



## **Sustainable Development in a Diverse World (SUS.DIV)**

### **STRATEGIC PAPER OF RESEARCH TASK 3.2**

**“Diversity and the creative capacity of organizations and teams”**

## **Future Research Activities and JPA for the next 18 months**

### **Participants**

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This task group is going to focus on personality diversity among work group members and its impact on group creativity and organizations' innovative output. More specifically, the following questions are going to be addressed:

**1. What are the effects of team personality diversity on creative work group outcomes?**

Which composition of personality traits in work groups is most effective to ensure high-creative outcomes? Additionally, which composition of traits makes work groups most efficient at implementing creative ideas into reality (= innovation)?

**2. What are the effects of team personality diversity on creative work group processes?**

Besides analyzing the effects of personality, the group is going to study the processes which mediate the creation and implementation of ideas. Personality diversity is likely to influence a group's interpersonal cohesion, thereby also affecting group members' task focus. Does the generation of creative ideas and their implementation benefit more strongly from smooth interpersonal relationships or a high task focus or both? Which composition of personality traits is conducive to social cohesion? Is it the same that would generate a high task-focus among work group members? And which of both—team climate or task-focus—is paramount to creativity and innovation?

**3. What are the relative effects of team personality diversity on work group outcomes compared to situational variables?**

In what way does team members' personality interact with situational parameters affecting their motivation to collaborate and engage in the tasks at hand? More specifically, do situational incentives/constraints outperform the impact of personality?

## **Appendix: Research project**

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### **Team personality diversity, group creativity and innovativeness in organizational teams**

#### **Objective**

Nowadays one of the main characteristics of organizations is their increased reliance on team structures to organize work processes. The aim of this project is to enhance the understanding of how diversity among work group members with regard to their personality, i.e. their non-professional characteristics, affects the innovativeness of teams.

#### **Theoretical background**

Due to globalization and the increased application of high-technology, work processes in organizations have undergone a radical change: Production cycles have become shorter and the pressure on organizations to innovate has increased. Concomitantly, organizations more and more rely on team structures, thereby combining employees with different skills and abilities into work groups to increase their innovative potential.

For teams to rise to this potential, group members have to collaborate. Not only do they have to pool their professional capacities but also integrate each group member's attitudes, values, and habits. Therefore, organizations face the challenge of not only finding the right individual for a certain job but also the best combination of people to form a team. The question to answer is: What combination of personalities would be optimal to yield innovative results? Innovation in this context is defined as the implementation of a creative idea into practice, be it a product or procedure. To be creative, the idea must be novel to the unit affected and aim to be useful (see West & Anderson, 1996).

To assess people's personality both economically and comprehensively, we will draw on the Big Five model (Costa & McCrae, 1992), one of the most widely known personality models in current psychological research. The Big Five comprise five dimensions: 1) openness to experience, 2) conscientiousness, 3) extraversion, 4) agreeableness, and 5) neuroticism.

1) People high in openness to experience are described as aesthetically oriented, curious, flexible, imaginative, intelligent, sensitive, sophisticated and widely interested. 2) People high in conscientiousness are described as careful, cautious, controlled, enduring, fastidious, orderly, persevering, reliable, responsible, and self-controlled. 3) People high in extraversion are described as active, energetic, exhibitionistic, expressive, sociable, socially present (= sociability component of extraversion) and as being a leader, having a need for recognition, being power-oriented, self-accepting, self-assured, and self-confident (= confidence-dominance component of extraversion). 4) People high in agreeableness are described as affiliative, cooperative, easy-going, empathic, friendly, generous, nurturing, peaceful, supportive, and warm. 5) People high in neuroticism are described as anxious, defensive, depressed, emotional, excitable, guilt-prone, insecure, labile, shrewd, and worrying (Feist, 1998).

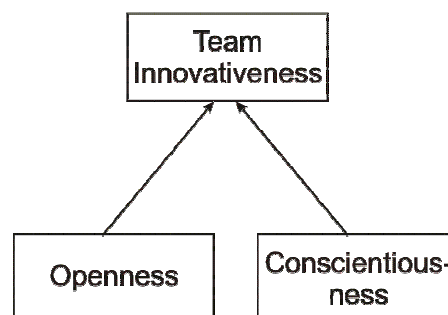
Openness to experience and conscientiousness are related to individuals' creativity (Feist, 1998), i.e. more open and conscientious people are more creative. In work groups, diversity of group members with regard to their values on the Big Five dimensions will shape the style of interaction, thereby creating a team climate which might be more or less beneficial to the engagement in creative group processes. Specifically, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion should contribute to a

positive team climate encouraging people to share ideas and put effort into the tasks at hand (Taggar, 2002).

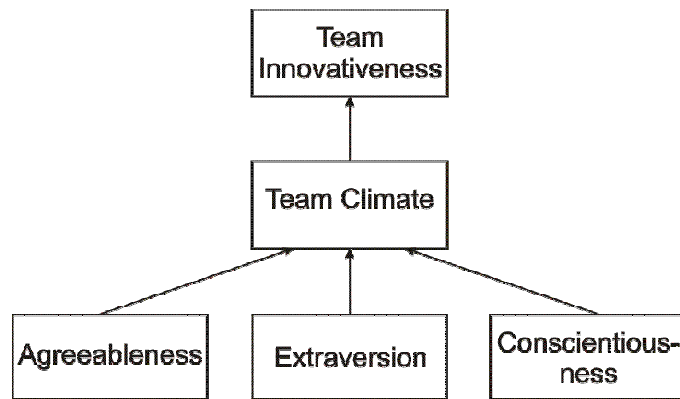
However, the restriction on personality variables to model team innovativeness would be too simplified, as people's behavior is a function of both dispositional and situational influences (Lewin, 1935). Working conditions can affect both people's motivation to produce high-quality outcomes and their willingness to cooperate. For example, high time pressure would adversely affect group members inclination to explore the details of the task at hand (epistemic motivation; Kruglanski, 1989). As creative problem solving tasks are typically unclearly defined and can be solved in manifold ways, high epistemic motivation should be a situational prerequisite for finding innovative solutions. Rewarding group members for their individual rather than their team performance would be a situational parameter negatively affecting their willingness to function as a team (social value orientation; see DeDreu & Carnevale, 2003), thereby negatively affecting their innovativeness, too.

The question is in what way group members' personality diversity (1) directly and (2) indirectly affects team innovativeness. (3) Additionally, in what way does group members' personality diversity interact with situational variables like epistemic motivation and social value-orientation, thereby impacting team innovativeness?

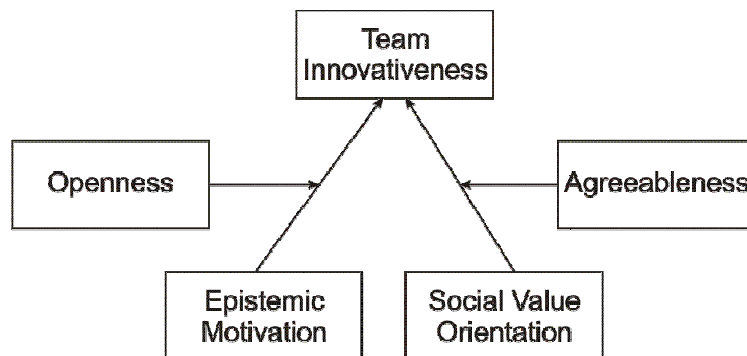
The following graphs give an overview of the potential ways in which group members' personality diversity might be related to team innovativeness.



**Figure 1:** Direct effects of team members' personality diversity on team innovativeness.



**Figure 2:** Indirect effects of team members' personality diversity on team innovativeness.



**Figure 3:** Moderating effects of team members' personality diversity on team innovativeness.

### Methodology

To study the effects of team member' personality on innovativeness, the project is going to apply both lab-based experimental and field research.

## References

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