An Explanation of Differences between Government Offices
in Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Dong Chul Shim and John Rohrbaugh
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
University at Albany, State University of New York

ABSTRACT

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) includes employees’ discretionary actions not explicitly recognized by formal reward systems that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). The present study was the first group-level investigation of OCB antecedents in governmental organizations using the office or bureau, not the government employee, as the primary unit of analysis. The hypotheses foundational to the investigation posited that aggregate employee perceptions of the importance and challenge of work assigned in an office would predict, in part, the degree of overall job satisfaction, and that all three variables would be associated with the level of OCB reported in an office. The present study was conducted with an organizational survey of all employees in geographically dispersed offices of a state government agency. Altogether 2136 usable questionnaires were returned for an overall response rate of 82 percent and subsequently partitioned into 65 distinct office groups. Results based on a multivariate path model suggested that the overall levels of job importance and job challenge in an office had positive relationships with collective job satisfaction and explained over two-thirds of the variability observed. Job satisfaction did not fully mediate the connection of work importance and work challenge to OCB; all three independent measures were linked directly to the amount of OCB reported in these offices ($R^2 = .45$). One important implication of the study is that OCB may serve as a compensatory mechanism in government offices for the assignment of somewhat inconsequential tasks and responsibilities.
An Explanation of Differences between Government Offices in Employees’ Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Dong Chul Shim and John Rohrbaugh
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
University at Albany, State University of New York

INTRODUCTION

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) includes employees’ discretionary actions not explicitly recognized by formal reward systems that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). Initially, the fundamental assumption was that OCB was exhibited as a way that employees reciprocated favorable treatment by employers, as anticipated in social exchange theory (Organ, 1990; Organ & Konovsky, 1989; Organ & Moorman, 1993). More recently, identity theories (social and role identity theory) have suggested that the extent of OCB is influenced by role definition and organizational identification (Carmeli, 2005; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Morrison, 1994). Another emerging perspective in public management is the importance of public service motivation, that is, the propensity of public employees to engage in prosocial behaviors due to an ethos of compassion and commitment to the public interest (see, for example, Houston, 2006; Kim, 2005; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008; Rayner, Williams, Lawton, & Allinson, 2011).

According to Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006), OCB makes an important contribution to overall organizational performance in that it can facilitate work processes by filling the gaps associated with non-prescribed tasks that job descriptions might not cover clearly. Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, and Blume (2009) have compiled considerable evidence that the extent of OCB can be linked directly to variability in organizational performance including both productivity and efficiency indicators. OCB is particularly critical in enhancing governmental effectiveness, since it can supplement formal bureaucratic operations that may be somewhat restricted by limited administrative resources or protocols (Vigoda and Golemibewski, 2001). When engaging in OCB, public employees, similar to their counterparts in the private sector, are seeking ways to enhance organizational performance by contributing to a better organizational culture and even providing for better public service. Thus, governmental operations can be managed with greater efficiency and services delivered with higher quality whenever employees interact with agency stakeholders in ways that exhibit the positive actions associated with OCB (Kim, 2005).

Considerable research has been devoted to investigating the antecedents of OCB in private sector organizations (for reviews, see Organ and Ryan, 1995; LePine, Erez, and Johnson, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach, 2000; Dalal, 2005). Only a few studies of OCB, however, have been undertaken in the context of government agencies in the United States (Rioux and Penner, 2001; Finkelstein and Penner, 2004; Pandey et al., 2008), United Kingdom (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro, Morrow, and Kessler, 2006), Australia (Noble, McWilliams, Teo, and Rodwell, 2006), Korea (Kim, 2006), and Kuwait (Alotaibi, 2001), and all
of these have been conducted with the individual employee as the primary unit of analysis. The present study was the first formal investigation of OCB in a governmental organization using the group (i.e., office or bureau) as the unit of analysis.

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior**

Employees’ organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) or “extra-role behavior” differs from the formally assigned in-role responsibilities defined by a job description linked directly to the functioning of an organization. Of course, prosocial behaviors such as providing high quality service to clients or offering assistance to co-workers can be an explicit facet of the job for many government employees, while they might not be key aspects of performance evaluations for others (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). In essence, the core concept of OCB is hinged on whether the behavior is discretionary and serves to promote an organizational culture in which employees are known to cooperate widely and contribute broadly in ways that ultimately enhance organizational effectiveness (Organ et al., 2006). In this context, volition and a predisposition to offer one’s full effort are prolegomenous to OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Not all discretionary prosocial behavior in organizations, however, would be classified as OCB. Prosocial behavior is a broader construct than OCB in that it includes activities both functional and dysfunctional with respect to organizational goals (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). For example, a manager can show leniency toward employees in policy enforcement or retention decisions, prosocial choices that may be supportive of individuals and foster interpersonal relationships but may not be necessarily advantageous to the organization. Altruism also has been linked to OCB as the basis of a variety of beneficent actions (Krebs, 1970). The identification of altruistic behaviors, however, presumes that an individual’s motivation for helping others is without regard to self-interest, while the construct of OCB makes no such presumption. Further, altruistic behaviors are studied in many situations, while OCB is institutionally identified and bounded. Organizational spontaneity is another seemingly comparable construct (George and Brief, 1992; George and Jones, 1997) and, in fact, pertains to a set of behaviors that also are encapsulated by OCB. The construct of OCB, however, is more expansive than organizational spontaneity, as discussed below.

Organ (1988) proposed a five-dimensional model of OCB consisting of altruism (assisting coworkers with work-relevant tasks); courtesy (being respectful and considerate of other employees); conscientiousness (fulfilling in-role duties well beyond required levels); civic virtue (participating in organizational life such as meetings, events, and governance); and sportsmanship (tolerating difficulties without undue complaints). Later, he expanded this framework to include peacekeeping and cheerleading (Organ, 1990). An alternative construction of OCB (see, for example, Williams and Anderson, 1991) differentiates the target or direction of actions, either toward the benefit of other individuals (termed OCBI) or toward the benefit of the organization (termed OCBO). Conceptual representations of OCB now include altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, and cheerleading in the OCBI category, and conscientiousness (sometimes termed compliance), civic virtue, and sportsmanship in the OCBO category (Podsakoff et al., 2009).
Antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Prior explanations of OCB can be clustered in four domains of antecedent variables: employee characteristics, leadership behaviors, organizational conditions, and task (job) dimensions (see, for example, Podsakoff et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2002). Of all employee characteristics, prior research has shown that positive attitudes about organizational fairness, as well as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, are predictive of more frequently observed and reported OCB, although not accounting for more than ten percent of the variance in meta-analytic studies (see also LePine et al., 2002). Positive leadership behaviors also have been linked frequently but, again, only moderately with OCB. Organization conditions have been studied repeatedly but appear to be quite weakly associated with OCB. Task dimensions have been given little attention in research pertaining to OCB antecedents and will be discussed in more detail below.

Most OCB studies involving organizations in the public sector have focused on antecedent variables in the domain of employee characteristics. Some of these studies have provided additional support for the importance of positive attitudes about organizational fairness in predicting OCB (Alotaibi, 2001; Rioux and Penner, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002), although the amount of explained variance in OCB has never exceeded ten percent. Surprisingly, not one public sector study of OCB that included a measure of job satisfaction has reported its significant contribution within a multivariate model (Alotaibi, 2001; Kim, 2006; Noblet et al., 2006). The findings with respect to organizational commitment have been mixed (Rioux and Penner, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2006; Kim, 2006; Alotaibi, 2006; Pandey et al., 2008). All reported significant bivariate correlations between commitment and multiple dimensions of OCB (median $r = .25$), but subsequent multiple regression models indicated that this connection was attenuated when other variables such as organizational fairness were introduced.

Rioux and Penner (2001; see also Finkelstein and Penner, 2004) have explored the motivational basis of employees’ engagement in OCB using a 30-item Citizenship Motives Scale (CMS) with three subscales: organizational concern, prosocial values, and image management. The CMS elicits a rating of importance for each of the 30 reasons why an employee might engage in OCB (e.g., “Because I want to help my coworkers”). Although the greater importance of a larger number of reasons was found to be significantly correlated with OCB, there remains the theoretical question of whether self-reported explanations for behavior should be classified as antecedent variables. Within the public management literature, public service motivation (PSM), as the prosocial values subscale of the CMS, has been advanced as a predictor of OCB

1 One exception may be the role of the leader-member exchange (LMX) variable. Podsakoff and others (2000) summarized the strength of the LMX-OCB relation across six studies with a correlation of .36. Ilies, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) provide a recent discussion of this connection.

2 Coyle-Shapiro and her colleagues (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro, Morrow, and Kessler, 2006) have incorporated measures of organizational conditions such as perceptions of organizational support and employer inducements, as well as measures of leadership behaviors such as trust and reciprocity in their research. Only the perception of organizational support appeared to be useful in predicting OCB, findings consistent with prior meta-analyses (see Podsakoff et al., 2000: 528). Noblet and others (2006), however, did not find a relation between OCB and organizational support but reported that the amount of immediate support from coworkers and supervisors was a significant predictor, as did Pandey and others (2008).

3 Such explanations can become tautological: I help my coworkers because I want to help my coworkers.
Podsakoff and others (2000: 532) observed that the domain of task dimensions as antecedents of OCB “appear to be consistently related to a wide variety of organizational citizenship behaviors, although little attention has been given to them....This is interesting because it suggests a whole new category of antecedents that has not been previously considered.” Similarly, Noblet and others (2006: 1805) concluded that little is known about the characteristics of work that can have positive or negative effects on OCB. Task variety (or, reversely, task routinization) has been shown to be moderately connected to OCB, and task feedback weakly associated (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Turnipseed and Murkison (2000) reported that task clarity might have an explanatory role, as well. In another study (Noblet et al., 2006), workload did not appear to be associated with OCB, but job control (or decision latitude) was found to be significantly related. The present study explored two additional task dimensions—job importance and job challenge—that, as yet, have not been linked in the research literature to OCB.

Organizational Climate and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational climate is an aggregated molar construct that reflects employees’ collective perception of their work environment (Schneider and Reichers 1983). Such perception reflects the sense-making process by which co-workers jointly understand and share their experiences of organizational events (James, Choi, Ko, McNeil, Minton, Wright, and Kim, 2008). Thus, organizational climate is a construct at the group level of theory and should be analyzed strictly as such. To the extent that employees in an office agree in their reports of psychological climate,4 their shared perceptions may be aggregated to describe the organizational climate (James et al., 2008).

Shared perceptions of organizational climate are partly a consequence of employees’ work-related values, latent indicators of what individuals typically want to gain from their workplace (James et al., 2008). An illustrative list of work-related values might include desires for harmony and justice; warm and friendly social relations in an organization; support and recognition; and challenge, independence, and responsibility (Locke, 1976: 1326). These values can engender cognitive schemas that employees use to assess the impact of their work environment on their organizational well-being (James and James, 1989). Thus, work-related values reflect what employees consider to be important for their sense of personal well-being, and the resulting cognitive schemas are employed to assess the degree to which such values are fulfilled in their organizations (James et al., 2008).

---

4 Psychological climate refers to “an individual’s cognitive representations of relatively proximal situational conditions, expressed in terms that reflect psychologically meaningful interpretations of the situation” (James, Hater, Gent, and Bruni, 1978: 786).
James and others (2008) have identified four primary domains of organizational and psychological climate that are based on work-related values: 1) role stress and lack of harmony; 2) workgroup cooperation, friendliness, and warmth; 3) leadership facilitation and support; and 4) work challenge, autonomy, and responsibility. This framework has found empirical support in a variety of work settings (see, for example, James and James, 1989; Parker, Baltes, Young, Huff, Altmann, Lacost, and Roberts, 2003). As noted above, leadership facilitation and support, as well as workgroup cooperation, have been found to be moderately linked to OCB in prior research. The present study was designed to explore a separate domain of the organizational climate framework for alternative antecedents of OCB in public sector organizations: work importance and work challenge. Both work importance and work challenge have been identified by James and others (2008) as occupying the same organizational climate domain with variety and autonomy. Work importance and work challenge, however, would appear to be more immediately connected to OCB than variety and autonomy, as discussed below.

A Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

Nearly two decades ago, Organ and Ryan (1995: 797) suggested that the study of OCB is well-suited to research in which the group is used as the unit of analysis: “OCB is more interesting as a group-level phenomenon and …this is the preferred level at which to theorize about…OCB.” Podsakoff and others (2000) also encouraged more group-level theory and research to be initiated. In the following years, a number of group-level studies have been published linking OCB with organizational performance (Nielsen, Hrivnak, and Shaw, 2009), but similarly designed studies of the antecedents of OCB have been lagging (see, for example, Ehrhart, 2004; Richardson and Vandenberg, 2005). The present study was the first group-level investigation of OCB antecedents in governmental organizations using the office or bureau as the primary unit of analysis.

As shown in Figure 1, the conceptual model on which the present study was based is not complex. The overall degree of job satisfaction in the organization is indicated as having a direct and positive association with group-level OCB. Two variables were selected from the organizational climate domain of work challenge, autonomy, and responsibility: work importance and work challenge. Both variables were considered to exhibit a direct and positive association both with job satisfaction and with OCB. There are practical advantages to limiting this framework to what Merton (1957) characterized as “theory of the middle range,” that is, a network of concepts of modest scope oriented toward a well-delineated issue.

Job satisfaction. Much of the early body of OCB research consistently identified job satisfaction as an antecedent (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Social exchange theory supported this connection by framing OCB as one mechanism through which employees could reciprocate for having their needs appropriately fulfilled in the workplace (Organ et al., 2006). Less job satisfaction was understood to evoke a lower level of OCB (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, and Near, 1983). Fassina, Jones, and Uggerslev (2008) have reported that job satisfaction

---

5 James and colleagues (1978) initially identified five domains of climate, but in subsequent work they included only four domains. Aspects of the fifth domain, organizational and subsystem attributes, were included in the first (i.e., role stress and lack of harmony) and fourth domains (i.e., social environment characteristics) of their model.
accounts for a significant degree of variance in OCB, even when three types of organizational fairness are simultaneously controlled.

Not one public sector study of OCB that included a measure of job satisfaction has reported its significant contribution as a predictor within a multivariate model (Alotaibi, 2001; Kim, 2006; Noblet et al., 2006). The lack of alignment in findings between public and private sector samples of employees has yet to be explained. Nevertheless, in accordance with social exchange theory, the conceptual model framing the present group-level study anticipated a direct and positive relation between job satisfaction and OCB:

Hypothesis 1: Offices and bureaus in which employees report greater job satisfaction will produce reports of greater levels of OCB; lower levels of OCB will be reported in offices and bureaus with less overall job satisfaction.

**Work importance.** The social identity perspective (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986) and, in particular, the group engagement model (Blader and Tyler, 2009) suggest that individuals enact group norms and help a group to achieve its collective goals through cooperative behaviors when the group is an important source of their sense of self. The social identity perspective emphasizes that individuals have a strong need for a positive self-image and often attempt to improve their self-image by increasing their involvement in groups that can foster this process of enhancement.

The connection between the importance of one’s organizational work assignments (sometimes termed “task significance” and job satisfaction is well-established (see, for example, Fried and Ferris, 1987). The possibility that greater work importance also can be associated with more OCB has not been investigated either at the individual or group level of analysis. However, Rousseau (1998) proposed that social identity is higher when individuals believe that their work efforts are meaningful and share the interests of their work group. Thus, employees’ reports of work importance and job satisfaction may be considered indicative of group engagement (Blader and Tyler, 2009) and a willingness to expend more effort toward both in-role performance, as well as the extra-role activities of OCB (Organ et al., 2006). For these reasons, two additional hypotheses consistent with the social identity perspective were identified:

Hypothesis 2a: Offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work importance will produce reports of greater job satisfaction; lower levels of job satisfaction will be reported in offices and bureaus with lesser work importance.

Hypothesis 2b: Offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work importance will produce reports of greater levels of OCB; lower levels of OCB will be reported in offices and bureaus with lesser work importance.

**Work challenge.** Work challenge, as work importance, is considered a key factor in increasing an employee’s motivation (Wright, 2004). When a job is perceived to be complex and requires considerable effort, a sense of pride and accomplishment emerges with the

---

6 One possible explanation is that the public sector studies have used somewhat unique and unconventional measures of job satisfaction; no common measure of job satisfaction has been adopted widely for public management research.
completion of such tasks. In public management research, however, work challenge (sometimes termed “job difficulty” or “job demand”) has not been widely adopted as a variable of interest (Hassan and Rohrbaugh, 2011). Noblett and others (2006), working from Karasek’s (1979) job demand-control model, may have been produced the first and only study to assess the connection of work challenge to job satisfaction, as well as to OCB; no relationship was found.

Across the full range of organizational conditions in which work challenge might vary from extremely low (i.e., simple tasks that are easy to accomplish well) to extremely high (i.e., complex tasks that are nearly impossible to accomplish well), its relations with consequential variables are likely to be nonlinear and mediated by other factors. As Wright (2004) observed, increased job demands can raise employees’ self-efficacy by signaling others’ confidence that they can meet greater work challenges; as a result, group engagement may be greater. At a certain point, however, excessive job demands termed “role overload”—especially without essential support and control—will reverse these relationships, resulting in lower job satisfaction and less willingness to engage in OCB (see, for example, Jex and Thomas, 2003). In the present study, indications of excessive job demands were absent, so that following hypotheses could be tested in a linear rather than nonlinear manner:

Hypothesis 3a: Offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work challenge will produce reports of greater job satisfaction; lower levels of job satisfaction will be reported in offices and bureaus with lesser work challenge.

Hypothesis 3b: Offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work challenge will produce reports of greater levels of OCB; lower levels of OCB will be reported in offices and bureaus with lesser work challenge.

The conceptual model shown in Figure 1 allows for a determination of whether job satisfaction appears to fully or partially mediate the influence of work importance and work challenge on OCB by tracing both their direct and indirect effects. If the direct path of work importance to OCB or if the direct path of work challenge to OCB would be found to be non-significant, the job satisfaction would be shown to fully mediate one or both effects.

METHOD OF STUDY

The present study was conducted with an organizational survey of all employees in geographically dispersed offices of a state government agency with twelve distinct divisions of operation. Data were gathered through the design and use of a unique, eight-page questionnaire to a population of 2614 employees. Responsibility for internal distribution and collection of questionnaires was assigned to division managers. Altogether, 2136 usable questionnaires were returned for an overall response rate of 82 percent; response rates by division ranged from a low of 70 percent to a high of 100 percent.

As shown in Table 1, most (87 percent) of the respondents were white, and 60 percent were female. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of the respondents reported their job was best described as clerical or support, nearly half (47 percent) as professional or technical, and nearly
one in five as managerial or executive (19 percent). Approximately two-thirds were between the ages of 40 and 59 (63 percent); another third were under 40 (31 percent). Not shown in Table 1, lengths of tenure (arithmetic means of 4.8 years in current position, 9.8 years in current office or bureau, and 11.6 years in the state agency) were positively skewed.

All respondents completed a 130-item questionnaire designed in large part to examine employees’ perceptions of the organizational climate in the organization, as well their organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). In addition to the variables relevant in the present study, data were collected for other agency, office and individual level variables, the analysis of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Items for all of the variables were measured either on a six-point (coded 1-6) strength of agreement (strongly disagree, generally disagree, disagree a little, agree a little, generally agree, and strongly agree) or a five-point (coded 0–4) frequency of occurrence (almost never/never, rarely, sometimes, often, and almost always/always) scale. A complete list of the items included in each measure used in the present study is provided in the appendix.

Each of the three independent measures in the conceptual model—work importance, work challenge, and job satisfaction—was assessed using three items borrowed, wherever possible, from previously validated measures. The measure of work importance was derived from the job diagnostic survey (Hackman and Oldham, 1975), and the measure of work challenge was derived from the task-goal attributes (Steers and Porter, 1974). Both measures were validated recently by Shim and Rohrbaugh (2011).7 Job satisfaction was measured using items provided by Wright and Davis (2003). In the present study, slight variations in the content of the three independent measures were made in an effort to improve their reliability and discriminant validity. The full set of items used in these measures is presented in the appendix.

LePine and others (2002) have concluded that OCB should be considered as a latent construct to be measured as a general tendency to be cooperative and helpful. The design of the present study did not attempt a multi-dimensional assessment of OCB but rather incorporated this latent construct approach using four items that tended toward OCBO—behaviors that benefit the organization in general, rather than specific individuals (Williams and Anderson, 1991). This approach is consistent with the study design at the group level of analysis. Specific wording of the four items that form this OCB scale was shaped by reviewing scales validated in prior OCB studies (Organ et al., 2006); these items are included in the appendix.

RESULTS

Not all employees who participated in the survey reported their office location, presumably as a means to assure their anonymity. A total of 1627 employees, however, could be identified within 65 different office locations, a retention rate of 76 percent.8 Only three of these

---

7 Work importance was termed “task significance” by Hackman and Oldham (1975). Work challenge was termed “goal difficulty” by Steers and Porter (1974). Shim and Rohrbaugh (2011) used Cronbach’s alpha to establish scale reliabilities: .66 for importance and .79 for challenge; the measures were moderately correlated (r = .45). Wright (2004) reported an alpha of .85 for a parallel measure of challenge.

8 Clerical and support staff appeared more concerned than other employees about revealing their office locations. Over 85% of professional and technical employees, for example, reported their places of work.
locations needed to be dropped from the study because three or fewer employees had reported working there. The number of employees in the remaining 62 offices ranged from four to 129; 23 of these offices were described by fewer than ten employees, while thirteen offices were described by more than 50 employees.

For each measure in the conceptual model, its component items were standardized with mean of 0.0 and standard deviation of 1.0 at the individual level of analysis, then averaged so that the arithmetic mean of the measure also was 0.0; standard deviations ranged from .71 for the dependent measure OCB to .86 for job satisfaction. The reliability estimates using Cronbach’s alpha for the four measures are shown in Table 2; all were acceptable and ranged from .67 for the dependent measure OCB to .82 for job satisfaction. Individual scale scores were aggregated (averaged) within offices and bureaus for group-level analysis (n = 64). Also presented in Table 2 are the bivariate correlations between the four measures at the group and at the individual levels of analysis. For both levels, work challenge was more greatly associated with OCB than either job satisfaction or work importance. Work importance, however, was highly correlated with job satisfaction at both the individual and group levels of analysis ($r_s = .67$ and $.79$, respectively). Work importance and work challenge were not highly correlated at the individual level ($r = .16$ but more so at the group level ($r = .43$).

All hypotheses for the present study were tested with the multivariate path model shown in Figure 2. Job satisfaction initially was regressed on work importance and work challenge, then OCB was regressed on work importance, work challenge, and job satisfaction jointly. Altogether over two-thirds of the variability in overall job satisfaction across offices and bureaus could be predicted from the levels of perceived work importance and work challenge ($R^2 = .69$), and almost half of the variability in overall OCB across offices and bureaus could be predicted from levels of perceived work importance, work challenge, and job satisfaction ($R^2 = .45$). Hypothesis 1—offices and bureaus in which employees report greater job satisfaction will produce reports of greater levels of OCB—was supported. The path coefficient ($\beta$) for job satisfaction $\rightarrow$ OCB was $.65$, the largest predictor.

Hypothesis 2a—offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work importance will produce reports of greater job satisfaction—also was supported. The path coefficient ($\beta$) for work importance $\rightarrow$ job satisfaction was $.67$, the largest of the five path coefficients in the conceptual model. Hypothesis 3a—offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work challenge will produce reports of greater job satisfaction—was supported, as well. The path coefficient ($\beta$) for work challenge $\rightarrow$ job satisfaction was .29, but the shared perception of work challenge clearly was not nearly as predictive of job satisfaction as the shared perception of work importance.

Hypothesis 2b—offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work importance will produce reports of greater levels of OCB—was not supported. In fact, a strong inverse relationship was found between work importance and OCB. The path coefficient ($\beta$) for work importance $\rightarrow$ OCB was -.43. Offices and bureaus in which the shared perception of work importance was low also reported greater levels of OCB, despite the fact that greater work importance was connected to more job satisfaction and greater job satisfaction was connected to more OCB. Evidently, the importance of work in offices and bureaus can impede as well as
facilitate OCB, an issue discussed in more detail below. Hypothesis 3b—offices and bureaus in which employees report greater work challenge will produce reports of greater levels of OCB—was supported. The path coefficient ($\beta$) for work challenge $\rightarrow$ OCB was .38. Thus, the strength of this direct relationship was only partially mediated, not fully mediated, by job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was the first formal investigation of OCB in a governmental organization using the group (i.e., office or bureau) as the unit of analysis. The goal was to examine how well organizational climate variables in one specific domain—work importance and work challenge—predict OCB in offices and bureaus of a large, geographically dispersed government agency (James et al., 2008). The study design relied on a conceptual model that could provide a well-grounded justification for the selection of the set of four variables. This framework was restricted to what Merton (1957) characterized as “theory of the middle range.” Since the model does not provide a grand or overarching theory of OCB, it should not be taken as the only useful way of analyzing the phenomena of interest here and merely represents one of many possible theoretical constructions. No amount of empirical support for this particular model can logically jeopardize the validity of other alternative frameworks that might be proposed.

The present research findings provide support for the contention of Organ and Ryan (1995) that the study of OCB is well-suited to research in which the group, rather than the individual employee, is used as the unit of analysis. At the group level, nearly half of the variability in OCB exhibited in offices and bureaus ($R^2 = .45$) could be predicted from the shared perceptions of work importance and work challenge, as well as overall job satisfaction. This proportion of explained variance is considerably more than reported in prior public management studies at the individual level of analysis (see, for example, Alotaibi, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Rioux and Penner, 2001; Pandey et al., 2008).

As noted in the introduction, not one public sector study that included job satisfaction as an independent measure has reported its significant contribution as a predictor of OCB within a multiple regression equation. This is puzzling because of the long-established relationship between job satisfaction and OCB in business and industrial settings (Podsakoff et al., 2000). In the multivariate path model shown in Figure 2, however, job satisfaction is shown to play a key role in predicting the level of OCB in 62 offices and bureaus ($\beta = .65$). This result, more in alignment with private sector research findings, may be attributable in the present study to the use of a more conventional and established measure of job satisfaction incorporating previously validated items (Wright and Davis, 2003; Hassan and Rohrbaugh, 2011).

Job satisfaction, however, did not fully mediate the effects of work importance or work challenge on OCB. Both work importance and work challenge had positive indirect relations with OCB through increased job satisfaction ($\.67*.65=.44$ and $.29*.65=.19$, respectively), but each exhibited a direct connection to OCB, as well. The overall relation of work challenge and OCB at the group level was unambiguous. Offices and bureaus with an organizational climate of greater work challenge experienced more shared job satisfaction among employees, as well as more shared OCB. Much less clear was the overall relation of work importance and OCB at the
group level. Although its positive indirect connection to OCB was evident (i.e., greater work importance was associated with more job satisfaction, and greater job satisfaction was associated with more OCB), its direct effect on OCB was negative. A shared perception of greater work importance in the 62 offices and bureaus predicted lower OCB when job satisfaction and work challenge were held constant in the multivariate path model.

Organ and others (2006: 116) have suggested that the work characteristic termed role overload could be negatively related to OCB due to the reduced amount of discretionary time available for extra-role activities. It is possible that the negative direct effect of work importance found in the present study has an explanation that is parallel to the role overload variable. When the importance of in-role responsibilities in the 62 offices and bureaus was widely perceived to be high, employees tended not to engage so fully in OCB. However, when the shared perception among employees was that their formal duties were not so important, they may have searched for other significant responsibilities to which they could commit their discretionary time. Of course, there is an alternative possibility that this negative path coefficient might be attributable merely to a statistical artifact that can occur when predictors are highly correlated (i.e., the “multicollinearity problem;” see, for example, Freund and Wilson, 1998: 181-223). This does not appear to be a useful explanation in the present study since 1) work importance and job satisfaction were not so highly correlated, 2) the number of offices and bureaus (n = 62) was adequate for three independent measures, and 3) the size of the standard error for the direct path was small (SEβ = .15). Perhaps not a statistical artifact, then, OCB may serve in part as a compensatory mechanism in government offices for the assignment of somewhat inconsequential in-role tasks and responsibilities.

Tests of statistical significance were not conducted for this study because survey respondents were not sampled from the full population of employees. In fact, all employees were included in the survey, and nearly all employees completed a questionnaire; the participation rate was .82. Thus, the coefficients reported here can be considered to be quite close approximations of the population parameters for the time period in which this study was conducted. If customary statistical tests had been conducted, however, all correlation coefficients shown in Table 2 and all path coefficients shown in Figure 2 would be determined to be significant (p < .05).

This study shares the potential problem of common method bias (Campbell and Fiske 1959) with all prior studies that have focused on organizational commitment using self-report data from a single source such as an interview protocol or a questionnaire. In brief, the measurement of multiple variables through a common method may overestimate the actual magnitude of their interrelations due to the contribution of a pattern of response covariance evoked solely by use of one assessment form. Self-reports in organizational research, for example, may induce patterns of response set such as social desirability, acquiescence, or deviation that can increase observed correlations between measures. Statistical remedies for common method bias remain problematic (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003).

A variety of non-statistical procedures were introduced in the design of the present study to reduce potential common method bias. Anonymity of response was assured repeatedly in all correspondence and evidenced in every aspect of data collection. Questionnaires were
completed at different times and in multiple office locations. Further, the particular items used in the present study were interspersed widely over seven pages and nine distinct sections within the larger 130-item questionnaire. These items also were almost evenly split in the directionality of their wording (i.e., both positive and negative statements). Varied response formats were presented. Although no items for “marker” variables were inserted strategically in the questionnaire to allow for the statistical control of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), the results of the present study produced some evidence that the design procedures (discussed above) may have been at least somewhat effective. For example, the degree of discriminant validity indicated by the individual-level correlation of job satisfaction and OCB ($r = .25$) was equivalent to that reported previously in meta-analytic studies (Organ et al., 2006: 76-77). Thus, common method bias appears to have been successfully attenuated, if not eliminated, in the present study.

The value of the present conceptual model, although promising, was limited in several notable ways. Cross-sectional studies such as this one, of course, cannot examine the development or decline of OCB over time. Government career commitment (Shim and Rohrbaugh, 2011) and, much more generally, public service motivation (Pandey, Wright, and Moynihan, 2008) may be key variables that can shape, at least in part, work-related attitudes. Also unanswered by the present study is another work environment question: employees’ perceptions of organizational fairness (i.e., both distributive and procedural justice) and its role in influencing OCB (Fassina et al., 2008) in public management. The relation of the psychological climate—as perceived by individual employees—to the organizational climate—as an aggregated molar construct of employees’ collective perceptions—remains to be investigated, as well. Clearly, however, the present study suggests that much of the variance in OCB can be predicted from differences in organizational climate, particularly the shared perceptions work importance, work challenge, and job satisfaction.

REFERENCES


Figure 1. Conceptual Model for the Present Study.
Figure 2. Multivariate Path Model for the Present Study.
Table 1. Employee Demographics and Organizational Characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 30</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Position</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>student/hourly</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerical/support</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional/technical</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manager (first-, mid-level)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senior manager/executive</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Bivariate Correlations between Measures at Individual and Group Levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual level</td>
<td>(.67)</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group level</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Work Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual level</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>(.70)</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group level</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Work Challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual level</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>(.72)</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group level</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Job Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual level</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>(.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group level</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alphas for each measure are shown in parentheses.
APPENDIX

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

I do extra work for my job that isn’t really expected of me.
I am known to “go the extra mile” for this division.
I find ways to make work-related suggestions that could improve performance.
I am willing to volunteer for teams and committees.

Work Importance

I feel that my job is very important.
I work on tasks that seem useless or unnecessary. (reverse scored)
Through my work I help to provide valuable services to New York State taxpayers.

Work Challenge

My work is very challenging.
My daily work routine is very predictable. (reverse scored)
I get an opportunity to do new and different things at work.

Job Satisfaction

I am very satisfied with the kind of work that I do.
At least for now, my current position is well suited to my needs.
At the end of the day, I feel good about the work that I do here.