Employee Self-Enhancement Motives and Job Performance Behaviors: Investigating the Moderating Effects of Employee Role Ambiguity and Managerial Perceptions of Employee Commitment

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This study examined the effects of employee self-enhancement motives on job performance behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors and task performance) and the value of these behaviors to them. The authors propose that employees display job performance behaviors in part to enhance their self-image, especially when their role is not clearly defined. They further argue that the effects of these behaviors on managerial reward recommendation decisions should be stronger when managers believe the employees to be more committed. The results from a sample of 84 working students indicate that role ambiguity moderated the effects of self-enhancement motives on job performance behaviors and that managerial perceptions of an employee’s commitment moderated the effects of those organizational citizenship behaviors that are aimed at other individuals on managers’ reward allocation decisions.

Keywords: organizational citizenship behavior, task performance, impression management, employee commitment, instrumentality

Researchers have carried out a substantial number of studies on job performance behaviors from the aspects of both task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Conway, 1999; LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Task performance is defined as the expected behaviors “that are directly involved in producing goods or services, or activities that provide indirect support for the organization’s core technical processes” (Van Scotter et al., 2000, p. 526). Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Both types of job performance behaviors are considered to be valuable and desirable in organizations, and researchers have focused their efforts on identifying the determinants of employee job performance behaviors.

Despite the extensive studies on these determinants, few researchers have examined the impact of the employees’ motive of impression management on these two types of employee behavior (cf. Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005). Impression management is a common phenomenon in the workplace (e.g., Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Wayne & Green, 1993; Wayne & Liden, 1995), and employees may engage in such behaviors to enhance their self-image (e.g., Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Individuals recognize that by improving their performance, they will come to be seen as competent and as assets to the organization, and in this way they can impress others, including their immediate managers. However, this possibility has not yet been paid enough attention. Similarly, although scholars have suggested that employees may display OCBs for self-serving interests, such as a desire to impress the management, this possibility has not been investigated extensively (e.g., Bolino, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Hui, 1993; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Also, we do not yet know how an employee’s role perception influences the relationship between the employee’s impression management motive and job performance behaviors. In addition, T. D. Allen and Rush (1998) and Hui, Lam, and Law (2000) suggested that although OCBs are not formally recognized by the reward system, managers do recognize the value of these behaviors by employees and reward them in informal ways. Nonetheless, further theorizing and investigation is needed on the factors that may strengthen or weaken this relationship.

The present study has three purposes. First, we investigate whether employees exhibit job performance behaviors with a motive to enhance their self-image. Second, we examine the moderating role of the employee’s perception of his or her role (i.e.,...
role ambiguity) on the relationship between the motive to enhance one’s self-image and job performance behaviors. We theorize that employees are more inclined to engage in job performance behaviors in part from a desire to enhance their self-image when their role is not clearly defined—that is, when the perceived role ambiguity is high. Third, we investigate the influence of managerial perceptions of an employee’s commitment to the organization on decisions to recommend rewards. We expect to find that managers’ perceptions of the affective commitment of employees to the organization will have a moderating effect on the relationship between job performance behaviors and managers’ decisions to recommend rewards.

There are two primary theoretical contributions of the present study. First, by integrating the impression management literature with task performance and OCB literature (e.g., Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001), our research extends the impression management motive perspective to include employee job performance behaviors. Second, this study broadens the perceptual approach to job performance behaviors by examining the moderating effect of the perceptions of both employees and managers. Thus, in this study, we advance current knowledge on the antecedents and consequences of job performance behaviors.

Hypothesis Development

Impression Management and Job Performance Behaviors

As noted by many scholars (e.g., Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Wayne & Green, 1993; Wayne & Liden, 1995), impression management is a common phenomenon in the workplace. To impress others, employees may engage in behaviors that are perceived as valuable, desirable, and beneficial. In this study, we suggest that in order to enhance their self-image, employees might (a) work harder to improve their task performance and (b) engage in OCBs.

It is commonly accepted that organizations need and value employees who perform well, and these high performers are considered a valuable asset for the organization. Task performance is an indicator of an employee’s talents, capability, and competence. Employees who achieve higher levels of performance are likely to be more valued and to be viewed more favorably by others, and their performance will be recognized and rewarded. Thus, employees can impress others, including their immediate managers, by achieving a higher performance than expected. Recognizing this, employees who are highly motivated to enhance their self-image may try harder to improve their task performance. On the other hand, employees who are not so motivated and do not feel the need to impress their managers may limit their work effort and thus produce only an acceptable level of task performance. Thus, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 1: Employee self-enhancement motive is positively related to task performance.

Researchers have identified several tactics used for impression management. Interestingly enough, these tactics seem to have a lot in common with OCBs (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). For example, Eastman (1994) noted that ingratiation, which is defined as a “political tactic employees use to further their personal interest” (p. 1379), may have some similarity to OCBs, in that it appears to be an extrarole behavior. Wayne and Green (1993) found that altruistic citizenship behaviors were positively related to image management behaviors.

Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that organizations need and value employees who are willing to exceed their formal job requirements (e.g., Barnard, 1938; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Organ, 1988). Hence, employees who engage in more OCBs may be more valued and be viewed more favorably by others. OCBs may provide individuals with opportunities to show off their talents and knowledge so that they appear more competent (Stevens, 1997). Although few empirical studies have examined this issue, image enhancement appears likely to be a motive for an employee to engage in OCBs (Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Consequently, it can be argued that employees who are motivated to manage the impression that they give to others are likely to use OCBs to improve their self-image at the workplace. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Employee self-enhancement motive is positively related to OCBs.

Moderating Effects of Employee Role Perception

We propose that role ambiguity will moderate the relationship between the motive to enhance one’s self-image and job performance behaviors. Several streams of research suggest that job roles may not be as clearly defined as people believe. For instance, the role-making literature (Graen, 1976) has noted that job roles are rarely fixed and that role perceptions evolve as a result of employee interactions. Role ambiguity generally can be defined as a perceived lack of job-related information (Breaugh & Colihan, 1994; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Job-related information can include performance expectations, goals, assignments, authority, responsibilities, job duties, and other job conditions. When the role is not clearly defined, there are at least two approaches that employees can take to enhance their self-image. First, they may set their own specific and challenging performance goals and expectations. Second, they may expand the scope of their job to include not only task performance but also OCBs.

When role ambiguity is high, performance expectations may not be clear, and specific performance goals may not be assigned to the employees. In such situations the employees may have to speculate and/or set their own goals. Self-set goals can themselves be an indicator of a person’s talents, competence, and self-efficacy, especially when task expectations are not clear and a task goal is not assigned. When role ambiguity is high, self-set specific and challenging goals can impress others, including the supervisor, because a self-set goal that is specific and challenging indicates the self-efficacy of the employees and implies that they care about the organization and its performance. Therefore, those employees who are highly motivated to enhance their self-image are likely to set themselves specific and more challenging performance goals, which lead to higher task performance (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990). It is also possible that those who have low motivation to enhance their self-image may not even set goals for themselves and may take advantage of the role ambiguity as a justification for their modest task performance. As a result, those who are highly motivated to enhance their self-image may perceive job performance behaviors to be more purposeful (cf. Organ & Greene, 1974), leading to high task performance, as such employees are...
more likely to choose conscious goals (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990). In contrast, when role ambiguity is low, the performance expectation is clearly defined, and specific goals are assigned to each employee. In a low-ambiguity situation, all employees are likely to have similar levels of performance goals, and as a result, there are likely to be fewer differences in performance.

**Hypothesis 3:** Employee role perception moderates the relationship between the employee self-enhancement motive and task performance such that this relationship is stronger when role ambiguity is high than when role ambiguity is low.

Morrison (1994) found that employees were more likely to engage in behaviors typically construed as OCBs if they defined their jobs broadly. She concluded that OCBs are a function of employees’ definition of their responsibilities. In essence, her study showed that employees’ perception of their role affected the amount of OCBs that they exhibited. Extending Morrison’s research, we propose in this study that role ambiguity moderates the relationship between the motive to enhance one’s self-image and OCBs.

When role ambiguity is high, there is much more room for employees to develop different interpretations of their job requirements. This can be considered a weak situation in which there are few situational constraints on the incumbents and they have a high degree of discretion about how they do their job. This enables them to integrate more job aspects into their role (Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, & Hemingway, 2005) and provides greater opportunities for them to engage in OCBs, especially when they wish to improve their self-image. In this situation, employees who are highly motivated to enhance their self-image are likely to define their roles more broadly than others.

On the other hand, when role ambiguity is low, employees know what is expected of them and have a lower margin of discretion for interpreting their job requirements. In this clearly defined situation, individuals are likely to focus on and direct their efforts mainly toward what is expected of them in their job. It can be deduced that when role ambiguity is low, employees are less likely to engage in OCBs. Therefore, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 4:** Employee role perception moderates the relationship between the employee self-enhancement motive and OCBs such that this relationship is stronger when role ambiguity is high than when role ambiguity is low.

**Job Performance Behaviors and Managerial Reward Recommendation Decisions**

Earlier research has confirmed that employee OCBs have a beneficial influence on organizational effectiveness and the performance of a firm (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Koys, 2001; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997; Podsakoff & MacKenzie 1994; Walz & Niehoff, 2000). More recently, researchers have started to pay attention also to the benefits that might accrue to individual employees when they display OCBs (T. D. Allen & Rush, 1998; Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999; Van Scotter et al., 2000). In reality, as part of the social exchange process, managers may reciprocate by recommending higher rewards for those employees who exhibit OCBs. Managers may even deliberately reward employee citizenship behaviors in order to encourage other employees to exhibit such behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1993). For example, in their simulation study, Kiker and Motowidlo (1999) found that interpersonal facilitation by an employee had a significant effect on managerial reward decisions. Interpersonal facilitation “includes behaviors such as praising coworkers when they are successful, supporting and encouraging a coworker with a personal problem, and talking to others before taking actions that might affect them” (Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999, p. 603). Interpersonal facilitation is very similar to OCB, especially OCB that is directed toward specific individuals. These findings imply that OCB by an employee can have a positive effect on managerial reward decisions. In addition, Van Scotter et al. (2000) demonstrated that contextual performance as well as task performance predicted career-related outcomes such as promotability and rewards. Although formal reward systems may not directly or explicitly recognize OCBs, managers may acknowledge and reciprocate employee OCBs by recommending higher rewards for them using their personal discretionary power. Thus, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 5:** OCBs by employees are positively related to managerial reward recommendation decisions.

In addition, we expect to find a positive relationship between task performance and managerial recommendations concerning rewards. The logic for this hypothesis is straightforward, in that task performance is the behavior that is expected from an employee and that is directly related to the production of goods or services of value to the organization. In addition, several studies (Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1991; Werner, 1994) have found that task performance has a significant effect on managers’ overall ratings of employees. T. D. Allen and Rush (1998) also identified the positive effects of task performance on a manager’s reward recommendations. Therefore, we also expect the following:

**Hypothesis 6:** Employee task performance is positively related to managerial reward recommendation decisions.

**Effects of Managerial Perceptions**

We argue that managerial perceptions can also play a significant role in a manager’s reward recommendation decisions. In particular, this study focuses on the manager’s perception of an employee’s affective commitment to the organization. Although a majority of the empirical studies on organizational commitment have focused on employees’ self-perception, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., T. D. Allen & Rush, 1998; Shore & Wayne, 1993), managers are likely to also develop their own perceptions of the employee’s level of affective commitment to the organization. This perception can be expected to play a critical role in influencing the decision-making process of the managers. Several studies can be found in the literature that provide guidance on this matter.

The attribution and categorization literature provides insights into the role of individual cognition on the judgment and performance evaluation of others (e.g., Feldman, 1981, 1986; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Werner, 1994). Individuals develop comprehensive cognitive frameworks or templates known as schemata (e.g., Fiske...
& Taylor, 1984) and classify other individuals accordingly (Feldman, 1981, 1986). They may use a variety of cues such as demographic characteristics and attitudes to classify other people. Managers, as organizational representatives, are also likely to develop schemata of their employees and in this way to categorize them as trustworthy or not trustworthy, using the level of commitment that employees demonstrate as an attitudinal attribute (Cantor & Mishel, 1979). Once the categorization and schema of the employee is developed, it influences the manager’s attitude toward the employee. These attributions may influence the manager’s in-group versus out-group assessment and any subsequent reward recommendation decisions (cf. Green & Mitchell, 1979).

In addition, managers establish a social exchange relationship with their staff (e.g., Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). As part of this relationship, they feel obligated to recognize and repay the staff member’s commitment to the organization. This sense of obligation is stronger in the case of highly committed employees than in the case of those who are less committed. As a result, they are likely to use rewards to compensate those employees who they believe to be loyal to the organization. For instance, Shore, Barksdale, and Shore (1995) found that managerial perception of the affective commitment level of an employee had a positive influence on various managerial evaluations, including reward decisions. Therefore, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 7:** Managerial perceptions of the affective commitment of employees are positively related to managerial reward recommendation decisions.

In addition to the direct effects described above, managerial perception of an employee’s affective commitment to the organization may also moderate the relationship between employee job performance behaviors and managerial reward recommendation decisions. Managers may interpret OCBs displayed by less committed employees as merely calculated behavior designed to achieve the personal goals of the individuals by manipulating the situation and, consequently, see them only as “good actors” (Bolino, 1999). In contrast, they may interpret the OCBs of highly committed employees as stemming from an intrinsic desire to contribute to the functioning of the organization and so consider them as “good soldiers” (Bolino, 1999). In this case, the managers would be more likely to reward them for their OCBs. Thus, when managers make reward recommendation decisions, they may respond to employee OCBs differentially according to their own perception of the employee’s commitment. In other words, a manager’s perception of employee affective commitment is likely to influence the relationship between OCBs and managerial reward recommendations in the light of that manager’s interpretation of the behavior and motives of a particular employee.

In addition, when a manager concludes that an employee is highly committed to the organization, a halo effect may occur. In other words, the rater’s overall impression or evaluation of an individual may influence the ratings of specific attributes (Cooper, 1981). In this context, if two employees exhibit an equivalent level of OCBs, the manager is likely to view other job performance behaviors (such as task performance) more favorably for an employee whom the manager considers to be more committed than for another employee whom the manager views as being less committed. This halo effect may occur because the manager can trust those employees who go the extra mile to also be dependable in performing their own tasks and to cooperate more among themselves (e.g., Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995). This can induce higher reward recommendations for those employees with higher levels of perceived affective commitment even when two employees exhibit similar levels of OCBs. The same logic can be applied to task performance. If two employees exhibit an equivalent level of task performance, the manager is likely to have a more favorable assessment of and to recommend higher rewards for an employee whom the manager considers to be more committed than for an employee whom the manager thinks of as less committed. Therefore, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 8:** Managerial perception of the affective commitment of an employee moderates the effects of OCBs on a manager’s reward recommendation in that they will have a stronger positive impact for an employee whom the manager perceives as being highly committed than for one whom the manager perceives as being less committed.

**Hypothesis 9:** Managerial perception of the affective commitment of an employee moderates the effects of task performance on a manager’s reward recommendation in that it will have a stronger positive impact for an employee whom the manager perceives as being highly committed than for one whom the manager perceives as being less committed.

**Method**

**Participants and Procedures**

Data were collected using questionnaires distributed to employees and their direct managers. Surveys were distributed to 164 full-time employees who were taking management courses at two large, public universities in the mid-Atlantic United States. Of the surveys distributed, 107 were returned, giving a response rate of 65.24%. Of the respondents, 36.11% were male, and the average age was 27.79 years (SD = 8.73). On average, their organizational tenure was 51.76 months (SD = 53.17), their job tenure was 38.91 months (SD = 35.12), and they averaged 30.15 months (SD = 20.83) with their immediate manager. The jobs that the participants held were very diverse, including software engineering, management consulting, mortgage brokerage, office management, and nursing, to name a few.

The survey packet included a managerial survey, together with a preaddressed reply envelope, which participants delivered to their immediate manager. Ninety-two managers returned the survey, of whom 55.81% were male and 73.56% held at least a bachelor’s degree. Their average age was 36.95 years (SD = 5.03). The respondents included in this study were limited to those with complete matched data (N = 84).

**Measures**

The focal employees were asked to provide information on their motivation to enhance their self-image and their perception of the ambiguity of their role. Their immediate managers were asked to provide their perception of the focal employee’s affective commit-
ment level, their evaluations of the focal employee’s level of task performance and OCBs, and their managerial reward recommendation decisions. All of the items except for reward recommendation decisions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Self-enhancement motive. We operationalized this variable as an individual employee’s sensitivity to other people’s perception of him or her and the employee’s level of motivation to adapt his or her behavior in order to project a good self-image to others. Because there was no well-established measure to assess the self-enhancement motive, we initially developed a nine-item scale to measure this variable. This scale was reviewed by a management scholar not involved in this research, who recommended the deletion of one item.

To validate our measures, we pretested them using data collected from 121 employees in a software company and 48 employees in a manufacturing firm as part of a separate field study. Both companies are located in the northeastern United States. We also measured self-monitoring, which represents an ability to manage self-image (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984), because self-monitoring is probably most similar to the concept of the self-enhancement motive, although self-monitoring captures the ability and not necessarily the willingness or intent. We used the validated scale to measure self-monitoring (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Principal-axis factor analysis produced a two-factor solution with eigenvalues of 4.40 and 1.75, which explained 27.49% and 10.95% of the variance. All of the items for self-monitoring loaded on one factor. One of the items we developed had a higher factor loading on self-monitoring than on self-enhancement motive, although both factor loadings were low. The other seven items loaded on the intended factor and had a reliability of .75. The correlation between self-monitoring and intention to impress management was .31 (p < .01). These results provided some evidence of the discriminant validity as well as the reliability of our instrument. On the basis of the pretest results, we selected seven items for this study.

We conducted a factor analysis on this seven-item scale with the data collected for the present study. Although the principal-axis factor analysis produced a one-factor solution, one item had poor factor loading, so it was dropped from the subsequent analyses. We also conducted confirmatory factor analysis with the remaining six items (Figure 1). The model fit statistics, such as the comparative fit index (.97), standardized root-mean-square residual (.05), and root-mean-square error of approximation (.08), all indicated that the fit of the model was good. Moreover, all of the items loaded significantly (p < .05) on the latent construct.

The reliability of this scale was .81. We used these six items as the final measure for this study (see Appendix). We also conducted additional factor analysis for this six-item scale along with 20 items for measuring employee use of the impression management tactics identified by Wayne and Ferris (1990). We obtained these ratings from the managers. Our principal-axis factor analysis with varimax rotation yielded a three-factor solution (see Appendix), which provided evidence for the discriminant validity of our self-enhancement motive scale items.

Role ambiguity. Role ambiguity was measured using five items from Rizzo et al. (1970). Consistent with previous research and the conceptualization of role ambiguity, all of the items were reverse coded, which resulted in a scale for which the higher the score was, the greater was the role ambiguity. A sample item stated, “I feel certain about how much authority I have.” Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .90.

Task performance. To measure task performance, we adopted the seven-item scale from Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item reads, “The subordinate performs tasks that are expected of him/her.” Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .86.

OCBs. OCBs have often been separated into those that are aimed at other individuals (OCB—I) and those aimed at the organization (OCB—O). In this study, we therefore examined our hypotheses in terms of both forms of OCB. We used the 14-item OCB scale from Williams and Anderson (1991) to measure OCB—I (seven items) and OCB—O (seven items). Three items for OCB—O were reverse coded to be consistent with the other items, which had a positive valence. However, the reverse-coded items formed a separate additional factor. Therefore, three items from OCB—O were dropped (e.g., Harvey, Billings, & Nilan, 1985; Magazine & Williams, 1996). The reliabilities were .89 and .84 for the remaining seven-item OCB—I and four-item OCB—O scales, respectively.

Managerial perception of subordinate affective commitment. Similar to Shore et al. (1995), we asked the manager to evaluate the employee’s affective commitment toward the organization, using an eight-item affective commitment scale adapted from N. J. Allen and Meyer (1990). The subject of the item was changed to refer to the subordinate. A sample item reads, “S/he feels emotionally attached to this organization.” The reliability of this scale was .95.

Reward recommendation decisions. We used the five-item scale from T. D. Allen and Rush (1998) to assess managers’ reward recommendation decisions regarding the employees. The managers were asked to indicate the extent to which they would recommend the employees for five rewards (salary increase, promotion, high-profile project, public recognition [e.g., company award], and opportunities for professional development) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = would definitely not recommend; 2 = would probably not recommend; 3 = neutral; 4 = would recommend with some minor reservation; 5 = would recommend with confidence and without reservation). The reliability of this scale was .88.
Analytical Strategy

We standardized those variables involved in moderation before creating the interaction terms. To test Hypotheses 1 through 4, we performed three sets of hierarchical regression analyses (one for OCB–I, another for OCB–O, and another for task performance). In Step 1, we included the self-enhancement motive followed by role ambiguity in Step 2. In Step 3, the interaction term (Self-Enhancement Motive × Role Ambiguity) was entered. In addition, following Aiken and West (1991), we plotted the significant interaction effect, using plus or minus one standard deviation.

To test Hypotheses 5 through 9, we conducted another set of hierarchical regression analyses. In Step 1, we entered task performance, OCB–I, and OCB–O. In Step 2, we included managerial perceptions of the employees’ affective commitment. Finally, in Step 3, the interaction terms between OCBs (i.e., OCB–I and OCB–O) and managerial perceptions of the employees’ affective commitment and the interaction between task performance and managerial perceptions of the employees’ affective commitment were included. We also depicted the significant interaction plot, using the same procedure.

We conducted analyses with several control variables, such as demographics (age, gender, race, educational level, and hierarchical job level), leader–member exchange, and job satisfaction. The results of these analyses were comparable to the results depicted in Tables 2 and 3. We also used two different methods to deal with missing values: mean replacement and listwise deletion. The results of the analyses using listwise deletion (N = 77) were comparable to the results obtained with mean replacement (N = 84) for the matched data. Hence, we report only the results from the larger sample (N = 84).

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations are depicted in Table 1. As indicated in this table, the correlations for most of the variables were in the expected direction. Table 2 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analyses for OCB–I, OCB–O, and task performance. Models 1–3 report the standardized beta coefficients (βs) associated with each individual step. Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between the self-enhancement motive and task performance; however, the results did not provide support for this hypothesis (β = .13, ns). Hypothesis 2 suggested a positive relationship between the self-enhancement motive and OCBs. The self-enhancement motive was significantly and positively related to OCB–O (β = .28, p < .05) but not to OCB–I (β = .12, ns). Therefore, these results provided some support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 proposed a moderating effect of role ambiguity on the relationship between the self-enhancement motive and task performance. The results demonstrate that there was a significant interaction effect between the self-enhancement motive and role ambiguity on task performance, as the interaction step accounted for an incremental variance of 9% (ΔF = 7.83, p < .01; β = .31, p < .01; see Table 2 and Figure 2A). The self-enhancement motive was positively related to task performance when role ambiguity was high, whereas there was no significant relationship between self-enhancement motives and task performance when role ambiguity was low.

Hypothesis 4 was also supported. Hypothesis 4 argued for a moderating effect of role ambiguity on the relationship between the self-enhancement motive and OCBs. The second step for each regression indicates that the incremental variance accounted for by the interaction term was significant for both dimensions of OCBs. For OCB–I, the interaction term explained 9% of the additional variance over and above that accounted for by the variables included in previous steps (ΔF = 8.06, p < .01). For OCB–O, the interaction term accounted for 17% of the incremental variance (ΔF = 19.18, p < .01) beyond that accounted for in previous steps. The results showed a significant interaction effect between the self-enhancement motive and role ambiguity on OCB–I (Table 2 and Figure 2B): The self-enhancement motive had a positive influence on OCB–I when role ambiguity was high but had no significant effect when role ambiguity was low. Similarly, we found a significant interaction effect between the self-enhancement motive and role ambiguity on OCB–O (Table 2 and Figure 2C): The self-enhancement motive was positively related to OCB–O when role ambiguity was high but had no significant effect when role ambiguity was low. Therefore, these results provided support for Hypotheses 3 and 4.

Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analyses for managerial reward recommendation decisions. Hypothesis 5 posited a positive relationship between OCBs and managerial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Role ambiguity</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>(.90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Self-enhancement motives</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>−.13</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>3. Task performance</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>−.18*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. OCB–I</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>−.23*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. OCB–O</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>−.53**</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Subordinate affective commitment</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>−.17</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>(.95)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Reward recommendation</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>−.26**</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 84. Values in parentheses are reliabilities. Means and standard deviations are listed for informational purposes only, because these values were standardized for the regression analyses. OCB–I = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the individuals; OCB–O = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the organization.

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

These variables were based on focal employee ratings. These variables were based on manager ratings.
reward recommendations. The results indicate that OCB–I had a significant positive effect on reward recommendations ($b = .36$, $p < .01$). OCB–O also had a significant positive effect on reward recommendations ($b = .21$, $p < .05$). Therefore, these results provided support for Hypothesis 5. Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant relationship between task performance and reward recommendations ($b = .16$, $ns$) or between the managerial perception of employee affective commitment and reward recommendations ($b = .11$, $ns$). Thus, the results of our study did not provide support for Hypothesis 6 or 7.

Hypothesis 8 argued for a moderating effect of managerial perception of employee affective commitment on the relationship between OCBs and managerial reward recommendation decisions. The last step of the regression analysis indicated that the interaction terms explained 6% of the incremental variance. The beta coefficients for this step showed a significant interaction effect between OCB–I and managerial perception of employee affective commitment on reward recommendation decisions ($b = .33$, $p < .05$). When plotted, the figure indicated that the relationship between OCB–I and the reward recommendation was stronger when the managerial perception of employee affective commitment was high than when it was low (see Figure 3). On the other hand, the interaction effect between OCB–O and managerial perception of employee affective commitment was not significant ($b = -.18$, $ns$). Overall, Hypothesis 8 received some support. However, there was no significant interaction effect between task performance and the managerial perception of employee affective commitment ($b = -.09$, $ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Discussion

This study has investigated (a) the effects of employee self-enhancement motive on job performance behaviors, as moderated by the employee’s perception of role ambiguity; (b) the instrumental values of job performance behaviors for individual employees, by examining the effects of job performance behaviors on managerial reward recommendations; and (c) the main and moderating

### Table 2

**Regression Results on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Task Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable*</th>
<th>Task performance</th>
<th>OCB–I</th>
<th>OCB–O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Main effects of self-enhancement motive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enhancement motives</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Main effects of employee role perception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role ambiguity</td>
<td>–.17</td>
<td>–.08</td>
<td>–.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Enhancement Motives × Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $F$</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ change</td>
<td>4.27*</td>
<td>8.06**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ change</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 84$. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. OCB–I = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the individuals; OCB–O = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the organization.

* Variables are standardized.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. 

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**Figure 2.** Interactions of (A) self-enhancement motives and role ambiguity on task performance; (B) self-enhancement motives and role ambiguity on OCB–I; and (C) self-enhancement motives and role ambiguity on OCB–O. OCB–I = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the individuals; OCB–O = organizational citizenship behaviors intended to benefit the organization.
effects of the managerial perception of the employee’s affective commitment on reward recommendation decisions. We found that one reason for individuals to display OCB–O stemmed from a motivation to enhance their self-image. More important, we found that this effect was moderated by the employee’s perception of role ambiguity. The motivation to enhance one’s self-image was positively related to OCB–O when role ambiguity was high, but there was no significant relationship between self-enhancement motive and OCB–O when role ambiguity was low. This finding demonstrates the importance of employee role perceptions (cf. Morrison, 1994). Although we did not find that the self-enhancement motive had a major effect on OCB–I or on task performance, we did find that role ambiguity had some moderating effect for OCB–I and task performance. These findings suggest that employees display particular job performance behaviors when they are motivated to impress the management, especially when there is high role ambiguity.

Our findings indicate that motives and perceptual approaches to OCBs (e.g., Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001) are viable theoretical perspectives that are complementary to the social exchange or affective approaches to job performance behaviors. Here, we do not intend to argue that the self-enhancement motive (or motives approach in general) is inherently detrimental to the organization or the employee. Future research could extend our findings by explicating this moderating effect further. For instance, future study can develop and use a new measure that would capture the employee’s perception of role ambiguity in relation to the behaviors expected (or not expected) of his or her role and how others perceive the employee’s self-enhancement motive.

Furthermore, our study has demonstrated the instrumental value of OCBs for individual employees. In other words, OCBs can benefit not only the organization but also the individual employee. When individuals display more OCBs, the managers tend to recommend greater rewards for them. Moreover, the findings suggest that the effects of OCBs on reward recommendations were stronger when managers perceived employees to be more committed. As Bolino (1999) noted, however, managers may simply disregard OCBs when they perceive that these behaviors have been undertaken only as a means of impressing the management—that is, by less committed employees. This leads to another interesting question that can be explored in the future, involving the nature of OCBs exhibited for different reasons underlying the motivation to enhance self-image and its impact on organizational effectiveness. For example, it is possible that OCBs that are directed more toward impressing the manager are less beneficial for the functioning of the organization than OCBs that are directed more toward helping the coworkers. In other words, those employees who use OCBs more as an ingratiation tactic may direct their efforts toward the manager but not to helping the coworkers. Thus, future research could extend our study in different ways.
Impression Management and Job Performance Behaviors

Impression management is an important phenomenon at work. It implies that individuals may have a self-interested motive for engaging in job performance behaviors. If job performance behaviors are highly valued in an organization, then it is natural for individuals to exhibit higher levels of task performance and adopt OCBs in order to create a better image of themselves. Our study supported this contention and demonstrated that the self-enhancement motive may be another cause of OCB–O. Our findings imply that OCB–O may not be purely altruistic and can include calculating behaviors. Moreover, our results illustrate that employees are more likely to adopt such job performance behaviors—task performance and both OCB dimensions—to enhance their self-image when they perceive that their role is ambiguous.

Our findings raise an important issue, namely, the legitimacy and the organizational value of impression management. Impression management motives can be viewed from two aspects. One aspect is the traditional notion that impression management is used in order to avoid negative consequences such as punishment and to advance an employee’s personal interests, often at the expense of the organization (Wortman & Linsemmer, 1977). In this case, impression management only takes the form of manipulation of the image, for instance, by the use of flattery and ingratitude (e.g., Eastman, 1994), and is not accompanied by any meaningful or constructive behaviors.

An aspect that has not been emphasized, however, is the notion that impression management can be used to produce positive consequences. This has beneficial effects for the organization because it is more likely to be accompanied by meaningful, productive behaviors, such as improved task performance and helping behaviors. In the present study we have followed the second approach, considering the motivation to enhance self-image as a catalyst for the employees to exhibit productive job performance behaviors, especially when their role is not clearly defined. Our findings have confirmed the validity of this approach.

However, OCBs adopted for impression management motives may not be as beneficial to organizations as OCBs stemming from motives such as concern for the organization and social values. Thus, further research is needed to investigate the legitimacy and organizational values of OCBs stemming from impression management motives and whether OCBs adopted for other motives can also be beneficial to organizations.

In addition, the results showed that OCBs are negatively related to role ambiguity (Table 2), although we did not hypothesize this. The findings suggest that managers may find it helpful to clarify the job roles of employees in order to facilitate citizenship behaviors. The findings are very interesting, given that our results also showed that employees are likely to engage in OCBs with a view to impressing the management when there is a high level of ambiguity about their job role. The effects of role ambiguity on OCBs might be more complicated than we expected. The significant and negative effect of role ambiguity on OCBs may imply that there is a mediation effect. As Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) suggested, role ambiguity affects OCBs through employee job satisfaction. Future research needs to address this issue.

Our findings are somewhat similar to those of Rioux and Penner (2001), who found that the impression management motive was not significantly related to OCBs, in that our results demonstrated that the self-enhancement motive was not related to OCB–I. However, unlike their results, we found that the self-enhancement motive was positively related to OCB–O. One plausible explanation for the different findings regarding OCB–O is the measurement we used. Rioux and Penner used the motivation to avoid giving a negative impression to measure the impression management motive, whereas we used the motive to enhance the self-image. Our findings may indicate that individuals engage in certain citizenship behaviors more from the motive of enhancing their self-image than from the motive of avoiding giving a negative impression. Future studies may further our understanding by examining the roles that each of these different types of impression management motives play. More important, we took one step further and found that there were significant interaction effects between the impression management motive and employee role perception.

Instrumental Value of OCB

Extending the work of Shore et al. (1995), we examined the moderating effects of the manager’s perception of an employee’s affective commitment on the relationship between citizenship behaviors and the manager’s reward recommendations. The results of this study demonstrate that although reward systems may not necessarily recognize the citizenship behaviors of individuals formally, in reality managers do take OCBs into account when making decisions on reward recommendations.

Our findings indicate the importance of managers’ perceptions of their subordinates. The positive effects of OCB–I on reward recommendations were much stronger when the manager perceived an individual to be committed to the organization. As representatives of the organization, managers will make assessments of their employees, and these assessments will influence their reward decisions. Extending these findings, it may be revealed that managers recognize the intentions of the employees and that this recognition will affect their assessment of the commitment of the employees to the organization and, hence, influence their reward recommendation decisions. Further research is needed to examine this aspect in more depth.

Limitations and Conclusion

Our findings have to be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, the data were collected at one point in time. Given our cross-sectional design, we cannot infer causality. Another limitation is the potential risk of common method bias. We tried to reduce this potential problem by collecting data from two different sources, the focal employees and the managers, which were considered the most appropriate sources. In addition, common method bias for this particular study is less likely to be a matter of concern, given our findings of significant interaction effects (Evans, 1985). Additional limitations may be issues that are associated with our measures. First, our assessment of the self-enhancement motive is a newly created measure that taps into intentions to engage in image management that are more proactive on the employee’s part. Although we were careful and took steps to develop a valid tool of measurement, and some of the analyses provided evidence of its validity, future research needs to further validate this scale.
addition although previous studies have successfully measured managerial perception of an employee’s affective commitment (e.g., Shore et al., 1995; Shore & Wayne, 1993), it is still possible that this scale may reflect only the manager’s overall impression of the employee. However, as Table 1 reveals, it is not significantly correlated with the specific aspects of task performance and OCB–O. Moreover, we did find that it is significantly correlated with the employee’s self-rating of his or her affective organizational commitment ($r = .38, p < .01$) in a separate field study in which data were collected from 123 matched samples of employees and managers. As a result, we are very confident that it captures the actual level of an employee’s affective commitment to the organization. However, future research may be needed to validate this instrument further.

The participants in our survey were from different companies and held various types of jobs, which is one of the advantages of our research design. However, this can also be a potential source of confusion. The participants held very diverse jobs (e.g., software engineering, management consulting, mortgage brokerage, office management, and nursing) with dramatically different expectations and opportunities to engage in OCBs. These differences may have had an influence on some of the results. It is possible that some jobs, such as nursing, offer many opportunities and expectations for helpful behavior toward coworkers. Citizenship behaviors may be seen as a basic requirement for such jobs. In contrast, jobs such as software engineering and mortgage brokerage may not offer nearly as many opportunities and expectations for OCBs. Thus, it would be advisable for future research to include a control for job type and its potential for distortion of the results.

Despite its limitations, this study enriches our understanding of the individual employee’s instrumental motive for job performance behaviors and of their instrumental value, as well as the perceptual factors involved in this process. Our findings suggest that individual job performance behaviors may not be truly altruistic in nature, as previous researchers have conceptualized. Employees may use job performance behaviors as a way to achieve personal benefits and to enhance their self-image, especially when their job roles are not clearly defined. We also demonstrated the importance of managers’ perceptions of the subordinate’s affective commitment for their reward recommendation decision, as well as the importance of individuals’ perception of their own role when they display OCBs from self-enhancement motives. In short, this study illustrates the utility of viewing OCBs from different angles. Hence, additional research in this area seems not only warranted but critical to advance our understanding of citizenship behaviors.

References


Koys, D. J. (2001). The effects of employee satisfaction, organizational


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(Appendix follows)
## Appendix

### Factor Analysis Results on Self-Enhancement Motives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>IMS</th>
<th>IMJ</th>
<th>SEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S/he agrees with you on major issues.</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he compliments you on your dress or appearance.</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he lets you know that he/she tries to do a good job in his/her work.</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>−.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he does personal favors for you.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he offers to do something for you which he/she is not required to do; that is, he/she did it as a personal favor to you.</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he tries to act as a &quot;model&quot; employee in front of you by, for example, never taking longer than the established time for lunch.</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>−.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he praises you on your accomplishments.</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he takes an interest in your personal life.</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he works hard when he/she knows the results will be seen by you.</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>−.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he volunteers to help you on a task.</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>−.14</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he presents himself/herself to you as being a friendly person.</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>−.34</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he tries to take responsibility for positive events, even when he/she is not solely responsible.</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>−.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he tries to make a positive event that he/she is responsible for appear better than it actually is.</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>−.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he tries to let you think that he/she is responsible for the positive events that occur in your work group.</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he tries to make a negative event that he/she is responsible for not appear as severe as it actually is.</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he plays up the value of a positive event that he/she has taken credit for.</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he arrives at work early in order to look good in front of you.</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>−.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he works late at the office so that you will think he/she is a hard worker.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>−.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he presents himself/herself to you as being a polite person.</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>−.55</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he makes you aware of his/her accomplishments.</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>−.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to change my behaviors to create a good impression to others.</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to modify my behaviors to give good images to others.</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to me to give a good impression to others.</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to present myself to others as being a friendly and a polite person.</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sensitive to the impression about me that others have.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>−.15</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to create the impression that I am a &quot;good&quot; person to others.</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>−.09</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance explained (%)</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>17.54</td>
<td>11.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The first 20 items are from Wayne and Ferris (1990). Within each column, values in bold load significantly on that factor. Italics indicate items for Impression Management—Self Focused. IMS = Impression Management—Supervisor Focused; IMJ = Impression Management—Job Focused; SEM = Self-Enhancement Motives.