

Personality Trait Inferences About Organizations: Development of a Measure and Assessment of Construct Validity

Jerel E. Slaughter
University of Arizona

Michael J. Zickar and Scott Highhouse
Bowling Green State University

David C. Mohr
Department of Veteran Affairs, Boston

The authors conducted 4 studies to construct a multidimensional measure of perceptions of organization personality. Results of the first 2 studies suggest that (a) 5 broad factors are sufficient to capture the structure of organization personality perceptions, (b) real-world organizations differ on personality profiles, and (c) personality trait inferences are related to organizational attraction. Results of a 3rd study suggest that personality trait inferences assessed in 1 sample are related to ratings of organizational attractiveness by a 2nd sample. Finally, results of a 4th study suggest that the measure is sensitive to experimental manipulations of organizational descriptions. Implications and suggestions for the use of this measure in future research are discussed.

Consider the following sample of slogans from television and radio advertisements over the last several years:

When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen.

You're in good hands with Allstate.

Built Ford tough.

Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.

These slogans, along with innumerable examples not listed here, suggest that organizational decision makers and individuals who are responsible for firms' marketing or advertising attempt to portray companies as having personalities. Perceptions of organizations' personalities likely are formed not only through these deliberate advertising strategies but also through the type and quality of their products and services, the physical aspects of their places of business, their employees, clientele that use their products and services, and social information. Although the study of organization personality perceptions has largely escaped the atten-

tion of traditional industrial–organizational (I-O) psychologists (for two exceptions that we will discuss below, see Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Tom, 1971), some empirical evidence from related disciplines suggests that people may make personality trait inferences about organizations. One very similar construct that has received considerable attention by researchers in the field of marketing is *brand personality*, defined by Aaker (1997) as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 347). Brand personalities are easily recognizable by marketing experts and consumers alike (Siguaw, Mattile, & Austin, 1999). For example, research has shown that consumers generally perceive Coca-Cola as cool and all-American (Pendergrast, 1993), whereas they perceive Pepsi as being young and exciting (Plummer, 1985).

We conducted the current investigation under the assumption that, just as individuals ascribe human personality traits to product brands (Aaker, 1997; Gilmore, 1919; Siguaw et al., 1999), to themselves (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Shamir, 1991), and to other individuals (Hogan, 1991; Norman & Goldberg, 1966; Watson, 1989), they would also be able to describe organizations in trait terms. Although people may perceive organizations to have certain personality traits, the structure of these traits does not have to correspond to the human taxonomy. The primary purpose of this research is to develop an instrument that can be used to describe organizations' personalities. Several authors have suggested that describing organizations' personalities would be a fruitful endeavor with implications for research and practice. For example, in a seminal article aimed at integrating micro- and macroorganizational behavior, Staw (1991) suggested that “We might generalize the entire notion of behavioral disposition to the organizational level. Here, we would treat organizations as if they were living, breathing entities with predictable behavioral tendencies” (p. 814). Schneider (1987) even went so far as to claim that I-O psychologists had been examining personality at the wrong level of analysis all along:

Jerel E. Slaughter, Department of Management and Policy, University of Arizona; Michael J. Zickar and Scott Highhouse, Department of Psychology, Bowling Green State University; David C. Mohr, Department of Veteran Affairs, Boston.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jerel E. Slaughter, Department of Management and Policy, 405 McClelland Hall, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721. E-mail: jslaughter@eller.arizona.edu

Using personality or interest tests to make fine-grained distinctions among applicants for a particular job in a particular company is like employing a yardstick when a micrometer is required . . . I believe that the use of measures of individual personality and interest to conducting research *across organizations* would be interesting from a scholarly point of view and practical from an organizational change standpoint. (p. 447, italics added)

Thus, the first and primary purpose of the current investigation was to develop a measure that could capture the structure of organization personality perceptions. Borrowing from Aaker's (1997) definition of brand personality, we define *organization personality* as the set of human personality characteristics perceived to be associated with an organization. We wanted to make clear, however, that we are not suggesting that organizations "have" personalities in the sense that humans have personalities, as Staw (1991) may have suggested in the quotation depicted above. Our intention is not to anthropomorphize organizations and treat them as though they were living entities. Rather, we view organization personality as emanating from perceptions of individuals who have some familiarity with the organization. As Hogan (1991) explained, the term personality has had two completely different meanings through psychology's history as a discipline. The first meaning concerns a person's internal processes and propensities and helps to explain why he or she acts in a certain way; in this sense, personality is internal and must be inferred. The second meaning concerns one's social reputation or the manner in which a person is perceived by family, friends, and coworkers. In this sense, personality is public and verifiable; it is concerned with the amount of esteem, regard, or status afforded a person by outsiders. It is the latter meaning that corresponds to our ideas about outsider's perceptions of organization personality—it is the social reputation of the organization, rather than its internal processes.

We suspect that these perceived personalities of organizations emerge through the different ways the organization presents itself as well as how other entities present the organization to the public—through television and radio advertisements, through media coverage and press releases, the internet, familiarity with the organizations' physical places of business and clientele, and/or information obtained from one's friends, family, and acquaintances. As a result, an outsider's perception of an organization's personality may in fact be a function of his or her perceptions of the personality of a representative of that organization (e.g., a customer service representative with which the outsider has had contact or a depiction of the organization's employees in a television advertisement), but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Indeed, if such inferences are completely idiosyncratic, then we should not be able to find evidence for agreement regarding traits.

Following Aaker (1997), we elected to measure respondents' inferences about organizations' personalities by asking them about the extent to which they agreed that various personality traits were descriptive of an organization. One common criticism of measures of brand personality perceptions is that such measures are taken from existing measures of (human) personality but not developed in a consumer brand context (Kassarjian, 1971). Inspection of this body of literature also reveals that brand personality perception measures are also often constructed with little attention to important psychometric issues (Churchill, 1979) to which personality psychologists would typically devote considerable concentration.

Therefore, in the current investigation, our goal was to develop a self-report measure of organization personality perceptions with trait adjectives taken from multiple personality measures, retaining only those trait adjectives that respondents found to be useful for describing their perceptions of the organizations' personalities. Throughout the process, we adhered to psychometric principles typically used in the construction of inventories of human personality (e.g., Church & Burke, 1994; Goldberg, 1992; Saucier, 1994; Zickar, 2001).

Organization Personality Perceptions and Organizational Attraction

One important reason for studying personality trait inferences about organizations is that the way a prospective applicant perceives an organization's personality may influence that person's attraction to the organization as a place to work. Several authors have suggested that the decision to apply for a job is related to the general impression that an applicant holds of an organization's overall attractiveness (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Forbrum & Shanley, 1990; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Steirwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Rynes, 1991; Turban, 2001). It seems reasonable to expect that this general impression of organizational attractiveness could be influenced, at least in part, by the set of personality characteristics that an individual associates with an organization.

In the brand personality literature, a distinction has been made between *instrumental* and *symbolic* meanings of products (e.g., Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986). Instrumental meanings of products are those that have utilitarian or functional value, whereas symbolic meanings of products have expressive value. Purchasing a product of a particular brand may enable individuals not only to achieve maximum utility by way of the product's instrumental meaning, but also to express their personalities or increase their self-esteem through the product's symbolic meaning. In fact, research on brand personality perceptions is motivated by the idea that creating a specific personality for a brand influences preferences (Keller, 1993). Lievens and Highhouse (2003) recently applied this instrumental-symbolic distinction, originally developed in the marketing literature, to the literature on organizational image. On the basis of similar logic, we tested the proposition that the expressive value, or symbolic function, of organization personality perceptions serves to influence self-reported attraction to organizations. Thus, a second purpose of the current investigation was to examine whether people are more strongly attracted to an organization when they perceive that it has higher levels of certain personality characteristics.

This portion of our investigation's focus situates the study of organization personality perceptions squarely within the organizational attraction and job choice literature. In a recent review of studies conducted during the 1990s, Highhouse and Hoffman (2001) suggested that a variety of signals that are unintentionally emitted by an organization can influence attraction and job choice through indirect information cues (e.g., Spence, 1974). That is, organizational policies and practices, such as an organization's perceived environmental stance (Turban & Greening, 1996) or which instruments the organization uses to select applicants (Crant & Bateman, 1990; Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994), may influence potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness even though the original purpose behind the practice had

little to do with attracting or discouraging applicants. The current research is based on the idea that organization personality perceptions may also serve as indirect information cues; although a company may not specifically attempt to manipulate personality perceptions for the explicit purpose of attracting applicants, such personality perceptions may have the unintended effect of making the organization more or less attractive to potential applicants.

It is also important to note that, if certain perceptions serve to make the organization less attractive to potential applicants, this could be construed as a positive or a negative outcome. The self-selection hypothesis, commonly used to explain the effects of realistic job previews on employee retention, suggests that job seekers match their needs and desires with what the organization offers (Rynes, 1991; Wanous, 1980). If the job seeker's self-perceptions do not match his or her perceptions of the organization, this person may choose not to seek more information about jobs at that particular company. This results in saved resources for both the company and the job seeker. The adverse self-selection hypothesis, however, suggests that highly qualified applicants will be the ones most likely to select out of the applicant pool if they have negative perceptions because they are likely to have more options available to them (Bretz & Judge, 1998; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). Thus, it is possible that an observed relation between personality perceptions and organizational attractiveness would have both positive and negative implications for organizations.

Previous Research on Firm Perceptions

Organization Personality Perceptions

As previously mentioned, there have been two studies that have investigated perceptions of the personalities of organizations. Tom (1971) asked students from a college placement center to rate the personalities of their most preferred and least preferred organizations using Gough and Heilbrun's (1965) Adjective Check List (ACL) and Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey's (1951) Study of Values (SOV). Tom's use of these scales to measure organization personality is problematic because many items on these scales are not applicable to the task of describing organizations. In the Lievens and Highhouse (2003) study on personality inferences about firms, the researchers solicited ratings of the personalities of Belgian banks using Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. They reported that seven of Aaker's 42 items had unacceptably low item-total correlations and had to be removed from the scale. They also found that only one of Aaker's five dimensions could be used to distinguish between the organizations. These findings would also lead one to believe that there may be other personality traits or dimensions that are relevant to organization personality but are not relevant for describing brand personality.

Given the observations and findings reported above, it seemed appropriate to use an inductive approach to the development of a measure of firm personality perceptions because measures developed for other purposes do not seem directly transferable to this task. In the present investigation, we took considerable care to ensure that the adjectives that made up the final version of our scale were useful for describing organization personality by eliminating many of the original items that were deemed to be inappropriate or not applicable for describing organizations' personal-

ities and by building scales on the basis of the results of factor analyses and other psychometric information.

Although we were hesitant to introduce new constructs that were redundant with existing ones, we could not assume that the structure of perceptions of organizations' personalities is equivalent to the structure of individual personality and perceptions of brands' personalities. For example, Aaker (1997) found that although three dimensions of her brand personality scale (sincerity, excitement, and competence) could feasibly map on to dimensions from the Big Five personality characteristics (i.e., Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness), two dimensions of brand personality (i.e., sophistication and ruggedness) did not have a Big Five counterpart. Given Aaker's finding that factors of human personality and factors of brand personality perceptions are conceptually different from one another, it also seems likely that some dimensions relevant to human personality or brand personality are not relevant for describing perceptions of organization personality. Consistent with this possibility are the results observed by Lievens and Highhouse (2003), as we described above.

Organizational Values

One concept that is somewhat similar to perceptions of organization personality, yet is conceptually distinct from it, is that of organizational values. Values were defined by Locke (1976) as, "that which a person subconsciously desires, wants, or seeks to obtain" (p. 1304), and by Rokeach (1973) as enduring beliefs about what is right and what is wrong. Organizational values have already received considerable research attention in the organizational culture and person-organization fit literatures (e.g., Chatman, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), and without making some distinction between value and personality domains, examining perceptions of organization personality may seem superfluous. However, Judge and Cable (1997) argued that personality and values are in fact distinct. Drawing on the perspectives offered by Locke (1976), Rokeach (1973), and Dawis (1990), these authors suggested that personality traits are general and enduring, whereas values are more specific and less static. They also proposed that values mediate the relationship between personality and preferences. As one example of this distinction between personality and values, consider an individual who is conscientious (personality trait). Such a person may believe in the value of working hard (value), which in turn leads this individual to choose a more challenging job over a less challenging one (preference). Thus, values mediate the relationship between personality and preferences.

Another important difference between personality and values, whether they are attributed to organizations or to people, is the degree to which they are evident to observers who have had limited interaction with that entity. For example, in many cases, an individual's personality may be judged relatively accurately on the basis of very limited interpersonal interaction (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Watson, 1989). However, making good judgments about what an individual values is likely to require a great deal more information. For two people to know what each other values, they would have to have had conversations about their likes and dislikes and what they desire and do not desire.

These distinctions between values and personality are similar when organizations are described. An organization's values are

likely to be somewhat transitory and may fluctuate as a result of external market pressures or the hiring of a new CEO, whereas an organization's attributed personality is likely to remain stable over time. Furthermore, the personality of a large, well-known organization may be inferred on the basis of limited information—hearing about it in the news, seeing its advertisements, or having visited the organization's place of business on one or two occasions. An accurate assessment of the organization's values, on the other hand, would require having met a representative of the organization, such as a recruiter, through whom the organization's values are transmitted, or perhaps having read recruitment material in which organizational values are specifically communicated to the potential applicant (e.g., Highhouse, Hoffman, Greve, & Collins, 2002; Judge & Bretz, 1992).

Some evidence for the validity of this distinction resides in the pattern of measured value judgments and personality judgments in past research. For example, Cable and Judge (1996) and Judge and Cable (1997) measured applicants' beliefs about organizations' values only after they had been interviewed by a company's recruiters. Lievens and Highhouse (2003), however, asked respondents to describe personality traits of well-known banks only if they had not been involved in a recruitment interview with a bank. Thus, personality and values are distinguishable on the basis of (a) their stability and (b) the degree to which they are evident to observers during limited interaction.

Summary and Overview of the Present Investigation

In the interest of being thorough (and so as to not misrepresent ourselves as being the first to consider this issue), we have discussed two previous attempts at measuring organization personality perceptions, as well as some of the limitations of these studies. We have also discussed some arguments made cogently by previous authors, which suggest that perceptions of organization personality are distinct from perceptions of brand personality and perceptions of organizational values.

Note, however, that the purpose of this investigation was not to distinguish statistically between organization personality factors and similar constructs, nor was it to build directly from the limitations of previous research efforts. Rather, as we have noted, we used an inductive method to identify traits useful for describing organization personality and more general personality factors under which these component traits may be subsumed. Furthermore, having made the argument that personality and values are conceptually distinct, we thought it unnecessary to take steps to distinguish between them statistically. Thus, the major purposes of this investigation were (a) to develop an instrument for describing perceptions of the personalities of a wide range of organizations and (b) to examine whether perceptions of organization personality traits were useful for predicting facets of organizational attractiveness. Below, we describe several data collection efforts aimed at the development and validation of our measure. Activities during such efforts included the following: the collection of traits from a variety of different personality studies; the exploratory examination of the structure of organization personality perceptions; the confirmation of the structure on a different sample of respondents, who rated different organizations; testing within-sample and cross-sample relations between perceptions of personality traits and measures of organizational attraction; and further providing con-

struct validity evidence by testing the measure's sensitivity to differences in manipulated organizational characteristics.

Study 1: Instrument Development

Method

Initial Instrument Development

Initially, our goal was simply to amass any and all trait adjectives that could potentially be descriptive of perceptions of organizations' personalities and then to eliminate those traits that were unlikely to be descriptive (i.e., those traits that we felt respondents would not be able to ascribe to an organization). We culled 248 different trait adjectives from various studies of human personality and brand personality (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Goldberg, 1992; Gough & Heilbrun, 1983; Malhotra, 1981; Tupes & Christal, 1961; Wells, Andriuli, & Seader, 1957). In addition, we added seven items that were not included on any of the human or brand personality scales cited above but that we thought might be related to organization personality perceptions (i.e., attention-seeking, boring, conservative, fast-acting, fast-paced, genuine, risk taking). Each of the four authors and two additional research assistants independently examined the list of trait adjectives and indicated whether, in his or her judgment, a trait adjective could be used to describe the personality of an organization. Still seeking to include a relatively broad range of trait adjectives, at this point we eliminated only those items that three of the raters (50%) indicated could not be descriptive of any organization's personality, and we eliminated redundancies across studies. This left us with a total of 165 items, or 65% of the original 255 items. Some of the eliminated items included *aloof*, *boorish*, *frank*, and *marked interest in opposite sex*. Items eliminated at this stage are available from Jerel E. Slaughter.

Next, we set out to further eliminate items that respondents did not view as being descriptive of an organization's personality, as well as items that were difficult for respondents to understand. In this portion of the study, we randomly assigned students ($n = 256$) enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at a medium-sized Midwestern university to one of three organizations likely to be highly familiar to young college students (JC Penney, McDonald's, or Wal-Mart) and asked them to rate the extent to which they agreed (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) that each of our remaining 165 trait adjectives were descriptive of each of the three organizations. We also asked the students to place a question mark in the blank if they did not understand the meaning of a particular word or if they did not believe that an item could be descriptive of the company's personality (i.e., they could not determine the extent to which they agreed whether a trait was descriptive or not). We then eliminated any item that was misunderstood or that was rated as not being descriptive by 25% of the respondents. This left us with a total of 71 items, 43% of the original 165. Items that were retained are presented in Appendix A. Items eliminated at this stage are available from Jerel E. Slaughter.

Further Instrument Development

Next, we set out to explore the factor structure of personality trait inferences about organizations using two samples of respondents. We randomly assigned participants in Sample 1 to one of four organizations to develop an initial factor structure, and then confirmed this structure on data collected from individuals in Sample 2. Participants in Sample 2 were randomly assigned to one of six organizations, each of which was different from the organizations presented to Sample 1 participants.

We were also interested in whether there were between-organizations differences in personality. Thus, once we had confirmed the structure of organization personality perceptions, we tested for overall differences between organizations on the confirmed personality dimensions and then inspected the results to identify specific between-organizations differences.

Data Collection

Students recruited from introductory psychology classes at two universities participated in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to either 1 of 6 or 1 of 4 companies, for a total of 10 companies across the two samples (Disney, Microsoft, Nike, Reebok, Kroger, Wal-Mart, Subway, Bob Evans, Meijer, or JC Penney) on which to base their ratings of organization personality. Sample 1 ($n = 281$) was from a large, southern university. Respondents were 71% female, with a mean age of 19.9 years. Sample 2 ($n = 274$) was from a medium-sized university in the Midwest. Respondents were 74% female, with a mean age of 19.5 years.

Results

Factor Structure

We explored the factor structure of the organization personality perceptions using a two-step approach. First, we ran a series of exploratory principal factor analyses (with varimax rotation) on the data generated by Sample 1. In a series of subsequent analyses, we then eliminated items that had cross-loadings greater than .40 or that did not have loadings of at least .40 on any factors with minimum eigenvalues of 1.0. Five clear factors emerged, representing 27 of the original 71 items and accounting for 55% percent of the variance in ratings. On the basis of the items remaining for each scale, we labeled these five factors Boy Scout (e.g., honest, attentive to people, family-oriented), Innovativeness (e.g., original, creative, unique), Dominance (e.g., big, successful, popular), Thrift (e.g., simple, low-class, sloppy), and Style (e.g., trendy, up-to-date, contemporary).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Next, we ran confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) using the five-factor structure extracted from the above analysis on Sample 2 ($N = 274$). Results of the CFA indicated that the fit of the data to the hypothesized five-factor structure was marginal, $\chi^2(289, N = 274) = 683.24, p < .001$; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .79, comparative fit index (CFI) = .82, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .071. Therefore, we inspected the labels for the items that we had specified to load on each scale, as well as the modification indices that indicated highly correlated observed variables and high cross loadings (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984). We observed that the items big (from the Dominance scale) and small (from the Thrift scale) were highly correlated, as were their uniquenesses. It did not seem to make much sense conceptually to have big and small as indicators of two different latent constructs, and we therefore removed these items from the scale. In addition, the item *up-to-date* (from the Style scale) was highly correlated with several other variables and thus also produced extremely high modification indices. Finally, the item *simple* (from the Thrift scale) had low factor loadings, and we elected to remove this item as well. Removing these four items allowed us to achieve much better fit, $\chi^2(220, N = 274) = 409.13, p < .001$; RMSEA = .056, TLI = .88, CFI = .90. We then fit this model to the data that combined Samples 1 and 2, and found that the model fit the data well, according to the fit indices, $\chi^2(220, N = 555) = 508.79, p < .001$; RMSEA = .049, TLI = .94, CFI = .95. Items and their respective standardized factor loadings (lambdas) are presented in Table 1. Inspection of Table 1 reveals that the majority of factor loadings are quite high.

Table 1
Standardized Factor Loadings (λ_x) for Items in Study 1

| Item | Factor 1: Boy Scout | Factor 2: Innovativeness | Factor 3: Dominance | Factor 4: Thrift | Factor 5: Style |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Friendly | 1.00 | | | | |
| Family-oriented | .94 | | | | |
| Pleasant | .82 | | | | |
| Personal | .79 | | | | |
| Attentive to people | .78 | | | | |
| Helpful | .75 | | | | |
| Honest | .71 | | | | |
| Cooperative | .71 | | | | |
| Clean | .66 | | | | |
| Creative | | 1.00 | | | |
| Exciting | | .96 | | | |
| Interesting | | .83 | | | |
| Unique | | .77 | | | |
| Original | | .73 | | | |
| Popular | | | 1.00 | | |
| Busy | | | .93 | | |
| Successful | | | .78 | | |
| Poor | | | | 1.00 | |
| Sloppy | | | | .85 | |
| Low class | | | | .62 | |
| Modern ^a | | | | | 1.00 |
| Contemporary ^a | | | | | .83 |
| Trendy | | | | | .78 |

Note. $N = 555$. $\chi^2(220) = 508.79, p < .001$. Tucker–Lewis index = .94, comparative fit index = .95, root-mean-square error of approximation = .049.

^a Removed from the scale after Study 2.

To ensure that this model was the best-fitting model to the data, we compared the fit of the five-factor model to four alternative models. The first model was a one-factor model in which all of the items were specified to load on one factor. The next model was a three factor model in which all of the thrift items and all of the dominance items were specified to load on the same factor, and all of the innovativeness items and all of the style items were specified to load on the same factor. The third and fourth alternative models were both four-factor models; the third model had a common factor for all of the dominance and thrift items, and the fourth model had a common factor for all of the innovativeness and style items.

Table 2 presents the fit statistics for each of these models, as well as results of chi-square tests used to compare alternative models with the five-factor model. Note that each of the chi-square difference tests suggests that the more parsimonious models fit the data significantly worse than the five-factor model. Given these results, we proceeded with more substantive analyses and additional studies on the basis of the five-factor model.

We then computed coefficient alpha reliabilities for each of the five scales. Each of these estimates was higher than the suggested cutoff of .70 for the development of new measures (Nunnally, 1978). Observed internal consistency (α) estimates for the scales were .87 (Boy Scout), .87 (Innovativeness), .76 (Dominance), .88 (Thrift), and .70 (Style). In short, the five-factor solution fit reasonably well.

Between-Organizations Differences and Within-Organizations Agreement

A measure representing organization personality perceptions is only likely to be useful if it captures meaningful differences among organizations. To examine this, we conducted a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with organization as the independent variable and the five organization personality perceptions variables as the dependent variables. This analysis suggested relatively large between-companies differences, Wilk's $\Lambda = .10$, multivariate $F(45, 1945) = 16.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .37$. We then proceeded with five univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs). These analyses suggested that there were between-companies differences on each of the personality perceptions variables. For the Boy Scout scale, $F(9, 432) = 12.41, p < .001; \eta^2 = .22$; for the Innovativeness scale, $F(9, 494) = 43.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .50$; for the Dominance scale, $F(9, 541) = 34.05, p < .001, \eta^2 = .36$; for

the Thrift scale, $F(9, 492) = 158.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .74$; and finally, for the Style scale, $F(9, 502) = 26.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .32$.

In addition, we conducted follow-up analyses using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) tests; the results of those analyses are presented in Table 3. Inspection of Table 3 reveals a logical pattern of findings. As one might expect, companies that were rated especially high on Boy Scout included Disney, Bob Evans, and Wal-Mart; companies rated high on Innovativeness included Disney, Nike, and Reebok; those rated high on Dominance included Disney, Nike, and Reebok; those rated high on Thrift included JC Penney, Meijer, Wal-Mart, Kroger, and Bob Evans; and those rated high on Style included Nike and Reebok.

To examine participant agreement on the rating of each of these organizations' personalities, we computed $r_{wg(j)}$ (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993) for each of the multiple-item scales for each organization and then computed the median $r_{wg(j)}$ values across organizations, per Lindell and Brandt (1999). The median $r_{wg(j)}$ values were .95 (Boy Scout), .89 (Innovativeness), .90 (Dominance), .85 (Thrift), and .83 (Style). Given these reasonable values, it appears that participants assigned to each organization generally evidenced high agreement in the rating of the organizations' personalities.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a measure of organization personality perceptions. Our results suggest that five broad factors were sufficient to capture the structure of perceptions of firm personality: Boy Scout, Innovativeness, Dominance, Thrift, and Style. Results suggested fairly strong within-organizations agreement and plausible between-organizations differences.

Although the scale development provided good initial validity evidence for this measure, we still had some concerns. First, as noted in the introduction, we were interested in testing relationships between facets of organization personality perceptions and facets of organizational attraction. Second, we were concerned that some of the scales had to be shortened to as few as three trait adjective items in order to achieve good model fit, and thus we wanted to add items to the scales to (a) increase scale reliabilities, (b) better capture the constructs that we believed we uncovered in Study 1, and (c) explore whether we could find stronger within-organizations agreement on some of the scales (note that the $r_{wg(j)}$ value for the Style scale was only .83). Finally, note that the items that we retained for the Thrift scale could be described as some-

Table 2
Comparison of Alternative Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models in Study 1

| Model | $\chi^2(df)$ | $\Delta\chi^2(df)$ | CFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Hypothesized | $\chi^2(220) = 508.78$ | — | .95 | .94 | .046 |
| One-factor | $\chi^2(230) = 2,810.72$ | $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 2,301.94$ | .52 | .47 | .142 |
| Three-factor | $\chi^2(227) = 1,109.54$ | $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 600.75$ | .84 | .82 | .084 |
| Four-Factor 1 | $\chi^2(224) = 941.85$ | $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 433.07$ | .87 | .85 | .076 |
| Four-Factor 2 | $\chi^2(224) = 695.98$ | $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 187.20$ | .91 | .90 | .062 |

Note. $N = 555$. All chi-square values are significant at $p < .001$. $\Delta\chi^2 =$ chi-square goodness-of-fit difference between constrained and hypothesized model. The three-factor model specified all dominance and thrift items to load on the same factor and also specified all innovativeness and style items to load on the same factor. Four-Factor 1 included only the Dominance–Thrift constraint. Four-Factor 2 included only the Innovativeness–Style constraint. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

Table 3
Organization Personality Scale Means by Company in Study 1

| Company | Boy Scout | Innovativeness | Dominance | Thrift | Style |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Kroger | 3.57 _{c,d} | 2.67 _d | 3.87 _c | 3.80 _{a,b} | 3.16 _d |
| Wal-Mart | 3.74 _{b,c} | 2.86 _{c,d} | 4.13 _{b,c} | 3.60 _b | 3.06 _{d,e} |
| Subway | 3.60 _{c,d} | 3.22 _c | 3.96 _{b,c} | 3.71 _{a,b} | 3.44 _{c,d} |
| Bob Evans | 4.08 _{a,b} | 2.85 _{c,d} | 4.16 _{b,c} | 4.05 _a | 2.64 _e |
| Meijer | 3.67 _c | 3.01 _{c,d} | 4.18 _{b,c} | 3.61 _b | 3.49 _{c,d} |
| JC Penney | 3.54 _{c,d} | 2.76 _d | 3.54 _d | 3.90 _{a,b} | 3.31 _{c,d} |
| Disney | 4.12 _a | 4.45 _a | 4.84 _a | 1.63 _d | 3.71 _{b,c} |
| Microsoft | 3.48 _{c,d} | 3.15 _c | 4.28 _b | 2.15 _c | 3.62 _c |
| Nike | 3.42 _{c,d} | 3.89 _b | 4.77 _a | 1.59 _d | 4.12 _{a,b} |
| Reebok | 3.24 _d | 3.84 _b | 4.71 _a | 1.82 _{c,d} | 4.17 _a |

Note. Within columns, means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$.

what derogatory. Because of concerns about threats to validity, we sought to add items that captured the notion of Thrift without being pejorative.

Thus, we conducted a second study with an independent sample and several additional focal organizations. In an attempt to increase the length of our existing measures, several additional trait adjective items were written for each of the scales.

Study 2: Scale Refinement and Substantive Analyses

Method

Scale Revisions

Independently, the authors wrote additional items to tap the five personality–perception dimensions confirmed in Study 1. These items were checked for redundancy with the list of items already removed from consideration in the early scale-development stages. The items considered for addition in this study were: Boy Scout—trustworthy; Innovativeness—boring, exclusive, innovative, inventive, plain; Dominance—active, bully, demanding, dominant, victorious, winning; Thrift—deprived, low budget, reduced, undersized; Style—current, cutting edge, fashionable, hip, stylish. We also added the trait *simple* back to the Thrift scale to determine whether its low item-total correlation and contribution to poor model fit in the first study may have been functions of the specific organizations rated.

Data Collection

Students ($N = 457$) recruited from undergraduate psychology courses at a large, southern university participated for course credit. Individuals were randomly assigned to one of seven companies (AT&T, Disney, Ford, McDonald's, Microsoft, Nike, Universal Studios) on which to base their ratings of organization personality and organizational attraction. These companies were selected on the basis of high ratings of familiarity in a different study unrelated to the present investigation. Participants were 72% female, with a mean age of 19.2.

Organizational Attraction Measures

In addition to the personality perceptions measures, participants also completed three scales adapted from a validity study by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (in press). With respect to the company to which respondents were randomly assigned, participants rated their attraction to the company as a place to work (e.g., "This company is attractive to me as

a place for employment," four items, $\alpha = .93$), their future intentions toward the company (e.g., "I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company," five items, $\alpha = .92$), and their perceptions of the company's reputation as a place to work (e.g., "This is a reputable company to work for," five items, $\alpha = .91$). All responses were made on a 5-point scale of agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Results

Factor Structure

The first concern we had was whether the five-factor structure held up on an independent data set, using the 23-item model confirmed on the two samples in Study 1. The CFA results indicated a good fit of the model to the data, $\chi^2(220, N = 441) = 510.75, p < .001, TLI = .93, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .055$. However, because we were concerned about the length and reliability estimates for some of the scales, we next fit the data to a model with five factors (organization personality latent variables) and 45 indicators (items), using the structure confirmed in the scale development study and the additional items written. Although we observed a reasonable RMSEA (.080), other fit statistics indicated poor fit, $TLI = .79, CFI = .80$. We examined the items for low factor loadings and high modification indices and proceeded with additional analyses until we achieved reasonable fit. In all, we eliminated 12 items, leaving us with 33 items, an average of 6.6 per scale. Removing these items allowed us to achieve good model fit, $\chi^2(485, N = 441) = 1084.31, p < .001, TLI = .92, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .053$. Items and their respective factor loadings are presented in Table 4. Note that items loading on each of the first four dimensions (i.e., Boy Scout, Innovativeness, Dominance, and Thrift) remained relatively unchanged from Study 1, except that we were able to add several additional items to each scale. However, one item that we had specified to load on the final latent factor (modern) produced extremely high modification indices and contributed excessively to a poor model fit, and another item (contemporary) had low factor loadings. Observed internal consistency estimates were .87 (Boy Scout), .87 (Innovativeness), .82 (Dominance), .91 (Thrift), and .92 (Style). As in Study 1, we also compared the fit of the five-factor model with four alternative

Table 4
Standardized Factor Loadings (λ_x) in Study 2

| Item | Factor 1: Boy Scout | Factor 2: Innovativeness | Factor 3: Dominance | Factor 4: Thrift | Factor 5: Style |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Friendly | 1.00 | | | | |
| Attentive to People | .99 | | | | |
| Pleasant | .98 | | | | |
| Family-oriented | .93 | | | | |
| Cooperative | .90 | | | | |
| Personal | .86 | | | | |
| Helpful | .84 | | | | |
| Clean | .75 | | | | |
| Honest | .74 | | | | |
| Interesting | | 1.00 | | | |
| Exciting | | .99 | | | |
| Unique | | .95 | | | |
| Creative | | .93 | | | |
| Boring ^a | | -.78 | | | |
| Plain ^a | | -.75 | | | |
| Original | | .67 | | | |
| Successful | | | 1.00 | | |
| Popular | | | .99 | | |
| Dominant ^a | | | .85 | | |
| Busy | | | .78 | | |
| Active ^a | | | .70 | | |
| Low budget ^a | | | | 1.00 | |
| Low class | | | | .96 | |
| Simple ^a | | | | .91 | |
| Reduced ^a | | | | .89 | |
| Sloppy | | | | .87 | |
| Poor | | | | .83 | |
| Undersized ^a | | | | .69 | |
| Deprived ^a | | | | .65 | |
| Stylish ^a | | | | | 1.00 |
| Fashionable ^a | | | | | .96 |
| Hip ^a | | | | | .95 |
| Trendy | | | | | .89 |

Note. $N = 441$. $\chi^2(517) = 1,333.37$, $p < .001$. Tucker–Lewis index = .92, comparative fit index = .92, root-mean-square error of approximation = .052.

^a Added to the scale for Study 2.

models and found that, as before, the five-factor model had the best fit.

Between-Organizations Differences, Within-Organizations Agreement, and Relations With Organizational Attraction

As with the scale development study, we wanted to ensure that the organization personality measures could discriminate between companies. Thus, we first conducted a one-way MANOVA with organization as the independent variable and the five organization personality scores as the dependent variables. This MANOVA was significant, Wilk's $\Lambda = .37$, multivariate $F(30, 1662) = 15.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. We then proceeded with five ANOVA's, each of which evidenced between-companies differences. For the Boy Scout scale, $F(6, 419) = 18.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$; for the Innovativeness scale, $F(6, 419) = 49.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .42$; for the Dominance scale, $F(6, 422) = 5.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$; for the Thrift scale, $F(6, 419) = 14.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$; and finally, for the Style scale, $F(6, 422) = 27.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$.

In addition, we conducted follow-up Tukey's HSD analyses; results are presented in Table 5. Inspection of Table 5 reveals an interesting pattern of findings. Companies that were rated espe-

cially high on Boy Scout included Disney and Universal Studios; companies rated high on Innovativeness included Disney, Nike, and Universal Studios; those rated high on Dominance included Disney, Nike, Microsoft, and McDonald's; those rated high on Thrift included McDonald's and Ford; and those rated high on style included Nike, Disney, Ford, and Universal Studios. Note that, for those companies that were examined in both Studies 1 and 2, scale means were fairly similar across the two studies (see Table 3).

To examine participant agreement on the rating of the organizations' personalities, we again computed $r_{wg(j)}$ for each of the multi-item scales for each of the organizations. We then computed the median $r_{wg(j)}$ values (i.e., the median value across the seven organizations). Each of these values was relatively close to 1.0, suggesting that there was fairly strong agreement among individuals randomly assigned to rate the same company. Median $r_{wg(j)}$ values for the factors were as follows: .94 (Boy Scout), .90 (Innovativeness), .90 (Dominance), .92 (Thrift), and .89 (Style).

We also conducted multiple regression analyses to examine whether the sets of organization personality variables predicted attraction to the organization. The results of these analyses are

Table 5
Organization Personality Scale Means by Company in Study 2

| Company | Boy Scout | Innovativeness | Dominance | Thrift | Style |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| AT&T | 3.33 _c | 3.10 _{d,e} | 4.11 _c | 1.81 _{b,c} | 2.98 _c |
| Disney | 4.16 _a | 4.43 _a | 4.57 _a | 1.33 _d | 3.48 _b |
| Ford | 3.49 _{b,c} | 3.39 _{c,d} | 4.04 _c | 2.02 _{a,b} | 3.49 _b |
| McDonald's | 3.28 _c | 3.65 _c | 4.27 _{a,b,c} | 2.34 _a | 2.55 _d |
| Microsoft | 3.33 _c | 3.05 _e | 4.32 _{a,b,c} | 1.68 _{b,c,d} | 3.29 _{b,c} |
| Nike | 3.43 _c | 4.03 _b | 4.50 _{a,b} | 1.60 _{c,d} | 4.13 _a |
| Univ. Studios | 3.78 _b | 4.14 _{a,b} | 4.25 _{b,c} | 1.60 _{c,d} | 3.71 _b |

Note. Within columns, means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. Univ. = Universal.

presented in Table 6. Each of the sets of variables explained significant variance in the organizational attraction measures: For Attraction, $R^2 = .32$; for Job Pursuit Intentions, $R^2 = .29$; and for Reputation, $R^2 = .39$. Table 6 also presents standardized regression coefficients for each of the organization personality variables, as well as the associated t values. Each of the variables was predictive of the organizational attraction measures, with the exception of the Dominance scale.¹

Discussion

Study 2 suggested that the five-factor structure of organization personality explored and confirmed in the first two samples was also a good fit to the data for a third sample of respondents, in which the personalities of seven organizations were rated. Results suggested that there was significant between-organizations variability on each of the five traits, as evidenced by the one-way ANOVAs, and that respondents assigned to rate the same organization showed substantial agreement in their ratings, as evidenced by the high $r_{wg(j)}$ values observed. It is worthwhile noting that the $r_{wg(j)}$ value of the Style scale increased from .83 to .89 and that we were able to add some more neutral items to the Thrift scale so that not all of the items were derogatory.

Regression analyses suggested that, with the exception of the Dominance dimension, each of the organization personality variables was predictive of various dimensions of organizational attraction, namely overall attractiveness, reputation, and intentions to join the organization. This suggests that applicants' or potential applicants' inferences about an organization's personality traits may affect decisions to apply or to join an organization. Regarding the null findings for the Dominance dimension, it is possible that the degree to which an organization is high versus low on personality traits reflecting dominance (e.g., busy, successful, popular) does not affect individuals' attraction to the organization. However, inspection of the zero-order correlations between Dominance and the three organizational attraction measures (attraction, intentions, and reputation) suggest that this is not the case, $r = .24$, $.26$, and $.39$, respectively. Thus, it is probably more likely that Dominance is related to attraction, but that either (a) judgments of other personality traits weigh more heavily on the minds of raters when judging attractiveness, or (b) the variance shared by Dominance and measures of attraction is simply shared with other variables. It is also likely that selecting for inclusion only organizations that were likely to be very familiar to respondents contributed to a relatively restricted range on ratings of Dominance (note also that

between-organizations differences accounted for only 7% of the variance in ratings on this scale). This also may have reduced its power to influence ratings of organizational attractiveness.

At this point, we essentially had developed a multidimensional measure of organization personality perceptions. The scales used to represent the five factors of organizational personality—Boy Scout, Innovativeness, Dominance, Thrift, and Style—were found to have high internal consistency reliability, were related to organizational attractiveness, and their means were found to be significantly different across organizations.

One potential problem with our analyses of relations between organization personality perceptions and organizational attractiveness variables is that common method bias may have been driving (or inflating) the relations between the variables. That is, the relationships between these variables may be inflated because of the self-report nature of each of these variables and the fact that the same observers rated personality of, and attraction to, the organizations to which they were randomly assigned. To address this problem, we conducted a third study, in which perceived organizational personality characteristics were defined as the average

¹ Given the major findings from Study 1 and 2 (significant between-organizations differences on the personality perceptions variables, strong within-organizations agreement on the personality perceptions variables, and significant relations between personality perceptions and organizational attractiveness), a valid question is whether one should consider personality-attraction relations at the organizational level of analysis in these studies. To examine whether this was a viable option, we conducted within- and between-analyses (WABA) as specified by Yammarino and Markham (1992) to determine whether the variables could appropriately be considered group-level variables. WABA allows researchers to partition variance into within- and between-groups components and to compute between-groups and within-groups relations between variables. Our analyses suggested that, across Studies 1 and 2, only the Study 1-Thrift and Study 1-Innovativeness variables showed between-groups variance that was significantly larger than within-groups variance. In Study 2, in which various attraction variables were measured, for none of these outcomes was the between-groups variance significantly larger than the within-groups variance; this was also true for each of the personality-perceptions variables. Thus, despite the significant between-organizations differences suggested by the MANOVAs and ANOVAs reported in the text, the WABA analyses suggest that there is sufficient within-organizations variance such that the relations between variables are appropriately considered at the individual, rather than organizational, level of analysis, and therefore are reported as such. Complete results of the WABA analyses are available from Jerel E. Slaughter.

Table 6
Results of Regression Analyses for Predicting Organizational Attraction Variables From Organization Personality in Study 2

| Organization personality variable | Attraction | | Job pursuit intentions | | Reputation | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|------------------------|----------|------------|----------|
| | β | t | β | t | β | t |
| Boy Scout | .26 | 5.58*** | .25 | 5.12*** | .19 | 4.13*** |
| Innovativeness | .18 | 3.15*** | .14 | 2.34** | .11 | 1.91* |
| Dominance | -.05 | -1.03 | -.02 | -.44 | .07 | 1.43 |
| Thrift | -.17 | -3.04*** | -.20 | -3.48*** | -.31 | -5.92*** |
| Style | .15 | 3.14*** | .14 | 2.87*** | .16 | 3.54*** |
| R^2 | .32*** | | .29*** | | .39*** | |
| Adjusted R^2 | .31 | | .28 | | .38 | |

Note. Because of missing data, N ranged from 425 to 437. Standardized regression coefficients are presented. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

ratings given to a company by one group of participants, and organizational attraction, intentions toward an organization, reputation, and likelihood of accepting a job offer were defined as the average ratings given to a company by a different group of participants. Thus, organization personality as rated by one sample was used to predict organizational attractiveness as rated by a different sample. This study is described below.

Study 3: Personality–Attraction Relations Without Method Bias

Pilot Study

Because personality perceptions and attraction were to be aggregated to the organizational level of analysis for the statistical analyses in Study 3, our first task was to identify a larger set of organizations that would be recognized by all participants. It was also important that participants had enough familiarity with an organization to have some basis for forming perceptions of organizational personality and attractiveness.

We therefore ran a small pilot study to arrive at a set of organizations appropriate for inclusion. Undergraduate psychology students at a large southern university ($N = 74$, 71% female, mean age = 22.1) were presented with names of 101 companies. These companies represented the 2001 *Fortune* 100 organizations and one fictitious organization (“Summerlin Corporation”). For each organization, participants indicated whether they recognized the name of the organization (by circling *yes* or *no*). For each organization they recognized, participants were asked to rate their familiarity with the organization on a 5-point scale (1 = *very familiar* to 5 = *very unfamiliar*). Participants were not asked to rate their familiarity with organizations they did not recognize.

Only one participant indicated recognition of the fictitious organization; that individual’s data were eliminated from further analysis. We then selected organizations for inclusion on the basis of three criteria: 90% recognition, mean familiarity ratings of greater than 4.25 (out of a possible 5.0) and nationwide presence. Organizations had to meet all three criteria to be selected for inclusion; several organizations were eliminated on the basis of not meeting one of the three criteria. Using these criteria left us with

23 of the original 100 organizations. These organizations are listed in Appendix B.

Method

Students in two large introductory psychology classes at a medium-sized, Midwestern university served as participants for Study 3. A coin flip was used to assign one class ($N = 203$, 66% female, mean age = 18.8) to rate perceptions of organization personality (hereafter referred to as Sample 1), and to assign the other class ($N = 168$, 57% female, mean age = 18.9) to rate organizational attraction variables (hereafter referred to as Sample 2). Within each class, participants were randomly assigned to 1 of the 23 organizations identified in the pilot study. Depending on the class to which a participant belonged, he or she rated the organization on traits related to Boy Scout ($\alpha = .83$), Dominance ($\alpha = .76$), Innovativeness ($\alpha = .86$), Thrift ($\alpha = .92$), and Style ($\alpha = .88$), or on their Attraction to the organization as a place to work ($\alpha = .89$), their intentions to pursue a position at the organization ($\alpha = .84$), their perceptions of the organization’s reputation ($\alpha = .84$), and the likelihood that they would accept a job offer at the organization if one were made (one item, 10-point scale, ranging from 10% to 100%).

Results

To determine whether companies differed on the variables measured, we ran several one-way ANOVAs, with Organization serving as the independent variable and the personality perceptions and attraction-related variables serving as dependent variables. Results indicated significant between-organizations differences on Boy Scout, $F(22, 180) = 3.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$; Dominance, $F(22, 178) = 6.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = .43$; Innovativeness, $F(22, 180) = 4.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .37$; Thrift, $F(22, 180) = 5.64, p < .001, \eta^2 = .41$; Style, $F(22, 179) = 4.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .38$; Attraction, $F(21, 146) = 1.77, p < .05, \eta^2 = .20$; Reputation, $F(22, 155) = 4.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .37$; but not Intentions, $F(22, 155) = 1.15, p > .05, \eta^2 = .14$, or Likelihood of job offer acceptance, $F(22, 155) = .98, p > .05, \eta^2 = .12$. Because of space limitations, we do not report here means by organization or the results of post hoc tests. These results are available from Jerel E. Slaughter on request.

To determine whether personality perceptions of Sample 1 were related to organizational attraction variables in Sample 2, we

Table 7
Relations Between Personality Perceptions and Organizational Attractiveness in Study 3

| Organization personality variable | Attraction variables | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Attraction | Intentions | Reputation | Job offer |
| Boy Scout | $r = .14, p = .520$ | $r = .16, p = .475$ | $r = .35, p = .098$ | $r = .27, p = .220$ |
| Dominance | $r = .39, p = .064$ | $r = .44, p = .034$ | $r = .78, p = .000$ | $r = .45, p = .036$ |
| Innovativeness | $r = .39, p = .067$ | $r = .39, p = .067$ | $r = .60, p = .003$ | $r = .33, p = .120$ |
| Thrift | $r = -.41, p = .054$ | $r = -.38, p = .076$ | $r = -.71, p = .000$ | $r = -.44, p = .037$ |
| Style | $r = .32, p = .132$ | $r = .34, p = .111$ | $r = .50, p = .015$ | $r = .29, p = .174$ |

Note. $N = 23$. Values in bold are significant at $p < .10$. Values in bold and underlined are significant at $p < .05$.

aggregated all of the personality perceptions variables and attraction variables to the organizational level of analysis. For example, in Sample 1, we reduced the N from 203 (participants) to 23 (organizations) by defining each organization as the mean level of five personality variables, rated by the participants randomly assigned to rate their perceptions of one organization's personality (the number of participants assigned to each organization ranged from 7 to 11). In Sample 2, we reduced the N from 168 (participants) to 23 (organizations) by assigning to each organization the mean level of attraction, intentions, reputation, and likelihood of job offer acceptance, rated by participants randomly assigned to rate attraction toward one organization (the number of participants assigned to rate each organization in this sample ranged from 6 to 9).

We then merged the two data sets to compute the correlations. The zero-order correlations and associated p values (two-tailed tests) are presented in Table 7. Inspection of Table 7 reveals some interesting findings. Overall, perhaps most striking is the magnitude of the correlations between personality perceptions and attraction variables as rated by different samples of participants: The mean of the absolute values of the correlations presented in Table 7 is .40. Looking across the rows of the table, it is also interesting to note that Dominance and Thrift correlated with each of the attraction-related variables (although the correlation between Dominance and Attraction was marginally significant at $p < .10$), with fewer relations between personality variables Innovativeness, Style, and Boy Scout and the attraction variables (note that there was less between-organizations variance on the Boy Scout variable, relative to the other personality perceptions variables). Looking down the columns of the table, it is notable that perceived Reputation is correlated with each of the personality perceptions variables, with several other significant and marginally significant relations between Attraction and Intentions and personality perceptions. Only Dominance and Thrift were significantly correlated with reported likelihood of accepting a job offer.²

Discussion

The purpose of Study 3 was to conduct a stronger test of the personality perceptions–organizational attraction relations found in Study 2. It is notable that, even with an N of 23, which afforded low power to detect personality–attraction relations that do exist, several statistically significant correlations were observed at the organizational level of analysis. In these analyses, two different groups of participants provided personality perceptions and ratings

of attractiveness. Thus, it appears that common method bias is not the only explanation for the relations observed in Study 2. We should also note that, although many significant correlations were observed, ratings of Reputation stood out as the attraction dimension most strongly related to personality dimensions. Dominance and Thrift stood out as the personality perceptions most strongly related to attraction variables in general.

To provide additional supporting evidence for the construct validity of the scale, we conducted a fourth study, in which we examined the sensitivity of our measure to a between-subjects experimental manipulation. This study is discussed below.

Study 4: Experimental Validation of the Organization Personality Scale

In the final study, we sought to test whether the organizational characteristics could be manipulated to reflect high levels of a single personality dimension (i.e., high Boy Scout, high Innovativeness, high Dominance, high Thrift, or high Style). We reasoned that if organizations are indeed perceived to differ on such dimensions, it should be possible to describe organizations as having high levels of these personality traits, and a valid measure of organization personality perceptions should be sensitive to these differences. Several authors have suggested that evaluating a measure's sensitivity to experimental manipulations is a helpful supplement to traditional validity evidence (e.g., Breaugh & Colihan, 1994; Guion, 2002; Schmitt & Klimoski, 1991).

In general, we expected significant between-companies differences on the personality variables; we expected that the company described as having high levels of each dimension to be rated higher than all of the other companies on that dimension. For example, the company described as a "High Boy Scout" company should have significantly higher ratings on a Boy Scout scale than companies described as "High Style" or "High Innovative" companies.

² We also conducted these correlational analyses at the individual level of analysis, in which the mean personality perceptions provided by Sample 1 were correlated with individual ratings of attraction, provided by Sample 2 (e.g., each individual who rated attraction to Wal-Mart in Sample 2 was assigned the mean of each of the five personality perception ratings given to Wal-Mart by participants in Sample 1). Results of these analyses were consistent with the organizational-level analyses presented in the text of the article; many of the correlations were smaller in magnitude, but as a result of the increased sample size, they remained statistically significant.

We also expected significant within-companies differences on the personality perceptions scales. For example, we expected that a company described as a High Boy Scout company would be rated significantly higher on the Boy Scout scale than on the Innovativeness and Style scales.

Finally, we also tested whether the manipulation of company description affected ratings of attraction to the organization as a place to work and as a place to shop. Recall that, in Studies 2 and 3, described above, we observed significant relations between ratings of organization personality and ratings of organizational attractiveness. Findings that suggest that personalities may be inferred from newspaper articles could have important implications for influencing organizational attractiveness through flattering media coverage.

Method

Stimuli and Procedure

Five hypothetical newspaper articles were written. Each of these articles was written to reflect high levels of a single personality dimension. Each article described a "brand-new area company," with the premise of the article being "to keep readers informed of the important link between corporations and the community, and to introduce the new company to our readers." The company described was called "Stage Clothing Downtown," a clothing store part of a larger parent company with holdings in a variety of industries. The article was written from the perspective of a reporter, who wrote about her perceptions as an observer and included short quotations from interviews with customers.

The High Boy Scout version of Stage Clothing Downtown was described as a company that gave excellent customer service and had been finalists for customer service awards in years past. The High Innovative version described the company as one that used an innovative way of selling clothing. The High Dominance version was described as hectic and fast-paced, and as being part of an organization that had grown in size considerably over the last 35–40 years. The High Thrift version was described as a company that thrived on being a good value for customers, and the High Style version was described as one that en vogue and "classy," a store where those concerned with fashion would be interested

in shopping. An example of one of these articles, the High Innovative version, is provided in Appendix C.

Measures

Organization personality. After reading the simulated newspaper article, participants rated the degree to which each of the 33 trait adjectives described Stage Clothing Downtown. As with Studies 1 and 2, these ratings of agreement were made on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Organizational attractiveness. As in Studies 2 and 3, participants completed three scales adapted from a validity study by Highhouse et al. (in press). With respect to the version of Stage Clothing Downtown to which they were randomly assigned, participants rated their attraction to the company as a place to work, their future intentions toward the company, and their perceptions of the company's reputation. Participants also completed a three-item measure of their attraction to Stage Clothing Downtown as a place to shop (e.g., "I would go shopping at Stage, if I were looking for some new clothes"). All responses were made on a 5-point scale of agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Finally, participants indicated the likelihood that they would accept an offer of employment at Stage Clothing Downtown, if one were made. This variable was measured on an 11-point scale, ranging from 0% to 100%, with anchors at each 10% interval.

Participants and Procedure

Students ($N = 356$, 66% female, mean age = 19.3) recruited from undergraduate psychology courses at a large, southern university participated in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the five articles and to indicate the degree to which each of the 33 personality items described the company they had read. They were then asked to complete the scales measuring organizational attractiveness and attractiveness as a place to shop.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the major variables in Study 4 are presented in Table 8. Although estimated scale reliabilities for the organization personality vari-

Table 8
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Major Study Variables in Study 4

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| 1. Gender | 1.33 | 0.47 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age | 19.26 | 2.37 | .05 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Full time | 1.27 | 1.36 | .26 | .35 | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Part time | 2.45 | 1.54 | .01 | .22 | .14 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Boy Scout | 3.68 | 0.63 | -.06 | -.01 | -.03 | -.05 | (.86) | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Innovativeness | 3.67 | 0.75 | -.04 | -.05 | -.03 | .01 | .14 | (.88) | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Dominance | 3.78 | 0.64 | .01 | .02 | -.06 | -.01 | -.01 | .28 | (.78) | | | | | | | |
| 8. Thrift | 2.17 | 0.79 | -.02 | -.04 | .01 | .03 | -.10 | -.51 | -.43 | (.85) | | | | | | |
| 9. Style | 3.49 | 0.92 | -.01 | -.05 | -.04 | -.05 | -.10 | .57 | .40 | -.50 | (.94) | | | | | |
| 10. Attract work | 3.10 | 1.11 | -.11 | -.05 | -.05 | -.04 | .30 | .31 | .15 | -.24 | .28 | (.95) | | | | |
| 11. Attract shop | 3.43 | 0.86 | -.11 | .00 | -.04 | -.04 | .27 | .48 | .15 | -.37 | .40 | .48 | (.79) | | | |
| 12. Intention | 3.04 | 0.96 | -.03 | -.05 | -.08 | -.08 | .32 | .28 | .19 | -.20 | .29 | .81 | .43 | (.87) | | |
| 13. Reputation | 3.68 | 0.70 | -.12 | -.01 | -.04 | -.05 | .34 | .34 | .26 | -.39 | .25 | .41 | .38 | .45 | (.81) | |
| 14. Chances | 54.60 | 26.59 | -.04 | -.09 | -.09 | -.10 | .22 | .28 | .16 | -.25 | .29 | .75 | .38 | .83 | .41 | — |

Note. Because of missing data, N ranged from 351 to 356. Correlations $|\geq .10|$ and greater are significant at $p < .05$. Correlations $|\geq .14|$ and greater are significant at $p < .01$. Gender coded 1 = female, 2 = male. Attract work = attraction to Stage as a place to work; Attract shop = attraction toward Stage as a place to shop; Chances = percentage likelihood of accepting a job offer; Stage = Stage Clothing Downtown, a hypothetical clothing store used in the study.

ables are slightly lower than in Studies 1 and 2, they nonetheless met minimum requirements. Note, however, that we removed the item *clean* from the Boy Scout scale; the observed median inter-correlation between this item and other Boy Scout items was less than .10, and removing this variable from the scale raised the internal consistency reliability estimate from .77 to .86. The pattern of correlations was logical and consistent with our expectations; the organization personality trait inferences were significantly correlated with the outcomes variables. Inferences about the degree to which an organization is high on Thrift traits were negatively related to outcomes such as attitude toward the organization as a place to work and as a place to shop, reported intentions toward the organization, perceptions of its reputation, and the reported chances of accepting a position at the organization if offered. All of the other personality trait inferences were positively related to these variables.

We then proceeded with three sets of analyses. The purpose of the first set of analyses was to examine whether the manipulation of the newspaper article’s content affected ratings of organization personality. A one-way MANOVA suggested that this manipulation affected the set of organization personality–perception variables, Wilk’s $\Lambda = .21$, multivariate $F(20, 1125) = 33.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .32$. The five univariate ANOVAs conducted on each organization personality variable also demonstrated between-organizations differences on each of the variables. For Boy Scout, $F(4, 350) = 40.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .32$; for Innovativeness, $F(4, 350) = 33.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27$; for Dominance, $F(4, 351) = 29.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .25$; for Thrift, $F(4, 345) = 20.51, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$; for Style, $F(4, 350) = 46.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$.

We also conducted Tukey’s HSD tests to examine whether the manipulations had affected the scales as expected. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 9. In all cases, the organization that was expected to be rated highest on a given scale was always rated highest. For example, the High Boy Scout organization was rated highest on the Boy Scout scale, the High Stylish organization was rated highest on the Style scale, and so forth. However, with respect to the adjectives measuring Innovativeness, the difference between ratings of the High Innovative organization ($M = 4.17$) and the High Style organization ($M = 4.03$) was not statistically significant.

In the second set of analyses, we examined the within-organizations differences on the personality variables. For example, we wanted to test whether the High Boy Scout organization was rated higher on the Boy Scout scale than it was on the Innovativeness, Thrift, Style, and Dominance scales. Thus, for

each organization, we conducted four dependent-samples *t* tests, testing for differences in means between the personality scale that matched the organization description and the four other scales. For example, for those individuals who read the description of the High Boy Scout organization, we examined whether the ratings on the Boy Scout scale were higher than ratings on the Innovativeness, Thrift, Style, and Dominance scales.

Results of the dependent-samples *t* tests are presented in Table 10. Inspection of Table 10 reveals that, with the exception of the Thrift scale, participants gave the appropriate scale significantly higher ratings than any other scale: Within each condition, individuals rated the traits consistent with the organization’s description significantly higher than those traits that are less relevant to the organization’s descriptions. For example, inspection of the first column of Table 10 reveals that individuals randomly assigned to the High Boy Scout company description gave the organization higher ratings on the Boy Scout scale than on the Innovativeness, Dominance, Thrift, and Style scales.

In the final set of analyses, we tested whether the effects of the company-description manipulation affected variables related to organizational attractiveness. We conducted a one-way MANOVA with company description as the independent variable, and attraction-work, attraction-shop, intentions, reputation, and likelihood of accepting a job offer as the dependent variables. The MANOVA was significant, Wilk’s $\Lambda = .81$, multivariate $F(20, 1138) = 3.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. The five univariate ANOVAs on the individual dependent variables also suggested significant between-companies differences on these variables. For Attraction as a place to work, $F(4, 349) = 5.11, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$; for Attraction as a place to shop, $F(4, 349) = 7.78, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$; for Intentions, $F(4, 351) = 3.94, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$; for Reputations, $F(4, 348) = 7.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$; for Likelihood of accepting an offer, $F(4, 348) = 4.20, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$. We also conducted follow-up Tukey’s HSD tests; results of those tests are presented in Table 11. Inspection of Table 11 reveals that the High Boy Scout, High Innovativeness, and High Style organizations stood out as those that engendered the most favorable reactions among the participants.

Discussion

The results of Study 4 provide additional construct validity evidence for the five-factor conceptualization of organization personality perceptions. Observer ratings of companies’ personalities corresponded to our experimental manipulation of personality in

Table 9
Organization Personality Scale Means by Company in Study 4

| Version of Stage Clothing Downtown | <i>n</i> | Boy Scout | Innovativeness | Dominance | Thrift | Style |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| High Boy Scout | 70 | 4.25_a | 3.44 _b | 3.77 _{b,c} | 2.06 _{b,c} | 3.19 _c |
| High Innovativeness | 72 | 3.77 _b | 4.17_a | 3.39 _d | 2.21 _b | 3.32 _c |
| High Dominance | 74 | 3.20 _c | 3.57 _b | 4.31_a | 2.06 _{b,c} | 3.69 _b |
| High Thrift | 68 | 3.77 _b | 3.10 _c | 3.52 _d | 2.82_a | 2.80 _d |
| High Style | 72 | 3.42 _c | 4.03 _a | 3.84 _b | 1.76 _c | 4.39_a |

Note. Means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. Values in bold on diagonal represent personality dimensions that correspond to company description.

Table 10
Within-Organizations Personality Scale Means and t Test Results for Study 4

| Variable | Experimental condition (organization) | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| | High Bo | | High In | | High Do | | High Th | | High St | |
| | Bo | Other | In | Other | Do | Other | Th | Other | St | Other |
| <i>M</i> | 4.25 | 3.44 (In) | 4.17 | 3.77 (Bo) | 4.30 | 3.20 (Bo) | 2.82 | 3.77 (Bo) | 4.40 | 3.43 (Bo) |
| <i>t</i> | | 10.11 ^{a***} | | 6.01 ^{c***} | | 10.09 ^{d***} | | -8.72 ^{f***} | | 11.07 ^{c***} |
| <i>M</i> | 4.25 | 3.77 (Do) | 4.17 | 3.39 (Do) | 4.30 | 3.57 (In) | 2.82 | 3.11 (In) | 4.40 | 4.04 (In) |
| <i>t</i> | | 6.34 ^{a***} | | 10.57 ^{b***} | | 9.14 ^{d***} | | -1.91 ^{f†} | | 5.57 ^{a***} |
| <i>M</i> | 4.25 | 2.05 (Th) | 4.17 | 2.21 (Th) | 4.30 | 2.06 (Th) | 2.82 | 3.51 (Do) | 4.40 | 3.84 (Do) |
| <i>t</i> | | 16.80 ^{a***} | | 15.84 ^{c***} | | 16.71 ^{e***} | | -5.67 ^{f***} | | 7.69 ^{c***} |
| <i>M</i> | 4.25 | 3.19 (St) | 4.17 | 3.32 (St) | 4.30 | 3.69 (St) | 2.82 | 2.82 (St) | 4.40 | 1.76 (Th) |
| <i>t</i> | | 10.35 ^{a***} | | 10.24 ^{c***} | | 6.50 ^{e***} | | .02 ^{f†} | | 11.07 ^{b***} |

Note. Bo = Boy Scout; In = Innovativeness; Do = Dominance; Th = Thrift; St = Style.
^a *df* = 69. ^b *df* = 70. ^c *df* = 71. ^d *df* = 72. ^e *df* = 73. ^f *df* = 65.
 † *p* > .05. *** *p* < .001.

newspaper articles. These results indicate that inferences about organizations' personality traits may be made on the basis of relatively short, 400-word newspaper articles, and that the measure constructed in this investigation can capture such trait inferences. Although researchers have begun to study various antecedents of corporate image and reputation (e.g., Gatewood et al., 1993; Cable & Graham, 2001; Highhouse et al., 1999), there has not been much discussion about the media through which such inferences are formed or how much company exposure is required to form such opinions. For example, Highhouse et al. (1999) studied the antecedents of company employment image in the fast-food industry and found that inferences about image were related to ratings of perceived respectability, product image, and favorability of potential coworkers, among others. Cable and Graham (2001) concluded that organizational profitability, familiarity with the organization, and the degree to which individuals would be proud of working in the organization's specific industry were the major determinants of job seekers' reputation perceptions. The results of Study 4 suggest that some of these determinants of image and reputation may be formed rather quickly, with only limited exposure to company information.

It also is important to realize that, although we can be reasonably confident that the five factors are distinct, they certainly are not orthogonal. We found that our manipulation of the company description often affected the ratings of more than one personality dimension, as we discussed above. Moreover, although in the between-subjects analyses the High Thrift organization was rated

higher on the Thrift scale than were the other organizations, the expected differences were not present for this organization in the within-subjects analyses. Individuals randomly assigned to the High Thrift organization rated this organization higher on the Boy Scout and Dominance scales than on the Thrift scales, and there were no differences between Thrift ratings and Innovativeness ratings or between Thrift ratings and Style ratings. Thus, consistent with ideas about human personality, perceptions of an organization's overall personality likely reflects perceptions of that organization's unique constellation of traits, or where individuals perceive the organization stands on a variety of different traits. It may also simply be difficult to infer an organization's Thrift-related traits from a short newspaper article, especially one that has been written in a relatively neutral tone.

It is also important to recognize the potential limitations stemming from the fact that the hypothetical organization used in study 4 was a clothing company. As one reviewer noted, men and women may be differentially attracted to, for example, clothing stores versus manufacturing organizations. However, inspection of Table 8 reveals that none of the correlations between gender and any of the personality or attraction variables was higher than .12. Furthermore, follow-up moderated regression analyses did not reveal that gender moderated any of the relationships between personality perceptions and attraction. Nevertheless, future studies might consider using other kinds of hypothetical organization (e.g., electronics, manufacturing, engineering) in experimental studies using the scale developed in the present investigation.

Table 11
Organizational Attractiveness Scale Means by Company in Study 4

| Company | Att. work | Att. shop | Reputation | Intention | Likelihood |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| High Boy Scout | 3.45 _a | 3.57 _{a,b} | 4.02 _a | 3.32 _a | 59.71 _a |
| High Innovativeness | 3.25 _{a,b} | 3.50 _{a,b} | 3.59 _b | 3.03 _{a,b} | 55.35 _{a,b} |
| High Dominance | 2.89 _{b,c} | 3.20 _{b,c} | 3.71 _b | 2.88 _b | 52.74 _{a,b} |
| High Thrift | 2.71 _c | 3.09 _c | 3.41 _b | 2.76 _b | 44.41 _b |
| High Style | 3.20 _{a,b,c} | 3.76 _a | 3.65 _b | 3.20 _{a,b} | 60.28 _a |

Note. In each column, means with different subscripts are significantly different at *p* < .05. Att. work = attraction as a place to work; Att. shop = attraction as a place to shop.

General Discussion

Summary of Findings

It is important for I-O psychologists to understand personality trait inferences about organizations for several reasons. First, people perceive that organizations have different personalities and show fairly strong agreement in their ratings of these personalities. Findings from this research suggest that significant between-organizations differences existed on each of the five organization personality perceptions scales: Boy Scout, Innovativeness, Dominance, Thrift, and Style. Second, this set of personality dimensions is conceptually distinct from the five-factor model. Although there are clearly some similarities (e.g., Boy Scout and Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Style), the two sets of five labels appear to be distinct from one another. Similar to observations made by Aaker (1997) in her study of brand personality, our findings suggested that there are dimensions of organization personality perceptions (e.g., Thrift) that have no counterpart in the Big Five framework. Moreover, we found that many trait adjectives typically used to describe human personality were eliminated in very early data collection because the researchers and participants found that they were not applicable to the description of organization personality perceptions. Our research demonstrates that scales used to measure human personality cannot be used for measuring organization personality without significant modification.

Another reason it is important to study inferences about firm personality is that such inferences are related to broad inferences about the company in general, and these broad inferences are of interest to organizational decision makers and to other stakeholders. The findings from this investigation suggest that ratings of organization personality are related to perceptions of overall organizational attractiveness, the reputation that the organization has among prospective applicants, and the self-reported likelihood that one would pursue a job at that organization. These findings were observed when each respondent rated perceptions of personality and organizational attractiveness in Study 2 and when different sets of respondents rated personality perceptions and attractiveness in Study 3. Furthermore, the finding of significant differences in attractiveness as a place to work was replicated in Study 4, in which the name (Stage Clothing Downtown) and familiarity with the organization prior to the study (none) were held constant across experimental conditions. This suggests that respondent familiarity with the organization is not likely to be the only explanation for the findings from Studies 2 and 3.

Limitations and Future Research

Clearly, there are several limitations to this study, many of which may be overcome with future studies expanding on the work we have done here. One is the number of organizations and organization types on which our measure was evaluated (30 different organizations across Studies 1, 2, and 3). Although we attempted to represent several different kinds of organizations in the studies presented in this article, it is possible that the results from this study may be particular to the organizations we studied. Large organizations were chosen so that all respondents would be familiar with the company that they were evaluating. Future studies should include small organizations as well as large ones.

On a related note, it is important to recognize a potential measurement problem in the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses in Studies 1 and 2. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis assumes that observations are independent, but in Studies 1 and 2, individuals were nested within organization, such that more than one participant (indeed, between 36 and 71 participants) rated each organization. Logically, given that there was reasonable within-organizations agreement on the personality scales, which likely means that there was less-than-optimal overall variance on the items, the factor structure would be likely to remain intact if a larger number of organizations were added to the data set, which would likely have the effect of increasing the variance on each item.

Clearly, an important next step for researchers is to determine whether the factor structure remains intact when observations are fully independent. However, this may be difficult to assess as each individual in the sample would be required to rate a single organization. In the pilot portion of our third study, only 23 of the *Fortune* 100 companies were recognized by 90% of the student sample. We believe it is unlikely that a greater portion of the organizations would be recognized in a more diverse, less educated, nonstudent sample. One way, then, to address this problem may be to have individuals rate the organization for which they work. However, collecting data from organizational insiders may be problematic in that what the data represent may be contaminated by idiosyncratic personal experiences. In addition, these data would constitute some departure from the definition of personality as social reputation (Hogan, 1991). More creative data collection efforts might therefore be required to gather hundreds of independent observations of organization personality perceptions. For example, researchers could assign respondents to one of several hundred organizations to rate. Respondents could first be asked to rate a less well-known organization, but only if they indicated a high level of familiarity with that company. If a given respondent were not familiar with the particular organization listed first, alternate organizations could be listed, and each could be asked to rate the first organization listed in the packet with which he or she felt there was enough familiarity to provide ratings. This would be a fairly efficient method of gathering as many independent observations as possible. Having considered these issues, however, we would caution that this method could also be problematic. Any given respondent might rate the organization with which the respondent is most familiar, regardless of order of presentation. Or, that respondent might rate the organization toward which he or she has the most favorable or least favorable feelings (e.g., because of a very recent and salient positive or negative experience).

On another measurement-related note, and as one reviewer pointed out, given the high internal consistency estimates for each scale and the relatively small number of items per scale, it is unlikely that there are any facet-level dimensions for these scales. Thus, another possible limitation of this investigation is that the five-factor structure we have uncovered may be incomplete or insufficiently complex as a result of using an inductive method and paying so much attention to psychometric issues (e.g., model fit in confirmatory factor analyses). The lack of specific facet dimensions in a study of perceptions of organization personality is not surprising, however. Recall that the definition of personality in this study was limited to the organizations' social reputations. Therefore, these perceptions were necessarily measured from observers'

perspectives. As a result, we should expect it to be somewhat less complex than the structure of human personality, which more often refers to individuals' internal processes and propensities and is more commonly assessed through respondent self-report (Hogan, 1991).

It is also important to note that, in the present study, we only asked individuals to provide a judgment of their attraction to the organization. Cognitive psychologists have noted that judgment and choice are clearly different processes (Billings & Scherer, 1988; Hammond, 1996; Payne, Bettman, & Johnson, 1993). As such, it is not always feasible to generalize judgments of attractiveness to real-world (or even simulated) job choice. Future research could provide some insight as to whether inferences about organization personality can actually influence whether an individual may choose one job over another.

Another interesting issue that future researchers might consider addressing is the source of organization personality development (i.e., the origin of perceptions of an organization's personality). As we briefly touched on in the introduction of this article, inferences about an organization's personality traits may have multiple antecedents, including statements made by the organization in their advertising, the type and quality of an organization's products and services, and individuals' interaction with the company's employees. As one reviewer noted, perhaps the next step is to identify concrete organizational practices (e.g., types of advertising campaigns, stated organizational policies on the environment, publicly known actions by CEOs), and to relate those concrete practices to perceptions of organizations' personalities.

Although there are likely to be several different antecedents of any one person's perceptions of a single organization's personality, in the present investigation we did not attempt to identify the source of our participants' ratings of organizations' personality nor did we attempt to establish the degree of contact that participants had with the organization whose personality they were randomly assigned to rate. However, we believe that it would be worthwhile to develop and test explicit models of the antecedents of perceptions of organization personality. Such antecedents might include not only proximal antecedents, such as concrete organizational practices, marketing and advertising attempts, the personalities of an organization's employees, and so forth, as we discussed in the preceding paragraph, but also might include much more distal antecedents, such as the founder's personality or the founder's goals (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith, & Paul, 2001; Schein, 1992). It would also be interesting in future research to determine whether different levels of familiarity or contact with organizations were related to ratings in some way. For example, it is possible that familiarity may be positively related to agreement, in which individuals with greater levels of familiarity with the organization would evidence greater levels of agreement, and those with relatively less familiarity with the organization would evidence less agreement about an organization's standing on a personality trait.

It would also be interesting to study the consequences of having high levels of particular personality characteristics. For example, one way to study this might be to examine the relations between observer ratings of organization personality and more objective organizational performance measures in a longitudinal study. The consequences of high interobserver agreement about an organization's personality would also be interesting to study. High agree-

ment in outsiders' perceptions of an organization's personality among observers might indicate a greater degree of homogeneity of personality among organizational members. Schneider (1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995) suggested that homogeneity of personality in organizations can lead to inflexibility in turbulent environments.

Another potentially fruitful area for future research is to examine the ways in which applicant personality may interact with inferences about organization personality to influence organizational attractiveness. Several authors have provided evidence to suggest that perceived organizational attractiveness is likely to be enhanced by a match or fit between applicant characteristics and organizational characteristics (e.g., Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993). Given the recent success with which researchers have been able to measure human personality, as well as our relative success in measuring organization personality perceptions, it would be interesting to see whether individuals may be differentially attuned to an organization's personality, depending on their own personalities. For example, it may be that inferences about Boy Scout traits may influence attractiveness to a greater extent among those who are highly conscientious versus those who are less conscientious. One could imagine similar interactions between self-rated Openness to Experience and perceptions about an organization's innovativeness.

Another question that would be worthwhile examining in future research is whether personality trait inferences explain incremental variance in attraction to organizations or jobs, over and above other job and organizational attributes. Most commentators on recruitment research (e.g., Barber, 1998; Breaugh & Stark, 2000; Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001; Rynes, 1991) have complained that research on organizational attraction and job choice is often fragmented, examining only a few variables at a time. Thus, it is still difficult to make definitive statements about which variables are truly unique influences on attraction, and alternatively, which attributes may act as a substitute for others. In the future, it will be important to test hypotheses about the incremental variance in attraction explained by personality trait inferences, over and above "objective" job and organizational attributes (see also Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Moreover, given the similarity (but not complete overlap) of organization personality perceptions and organizational values perceptions, incremental validity of inferences about personality over inferences about values, and of inferences about values over inferences about personality, would also be a worthwhile research question to pursue.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study was aimed at providing an initial understanding and framework for studying personality trait inferences about organizations. Despite its limitations, this study was an important first step in delineating the structure of organization personality perceptions and examining their relationships with organizational attractiveness.

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Appendix A

71 Personality Items Retained for Instrument Development

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| attention seeking | hardworking | reliable |
| attentive to people | helpful | rude |
| big | high-class | simple |
| busy | honest | sloppy |
| cheap | impersonal | slow |
| cheerful | inconsistent | small |
| clean | inefficient | sophisticated |
| colorful | informal | stable |
| common | interesting | successful |
| contemporary | low class | superior |
| conventional | middle class | systematic |
| cooperative | modern | thrifty |
| corporate | neat | trendy |
| creative | old fashioned | unconventional |
| different | ordinary | unimaginative |
| disorganized | organized | unique |
| dominating | original | unorganized |
| efficient | personal | unpleasant |
| exciting | plain | unkind |
| family-oriented | pleasant | unusual |
| fancy | poor | upper class |
| fast-paced | popular | up to date |
| formal | powerful | wonderful |
| friendly | relaxed | |

Appendix B

Organizations Included in Study 3

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Allstate | Johnson & Johnson |
| American Express | K-Mart |
| AT&T | Microsoft |
| Coca-Cola | Motorola |
| Dell | Pepsi |
| Exxon | Sprint |
| Ford | State Farm |
| General Electric | Target |
| General Motors | Verizon |
| Home Depot | Wal-Mart |
| IBM | Walt Disney |
| JC Penney | |

Appendix C

Example Stimuli for Experimental Validation

SECTION C, PAGE 11 TOWNSHIP DAILY: ERIE TOWNSHIP, OHIO SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1997

Focus on...

Stage Clothing Downtown

Each week this column will highlight a brand-new area company in order to keep readers informed of the important link between corporations and the community, and to introduce the new company to our readers. We will attempt to present an unbiased view of the company, based on direct observation and interviews with customers and local citizens. This week the focus is on Stage Clothing. Stage is part of the parent company Steinbrenner, Incorporated, a large multinational company with holdings in a variety of industries, including the entertainment, real estate, finance, education, computing, food service, retail clothing, and manufacturing industries.

Four months ago, Stage Clothing took over empty space in the old Kaufman building on West Buckeye Street between Thurstin and Lehman avenues. As part of our coverage for this study, we researched the company history and spoke to some of Stage's customers down on West Buckeye last Tuesday. We highlight some of their comments in our introduction to Stage clothing below.

Perhaps the most defining feature of Stage is the way they go about selling their merchandise. Most people are familiar with the traditional retail clothing store phenomenon: When you're just looking around, the salespeople are all over your back, but as soon as you need some assistance, the salespeople are nowhere to be found.

At Stage, they've taken steps to combat this problem. When you walk in the door, you're asked to take a red, green, or yellow arm band.

Red means, "Don't come near me—I'm just looking. If I want help, I'll ask for it."

Green means, "I have no idea what I want. Help me, please!"

Yellow means, "I can't decide whether I want help or not. Come find me if all the green folks have been helped."

Arm bands are plentiful and are washed after each use.

"You've gotta hand it to them, they're original," said one fellow we ran into. "It's a really novel way to sell clothes. Someone was really thinking when they came up with that one."

We also caught up with Jody, one of the store's assistant managers. "I really dig the way we do what we do here at Stage. I'm proud to say I work here—no one's as wacky as we are!"

Based on our observations and interactions with Stage's customers, we believe that they are headed for a great deal of success. Stage believes in doing things differently.

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Telephone: 627-9785

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Co-Publisher and Editor

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