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## Meeting madness: Counterproductive meeting behaviors and personality traits

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## Abstract

When used effectively, workplace meetings serve as an invaluable opportunity for coworkers to achieve organizational objectives. However, meetings are often regarded as inefficient, unproductive, and a waste of time. Due to meeting attendee frustration, there can be detrimental impact on employee wellbeing. In this paper, we examine the impact of a specific type of meeting behavior, counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBs), which include non-constructive criticism and complaints on perceptions of meeting effectiveness. Additionally, we explore the potential moderating influence of personality characteristics on this relationship. While meeting leaders may take great efforts in designing meetings based on good meeting practices supported by research, meeting outcomes could be largely influenced by the individual personality characteristics of meeting attendees. This research is aimed at developing a greater understanding of how individual differences, namely personality traits, play a role in meeting interactions and outcomes. Respondents completed a survey that measured CMBs, personality characteristics, and meeting effectiveness. Our findings indicate CMBs are negatively related to perceived meeting effectiveness. Additionally, the negative relationship was stronger for individuals who possess higher levels of agreeableness and stronger for individuals possessing lower levels of extraversion. We discuss implications for managers and meeting attendees.

**Keywords:** counterproductive meeting behaviors, personality, meeting effectiveness, meetings, workplace behaviors



### Meeting Madness: Counterproductive Meeting Behaviors and Personality Traits

Workplace meetings are extraordinarily common in the business environment. Every day, approximately 25 million meetings are held in the United States (Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Rogelberg, 2015). When used effectively, meetings can provide an invaluable opportunity for employees to share information with each other, engage in problem solving or decision-making, and receive feedback from each other on issues facing a group of employees or the organization as a whole (Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006). Meetings are one of the most important events in organizational life, as evidenced by the upsurge in time spent in meetings (Rogelberg et al., 2006), along with the trend towards employee work becoming more team oriented in nature (Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart 2001).

Meetings play an important role in an organization's effectiveness but can be a source of irritation and cause resentment among employees if they are not run properly (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011). In fact, over half of the meetings that are conducted are considered to be lacking in quality and often fall short of achieving their overall objective (Schell, 2010). Meetings literature suggests the importance of good meeting practices, such as adhering to an agenda, recording meeting notes, inviting only the attendees that are needed, and ensuring that the meeting location is adequate (Cohen et al., 2011). There is somewhat less research on counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBs), which may be described as attendee behaviors or actions that obstruct meeting goals from being attained and decrease the perceived and actual effectiveness of meetings (Allen, Yoerger, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Jones, 2015). Common CMBs include meeting attendees engaging in side conversations or complaining about responsibilities (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Another example would be when a meeting attendee focuses on his or her displeasure with the organization and expresses a lack of

interest in positive change. Such behavior can deter the group from their goal and bring unnecessary pessimism into the meeting.

We believe that other attendees might experience negative reactions, such as frustration, stress, and irritability, when seeing such social transgressions or violations of a norm being committed. As a result, employees may start to view the meeting in which they are participating as a waste of time and cause them to form negative ideas about the organization as a whole. However, the degree to which attendees' perceptions are influenced by CMBs may depend on individual characteristics, such as possessing particular personality traits or combinations of personality traits. Our view is that it is only by gaining greater insight into these personality types and how they influence behavior and beliefs that meeting leaders, or even non-leaders, may be able to ultimately become better able to interact with their attendees in ways that promote meeting effectiveness. After all, the meeting context must be studied as the dynamic environment that it is, not as static one in which such systematic, personality-based variations in reaction do not exist.

Although there is extensive literature on counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) in general (e.g., Boddy, 2014; Chang & Smithikrai, 2010; Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006), one of the key distinctions between CMBs and CWBs is that CWBs are much more likely to consist of actions taken with the intention of causing direct harm to an organization. In past research common examples of CWBs have included harassment, sabotage, and theft, as well as drug use while on the job (Spector et al., 2006), which may all be considered directly detrimental to organizational wellbeing. Researchers have also recognized CWBs that are withdrawal behaviors, such as lateness (Spector et al., 2006), of which the cause may be more related to constraints placed on an individual rather than intentional acts of a destructive nature. In contrast, many CMBs are behaviors that can indicate more of a lack of regard for the organization and fellow

employees. As such, much of the previous literature on CWBs bears relatively little relevance for the present discussion.

In order to understand the ways in which CMBs may differentially impact individuals depending on their personality type, we now turn to trait theory and consider predispositions of attitude that may affect the perception of meetings. The lack of research in this area is not due to an expectation that such differences do not matter; indeed, previous research has examined the role of personality in many different sources of employees' stress (Yavuzer, Gündoğdu & Koyuncu, 2015), the relationship between personality-based fit and aspects of satisfaction with work (Christiansen, Sliter, & Frost, 2014), personality traits and wellbeing in employees (Jibeen, 2014), the moderating effect of personality traits in learning climates (Naveh, Katz-Navon, & Stern, 2015), and the relationship between counterproductive work behaviors in general, personality traits, and job satisfaction (Mount et al., 2006). Past studies suggest that the breach of a psychological contract, perhaps including meeting norms, does tend to negatively impact organizational outcomes, such as organizational and job commitment (Bal, De Lange, Jansen, & Van Der Velde, 2008; Chao, Cheung, & Wu, 2011). We consider CMBs to be perceived as workplace stressors that impair the functioning of individuals and groups in the meeting context (Allen, Yoerger, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Jones, 2015). Yet, the degree to which individuals can be more or less likely to perceive given events as detrimental or the way in which events are framed depends on individual characteristics, such as personality traits (Parkes, 1994).

In the present study, we suggest that a meeting attendee's individual personality traits may influence the degree to which CMBs impact them, and therefore, the perception of meeting effectiveness. To explain why these relationships may exist, we look to trait theory and, specifically, explore The Big Five. The personality dimensions used in The Big Five are

agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience (Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991). The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent to which the personality of a meeting attendee impacts the degree to which others' CMBs affect their perceived meeting effectiveness of their most recent meeting.

### **Counterproductive Meeting Behaviors and Meeting Effectiveness**

Counterproductive meeting behaviors obstruct meeting attendees from effectively accomplishing their meeting goals (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Past research suggests that groups whose interactions convey low initiative, low interest, and a general lack of commitment to the tasks at hand produce less effective results (Cooke & Szumal, 1994). One potential explanation for this result is not only that irrelevant discussion and disruptive behavior can waste meeting time but also that counteractive cycles can develop, such that the occurrence of one CMB, such as complaining, increases the likelihood that more complaining will follow, as somewhat of a reinforcement of the behavior to produce a pattern of counterproductive interaction (Kauffeld & Meyers, 2009). CMBs can detract from the goal of the meeting and threaten good meeting processes. They often create a dysfunctional environment and interfere with the progress of the meeting (Gerpott & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2015).

Given that over half of meetings are perceived as ineffective, lacking in quality, or in some way falling short of achieving their overall objective (Schell, 2010), we believe now is the time to make greater efforts in investigating counterproductive interaction in meeting environments specifically. CMBs may reduce meeting effectiveness in many ways; for example, if a meeting attendee is complaining or criticizing others in the meeting, this may cause other members of the meeting to feel as though the meeting is not going well and, therefore, feel that it is not effective. We suggest that CMBs can negatively affect meeting attendees' perceptions of

meetings and can detract from the overall goal of the meeting. Inherently, CMBs hinder progress being made in a meeting and cause dysfunction in the meeting and potentially among meeting attendees (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

*Hypothesis 1:* CMBs are negatively related to perceived meeting effectiveness.

### **Personality as a Moderator**

In addition to CMBs negatively relating to meeting effectiveness, we also believe that the personality of the individual experiencing the negative behaviors in the meeting context will impact the extent to which those negative behaviors reduce their perceptions of meeting effectiveness. Specifically, each of the major personality characteristics may differentially impact the relationship between CMBs and meeting effectiveness. To explain why these relationships may exist, we look to trait theory and, specifically, explore The Big Five.

Personality traits may be considered to be categories of the particular combination of feelings and thoughts that individuals experience, which ultimately influences their perceptions, expectations, reactions, and behavior (Winne & Gittinger, 1973). The purpose of personality theories is to identify associations between thoughts and actions (McCrae, 1994). The Big Five refers to five major personality traits that have been discovered through past research, and these traits have been found across a wide range of locations and demographics (Gurven et al., 2013).

Here, we will provide a very brief overview of each of these traits here, followed by a more extensive description later on in this paper. Agreeableness tend to put effort into displaying kindness, helpfulness, and empathy, as well as making an effort to get along with others (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007). Extraversion generally implies an inclination towards social behavior and positive affectivity (Ashton et al. 2002). Conscientiousness refers to the tendencies to demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and persistence, as well as planning



behavior (Roberts, Walton, & Bogg, 2005). Emotional stability is often discussed in reference to its opposite, which is neuroticism. Whereas those high in neuroticism are especially susceptible to being anxious, depressed, and overall negativity, the absence of these negative tendencies is associated with high emotional stability (Evans & Rothbart 2007; Ghimbuluț, Rațiu, & Opre, 2012). Openness to experience refers to the tendencies to demonstrate intellectual curiosity and an active imagination, as well as a willingness to experience novel situations (Costa & McCrae, 1985).

Previous management research suggests that personality does indeed play a role in the degree to which meeting attendees are influenced by others within the meeting setting. For example, Allen and colleagues (2014) found that the relationship between how much of meeting attendee interacts with others in the meeting setting before its official start and their perceptions of the meeting's effectiveness is significantly stronger for attendees who are less extraverted. Here, we make arguments for how particular personality traits may influence the impact of CMBs.

First, those high in agreeableness tend to be more cooperative and considerate (McCrae & Costa, 1999). In addition, they are often regarded as sympathetic people (Luyckx, Tepper, Klimstra, & Rassart, 2014). Due to the high value that these individuals place on maintaining group cohesion towards goal achievement, we suggest that they may be especially perturbed by actions that destroy harmony in efforts towards accomplishing group goals. According to past research, those who have high levels of Agreeableness tend to find certain types of conflict and threat to be less appropriate than those who have low levels of agreeableness (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001).

To further explain, one aspect of agreeableness is compliance (Laursen, Pulkkinen, & Adams, 2002). If a meeting attendee is engaging in CMBs, those who are high in agreeableness and value adherence to explicit or implicit rules may be more irritated by these behaviors because they strive for everyone to get along and comply with the rules of the meeting; therefore, they may view a meeting that does not meet these standards as having been less effective, to some degree regardless of actual meeting effectiveness. Meeting attendees high in agreeableness tend to want everyone to agree on issues being brought up, or at least get along with each other and work together without unnecessary conflict.

*Hypothesis 2a:* Agreeableness moderates the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, such that the negative relationship is stronger when agreeableness is high.

Second, extraversion is measured by the degree to which an individual is assertive, talkative, and sociable (Politis & Politis, 2011). Those who are high in extraversion tend to be more assertive and set more personal goals for themselves (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991). Highly extraverted individuals are more able to deal with challenges in their life in a calm manner (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991). They are usually outgoing, dominant, and can be overly controlling (Antonioni, 1998). If an individual is high in extraversion, they may not be as negatively affected by CMBs due to their relatively greater enjoyment of interacting with others; in fact, it seems likely that extraverts are likely to be partially or wholly responsible for particular types of CMBs (Rusting & Larsen, 1997). If a meeting attendee is disrupting the flow of the meeting, someone who is high in extraversion may not be as bothered by this before as someone who is low in extraversion.

Although past management research has shown extraversion to be positively related to self-promotion behaviors (Bourdage, Wiltshire, & Lee, 2015) which can certainly be counterproductive in the meeting setting, research has not previously given as much attention to how those who are high in extraversion may be differentially affected by others' counterproductive behaviors. As past research has shown that certain types of CMBs, such as complaining, tend to occur in cycles unless stopped (Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., & Kauffeld, 2010), it seems that others' committing CMBs could potentially provide an opportunity for individuals high in extraversion to also engage in the behavior, which could lead them to not perceiving the CMBs to be as damaging to the meeting.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Extraversion moderates the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, such that the negative relationship is stronger when extraversion is low.

Third, conscientiousness is measured by the degree to which an individual is disciplined, reliable, and competent (Robert & Cheung, 2010). Those who possess high levels of conscientiousness are self-aware and pay attention to detail. They tend to be responsible and orderly. In addition, they tend to prefer to make plans and stick to them (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991).

Past research suggests that those who display higher levels of conscientiousness often engage in fewer counterproductive work behaviors (Bowling, Burns, Stewart, & Gruys, 2011). Because those with high levels of conscientiousness are often very systematic (Luyckx et al., 2014), deviations from the plan, or agenda, for the meeting may upset them more and affect their view of the meeting, specifically their view of the effectiveness of the meeting. Most likely someone with high levels of this characteristic will be participating in redirecting the focus of the

meeting. Conscientious personalities are often achievement-oriented; therefore, if a meeting's goal is not met because of a meeting attendee engaging in CMBs, a person high in conscientiousness may be relatively more impacted by this than someone low in conscientiousness.

Past research suggests that individuals who are high in conscientiousness tend to be particularly able to recognize stressors and also take effort to avoid them (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010) so that they may maintain positive relationships with others. However, such avoidance is less of an option in most workplace meetings, which may mean that greater frustration could occur. Yet, it should be noted that conscientiousness is also associated with a greater inclination to engage in effort control and the suppression of charged responses (Jensen-Campbell, Rosselli, Workman, Santisi, Rios, & Bojan, 2002), meaning that observed reactions of CMB stressors may not be particularly pronounced and not likely to lead to engaging in CMBs for those high in conscientiousness, but the heightened frustration will likely still take place.

*Hypothesis 2c:* Conscientiousness moderates the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, such that the negative relationship is stronger when conscientiousness is high.

Fourth, emotional instability may be defined as broad dysfunction, accompanied by sadness, anger, and excessive anxiety (Liu, Robinson, Ode, & Moeller, 2013). Because those who are emotionally unstable are a bit more self-absorbed, it is anticipated that others' behavior will be perceived as more problematic. Emotional instability is related to a decrease in prosocial behaviors (Hitlan & Noel, 2009) which, in turn, impact CMBs (Salgado, 2002). Those who possess higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of emotional stability have been found to report a greater number of conflicts with others (Bono, Boles, Judge, & Lauver, 2002), but

research has not focused much on how those with higher levels of neuroticism may be differentially impacted by the counterproductive behaviors of others. However, when someone high in emotional instability experiences a problem, they tend to have greater sensitivity and heightened reaction to certain stressors (Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995), as well as greater negative affect, compared to individuals low in emotional instability (Dunkley, Mandel, & Ma, 2014). For these reasons, we believe that those who are low in emotional stability will be more affected by CMBs and will view them as especially detrimental to the meeting's effectiveness compared to individuals who possess relatively higher levels of emotional stability.

*Hypothesis 2d:* Emotional stability moderates the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, such that the negative relationship is stronger when emotional stability is low.

Fifth, openness to experience is measured by the degree to which an individual is intellectually curious, flexible, and creative (Matzler, Bidmon, & Grabner-kräuter, 2006). Those who score high in openness are often more open to a wide range of stimuli (Politis & Politis, 2011). It is suggested that those who are high in openness may not be as impacted by CMBs because they are flexible and open to a variety of different stimuli (Dunkley et al., 2014). Those who have high levels of openness are often insightful and often deeply examine the commitments they have made (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991). Some past research has found that openness is positively associated with positive affect and lower appraisals of threat (Schneider, Rench, Lyons, & Riffle, 2012). Because of this, we suggest that, for someone who is low in openness, CMBs will affect the individual more, and they may view the meeting as less effective.

*Hypothesis 2e:* Openness to experience moderates the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, such that the negative relationship is stronger when openness is low.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Amazon's MTurk was used to recruit participants to participate in the study. MTurk supplies a nationally representative sample (Minton et al., 2013) and represents a variety of demographics (Simons & Chabris, 2012). In order to be eligible to participate in the study, participants were required to be full-time employees, employed by an organization within the United States, and regularly attend at least one meeting per week. They completed a survey, which measured CMBs, perceived meeting effectiveness, personality characteristics, and demographic information, such as job level. A total of 331 participants responded to the survey and received the incentive (\$0.50). However, due to missing data on focal variables, an N of 274 is reported. The participants were 53% female. The mean age of the participants was 36.2 years old ( $SD = 12.45$ ), and the average tenure was 5.9 years ( $SD = 5.58$ ). A total of 41% supervised others. Participants were from a variety of occupational backgrounds, with 41% working for an organization that is privately held, for profit, and not quoted on the stock exchange, 25% working for an organization publicly traded, for profit, on the stock exchange, 20% working for an organization that is private, not for profit, and 12% working in the public sector. On average, participants attended 2.43 meetings per week. The number of meetings attended did not significantly correlate with any of the focal variables.

We implemented a variety of procedures to mitigate concerns of common method bias that can accompany cross-sectional studies (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). By

emphasizing the participants' anonymity in our instructions and expressing that there were no right or wrong answers, participants may have been able to experience less evaluation apprehension. We also counterbalanced question order on the survey, as suggested by Podsakoff and colleagues (2003), in an effort to mitigate the influence of item-context induced mood states, priming effects, or other related biases. In terms of approach to analysis, we decided to investigate each personality variable independently, as there was not sufficient theoretical justification for combining the effects into a single model to be tested simultaneously. Due to sample size limitations and covariance issues between the variables, the most appropriate approach was to conduct independent analyses.

## Measures

**Counterproductive meetings behaviors.** Counterproductive meetings behaviors were assessed by using an eighteen-item measure (Allen, Yoerger, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Jones (2015). Respondents were asked, "To what extent do you observe the following in the meetings you regularly attend at work?" Sample items included "Meeting attendees use sarcasm to criticize others." Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*to no extent*) to 5 (*to a great extent*). The internal consistency of the CMB measures was .96.

**Meeting Effectiveness.** Meeting Effectiveness was assessed by utilizing an ten-item measure developed by Nixon & Littelpage (1992). Participants were asked to think of their last meeting and assess how different words or phrases described how they felt about that meeting. Sample items included "waste of time," "effective," and "useless." Items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*to no extent*) to 5 (*to a great extent*). The internal consistency of the Meeting Effectiveness measure was .89.

**Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness.**

Agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness were assessed using a scale developed by Goldberg (1999). Participants were asked to assess how well they identified with each of a series of statements in the survey. Sample items included “have a soft heart,” “feel comfortable around people,” and “am exacting in my work.” Items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*to no extent*) to 5 (*to a great extent*). The internal consistencies of the Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness measures were .75, .92, .90, .94, and .70, respectively.

**Demographic Control Variables.** Demographic control variables were assessed to account to individual difference confounds. Job level was assessed by asking the participants “How would you best characterize your job level?” Respondents answered 1 (*Employee Associated Level*), 2 (*Supervisor Level*), 3 (*Manager Level*), 4 (*Director Level*), or 5 (*Senior/Top Management Level*). Correlational analyses indicated that job level, gender, and tenure were the demographics related to either the predictor or outcome variable. Thus, these variables were controlled for in the analyses, per the recommendations of Becker (2005).

## Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for age, job level, tenure, as well as CMBs, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, emotional stability, and extraversion. This table also shows a correlation matrix for job level, gender, tenure, CMBs, meeting effectiveness, agreeableness, and extraversion. For all of the moderation analyses that follow, the “low” and “high” groupings for personality variables were based on whether individuals were below or above the mean score on the given personality variable.



To test Hypothesis 1 (CMBs negatively impact meeting effectiveness), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. First, job level, gender, and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .06, p = .00$ ). Next, CMBs was included and found to significantly relate to perceived meeting effectiveness ( $\Delta R^2 = .18; \beta = -.44, p < .001$ ). Therefore, H1 was supported.

To test Hypothesis 2a (CMBs negatively impact meeting effectiveness, as moderated by level of agreeableness), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table 2). First, job level, gender, and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .06, p = .00$ ). Next, CMBs and agreeableness were included and found to significantly relate to perceived meeting effectiveness ( $\Delta R^2 = .20, p < .001$ ). Finally, the interaction term was included, and agreeableness was found to moderate the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness ( $\Delta R^2 = .02; \beta = -.14, p = .01$ ). Therefore, H2a was supported (see Figure 1).

To test Hypothesis 2b (CMBs negatively impact meeting effectiveness, as moderated by level of extraversion), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table 2). First, job level, gender, and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .06, p = .00$ ). Next, CMBs and extraversion were included and found to significantly relate to perceived meeting effectiveness ( $\Delta R^2 = .23, p < .001$ ). Finally, the interaction term was included, and extraversion was found to moderate the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness ( $\Delta R^2 = .02; \beta = .16, p = .01$ ). Therefore, H2b was supported (see Figure 2).

Hypotheses 2c, 2d, and 2e (CMBs negatively impact meeting effectiveness, as moderated by conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, respectively) were also tested. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. However, none of these hypotheses were supported. For full results of Hypotheses 2c and 2d, see Table 3. For full results of Hypothesis 2e, see Table 4. \_

### **Discussion**

As illustrated above, our research suggests that CMBs are negatively related to meeting effectiveness. In addition, we examined how this relationship might be moderated by individual personality traits. Our first finding in this study was that CMBs are negatively related to meeting effectiveness, as moderated by agreeableness, such that the negative relationship between CMBs and meeting effectiveness is stronger for those high in agreeableness. One reason for this may be that those high in agreeableness desire everyone to get along and for the meeting to go smoothly (Graziano et al., 2007). When there is discord among group members, individuals high in agreeableness may become relatively more distressed. The behaviors may then be perceived as particularly irritating and lead the individual to feel as though the meeting is ineffective and a waste of his or her time.

Our second finding was that the negative relationship between CMBs and meeting effectiveness is stronger for those low in extraversion. If an individual is low in extraversion, they tend to not be as outgoing, dominant, and controlling as those high in extraversion (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1991). Highly extraverted individuals may place greater inherent value on all forms of interaction, including CMBs, and therefore not perceive them as affecting a meeting's effectiveness to as large of a degree. If someone is low in extraversion, they may be more irritated

by the CMBs he or she is experiencing in the meeting. They may be overwhelmed by erratic behaviors and too much stimulation in gatherings.

In this study, we also tested the relationship between CMBs and meeting effectiveness as being moderated by conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. The main relationship was not moderated by these three personality traits. In regards to conscientiousness, one reason the moderation may not have been significant is because individuals high in conscientiousness may be particularly focused on getting back on track following instances of CMBs and are therefore not any more or less affected than meeting participants in general. We make this suggestion based on past research that has found a strong correlation between conscientiousness and persistence (De Fruyt, Van De Wiele, & Van Heeringen, 2005). One reason for the lack of a moderating influence of emotional stability, might be because emotional stability has sometimes been considered to have less to do with the actions of other people and more to do with the degree to which they are able to successfully navigate the responsibilities and struggles they are facing in their lives (Li & Ahlstrom, 2016). In other words, their inclination to react may not be particularly more or less strong because of behavior that does not seem to be affecting them in a very direct way. Lastly, the lack of a moderation of openness to experience may be due to the trait being more concerned with their attentiveness to internal thoughts and feelings as opposed to perceptions of external events (Costa & McCrae, 1985).

Additionally, we would like to discuss the positive association between job level and meeting effectiveness. Although a full discussion of this relationship is beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that this finding may be related to a bias; we assert that individuals with a higher status in an organization will also tend to have a greater role in the design or facilitation of the meeting. If employees possessing higher authority actually do contribute more in meetings,

leading to enhanced perceptions of outcomes, then this finding may be supported by previous studies focusing on egocentric biases. Specifically, research by Roese and Olson (2007) has suggested that if an individual is reflecting on an outcome in which they played a significant role in achieving, they will tend to rate the outcome highly as a self-serving judgment to maintain or increase their internal state of affect and preserve self-esteem. Due to the positive relationship between job level and perceptions of meeting effectiveness, we controlled for job level in the analyses.

### **Research and Theoretical Implications**

Of all five of the personality traits examined here, it is perhaps not surprising that agreeableness and extraversion were the key variables that served as moderators in considering the impact of counterproductive meeting behaviors. The reason we say this is because past research has indicated that agreeableness and extraversion tend to have the strongest implications for interpersonal relationships and interactive events (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004; Wilt & Revelle, 2009). Based on past research, there is some indication that more highly extraverted individuals tend to be more satisfied with their social situations because of a higher degree of trust and that individuals high in agreeableness tend to have higher satisfaction in situations as a result of having more positive than negative exchanges with others (Tov, Nai, & Lee, 2016). Therefore, the finding that those possessing higher levels of agreeableness tend to be more negatively affected by CMBs may be an indication that such negative reactions may be mitigated by not only discouraging the prevalence of CMBs but also by encouraging a greater number of positive interactions within the meeting setting generally and those committing the CMBs specifically. Assuming that violation of trust is a key factor in the negative relationship between a low degree

of extraversion and negative perceptions of meeting effectiveness, managers may be able to actively promote trust among employees following incidents of CMBs.

The interactions presented here illustrate how personality dimensions play a role in the relationship between CMBs and perceptions of meeting effectiveness. With this information in mind, employers may be better able to manage their employees and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, they can will have a greater awareness of which employees are likely to be affected my CMBs the most negatively and, therefore, may be most in need of managerial intervention following such negative actions in the meeting context. Many organizations already administer personality assessments to determine how well a given individual will fit into a work department or the organization as a whole (Kulas, 2013). Employers and managers may also use these assessments once the employee is hired to appropriately design teams based in part on personality profiles and knowledge of team dynamics.. Of course, the most obvious and simple implication is that CMBs should be discouraged given that they are considered to be especially harmful by certain types of employees. When CMBs are reduced, post-incident interventions will no longer be necessary.

A major implication of this study is that trait theory does indeed bear relevance to the study of meetings. More specifically, the relationship between individual differences in personality characteristics (such as levels of extraversion and agreeableness) appear to affect the degree to which meeting attendee actions and behavior impact the perception of meeting outcomes. However, it is important to remember that the present discussion is focused on individual perceptions of meeting effectiveness and not any objective indicators. As such, our results only suggest that employees high in extraversion do not seem to sense CMBs as having been as much of a distraction from accomplishing meeting goals. An implication of this finding

may be that extraverts could be able to perform better in a meeting as a result of being less distracted by others' CMBs, but with certain personality types being positively related to engaging in certain types of CMBs, it would be premature to draw such conclusions from the present data.

Second, meeting leaders must realize that the negative impact of CMBs is a real threat to perceptions of meeting effectiveness, and potentially other meeting outcomes, such as trust and voice (Allen, Yoerger, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Jones, 2015); while organizational leaders can make greater efforts to implement effective meeting practices and research suggests that the actions of leaders have a particularly strong influence on perceptions developed among subordinates (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), any approach to CMB prevention will be incomplete without also addressing the actions of subordinate meeting attendees within the meeting.

### **Practical Implications**

Although there is little disagreement that organizations should strive for high quality interaction and effectiveness in meetings, this study is one of the first to examine perceptual differences based on individual characteristics. Based on this research, it may prove useful for meeting leaders to take greater efforts to understanding the personalities of their employees in order to more effectively design work teams, so that employees are best able to work cohesively on shared work responsibilities, including meeting tasks. As with other areas of work life, meeting performance should be subject to evaluation to at least some degree, perhaps using 360 degree feedback evaluations. Such accountability is critically important to ensure the deterrence of CMBs and eliciting optimal attendee performance (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013; Rogelberg,

Shanock, & Scott, 2012). Managers must make an effort to stress the importance of professionalism in meetings and lead by example.

In addition to understanding the personality characteristics of meeting attendees, meeting leaders may also want to make greater efforts in developing their skills and abilities to structure meetings in ways to prevent CMBs among attendees, deter the continuation of any CMBs, and mitigate the negative impact of CMBs through taking other action. In fact, it may be wise for such training for managers to take place as soon as they are placed in a position of authority as a meeting leader. Given the importance of the meeting context and its impact on outcomes, such as commitment or overall job satisfaction (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013), it is especially important that managers, or those who facilitate meetings within an organization, are more informed about the threat that CMBs pose and what they can do to promote positive outcomes. When managers know and understand the influence of their employees' individual differences, such as personality characteristics, they become empowered to better prepared to address these behaviors with meeting attendees who may be causing problems and make positive changes to the work environment. One option may be to confront attendees engaging in CMBs face to face in the group setting or one on one after CMBs occur.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Although this study was a necessary first step in the exploration of the role of personality in the relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness, there are limitations that should be noted. First, one limitation of this study is that it is cross sectional in nature. All variables were assessed at a single point in time. As a result, common method bias is a potential concern for this self-report, survey-based data measured at a single point in time (Podsakoff et al., 2003). While we cannot rule out the possibility of our results being subject to this bias, we did

take steps to reduce the threat of this concern. For example, the presence of a moderation effect (and in the direction expected) is evidence that common method bias is less likely to be present (Evans, 1985).

Further, we attempted to mitigate the potential influence of social desirability bias by instructing participants not to include identifying information along with their responses; this bias is a concern because there can be a tendency for respondents to present a view of their behavior that they believe will be received more favorably by the researchers, which can lead to distorted and inaccurate results. Finally, the sample may be culturally biased as a result of the respondents coming exclusively from the United States. For example, in Germany, often times meeting attendees display more counteractive behaviors than those from the United States (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Meinecke, 2014). Therefore, the generalizability of this study is limited.

The findings of this study also provide insight for future research directions. For example, additional studies could look at the influence of personality on the relationship between CMBs and a variety of other meeting outcomes or explore whether this relationship is affected by accounting for good meeting practices. Given past research exploring the relationship between Big Five personality characteristics and knowledge sharing (Matzler, Renzl, Muller, Herting, & Mooradian, 2008), it seems that meeting attendees possessing high levels of agreeableness would tend to make greater efforts to communicate in the meeting context and that individuals high in conscientiousness would tend to be more reliable in engaging in specific best meeting practices, such as note taking or other types of written documentation that may be helpful for meeting attendees to perform (Matzler, Renzl, Mooradian, von Krogh, & Mueller, 2011). Thus, future research should consider also looking at personality as a predictor of other meeting behaviors, such as communication behaviors as well as other ideal meeting attendee/leader actions.



Investigating personality as a predictor of CMBs or other meeting behaviors is also responsive to the fact that not all personality characteristics operated as moderators. It might actually be that personality directly impacts behavior in meetings rather than serves as a boundary condition for engaging in such behavior. A broader range of meeting behavior would be needed to fully test this idea than is currently found in this study, and thus a future research opportunity presents itself.

Additionally, researchers may explore the degree to which the relationships found in this study were impacted by differences in expectations based on a particular personality characteristic or a combination of personality characteristics. For example, perhaps attendees possessing low levels of extraversion and low levels of agreeableness tend to have lower (or in some way different) expectations for the meeting, compared to attendees possessing high levels of both extraversion and agreeableness. If such relationships exist, perhaps expectations can be managed to mitigate the impact of CMBs.

Another future direction may be to take a more experimental approach and assess how different types of CMBs or different frequencies of CMBs may differentially impact perceptions of meeting effectiveness, due to personality characteristics. Such an experiment would likely require the use of a confederate who would be trained to engage in particular types of CMBs. Then, measures of personality as well as observed and self-report reactions from meeting participants would be taken. One challenge for such a study is ensuring consistent behavior of the confederate across meeting instances within conditions. However, the use of experimental methodologies would provide the control necessary to allow for causal inferences, which would add to the growing understanding of meeting behaviors in organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Meetings are a vital part of an organization. They can contribute to employees' perceived overall organizational effectiveness and satisfaction. This study illustrates that employees' perceived meeting effectiveness could be impacted by CMBs differently because of their personality differences. This knowledge can be used to optimize each employee's strengths and be able to better address any limitations they may have.

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Table 1

*Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all measures*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Counterproductive	1.91	.77	(.96)									
Meeting Behaviors (CMBs)												
2. Meeting Effectiveness	3.76	1.08	-.44*	(.89)								
3. Agreeableness	3.68	.59	-.28*	.25*	(.75)							
4. Extraversion	3.15	.96	-.06	.26*	.31*	(.92)						
5. Conscientiousness	3.75	.77	-.29*	.24*	.39*	.17*	(.90)					
6. Emotional Stability	3.54	1.00	-.24*	.25*	.34*	.42*	.48*	(.94)				
7. Openness to Experience	3.71	.59	-.21*	.11	.43*	.31*	.44*	.38*	(.70)			
8. Job Level	1.69	.99	.06	.22*	.03	.16*	.07	.08	.06	-		
9. Gender	1.53	.50	-.16*	.06	.22*	-.05	.15*	-.07	.11	-.06	-	
10. Tenure	5.86	5.58	-.12*	.10	.08	.07	.23*	.23*	.12*	.23*	.07	-

*Note.*  $N = 274$ . Diagonal values are the internal consistency reliability estimates for each scale. \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed).

Table 2

*Effects of CMBs on meeting effectiveness moderated by agreeableness and meeting load*

Model	Meeting Effectiveness					Model	Meeting Effectiveness				
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE_B$	$\beta$		$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE_B$	$\beta$
Step 1	.06*	.06*				Step 1	.06*	.06*			
Constant			3.07	.25		Constant			3.03	.25	
Job Level			.23	.07	.22*	Job Level			.22	.07	.20*
Gender			.17	.13	.08	Gender			.19	.14	.08
Tenure			.01	.01	.05	Tenure			.01	.01	.06
Step 2	.26*	.20*				Step 2	.29*	.23*			
Constant			3.37	.23		Constant			3.34	.22	
Job Level			.25	.06	.23*	Job Level			.21	.06	.19*
Gender			-.04	.12	-.02	Gender			.02	.12	.01
Tenure			-.00	.01	-.01	Tenure			.00	.01	-.02
CMB			-.58	.09	-.40*	CMB			-.64	.08	-.44*
Agreeableness			.25	.11	.14*	Extraversion			.24	.06	.21*
Step 3	.28*	.02*				Step 3	.31*	.02*			
Constant			3.31	.23		Constant			3.30	.22	
Job Level			.23	.06	.21*	Job Level			.20	.06	.18*
Gender			-.02	.12	-.01	Gender			.07	.12	.03
Tenure			.00	.01	.00	Tenure			.00	.01	-.02
CMB			-.62	.09	-.43*	CMB			-.63	.08	-.43*
Agreeableness			.23	.11	.13*	Extraversion			.30	.07	.27*
CMB X A			-.34	.13	-.14*	CMB X E			.25	.09	.16*

Note.  $N = 250$ . CMB = counterproductive meeting behavior. A = agreeableness. E = extraversion.

\*  $p < .05$

Table 3

*Effects of CMBs on meeting effectiveness moderated by conscientiousness and emotional stability*

Model	Meeting Effectiveness					Model	Meeting Effectiveness				
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE_B$	$\beta$		$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE_B$	$\beta$
Step 1	.06*	.06*				Step 1	.06*	.06*			
Constant			3.08	.25		Constant			3.12	.25	
Job Level			.24	.07	.21*	Job Level			.22	.07	.22*
Gender			.15	.13	.07	Gender			.17	.14	.08
Tenure			.01	.01	.05	Tenure			.01	.01	.06
Step 2	.25*	.19*				Step 2	.25*	.19*			
Constant			3.38	.23		Constant			3.27	.23	
Job Level			.25	.06	.23*	Job Level			.25	.06	.24*
Gender			-.04	.12	-.02	Gender			.08	.12	.04
Tenure			-.01	.01	-.04	Tenure			.00	.01	-.04
CMB			-.59	.09	-.41*	CMB			-.54	.09	-.38*
Con			.18	.08	.03*	ES			.17	.06	.16*
Step 3	.25	.24				Step 3	.25	.00			
Constant			3.36	.23		Constant			3.26	.23	
Job Level			.26	.06	.23*	Job Level			.25	.06	.24*
Gender			-.03	.12	-.02	Gender			.07	.12	.03
Tenure			-.01	.01	.04	Tenure			.00	.01	-.04
CMB			-.61	.09	-.41*	CMB			-.56	.09	-.39*
Con			.16	.08	.12	ES			.16	.07	.15*
CMB X Con			-.09	.11	-.05	CMB X ES			.06	.09	-.04

Note.  $N = 234$ . CMB = counterproductive meeting behavior. Con = conscientiousness. ES = emotional stability.

\*  $p < .05$

Table 4

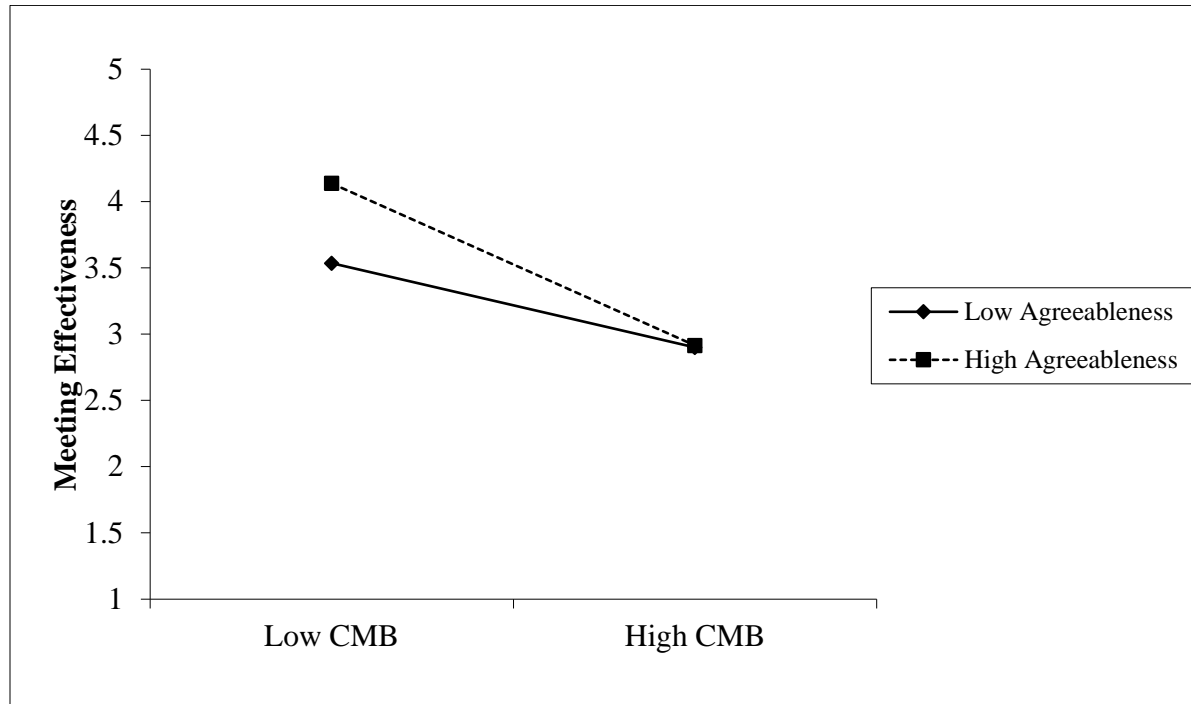
*Effects of CMBs on meeting effectiveness moderated by Openness*

Model	Meeting Effectiveness				
	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE_B$	$\beta$
Step 1	.06*	.06*			
Constant			3.08	.25	
Job Level			.24	.07	.21*
Gender			.15	.13	.07
Tenure			.01	.01	.05
Step 2	.24*	.18*			
Constant			3.34	.23	
Job Level			.26	.06	.23*
Gender			-.03	.12	-.01
Tenure			-.00	.01	-.01
CMB			-.63	.08	-.43*
Openness			.06	.11	.03
Step 3	.24	.01			
Constant			3.31	.23	
Job Level			.25	.06	.23*
Gender			-.02	.12	-.01
Tenure			-.00	.01	-.01
CMB			-.63	.08	-.43*
Openness			.05	.11	.02
CMB X Openness			-.20	.14	-.08

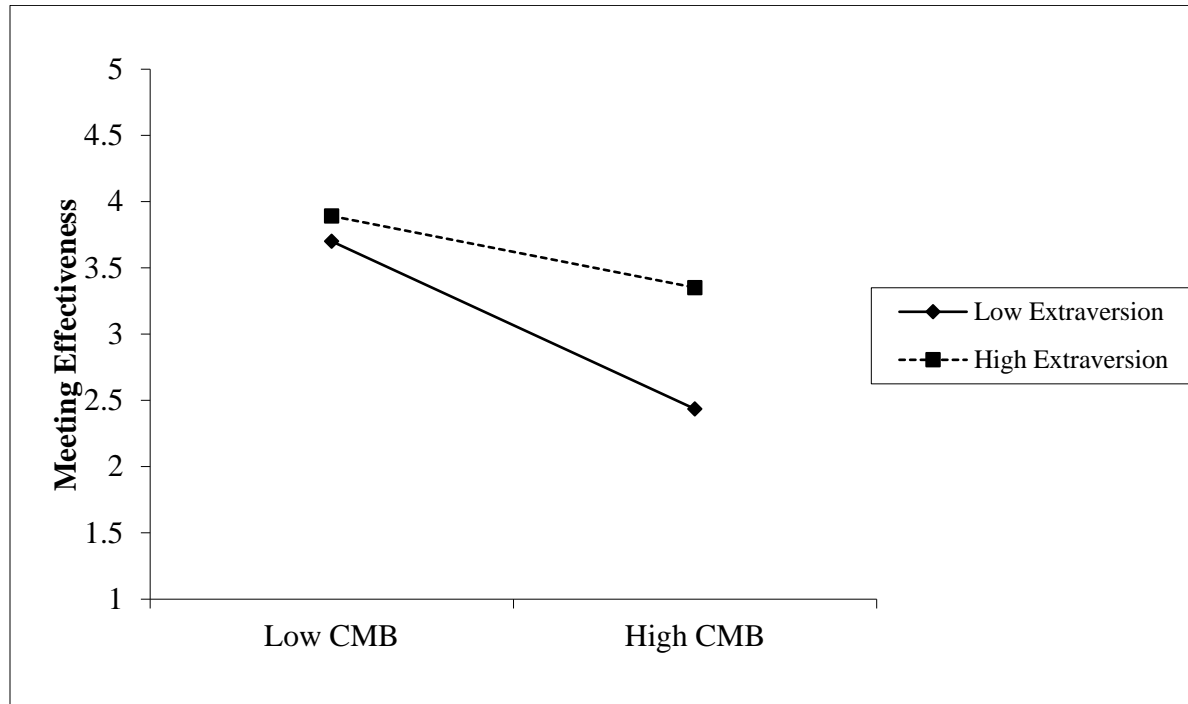
Note.  $N = 258$ . CMB = counterproductive meeting behavior.

\*  $p < .05$





*Figure 1.* Result of probing the proposed interaction between CMBs and agreeableness as predictors of meeting effectiveness. It was predicted that individuals reporting a high level of agreeableness would tend to demonstrate a more negative relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness.



*Figure 2.* Result of probing the proposed interaction between CMBs and extraversion as predictors of meeting effectiveness. It was predicted that individuals reporting a low level of extraversion would tend to demonstrate a more negative relationship between CMBs and perceived meeting effectiveness.