

“Who’s side are *you* on?”

Side-taking motives of lay third parties and the influence of personality

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Abstract

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the motives for side-taking by lay third parties and to explore the influence of personality traits on those motives. *'Lay third parties'* refer to those who are unintentionally involved in an interpersonal conflict between two individuals. In total, 111 students and 101 employees completed the scale measuring legitimacy-, interests-, and relationship-motivated side-taking, and the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (FFPI) measuring Conscientiousness, Autonomy, Agreeableness and Extraversion. Results from factor analyses demonstrate that the three types of side-taking motives are distinct. From regression analyses, Autonomy appears to have a negative influence on interest motivated side-taking, which is further moderated by Extraversion. Agreeableness has a positive influence on relationship motivated side-taking in the student sample. Those two links and the moderator effect of Extraversion were assumed in advance. However, Conscientiousness appears to be a poor predictor for side-taking motives which was *not* in line with our hypothesis. Results are discussed in terms of importance for disputants, and coalition and conflict theorists.

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Introduction

“When I am faced with an argument between two friends, and they ask me to take sides, I tend to stay out of the dispute. But when I really have to take sides, I will support the one with whom I have a better relationship, even if his/her arguments are not completely reasonable. Arguments are important, but interpersonal relationships are even more important, at least to me.” (Julia, 19 years old).

“Two of my colleagues are in a heated dispute about the future direction of our crisis centre. Tom, the founder of the centre, has a lot of experience and wants to keep everything as usual. Rebecca, the promising director of the centre who was just transferred to our department one year ago, advocates for an innovation of the centre. Neither of them would like to give in, and they both want the support of other colleagues. I side with Rebecca because she is in the right. At the same time, I feel sad to side against Tom because he is such a good supervisor, and has taught me a lot in the past.” (Seth, 31 years old).

In both examples above, Julia and Seth were faced with a conflict situation and were expected to take sides by both conflicting parties. However, they made a different choice. What motivated them to take side with one instead of the other party? And can their side-taking motives be predicted? The primary goal of this study is to investigate the motives for side-taking by third parties and to explore the factors influencing those motives.

Before going specifically into the side-taking motives and their influencing factors, first some key concepts need to be clarified. When a person is asked to take sides, he/she is often involved in a conflict dilemma between others, either actively or passively. *Conflict* here refers to: *“The perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that the parties’ current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously”* (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). For example, both Tom and Rebecca had different interests and did not want to give in, so they could not reach their goals at the same time. The term ‘simultaneously’ stresses on the fact that conflicts only emerge when two parties, or their goals, are interdependent on each other and there are not enough resources to satisfy both. Side-taking is performed by professional third parties - like mediators and arbitrators - and by ‘lay third parties’

who became unintentionally involved in an interpersonal conflict between two individuals, without being an obvious coalition party or having professional background in, or knowledge of conflict handling (Yang, 2006). In this study, we focus on lay third parties.

When faced with a conflict, what are the options for lay third parties to react to it? They can avoid the conflict, help the disputants out, or take sides with one of the disputants (Van de Vliert, 1997). Although research has shown that in the majority of cases (52%) inaction / avoiding was adopted by third parties in conflicts, a significant percentage took sides when faced with a coalition request from both disputants (33%) (Felson & Steadman, 1983). Other studies also support that side-taking is a main reaction in conflicts (Glasl, 1980; Van de Vliert, 1981; Van de Vliert & Mastenbroek, 1998). Surprisingly, studies on side-taking by third parties have received little scientific attention in contrast to other options (Murray, 1975). Moreover, the influence of lay third parties' side taking on a conflict is interesting because the results can directly escalate or deescalate the conflict. Once a lay third party supports a side, it may reinforce the win-lose consequences of the conflict.

Back to the example, Julia took sides with the disputant with whom she had a good social relationship. In contrast, Seth supported the disputant who came with legitimacy arguments. Apparently, Julia and Seth had different motives for side-taking. Many factors may have influenced these differences. For example, the situation in which the conflict occurs, the primary experience of Julia and Seth with side-taking, or individual differences of Julia and Seth toward side-taking. This study focuses on the influence of *personality* on side-taking motives.

It should be mentioned that this study is limited to side-taking in conflict situations where both the disputants and the third party are equal in hierarchy, power distance and have lateral relationships. Personal differences in side-taking motives will be clearer when individuals are equal in status; they can fully express themselves. The hierarchical status of the disputing colleagues may obscure the personal side-taking motives of individuals because this limits their freedom of action (*e.g.*, siding with the supervisor is more attractive than siding with a subordinate because of expected job perspectives).

The research question of this study can be summarized as follows: What are the motives of lay third parties to take sides, and how do individual differences influence these side-taking motives?

By answering those questions, this paper makes three contributions to the field of conflict handling. First, findings will help our understanding of conflict dynamics which will facilitate future research and theory building about conflicts. Second, disputants can apply this information in order to persuade other parties so as to build an effective coalition with them. Third, professionals can deliberately use the results of this study for an adequate diagnosis, productive confrontation of the conflict, and self-insights.

Hypotheses Development

When lay third parties make up their minds in choosing a side, they have to collect information and form judgements from at least three perspectives. First, lay third parties may have concerns about the conflict issue. They are sensitive for judgement about whose arguments are right, reasonable, and appropriate (thus legitimacy of arguments becomes a motive for their side-taking choice). Second, lay third parties may worry about the consequences of side-taking in a conflict, such as sanction or rewards. This concerns their self-interests (interest motives). Third, lay third parties may take their relationship with disputants into account. They prefer to choose for those with whom they have a close pre-existing relationship (relationship motives).

Legitimacy motivated side-taking. Legitimacy refers to a generalized perception of individuals' actions as desirable, proper, or appropriate either within socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions or depending on individuals' inner judgements (*cf.*, Ginzel, Kramer, & Sutton, 1992; Nielsen & Rao, 1987; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). In terms of side-taking, Gross (1958) stated that legitimacy perception is the extent to which a third party feels that each disputant's claims are right or reasonable. Legitimacy motivated individuals - like Seth in the example -, stand for the disputant who's arguments are perceived as more in the right. Lay third parties develop legitimacy perceptions from two aspects. The first is referred as *moral* legitimacy, individuals make judgements based on whether an activity is 'the right thing to do' and based on whether it

effectively promotes societal welfare (Suchman, 1995). The second is referred as *cognitive* legitimacy. It provides information about whether arguments hold by disputants mesh both with larger belief systems and with the experienced reality of daily life (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Because legitimacy perception is a kind of inner judgement made by individuals, there is no doubt that legitimacy side-taking motives vary from person to person.

Interest motivated side-taking. Side-taking can be stimulated by self-interest of lay third parties, which can be further distinguished in two types; sanction avoiding and reward receiving side-taking motives.

For side-taking motivated by *sanction avoidance*, lay third parties try to minimise their losses by supporting the disputant who may punish them if they disconfirm the disputant's coalition request. The desire to be self-protective and avoid sanctions can be considered as underlying psychological mechanisms for this motive. The sanctions lay third parties actually expect from disputants, depends on the information collected. For example, the information about the announced sanctions, the sanctions in the past (Deutsch, 1973), and the likelihood and extend the disputant will apply punishment or penalties (Van de Vliert, 1981; Gross, 1958). Moreover, the possibilities the third party has to react to the sanctions are also taken into account.

For *side-taking motivated by receiving rewards*, lay third parties try to maximise their interests by supporting the side who may reward them. They react to conflict situations with a specific and limited purpose to maximise their own needs. Reward motivated side-taking leads third parties to side with the disputant who has greater potential to return in their favour in any way; such as acceptance, status, friendship, financial funds (*e.g.*, Perugini & Gallucci, 2001; Clark & Jordan, 2002). The rewards lay third parties actually expect from disputants, also depends on the information collected.

Some individuals will conform easily to a disputant's coalition request because of their self-interests. Other people are sensitive to demands placed on them as limitation to their freedom of action. As a result, they respond against such pressure by acting contrary to them (Brehm, 1966; Staub, 1980). Whether an individual will join in the coalition request or react contrary to the request, also depends on personal preferences, and thus

personality may play an important role in influencing interest motivated side-taking.

Relationship motivated side-taking. In addition to conflict issues and self-interests, third parties also take relationships with disputants into account when *processing and weighting information*, and choosing conflict behaviour. Ohbuchi and his associates have argued the importance of social relationships (1999). Additionally, based on the theory of partisanship, Cooney & Philips (2004) pointed out that lay third parties' *social location* is an important predictor of which side the lay third party will take; "Not only the merits of who is right or wrong determines which side the third party chooses. Even so, their location in social space predicts whose side they choose". An important predictor for the social location is *relational distance*: the level of participation in one another's lives, and *functional independence*: the lay third parties' relative ability to survive and prosper without one other (Black, 1990). All those arguments convey the idea that interpersonal relationships motivate lay third parties to give a hand to the disputants with whom they share a close relationship. Certainly there are some individual differences on the extent to which social relationships influence side-taking.

The impact of personality on side-taking motives. Before third parties determine their standpoint in the conflict, they collect information to clarify the ambiguity about the conflict issues, the causes, the process, and the effects of the conflict (*e.g.*, Berlyne, 1960). It should be taken into account that the information collected will probably be asymmetric, because the third party has more contact or a better relationship with one party than with the other (Van de Vliert, 1981).

As mentioned before, this study focuses on the influence of *personality* on side-taking motives due to three reasons: First, personality differences impact the way individuals collect information that frames their social situations as well as their mental images of social relationships. As a result of this process, personality adds a surplus to the motivation of side-taking in a congruent way (Van de Zee & Perugini, 2006; Deci, 1975; Sheppard et al., 1987; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Rioux & Penner, 2001). This is illustrated in the example of Julia and Seth; due to their differences in personality, they perceived and interpreted the conflict differently which shaped their motives for side-taking. Second, personality is expected to show a stronger impact on behaviour in "weak" or ambiguous

situations in which there are less situational constraints on behaviour than in ‘strong’ or ‘clear’ situations in which situational pressures or constraints are high (Mischel, 1977; Organ, 1994). Side-taking dilemmas often create an ambiguous rather than clear situation. Under such conditions, people get more chances to express themselves and behave according to their characteristic tendencies, predispositions, or innate traits (King et al., 2005). Third, given the fact that there is a causal link between personality and conflict handling tactics (Antonioni, 1998; King, George, & Hebl, 2005; Van der Zee & Perugini, 2006; Chanin & Schneer, 1984), one should not be surprised that personality may influence side-taking motives as well. However, the effects of personality traits on individual side-taking motives, are not yet empirically tested (Van de Vliert, 1975; Van de Vliert & Cottrell, 1979). Therefore, we attempt to build a link between personality on one hand and side-taking on the other.

Personality traits. The Five Factor model (Norman, 1963) is one of the most influential works in personality psychology. It claims that personality comprises five basic traits: Conscientiousness, Autonomy, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Emotional Stability. Table 1 lists the definition of each trait, the positive poles (+), and negative poles (-) of the Five Factor personality traits briefly. With regard to side-taking, the first four factors are proposed to have influence on the different side-taking motives.

Table 1: The Five-Factor Personality Descriptions and Corresponding Traits

Trait	+	vs.	-
Conscientiousness Steady and firm people who are good organised and think before they act.	Fussy, tidy Responsible Scrupulous	vs.	Careless Undependable Unscrupulous
Autonomy Insightful and critical people, desiring to be thoughtful and reflective.	Intellectual Artistically Polished, refined	vs.	Unreflective Insensitive Crude, boorish
Agreeableness Generous, trusting people who consider the more humane aspects of humanity.	Good-natured Mild, gentle Cooperative	vs.	Irritable Headstrong Negativistic
Extraversion Outgoing and assertive people who have social skills and numerous friends.	Talkative Adventurous Sociable	vs.	Silent Cautious Reclusive
Emotional Stability Calm and stable people who are not prone of getting upset or anxious.	Poised Calm Composed	vs.	Nervous, tense Anxious Excitable

Conscientiousness on legitimacy motivated side-taking. Conscientiousness is the principal regulating factor that is primarily driven by cognitions and is not led by emotions (Van der Zee & Perugini, 2003). The trait is described in terms of alert, ambitious and firm. It is commonly associated with reliability, thoroughness and long-term plans (McCrae & Costa, 1991). Highly conscientious people maintain socially prescribed impulse control, which results in thinking before acting, and following norms and rules (John & Srivastava, 1999).

In terms of side-taking, Conscientious lay third parties tend to contemplate the content of the conflict carefully and give priority to following norms or regulations when forming a judgement of “wrong” or “right”, rather than to be led by emotions. Therefore, it is assumed that Conscientious lay third parties are motivated to take sides based on their inner judgements of right or wrong.

Also, Conscientious individuals develop the identity of a ‘person of integrity’, and their conventionality engenders social acceptance and social status. They develop the reputation of being dependable, responsible, and careful (Hogan, Johnson, & Briggs,

1997), which makes their judgements more content-related instead of depending on either social relationships or self-interests. For example, Seth took the side of his colleague Rebecca because he considered her arguments as more reasonable than those of Tom. Hence, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: The *more* Conscientious lay third parties are, the *more* tendencies they have to side with the disputant who forms his/her arguments on the basis of legitimacy.

Autonomy on interest motivated side-taking. Autonomous individuals are insightful, thoughtful and reflective. The trait may also include a need for variety (Maddi & Berne, 1964), understanding (Jackson, 1984) and wide ranging intellectual interests. Autonomous individuals have rebellious tendencies, due to such adjectives as critical, plain, and mutinous. Moreover, they tend to endorse liberal political and social values because questioning authority is a natural extension of their curiosity (McCrae, 1994).

In terms of side-taking, Autonomous individuals think critically and their rebellious colourings prepares them to follow their own ideas in deciding which side to support instead of fulfilling morally or socially accepted roles as in legitimacy and relationship motivated side-taking. Lay third parties with a strong Autonomy may feel *less* obligated to satisfy coalition requests of disputants. They especially side against the disputant who tries to influence their decision by using threats or rewards. Taken together it is hypothesized that:

Hypotheses 2: The *more* Autonomous lay third parties are, the *less* they are motivated have to take sides based on expected sanctions (2a) or perceived rewards (2b).

Agreeableness on relationship motivated side-taking. Agreeableness refers to “the more human aspects of humanity”; including characteristics such as altruism, nurturance, caring, and emotional support (Digman, 1990). Agreeable individuals are strongly concerned with interpersonal relationships (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996). Individuals high in Agreeableness are described as kind, sympathetic, and generous (McCrae & John, 1992). They have the tendency to be cooperative, considerate, and

trusting of others (Barrick & Mount, 1991), so that they deal with conflict cooperatively or collaboratively (Digman, 1990).

In terms of side-taking, although high Agreeable lay third parties do *not* have tendency to escalate the conflict, and to make enemies with disputants, when both sides want to make a coalition, they have to make a side-taking decision. Agreeable individuals put weight on social relationships and are emotional supportive and kind. Behaviour according to these characteristics arouses a feeling of pleasure and fulfilment to them. Highly Agreeable personalities are more likely to sacrifice the party with whom they have less relationship. They may choose the party with whom they have a close relationship because this will cause them less pain to break the relationship with the distant party. For example, Julia took sides with her best friend because this made her feel happy and brings fulfilment to herself. Therefore, the assumption is made:

Hypothesis 3: The *more* Agreeable lay third parties are, the *more* they are motivated to side with a disputant based on their interpersonal relationship.

Extraversion; the trait description. Extraversion reflects an 'energetic approach' to the social and material world. This is characterized by such traits as assertiveness, activity, enthusiasm, positive emotionality and sociability (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & John, 1992). Extravert individuals are outgoing and enjoy companionship of others, they have numerous friendships and vocational interests, they are upbeat, talkative and optimistic (Hogan, Johnson, & Briggs, 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Costa & McCrae, 1985). They have the social skills and the desire to work with others (McCrae & Costa, 1978). Extraverts are increasingly viewed as being ambitious, hardworking, dominant and achievement-oriented individuals (Hogan, 1983; Tellegen, 1985). Extraverts are generally impulsive and risk-taking individuals. Their feelings are not kept under tight control, and they are not always reliable individuals (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975).

The moderating effect of Extraversion. Individuals' personalities are comprised of multiple traits in a trait hierarchy and this makes it likely that combinations of traits do have stronger influences on behaviour; "It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that any single

trait will have much explanatory power” (Hough, 1992; Organ, 1997). Hogan, Hogan and Roberts (1996) argue that the impact of a personality trait on behaviour indeed depends on other traits. It is most likely that higher-order traits will influence other traits mostly because higher-order traits represent the broadest, most general level in the hierarchy of dispositions (Watson & Clark, 1997). For these reasons, it is insightful to consider the combined effects of traits which are theoretically expected to interact in ways to promote or inhibit side-taking motives.

Regarding motives for side-taking, it is expected that Extraversion will function as a higher order trait because it is identified in virtually every multidimensional personality inventory that has been developed during the past 50 years (Watson & Clark, 1997) and it has a general influence on human behaviour. Additionally, circumplex research suggests that Extraversion is the only ‘pure’ factor in the Big Five (Hofstee, De Raad, & Goldberg, 1992). Moreover, Witt (2002) already found that Extraversion indeed had a moderator effect on the link between personality and job performance. Based on the arguments and evidence mentioned above, it is assumed that Extraversion may serve as a higher-order personality trait to adjust the links between personality traits and side-taking motives. Specifically, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Extraversion will moderate the link between Conscientiousness and legitimacy motivated side-taking.

Hypothesis 5: Extraversion will moderate the link between Autonomy and sanction motivated side-taking (5a) and reward motivated side-taking (5b).

Hypothesis 6: Extraversion will moderate the link between Agreeableness and relationship motivated side-taking.

Emotional Stability is also one of the five personality traits in the Big-Five model as well. Individuals high on this trait are calm, satisfied, arranged and stable. They are not prone of getting upset or anxious (John & Strivastava, 1999). However, as far as to our knowledge, we can *not* logically reason any direct- and indirect impact of Emotional Stability on side-taking motives, so no hypotheses were formulated. However, the trait is

measured in this study in order to explore the links between Emotional Stability and side-taking motives in an empirical way.

Method

Participants

Two samples - one student and one employee group - were recruited in order to test the theoretical assumptions. The student sample was used to empirically test the structure of side-taking motives, and initially explore the links between personality and side-taking motives. The employee sample was used to refine the structure of the side-taking questionnaire and confirm the relationship between personality traits and side-taking motives. In total, 212 respondents (111 students and 101 employees) voluntarily participated in this study.

Student sample. Student respondents were recruited from the ‘Saxion Universities of Applied Sciences’, and the ‘University of Twente’. Their average age was 22, ranging from 18 to 30, and 61% were male.

Their nationality was West-European. Their studies comprised of four fields: Technical (36%), Management & Business (24%), Behavioural Sciences (23%), and Medical Studies (17%). All students had part-time work experience. We also collected information about religious orientation, and participants were free to answer, 18% reported that they were religious. The answer options were “Yes” or “No” and respondents were free to answer this question.

Employee sample. The employee participants were recruited from several regions in the Netherlands and worked in a variety of ‘business areas’ and functions. Their average age was 38, ranging from 23 to 65, and 42% were male. Their nationality was West-European. The distribution of the highest education achieved was; “MBO” (29%), “HBO” (30%), “WO” (39%), other (2%). Their occupations comprised of six fields: Operational (4%), Clerical / Administrative support (21%), Professional / Technical (27%), Manager at low level (6%), Manager at middle level (33%), and Manager at top level (9%). The average years of work experience was 16, ranging from 6 months to 46 years. For their marriage status, 43% were married, 28% were not married, 20% were

living together, 5% were divorced, 1% were widow / widower, and 3% other. Regarding the question about religious belief, 39% reported that they were religious.

Procedure

All participants were approached through personal networks and snowball sampling. We created a temporal separation by introducing a week delay between the two measures to avoid common method biases on the relationship between the “Five-Factor Personality Inventory” (FFPI) and the side-taking questionnaire. In the first week, all participants filled in the paper-and-pencil based FFPI, and in the second week they were asked to fill in the side-taking questionnaire.

The order of concepts and items in the side-taking questionnaire were assumed to influence the results. Therefore, different versions of the questionnaire and the random-item questionnaire were tested in complementary analyses.

Participants were asked to fill in their e-mail address in *both* questionnaires so as to collate their answers. A reminder was sent in case a side-taking questionnaire was *not* handed in. Each participant was provided with their scores on the FFPI as a thank-you for their participation.

Respondents were assured that their answers are treated confidentially and used for scientific research purposes only. Employees without any social or work connection to the researchers were approached as frequently as possible in order to reduce social desirability in their answers.

Measures

Personality measurement. The *Five Factor Personality Inventory* (FFPI) developed by Hendriks, Hofstee & De Raad (1999) was used to measure the “Big Five” personality traits as distinguished by Goldberg (1992). This scale has been tested on a large Dutch population. It has been proved to be a reliable and valid scale and is an efficient system for identifying and communicating personality traits (McCrae & John, 1992; Piedmont et al., 1991). In total the FFPI contains 100 items, each personality trait is measured with 10 items of the ‘positive’ pole (+) and 10 items of the ‘negative’ pole (-) (*e.g.*, Extraversion vs. Introversion). An example for each pole of each trait is given; for Conscientiousness

“I behave properly” (+) or “I do unexpected things” (-), for Autonomy “I decide things on my own” (+) or “I do what other’s want me to do” (-), for Agreeableness “I respect others feelings” (+) or “I see my own needs first” (-), for Extraversion “I love large parties”(+) or “I avoid company”(-), and for Emotional Stability “I keep my emotions under control”(+) or “I invent problems for myself”(-).

All items were measured on 5-point scales (1 = “not at all applicable”, 2 = “less applicable”, 3 = “moderately applicable”, 4 = “mostly applicable”, and 5 = “entirely applicable” to themselves). The original scores were computed to a person’s compatible anchored factor scores by the “FFPI scoring for Windows” programme (Hofstee & Hendriks, 1998). Compatible anchored factor scores are standardized scores anchored at the scale midpoint.

The FFPI was chosen to measure personality due to the fact that almost every item of the test has loadings on two personality traits and describes on the negative and positive poles. Another reason for using the FFPI is that the scale is based on a combination of two approaches, the Five-Factor Model and the Circumplex Model, which results in a strong and detailed instrument. The Five-Factor Model of personality, also known as “Big Five model” (Goldberg, 1992), describes dispositions at the highest level of hierarchy of personality traits, meaning that most specific and narrower personality dimensions can be understood within the framework (James & Mazerole, 2002; Goldberg, 1999). The interpersonal Circumplex Model contains the AB5C-system (Abrieved Big-Five Circumplex; Hofstee & De Raad, 1991). This system is based on the *lexicographic hypothesis* which states that all traits, characteristics or behaviour that distinguish people, is expressed in language. Setting free the opportunity for identifying clusters of traits that are semantically cohesive, and therefore they permit fine-grained personality descriptions which can be used in explaining the (interaction) results of this study (*e.g.*, low Agreeableness and high Extraversion) (Hofstee, De Raad, & Goldberg, 1992; Becker, 1999).

Side-taking motives measurement. The side-taking motives instrument was developed in five steps. First, a 32-item list was generated describing legitimacy, interest and relationship motivated side-taking. The items were based upon literature and several

relevant scales (Moral-Expedient orientation scale; Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958; Van de Vliert & Cotrell, 1979). The final list of items was measured on 5-point Likert scales (1 = “strongly disagree”, 2 = “disagree”, 3 = “neither disagree nor agree”, 4 = “agree”, and 5 = “strongly agree”). In the second step, the questionnaire was administered to the sample of 111 students. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .65 for the 8 items measuring legitimacy motivated side-taking, .67 for the 8 items measuring side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance, .88 for the 5 items measuring side-taking motivated by receiving rewards, and .76 for the 6 items measuring relationship motivated side-taking. In step three, based on explanatory factor analyses, the structure of the side-taking questionnaire was validated and refined by removing or improving items which had multiple or no factor loadings. In step four, the improved side-taking scale was applied to the employee sample. In the final employee sample of 101 employees, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .77 for the 5 items measuring legitimacy motivated side-taking (e.g., “The more a colleague’s arguments are in the right, the more I am inclined to support him/her”), .58 for the 5 items measuring side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance (e.g., “I choose for the disputant who can punish me”), .85 for the 5 items measuring side-taking motivated by receiving rewards (e.g., “I care about what I can gain when choosing which side to support”) and .78 for the 6 items of relationship motivated side-taking (e.g., “When I have a close relationship with one of the colleagues, I intend to support him/her”).

The relative low alpha of .58 on sanction avoidance motivated side-taking can be explained by the questions designed to measure sanction avoidance motives. Two items had a low factor loading on the sanction-avoidance concept: “The more threats a disputant makes, the *less* I am willing to support him/her” (-.41) and “I would side *against* the colleague, even when I know he/she can punish me for the consequences” (-.43). A third item had a loading on reward motivated side-taking and no loading on the sanction concept at all: “Whether I will get in trouble or not will influence my side-taking decision”. Those three items may be difficult to understand for lay people because they are negatively formulated, this makes it difficult to understand the meaning of the item for those who fill in the questionnaire without concentration. Consequently, three of the five items were not accurately measuring sanction avoidance motivated side-taking which

has caused the low reliability level of this concept. See Appendices A and B for detailed information about the side-taking questionnaire.

In step five, explanatory factor analysis was again employed to validate the side-taking concepts on the current sample of 101 employees.

Data analyses

Demographic variables such as gender, age, and years of work experience were included into the analyses as a control. Moreover, religious orientation was taken into account because we assumed that religious individuals have more tendencies for acting from their moral standards as defined in their religion.

The data were analysed through a two-stage approach. In the first stage, the structure of the side-taking questionnaire was tested. In the second stage, the influence of personality on lay third parties side-taking motives was investigated. The main statistics for data analyses were factor analyses to explore the side-taking questionnaire, and hierarchical multiple regression analyses to test the hypotheses (Aiken & West, 1991). The FFPI scores were converted into *z*-scores (standardized scores) prior to conducting regression analyses.

Results

Factor structure of side-taking motives

First, an explanatory factor analysis with principal component method was conducted on the student sample, to initially explore the structure of the side-taking questionnaire. Nine factors were originally extracted when ‘eigenvalue’ were set to equal or greater than 1.00. However, we detected a serious drop after four or five factors in the ‘scree plot’. Based on literature, four main factors of side-taking motives were assumed. Therefore, four side-taking factors were extracted for further analyses.

The first factor in the student sample intended to measure legitimacy motivated side-taking explained 9% of total variance. The second factor intended to measure sanction avoiding motivated side-taking explained 7% of total variance. The third factor intended to measure reward motivated side-taking explained 19% of total variance. The last factor

intended to measure relationship motivated side-taking explained 10% of total variance. The total, 45% of variance is explained by four factors.

In the employee sample, another principal component matrix resulted in five main factors originally when “eigenvalue” was equal or greater than 1.00. The scree plot was similar to the scree plot of the student sample, there was a significant inflexion on the curve after four or five factors. The amount of variance explained by those four factors were 13%, 9%, 25%, and 14% respectively. The total, 61% of variance is explained by four factors including 21 items. All factor loadings are shown in Appendix B.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations broken down for Student and Employee Sample

		<i>Ms</i>	<i>SDs</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SDe</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>ST</i>																	
1	<i>Legit</i>	3.78	.43	3.90	.49	-	-.14	-.29**	-.18†	.06	.06	-.02	.02	.00	-.06	.08	.04
2	<i>Sanct</i>	2.49	.52	2.19	.62	-.17†	-	.39**	.23*	-.02	-.37**	-.07	-.03	-.07	-.08	.09	-.23*
3	<i>Rewar</i>	2.65	.71	2.33	.67	-.13	.34**	-	.23*	-.03	-.20*	-.18†	.13	.16	-.06	-.23*	-.05
4	<i>Relat</i>	3.16	.57	3.11	.60	-.19†	.05	.35**	-	-.08	-.26**	.16†	.12	-.03	-.13	.01	.06
<i>Per</i>																	
5	<i>C</i>	.20	1.04	.74	1.20	-.04	-.05	-.07	-.03	-	.02	.25*	.18†	-.16	.14	.14	.01
6	<i>AU</i>	1.00	.93	1.30	.95	.03	-.24*	-.15	-.18†	-.15	-	-.14	-.00	-.04	-.13	-.21*	.02
7	<i>A</i>	1.65	1.00	2.06	1.03	-.01	-.15	-.27**	-.10	-.09	-.07	-	-.33**	.00	.18	-.22*	-.07
8	<i>E</i>	1.03	.88	.85	1.14	-.02	.01	.02	.16	.08	.03	-.34**	-	-.14	-.18	.01	-.08
9	<i>ES</i>	1.04	1.01	.88	.87	-.03	.04	.21*	.05	-.23*	.02	-.16	-.08	-	.02	-.32**	.22*
<i>Co</i>																	
10	Age	22.21	2.09	38.46	11.65	-.14	-.15	.05	-.11	.15	.22*	.20*	-.14	-.03	-	-.07	.01
11	Gender	NA	NA	NA	NA	.10	.08	-.14	.12	.24*	-.18†	.15	.22*	-.26**	.07	-	-.21*
12	Religi	NA	NA	NA	NA	-.07	.01	.04	.06	.25*	.10	.10	.07	-.03	-.08	.09	-

Note. *Ms* and *SDs* refer to means and standard deviations in the student sample; *Me* and *SDe* refer to means and standard deviations in the employee sample. † $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Correlations *above* the diagonal refer to the *student* sample (n = 111).

Correlations *below* the diagonal refer to the *employee* sample (n = 101).

ST = Site-taking, *Per* = Personality trait, *Co* = Control variables

Legit = “legitimacy motivated side-taking”, *Sanct* = “sanction motivated side-taking”, *Rewar* = “reward motivated side-taking”, and *Relat* = “relationship motivated side-taking”.

C = “Conscientiousness”, *AU* = “Autonomy”, *A* = “Agreeableness”, *E* = “Extraversion”, and *ES* = “Emotional Stability”.

Gen represents “Gender”, *Religi* represents “Religion”, *NA* represents “Not Applicable”

Descriptive statistics

In both student and employee samples, results showed that legitimacy motivated side-taking is the most preferred side-taking motive ($M_{\text{student}} = 3.78$; $M_{\text{employee}} = 3.90$). Sanction avoiding motivated side-taking occurred least often ($M_{\text{student}} = 2.49$; $M_{\text{employee}} = 2.33$). For personality traits, in both samples, Agreeableness was mostly possessed ($M_{\text{student}} = 1.65$; $M_{\text{employee}} = 2.06$) and Conscientiousness was least dominant compared to other traits ($M_{\text{student}} = .02$; $M_{\text{employee}} = .74$).

In both the student and employee samples, a positive correlation appeared between sanction avoiding and reward receiving side-taking motives ($r_{\text{student}} = .39$; $p < .01$, and $r_{\text{employee}} = .34$; $p < .01$).

In the student and the employee sample, Autonomy appeared to be negatively correlated with sanction avoiding motivated side-taking ($r_{\text{student}} = -.37$; $p < .01$; $r_{\text{employee}} = -.24$; $p < .05$). Also, only in the student sample, a negative correlation appeared between Autonomy and reward receiving side-taking ($r_{\text{student}} = -.20$; $p < .05$). The above two findings taken together indicate that Autonomy has a negative influence on interest motivated side-taking.

In the student sample, Agreeableness correlated positively with relationship motivated side-taking ($r_{\text{student}} = .16$; $p < .10$), indicating that Agreeable individuals take sides with the party they have a good social relationship with.

Table 3 The Impact of Personality on Side-Taking Motives

	Students				Employees			
	Legit	Sanction	Reward	Relation	Legit	Sanction	Reward	Relation
Control								
Age	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.04	.01	-.01	-.01	-.02
Gender	.02	-.03	-.45**	.01	.08	.00	-.27†	.08
Work experience	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	-.03	.04	.06	.04
Religion	.03	-.35**	-.19	.09	-.02	.01	.01	.02
Predictor								
Conscientiousness	.02	.00	-.02	-.03	-.02	.00	.02	-.05
Autonomy	.03	-.18**	-.14†	-.17**	.03	-.16*	-.12†	-.13
Agreeableness	.01	-.06	-.11	.12*	-.01	-.13*	-.20*	-.03
Extraversion	.01	-.04	.09	.14*	-.02	-.02	-.05	.08
Emotional Stability	.00	-.03	.12†	-.01	-.02	-.02	.10*	.01
<i>Two-way interaction</i>								
<i>C * E</i>	-.05				.10*			
<i>AU * E</i>		.09†	.07			.16*	.00	
<i>A * E</i>				-.09				.06
<i>F</i>	.58	3.25*	2.61†	3.25*	1.47	4.83**	.81	1.37
ΔR^2	.02	.08	.07	.08	.04*	.13*	.02	.04
Total <i>R</i> ²	.02	.14	.13	.14	.04	.27	.04	.07

Note. Regression coefficients shown are unstandardized beta weights in step 2.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

S = "Students (n = 111)", *E* = "Employees (n = 101)"

C = "Conscientiousness", *AU* = "Autonomy", *A* = "Agreeableness", *E* = "Extraversion".

Legit = "legitimacy motivated side-taking", *Relation* = "relationship motivated side-taking",

Sanction = "sanction motivated side-taking", *Reward* = "reward motivated side-taking", *NA* =

Not Applicable

Test of the hypotheses

Legitimacy motivated side-taking. Hypothesis 1 presents a positive effect of Conscientiousness on legitimacy motivated side-taking. Hypothesis 4 posits that Extraversion will further moderate the link between Conscientiousness and Legitimacy motivated side-taking. The results in Table 3 indicated that Conscientiousness had no effect whatsoever on legitimacy motivated side-taking in both the student and the employee sample ($b_{\text{student}} = .02$; *ns*; $b_{\text{employee}} = -.02$; *ns*) which rejects hypothesis 1. However, the interaction between Conscientiousness and Extraversion appeared to have a significant influence on legitimacy in the employee sample ($b_{\text{employee}} = .10$; $p < .05$), but not in the student sample ($b_{\text{student}} = -.05$; *ns*). Though, note that the overall model was not significant for both student and employee sample ($F = .58$; *ns*, and $F = 1.47$; *ns*). This limits our confidence to draw the conclusion that Conscientiousness and Extraversion have a significant interaction effect on legitimacy motives.

Two reported cases from the open question section support the unpredictability of legitimacy motivated side-taking by Conscientiousness.

“When I was in the board of a student organization, I was also involved in organizing the introduction period for this organisation. Somebody asked me a favour. I didn’t know how I could combine this favour with my position in the board. So I rejected his request. He didn’t like this at all, but I had the feeling this was the only right thing to do” (Man, 25 years old. Mean personality score: $C = -.52$, $AU = 1.37$, $A = 2.96$, $E = .98$, $ES = 2.22$)

“There was a conflict in a group of my student organization. A very good friend and somebody who was far from friendly had a dispute. My best friend was not in the right. We talked about it and solved this businesslike” (Woman, 20 years old: Mean personality scores: $C = 1.81$, $AU = 1.40$, $A = 2.10$, $E = .61$, $ES = -1.86$).

The individual in the first case described the importance of ‘right and wrong’ arguments, however he was low on Conscientiousness. The woman in the second case also gave priority to good arguments, however, she was high in Conscientiousness. This illustrates the inconsistent effect of the influence of Conscientiousness on legitimacy motivated side-taking.

Side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance. Hypothesis 2a presents a negative effect of Autonomy on side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance. Hypothesis 5a posits that Extraversion will further moderate the link between Autonomy and side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance. The results in Table 3 indicated similar results for both the student and the employee sample. Autonomy had a main negative effect on side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance ($b_{\text{student}} = -.21; p < .01$ and $b_{\text{employee}} = -.17; p < .05$), which confirms hypothesis 5a.

A reported case from the open question section supports that individuals high in Autonomy do *not* let limit their freedom by proposed sanctions.

“I was working for a Belgium company who wanted to fire employees because of a complaint about the products caused by work machinery and not by personal mistakes. It affected the employees, who were not responsible for the errors and who had always worked more than necessary. I didn’t agree at all with his plans to fire some of us, so I stood up against his plans otherwise I would lose my self-respect. In the end, his plans didn’t work out, so I won. The relation between us did not improve of course”. (Man, 65 years old. Mean personality scores: C = .85, AU = 1.45, A = 1.03, E = -.75, ES = .84).

Moreover, the interaction between Autonomy and Extraversion had a significant influence on side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance ($b_{\text{student}} = .09; p < .10$ and $b_{\text{employee}} = .16; p < .05$). This confirms hypothesis 5a about the moderating effect of Extraversion. The interaction models were significant in both student and employee samples ($F_{\text{student}} = 3.25; p < .05$, and $F_{\text{employee}} = 4.83; p < .01$).

A depiction was conducted to further investigate how Autonomy and Extraversion jointly shape side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance. Figure 1 shows that when Extraversion is *low*, Autonomy has a negative effect on sanction avoiding motivated side-taking ($b_{\text{employee}} = .17; p < .10$). However, when Extraversion is *high*, the above mentioned negative relationship has disappeared ($b_{\text{employee}} = .26; p < .10$). From Figure 1, we also observe that when Autonomy and Extraversion are *both low*, the tendencies that lay third parties side with the disputant uses threats is *maximum*. When Autonomy is *high* and Extraversion is *low*, the tendency of a lay third party to side with the disputant uses threats is *minimum*. The same results can be shown in both samples.

Sanction avoidance motives and Autonomy

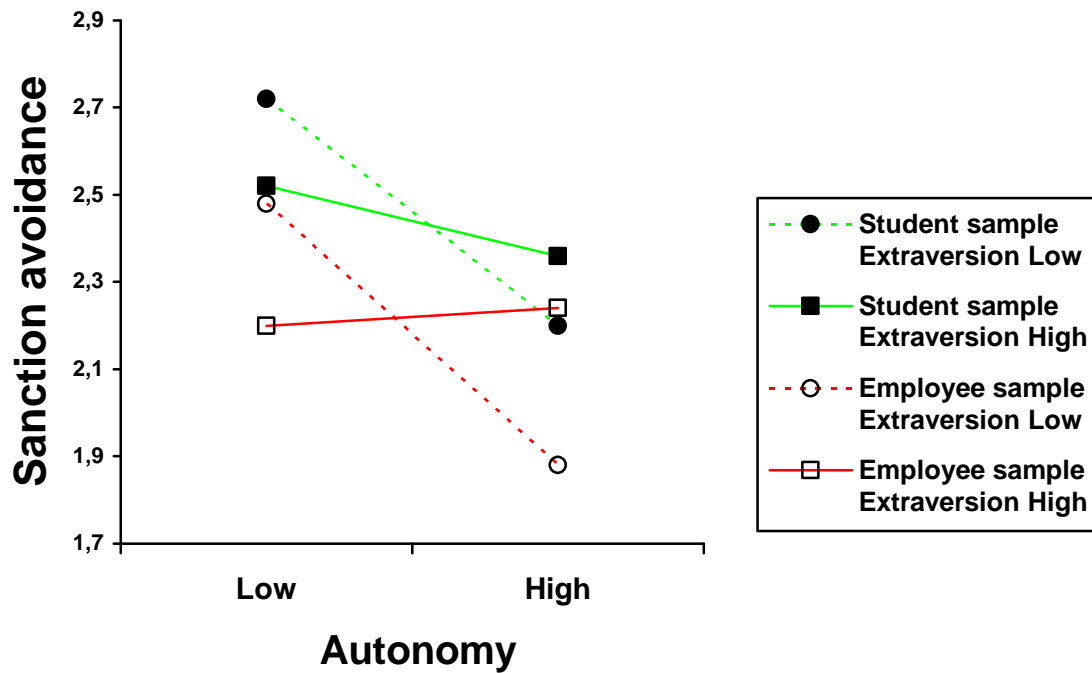


Figure 1 Side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance regressed on Autonomy scores: low and high Extraversion groups. Student and the employee sample.

Side-taking motivated by receiving rewards. Hypothesis 2b preserves a negative effect of Autonomy on side-taking motivated by receiving rewards. Hypothesis 5b assumes that Extraversion will further moderate the link between Autonomy and side-taking motivated by receiving rewards. The results in Table 3 indicated that Autonomy has a negative effect on reward receiving side-taking in both the student sample and the employee sample ($b_{\text{student}} = -.17; p < .05$; $b_{\text{employee}} = -.12; p < .10$), which confirms hypothesis 2b. However, we failed to detect an interaction between Extraversion and Autonomy on reward receiving side-taking in both samples ($b_{\text{student}} = .07; ns$, and $b_{\text{employee}} = .003; ns$), which rejects hypothesis 5b. The student interaction model is significant ($F_{\text{student}} = 3.51; p < .05$), however the employee interaction model appeared *not* to be significant ($F_{\text{employee}} = 1.23; ns$).

Relationship motivated side-taking. Hypothesis 3 predicts a main effect of Agreeableness on relationship motivated side-taking. Hypotheses 6 further assumes that Extraversion moderates this relationship. Table 3 showed a positive effect of Agreeableness on relationship motivated side-taking in the student sample ($b_{\text{student}} = .12$; $p < .05$) which is in line with hypothesis 3. However, in the employee sample, this relationship disappeared ($b_{\text{employee}} = -.03$; ns). In addition, in both samples, the interaction effect between Agreeableness and Extraversion had no effect on relationship motivated side-taking ($b_{\text{student}} = -.09$; ns ; $b_{\text{employee}} = .06$; ns), suggesting that hypothesis 6 has to be rejected. The interaction model was significant for the student sample ($F_{\text{student}} = 3.25$; $p < .05$), but not for the employee sample ($F_{\text{employee}} = 1.37$; ns).

A reported case from the open question section supports that individuals high in Agreeableness have the tendency to side with the disputant they have a good relationship with.

“At my work there emerged a conflict between somebody from my engineering department and the other production department. I agreed with the arguments of the production, but tended to support the engineer. I supported the engineer because his arguments were okay and it felt more natural to support him, even if he was not completely right” (Man, 24 years old. Mean personality scores: C = .75, AU = 1.08, A = 2.37, E = .28, ES = 1.79).

Complementary analyses. Further analyses between Emotional Stability and side-taking motives showed that Emotional Stability had a positive main effect on reward receiving motivated side-taking in both samples ($b_{\text{student}} = .12$; $p < .10$; $b_{\text{employee}} = .10$; $p < .05$). Which suggests that Emotional Stable individuals have the audacity to side with the disputant who benefits them most. They feel satisfied and stable about themselves, so they are not afraid of outsiders' reactions and feel confident about their opportunistic way of side-taking.

Control variables have shown that gender should be taken into account in interpreting reward motivated side-taking ($b_{\text{student}} = -.45$; $p < .01$ and $b_{\text{employee}} = -.27$; $p < .10$). Males appeared to have stronger tendencies for reward motivated side-taking in both

samples. This was also shown in correlation analyses. Moreover, only in the student sample, and *not* in the employee sample, whether individuals are religious should be noted when interpreting sanction avoiding motives ($b_{\text{student}} = -.35; p < .01$). Possibly, religious individuals perceive sanction avoidance motivated side-taking as inappropriate based on their religious norms. Non religious students have stronger tendencies for side-taking motivated by sanction-avoidance. This was also shown in the correlation analyses in Table 2.

Discussion

Side-taking is one of the main reactions by lay third parties when they are faced with two incompatible expectations from disputants with the consequence that the conflict often escalates. This study focuses on side-taking motives by lay third parties and especially explores the influence of lay third parties personality on their side-taking motives. Regarding to the findings on side-taking, three types of side-taking motives - legitimacy, interest, and relationship - are theoretically distinguished and then empirically confirmed in this study. Regarding to the impact of personality, the findings suggest that personality has an influence on side-taking. Namely, Autonomy and Agreeableness have proven to influence interest and relationship motives for side-taking, which confirms our hypotheses. We would like to highlight three points for discussion.

First, the significant negative influence of Autonomy on interest motivated side-taking deserves more attention. In both the student and the employee samples, the findings show that lay third parties who are *high* in Autonomy dislike to take sides based on self-interests. In other words, Autonomous lay third parties are *less* sensitive for extortion from disputants and do *not* want to let their action be limited by others. They tend *not* to take sides with the disputant coming with threats or rewards. This finding confirms the conclusion of Brehm (1966) that people frequently respond against pressure that limits their freedom by acting contrary to them.

The assumption that Extraversion moderates the link between Autonomy and side-taking motivated by sanction avoidance is confirmed in this study. From the interaction graph, we found two interesting findings concerning this link. First, when Extraversion is *low*, Autonomy has a *negative* effect on sanction avoiding motivated side-taking.

However, when Extraversion is *high*, the above mentioned negative relationship disappears. The interaction graph also indicates that when Autonomy and Extraversion are *low*, lay third parties tendency to side with the disputant using threats is *maximum*. This may result from the lay third parties' lack of perceived alternative options (low Autonomy: not insightful and not reflective) and their hesitance to reject the disputants demands placed on them (low Extraversion: not assertive, introvert). The AB5C-system of the Circumplex model enforces this results by describing individuals who are low on Autonomy and low Extraversion as conservative, slavish / servile, and narrow-minded. However, when Autonomy is *high* and Extraversion is *low*, lay third parties' tendency to side with the disputant using threats is *minimum*. Third parties may take sides after contemplating the disputants' claims and than react out their inner beliefs (high Autonomy: critical, rebellious, thoughtful) and do not value social relationships (low Extraversion: shy, not social, lonely ones); this makes them less likely to conform to a disputant's requests. The AB5C-system of the Circumplex model enforces this results by describing individuals high in Autonomy and low in Extraversion as philosophical, complex, and thoughtful.

Second, a positive influence of Agreeableness on relationship motivated side-taking appears in the student sample and not in the employee sample. Students with a *high* score on Agreeableness have strong tendencies to side with the disputant they have a good relationship with. It seems that age and work experience have an influence on how Agreeableness functions in terms of relationship motivated side-taking. Among employees, it is probably considered unprofessional to take sides with a disputant only based on individual social relationships. Students have not yet developed the mentality of being professional in handling a conflict. Additionally, employees may have more experience in separating work conflict and personal life in contrast to students. Students may judge Agreeableness in terms of personal friendship, so this may lead to their more relationship oriented side-taking motives. An alternative explanation could be that employees may perceive being a team player in work situations as more characteristic of Agreeableness than their personal relationships with others (*e.g.*, they may prefer siding with the disputant they have a good cooperation with instead of siding with a good friend).

Third, the link between Conscientiousness and legitimacy motivated side-taking did *not* appear in both samples, which disconfirms our hypothesis. This may be explained by the independent variable Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness appears to be a poor predictor for all side-taking motives. Conscientiousness appears to be the least frequent personality trait compared to the other four traits in the student sample. Conscientiousness was the most dominant trait among only 5 of the 111 students. Compared to the average score of 1.00 in the Dutch population, the students scored very low with an average score of .20. It seems that the student sample in this study is not a representative sample concerning Conscientiousness, which makes it difficult to predict legitimacy and other side-taking motives by Conscientiousness. The factor Conscientiousness in the employee sample seems normal, 19 of the 101 employees showed it as their major personality trait and the average score was .74. Mortimer, Finch, and Kumka (1982) have demonstrated that it is a normal tendency of Conscientiousness to be higher in the older employee sample because Conscientiousness normally increases with age. An explanation of the absence of Conscientiousness as a predictor of legitimacy in the employee sample is not yet clearly found in this study. A possible explanation could be that in a side-taking dilemma, Conscientious individuals may show other personality traits first because they are personally involved in a conflict which arouses emotions. The trait Conscientiousness may be not accurate enough due to the lack of taking emotional arguments into account to predict motives in complex and emotional side-taking situations.

The failure of the link may also be caused by the dependent variable legitimacy motivated side-taking. As pointed out, legitimacy comprises three types: Cognitive legitimacy, moral legitimacy and *pragmatic legitimacy*. Pragmatic legitimacy rests on the self-interest calculations of a person's most immediate contacts such as friends, colleagues etc. and *not* on the inner judgements of the individual like in cognitive and moral legitimacy (*e.g.*, Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). In the measurement of legitimacy in this study, we only took moral and cognitive legitimacy into account. This neglecting of pragmatic legitimacy have caused an incomplete concept of legitimacy motivated side-taking and consequently weaker link between Conscientiousness and legitimacy.

Limitations

Three limitations should be noted when interpreting the results of this study. The first limitation concerns types of side-taking motives. In everyday life, different side-taking motives may intervene with each other and can not be distinguished as we assumed in theory. A reported case from the open-ended questions illustrates this combination of side-taking motives: *“Rational arguments are most important to me in conflicts. The relationship with a colleague is less important, however, it is easier to discuss all the (counter) arguments with a friend. And of course, I have less tendency to provide the party who is not my friend with good arguments”* (Man, 31 years old). This example shows the interfering of legitimacy and relationship motives which illustrates that a more fine-grained picture of side-taking motives should be investigated in further research.

The second limitation concerns personality measured by the FFPI as a predictor of side-taking motives. However the FFPI measures a positive and negative pole of each trait and the Circumplex-model, possibly these five broad categories were still too general to specifically predict side-taking motives in an accurate way. A more fine-grained personality inventory could provide stronger influences on side-taking motives (e.g., Cattell's 16 Personality Factors).

A third limitation of this study concerns the extent to which personality can predict side-taking motives completely. Although we highlight the impact of personality on side-taking motives, it is reasonable that the function of a lay third party's personality on their side-taking tendencies interacts with other factors such as the situation in which the conflict occurs. Staub (1980) stated, “Every person has varied goals, which can be arranged in a hierarchy according to their importance to the person. Whether these different goals are activated will depend on the nature of the situation, as well as on the characteristics of the person”. Bazerman et al., (2000), and Pruitt and Carnevale (1998) suggested that the *interaction* between individual differences and situational factors might better predict side-taking. In interpreting the results of this study, the additional influence of the situation in which the conflict occurs should be taken into account. For example, the lack of interaction between Conscientiousness and legitimacy motivated side-taking in this study, may also derive from not taking into account situational factors.

The above mentioned limitations can be improved in further research. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews might be a good method to distinguish the types of side-taking motives which can improve the current side-taking questionnaire. Moreover, a specific personality inventory might be more suitable in predicting side-taking motives. In addition, it would be interesting for further research to investigate the *combined* influence of *personality* and *situation* on side-taking motives.

Practical implications

To conclude this report, two practical applications are suggested. First, when one is in a conflict and wants to get support from outsiders, two strategies are recommended in forming an effective coalition. He/she should take the personality of the “target” (lay third party) into account. First, Autonomous “targets” it is better *not* persuade them by using threats or rewards; they may side opposite to you because they prefer their freedom of action. Second, concerning coalition forming with Agreeable individuals, one should influence them through social relationships. Agreeable lay third parties take social relationships seriously and are likely to side with the disputant they have a close relationship with. You have a good chance to gain their support when you are already close friends.

Second, the findings of this study might be a good advice to individuals working in the side-taking field (*e.g.*, mediators, arbitrators) who’s primary goal is to settle conflicts. Knowing the influences of personality on side-taking, professionals should consider their own personality carefully before they make up their minds about how to handle the conflict. One of the most difficult tasks for professionals is to stay neutral in conflicts. More insight in their own side-taking tendencies can be obtained after asking themselves the question; “Is it my personality that induces me to make such a side-taking decision?”

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Appendices

Appendix A Side-Taking Motive Scale (employees)

Introduction:

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. This is the second and last questionnaire of the personality and side-taking research. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire. All your answers will be treated confidentially. We would like to know your e-mail address in order to match this questionnaire with the data you have already provided to us.

E-mail address: _____

Instruction:

At your work place, you may sometimes be faced with a conflict, a dispute, or a disagreement between colleagues. As the disagreement progresses, especially when both sides want to gain your support, you may have to stand for one side or the other. We would like to know which factors influence your preference in side taking in work conflicts. Below you will find two examples of a conflict situation at work.

1) One of your colleagues is your friend as well. In a team project, he/she is not working fast because he/she is not motivated for the project anymore. The other team member becomes frustrated because of the attitude of your friend and wants him to quit the project.

2) An other possible situation could be about financial funds. Two colleagues are arguing about an financial investment. One colleague wants to invest in the development of new products, the other colleague advocates for investments in current products in order to optimize them.

Please note: We are interested in the *general* criteria over different work conflict situations which influence you in taking sides.

In the following scale, we list 22 statements concerning people's opinions and reasons for taking sides in a conflict situation at work. There is no right or wrong answer to these statements. Please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

If you strongly *disagree*, circle "1" in the scale next to the statement; if you strongly agree circle "5" in that scale; if you neither disagree nor agree, circle "3". Overall, please circle a number which fits your preference best by referring to the following key:

1= Strongly *disagree*

2= *Disagree*

3= Neither disagree nor agree

4= Agree

5= Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1.	I choose to stand for the side whose arguments sound proper.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The more a colleague's arguments are in the right, the more I am inclined to support him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I stand for legitimate principles, regardless of the rest.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I am comfortable in supporting the side whose arguments are right.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Some people take side only based on who is right or who is wrong. I don't like those kind of people.	1	2	3	4	5

1.	The stronger the social connection I have with a colleague, the more I am inclined to support him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I give priority to the colleague who is my friend.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	When I have a close relationship with one of the colleagues, I intend to support him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	In order support the colleague who is my friend, I tend to reject any persuasion from the other party.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	In deciding whom I will support, it is difficult for me to ignore the relationships I have with both colleagues .	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Some people take side with the colleague they have a close relationship with. I don't like these type of persons.	1	2	3	4	5

1.	I choose for the disputant who can punish me.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The more damage a side can bring to me, the more I am inclined to support him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I would side <i>against</i> the colleague, even when I know he/she can punish me for the consequences.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Whether I will get in trouble or not, will influence my side-taking decision	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The more threats a disputant makes, the <i>less</i> I am willing to support him/her.	1	2	3	4	5

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither disagree nor agree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1. I choose to stand for the disputant who can reward me.				1	2 3 4 5
2. The more benefit I can receive from a party, the more I am inclined to support him/her.				1	2 3 4 5
3. I care about what I can gain when choosing which side to support.				1	2 3 4 5
4. I tend to support the party who promises to reward me.				1	2 3 4 5
5. It is difficult for me to disregard the benefits I can gain from taking sides.				1	2 3 4 5

In your work, did you ever experience a conflict, a dispute, or a disagreement between colleagues? Would you like to share that experience(s) with us? Please report your experience(s) in the following box and continue on the backside of this page when necessary.

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The following questions are *not* obligated to fill out.

Gender: Male Female

Age: _____ years old

What is your political preference?

Left Middle/Centre Right Other

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your contribution and cooperation to this research!

If you have any questions or remarks on this research, do not hesitate to contact Hanna Lange: e-mail h.c.g.lange@student.utwente.nl.

Appendix B Factor analyse

Table B Item Content of Side Taking Motivation Scale and Corresponding Loadings on the Four Factors of the Student and Employee Sample

Legitimacy	<i>L</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>IR</i>	<i>R</i>
I stand for legitimate principles, <u>whoever the disputants are.</u>				
**I stand for legitimate principles, <u>regardless of the rest.</u>		.40		
The more a <u>side's</u> arguments are in the right, the more I am inclined to support him/her.	.76			
The more a <u>colleague's</u> arguments are in the right, the more I am inclined to support him/her.	.84			
I am comfortable in supporting the side whose arguments are right.	.68			
I am comfortable in supporting the side whose arguments are right.	.77			
I choose to stand for the side whose arguments sound proper.	.68			
I choose to stand for the side whose arguments sound proper.	.79			
~ I <i>dislike</i> people who choose sides only based on who is right or who is wrong.				
** ~ <u>Some people take side only based on who is right or who is wrong. I don't like those kind of people.</u>				
*I give priority to the side with reasonable arguments.				
* ~ I will side <i>against</i> him/her, even when I know that a party has reasonable arguments.				

Sanction	<i>L</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>IR</i>	<i>R</i>
I choose for the disputant who can punish me.		.72		
<u>I choose for the disputant who can punish me.</u>		.74		
The more damage a side can bring to me, the more I am inclined to support him/her.		.75	.40	
<u>The more damage a side can bring to me, the more I am inclined to support him/her.</u>		.68		
*I give priority to the party who can threaten me.		.62		
My side-taking decision will be influenced by whether a <u>disputant</u> can make trouble for me.		.50	.45	
** <u>Whether I will get in trouble or not, will influence my side-taking decision.</u>			.61	
~ The more threats a <u>side</u> makes, the less I am willing to support him/her.			-.50	
** ~ <u>The more threats a disputant makes, the less I am willing to support him/her.</u>	.41		-.41	
~ I would side against the <u>disputant</u> , even when I know he/she can punish me for the consequences.			-.49	
~ <u>I would side against the colleague, even when I know he/she can punish me for the consequences.</u>	.36		-.43	
* ~ When making up my mind, I care <i>less</i> about the negative consequences produced by the conflicting parties.			-.48	
* ~ I dislike people who stand up for a side because of their fear of being punished.			-.41	

Reward	<i>L</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>IR</i>	<i>R</i>
The more benefit I can receive from a party, the more I am inclined to support him/her.			.83	
The more benefit I can receive from a party, the more I am inclined to support him/her.			.81	
*If I can receive something in return from a side, I will most likely stand up for him/her.			.81	
I care about what I can gain when choosing which side to support.		.38	.81	
I care about what I can gain when choosing which side to support.			.83	
I choose to stand for the <u>side</u> who can reward me.			.76	
I choose to stand for the <u>disputant</u> who can reward me.		.38	.77	
*I calculate how much I can gain from each side before I support him/her.			.74	
I tend to support the <u>disputant</u> who promises to reward me.			.71	
I tend to support the <u>party</u> who promises to reward me.			.78	
*~ I <i>dislike</i> people who stand up for a disputant because of self-interests.			-.61	
It is difficult for me to disregard the benefits I can gain from taking <u>someone's side</u> .			.56	.51
It is difficult for me to disregard the benefits I can gain from taking <u>sides</u> .			.68	

Relationship	<i>L</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>IR</i>	<i>R</i>
I give priority to the side who is a <u>friend of mine</u> .				.76
I give priority to the colleague who is <u>my friend</u> .				-.67
In deciding whom I will support, it is difficult for me to ignore the relationships I have with both <u>parties</u> .				.70
In deciding whom I will support, it is difficult for me to ignore the relationships I have with both <u>colleagues</u> .				-.65
*I choose to stand for the side with whom I have a good relationship.				.70
When I have a close relationship with one of the <u>disputants</u> , I intend to support him/her.				.66
When I have a close relationship with one of the <u>colleagues</u> , I intend to support him/her.				-.83
In order support my <u>friend</u> , I tend to reject any persuasion from <u>the side who is a stranger to me</u> .				.39
In order support the <u>colleague</u> who is my friend, I tend to reject any persuasion <u>from the other party</u> .				-.67
* ~ I would side <i>against</i> a party even when I have a good relationship with him/her.	.44			-.44
~ I <i>dislike</i> people who take the side with the <u>disputant</u> they have a close relationship with.				-.39
~ Some people take side with the <u>colleague</u> they have a close relationship with. I don't like these type of persons.				.46

Note. *L* represents “legitimacy motivated side-taking”, *IS* represents “sanction-avoidance motivated side-taking”, *IR* represents “reward receiving motivated side-taking”, and *R* represents “relationship motivated side-taking”. Factor loadings > 0.35 are shown.

Items with ~ in front are negatively formulated items, their factor loadings are based on non-recoded. The Cronbach's alpha's, correlation and regression analyses were calculated on base of recoded scores.

The first statement is asked in the student version, the second statement is asked in the employee version of the questionnaire and is marked grey.

Items with * were only used in the student-version, and thus removed for the employee version of the questionnaire.

Items marked with ** of the employee scale are excluded from statistical analyses.

In selecting appropriate items for the employee version of the side-taking questionnaire, a balance was made between the factor loadings and the reliability of the construct that was intended to measure by the items. Ten items were not included in the employee version of the questionnaire. These were removed from the student version because they either had: 1) a low loading on the construct, 2) a loading on a non-intended construct also, 3) the item was misunderstood because people did not recognise the negative formulation, or 4) had the same content as another item on that construct. In the latter case when the loading was good, there was no additional value of the item for the concept because the item was more or less the same as another one already included.

After selecting the best items for the employee version, some items were improved and / or adjusted to work conflict situations: meaning for example that the word 'disputant' was replaced by 'colleague'. These adjustments are underlined in the Table B.

Four items in the employee version were removed for further analysis because there was either a loading on a non-intended concept, or they loaded on two concepts quite low, or the loading of an item was $< .35$ at any construct which resulted in a decrease of reliability and strength of the concept.

The item 'Whether I will get in trouble or not, will influence my side-taking decision' measuring the concept 'sanction motivated side-taking' was removed because it had a loading on the concept 'reward motivated side-taking'. This suggests that employees interpreted this item as a reward item because they wanted to avoid the sanction. The item 'The more threats a disputant makes, the less I am willing to support him/her' of the same concept was removed as well, because it had a low loading on 'Reward motivated side-taking',

and the same low loading on the concept 'legitimate motivated side-taking'. When these two items were removed, the Cronbach's alpha increased from .57 to .58.

The item 'I stand for legitimate principles, regardless of the rest' of the concept 'legitimate motivated side-taking' was removed because it had a loading on the non-intended concept 'sanction motivated side-taking', suggesting that the sentence part 'regardless of the rest' has a kind of sanction value in it. The item 'Some people take side only based on who is right or who is wrong. I don't like those kind of people') of the legitimacy concept is also removed, because it has no loading higher than .35 on the concept 'legitimate motivated side-taking'. An explanation for this could be the last statement 'I don't like those kind of people', this is a negatively formulated sentence which could refer to social relations or sanctions. Another explanation could be the 'right or wrong' in the first part of the sentence, it could be unclear to the employees what was intended to state when they read the sentence imprecise or fast. After removing these two items, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient increased from .67 to .77. All the items of the 'reward motivated side-taking scale' and 'relationship motivated side-taking' scale were included for further analysis. Their Cronbach's alpha was high; .85 and .78 respectively.