Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Social Loafing: The Role of Personality, Motives, and Contextual Factors

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ABSTRACT. The present study integrates the literature on social loafing and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The authors examined the roles of personality, motives, and contextual factors in influencing the work behaviors of OCB and social loafing. In a sample of 341 individuals working in project groups, with data collected over 3 time periods, the authors found that conscientiousness was negatively related to social loafing. They also found the known positive relation of OCB with conscientiousness. Felt responsibility was negatively related to social loafing. The authors found no significant relations between social loafing and OCB motives.

Keywords: motives, organizational citizenship behavior, personality, social loafing

THE POPULARITY OF USING WORK GROUPS in organizations has risen significantly over the past decade (e.g., Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Team-based work groups are used in a diverse range of tasks and have become an almost indispensable feature in organizations (Katzenbach & Smith). This increased use of groups has led to research attention on group productivity and group productivity loss (Ilgen, 1999). In particular, a substantial amount of research attention has been devoted to studying the manifestation of social loafing behavior and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Social loafing behavior is one form of group productivity loss, whereas OCB contributes to increased productivity and effectiveness. The workplace phenomena of OCB and social loafing have not been studied together despite the apparent parallels that connect the two fields. For example, both work behaviors are driven by motivational factors, are exercised within the discretion of individuals, and have an impact on overall organizational performance. Thus far, OCB has been studied in the organizational behavior literature and social loafing has been studied under social psychology.

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Both OCB and social loafing are important areas of interest in the understanding of work groups, as these behaviors can significantly impact the performance of organizations. Whereas OCB has generally been accepted as beneficial to organizations, social loafing is a behavior that organizations want to eliminate. Both behaviors are critical to the effective functioning and competitiveness of an organization; thus, understanding these behaviors together will help to maximize the potential of an organization’s workforce and minimize resource waste. In the present article, given the parallels in these two bodies of knowledge, we assert that predictors of one set of behaviors can be useful in predicting the tendency to engage in the other. The identification of a common set of antecedents to both behaviors would be especially salient, as organizations would then be better equipped to increase OCB and reduce social loafing in the workplace and thus better able to develop measures to increase the productivity of work groups.

Social loafing and OCB are work behaviors attributed to the individual, but they have greater repercussions on the group and organization of which the individual is part (e.g., Liden, Wayne, Jaworski, & Bennett, 2004; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Both constructs have also been found to impact organizational performance; OCB contributes to the increased effectiveness of organizations (Organ, 1988), whereas social loafing results in decreased performance of individuals in groups (Jackson & Harkins, 1985; Kerr & Bruun, 1983; Latane, Williams, & Harkins, 1979). OCB is defined as extrarole work behavior that exceeds formally required work expectations (Organ, 1988). Social loafing comprises work behavior that is less than what is formally required by the system (Latane et al.). Both behaviors are within the control of the individual: OCB is voluntary contributions that go beyond task and organizational requirements, and social loafing is deliberate attempts within the group to withhold effort (Kerr, 1983). Given the commonalities, it is likely that factors that give rise to the high tendency of an individual to display OCB may simultaneously result in a low tendency to engage in social loafing.

In addition, both OCB and social loafing are affected by factors that are essentially motivational (Liden et al., 2004; Rioux & Penner, 2001). OCB is strongly related to motives such as organizational concern (OC) and prosocial values (PV; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Rioux & Penner), whereas social loafing is highly correlated with social expectancy theory (Karau & Williams, 1993). This review of literature suggests a possible theoretical integration of the fields (for a comparison between OCB and social loafing, see Table 1). Given the focus of organizational studies in examining both dispositional and contextual variables that affect behavior, we use both a person approach in understanding personality (conscientiousness) and motives and a contextual approach in understanding the factors that influence OCB and social loafing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>OCB</th>
<th>Social loafing</th>
<th>Both OCB and social loafing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of discretion</td>
<td>Exercised by an individual as a result of positive influences or as a means to positive outcomes.</td>
<td>Exercised by an individual as a result of negative influences or as a means to cope with negative outcomes.</td>
<td>Within control of the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of attribution</td>
<td>Occurs at the individual or organizational level.</td>
<td>Occurs in a work-group context.</td>
<td>Attributed to the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis of motivation</td>
<td>Motives such as organizational concern, prosocial values, and impression management.</td>
<td>Expectancy-value theory.</td>
<td>Affected by factors that are essentially motivational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to formal work requirements</td>
<td>Extrarole behavior that exceeds formal work requirements.</td>
<td>Work behavior that is less than what is contractually required.</td>
<td>Related to in-role behaviors, albeit differentially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of control by individuals</td>
<td>Voluntary contributions.</td>
<td>Deliberate actions to withhold efforts.</td>
<td>Deliberate control by individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conscientiousness, OCB, and Social Loafing

In the present study, we focused on conscientiousness in the Big Five model, as it is the most consistent predictor of various job criteria (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In particular, studies that linked personality with OCB have found conscientiousness to be the best predictor of OCB among the Big Five personality dimensions (Organ, 1994). Conscientiousness includes facets such as reliability, self-discipline, and perseverance (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Conscientious individuals are frequently described as purposeful, organized, exacting, disciplined, diligent, dependable, methodical (Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002), strong-willed, careful, future-oriented, and motivated to accomplish goals (Costa & McCrae, 1988).

Taking into account the parallels that exist between social loafing and OCB, we posited that an individual low in conscientiousness is likely to be less motivated, less purposeful, less dependable, somewhat lackadaisical and hedonistic, among other less desirable traits (Kelly, Johnson, & Miller, 2004). In Ringelmann’s work detailed by Kravitz and Martin (1986), Ringelmann attributed the decrease in performance with increasing group size to coordination loss; that is, “the lack of simultaneity of their efforts” (Kravitz & Martin, p. 937). Conscientiousness (or the lack of it) can have an impact on such lack of coordination, given the relatively low levels of self-discipline, a facet of conscientiousness. A person low in conscientiousness is therefore more likely to withhold effort when the situation allows or when doing so appears advantageous to his or her position. In other words, an individual who is less conscientiousness may find it more acceptable to hide in the crowd and not contribute as much to the pooled effort in a group setting because evaluation potential is low. Therefore, an individual low in conscientiousness is more likely to engage in social loafing than is an individual high in conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Conscientiousness is negatively related to social loafing.

Motives, OCB, and Social Loafing

Motives have been found to be responsible for both OCB and social loafing (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; George, 1992; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Previous studies have provided evidence that motives—particularly OC and PV—account for a unique amount of variance in OCB. PV motives are those concerned with the desire to be helpful toward peers and be socially accepted; these have a strong positive relation with OCB toward peers (OCBI). OC motives are related to a desire to help the organization that stems from pride and a sense of identification that the individual has toward the organization and have a strong positive association with OCB toward the organization (OCBO).

At the same time, individuals have been found to be more likely to engage in social loafing when they perceive fellow workers to be doing so at their
expense (Kerr, 1983; Jones, 1984) or when they feel that their individual effort is not distinguishable and thus not differentially rewarded (George, 1992; Kerr & Bruun, 1981). Thus, individuals consciously engage in OCB and social loafing as a means of achieving certain desired outcomes. We proposed that the motives that predict OCB would also predict social loafing.

PV cause individuals to be more inclined to engage in behavior such as helping to cover the duties of a colleague who is absent or offering to train a new colleague. A lack of PV may indicate a lower tendency for individuals to help coworkers and may increase the likelihood that individuals engage in social loafing and shirk responsibilities, with the perception that others can do their share of the work.

In addition, motives such as OC may explain why some individuals are more likely to engage in social loafing. An individual who has a low degree of OC will be more inclined to engage in social loafing despite the negative consequences such behavior has for the organization. Similarly, in the context of a work group, low concern for the group probably increases the likelihood of social loafing.

\[ H_2: \text{The OCB motives of OC and PV are negatively related to social loafing.} \]

**Contextual Factors of Social Loafing and OCB**

Researchers have explored contextual factors to help explain social loafing and OCB. In this article, we focus on the following factors: task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility. Group cohesiveness and task interdependence have been found to predict both OCB and social loafing (Karau & Hart, 1998; Kidwell, Mossholder, & Bennett, 1997; Liden et al., 2004; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991), and task visibility and felt responsibility have been found to predict social loafing and OCB, respectively (Jones, 1984; Pearce & Gregersen). Given the salience of these contextual factors in each respective context, there is a need to understand if such contextual factors drawn from both sets of literature are relevant and predictive.

**Task visibility.** Task visibility is the extent to which an individual believes that others are aware of his or her effort (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993). The level of task visibility depends to a large extent on whether the work context permits monitoring and evaluation of individual performance (Jones, 1984). In general, when individuals work alone, task visibility is high; when they work as part of a group, task visibility tends to be low. When task visibility is perceived as low, individuals may prefer to hide in the crowd or may feel lost in the crowd (Latane et al., 1979) because additional effort expended is deemed as unnoticed by others (George, 1992). This makes individuals less inclined to expend a great amount of effort because they feel that their individual contributions cannot be identified. No researchers have conducted significant studies on the relation between task visibility and OCB.
In contrast, when a task is highly visible, the extent to which different aspects of the task need to be coordinated and completed becomes much clearer. To enable the task to be completed, there is a likelihood that individuals would contribute more than required to complete the work well. In addition, insofar as individuals engage in OCB as a means of achieving certain desired ends, we argue that greater task visibility will make an individual more likely to exhibit OCB, because increased task visibility means that more people are aware of the display of OCB, which helps the individual achieve the desired outcome. Although theoretically, OCB is not formally noticed, recognized, or rewarded, researchers have found that OCB is affected by reward contingencies (Podsakoff et al., 2000). In practical terms, OCB is used to achieve desired outcomes.

**Task interdependence.** Task interdependence is the “degree of task-driven interaction among work group members” (Shea & Guzzo, 1987, p. 331). The amount of task interdependence felt by each individual in a work group may be different as a result of varying perceptions (Liden et al., 2004; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). In general, a team has high levels of interdependence when its task is defined in collective terms.

Liden et al. (2004) found that task interdependence was positively related to social loafing behavior; that is, when individuals perceive their tasks as being more interdependent, they find it more difficult to derive a personal sense of accomplishment in their work. There is also an economic incentive to withhold effort when it is not possible to distinguish individual contributions (Jones, 1984). However, we assert that task interdependence and social loafing are negatively related. When task interdependence is high, the success of the effort put forth by each group member is likely to be contingent on the performance of others. Because group members must work together, fellow group members easily notice the work behavior of other members, which reduces the tendency for each individual to engage in social loafing.

The mere proximity to coworkers and frequent interactions for a task with high interdependence between individuals is likely to foster a sense of empathy among group members (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). This shared empathy will lead to a greater concern for the performance of the group, which will make group members less inclined to shirk their duties. In addition, according to the social compensation hypothesis (Williams & Karau, 1991), individuals will work harder when they perceive that fellow workers are not contributing enough effort. This is intensified in a situation in which task interdependence is high because the output is collective. Therefore, we posited that task interdependence would be negatively related to social loafing.

In contrast, with regard to task interdependence and OCB, the empirical evidence is weak. Smith et al. (1983) hypothesized but did not find a positive relation between task interdependence and OCB. Logically, when task interdependence is high, group members are more likely to interact with each other, and
such work situations facilitate individuals’ displaying more instances of OCB, especially in the form of OCBI. We therefore posited that task interdependence and OCB are positively correlated.

**Group cohesiveness.** Group cohesiveness has long been an important element in the study of group dynamics (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003; Kidwell et al., 1997). It is a measure of the level of affinity that members have toward one another, the extent to which they desire to remain and function as part of the group, and the degree to which group membership is valued by members (Karau & Hart, 1998). Beal et al. found that highly cohesive groups tend to experience superior contextual performance.

Empirical evidence has shown social exchange to be important in explaining and predicting citizenship behavior (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). OCB may reflect members’ efforts to maintain exchange relationships within the group that are social rather than economic. Highly cohesive groups are likely to have a strong sense of social identity that can increase members’ desire to help one another (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). Previous researchers have found that group cohesiveness is related to dimensions of OCB such as courtesy (Kidwell et al., 1997). George and Bettenhausen (1990) found group cohesiveness to be correlated with a measure of prosocial behavior at the group level. In work groups in which members experience high degrees of liking and cooperation, OCB may act as one medium of exchange and may be expected of members. A high level of group cohesiveness may also instill a sense of belonging and identity in the group; members will then be more inclined to engage in prosocial behavior.

Group cohesiveness also plays a role in influencing social loafing behavior. Karau and Williams (1997) found that group cohesiveness reduces or eliminates social loafing. Karau and Hart (1998) found that social loafing occurred only in groups with low or no cohesion; in highly cohesive groups, individuals were reported to work as hard collectively as they did singly. This situation probably occurs because members in a cohesive group tend to be concerned about the welfare of the group and thus do not withhold individual effort so as not to negatively affect the performance of the group. Thus, we posited that group cohesiveness is related positively to OCB and negatively to social loafing.

**Felt responsibility.** Felt responsibility is a subjective feeling of responsibility to engage in helping behavior toward fellow group members. If individuals feel a sense of responsibility toward coworkers or the organization, they may be more inclined to help by engaging in extrarole behavior (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). The greater the felt responsibility that one has toward one’s work, coworkers, and organization, the more one will engage in behavior that serves the purpose of enhancing such performance.

Felt responsibility has not been studied with respect to social loafing. When more people are available to work, people often do not have to work as hard as
they do when only a few people are present (Latane et al., 1979). This translates into a lesser degree of felt responsibility toward the collective product and group performance, as individuals may feel that others will share the workload. When an individual has a low degree of felt responsibility toward coworkers or the combined output, he or she is inclined to put forth less effort in the group due to the perceived dispensability of his or her efforts for group success (Kerr & Bruun, 1983). It is therefore likely that a negative relation exists between felt responsibility and social loafing behavior.

H₃a: The contextual factors of task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility are negatively related to social loafing.

H₃b: The contextual factors of task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility are positively related to OCB.

OCB and Social Loafing

OCB has been found to be strongly associated with conscientiousness and the motives of PV and OC. Contextual factors, however, account for social loafing to a larger extent. Thus, we wanted to find out if the social loafing predictors explain variance in OCB over and above established OCB predictors and whether the OCB predictors account for additional variance in social loafing over and above established social loafing predictors.

H₄a: Contextual factors (task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility) account for additional variance in OCB over and above conscientiousness and motives (PV and OC).

H₄b: Conscientiousness and motives (PV and OC) account for additional variance in social loafing over and above the contextual factors (task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility).

Method

Participants

Participants were 341 undergraduates from a university in Singapore in an introductory management class. This study forms part of the requirements for their class participation, which went toward fulfilling their modular credit. Students who took part signed up on a random basis.

We collected data for this study over three time periods; the first survey was conducted at the beginning of the semester (Time 1), the second survey was conducted 1 month into the semester (Time 2), and the last survey was conducted another month later (Time 3). Only data from respondents who took part in all three surveys were included in the analysis. We assured participants of their anonymity.
We used well-validated measures. However, we modified some of these measures to the specific context of the study. For example, for the task visibility scale, we replaced the focus of “supervisor” with “fellow project group members.” This is a commonly accepted practice. For example, in a study on antecedents of OCB, Settoon and Mossholder (2002) developed a measure of coworker support by replacing the referent of the Perceived Organizational Support scale by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) with the focal employee’s coworkers. Although the validity of the construct may be called into question in such an adaptation, the theoretical constructs underpinning the hypothesized relations remain the same. In adapting the scale, the specific circumstance under which the study is conducted is contextualized and making such change to the referent is unlikely to affect the validity of the construct.

Procedure

Time 1 measure. Nine items measuring conscientiousness were collected at Time 1 with John and Srivastava’s (1999) scale (α = .80). We collected conscientiousness data first because personality variables are dispositional and unlikely to change over time. Respondents rated themselves on the extent to which they agreed with statements, which included “I see myself as someone who does a thorough job” and “I see myself as someone who can be somewhat careless,” on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

Time 2 measures. To measure motives, we used the 10-item OC Scale (α = .88) and 10-item PV Scale (α = .89) of Rioux and Penner (2001). We adapted items for the context of this study where the perspective was changed from that of an organization to that of the project group. For the construct of OC, sample items include “I want to understand how the group works,” “I feel pride in the group,” and “I am committed to the group.” For the construct of PV, sample items include “I want to help my group members in any way I can,” “I believe in being courteous to others,” and “I can put myself in other people’s shoes.” Participants rated items a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 6 (very important).

Contextual variables. We adapted the task visibility measure (α = .71) from George’s (1992) 6-item scale, modified to the perspective of the student, and we replaced the “supervisor” in the original scale with “fellow project group members.” Sample items include “My group members are generally aware when any member in the group is putting forth below average effort” and “It is generally hard for my group members to figure out how hard I am working.” We measured task interdependence (α = .83) with Pearce and Gregersen’s (1991) 10-item scale. Sample items include “I work closely with my other group members in doing my part of the project work” and “My part of the project work requires me to consult with other group members fairly frequently.” For both scales, respondents rated the items on a 6-point Likert
scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic) to 6 (very characteristic). We measured group cohesiveness ($\alpha = .89$) with 8 items adapted from Dobbins and Zaccaro (1986). Sample items include “The members of my project group get along well together” and “I enjoy belonging to this project group because I am friends with many group members.” We measured felt responsibility ($\alpha = .77$) with 6 items adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1975). Sample items include “I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help my present project group achieve its goal” and “I have an obligation to my present project group to ensure that I produce high quality work.” For both scales, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with the statements on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

**Time 3 measures.** We measured OCB (OCBI, 6 items, $\alpha = .81$; OCBO, 6 items, $\alpha = .64$) with Williams and Anderson’s (1991) scale. We omitted 2 of the original 14 items because they were not relevant in the context of this study. We modified the items for OCBO to reflect the project group specifically. Sample items for OCBI include “I help others who have heavy project-related work loads” and “I pass along project-related information to project group members.” A sample item for OCBO is “I give advance notice when I am unable to come to project group meetings.” Respondents rated the items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic) to 6 (very characteristic).

We measured social loafing with 9 items ($\alpha = .82$) adapted from the 10-item scale developed by George (1992). Sample items include “I defer responsibilities that I should assume to other group members” and “I defer project-related tasks to other group members if they are present.” Respondents rated items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic) to 6 (very characteristic).

**Analyses**

We used SPSS software to perform statistical analyses. Usefulness analyses via ordinary least squares regressions were carried out to test the hypotheses. Usefulness analysis is a technique used to examine the significant and unique contribution in the variance of one variable or a set of variables over others in the criterion variable. This technique removes the common variance between predictors and is a stringent test of relations, especially when data are from a common source (Darlington, 1968; Folger & Konovsky, 1989).

**Results**

Participants included 185 men (54.3%) out of 341 total. Coefficient alpha for the study variables ranged from .64 to .89. Except for OCBO ($\alpha = .64$), reliability for the rest of the variables was above the recommended .70 level.

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of all constructs in this study. Conscientiousness was significantly correlated to most Time 2
### TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables (N = 341)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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<td><strong>Time 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Group concern</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.18**</td>
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<td>3. Prosocial values</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.68**</td>
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<td>4. Task visibility</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
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<td>5. Task interdependence</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
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<td>6. Group cohesiveness</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
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<td>7. Felt responsibility</td>
<td>4.79</td>
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<td>.19**</td>
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<td>.51**</td>
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<td><strong>Time 3</strong></td>
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<td>8. OCBI</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>.19**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
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<td>9. OCBO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.85**</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Social loafing</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.62</td>
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<td>-.27**</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td>-.55**</td>
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*Note.* Cronbach’s alphas are reported in parentheses on the diagonal. OCBI = organizational citizenship behavior toward individuals. OCBO = organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
and Time 3 constructs. In Time 2, conscientiousness was significantly correlated with OC ($r = .18, p < .01$) and PV ($r = .11, p < .05$). For contextual factors, conscientiousness was significantly related to group cohesiveness ($r = .16, p < .01$), felt responsibility ($r = .19, p < .01$), and task interdependence ($r = .13, p < .05$). We found significant positive correlations for conscientiousness with OCBI ($r = .19, p < .01$) and OCBO ($r = .22, p < .01$). We found a significant negative correlation between conscientiousness and social loafing ($r = -.27, p < .01$). We found significant positive correlations among all Time 2 constructs. In addition, all constructs in Time 2 and Time 3 were significantly related.

$H_1$ posited that conscientiousness is negatively related to social loafing. We found a significant negative correlation between social loafing and conscientiousness ($r = -.27, p < .01$). The regression model was significant, $F(7, 333) = 12.78$, $p < .01$; $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $p < .01$ (see Table 3). However, of the variables entered in Step 2, only conscientiousness was significantly and negatively related to social loafing ($\beta = -.19, p < .01$). Therefore, $H_1$ was supported.

$H_2$ posited that OCB motives of OC and PV are negatively related to social loafing. We found that OC and PV significantly and negatively correlated with social loafing. However, none of the OCB motives were significantly related to social loafing in the regressions (see Table 3). Therefore, $H_2$ was not supported.

$H_{3a}$ posited that the four contextual factors—task visibility, task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility—are negatively related to social loafing. In the regression analysis, we found that only felt responsibility

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 ($\beta$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task visibility</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task interdependence</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group cohesiveness</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt responsibility</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 ($\beta$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group concern</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial values</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>16.62**</td>
<td>12.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$df$</td>
<td>4, 336</td>
<td>7, 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.05**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**$p < .01$.**
significantly and negatively related to social loafing ($\beta = -.35, p < .01$). Therefore, $H_{3a}$ was partially supported.

Table 4 reports the results of the regression analysis on OCBO. We found Model 1 in Table 3 to be significant, $F(3, 337) = 12.19, p < .01; \Delta R^2 = .10$. Conscientiousness was positively related to OCBO ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), as was Model 2, $F(7, 333) = 9.15, p < .01; \Delta R^2 = .06, p < .01$. However, conscientiousness was the only independent variable that had a significant positive relation with OCBO ($\beta = .16, p < .01$). Among the independent variables entered in Step 2, task visibility and felt responsibility were significantly and positively related to OCBO ($\beta = .11, p < .01$, and $\beta = .27, p < .01$, respectively).

Table 5 reports the results of the regression on OCBI. Model 1 in Table 4 was statistically significant, $F(3, 337) = 34.32, p < .01; \Delta R^2 = .23$. In Model 1, PV and conscientiousness were positively and significantly related to OCBI ($\beta = .37, p < .01$, and $\beta = .13, p < .01$, respectively). Model 2 in Table 5 was also significant, $F(7, 333) = 24.41, p < .01; \Delta R^2 = .11, p < .01$. Here, only PV was significantly and positively related to OCBI ($\beta = .30, p < .01$). In Step 2, task interdependence ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) and group cohesiveness ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) were both significantly and positively related to OCBI. Felt responsibility had a less significant positive relation with OCBI ($\beta = .13, p < .05$).

$H_{3b}$ hypothesized that the four contextual factors are positively related to OCB. Table 4 indicates that both task visibility ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and felt responsibility ($\beta$

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**TABLE 4. Regression of Conscientiousness, Motives for Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Contextual Factors on Organizational Citizenship Behavior Toward the Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 ($\beta$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group concern</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>–.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial values</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 ($\beta$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task visibility</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task interdependence</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group cohesiveness</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>–.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt responsibility</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>12.19***</td>
<td>9.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$df$</td>
<td>3, 337</td>
<td>7, 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p < .01$.**
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=.27, p < .01) had significant positive relations with OCBO (Model 2). In Table 5, both task interdependence (β = .19, p < .01) and group cohesiveness (β = .19, p < .01) were significantly and positively related to OCBI. Felt responsibility yielded a less significant positive relation with OCBI (β = .13, p < .05). H3b was partially supported. However, not all the contextual factors were significant predictors of all the work behaviors.

H4a posited that contextual factors contribute to variance in OCBI and OCBO in addition to conscientiousness and OCB motives. As shown in Table 4 (Model 2, Step 2), the contextual factors explain additional variance in OCBO over and above that accounted for by conscientiousness and OCB motives (ΔR² = .06, p < .01). However, of the four contextual factors, only task visibility and felt responsibility displayed significant positive relations with OCBO. Thus, H4a with regard to OCBO was partially supported.

Model 2 of Table 5 shows that the contextual factors account for additional variance in OCBI over and above that which is explained by conscientiousness and OCB motives (ΔR² = .11, p < .01). This additional variance is likely due to the effects of task interdependence, group cohesiveness, and felt responsibility, as the relations are significant. This provides partial support for H4a with respect to OCBI. Overall, the regression results in Tables 3 and 4 provide partial support for H4a, whereas contextual factors account for additional variance in OCBO and OCBI. However, not all factors have significant relations with

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**TABLE 5. Regression of Conscientiousness, Motives for Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Contextual Factors on Organizational Citizenship Behavior Toward Individuals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 (β)</th>
<th>Model 2 (β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 (β)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group concern</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>−.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial values</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 (β)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task visibility</td>
<td>−.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task interdependence</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group cohesiveness</td>
<td>−.19**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt responsibility</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>34.32**</td>
<td>24.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>3, 337</td>
<td>7, 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>0.11**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01.
the work behaviors, and each contextual factor is related differently to each work behavior.

$H_{4b}$ stated that conscientiousness and OCB motives contribute to variance in social loafing over and above the variance explained by contextual factors. From Model 2 (Step 2) in Table 2, we observe that conscientiousness and OCB motives explain additional variance in social loafing behavior over that which is accounted for by contextual factors ($\Delta R^2 = .05, p < .01$). Because conscientiousness is the only factor that has a significant positive relation with social loafing in Model 2, it is likely that the additional variance can be explained by conscientiousness alone. Hence, $H_{4b}$ was partially supported.

**Discussion**

This study contributes to the literature by aligning the work in social loafing and OCB. In particular, we found that conscientiousness was negatively related to social loafing and found the known positive relation of conscientiousness with OCB. This finding bridges the gap between the personality and social loafing literatures. Another strong finding is that felt responsibility, a contextual factor that has been associated with OCB but not with social loafing, is negatively and significantly related to social loafing. However, we found no significant relations between social loafing and OCB motives. In sum, there is value in integrating the research on social loafing and OCB.

The finding that conscientiousness is negatively related to social loafing is the first step toward understanding the effects of personality on social loafing. Research on social loafing has always concentrated on contextual factors and how work can be better designed and allocated to prevent or lower the incidence of social loafing. The personality angle presents an opportunity to take a selection approach in designing work groups and forming groups with personality profiles that lower opportunistic behavior such as social loafing. Future researchers should also examine other Big 5 personality variables such as agreeableness. Individuals who are high on agreeableness tend to be friendly, cooperative, courteous, flexible, tolerant, and trusting (Thoms, Moore, & Scott, 1996) and are more likely to facilitate prosocial behavior toward fellow group members.

Another finding is that felt responsibility is strongly related to social loafing. Previous researchers considered felt responsibility a mediator in the relation between task interdependence and extrarole behavior (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991) and found it to be positively related to the tendency to display extrarole behavior at work in the form of taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The result of the present study suggests that felt responsibility may play a more significant main role in determining the tendency of individuals to engage in certain behaviors in the context of a work group.

We find it interesting that the contextual variables of task visibility, task interdependence, and group cohesiveness were not related to social loafing in
the regression analysis. Although this study was conducted with intact project
groups, the notion of group may not have been as well developed, given that
the student participants may have been involved in more than one work group
during the semester and group identification may not have been as strong for the
project in this class. Although group members were accountable to each other for
the final project, the students had full autonomy regarding the division of labor.
Therefore, it is not clear if group members spent time researching and writing
the term paper together or divided the required paper into separate parts that they
later put together. Differences in the division of labor affect group members’
perceived group cohesiveness. In addition, it is not clear if the project required
creativity; but in research on creative tasks, conditions that were thought to lead
to social loafing had an opposite effect (Bartis, Szymanski, & Harkins, 1988).

OCB motives of group concern and PV also did not predict social loafing. PV
predicted OCBI but not OCBO. This is unexpected, as the tendency to engage
in social loafing behavior is likely to be affected by the goals and outcomes that
an individual seeks to achieve (Rioux & Penner, 2001). Again, it is likely that
the group identity had yet to be fully developed and the variable with a group
focus did not predict the behaviors (although the zero-order correlations were all
positively and significantly related to the behaviors). Therefore, we may need to
seek other motives that motivate OCB and could affect social loafing.

Implications for Practice

This article contributes to the field by identifying factors that increase OCB
and decrease social loafing with work groups as the contextual focus. In the current
organizational paradigm, many group tasks are collective and require the pooling
of individual members’ inputs to form a single product. Because collective work
settings are pervasive and indispensable in today’s economy, it is imperative to
determine which factors affect productivity in these collective contexts.

Our results provide support for the use of personality variables in selection
and recruitment. Personnel selection based on the personality variable of con-
scientiousness can differentiate candidates who may have a greater tendency to
engage in positive work behaviors and a lower tendency to engage in negative
work behaviors. This practical application should be especially useful to team-
based organizations, as the need for hierarchical control is reduced and the neces-
sity of self-discipline is increased.

Organizations can affect certain contextual factors to the extent that they
have positive effects on work behaviors, such as instilling feelings of felt respon-
sibility among employees. Felt responsibility plays a significant role in reducing
the tendency to engage in social loafing and in inducing both OCBI and OCBO.
Organizations should create work conditions that increase feelings of felt respon-
sibility in work groups, such as fostering a culture of camaraderie that compels
employees to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to fellow workers.
Limitations and Future Research

In this article, we attempted to integrate two seemingly distinct conceptual fields that have many underlying parallels, as we identified in the literature review. A key strength of this study is that it was longitudinal, conducted over three time periods. In addition, outcome variables of OCB and social loafing were examined in ongoing project groups and not in experiments under laboratory conditions, as in many previous empirical studies.

One possible limitation of this study stems from the student sample, which limits generalizability. Thus, the next step is to replicate the findings in ongoing organizational work groups. Also, the concept of groups was not well developed in this study; future researchers should control or manipulate group maturity for higher significance in the contextual variable results. Another point of concern is the low alpha for OCBO (.64), which points again to the fact that the group identity may not have been strong in this sample. Although the data were self-reported, we collected them over three time periods, alleviating potential common method issues.

With this first step in integrating research on social loafing and OCB, other variables that have been shown to be strongly related to either or both work behaviors in previous empirical studies could also be hypothesized and tested. For instance, procedural justice is likely to play a key role in influencing both work behaviors. Considerable evidence suggests that procedural justice is a predictor of employee attitudes (e.g., Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). Attitudes are likely to influence the display of certain behaviors, including OCB and social loafing. Furthermore, procedural justice is an important determinant of employee behavior (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994).

In addition, social loafing is one form of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), deliberate actions taken to hurt the organization or its employees that include acts such as aggression and sabotage (Spector & Fox, 2002). Another similar form of antiorganizational behavior is known as workplace deviance behavior (WDB), voluntary behaviors of organizational members that violate organizational norms and threaten the organization’s well-being (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The parallels between these types of behavior have been identified in previous studies. Spector and Fox found that CWB and OCB are voluntary behaviors, the former intended to hurt the organization and the latter intended to help. Negative emotions tend to increase the display of CWB, whereas positive emotions encourage OC.

Different personality traits also affect the tendency to engage in OCB and social loafing. Lee and Allen (2002) investigated the role of affect and cognition in predicting OCB and WDB. Taking into account the different forms of counterproductive work behavior, the scope of future research should be expanded to include these in addition to social loafing. Considering a wider spectrum of behaviors may facilitate the exploratory study of whether OCB and counterproductive work behavior as a whole exist on the same construct.
In sum, the alignment the bodies of literature from social loafing and OCB points to a better understanding of these work behaviors. This study presents the first step in such an endeavor.

**AUTHOR NOTES**

**Hwee Hoon Tan** is an associate professor at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University, whose research focuses on understanding the cross-cultural aspects of interpersonal trust and the impact of personality on displayed emotions. **Min-Li Tan** works at a private bank and is interested in understanding productivity losses.

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*Original manuscript received February 23, 2007*

*Final version accepted May 21, 2007*