

# Self-perceptions of Our Personal Reputations: The Mediating Role of Image in the Development of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Robert Zinko, Assistant Professor, East Carolina University  
Christopher P. Furner, Assistant Professor West Texas A&M University  
Todd Royle, Assistant Professor, Valdosta State University  
Angela Hall, Assistant Professor, The University of Texas at San Antonio

## ABSTRACT

*An examination of the mediating effects of image on the relationship of both Conscientiousness, as well as Collectives, on the dependent variable organizational citizenship behaviors is presented. Data gathered from China and from U.S. working adults found that image fully moderated the relationships. Practical implications as well as future research are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

It's been more than 10 years since Mark Bolino asked the question: "Good soldiers or good actors?" Bolino's theoretical argument examining employees who do more than the minimum required of them, attempted to determine if the behaviors were a form of impression management, or if the actions were truly selfless in nature. Many scientists before and since have posed this question regarding the nature of who we are as human beings: are our noble actions truly magnanimous, or are they done only in an effort to persuade others and gain rewards? This study seeks to add to this line of inquiry by examining not only empirically-established antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), but also by considering how individuals view themselves may affect these relationships (i.e., will they still perform OCBs if they believe that others view them poorly). We propose to do this by examining the well-established relationships of collectivism and Conscientiousness as they interact with OCBs; but also considering image as a mediator. We suggest that regardless of how high individuals rate in collectivism or Conscientiousness, if they believe that others around them do not view them in a positive light, they will be less likely to perform OCBs.

## THE NATURE OF OCBs

In 1977, Dennis Organ published a paper intended to play the role of devil's advocate with respect to the relationship of job satisfaction and performance. He noted that decades of research had largely debunked the common-sense assumption that "happy workers are productive employees." He, along with subsequent researchers, proposed that there could be different dimensions of performance which lay outside the realm of a formal job descriptions, which are difficult to measure with common metrics (e.g., measures of output productivity or performance evaluations), but nevertheless add something to the effectiveness of an organization (Organ, 1977; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Thus, the field was introduced to the concept of citizenship behaviors. Subsequently, serious empirical work began to define and test these notions (e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983). Citizenship behaviors are defined as voluntary actions on the part of employees to contribute to their organizations by engaging in behaviors that may, or may not, be rewarded but that do improve the overall quality of the setting in which work is conducted (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). A number of distinct aspects of citizenship as well as the associated performance of employees in the context of their social environments can be identified. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) noted that employees who act as "good soldiers" are highly regarded by organizations. Such individuals are those who maintain good attitudes even under adverse circumstances, attend optional meetings, support social functions that benefit their colleagues and/or their organizations, and lend assistance to peers who are struggling (Coleman & Borman, 2000). These authors noted that

citizenship behaviors can be placed in two categories that differ according to who benefits more directly from employees' actions: coworkers or organizations.

The first category relates to interpersonal citizenship behaviors. These occur when employees act in ways that go beyond normal job expectations for the benefit of other members (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 2009). Helping others with heavy workloads is one such example. Courtesy is another common interpersonal act of good citizenship. It involves keeping colleagues updated and informed about relevant organizational information and decisions. Sportsmanship is also an aspect of interpersonal citizenship. Those who maintain good attitudes towards others even in trying times, avoid over-blowing their own difficulties, and avoid complaining are considered "good sports" (Coleman & Borman, 2000).

The second category in this broad class of proactive employee activity is specifically called organization citizenship behavior (OCB). These employee actions benefit the organization as a whole by supporting it, remaining loyal to it, and helping to improve its operations (Colquitt et al., 2009). One aspect of OCB is civic virtue. Virtuous employees are those willing to come in early or stay late, attend voluntary meetings, keep abreast of issues relevant to their companies' business environments, and remain abreast of internal policy changes (Coleman & Borman, 2000). Employees who champion the reputation of their firms and conduct themselves positively when away from the office are known as boosters, another component of OCB. Finally, when employees exercise "voice" (e.g., offering constructive suggestions for change and challenging poor decision making practices or bad rules) they help create more effective organizations, thus, engaging in another form of OCB (Coleman & Borman, 2000).

### **The Relationship Between Conscientiousness and OCB**

When considering OCB or contextual performance, these similar but distinct streams of analysis appear to have good theoretical rationale to posit that personality, and the attitudes which it helps create, do, in fact, induce giving behaviors by individuals. According to Organ and McFall (2004), personality is most likely to affect job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction) which in turn predict pro-social behaviors (provided the organizational context permits them). Salient to our discussion is one particular dimension of personality Conscientiousness, that is individuals' tendencies to be dependable, persistent, and responsible (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

A meta-analysis conducted by Organ and Ryan (1995) examined over a decade's worth of data on the linkages between job attitudes and OCB. They estimated that the population correlation coefficient, (using both supervisory and self-report responses and correcting for unreliable measures) between job satisfaction and the interpersonal helping dimension of OCB was .28. The correlation between impersonal (e.g., extra job related attention not specifically aimed at helping other individuals) Conscientiousness and OCB was .24.

Studies, particularly meta-analyses, show less robust, but still significant, relationships between direct measures of personality (e.g., Conscientiousness) and OCB (Organ & McFall, 2004). Among the Big Five measures of personality (Goldberg, 1996; Barrick & Mount, 1993), these authors reported that the Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness dimensions failed to correlate beyond an absolute value of .15 with OCB. The only one of the Big Five dimensions that fared relatively well (a .22 correlation with OCB) was Conscientiousness. Campbell (1990), when analyzing the United States Army's "Project Alpha," found a correlation of .30 between being dependable (i.e., an aspect of Conscientiousness) and personally disciplined, a very common component of citizenship behavior. Similarly, a 1994 study by Motowildlo and Van Scotter found correlations (.22, .31, and .36 respectively) between interpersonal cooperation, dependability, and work orientation, and contextual performance. Research by Kamp and Hough (1988) predicted organizational delinquency using personality measures. They found that adjustment and dependability strongly, negatively, correlated with delinquency (-.43 and -.42 respectively). All these studies, empirically as well as theoretically suggest that there is a relationship between Conscientiousness and OCBs.

### **The Relationship Between Espoused Collectivism and OCBs**

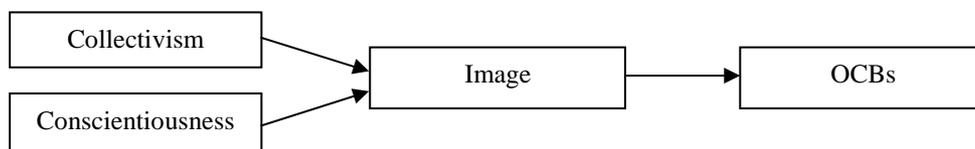
Espoused collectivism is an individual-level construct related to the extent to which an individual desires to be an active participant in, and to support, the groups with whom they identify (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). It is based on Hofstede's (1980) construct of collectivism, which is applied to countries rather than individuals. Because Hofstede's

collectivism construct cannot be used at the individual level to predict individual behavior (Furner & George, 2009), Srite & Karahanna (2006) adapted the construct (along with three more of Hofstede's culture constructs) making it individual level, self reported, and treating it as a stable personality characteristic.

Collectivists are characterized by a willingness to subordinate their personal needs in order to improve group outcomes (Furner, Mason, Mehta, Munyon & Zinko, 2009). This is because collectivists tend to derive more of their identity from the groups that they are part of than individualists. In other words, a collectivist perceives themselves as being successful if they are part of a group that is successful, they perceive themselves as powerful if they are part of a group that is powerful, etc. Collectivists tend to expend more effort nurturing relationships, and are more comfortable doing business with those with whom they have a relationship with (Triandis, 1995), often times creating complex webs of informal relationship networks in which favors are exchanged. In these networks, the power positions are related to group memberships (a powerful person in one of these networks is typically a person who part of a powerful group).

Building upon these (i.e., as well as other) theories, Moorman & Blakely (1995) showed high collectivism to be an antecedent of OCBs. Triandis (1995) pointed out that those who score highly in collectivism are more willing to subordinate their own interests for the benefit of the group to which they belong. This is because individuals who score highly on espoused collectivism derive a larger portion of their identity from their group associations than those who score low in collectivism, and thus want the group to be successful and highly respected, because if it is successful and highly respected, they will perceive themselves as successful and highly respected. Moorman & Blakely (1995) demonstrated that espoused collectivists do indeed engage in more OCBs.

#### MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS



**Figure 1: Hypothesized Image Model (Model 1)**

For the present study, we introduce and test a model of image as a mediator between established antecedents of OCBs (i.e., Conscientiousness and collectivism) and OCBs themselves. This model is found in Figure 1. In this, we propose that the effects that the aforementioned antecedents have on OCBs are fully dependent upon how individuals think others view them (i.e., image). The intermediate linkages in this model are explained in more detail below.

#### Image

Image is a socially constructed view (Chen & Meindl, 1991) that is essentially our perception of what we believe other thinks of us. In other words, it is what we think our reputation is (Roberts, 2005). In general, individuals attempt to create and maintain a positive reputation (i.e., and by default, a positive image) (Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007). There have been shown to be two main reasons for engaging in reputation-building behavior: the first is to obtain rewards. If rewards are available by the control of an audience (e.g., power), it has been shown that a positive reputation with that audience may assist in the achievement of these rewards. The second cited for the development of a reputation is as a means of, or substitute for, self-fulfillment (Baumeister, 1982). In this, Cohen (1959) suggested that individuals are motivated to not only become their ideal selves, but also to convince others around them of this image.

Although there is often a relationship between image and reputation (e.g., Hochwarter, et al., 2007 reported a correlation of .64 between image and reputation), this is not always the case. Individuals who are low in social astuteness may perceive their image as being the same as their reputation, rendering them completely erroneous in their assessment due to a "flawed self-assessment" (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). Nevertheless, regardless of how accurate an individual's image is (i.e., in relationship to their reputation), the consideration for enactment of OCBs depends not upon reputation, but on the individual's perception of his or her reputation (i.e., image).

### **Collectivism-Image Link**

Because collectivists value group success, and tend to have clearly defined expectations of group member behavior, they are interested in having those around them maintain a positive view of them. This is because they desire to be part of groups that are known for excellence, and they will actively engage in behaviors which they believe will position them into these groups (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). Collectivists can be expected to monitor their reputations, allowing them to alter their behaviors in ways that improve their reputations, and as such, their standings in the group (Elmer, 1984). This is to be by no means a suggestion that those high in collectivism will automatically have a high image, but rather to state that those who are low in collectivism may not necessarily care what the group thinks of them and therefore may not be as likely to attempt to maintain a positive image. Therefore, we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* There will be a small, but significant positive relationship between espoused collectivism and image.

### **Conscientiousness-Image Link**

Those who are high in Conscientiousness will be more concerned with what others think of them. They will often feel an obligation to support others around them; and they will often look for feedback regarding their actions in the form of positive affirmation. This is evident across several fields of study: For example, in studying purchasing habits, Bao, Zhou, & Su, (2003) found that those high in “face” Conscientiousness are more likely to purchase visible brand names in order to impress others; to the extent that subjects were found to knowingly purchase counterfeit brands simply to impress those around them.

Furthermore, a dimension of Conscientiousness is need for achievement (i.e., which usually requires feedback from others) (Bledow, & Frese, 2009). Those who are high in this dimension will often desire for those around them to acknowledge their actions. In this, a positive image should be desired, as it is a reflection of what the subject thinks others think of him or her.

*Hypothesis 2:* There will be a positive relationship between Conscientiousness and image.

### **Image-OCBs Link**

Those who have a positive image are interested in maintaining these images (Zinko et al., 2007). In order to preserve such positive views, individual will not only act in socially acceptable ways, but go beyond the expected norms in order to develop or maintain their images (Elmer, 1984). Behaviors that are done in the context of organizational citizenship can provide an outlet for those wishing to maintain their good images.

Additionally, individuals tend to compare themselves to their peers, viewing themselves in a slightly more favorable light (Festinger, 1954). As they see themselves as slightly better than their peers, they will attempt to signal this superiority via actions (Ferris, Blass, Douglas, Kolodinsky, & Treadway, 2003). Signaling theory proposes that individuals signal others in the market in an attempt to convey information or alter beliefs (Spence, 1974). For those who wish to maintain a positive view by others (i.e., image), we propose that these actions may manifest as OCBs.

*Hypothesis 3:* There will be a positive relationship between image and OCBs.

### **Image as a Mediator**

Because collectivists tend to value group outcomes over individual rewards, they are more likely to engage in OCBs with the belief that doing so will lead to positive group outcomes. However, research suggests that this willingness to “help out” is dependent upon how the individual feels the group views them. If individuals identify with a group, but feel the group is treating them unfairly, they are less likely to take part in discretionary behaviors (e.g., OCBs) (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Identity theory suggest that the “self” (i.e., who we believe we are) is made up of several different identities that reflect the various different social positions that we may occupy in larger social structures. The meanings that we assign to these identities hold our conceptions of ourselves (Stryker, 1980). Self-verification of these positions are confirmed when the social situation matches the identity. That is to say, when what we believe others think of us (i.e., image) matches what we think of ourselves.

Cast and Burk (2002) suggested that these verifications give us individual a feeling of competency and worth (i.e., the two dimensions of self-esteem). Therefore, when our image (i.e., what we believe others think of us) does not

match our view of ourselves we become dissatisfied (Grandey, 2003); and as such, may become and become emotionally negative toward the group (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). This negativity towards the group suggests that not only may the individual not perform OCBs, but may also attempt to find value for themselves by no longer finding the group of high importance in their lives; but instead, place their “value” in a different group (i.e., while still remaining part of the first group) (Stryker, 1980). This gives them even less motivation to perform OCBs for the original group, as they no longer place significant value in the group.

Much like espoused collectivism, those who are high in Conscientiousness, will look for positive responses from a group. As stated earlier, a dimension of Conscientiousness is need for achievement (i.e., which requires feedback from others), and that those who are high in need for achievement often require feedback for their actions. If the feedback is not of the expected level (e.g., the individual is seen in a negative light when a more positive assessment was expected), the individual will become disillusioned with the group and be less likely to perform OCBs (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

*Hypothesis 4a:* Image will fully mediate the relationship between espoused collectivism and OCBs.

*Hypothesis 4b:* Image will fully mediate the relationship between Conscientiousness and OCBs.

## METHODS

The participants for this study were working adults in both China as well as the United States. The use of working adults is common in the field of organizational behavior (e.g., Breaux, Munyon, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2009), and as such, seemed appropriate for testing examining the construct of Image. Data were obtained via an on-line survey that participants filled out. Responses were received from 283 individuals (199 from the US and 84 from China). The average income of the participants was \$54,000 with 56% of the sample being female.

### Measures

*Conscientiousness.* Conscientiousness  $\alpha = .81$  was measured using a ten-item scales from Goldberg (1999) using a five-point response format (1= strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree). *Organizational citizenship behavior.* Organizational citizenship behavior ( $\alpha = .92$ ) was measured using a six-item scale from Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) using a five-point format (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

*Image.* Image ( $\alpha = .92$ ) was measured using the 12-item, scale developed by Hochwarter et al. (2007) designed to measure reputation. Instead of measuring the subject’s reputation (i.e., by asking others to report on the subject’s behaviors), we used the scale as a self report measure (i.e., for which it was originally designed). Possible responses ranged from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7. Hochwarter et al. (2007) reported reliabilities of .94.

*Collectivism.* Collectivism ( $\alpha = .78$ ) was measured using Srite & Karahanna’s (2006) espoused collectivism scale, which includes 6 items, each measured on a 7 point scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

## RESULTS

Following Anderson and Gerbing’s (1998) widely accepted approach, first the scales were tested (measurement model), than the structure model was tested on the variable level. AMOS 16.0 was used for both tests.

### Testing the Measures

A confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated the necessity of deleting some items from specific measures in order to improve model fit. The reputation measure was reduced from 12 to 8 items, the accountability measure from 8 to 7 and the organizational citizenship behaviors scale was reduced from 6 to 4 items (A list of the items for the reputation and accountability measures, including deleted items, can be found in Appendix 1). Such a reduction of items on a unidimensional measure is consistent with common practice (e.g., Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005).

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the resulting variables. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested three categories of indices: absolute fit, such as chi square/df; a relative fit such as Tucker-Lewis index (TLI); and parsimonious fit, such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The final CFA on the remaining items

produced a /df of 3.75, a TLI of .94 and a CFI of .89. These findings suggest the measures accurately represent the data sampled (Tucker & Lewis, 1973; Bentler, 1990).

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Image	4.03	.53	<b>.94</b>			
2. Collectivism	4.34	.98	.09	<b>.78</b>		
3. Conscientiousness	3.81	.52	.48**	-.06	<b>.81</b>	
4. OCBs	3.69	.56	.47**	.21**	.28**	<b>.92</b>

Note: Reliabilities are on the diagonal. Correlations are in lower half.  
*N* = 283; \*\* *p* < .01

### Testing the Model

A structural equation model was run at the variable level to test the hypothesized model. Table 2 exhibits the squared multiple correlations and standardized total effects suggesting that image fully mediates the effects of conscientiousness and collectivism on OCBs.

**Table 2: Squared Multiple Correlations, Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects**

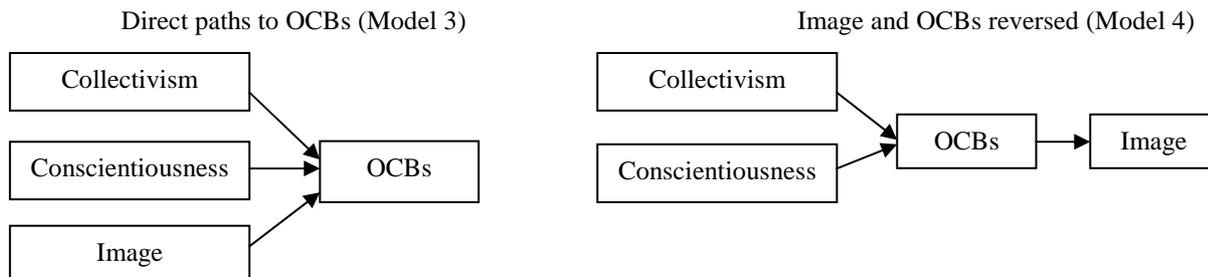
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Image	Collectivism	Conscientiousness
Image	0.24	**	0.056	0.479
OCBs	0.22	0.487	(0.027)	(0.239)

Note: All items reported <.01

\* Items in parentheses denotes indirect effects

### Testing Alternative Models

To validate the hypothesis, the alternative models approach was used, whereby several other potential models were evaluated (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Figure 2 below exhibits the paths that were added and removed based on theoretical likelihood of a superior fit. Not only did we test for direct effects on OCBs from conscientiousness and collectivism (i.e., model 3), but also tested a model with OCBs leading to image (i.e., model 4). Chi-square values (i.e., divided by degrees of freedom) were compared to determine the best fitting model.



**Figure 2: Comparison Models**

The results shown in Table 3 suggest that the hypothesized model best fits the data with a /df of 4.87, an NFI of .92 and a CFI of .93. The /df is slightly above the “normal” 4.0 cutoff (i.e., by .87), which can be expected by a sample size (Bearden, Sharma, & Teel, 1982; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hu & Bentler, 1999). These results suggest that the model accurately represents the data sampled (Tucker & Lewis, 1973; Bentler, 1990).

**Table 3: Model Comparison Results**

	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2$ /df	CFI	NFI
Model 1: Hypothesized model	14.6	3	4.87	.93	.92
Model 2: Null model	181.5	6	30.25	.00	.00
Model 3: Direct Paths from all 3 IVs to OCBs	87.0	3	29.00	.52	.52
Model 4: Switched OCBs and Image in Model	58.8	3	19.60	.68	.68

## DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to add to the body of knowledge regarding OCBs by developing a research question which potentially examines motivations of those performing OCBs. We did this by measuring the image of individuals as well as their propensity to perform OCBs. As shown below, we found that in our sample those with a low image (i.e., what individuals believe others think of them) were less likely to perform OCBs. To do this, we first showed there to be a positive relationship between both espoused collectivism and also Conscientiousness as they relate to image (i.e., confirming H1 and H2). Next, H3 was supported, by illustrating a positive relationship between image and OCBs. Finally, H4a & b showed that image mediated the relationship between espoused collectivism and also conscientiousness as they relate to OCBs.

These findings conform to the stream of thought that suggests that individuals perform OCBs in order to gain rewards. Based upon the data, we suggest that if the OCBs were carried out purely through altruism, then what others think should have little effect upon the subjects. Furthermore, although we acknowledge that it is possible that an individual may, in fact, perform OCBs in order to enhance his/her image, the results presented here reinforce the concept that if an individual becomes too negative toward a group (e.g., perhaps being caused by feeling the group does not view them in a positive manner), then that person will withdraw (Grandey, 2003). This withdrawal may result in that individual becoming emotionally negative toward the group (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003), thus, and refraining from performing OCBs.

A second goal of the study was to further the study of image. Although many eastern cultures have long had the concept of "face," it has only been in recent times that western organizational scientists have considered the construct. In the case of this study, the notion of image is very familiar to that of face. Both deal with the social construct of how others view an individual. In the case of OCBs, we found image to be a powerful motivator with respect to behaviors toward a group. As we become a more global society, concepts such as face, reputation, and image will need to be examined and reconciled in order to better understand not only the differences but also the similarities between societies. In light of these observed differences a number of studies have demonstrated that individuals who score high on espoused collectivism tend to engage in more OCBs (e.g. Moorman & Blakely, 1995). However, we found that when a collectivist perceives that they have a negative reputation, they actually engage in fewer OCBs.

There are multiple potential explanations. If one takes the position that individuals engage in OCBs because they are good actors, and want an easy way to earn recognition, it makes sense that individuals with a negative image will work harder to earn recognition, in order to fix their images. This explanation would seem to be equally effective regardless of the subject's espoused collectivism. If one takes the position that individuals engage in OCBs because they are good soldiers, who believe in the cause of their group and want to see it succeed, our finding that espoused collectivists are less likely to engage in OCBs when their images are negative. Supporting current theory, (e.g., Diefendorff & Richard, 2003), the results of this study suggest that the more an individual identifies with a group, the more distressed they will be if they will become if they feel that they have been treated badly by the group; and as such engage in fewer group serving behaviors. Since collectivists tend to identify more strongly with their group, it stands to reason that their negative affective reactions to their perceived negative reputation will lead them to withdraw more and engage in fewer OCBs.

The sample used in this study was gathered in order to achieve a legitimate range of variance in the collectivism measure. Espoused national culture is an individual difference construct that varies from individual to individual, even within countries (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). While individuals within a country can vary in terms of espoused national culture, there are patterns within countries based on the espoused culture dimensions. Our sample includes working adults from two countries: the United States and the People's Republic of China. Hofstede's dimensions show the two countries to be on the far ends of the collectivism scale (i.e., 91 & 20).

### Practical Implications

These findings have implications for practitioners who want to encourage OCBs among their employees in multicultural organizations. The finding that individuals who score high on espoused collectivism engage in fewer

OCBs when their image is negative indicates that OCBs can be encouraged among collectivists by fostering an environment of positive recognition, which should improve their image and thus encourage OCBs. The effects of positive recognition are more likely to be effective with individuals who score high on collectivism. Along the same lines, when an individual makes a mistake that needs to be corrected or performs poorly, managers can minimize the impact on that individual's image by keeping the mistake or poor performance secret from other group members, to the extent that this is feasible.

Furthermore, current research suggests that those who are high on Conscientiousness are more likely to perform OCBs. This is not necessarily the case. Employers and managers should take into consideration how the individual in question views his or her environment. If employees feel that they are not viewed in a positive light by their peers, they may be less likely to perform OCBs (i.e., regardless of their level of Conscientiousness).

### Limitations of the Study

This study did use single-source methodology, and as such, there remains some possibility for method variance to be problematic. When present, method variance typically is manifest through a spuriously inflating mechanism which results in generally and pervasively high correlations among the variables in the study. Inspection of the Table 1 correlation matrix does not appear to reflect such a spuriously inflating mechanism, thus method variance does not appear to be problematic in this study. Nevertheless, future research should further explore the subject using a variety of collection methods and measures.

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