

# Personality and Organizational Culture as Determinants of Influence

Cameron Anderson  
University of California, Berkeley

Sandra E. Spataro  
Cornell University

Francis J. Flynn  
Stanford University

How can individuals attain influence in organizations? Prior research has identified structural determinants of influence, such as formal authority and position in a social network. However, indirect evidence suggests that influence might also stem from personal characteristics. The authors tested whether influence can stem from the fit between the person and his or her organization (P–O fit). Consistent with expectations, extraverts attained more influence in a team-oriented organization, whereas conscientious individuals attained more influence in an organization in which individuals worked alone on technical tasks. Further, these effects held up after controlling for formal authority, job performance, and demographic characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The multiple ways in which individuals can gain influence are discussed.

*Keywords:* influence, power, personality, Big Five, person–organization fit

In organizations, the ability to influence others is critical to each member's overall effectiveness. Initiating change, obtaining assistance, and implementing new ideas all require the capacity to influence, direct, or modify others' behavior (Kanter, 1977; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Mowday, 1978; Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Many theorists have argued that structural factors, more than personal qualities, determine individuals' influence in organizations (Brass, 1984; Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer, 1981). For example, according to Kanter (1979), "we have to look not at the *person* . . . but at the *position* the person occupies in the organization" (p. 66) to understand differences in influence. Accordingly, researchers have focused on how individual influence is shaped by formal positions in the organization (e.g., Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), location in a social network (e.g., Brass, 1984; Burt, 1992), or subunit membership (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974).

In the current article, we argue that influence can also come from personal characteristics, specifically, from the fit between the person's characteristics and those of the organization. We tested whether the effects of personality (as rated by the self) on influence (as rated by multiple coworkers) would differ across two organizations: a consulting firm and an engineering department of a telecommunications firm. Further, we tested whether the effects would hold up after we had controlled for formal authority, job

performance, and demographic characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

## Influence in Organizations

Influence is the ability to change the actions of others in some intended fashion (Dahl, 1957; Mowday, 1978; Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Consistent with prior theories, we argue that influence in organizations stems primarily from two sources: power and the skillful use of influence tactics (e.g., Mintzberg, 1983; Mowday, 1978; Yukl, 1994). Power, in turn, can come from access to and control over important resources, such as information, equipment, decision premises, or monetary rewards (Burt, 1992; Mechanic, 1962; Salancik & Pfeffer 1977); alliances with prominent colleagues (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994; Mechanic, 1962); or the possession of personal characteristics that others admire and respect (Blau & Scott, 1962; Driskell, 1982; Homans, 1950). The more that individuals control resources, form important alliances, and possess admired qualities, the more their coworkers defer to their ideas and directives.

Above and beyond power, influence can stem from the use of effective influence tactics (Cable & Judge, 2003; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). Influence tactics can include ingratiation, threats, the use of reason and logic, and coalition building, for example (Kipnis et al., 1980; Mowday, 1978; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Some influence tactics tend to be more effective than others do, and the effectiveness of a specific tactic can depend on the context and target of influence (Enns & McFarlin, 2003; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Therefore, even if two individuals have the same level of power, they might differ in their levels of influence if one uses more effective influence tactics than the other does or knows when to use these tactics and on whom.

Though prior research has shown that structural factors, such as formal authority and social network position, can shape individu-

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Cameron Anderson, Walter A. Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley; Sandra E. Spataro, the Johnson School, Cornell University; Francis J. Flynn, Graduate School of Business, Stanford University.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Cameron Anderson, Walter A. Haas School of Business, 545 Student Services Building No. 1900, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720-1900. E-mail: anderson@haas.berkeley.edu

als' power (Brass, 1984) and influence tactics (e.g., Kipnis et al., 1980), we believe that personal characteristics should also shape these variables and, in turn, should determine influence in organizations (House, 1988). Specifically, one way in which personal factors should determine influence is through person–organization (P–O) fit.

### P–O Fit

P–O fit is defined as “the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched” (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005, p. 281). There are different forms of P–O fit. Complementary fit exists when the needs of the organization are filled by the individual or vice versa; supplementary fit exists when a person and an organization possess similar characteristics (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

Research and theory suggest that power and influence tactics should be shaped, in part, by complementary fit. Specifically, the demands–abilities form of P–O fit occurs when an individual's characteristics fill the needs of the organization (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Edwards, 1996). The demands that individuals face can involve the requirements placed on their behavior, such as the amount they need to accomplish by a specific deadline or the group norms by which they need to abide, whereas the abilities that individuals possess can include their skills, knowledge, time, or behavioral dispositions (Chatman, Caldwell, & O'Reilly, 1999; Edwards, 1996). When personal qualities allow individuals to meet organizational demands, they should complete their assigned tasks more easily and quickly (e.g., Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). The relative ease with which they perform their duties should give them the extra time and energy they need to engage in activities that build power. For example, with extra time, individuals could socialize with coworkers and build a network of relationships (Brass, 1984; Kanter, 1977), provide favors to others and build social capital (Flynn, 2003; Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006), lobby coworkers to generate support for their own agendas (House, 1988), and pursue opportunities to expand their domain of control.

This argument falls in line with notions of conservation and carryover expressed by Edwards (1996). As he argues, “Excess abilities . . . can be conserved to meet future demands, as when rest periods enable the person to handle upcoming tasks. . . . Carryover occurs when excess abilities pertaining to one demand are used to meet other demands” (Edwards, 1996, p. 297). Indeed, research has suggested that demands–abilities fit gives individuals the time they need to perform more organizational citizenship behaviors (for a review, see Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Similarly, we believe that demands–abilities fit allows individuals to engage in power-building behaviors.

In addition, power should be shaped by supplementary P–O fit, via its impact on the respect and admiration that individuals receive from coworkers. Respect and admiration are important determinants of power (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1950). The personal characteristics that are respected by peers can vary across organizations (Blau, 1964; Chatman, 1991). For example, creativity and innovation are highly valued in some organizations (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996) and technical skills are highly valued in others (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Therefore, when personal qualities match the organization's values (e.g., sociable individuals in

a team-oriented culture), individuals should achieve more respect among peers than when there is a mismatch (e.g., shy individuals in a team-oriented culture).

Supplementary P–O fit should also determine individuals' influence through its impact on influence tactics. The effectiveness of influence tactics can depend on the context, such as the status of the target (Kipnis et al., 1980; Yukl & Tracey, 1992), and possibly on the functional area of the organization (e.g., human resources vs. finance; Cable & Judge, 2003; Enns & McFarlin, 2003). This fact suggests that the effectiveness of specific influence tactics should depend on the organization. For example, rational persuasion, which involves the use of logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade others (Yukl & Falbe, 1990), might be particularly effective in organizations dominated by engineering; employees with technical backgrounds may be swayed more by logic and reason than by emotional or inspirational appeals, because they value logic and reason (Enns & McFarlin, 2003). In addition, when the characteristics of individuals match those of the organization, the individuals would be likelier to use more effective influence tactics. For example, individuals who are more detail oriented and logical use rational persuasion more often (Cable & Judge, 2003), which would help them attain more influence in organizations that value attention to detail.

### Study Overview

Reliable measurement of influence in organizations requires that ratings be obtained from multiple coworkers. Given the challenges involved in this task, prior studies of intraorganizational influence have typically investigated a single organization (e.g., Brass, 1984; Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Krackhardt, 1990). However, we aimed to show that the effects of personal characteristics on influence can differ across organizations; thus, we studied two distinct organizations. Further, because we aimed to demonstrate the differential effects of personal characteristics, we studied two organizations that were quite different from each other, a consulting firm and an engineering department of a telecommunications firm.

The consulting firm, which specializes in brand and image development, is composed of artistic designers, computer programmers, business professionals, and administrative support. The task environment involves substantial teamwork and collaboration. For each client, the firm establishes a team that includes some combination of designers, computer programmers, creative directors, and consulting managers, who work closely with one another. Preliminary interviews with employees confirmed that the organization's culture valued teamwork highly (which we tested empirically, as described below).

The engineering department provides technical support for its company's telecommunications installations at client sites. It is composed primarily of engineers and technicians but includes some general managers and administrative support. In the engineering department, in contrast to the consulting firm, much of the work is completed individually; tasks are handed off from one specialist to another. As confirmed by preliminary interviews with employees, the organization's culture valued task focus and attention to detail above all else. Therefore, the environments of these two organizations differed in both structural–technical and social–psychological domains (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). That is, they differed in the structural and technical elements necessary for task

accomplishment, as well as in their culture, shared values and norms, and ideologies.

To examine the effect of demands–abilities fit on influence, we focused on individual differences in personality. Ryan and Kristof-Brown (2003) called for more research on personality in P–O fit; they argued that personality has been less examined in P–O fit research than have other individual differences, even though it undoubtedly plays an important role. For example, 100% of recruiters surveyed in one study reported using personality to assess P–O fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Personality is an “individual’s characteristic patterns of thought, emotions, and behavior” (Funder, 1997, p. 1). Compared with values, which can evolve over time (Chatman, 1991), personality indicates more stable patterns of behavior (Epstein, 1979; Fleeson, 2001, 2004). Further, personality traits are observable and are used to predict future behavior (Kenny, 1994; Wiggins, 1979). Indeed, Judge and Cable (1997) noted that personality may be more observable than values are.

We focused specifically on the Big Five personality dimensions (Goldberg, 1993; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999). The Big Five is currently the most comprehensive and widely accepted taxonomy of personality traits, and researchers interested in the organizational outcomes of personality have increasingly adopted the Big Five dimensions as the most useful framework (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hogan & Hogan, 1991; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Therefore, use of the Big Five framework allowed us to build from prior research and contribute to a programmatic and accumulating body of findings.

## Hypotheses

### *Extraversion*

We expected that extraversion would have a stronger effect on individuals’ influence in the consulting firm than in the engineering department (Hypothesis 1). Extraversion implies an “energetic approach to the social and material world and includes traits such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality” (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 121). Extraversion fits better within the structural–technical elements of the consulting firm, in which employees work together in teams, than within those of the engineering department, in which individuals work alone. Therefore, extraverts should more easily meet and exceed the environmental demands (e.g., their task responsibilities) in the consulting firm and should perform their jobs more easily (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000). In turn, the ease with which extraverts perform their jobs in the consulting firm should give them extra time to engage in power-building activities.

Extraversion also better fits with the social–psychological elements of the consulting firm, in which teamwork was highly valued, than with those of the engineering department, in which task- and detail-focus were highly valued. The traits encompassed by extraversion, such as sociability and enthusiasm, therefore should be valued and respected more in the consulting firm than in the engineering department. Further, extraverts tend to use inspirational appeal as an influence tactic (Cable & Judge, 2003), which involves arousing the enthusiasm of others by appealing to their ideals or aspirations (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Inspirational appeal would seem to be more effective in influencing the behavior of consultants than of engineers (Enns & McFarlin, 2003).

### *Conscientiousness*

In contrast, we expected that conscientiousness would have a stronger impact on individuals’ influence in the engineering department than in the consulting firm (Hypothesis 2). Conscientiousness refers to “socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior” (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 121); conscientious individuals are efficient, detail oriented, and thorough in their work. These traits should help individuals in the engineering department meet their organization’s structural–technical demands particularly well. Though conscientiousness might facilitate task performance across organizations (Barrick et al., 2001), research on “situation trait relevance” (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) has suggested that it should affect performance most strongly in environments, such as the engineering department, that require attention to detail, precision, and high-quality task completion.

The traits encompassed by conscientiousness, such as attention to detail, diligence, and task focus, also fit better with the social–psychological elements of the engineering department than with those of the consulting firm. Therefore, these traits should be more highly valued and respected in the engineering department. Further, conscientious individuals tend to use the influence tactic of rational persuasion (Cable & Judge, 2003). This influence tactic should be particularly effective among engineers (Enns & McFarlin, 2003) and should help conscientious individuals attain more influence among coworkers in the engineering department than in the consulting firm.

## Additional Research Questions

In addition to the effects of extraversion and conscientiousness, we examined agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience, though we did not hypothesize effects for these personality dimensions.

### *Agreeableness*

Though agreeableness might help individuals perform in the team-oriented environment of the consulting firm (e.g., Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998), a number of studies have suggested that agreeable individuals are not motivated to attain power (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Judge et al., 2002; Kyl-Heku & Buss, 1996; Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990). Agreeable people are not more likely to strategically network (Kyl-Heku & Buss, 1996); nor do they use power assertion tactics (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996) or influence tactics, such as inspirational appeal or ingratiation (Cable & Judge, 2003). It seemed unlikely that agreeableness would predict influence.

### *Neuroticism*

The neuroticism dimension reflects individual differences in negative emotionality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The evidence relevant to neuroticism is very mixed. On the one hand, neuroticism is unrelated to job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001), which suggests that low levels of neuroticism might be unrelated to power-building behaviors. On the other hand, neuroticism can harm individuals’ respect and admiration (Anderson et al., 2001), which suggests that it might negatively predict influence. Yet, neuroticism is also related to the use of

influence tactics, such as inspirational appeal and ingratiation, and to less frequent use of rational persuasion (Cable & Judge, 2003), a finding that suggests it might contribute to influence in the consulting firm. Given these contradictory findings, we did not hypothesize a neuroticism effect.

### *Openness to Experience*

Finally, openness to experience describes “the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual’s mental and experiential life” (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 121). In general, studies of job performance have found weak and inconsistent effects for openness (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001). Further, it was unclear that the traits encompassed by openness would be more valued in one organization or the other, which discouraged us from predicting a relationship between openness and influence in either setting.

### *Ruling Out Potential Alternative Explanations*

In testing the links between personality and influence, it is important to rule out possible third variable effects. Demographic variables, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, are often related to individuals’ influence, in part because group members use these characteristics to infer a person’s skills and abilities (e.g., Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Strodtbeck, James, & Hawkins, 1957). Further, occupying a powerful position can shape behavior in addition to influence (see Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, for a review). Finally, job performance might lead to influence and to extraverted or conscientious behavior (e.g., high performers might be given more opportunities to speak and to work on tasks). Therefore, we controlled for demographic characteristics, formal authority, and, when possible, job performance.

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of 169 employees participated, 53 from the consulting firm (49% female, 76% Caucasian, 4% African American, 9% Asian American, 2% Hispanic/Latin American, and 9% “other”) and 116 from the engineering department (34% female, 47% Caucasian, 12% African American, 25% Asian American, 12% Hispanic/Latin American, and 4% “other”). The survey response rate was 76%. Respondents did not differ significantly from non-respondents in terms of gender, ethnicity, peer-rated influence, or formal rank in the organization.

### *Organizational Cultures*

We gave employees items from the Organizational Cultural Diagnosis Survey (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). Participants rated their organization’s team orientation with three items (team-oriented, people-oriented, and cooperative) and rated individual task orientation with three items (detail-oriented, result- or outcome-oriented, and decisive-oriented). As suggested by Kristof (1996), we calculated within-organization agreement on these dimensions using  $R_{\text{within group}}$ , which was .74 for team orientation and .80 for individual task orientation. Because organizational value measures often use Q-sort rating methods to control for average differences in ratings across cultures (e.g. O’Reilly, Chat-

man, & Caldwell, 1991), we ipsatized participants’ ratings, making each participant’s mean rating equal to zero and standard deviation equal to one. As expected, the consulting firm was rated higher on team orientation ( $M = .21$ ,  $SD = .34$ ) than was the engineering department ( $M = -.23$ ,  $SD = .37$ ),  $F(1, 153) = 50.68$ ,  $p < .01$ . In contrast, the engineering department was rated higher on individual task focus ( $M = .23$ ,  $SD = .37$ ) than was the consulting firm ( $M = -.21$ ,  $SD = .34$ ),  $F(1, 153) = 51.49$ ,  $p < .01$ .

### *Measures*

*Influence.* Following others (e.g., Krackhardt, 1990), we used coworker ratings to measure influence. In preliminary interviews, we identified appropriate subgroups (e.g., departments) in which to collect peer ratings. We then sent surveys to all members of the subgroups involved. It was infeasible to ask everyone to rate all other subgroup members, so we asked participants to rate 10 randomly selected coworkers on “how much influence this person exerts over decisions at work” on a scale from 1 (*Does not affect decisions*) to 7 (*Has a great deal of influence*). A participant’s influence score was the average rating given to him or her by coworkers. On average, participants received ratings from 6 coworkers. Means, standard deviations, and interrater reliabilities are shown in Table 1.<sup>1</sup>

*Big Five personality dimensions.* We used the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), which is a widely used and well-validated measure of the Big Five personality dimensions; its scales have shown substantial internal consistency, retest reliability, and clear factor structure, as well as considerable convergent and discriminant validity (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999). Shown in Tables 1 and 2 are means, standard deviations, and coefficient alpha reliabilities for each of the five scales.

*Formal rank.* We ranked each participant’s job according to its standing in the formal organizational hierarchy. In the consulting firm, support staff (24.3% of the sample) received a 1, technical consultants (45.1% of the sample) a 2, design consultants (0.7% of the sample) a 3, and managers (29.9% of the sample) a 4. In the engineering firm, support staff (6.6% of the sample) received a 1, engineers (70.6% of the sample) a 2, senior engineers (19.1% of the sample) a 3, and managers (3.7% of the sample) a 4. Note that there were more managers in the consulting firm, because work was conducted in small project teams, each of which required a manager; the engineers worked more independently and thus needed fewer managers.

*Background socioeconomic status.* Participants rated the socioeconomic class in which they grew up, or of their youth, on a scale from 1 (*Lower working class*) to 6 (*Upper-upper class*).

*Job performance.* In the consulting firm, participant performance was rated by the firm’s top management team on a scale of 1 (*Rarely or never meets expectations/Red flag*) to 5 (*Consistently exceeds expectations/Top performer/Leader*). The mean rating was

<sup>1</sup> Given the variance in the number of raters per participant, we divided the participants into subsamples according to the number of coworkers who rated them (e.g., one subsample included all participants who were rated by 8 coworkers, another subsample included all participants who were rated by 7 coworkers, and so on). We calculated intraclass correlations (ICCs) for each subsample, conducted a Fisher  $z$  transformation for the ICC values of each subsample, averaged those  $z$  values, and then transformed the average  $z$  value back into an overall ICC.

Table 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Variables in the Consulting Firm

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlation														
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
1. Extraversion	3.26	0.79	(.85)														
2. Conscientiousness	4.02	0.52	.23	(.66)													
3. Agreeableness	3.81	0.62	.04	.26	(.78)												
4. Neuroticism	2.74	0.66	-.36*	-.03	-.43*	(.75)											
5. Openness	4.29	0.50	.31*	.13	-.05	-.24	(.80)										
6. Formal rank	2.40	1.13	.17	-.01	-.02	-.27	.12										
7. Gender (1 = female)	0.49	0.50	.12	.11	-.02	.33*	-.01	-.18									
8. Background SES	3.61	0.94	.24	.13	-.08	-.10	.22	.18	-.16								
9. Ethnicity: Caucasian	0.75	0.43	.22	-.03	-.02	-.11	-.09	.05	.03	.26							
10. Ethnicity: Asian American	0.09	0.30	-.06	.03	-.01	.08	-.06	-.06	.20	-.28*	-.57*						
11. Ethnicity: African American	0.04	0.19	-.09	-.07	-.17	.14	-.02	.11	-.19	-.02*	-.35*	-.06					
12. Ethnicity: Latin American	0.02	0.14	-.07	.02	.14	-.10	.14	-.05	.14	-.09	-.24	-.04	-.03				
13. Influence	4.42	1.35	.46*	.02	.02	-.23	.10	.43*	-.07	.10	.10	-.18	.12	.16	(.76)		

Note. Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses. For the influence measure, the intraclass correlation is in parentheses.  $N = 53$ . All means and standard deviations are based on raw scores. All correlations are based on organization-centered scores. Formal rank was coded from 1 (low) to 4 (high). SES = socioeconomic status.

\*  $p < .05$ .

3.45 ( $SD = 0.75$ ). In the engineering department, the employee's performance was measured by the number of jobs completed, his or her efficiency, and the number of errors committed. These three indicators showed high reliability and were standardized and averaged together ( $\alpha = .75$ ). Performance statistics were available for only 65 of the engineers and senior engineers. Therefore, we include job performance in supplemental analyses only.

## Results

We first examined the main effects of personality across both organizations. To eliminate the effects of organizational membership, we standardized all variables within each organization. We conducted a hierarchical regression, entering gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity in the first step; formal rank in the organization in the second step; the other Big Five dimensions in the third step; and extraversion and conscientiousness in the fourth step. As shown in Table 3 in the "Across organizations" column, extraversion and conscientiousness were related to influence in the predicted direction, although the latter effect did not reach statistical significance. Agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness were unrelated to influence ( $\beta_s = .01, -.01, \text{ and } -.10$ , respectively).

To test whether extraversion and conscientiousness had different relations with influence across the two organizations, we used a moderated regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).<sup>2</sup> We regressed influence on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, formal rank in the organization, the Big Five dimensions, a contrast code for organization (consulting firm =  $-1$  and engineering department =  $1$ ), and the interaction terms (Extraversion  $\times$  Organization and Conscientiousness  $\times$  Organization). The interaction terms for extraversion ( $B = 0.23, SE = 0.08, \beta = .22, p < .01$ ) and for conscientiousness ( $B = -0.13, SE = 0.08, \beta = -.13, p < .05$ ) were both significant. The different patterns of relations are depicted in Figure 1. Therefore, extraversion was a stronger predictor of influence in the consulting firm than in the engineering department, which supports Hypothesis 1. However,

conscientiousness was a stronger predictor of influence in the engineering department than in the consulting firm, which supports Hypothesis 2.

When we controlled for job performance, extraversion ( $B = 0.54, SE = 0.14, \beta = .55, p < .01$ ) still predicted influence in the consulting firm and conscientiousness ( $B = 0.28, SE = 0.14, \beta = .27, p < .05$ ) still predicted influence in the engineering department. Moreover, the interaction effects for extraversion ( $B = 0.26, SE = 0.09, \beta = .25, p < .01$ ) and conscientiousness ( $B = -0.14, SE = 0.08, \beta = -.14, p < .05$ ) remained significant. Our findings thus held up after we had controlled for job performance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Because the two organizations could be considered independent samples, we also calculated the confidence interval of the difference between regression coefficients, as suggested by Cohen et al. (2003). The confidence interval of the difference between the extraversion coefficients for each organization was  $.41 \pm .34$ . The confidence interval of the difference between the conscientiousness coefficients in each organization was  $.27 \pm .23$ . Neither confidence interval includes zero; thus, we can conclude that extraversion was a stronger predictor of influence in the consulting firm than in the engineering department and that conscientiousness was a significantly stronger predictor of influence in the engineering department than in the consulting firm.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that the zero-order correlation between conscientiousness and influence in the engineering department was  $.04$  and that the standardized regression coefficient was  $.21$  in the full regression model suggests that one or more of the control variables might have suppressed the effect of conscientiousness on influence. Through a series of exploratory analyses, we found that formal rank might have suppressed the effect; controlling for formal rank increased the coefficient from  $.04$  to  $.14$ . Further, conscientiousness negatively related to formal rank; the zero-order correlation was  $-.16$ . This latter finding is consistent with research on power, which has shown that increased authority decreases inhibitions and attention to detail (Keltner et al., 2003).

Table 2  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Variables in the Engineering Department

Variable	M	SD	Correlation														
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
1. Extraversion	3.43	0.78	(.87)														
2. Conscientiousness	4.18	0.57	.16	(.81)													
3. Agreeableness	4.09	0.55	.19*	.43*	(.76)												
4. Neuroticism	2.44	0.78	-.28*	-.37*	-.44*	(.83)											
5. Openness	3.88	0.54	.34*	.09	.17	-.15	(.78)										
6. Formal rank	2.18	0.61	.07	-.16	-.27*	.19	.01										
7. Gender (1 = female)	0.34	0.47	-.04	.23*	.17	.25*	-.12	-.23*									
8. Background SES	3.24	1.10	.06	.09	.07	-.08	.18	-.03	-.06								
9. Ethnicity: Caucasian	0.47	0.50	-.03	-.08	-.12	.03	-.12	.20	-.15	.09							
10. Ethnicity: Asian American	0.25	0.43	-.11	-.10	-.09	-.03	.16	-.08	.05	.13	-.55*						
11. Ethnicity: African American	0.12	0.33	.02	.03	.07	-.04	-.09	-.11	.12	-.38*	-.35*	-.21*					
12. Ethnicity: Latin American	0.12	0.33	.08	.16	.22*	.03	.04	-.06	.10	-.03	-.35*	-.21*	-.14				
13. Influence	4.35	1.16	.04	.04	-.11	.14	-.19*	.45*	.02	-.16	.20*	-.15	-.04	.00	(.73)		

Note. Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses. For the influence measure, the intraclass correlation is in parentheses.  $N = 116$ . All means and standard deviations are based on raw scores. All correlations are based on organization-centered scores. Formal rank was coded from 1 (low) to 4 (high). SES = socioeconomic status.

\*  $p < .05$ .

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings and Implications

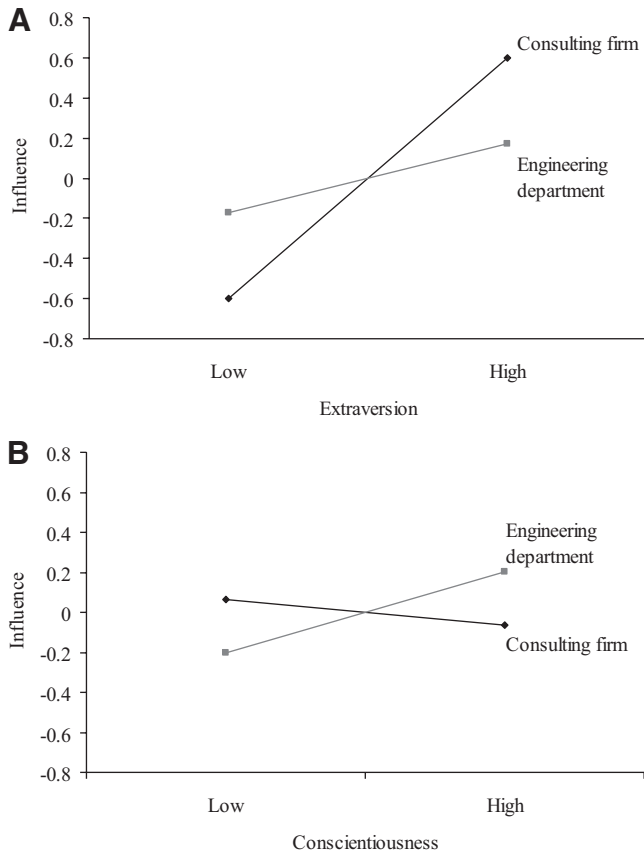
We found evidence that P-O fit predicts influence, above and beyond the effects of formal authority, demographic characteris-

tics, and even job performance. Specifically, extraversion predicted influence more strongly in a consulting firm, where much of the work occurred in groups and teamwork was highly valued, than in an engineering department of a telecommunications firm, where most employees completed their work alone and teamwork was

Table 3  
Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Influence in Two Organizations

Variable	Across organizations		Consulting firm		Engineering department	
	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$
Step 1						
Gender (1 = female)	-.02		-.05		.05	
Background SES	-.08		.06		-.20	
Caucasian (1 = Caucasian)	.32*		.29		.25	
African American (1 = African American)	.12		.23		-.04	
Asian American (1 = Asian American)	.09		.06		.04	
Latin American (1 = Latin American)	.23*		.26		.15	
Total $R^2$		.06		.11		.08
$\Delta R^2$		.06		.11		.08
Step 2						
Formal rank in organization	.45*		.42*		.46*	
Total $R^2$		.25*		.27*		.27*
$\Delta R^2$		.19*		.17*		.19*
Step 3						
Agreeableness	.01		-.02		.07	
Neuroticism	-.01		-.11		.04	
Openness	-.10		.00		-.16	
Total $R^2$		.26*		.28		.30*
$\Delta R^2$		.01		.01		.03
Step 4						
Extraversion	.26*		.60*		.17	
Conscientiousness	.12		-.07		.21*	
Total $R^2$		.32*		.51*		.34*
$\Delta R^2$		.06*		.23*		.05*

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .



*Figure 1.* Extraversion predicted influence more strongly in the consulting firm than the engineering department (A), whereas conscientiousness predicted influence more strongly in the engineering department than in the consulting firm (B). Each slope represents the standardized beta coefficient for the effect.

less valued. Conscientiousness showed the opposite pattern and predicted influence more strongly in the engineering department than in the consulting firm.

The current findings extend research on the distribution of influence in organizations, which has thus far taken a primarily structural approach (e.g., Brass, 1984; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). Our findings suggest that, in addition to structural variables, personal factors matter. In fact, in the consulting firm, extraversion had a stronger effect on individuals' influence than formal authority did.

Moreover, the findings extend research on P–O fit, which has shown that the fit between a person and his or her organization can promote better work attitudes, commitment to the organization, and increased job performance (for reviews, see Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). That work has not yet examined whether P–O fit might also affect individuals' influence, at least not directly. This gap is noteworthy, given the importance of influence to individual success in organizations (e.g., Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Mowday, 1978; Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Because personality is stable over time (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Fleeson, 2001), our findings might seem to suggest that the link

between personality and influence is rigid and unchangeable. For example, introverted individuals might have little chance of attaining influence in organizations such as the consulting firm we examined. However, individuals can change their behavior in ways discordant with their personality, if they are motivated and trained (e.g., Beer, 2002; Saleh, Williams, & Balougan, 2004). Therefore, organizations can help individuals change their behavior through leadership training programs (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002) that decouple the link between personality and behavior.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

There are a few limitations to the current research worth noting. First, the causal origins of the findings are uncertain. It is possible that people achieved influence in these organizations for reasons other than their personality traits or the fact that they became more extraverted or conscientious as a result of their influence. Also, it is important to point out that the effects we examined were cross-sectional. Our study addressed a different issue than would a longitudinal design, which might examine how personality traits facilitate influence attainment over the course of a career. For example, low levels of neuroticism might help people climb the corporate ladder over time because of their links with self-confidence.

Because we compared two organizations that had different cultures but were in different industries, we cannot know whether the effects of personality were due to P–O fit or person–industry fit. For example, conscientiousness might lead to influence among employees in the telecommunications industry in general and not just in the engineering department of the telecommunications organization we studied. A cleaner design for future research would compare firms in the same industry that have different cultures and working styles.

### *Conclusion*

The fact that individual effectiveness in organizations depends largely on individual ability to influence others (Kanter, 1977; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Yukl & Falbe, 1990) makes it critical for organizational scholars to understand the origins of influence. Although prior work has implied that individual position in the organization is the only way for the individual to attain influence, many theorists have argued otherwise (e.g., Cable & Judge, 2003; House, 1988). The current research empirically supports that argument by showing that P–O fit can serve as an important source of influence.

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