarity: indirect = .001, 95% CI [-.042, .044]; conscientiousness

dissimilarity: -.014, 95% CI [-.053, .022]). Alternatively stated, the positive effect of

agreeableness dissimilarity (conscientiousness) on emotional exhaustion was stronger among

individuals in units with unfavorable diversity climates, while the negative effect of

conscientiousness dissimilarity on emotional exhaustion was weaker among those in units with

favorable diversity climates. We offer graphic illustrations of the moderating effects of diversity

climate on the agreeableness dissimilarity-emotional exhaustion and conscientiousness

dissimilarity-emotional exhaustion relationships in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. Inconsistent

with Hypothesis 4c, diversity climate did not moderate the relationship between emotional

stability dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion.

Discussion

We sought to inform theory and leadership practice by proposing and testing a

psychological process in which personality dissimilarity affects organizational commitment

though emotional exhaustion—two outcomes that affect mission readiness. We argued that (a)

personnel who differ from their unit members in terms of agreeableness, conscientiousness, or

emotional stability are likely to have lower organizational commitment because of higher levels

of emotional exhaustion; and (b) the relationships between personality dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion are moderated by unit diversity climate.

The results revealed that agreeableness dissimilarity was positively related to emotional exhaustion and negatively related to organizational commitment (through emotional exhaustion). That is, personnel who differ from their peers in terms of liking others and valuing warm relationships and cooperation likely become emotionally drained and have reduced pride and interest in the organization. However, this psychological process only holds true among personnel in units with unfavorable diversity climates. Among personnel in units with favorable diversity climates, the negative impact of agreeableness dissimilarity did not hold.

The results also revealed that conscientiousness dissimilarity had an indirect effect on organizational commitment; however, the relationship was in the opposite direction as predicted. Personnel who were dissimilar to others in the unit in terms of conscientiousness were less likely to become emotionally exhausted and more likely to express organizational commitment, while those who were similar to others were more likely to become emotionally exhausted and less likely to express organizational commitment. We offer an observation to explain this surprising outcome: The mean conscientiousness score was four (out of five); thus, most of the participants reported being high in conscientiousness. Indeed, the DOD's focus on mission readiness emphasizes attention to detail. Hence, the number of cases in which an individual high in conscientiousness is in a unit comprised of personnel low in conscientiousness is likely to be relatively small. In contrast, conscientiousness dissimilarity was more likely to occur when an individual low in conscientiousness was in a group of coworkers high in conscientiousness. Slackers are likely to enjoy such circumstances, particularly if others are doing much of the work. We also discovered that Gevers and Peeters (2009) reported that in a study with a sample

comprised of highly conscientious individuals, they found that dissimilarity was unrelated to satisfaction with team performance. They argued that working alongside coworkers high in conscientiousness likely yields better-than-expected performance and corresponding high satisfaction. However, we enjoin future researchers to investigate this issue in organizations with greater diversity of conscientiousness.

Surprisingly, emotional stability dissimilarity did not yield the expected effects—a finding that is not unique (Liao et al., 2004). Bendersky and Shah (2013) argued (a) that although coworkers may start with negative expectations about working with emotionally unstable coworkers, perceptions change over time; and (b) personnel low in emotional stability may be anxious about unfavorable social appraisals, such that they exert sufficient effort and focus to perform effectively. That is, the low expectations among the conscientious personnel and the effort of the emotionally unstable coworkers together yield favorable appraisals over time (Bendersky & Shah, 2013). However, we invite future researchers to consider investigating this issue longitudinally.

Limitations and Strengths

We emphasize three limitations of the present study. First, we did not examine potential asymmetrical effects in personality dissimilarity, and we limited ourselves to personality aspects of deep-level characteristics having an impact on emotional exhaustion. Second, we focused on the personality factors that reflect the higher-order factor of socialization and stability. Whereas we know that extraversion dissimilarity affects emotional exhaustion (Perry et al., 2010), to our knowledge, the impact of openness to experience remains unknown. A comprehensive assessment of personality dissimilarity impacting psychological well-being would be of utility. Third, replication is needed, particularly in civilian organizations.

We offer three strengths of the present study. First, we tested our hypotheses using a relatively large data set. Second, responding to calls from scholars (Dose & Klimoski, 1999; Harrison et al., 2002; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007) to go beyond surface-level attributes and study deep-level dissimilarity, we focused on personality dissimilarity. Liao et al. (2004) investigated personality dissimilarity in terms of all the Big Five traits but found that only openness to experience dissimilarity predicted organizational commitment. We offer the present study as an extension of their work and proposed that the relationship between personality dissimilarity and commitment is indirect through emotional exhaustion. Third, responding to calls to consider unit and organizational characteristics while examining individual-level dissimilarity outcomes (Joshi, Liao, & Roh, 2011), we identified an aspect of the situation—unit diversity climate—that moderated the relationships between personality dissimilarity and emotional exhaustion. This finding may be an important extension of intergroup anxiety theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), as it indicates that unit diversity climate is an important boundary condition of the effects of deep-level dissimilarity.

Conclusion

Previously, we suggested that effective interpersonal relationships are critical to mission readiness in the DOD. Personality-based interpersonal conflicts probably pre-date spoken language and remain hindrances to effective unit functioning. In the DOD, they can be threats to mission readiness. With the present study, we have shown that personnel working with coworkers fundamentally different from themselves experience relatively low levels of emotional exhaustion and maintain relatively high levels of organizational commitment when in units that value diversity. The results of the present study are encouraging, as they indicate that commanders can inoculate personnel from negative mental states and attitudes stemming from

personality dissimilarity by emphasizing in word and deed that diversity is positive and

encouraged (Avery & McKay, 2006; Kossek et al., 2003). A favorable diversity climate in the

unit is a strong situation shaped by the commander that establishes how individuals are to be

treated—a situation that overcomes deep-level, personality-based differences.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelation Matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) Conscientiousness	4.01	0.80	--							
2) Emotional Stability	3.06	0.88	0.22	--						
3) Agreeableness	2.47	1.06	-0.28	-0.36	--					
4) Conscientiousness Dissimilarity	1.00	0.35	-0.30	-0.03	0.09	--				
5) Stability Dissimilarity	1.08	0.40	0.24	-0.03	-0.08	0.07	--			
6) Agreeableness Dissimilarity	1.33	0.45	0.20	-0.07	0.14	0.18	0.26	--		
7) Unit Diversity Climate	3.86	0.43	0.21	0.20	-0.21	-0.19	0.02	-0.03	--	
8) Emotional Exhaustion	3.20	1.11	-0.06	-0.66	0.39	-0.02	0.06	0.16	-0.22	--
9) Organizational Commitment	3.37	1.00	0.29	0.42	-0.38	-0.13	-0.03	-0.05	0.37	-.48

Note. $N = 8{,}196$ (Level 1); $N = 546$ (Level 2). Diversity climate is at the unit level of analysis. Correlations $> .02$ (.03) are significant at the .05 (.01) level.

Table 2

Summary of Multilevel Modeling Analyses

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Level 1		
Intercept – Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	-.01 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Intercept – Organizational Commitment (OC)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Conscientiousness Dissimilarity (CD) → EE	-.13** (.03)	-.12** (.03)
Stability Dissimilarity (SD) → EE	-.00 (.03)	-.00 (.03)
Agreeableness Dissimilarity (AD) → EE	.12** (.03)	.12** (.03)
CD → OC	-.04 (.03)	-.04 (.03)
SD → OC	-.14** (.03)	-.13** (.03)
AD → OC	.05* (.02)	.05* (.02)
EE → OC	-.28** (.02)	-.28** (.02)
Level 2		
Unit Diversity Climate (UDC) → EE	-.15** (.03)	-.15** (.03)
UDC → OC	.17** (.03)	.17** (.03)
Cross-level Interactions		
CD x UDC → EE		.22** (.08)
SD x UDC → EE		.03 (.07)
AD x UDC → EE		-.15* (.07)
CD x UDC → OC		-.01 (.08)
SD x UDC → OC		.01 (.07)
AD x UDC → OC		.09 (.06)
EE x UDC		.09* (.04)

Note. $N = 8,196$ (Level 1); $N = 546$ (Level 2). Dependent variables are residualized after accounting for the simple effects of conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Summary of Multilevel Tests of Moderated Mediation

IV: Conscientiousness Dissimilarity	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**	**Indirect**
-1 SD Diversity Climate	-.22** (.04)	-.32** (.02)	.063*
+1 SD Diversity Climate	-.03 (.05)	-.24** (.02)	.001
Difference	.19**	.08**	.062*
IV: Stability Dissimilarity	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**	**Indirect**
-1 SD Diversity Climate	-.02 (.04)	-.32** (.02)	-.001
+1 SD Diversity Climate	.01 (.04)	-.24** (.02)	.005
Difference	.03	.08**	.006
IV: Agreeableness Dissimilarity	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**	**Indirect**
-1 SD Diversity Climate	.18** (.04)	-.32** (.02)	-.059*
+1 SD Diversity Climate	.06 (.04)	-.24** (.02)	-.014
Difference	.12*	.08**	.046*

Note. $N = 8{,}196$ (Level 1); $N = 546$ (Level 2). Numbers in parentheses are standard errors * $p <$ .05, ** $p < .01$.
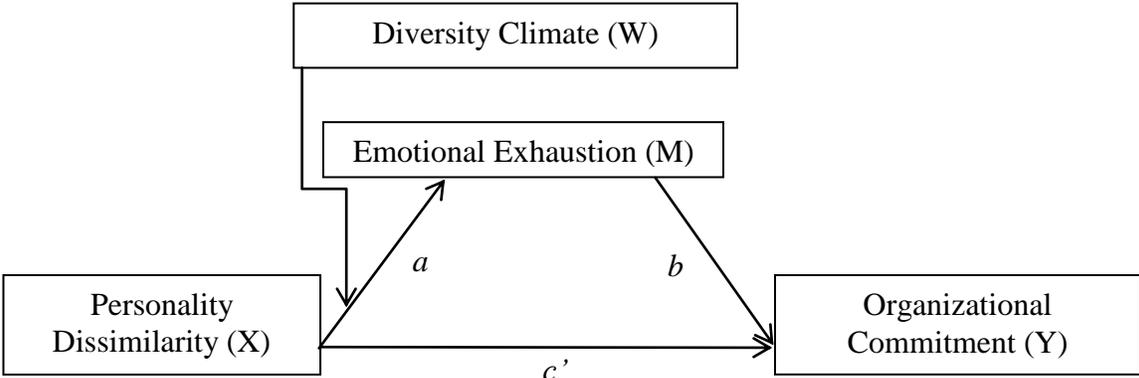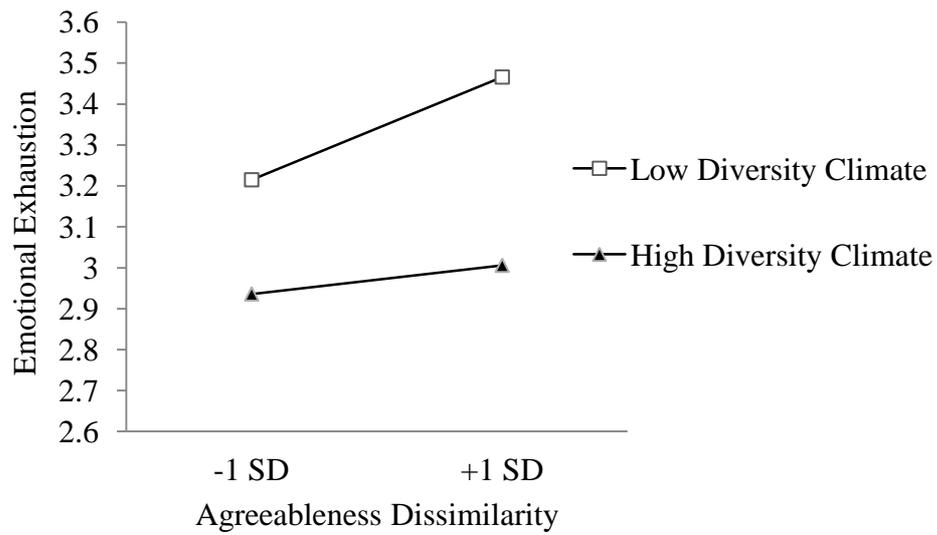
Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

Figure 2. The Moderating Effect of Diversity Climate on the Agreeableness Dissimilarity –

Emotional Exhaustion Relationship.

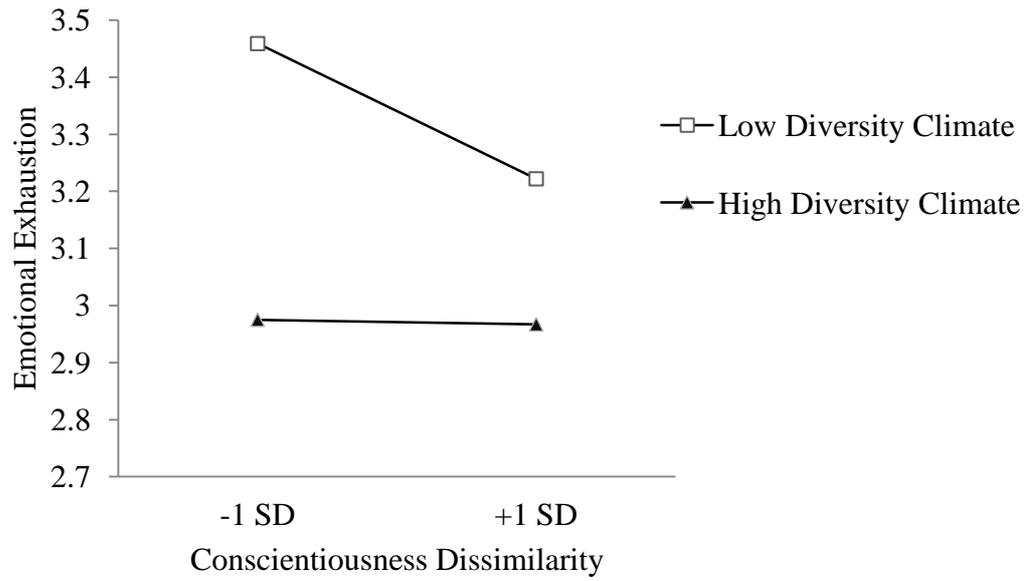*Figure 3*. The Moderating Effect of Diversity Climate on the Conscientiousness

Dissimilarity—Emotional Exhaustion Relationship