Details of applicant
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Duration
Application for an additional 0.4 fte research time during six months

Discipline: Organization Sciences
Keywords: Group-engagement model, relational information, identity formation, in-role behavior, extra-role behavior, team performance, team comparison.

2. Title of the application
What motivates employees to work? Empirically testing the group-engagement model.

3. Research proposal

3a. Problem statement and theoretical background
Teams have become the building blocks of most contemporary organizations (Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). As a result of these developments, intra-team dynamics have become more important for the effective functioning of an organization (Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). Exploration of the factors that promote and sustain both performance of the employees within the team, as well as the performance of the team itself, is therefore of great relevance for organizational policy development (Penner, Dovidio, Pilavin, Schroeder, 2005). Accordingly, investigation of these factors is the goal of the present research.

Recent theory and research in social psychology and organizational behavior has recognized the relevance of Tyler and Blader’s group-engagement model (Penner et al., 2005). Based on both procedural justice theory (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), the group engagement model is theoretically innovative although very solid (see van Prooijen, Van de Bos, & Wilke, 2004), and convincingly suitable to explain employees’ motivations that increase both their individual and their team’s performance.  

The central hypothesis in this theoretical model is that relational information shapes employees’ identity formation, which subsequently influences their attitudes, values and performance in teams (Tyler & Blader, 2003; see also De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; van Knippenberg, Martin, & Tyler, 2006; Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2006a; Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2006b; Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2007).

More specifically, the group-engagement model argues that the degree to which employees are treated with respect, i.e. unbiased, trustworthy and dignified (relational information), informs them about the extent to which they can perceive themselves as valued and accepted by the others in their team (see Tyler & Blader, 2003). In turn, this leads to an increase in the value they attach to their team membership (Sleebos et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2007) and enhances their levels of team identification (i.e. identity formation, see Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2001). Subsequently, strengthened team identification results in more in-role behaviors (i.e. those formal job requirements that are recognized by the formal organizational reward system) and extra-role behaviors (i.e. pro-social acts that are not directly specified by a job description but which are of benefit to the organization and which are not of direct benefit to the individual) on behalf of the team (see O’Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

The rationale underneath these propositions is that when employees experience more positive relational information, they will consider the team as more self-relevant and attractive (Sleebos et al., 2007). This will increase their identification with the team and causes them to feel subjectively and emotionally attached to it, and as such makes them to see the interest of the team as their own interest (van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). This will result in higher levels of both in-role and extra-role behavior (i.e. an increase in these

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1 The procedural justice theory (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) and the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) are both influential theories in social psychological and organizational behavior research.
behaviors are in the interest of the team), which consequently should enhance the performance of the team.

However, empirical research that fully examines these proposed mechanisms of the group-engagement model in ‘real life’ is still lacking (see Sleebos et al., 2007). Therefore, the objective of the present research is to actually test the group-engagement model on collected data. That is, to reflect on its theoretical premises and if necessary to improve or adjust these theoretical premises, and demonstrate its public and organizational applicability by distinguishing the effects on in-role behaviors, extra-role behaviors and team performance.

3b. Method / Approach

Questionnaire
Together with my co-author Dr. Steven Blader – with Prof. Dr. Tom R. Tyler the founder of the group-engagement model (see Tyler & Blader, 2003) – a questionnaire was developed to measure the constructs of the group-engagement model. To avoid similar reviewers’ criticism Tyler and Blader received on their submitted empirical work (i.e. they were commented on their use of ‘non-published measures’ and ‘measures of intentions’ instead of ‘actual behaviors’ or ‘supervisor evaluations’), we predominantly used internationally accepted measures for the questionnaire and requested supervisor evaluations of in-role/ extra-role behavior, and team performance.

Sample and Procedure
The survey study was conducted in 44 teams of a facility division of a large healthcare organization. All participants (201; 76% response rate) voluntarily completed the questionnaires during a monthly meeting with their fellow team members and their supervisor. To avoid social desirability, supervisors were not allowed to intervene during the survey. Questionnaires were handed out as well as collected by research assistants and entered in both a SPSS and an EQS database. After the survey was conducted, the organization debriefed the participants.

4. Key publications relevant to the present proposal


5. Time Plan
During 6 months, 0.4 fte a week is assigned to the following activities:
- 1 month, time is employed to extensive data analyzing in both SPSS and EQS, and writing of the method/results section. This method/results section is used for both the manuscript in English and the manuscript in Dutch.
- 4 months of writing both articles. After finishing a first draft of the manuscript in English, comments are requested from fellow scholars and applied to the manuscript. In expectation of the comments, the manuscript in English is translated in Dutch and adjusted to a more applied public (applied scientist, professionals, and students).
- 1 month of finalizing the article (including writing the editorial letter).
- Finally, submission of the manuscript to both an American ISI-rated, refereed high impact journal and the Dutch refereed applied journal (see 7a; expected output).

6. Relevance (scientific)
Although the group-engagement model is theoretically and internationally widely used to support theoretical premises and empirical findings in multiple fields of research (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Fisk, 2006; Fuller, Hester, Barnett, et al., 2006; Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006; van Prooijen et al., 2004; Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006), the model suffers from three limitations that undermine the empirical acceptance of the model (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, 2.

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2 Both SPSS and EQS are statistical packages. EQS is a program specifically designed for structural equation modeling.

3 Both authors (Blader & Sleebos) will ask fellow scholars to comment on the manuscript.
& Rupp, 2001). First, the model has not yet been tested empirically with internationally accepted measures. This still limits the scientific recognition the model deserves (Croppanzano et al., 2001). Second, the most important outcomes of the model are “in-role and extra-role behaviors”. However, hitherto empirical publications on the specific model solely focused on a) in-role and extra-role intentions instead of more objective outcomes like actual in-role and extra-role behaviors or supervisor evaluations. Third, insight in ‘how the model relates to team performance’ is still lacking in empirical publications so far.

The quality of the current research makes it possible to overcome these three limitations. Extra, the data allow us to study a novel controversy in organizational behavior research. A suggested tradeoff proposed by Podsakoff, McKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000; Bergeron, 2007) suggest that employees’ engagement in extra-role behaviors is possibly harmful for the organization, because employees’ engagement in extra-role behaviors can result in spending less time on in-role behaviors. As both in-role and extra-role behaviors are central outcomes in the group-engagement model, it is of great importance to examine the extent to which the group-engagement model is susceptible to this tradeoff. Because the model predicts in-role and extra-role behaviors out of different antecedents, we argue that the tradeoff not necessarily occurs. However, ultimately only examination of empirical data can examine the validity of the tradeoff hypothesis within the framework of the group-engagement model.

7. Expected output and contributions

7a. Expected output
The project (see Relevance) allows the authors a) to aim for an article published in an ISI-rated, American refereed high impact journal – i.e. the Journal of Applied Psychology (impact=2.85) or the Academy of Management Journal (impact=3.35) two leading journals on respectively ‘applied psychology’ and ‘new management thoughts and techniques’ – and b) to empirically support an applied article to be published in the Dutch refereed journal Gedrag & Organisatie.⁴

7b. Contribution to the research program of the Department
The current research directly taps into two core questions of the Organization Sciences’ research program ‘Strategizing for Opportunities’.⁵

1. Which organizational conditions advance extra-role behaviors in general and promote initiatives and learning behaviors? Do these behaviors enhance performance of organizational units?
2. Which benefits to the organization are affected by dynamics of identity formation and social networks?

The main hypotheses of the group-engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) are a) social identity in influences attitudes, values and both in-role and extra-role behaviors, and b) procedures are important because they shape people’s identity formation within groups. Thus, with the main hypotheses of the group-engagement model, the current research examines organizational conditions that stimulate employees to enhance both their in-role and extra-role behaviors. Moreover, the current research allows exploration of the effects on the performance of organizational units and as such also contributes to the research agenda of the department.

In addition, the model suggests that organizational conditions (i.e. relational information) to which employees are subjected promote the extent to which they socially identify with the organization (i.e. identity formation; Tyler, 1999). Social identification evokes a sense of oneness with the focus of identification – i.e. organization, department, group or unit (van Knippenberg, 2000). This psychological oneness with the focus of identification motivates individuals to take the focus’ perspective and to experience the focus’ goals and interests. Stronger identification should therefore lead to act in the focus’ interest, like for example demonstration of more extra-role behaviors (van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). In this respect, the model also demonstrates how the organization can benefit from identity formation.

Notably, the project is linked to the research of de Gilder⁶ (Ellemers, de Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), van Knippenberg⁷ (van Knippenberg et al., 2006) and current projects of the ‘Social Networks and Social Identity Research Group’.⁸

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⁴ Gedrag & Organisatie serves a Dutch audience of applied scientist, professionals, and students, who often have limited access to scientific databases like for example ISI Web of Knowledge or Psyclit.


⁶ Dr. Dick de Gilder is associate professor at the Organization Sciences department of the VU University Amsterdam.

⁷ Dr. Barbara van Knippenberg is associate professor at the Work and Organizational Psychology department of the VU University Amsterdam.
7c. Contribution to the research mission of the CCSS
Publication in a high-impact refereed ISI journal and cooperation with a very promising researcher outside the department (Blader – New York University: Stern School of Business) contribute to the specific CCSS research statements.  
In addition, only laboratory research has shown the validity of parts of the group-engagement model when predicting actual in-role and extra role behaviors (Sleebos et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2007). A comparative examination of the model in an organizational setting will correspond with the principles of the CCSS.

7d. Additional value
The experience and knowledge acquired during the current project will be employed for writing a NWO proposal. In this proposal, the group-engagement model is applied to social and ethnic groups in Dutch society. The theoretical underpinning of this forthcoming NWO proposal is similar to the theory used in the current proposal.

8. Replacement of applicant’s teaching obligations
The Head of the Dept. of Organization Science states replacement of the applicant’s teaching obligations in the attached letter.

9. CV of applicant (Including collaborations and publication record)
The Curriculum Vitae of the applicant is attached to the proposal (see Appendix A). The published and accepted articles of the applicant and his co-workers appeared in either A-journals or Special Issues in the field of social psychology and organizational behavior.

10. I hereby declare that I have completed this form truthfully:

Name: Ed Sleebos
Amsterdam, Date: November 15, 2007

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8 The Social Networks and Social Identity Research Group is a project group within the Organization Sciences department that actively does research on Social Network Analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978).
11. Literature references