# IMPACT OF SUPERVISOR'S IMPLICIT PERSON THEORY AND COMMITMENT ON PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS
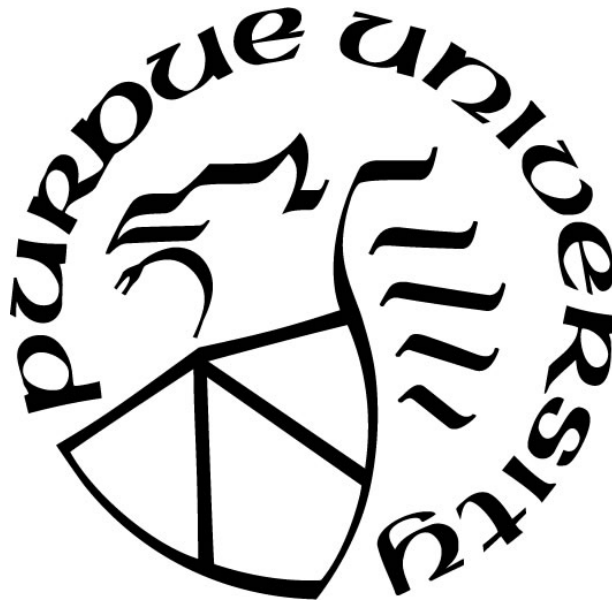
by

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*Way out west there was this fella... fella I wanna tell ya about. Fella by the name of Jeff Lebowski. At least that was the handle his loving parents gave him, but he never had much use for it himself. Mr. Lebowski, he called himself "The Dude". Now, "Dude" - that's a name no one would self-apply where I come from. But then there was a lot about the Dude that didn't make a whole lot of sense. And a lot about where he lived, likewise. But then again, maybe that's why I found the place so darned interestin'. They call Los Angeles the "City Of Angels." I didn't find it to be that, exactly. But I'll allow there are some nice folks there. 'Course I can't say I've seen London, and I ain't never been to France. And I ain't never seen no queen in her damned undies, so the feller says. But I'll tell you what - after seeing Los Angeles, and this here story I'm about to unfold, well, I guess I seen somethin' every bit as stupefyin' as you'd see in any of them other places. And in English, too. So I can die with a smile on my face, without feelin' like the good Lord gypped me. Now this here story I'm about to unfold took place back in the early '90s - just about the time of our conflict with Sad'm and the I-raqis. I only mention it because sometimes there's a man... I won't say a hero, 'cause, what's a hero? But sometimes, there's a man. And I'm talkin' about the Dude here. Sometimes, there's a man, well, he's the man for his time and place. He fits right in there. And that's the Dude, in Los Angeles. And even if he's a lazy man - and the Dude was most certainly that. Quite possibly the laziest in Los Angeles County, which would place him high in the runnin' for laziest worldwide. But sometimes there's a man, sometimes, there's a man. Aw. I lost my train of thought here. But... aw, hell. I've done introduced him enough.*

    -   *The Stranger*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PM – Performance Management

HR – Human Resources

IPT – Implicit Person Theory

AC – Affective Commitment

NC – Normative Commitment

CC – Continuance Commitment

# ABSTRACT

Performance management is not a new area within IO psychology research, however recently there has been growing interest with how to increase its effectiveness. Scholars are calling for more research to examine the antecedents of actual performance management behaviors that managers enact on a daily basis. The current study addresses this gap by utilizing Implicit Person Theory to understand the effect of supervisor perceptions on their behaviors that contribute towards the goal(s) of performance management. Previous research has suggested that Implicit Person Theory leads to more coaching behaviors, however, has failed to identify an explanatory mechanism. The current study relies on the three-component model of commitment to offer a mediating variable between Implicit Person Theory and differing degrees of performance management behaviors due to its more proximal relationship to the target behaviors compared to the broad antecedent of perception of others. The researchers tested this mediation using survey data from a broad sample of supervisors across the United States. Managers' Incrementalism was positively and significantly related to discretionary performance management behaviors via affective commitment to performance management, however the relationship between Incrementalism and focal performance management behaviors via continuance commitment was non-significant. This research extends previous performance management research by providing evidence for the influence of key supervisor attitudes and implicit beliefs on varying levels of performance management behaviors. Theoretical contributions, limitations and future research directions are discussed.

# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

Performance management (PM) has become a topic of discussion across Industrial/Organizational and business researchers due to vast disagreement on whether or not these systems are effective, and if we should even keep PM at all (Pulakos et al., 2015; Levy et al., 2017). The dissent has led practitioners and researchers alike to suggest organizations move away from traditional PM systems which emphasize evaluation and ratings, and transition to systems focused more on recognizing, rewarding, and developing performance as seen in premiere companies like Deloitte (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). Scholars suggest that manager actions in providing feedback and employee development at the individual level can aggregate to firm-level performance, and thus overall HR strategy should be considered in the design of PM systems (Schleicher et al., 2019; Tseng & Levy, 2018; DeNisi & Smith, 2014; Aguinis, 2013). With these, and other considerations in mind, past literature has shown that there is a wide breadth of factors that contribute to the successful development and implementation of PM systems, including strategy alignment contextual factors, ease of implementation, continuity, and a focus on employee growth and development (Aguinis, 2013; Pulakos et al., 2015; Fletcher, 2001; Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011; den Hartog, Boselie, & Pauwe, 2004).

More recently, researchers and practitioners have suggested that managerial commitment, or "buying in" and engaging in the practice of PM may be one important factor (Drawbaugh et al., 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015). Theories suggest that commitment is a multidimensional construct, as well as a phenomenon that can be distinguished among various objects or targets of commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Further, commitment is a mind-set that has been shown to bond a person to a specific goal, as well as develop and differentiate behavior towards a certain outcome (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). The present concern, and lapse in the literature, is whether commitment to PM predicts how supervisors engage with employees throughout the performance management process.

Another key component, recently studied, to understanding differences in supervisor behaviors contributing to PM concerns supervisor perceptions of the degree to which traits and

abilities can change over time. Implicit Person Theory (IPT) is "the belief in fixed versus malleable human attributes that can be seen as a core assumption in an individual's world view" (Dweck et al., 1995, p. 268). IPT can be broken down into two dimensions – incremental theory, or the belief that attributes can change over time, and entity theory, or the belief that individuals are relatively static in characteristics throughout their life (Hong et al., 1999). This theory has been extended to the workplace to show that managers with an incremental mindset engage in more coaching behaviors with employees (Heslin et al., 2005) and are perceived as more procedurally just in the performance management process (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011).

The current study seeks to investigate the degree to which supervisors' IPT differentially predicts supervisors' PM behaviors through the mechanism of commitment to the PM process. In other words, does commitment to performance management mediate the relationship between IPT and supervisor behaviors directed towards PM.

## Performance Management

Performance evaluations have long been perceived as an employee review that occurs annually, serving as a way to measure performance among employees and overall organizational effectiveness (Fletcher, 2001). Historically this has been referred to as, *performance appraisal*, which encompasses all activities relating to assessment of overall talent, measuring competencies, enhancing performance, distributing rewards, and stratifying the organization. Farr and Levy (2007) outline similar goals of performance evaluations to: a) provide criterion measure for validating predictor tests, b) make administrative decisions (promotion, retention, and salary adjustments), and c) develop employees. The initial function of performance appraisals served as a tool for talent measurement and was first applied to the military primarily as a way to inform promotion decisions. (Farr & Levy, 2007).

For much of the time between WWI and the 1980's the research surrounding performance appraisal pertained to increasing the validity of the evaluation tools. However, Landy and Farr (1980) provided evidence that only a small portion of the variance in performance ratings could be accounted for by the type of instrument used, and performance appraisal research shifted. Arvey and Murphy (1998) described a more recent history of research in performance appraisal involving the cognitive processes of raters and ratees, as well as the context of the appraisal setting. Much of this work was advanced by the seminal work of Murphy

and Cleveland (1991) and others (Ferris et al., 1994) on rating accuracy and instrumentation. Today, the concept of performance appraisal has developed into a broader, dynamic and longitudinal process taking much of the previous literature into account, while adapting to the needs of rapidly changing organizations.

The term performance appraisal has expanded to encompass a wider range of strategic functions and is now often referred to as performance management (PM) (Hartog et al., 2004). Aguinis (2013) described PM as a "continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and teams and aligning performance goals with the strategic goals of the organization" (p. 2). This definition of PM takes a different approach to performance appraisal systems in viewing PM more holistically. Levy et al. (2017) described how performance appraisal is a smaller part of the whole management process, however at its core is the necessary component of the whole PM system. PM is a large part of an organization's personnel-related activities and can be broken down into a few key steps and behaviors completed at the managerial level.

## Performance Management Behaviors

Aguinis (2013) outlined a six-step process of implementing a performance management system: 1) prerequisite consideration (knowledge of the job being reviewed and strategic mission of the company), 2) performance planning (specifying objectives with employees), 3) performance execution (observation and documentation of employee performance), 4) performance assessment (evaluation of extent to which objectives have been met), 5) performance review (appraisal meeting), and 6) performance renewal and re-contracting (assessing changes that should be implemented in the system). Nested within each of these stages are sets of supervisor behaviors that may or may not be explicitly required by the process. For instance, Pulakos and O'Leary (2011) discuss the administrative tasks of PM mentioned above as the *formal* actions that managers are required to complete such as the appraisal session, rating forms, and necessary documentation. However, there are also behaviors that we could consider as part of the *informal* behaviors towards performance management. These behaviors may include providing continuous feedback delivered in real-time, frequent and consistent communication to promote clarity and trust, coaching employees through challenges, and building strong relationships (Levy et al. 2017; Pulakos & O'leary, 2011; Pulakos et al., 2015). It

is within the dimension of *informal* behaviors that researchers suggest be the differentiating factors between effective an ineffective implementation of PM systems.

As Pulakos et al. (2015) discussed, formalized processes such as the cascading of organizational goals, procedures to differentiate and rank every employee are complex and burdensome, and annual systematic goal setting has created a "check the box" perspective in managers. Alternatively, Levy et al. (2017) outlined a series of "best practices" for practitioners to serve as guidelines for implementing less burdensome systems focused on strong supervisor-employee relationships. These behaviors are similar to the informal steps noted above, and include continuous coaching, agile goal-setting focused on career development, more frequent feedback, and providing a procedurally just process of evaluation (Aguinis, 2013; Levy et al. 2017; Ford & Hunt, 2018; Pulakos et al., 2015).

Research suggests that there are positive outcomes linked to these more informal supervisor actions. For example, frequent feedback is suggested to be a more effective strategy in improving the task-related accuracy of the feedback and higher employee retention compared to annual check-ins with supervisors (Gregory & Levy, 2015). Similarly, outcomes such as employee perceptions of procedurally just processes have expressed positive relationships with employee engagement (Gupta & Kumar, 2012) and trust in one's manager (Korsgaard et al., 1998). Thus, research supports the notion that supervisor behaviors in the broader PM system have a serious implications and potential benefit at the employee and organizational level overall. Pulakos et al. (2015) suggest that these types of everyday behaviors are critical to PM implementation. While we have identified the types of PM behaviors that generate positive outcomes, there is less knowledge of what predicts who is most likely to engage in more of these behaviors. As noted above, some researchers have suggested that supervisor's commitment to this human resource practice is an important factor to consider in an effort to maximize desired outcomes. In the subsequent section we will examine the commitment literature to better understand commitment as a possible mechanism of behavior.

## Defining Commitment

Early definitions of commitment largely arose out of sociology and were based on the association of values with individual involvement (Becker, 1960; Kanter, 1968; Etzioni, 1961) and typically focused on employee's commitment to the organization. Kanter (1968) provided a

similar definition of commitment referring to "the process through which individual interests become attached to the carrying out of socially organized patterns of behavior, which are seen as fulfilling those interests" (Kanter, 1968, p. 500). Similar to this categorization of commitment, researchers posit that behavior is a primary determinant of commitment in which certain patterns of behavior are repeated following from an individual's chosen set of actions (Salancik, 1977; Staw & Fox, 1977; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1981). The definitions of commitment offered here are construed in terms of an economic framework in which potential costs and benefits are evaluated prior to the individual choosing to either, pursue or avoid, a course of action toward the target (Becker, 1960; Etzioni, 1961; Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Another primary stream of research describes commitment as an attitudinal construct, which binds an employee to be engaged and remain in the organization through a feeling-state or psychological attachment (Porter et al., 1974; Mowday et al., 1982; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Brown, 1996). This framework diverges from earlier theories in that it does not define commitment as an outcome of a calculation of alternatives or patterns of behavior, but instead as a bond formed through identification with a target of commitment. This sort of attachment is thought to be affective in nature, meaning that the individual feels compelled to carry out the goals and values of the organization because they identify with them as well (Buchanan, 1974; O'Reilly & Chatham, 1986). Much of the research defining commitment as an attitudinal construct, or affective attachment, expands upon this framework (Mattheiu & Zajac, 1990). In more recent years, unified theories have developed, that merge previous literature into a more coherent, conceptual framework of commitment.

### Three Component Framework of Commitment

Meyer & Allen (1991) laid out the most widely used formulation of commitment that incorporates previous literature into a three-component model. In their view, commitment is not simply a continued action, nor an attitude towards a target, but instead a psychological state of varying forms. The degrees of commitment they describe include, a) affective, or an emotional desire to continue towards the goal of commitment; b) normative, an obligatory feeling to remain in pursuit; and c) continuance, which is guided by a perceived cost of failing to continue the course of action. Further, the researchers discuss that commitment should not be broken down into different "types," but instead are components that can be experienced simultaneously

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(Meyer & Allen, 1991). This conceptualization provides a general model through which all previous definitions of commitment including, attitudinal, or affective (Mowday et al., 1982), cost-associated courses of action, or continuance (Becker, 1960), and obligatory, or normative (Wiener, 1982) can be captured.

Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) argue that there is a "core essence" to commitment, which differentiates it from other constructs. It has commonly been conflated with concepts such as motivation or attitude, but is distinct in that the behavioral implications are independent of self-interest or conflicting extrinsic factors. Brown (1996) assessed three different commitment measures that used both, attitudinal and motivational frameworks, and found that both measures correlated with job involvement, however affective measures of commitment were more strongly associated. This is evidence that commitment is not simply a form of extrinsic motivation or positive attitude, but a separate phenomenon. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) provided a relevant discussion of the dimensionality of commitment.

Specifically, many models have understood commitment as unidimensional, in which it is viewed as a binding force to a particular course of action or goal. This binding force can be thought of as a mind-set that guides behavior (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). However, there has been disagreement among the various unidimensional conceptualizations, with regards to what defines the mind-set (Klein et al., 2012). Angle and Perry (1981) described commitment in a multidimensional nature, with employees possessing either a value commitment or commitment to stay and found three factors in a factor analysis of their commitment measure. Additionally, O'Reilly and Chatham (1986) possessed a view that held a similar view to Meyer and Allen (1991), which posits there are three primary dimensions of commitment – compliance, identification, and internalization.

Much of the commitment literature has focused on the development of the three components of commitment and identifies several factors that contribute towards its establishment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mayar & Schoorman, 1998; Lok & Crawford, 2001). Traditionally, research has looked mostly at antecedents of organizational commitment. Job involvement, need for achievement, personal importance to the organization, group attitudes towards the organization, task identity, and shared values have all influenced affective commitment substantially (Steers, 1977; Brown, 1996; Mayar & Schoorman, 1992; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Normative commitment has been researched less than others but has been

theorized to develop due to a psychological contract with the organization (Meyer et al., 1998). Lastly, research suggests that investments, that would thus be lost if an individual leaves an organization, (Jaros et al., 1993) increase with tenure and engender continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1993).

To date, much of the research in commitment has utilized the framework provided by Meyer and Herscovitch (1991) to study targets, outcomes, and correlates of commitment (Wright & Bonett, 2002; Leroy et al., 2012; LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002). Together, these three components of commitment act to influence a person's behavior towards a specific target, largely studied in the context of organizational commitment, but research has also explored commitment in other contexts and linked to numerous outcomes (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; O'Reilley & Chatham, 1986; Snape & Redman, 2003; Adil, 2016; Becker et al., 2008).

## Targets of Commitment

Scholars note that this area of research began with a broad approach to what is defined as the target, or entity (i.e. one's job), (Becker et al., 2008). Much of the research has examined organizational commitment, which refers to a bond linking the individual to an organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Herscovitch & Meyer (2002) showed that the multidimensional view of commitment can be extrapolated to certain goals or entities such as commitment to change. In addition, other targets of commitment observed in research include unions, leaders, clients, teams, occupations (Mattheiu & Zajac, 1990; Vandenberghe et al., 2004; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; Becker et al., 2008). This research, along with Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) indicates that their three-component-model is applicable to other contexts or other targets. As discussed below, the three-component model has higher predictive validity when applied to a specific target compared to a model using general organizational commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

When the focus of commitment becomes narrower, then the consequences, or behavior, change in a way that aligns with the object of commitment. Therefore, the more specific the target, such as commitment to increase diversity in an organization, the more specific the behaviors directed toward the target of commitment become (i.e. targeting recruitment efforts towards minority populations) (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2001). In the context of PM, the current study defines a) affective commitment as the supervisor internalizing the views that PM is a

beneficial process for both the employee and organization overall, b) normative commitment in supervisors as the mind-set that PM is necessary and it is their responsibility to perform the related tasks, and c) continuance commitment as the view that PM is a required part of the supervisor role and there would be adverse consequences if they didn't engage in it. The goal of the current research is to expand the target of commitment to an entity that has yet to be explored in the extant literature, and to identify how commitment type and level differentiates behavior pertaining to PM. Specifically, we anticipate that commitment to performance management will predict supervisor behaviors related to PM.

## Consequences of Commitment

Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) are careful in describing commitment as reflecting an attachment to an entity or course of action, which then influences behavior. This distinction is critical so that commitment can be studied in terms of both the target of commitment, as well as consequences in behavior. Targets will be discussed in the next section of this paper, while behavior as an outcome will be the focus for this section. Traditionally, commitment has focused on outcomes relating to intent to leave, or turnover (Becker, 1960; Porter et al., 1974; Brown 1996). However, the use of a multidimensional paradigm has allowed research to expand to behavior in a much broader sense. Outcomes such as job performance, organizational citizenship, job involvement, and attendance have all been foci in the effects of commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Brown, 1996; Meyer et al. , 1989). Further, it has been observed that normative and continuance commitment types are found to be predictive of continued employment, while affective commitment has shown to predict a wider variety of behavior in addition to continued employment. Several studies have observed job performance and organizational citizenship behavior being positively correlated with affective commitment (Meyer et al., 1989; O'Reilley & Chatham, 1986; Meyer et al., 2002). Others have also examined the varied outcomes associated with each type of commitment.

Meyer & Herscovitch (2002) differentiate between two types of behavior that follow from the target of commitment: a) focal behavior, directly aligns with the target of commitment, and b) discretionary behaviors, which are those that are not specified or required for attaining the target of commitment, but may be included at the choice of the individual. In other words, discretionary behaviors may be unique in that they go above and beyond the required tasks of

target of commitment and could provide additional benefit to the directed goal. Focal behaviors are quite specific in nature, being those that explicitly fulfill the object of commitment, which Meyer & Herscovitch (2002) termed *compliance*. Discretionary behaviors will vary to a greater extent and can be defined as facilitation or supporting of the object of commitment, which they termed *cooperation* and *championing*. Adil (2016) describe the cooperation and championing behaviors as an active form of support to commitment to change, whereas the compliance behaviors were a passive form of support in order to meet the minimal possible standard. According to the Meyer and Herscovitch (2002) model, affective, normative, and continuance commitment all correlate with compliance-centered behaviors, however only affective and normative commitment correlate significantly with cooperation and championing behaviors (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2002).

O'Reilly and Chatham (1986) found similar results in regard to three underlying dimensions of commitment that differentially predict two distinguishable types of behaviors, which they refer to as in-role and extra-role behaviors. The in-role, or focal, behaviors are what is explicitly outlined in the responsibilities of the role that are necessary for continuation of employment. The extra-role, or discretionary, behaviors are those that are not explicitly outlined by the job but benefit the organization. Specifically, they found that that the higher-level commitment types of internalization and identification with the organization's values were significantly and positively related to prosocial (extra-role) behaviors, and the lower form of commitment, compliance, was unrelated to extra-role behaviors and positively related to in-role behaviors. Relatedly, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) further argue that these behaviors can extend to other targets, or entities, in the workplace.

The current study will build on the previous conceptions of a multi-dimensional model of commitment and test whether one's commitment type will predict the behaviors involved in PM. In alignment with Meyer and Herscovitch's (2002) measurement of focal behaviors are those that "comply" with commitment to change, compliance behaviors in PM can be thought of as those that meet minimum requirements for completion of the PM system. For this study the appraisal meeting and completion of necessary HR documents will function as the focal behaviors because they are the essential component of the traditional PM process. Aguinis (2013) describes the step-by-step process of PM from planning the system and understanding job duties to performance renewal and "recontracting", in which the employee incorporates

information from the review session to alter goals and key competencies. The actions outlined above are typical to the necessary parts of supervisor responsibilities directed towards the PM process.

In a study of commitment to change, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) found that all three forms of commitment significantly predicted the focal behaviors, compliance with change, due to it being the minimum required by the organization. Discretionary behaviors, however, included both cooperation, or "going along with the spirit" of change, and championing, or promoting and making significant effort towards change were predicted by affective and normative commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). In the PM context, discretionary behaviors will be defined as the best practices outlined by recent research. Researchers discuss manager initiatives that go beyond those outlined by the official PM system such as, creating a trusting employee-supervisor relationship, helping employees find solutions to problems, balancing acknowledgement of employee strengths and developmental needs, and engaging in informal performance conversations (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). Other scholars have outlined similar solutions for performance effectiveness outside of guidelines of the formal PM system including manager investment in their employees' development (Levy et al., 2017), coaching (Capelli & Tavis, 2016), and creating a culture of fairness (Levy et al., 2017). It is in these discretionary behaviors where the most variation is expected between supervisors due to the "optional" nature of this dimension in PM.

## Implicit Person Theory

As stated in the overview of the current research, the goal of this study is to understand whether supervisors' IPT predicts their PM behaviors, and whether their level of PM commitment will help explain that relationship. To review, implicit person theories are defined by Hong et al. (1986) as the perspective in which a) individuals view abilities and attributes to be highly malleable (incremental theorists), or b) individuals are relatively stable in their attributes and that they are fixed in abilities (entity theorists). The concept of IPT has been around since early in the 20th century as a way to describe how individuals perceive others (Schneider, 1973). The theory was advanced by Dweck (1986) and others (Dweck and Legget, 1988; Chiu et al., 1997; Hong et al., 1997) as a theory of motivation to explain the rationale behind whether individuals pursued more challenging or simple tasks, and how they viewed their subsequent

outcomes. The theory has been extended to study motivational states and interactions with goal orientation (Hong et al., 1986), coping (Hong et al., 1999), and self-regulation (Burnette et al., 2013).

To better understand individuals' tendencies for certain behaviors, implicit person theories have consistently found that the type of theory one holds, incremental or entity, will predict behavior in achievement situations and in evaluations regarding others (Hong, 1994; Hong et al., 1998). Specifically, research has found that children who adopted an incremental mindset had more positive affect and effective strategies, such as reviewing instructions and monitoring their degree of effort in an ability task in comparison to children who adopted an entity mindset, and were therefore more able to adapt and persist in the task (Diener & Dweck, 1978; Dweck (1978). Over a set of three studies, Hong et al., (1999) showed that incremental theorists were more likely to a) attribute negative performance to lack of effort, b) are more likely to take remedial action following negative performance feedback, and c) that attributing effort to negative performance mediated the relationship between IPT and decision to engage in helpful, remediation tasks to practice for the test of intelligence. The studies by Dweck and colleagues underlie the importance of a self-regulatory process that results from one's IPT, and in turn, affects behavior in achievement situations.

Chiu et al. (1994), Dweck et al. (1995), and Dweck and Leggett (1988) provide strong evidence that implicit person theories elicit positive or negative trait views of oneself and others, which in turn, affect how one chooses to evaluate and respond to others' behavior. Regarding the formation of judgments in others' abilities, Dweck et al. (1995) highlight several studies in which participants who adopt an entity view are significantly more likely to attribute behaviors outlined in scenarios to personal traits (i.e. altruism, intelligence, etc.) of the target than other factors that were presented in the vignettes (i.e. behavioral and environmental mediators). In summary, these studies underscore the perspective that incremental theorists are more likely to evaluate themselves and others in terms of situational and psychological factors, and subsequently employ an instructional, adaptive approach in response. Alternatively, entity theorists are likely to attribute poor ability to one's fixed traits and respond in ways that are less suitable for adapting performance.

Few studies in the IO and management literature have utilized IPT to examine supervisor-subordinate relationships. Heslin et al. (2005) first extended the conceptual

framework of IPT from educational and social psychology fields to the performance appraisal process. They discovered that IPT predicted whether or not supervisors acknowledged or noticed when employees' performance became better or worse compared to the employee's initial level of achievement. This was based on the fact that those with an entity perception did not stray from their initial anchoring judgment of others, while those with an incremental outlook could make adjustments to their initial impressions of performance more easily (Heslin et al., 2005). This was among the first studies to provide evidence that an individual difference of the supervisor may predict how they behave in the PM setting.

A second study examining supervisor behaviors in PM indicated that supervisors' coaching behaviors may differ based on the IPT of the supervisor. Specifically, incremental managers were perceived by their employees to engage in more coaching behaviors compared to entity-based managers (Heslin et al., 2006). Relatedly, Zingoni and Corey (2017) tested a moderated-mediation model of employee IPT predicting job performance with the supervisor-employee relationship as a mediator, and supervisor goal orientation as a moderator. The researchers found that supervisors' goal orientation interacted with employees' IPT to predict the relationship quality, which in turn lead to higher job performance. This suggests that supervisors that adopt a mastery-oriented approach engage in more helpful behaviors (i.e. additional information and feedback) to coach their employees, and is critical for creating strong supervisor-employee relationships and, in turn, better performance. Coaching behaviors have been suggested as a core component in implementing a continual PM process (Levy et al., 2017; Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011; Tseng & Levy, 2018); however, they are only one facet of the extra-role behaviors that should be considered in employee development and performance management.

Heslin and VandeWalle (2011) explored the relationship of supervisor IPT and employees' perceptions of procedural justice. Their model revealed that there was a positive relationship between supervisor's IPT on employees' organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational commitment through the mediating role of employees' perceptions of procedural justice. Together, these studies suggest that IPT may predict a variety of supervisor behavior and influence employee's perceptions of those behaviors.

Related to the current study, the proposed model posits that the supervisors level of PM commitment will mediate the relationship between supervisors IPT and the extent to which they

engage in focal or discretionary behaviors. Due to previous research suggesting that incremental theorists view traits and abilities as malleable (Dweck et al., 1995), we propose, that IPT will more strongly relate to affective commitment, and will negatively correlate with continuance commitment. Incremental supervisors are more likely to endorse PM and view it as a valuable process, and therefore will be more affectively committed. Alternatively, entity-based supervisors are more likely to view PM as a futile process because of research suggesting that they attribute performance more to fixed attributes than psychological states and helping behaviors (Hong et al., 1994). Further, affectively committed supervisors are more likely to partake in both, focal and discretionary behaviors, and those higher in continuance PM commitment are likely to only complete the focal behaviors. This study will incorporate a model of IPT and supervisor behaviors by expanding the relationship found by Heslin et al. (2006), and utilize a three-component model of commitment from Meyer and Herscovitch (2002) to explain the association between supervisor IPT and their behaviors relating to PM.

### IPT Predicting Supervisor PM Behaviors

In line with previous research suggesting that the extent to which one views others as changeable overtime determines their reactions towards challenges and evaluations of others, the current study predicts that a supervisor's *incrementalism* will be positively related to discretionary and focal behaviors. Incremental managers are more likely to employ effective strategies towards the goal of PM (i.e. coaching, informal and frequent feedback), as opposed to merely conducting the behaviors necessitated by the PM system (i.e. providing the evaluation score and conducting the appraisal meeting). Conversely, entity managers are less likely to view the discretionary behaviors as worthwhile due to their beliefs that employees are fixed in their abilities, and therefore will not engage in behaviors above and beyond what is outlined by their role as a supervisor.

### Commitment as a Mediator

The degree to which one is attached, or psychologically bonded to a target through a particular mindset, has previously predicted the extent to which one exerts effort in pursuit of the target (Becker et al., 2008). Further, research suggests that commitments serve as explanatory

mechanisms for the most proximal target (Bentein et al., 2002). That is, in the case of specific outcomes broad mindsets (i.e. IPT) are seen as distal antecedents to behavior (i.e. problem solving), while commitment directly to the target (i.e. commitment to PM) explains this relationship. We suspect that affective commitment will significantly mediate the indirect effect between IPT and discretionary and focal behaviors. Whereas, continuance commitment will mediate the indirect effect between IPT and focal behaviors. Because of the mixed findings regarding normative commitment, the current study will make an exploratory prediction that normative commitment will mediate both discretionary and focal behaviors. We propose this because previous research suggests that normative commitment elicits a sense of duty or obligation and therefore, higher IPT may invoke a sense of responsibility for PM and consequently lead to both outcome behaviors.

## Current Research

Currently, there is serious discussion among scholars and practitioners about the state of PM, and how to best resolve current systems. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge around PM in order to better understand how manager perceptions and attitudes predict key behaviors in developing employees (Pulakos et al., 2015; Levy et al., 2017). The findings from this study will add to the theory by extending previous work in person perception (IPT) relating to helping behaviors (discretionary PM behaviors), and the important role of psychological bonds (commitment) in explaining the relationship. In addition, this research will begin to examine supervisory performance management behaviors more closely.

# Hypotheses

Instead of making specific hypotheses for each path, the current study has chosen to propose the following model (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

The figure depicted above shows the proposed parallel mediation paths from IPT to each of the outcome variables, Focal and Discretionary behaviors. The plus and minus signs indicate the proposed directions of the relationships between variables.

In line with previous research displaying mixed findings for normative commitment, the current study proposes an exploratory model of normative commitment mediating the effect of IPT on both, focal and discretionary behaviors (See Figure 2).
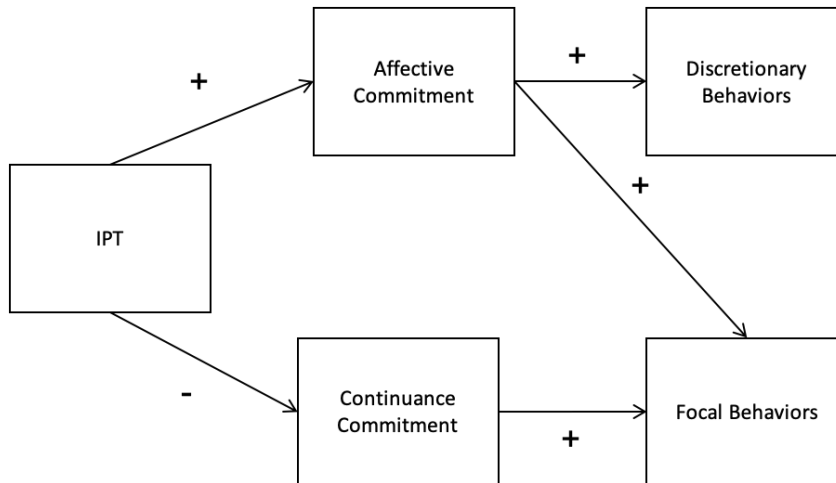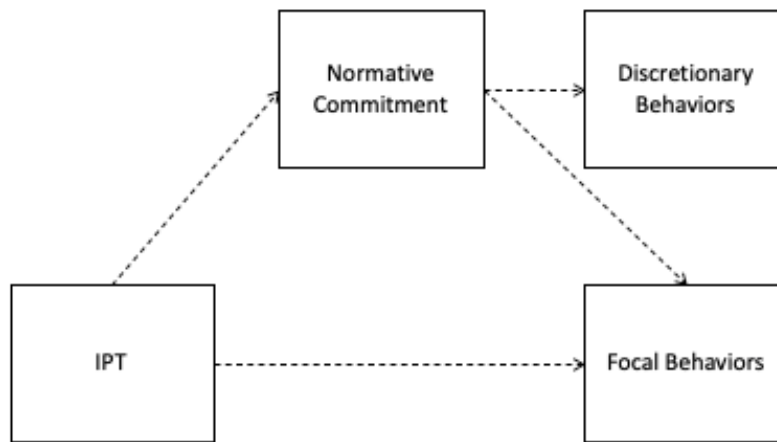


Figure 2.  Exploratory Model

The figure depicted above shows the exploratory mediation path from IPT to each of the outcome variables, Focal and Discretionary behaviors. There are no proposed directions for the relationships.

# METHOD

## Participants

The present research included a sample of 166 participants. The sample was relatively balanced by gender (55.4%, $N$=92 men). A large majority of the sample was White (74.1%, N=123). The remaining sample was comprised mostly of Black/African-Americans (10.8%, $N$ = 18), Asians (7.2%, $N$ = 12), and Hispanic/Latin(x) (4.2%, N=7). All of the participants reported that they worked full-time in a supervisor role either outside (95.8%, $N$=159), from home (.6%, $N$=1), or a mix of working both from home and remote (2.4%, $N$=4). There was a broad range of industries represented in the sample including, manufacturing (13.9%, $N$=23), healthcare (11.4%, $N$=19), entertainment (3.6%, $N$=6), hospitality/service (6.6%, $N$=11), government (12.7%, $N$=21), education (10.8%, $N$=18), business (23.5%, $N$=39), and other (16.9%, $N$=28). The sample largely held 4-year degrees (51.8%, $N$=86) or more advanced degrees (25.6%, $N$=43). Participants supervised varying amounts of direct reports including, 1-4 reports (31.0%, $N$=51), 5-9 reports (31.9%, $N$=53), 10-14 reports (19.3%, $N$=32), and 15 or more reports (18.1%, $N$=30).

## Procedure

The current study collected data via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk; https://www.mturk.com/). Scholars have reported a significant increase in the frequency of crowdsourcing websites such as Mturk to recruit a sample for organizational research (Keith et al., 2017). According to Keith and colleagues (2017), more diverse and generalizable samples can be recruited on Mturk in an efficient manner. Additionally, factors such as dishonesty and inattention have generally not been found to be an issue with proper precautions (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016; Keith et al., 2017). The current study used Amazon's Mechanical Turk to recruit supervisors in organizations across the U.S. who had experience in employing PM measures and responsibilities. Data were collected at two time points approximately one week apart to avoid effects of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff; 2003).

At time 1, supervisors were asked to reflect on their attitudes and perceptions regarding the malleability of others' traits (IPT). They also completed a measure to detect the degree to which they were invested and committed to their PM systems in their organizations. At time 2,

one week following time 1, supervisors were asked to complete measures of their PM behaviors, focal and discretionary, as well as a measure involving demographic information and PM characteristics.

Participants were eligible to participate in the survey if they were, (a) 18 years of age; (b) a U.S. resident; (c) employed full-time as a supervisor in an organization, and (d) had a formal PM system in place at their organization. They were provided a formal definition of PM prior to answering whether or not a formal system was established in their workplace. Those who were eligible received $.50 through a unique link as a result of completing the first survey. 300 participants completed the first survey within one week. The same participants who completed the first questionnaire received a notification that they qualified for the follow-up survey one week after the launch of the first survey. Completion of the second survey resulted in an additional $.75 as an incentive to complete the follow-up, which was also approximately 2 minutes longer.

Research assessing the quality of Mturk data has suggested that attention check, or "quality control" items, should be included in these online surveys to mitigate the possibility of careless responding (Woo et al., 2015; Cheung et al., 2017). Following these guidelines, the current study utilized open end response checks at the end of each survey. In the first survey, we asked participants to describe the process of performance management at their company. In the second survey, we asked respondents to describe the culture and general feeling of performance management in their organization. Responses that did not match the question or were irregular in respect to the content of the question would be removed from the data set.

In total, our initial sample resulted in 265 participants who completed both sets of surveys at time 1 and time 2 for a response rate of 88%. However, in order to match participants from Time 1 to Time 2 on Mturk using WorkerID numbers, data must be embedded into the settings on the crowdsourcing platform prior to releasing the survey. The current study failed to complete this step and was forced to resort to matching IP addresses between the two surveys as an alternative. In efforts to preserve the integrity of the data, any cases that did not match by IP address were removed from the analyses. In total there were 492 unique IP addresses between the two timepoints. We were accurately able to match 173 cases by exact IP address. Additional cases were removed for failing to meet qualifying criteria or including nonsensical responses for

our two quality check items. Our final sample included 166 responses for a final response rate of 62.6%.

## Measures

*Demographics.* Individual characteristics including race, age, gender, level of education, position within their organization, number of direct reports, and industry type were all collected in order to assess any systematic differences in relation to constructs of interest and other potential confounds. Additionally, we asked participants if they a) have a PM system in place, b) are required to meet on a regular basis with their reports, and c) are required to conduct the appraisal session and fill out proper documentation. If participants replied "no" to any of the previous questions, they were disqualified from the study.

*Implicit Person Theory.* We assessed IPT using an 8-item *kind-of-person* scale developed by Levy & Dweck (1997). The scale featured 4-items that measure *incremental* beliefs, or those that indicate the degree to which an individual views others as changeable and dynamic, and 4-items that measure *entity* beliefs, or the degree to which one is primarily viewed as fixed. An example item from the incremental scale includes, "Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics." An example of an entity item includes, "Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that they can do to really change that." The scale had acceptable levels of reliability in the current study ($a=.95$). Participants rated each item on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) scale. Entity-based items were reverse-coded so that high scores overall represent an incremental IPT. Thus, it is measured as a singlue, unitary scale. This scale has also been tested for social desirability and showed evidence of discriminant validity by showing little to no relationship (Dweck et al., 1995).

*PM Commitment.* The scale assessing overall supervisor commitment included 3 subsections measuring: a) affective commitment – 5 items, b) normative commitment – 5-items, and c) continuance commitment – 4 items, on a 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 7 *(strongly agree)* scale. The scale was modified from a *commitment to change* scale developed by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) and was pilot-tested for reliability and validity in a sample of 182 supervisors via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. The pilot study consisted of managers who worked 35+ hours in a supervisory role, 58% identified as male and 76% identified as White. A three factor structure was identified during the pilot study and internal consistencies for each of the subscales

exceeded .84. The current research repeated validity and reliability analyses to find appropriate factor loadings revealing 3 distinguishable dimensions of commitment, and adequate internal consistencies for each subscale of affective ($a$=.96), normative ($a$=.91), and continuance ($a$=.81). Example items included, "I think performance management is a useful process," "It's my obligation to conduct performance management," and "I have too much at stake to resist performance management" for affective, normative, and continuance commitment, respectively.

     *PM Behaviors.* We measured behaviors contributing to PM using two separate measures for *focal* and *discretionary behaviors.* The scale assessing *focal* behaviors is a measure used primarily for analyzing 12 managerial behaviors during the appraisal interview on a 1 *(rarely or never)* to 5 *(very frequently or always)* scale, and was adapted from Dorfman et al., (1986). Additional items were added for better assessment of the required behaviors necessitated by most organizations in 2020. For example, we added items such as, "I completed the annual performance review paperwork" and removed items we thought were irrelevant or subjective for measuring in-role supervisor behaviors towards PM (i.e. "I was very supportive of the employee during the discussion"). Internal consistency in the current research was .82. An example item from the focal behavior scale includes "I discussed how the performance review would affect his/her pay."

     The scale assessing *discretionary* behaviors was the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (PMBQ) developed by Kinicki et al., (2013) to better analyze broader behavioral dimensions involved in a more general PM system. Sample items from the PMBQ include, a) "Participatively sets goals" for the goal setting subscale; b) "is approachable and available to talk with others" for the communication subscale; c) "gives honest feedback" for the feedback subscale; d) "links recognition and/or rewards to performance" for the providing consequences subscale; e) "checks work for accuracy and/or quality" for the establishing/monitoring performance expectations subscale; and f) "helps identify solutions to overcome performance roadblocks" for the coaching subscale. The PMBQ measures supervisor PM behaviors across these six dimensions on a 1 *(rarely or never)* to 5 *(very frequently or always)*. The current study revealed appropriate coefficient alphas for each subscale that fell between .74 and .86, for a final internal consistency of .93 for the entire scale.

     The current study used the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (PMBQ) developed by Kinicki and colleagues (2013). Their scale aimed to capture the broad set of PM

behaviors that managers contribute throughout their day to day roles as managers. Kinicki et al. (2013) provided strong evidence of construct, convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity with a large sample size. Our findings revealed an overall internal consistency of .93 across 26 items.

# RESULTS

## Descriptive Statistics

The main purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between managers' IPT and the degree to which this predicted supervisors behaviors in PM. Additionally, we were interested in whether or not this relationship could be explained by supervisors level of commitment to PM. To begin, the current study examined correlations between manager IPT, commitment to PM, PM behaviors, and potential confounding variables. The confounding variables we tested for include demographic variables of the manager themselves, industry type, and factors of their position within the organization, such as number of subordinates and supervisors. Demographic variables of the manager include race, gender, education, and age. Other potential control variables that we collected include number of colleagues at their level in the organization, the time since their last performance review, and their position in the organization.

Means and standard deviations for each of the potential confounding variables and independent and outcome variables can be found in Table 1. Looking at the correlation table in Table 1., there were several significant correlations between the potential confounds and our variables of interest. Female managers reported higher levels of affective PM commitment ($r = .17, p < .05$), normative PM commitment ($r = .19, p < .05$), focal PM behaviors ($r = .17, p < .05$), and discretionary PM behaviors ($r = .23, p < .05$). Higher levels of education had negative relationships with affective PM commitment ($r = -.16, p < .05$) and discretionary PM behaviors ($r = -.15, p < .05$). Age had positive relationships with continuous PM commitment ($r = .23, p < .01$), focal behaviors ($r = .33, p < .01$), and discretionary behaviors ($r = .23, p < .05$). Other demographic and potential confounding variables did not show any meaningful correlations with the hypothesized variables. Time since last PM review displayed marginally significant relationships with IPT ($r = -.13, p < .10$), affective PM commitment ($r = -.13, p < .10$). As a result of these correlations, manager gender, age, level of education, and time since last PM review were included as control variables in the regression analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Variables and Bivariate Correlations

| | M (SD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender | 0.45 (.50) | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Level of Education | 3.98 (1.07) | -07 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Age | 41.07 (11.21) | 11 | -07 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Industry | 5.70 (2.91) | -03 | 19* | 13 | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Position | 2.65 (.61) | 04 | 09 | 08 | 03 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Number of Subordinates | 2.24 (1.08) | -08 | -01 | 07 | -08 | 17* | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Number of Supervisors | 1.56 (.707) | 02 | -09 | -09 | -10 | -06 | 11 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Number of Colleagues | 2.07 (1.08) | 09 | -02 | 07 | 04 | -01 | 07 | 20* | — | | | | | | | |
| 9. Time Since Last PM Review | 2.44 (1.26) | 12 | 20* | 13 | 16 | 00 | -02 | 00 | 03 | — | | | | | | |
| 10. IPT | 4.03 (1.14) | -01 | -14 | 06 | -13 | 06 | 05 | 06 | 01 | -13 | (.95) | | | | | |
| 11. Affective PM | 5.64 (1.18) | 17* | -16* | 04 | -03 | 02 | -01 | -05 | 02 | -13 | 22** | (.96) | | | | |
| 12. Continuance PM commitment | 5.32 (1.29) | 06 | -04 | 23** | 03 | 05 | 07 | -07 | 01 | -07 | -10 | 21** | (.81) | | | |
| 13. Normative PM commitment | 5.55 (1.05) | 19* | -01 | 15 | 11 | 07 | -07 | -09 | 06 | -02 | 09 | 61** | 39** | (.91) | | |
| 14. Focal Behaviors | 4.19 (.61) | 17* | -15 | 33** | 02 | 02 | -04 | 04 | 12 | -11 | -05 | 27** | 34** | 48** | (.81) | |
| 15. Discretionary Behaviors | 4.25 (.46) | 23* | -13 | 26** | 06 | 03 | 05 | -02 | 12 | -05 | 05 | 33** | 29** | 49** | 74** | (.84) |

Note: N=168. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; Chronbach's alphas are presented on the diagonal in parantheses. Decimals on the correlations are omitted. Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female); Number of Subordinates (1=1-4, 2=5-9, 3=10-14, 4=15+); Number of Supervisors (1=1, 2=2-4, 3=5+); Number of Colleagues (1=1-4, 2=5-9, 3=10-14, 4=15+); Time Since Last PM Review (1=1-3, 2=4-6, 3=7-9, 4=10-12, 5=13+ months). ** p<.01, *=p<.05.

Among the focal variables of interest, we found significant relationships between IPT and AC ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), however no significant correlations between IPT and NC ($r = .09$, $p = .26$) or CC ($r = -.10$, $p = .20$), although trending in the hypothesized direction. All mediation variables significantly related to both, focal and discretionary behaviors. Specifically, AC positively correlated with focal behaviors ($r = .27$, $p < .01$) and discretionary behaviors ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). CC demonstrated positive relationships with focal ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) and discretionary behaviors ($r = .29$, $p < .01$). NC demonstrated the strongest relationships with focal ($r = .49$, $p < .01$) and discretionary ($r = .49$, $p < .01$). The relationships between both, AC and NC are as strong or slightly stronger with discretionary behaviors than focal behaviors. It is also interesting to note that IPT was significantly related to AC, but not the other mediators.

**Hypothesized Model**

Although supervisor IPT did not significantly predict either of the outcome variables in our hierarchical regression analyses, it did significantly predict affective commitment to PM, and was trending towards predicting continuance commitment in the negative direction. Therefore, we decided to continue to test our mediation of IPT on focal and discretionary behavior via PM commitment. The current study hypothesized that supervisor incrementalism, or those who score higher on the IPT measure, would positively predict affective commitment to PM, which in turn would lead to significant, positive relationships with both focal and discretionary behaviors. Alternatively, supervisors who held entity beliefs, lower IPT, would be negatively associated with continuance commitment to PM, which would then lead to a significant positive association with only focal behaviors and not discretionary behaviors. As an exploratory hypothesis, the current study proposed that supervisors with incremental beliefs, higher IPT, would elicit a significant, positive relationship with normative PM commitment and result in a significant positive correlation with both outcome variables.

In order to test these proposed models, we used Hayes' (2012) PROCESS Macro Version 3 (Model 4). We ran a parallel mediation model via AC and CC for each of the dependent variables, focal and discretionary behaviors, and generated bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals for 10,000 samples. Additionally, we ran two simple mediation models with NC as a mediator for both, focal and discretionary behaviors. See Table 2 for those results. Regarding the parallel mediation model for IPT, we found a significant indirect effect on focal

behaviors through affective commitment (.03, 95% CI [.01, .05]) while controlling for age and gender, however not through continuance commitment (-.01, 95% CI [-.04, .01]); see Figure 2. Higher IPT, incremental beliefs, led to higher amounts of affective forms of commitment, which in turn, led to more focal behaviors in the PM process. For discretionary behaviors, we ran the same model using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS Macro (Model 4). We found a significant indirect effect of incremental beliefs on discretionary behaviors through affective (.02, 95% CI [.01, .05]), however not via continuance commitment (-.01, 95% CI [-.03, .00]); see Figure 3. Our exploratory analysis regarding normative commitment as a mediator revealed that IPT did not reveal a significant indirect relationship on focal (.02, 95% CI [-.02, .06]), nor discretionary behaviors (.02, 95% CI [-.01, .04]).

<p style="text-align:center">Table 2. Parallel Multiple Mediation Model</p>

| Antecedent | | $M_1$ (Affective Commitment) | | | | $M_2$ (Continuance Commitment) | | | | $Y_1$ (Focal Behavior) | | | | $Y_2$ (Discretionary Behavior) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Coeff. | SE | p | | Coeff. | SE | p | | Coeff. | SE | p | | Coeff. | SE | p |
| X (IPT) | $a_1$ | .23 | .08 | .01 | $a_2$ | -.13 | .09 | .15 | $c'$ | -.05 | .04 | .21 | $c'$ | .00 | .03 | .99 |
| $M_1$ (Affective Commitment) | | | | | | | | | $b_1$ | .11 | .04 | .01 | $b_3$ | .10 | .03 | .00 |
| $M_2$ (Continuance Commitment) | | | | | | | | | $b_2$ | .10 | .03 | .01 | $b_4$ | .07 | .03 | .02 |
| Constant | $iM_1$ | 4.52 | .45 | .00 | $iM_2$ | 4.72 | .50 | .00 | $i_y$ | 2.57 | .30 | .00 | $i_y$ | 2.94 | .23 | .00 |

<table>
<tr><td>$R^2 = .08$</td><td>$R^2 = .06$</td><td>$R^2 = .24$</td><td>$R^2 = .23$</td></tr>
<tr><td>$F(3,162) = 4.72, p = .00$</td><td>$F(3,162) = 3.71, p = .01$</td><td>$F(5,160) = 10.21, p = .00$</td><td>$F(5,160) = 9.28, p = .00$</td></tr>
</table>

*Note: N=166. Standardized regression coefficients are reported. a1=path from IPT to Affective Commitment. a2=path from IPT to Continuance Commitment. c'=direct path from IPT to each of the outcome variables (Focal and Discretionary behavior). b1=path from Affect commitment to Focal behavior. b2=path from Continuance Commitment to Focal behavior. b3=path from Affective Commitment to Discretionary behavior. b4=path from Continuance commitment to Discretionary behavior. iM1=coefficient of the constant for Affective Commitment. iM2=coefficient of the constant for Continuance Commitment. iy=coefficient predicting Focal behavior. iy=coefficient for Discretionary behavior.*
*\*\*= p<.01, \*=p<.05, †=p<.10*

Indirect effect = .03; 95% CI: [.01, .05]
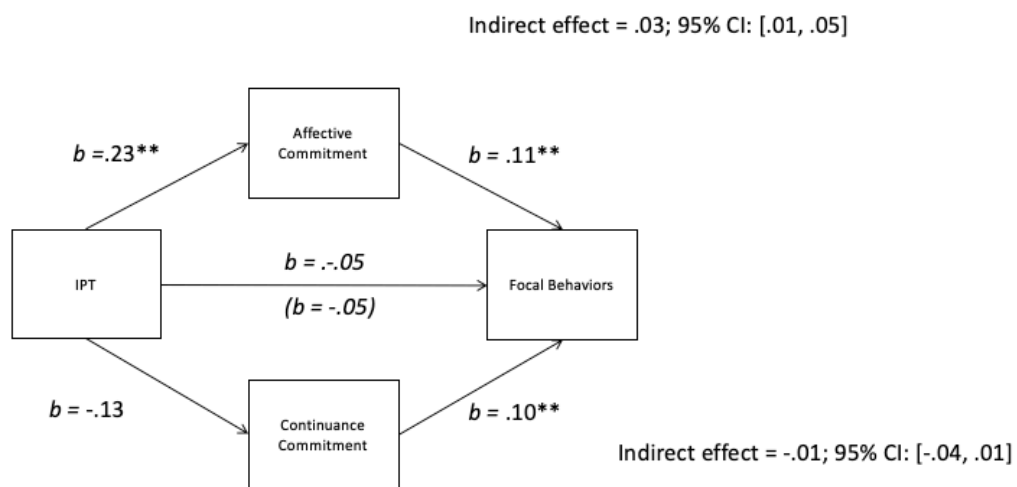


Figure 3. Parallel Mediation for Focal Behaviors

Mediational model testing the indirect effect of IPT on focal PM behaviors through PM commitment while controlling for age and gender. The total effect of IPT on focal behaviors is shown in parenthesis, and the direct effect (i.e. effect of IPT while controlling for PM commitment) is shown without parentheses.

b = the unstandardized regression coefficient. * = P < .05, ** = P < .01.

Indirect effect = .02; 95% CI: [.01, .05]

b =.23**

b = .10**

b = .00

(b = .02)

b = -.13

b = .07*

Indirect effect = -.01; 95% CI: [-.03, .00]

Affective Commitment

IPT

Discretionary Behaviors

Continuance Commitment

Figure 4.  Parallel Mediation for Discretionary behaviors

Mediational model testing the indirect effect of IPT on discretionary PM behaviors through PM commitment while controlling for gender and age. The total effect of IPT on discretionary behaviors is shown in parenthesis, and the direct effect (i.e. effect of IPT while controlling for PM commitment) is shown without parentheses.

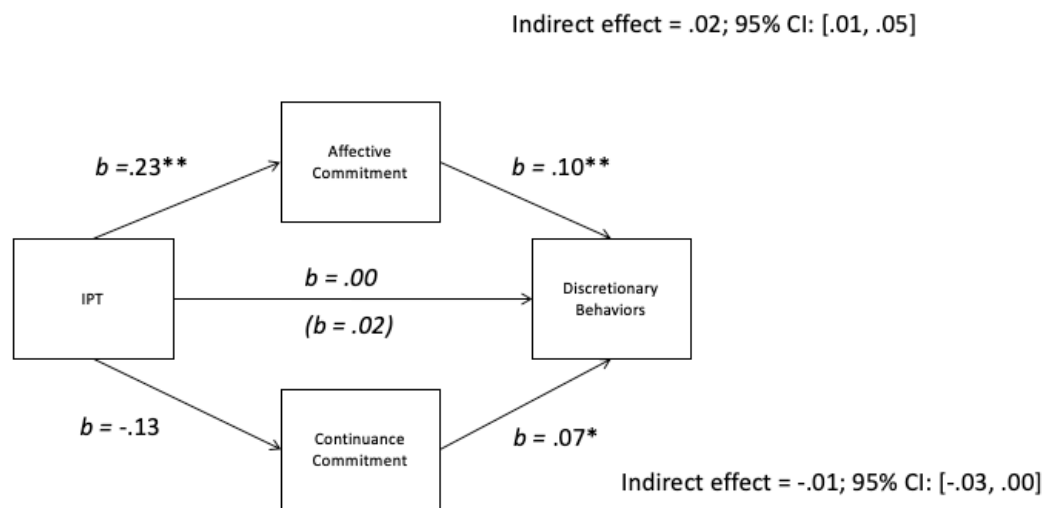b = the unstandardized regression coefficient. † =P < .10, * = P < .05, ** = P < .0

# DISCUSSION

For decades, researchers have debated the merits of performance management (Schleicher et al., 2018), particularly performance ratings (Landy & Farr, 1980). Recently, researchers have attempted to better understand the shortcomings of PM (Levy et al., 2017; Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). In one of the most comprehensive reviews of PM effectiveness to date, Schleicher and colleagues (2018) established a framework for future PM research in which they call for additional research to examine key informal and formal PM processes with a focus on manager responsibility. In their review, formal processes include specific tasks that follow from the outline of the organization's PM strategy, such as performance review meetings and administrative responsibilities (i.e. documenting the evaluation). Whereas, the informal processes include facets of PM that emerge over time and are not explicit in the outline of the PM strategy, like, informal feedback and PM climate. The distinctions of these processes laid out in this framework align with the definitions of *focal* and *discretionary* behaviors of the current research. Practitioners and scholars both agree that change is needed in order to make PM systems more effective. For example, in 2016 and 2017, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology listed PM in the top 10 workplace trends in subsequent years (SIOP, 2016). Schleicher and colleagues (2018) suggest that examining rater's, or supervisor's, ability to adequately implement formal and informal PM tasks is a relatively unexplored and crucial area of PM. As several scholars have outlined, the informal behaviors enacted by supervisors towards PM efforts are the most important aspects of the overall process (Levy et al., 2017; Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011).

This is in line with the previous work that examines individual differences in manager proclivities to coach certain employees (Heslin et al., 2006). Behaviors, such as coaching, that go above and beyond the administrative components of PM are of particular interest in improving PM effectiveness (Schleicher et al., 2018). The present study extends the body of the literature by exploring how commitment to performance management mediates the relationship between supervisors' IPT and supervisors' self-report of their informal and formal behaviors.

## Contributions

Heslin and VandeWalle (2005) first introduced IPT as a construct to explore in the I-O literature. They were concerned with how well supervisors IPT predicted acknowledgement of changes in employee performance and whether or not IPT could be manipulated. Across a series of studies, they were able to find that more incremental theorists were able to more accurately assess changes in performance (Heslin et al., 2005) and perceive employees as coachable (Heslin et al., 2006). However, in a multi-level model, Gregory and Levy (2011) were not able to find that supervisor IPT predicted the perceived quality of the employee coaching relationship. The researchers explained that this could be due to supervisors inflating their ratings of IPT to give an illusion of being a more incremental theorist, or believe that people generally can change but do not manifest that belief in their employees. Due to previous mixed findings and limited PM outcomes examined, the current study sought to better understand this relationship.

We failed to find a direct relationship between IPT and either of our dependent variables, focal PM behaviors ($r = -.05$) and discretionary PM behaviors ($r = .05$). We suspect this may be due to the self-rated nature of the PM behaviors where supervisors could be inflating their ratings of behaviors to appear more active in PM despite their beliefs about whether or not people can change. Item means and standard deviations for IPT were slightly higher than previous studies (Heslin et al., 2006; Gregory & Levy, 2011), however PM behaviors had relatively low base rates and variance compared to previous studies (Dorfman et al., 1986; Kinicki et al., 2013). The low variability across both outcome measures could contribute to a smaller relationship between IPT and PM behaviors (Furr, 2017). Despite failing to find a direct relationship between IPT and each outcome variable, such that the more incremental belief leads to increased focal and discretionary PM behaviors, there was a significant relationship between IPT and PM commitment. Specifically, the more incremental supervisors were in their beliefs, the more likely they were to be affectively committed to PM.

Previous commitment literature has found important relationships between commitment to various targets and behavioral consequences that include decreased likelihood to turnover (Angle & Perry, 1981; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), absenteeism (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and increased organizational value congruence (Somers, 2010), job satisfaction (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Meyer & Allen, 1993), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Commitment has also been used as an explanatory mechanism in a variety of supervisor

antecedent-outcome relationships such as, transformational leadership and organizational performance (Saleh, Nusari, Habtoor, and Isaac, 2018), leadership behavior and job satisfaction (Yousef, 2000), and job insecurity and counterproductive workplace behavior (Tian, Zhang, and Zou, 2014). The current study employed the theory put forth by Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) to understand PM behaviors as either focal, those that are completed to meet the minimum level of compliance for continuation of the target of commitment, or discretionary, those that exceed the expectations of the target. In line with their propositions and previous research (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Gellatly et al., 2006), the current study found that affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between supervisor IPT and both, focal and discretionary PM behaviors. However, continuance commitment did not mediate the relationship between IPT and focal or discretionary PM behaviors. In our exploratory hypothesis of normative commitment, the current study found that normative commitment to PM strongly predicted discretionary and focal behaviors above and beyond IPT and control variables however, did not mediate the relationship between IPT and PM behaviors. This is likely due to the evidence showing affective commitment predicts a broader set of behaviors, while normative and continuance commitment only predict specific, well-defined behaviors of the target of commitment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Although normative commitment had a stronger effect on PM behaviors than affective and continuance commitment, IPT did not significantly predict normative commitment above and beyond IPT and covariates. This in turn, weakened the indirect effect.

Extending the work of Wang and Williams (2016), the current study contributes by refining and replicating a previously developed measure of PM commitment. A new scale to capture how PM can be a specific target of commitment is useful because it allows researchers to measure the degree to which one, a) recognizes the inherent value of PM (affective commitment), b) understands the costs associated with not enacting PM behaviors (continuance commitment), or c) understands the obligation as a manager to contribute to PM (normative commitment). This contributes to the understanding and legitimizes the notion that one can "buy in to PM" (Wang & Williams, 2016).

The PM commitment measure employed in the current study was conceptualized in congruence with the three-component commitment model (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This model is the most widely used model in the commitment literature, containing affective, normative, and continuance mindsets (Becker et al., 2009). Phrasing adjustments were made to several items

within the revised PM commitment scale to better encompass each respective mindset with greater clarity. For example, the previous scale developed by Wang and Williams (2016) used an affective commitment to PM item – "As a manager, performance management is a useful tool for me." Whereas, the item was slightly modified in the current study to read – "I think performance management is a useful process." We also chose to remove reverse-scored items to improve factor structure and reliability from the previous version to maximize clarity. In the current study, the Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed a 3-factor, correlated structure. Correlations between the three dimensions were strongest for AC and NC ($r$=.61) and weakest for AC and CC ($r$=.21). This aligns with the correlated, yet distinct facets discovered by the organizational commitment model (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and commitment to change model (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). The current study extended previous notions and understanding of commitment by applying it to a new area within I-O psychology research, PM, and by understanding its mediating effects between perception and behavior.

The current study adds to the commitment literature overall by generalizing this construct to the PM context and understanding how it functions as an explanatory variable between supervisor perceptions of others and behavior. It provides the linkage that "buying in" (Drawbaugh et al., 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015) or committing to PM can be improved with a growth mindset and ultimately lead to broader, everyday PM behaviors.

## Future Directions

Heslin et al.'s (2006) intervention of priming an Incremental mindset to increase supervisor helping behaviors appeared to be successful over a short period of time. In our study, affective commitment to PM was the key variable in predicting increased discretionary behavior, such as coaching among others. Future studies should test whether or not inducing Incrementalism can be effective for increasing commitment level to the target of PM overall. This would indicate evidence for more specific attitudinal change (i.e. commitment) above and beyond general beliefs about others (i.e. IPT). It could also be the case that the link between IPT and PM commitment may be conditional based on factors like, organizational support for PM, or by the LMX relationship with specific employees. Future research should explore whether or not inducing IPT has a secondary effect on PM commitment and *when* this intervention may be most or least effective.

Employees often have different perspectives than their supervisors when it comes to assessing leadership behaviors (Taylor et al., 2008). Although supervisors and leaders have a great deal of insight into their own actions and behaviors throughout daily interactions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), it would be important for future research to rate the managers' behaviors from the employee's perspective. Supervisor-employee relationships also differ over time in organizations (e.g. Bauer & Green, 1996) and are especially important when considering components of the relationship like trust and LMX (Levy & Williams, 2004). Future research should incorporate looking at this relationship among employee dyads in organizations.

Considering the wide variety of PM systems discussed by practitioners today (e.g. Ford & Hunt, 2018), it would be beneficial to examine how PM context may serve as a moderator of commitment and behavior. Several distal PM inputs have been explored, and recently combined into a single conceptual framework to put forth an outline for new research directions. The inputs are divided into subcategories including, industry and organizational structure, global context, organizational climate, resources, and PM strategy and purpose (Schleicher et al., 2018). The context of the PM system is especially important when considering employee and supervisor reactions and dynamics (Levy & Williams, 2004). One specific area that would be interesting to pursue further would be the interaction of PM commitment and feedback environment (London & Smither, 2002). Because the overall feedback environment (i.e. frequency, source credibility, etc.) impacts organizational commitment and OCB's (Peng & Chiu, 2010), it may also be that the supervisor feedback environment interacts with supervisor PM commitment to strengthen overall PM behaviors.

## Limitations

The current study obtained ratings of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors all via self-report scales because it was not feasible for the study to obtain ratings from supervisor-subordinate dyads. Although, some of the variance accounted for between measures may be attributable from common method, common source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), the relationship is likely not due entirely to the effect of measurement from the same source. If common method bias was a serious concern, then we would have seen stronger correlations from theoretically distinct measurements (AC & CC). We attempted to remedy this possibility by collecting the predictor measures one week prior to collecting ratings of behavior and demographic information. This

should have reduced demand effects and attempts to match responses between the predictor and outcome variables.

Another design limitation that should be addressed is the possibility of self-serving bias or social desirability could have played a role in supervisor responses. Because there is societal pressure and possibly organizational pressure to express strong managerial skills in terms of providing feedback and coaching employees, supervisors in the current study could respond in a way to appear stronger in their own ability to do so. However, because we assured anonymity of responses and their results would not be tied to their organizations, there is not a lot of motivation for this to occur. Employee-rated supervisor behaviors would help mitigate this risk.

One other limitation of the current study that should be addressed is the correlational nature of this research. Although we temporally separated the predictors and outcomes, there was not an experimental manipulation. Therefore, we cannot infer the causal relationships between IPT, PM commitment and PM behaviors. It is possible for example, that another variable could be influencing PM commitment as opposed to PM commitment.

**CONCLUSION**

The present study suggests that supervisors' IPT influences the degree to which managers internalize the value of performance management, and in turn, enact specific behaviors that contribute towards the goals of PM. Our study contributes to the body of literature by providing a correlational evidence that PM can be a target of commitment and plays a mediating role in the relationship between supervisors' IPT and PM behaviors. This study establishes a stronger theoretical basis for understanding the attitudinal influences on critical managerial behaviors to develop and enhance employee performance.

# APPENDIX A. SURVEYS

## Implicit Person Theory
*Levy & Dweck (1997)*

Scale to be completed using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) rating

<u>Entity Items</u>

1. As much as I hate to admit it, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. People can't really change their deepest attributes.
2. Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that they can do to really change that.
3. The kind of person someone is, is something basic about them, and it can't be changed very much.
4. People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can't really be changed.

<u>Incremental</u>

1. Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.
2. People can substantially change the kind of person they are.
3. No matter what kind of a person someone is, they can always change very much.
4. People can change even their most basic qualities.

**Commitment to PM**

*Adapted from Herscovitch & Meyer (2002)*

Scale to be completed using a 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) rating

Affective

1. I believe in the value of performance management.
2. Performance management is beneficial to this organization.
3. I think performance management is a useful process.
4. Performance management serves an important purpose in my organization.
5. Performance management is necessary.

Normative

1. I feel a sense of duty to conduct performance management.
2. I would feel badly if I did not engage in the performance management activities.
3. It's my obligation to conduct performance management.
4. It would be irresponsible of me to resist performance management.
5. I do not think it would be right of me to oppose performance management.

Continuance

1. I have no choice but to engage in performance management.
2. I have too much at stake to resist performance management.
3. It would be too costly for me to not comply with performance management.
4. Ignoring performance management is not a viable option for me.

**Supervisor Behaviors (Discretionary)**

*Kinicki et al. (2013)*

Scale to be completed using a 1 (rarely or never) to 5 (very frequently or always) rating

Process of goal setting

1. Ensure that performance goals are linked to the strategic or operational goals of the company

2. Participatively sets goals

3. Assist in setting specific and measurable performance objectives

4. Assist in developing action plans that support performance goals

5. Encourage setting challenging, yet attainable goals

Communication

6. Communicate in a way that encourages discussion

7. Use active listening skills

8. Make yourself approachable and available to talk with others

Feedback

10. Give timely feedback about their performance

11. Give specific feedback about what is good and bad about performance

12. Assist in their career planning

13. Give honest feedback

14. Explain how someone's behavior affects him/her and the work group when providing feedback

15. Provide more positive than negative feedback

<u>Coaching</u>

15. Guide employees on how to complete difficult assignments and tasks

16. Provide the resources needed to get the job done

17. Help identify solutions to overcome performance roadblocks

18. Help people to develop their skills

19. Provide direction when it is needed


<u>Providing consequences</u>

20. Give special recognition for exceptional performance

21. Reward good performance

22. Link recognition and/or rewards to performance


<u>Establishing/monitoring performance expectations</u>

23. Check work for accuracy and/or quality

24. Keep employees informed about changes, deadlines, or problems

25. Communicate expectations relating to quality

26. Prioritizes tasks and goals

**Supervisor Behaviors (Focal)**

*Dorfman et al. (1986)*

Scale to be completed using a 1 (rarely or never) to 5 (very frequently or always) rating

1. I presented the positive qualities of the employee's performance very clearly.

2. I presented the negative qualities of the employee's performance very clearly.

3. I discussed with the employee the reasons for the employee's performance evaluation.

4. We discussed ways in which the employee could improve his/her performance.

5. We discussed how the performance review might affect future promotional opportunities and advancement.

*Additional items for focal behaviors:*

6. I Completed the annual performance review meeting on time.

7. I Completed the annual performance review paperwork.

**Demographics**

1. What best describes your current employment status?
   a. I work full-time outside of the home.
   b. I work part-time outside of the home.
   c. I work full-time at the home.
   d. I work part-time at the home.
   e. I am a stay-at-home parent.
   f. I work part-time at home and part-time outside of the home.
   g. I am not employed but I am looking.
   h. I am not employed and I am not looking.
   i. Other (please explain)

2. Which of the following categories best describes the industry that which your job falls within?
   a. Manufacturing
   b. Healthcare
   c. Entertainment
   d. Hospitality/Service
   e. Agriculture
   f. Government
   g. Education
   h. Business
   i. Other

3. What is the highest level of education?
   a. Less than high school.
   b. High School Degree/GED
   c. 2-year College Education
   d. 4-year College Education
   e. Master's Degree
   f. Doctorate Degree

g. Professional Degree

4. If you work for an organization of any kind, please describe your position in that organization:

   a. How many people do you regularly supervise (i.e., how many people in your organization would consider you one of their supervisors, managers, or bosses)?

   b. How many people directly supervise you (i.e., are there one or more people you consider a supervisor, manager, or boss)?

   c. How many people do you interact with regularly for work who you would consider colleagues at generally the same status or position in the organization as you?

5. What gender do you identify with?

   a. Male

   b. Female

   c. Other

6. What is your race/ethnicity?

   a. White or Caucasian

   b. Black or African-American

   c. American Indian or Alaska Native

   d. Asian

   e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

   f. Hispanic or Latino/a

   g. Biracial or Multiracial

   h. Other

7. Is English your primary language?

   a. Yes

   b. No

8. What is your country of residence?

9. What state do you reside in?

10. What is your age?

   a. <18 years old

   b. 18-25 years old

   c. 26-33 years old

d. 34-41 years old

e. >42 years old

11. Is there a performance management system in place within your company?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. I'm not sure

12. On what basis do you formally meet with your direct reports?

    a. Once a week

    b. Once a month

    c. Twice a year

    d. Once a year

    e. Never

13. Are you required by your performance management system to conduct a performance review session?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. Yes, but we do not assign ratings to employees.

    d. Not Applicable

14. Is there paperwork you must fill out in order to complete performance reviews for your employees?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. Not Applicable

# APPENDIX B. ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Table 3.  Hierarchical Regression Predicting PM Commitment

| Variable | Affective PM Commitment | | Continuous PM Commitment | | Normative PM Commitment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 1 | Model 2 |
| Constant | 6.15** | 5.25** | 4.38** | 5.05** | 4.90** | 4.56** |
| Gender | .18* | .19* | .06 | .05 | .20* | .20* |
| Age | .02 | .01 | .23** | .24** | .13† | .12 |
| Level of Education | -.11 | -.09 | .01 | .00 | .04 | .05 |
| Last PM Review | -.13 | -.10 | -.11 | -.12 | -.08 | -.07 |
| IPT | | .19* | | -.13† | | .08 |
| $R^2$ | .07* | .10* | .06* | .08* | .06* | .07 |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .04* | | .02† | | .01 |

Note: N=166. Standardized regression coefficients are reported.
**= p<.01,*=p<.05,†=p<.10

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Predicting PM Behaviors from Affective Commitment

| Variable | Focal Behaviors | | | Discretionary Behaviors | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Constant | 3.76** | 4.00** | 3.33** | 3.97** | 3.95** | 3.35** |
| Gender | .16* | .16* | .12 | .20** | .20** | .15* |
| Age | .31** | .32** | .32** | .25** | .24** | .24** |
| Level of Education | -.08 | -.08 | -.07 | -.09 | -.08 | -.06 |
| Last PM Review | -.15* | -.16* | -.13† | -.08 | -.08 | .05 |
| IPT | | -.10 | -.15* | | .01 | -.04 |
| Affective Commitment | | | .25** | | | .29** |
| $R^2$ | .16** | .17** | .22** | .13** | .13** | .20** |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .01 | .06** | | .00 | .08** |

Note: N=166. Standardized regression coefficients are reported.
**= p<.01, *=p<.05, †=p<.10.

Table 5.  Hierarchical Regression Predicting PM Behaviors from Normative Commitment

| Variable | Focal Behaviors | | | Discretionary Behaviors | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Constant | 3.76** | 4.00** | 2.86** | 3.97** | 3.95** | 3.07** |
| Gender | .16* | .16* | .06 | .20** | .20** | .11† |
| Age | .31** | .33** | .27** | .25** | .24** | .19** |
| Level of Education | -.08 | -.09 | -.11† | -.09 | -.09 | -.11 |
| Last PM Review | -.15* | -.16* | -.13* | -.08 | -.08 | -.05 |
| IPT | | -.11 | -.14* | | .01 | -.02 |
| Normative Commitment | | | .45** | | | .44** |
| $R^2$ | .16** | .17** | .35** | .13** | .13** | .31** |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .01 | .19** | | .00 | .18** |

*Note: Note: N=166, Standardized regression coefficients are reported.  \*\*= p<.01, \*=p<.05, †=p<.10.*

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Table 6.  Hierarchical Regression Predicting PM Behaviors from Continuance Commitment

| Variable | Focal Behaviors | | | Discretionary Behaviors | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Constant | 3.76** | 4.00** | 3.40 | 3.98** | 3.95 | 3.53** |
| Gender | .16* | .16* | .15* | .20** | .20** | .19** |
| Age | .31** | .32** | .26** | .25** | .24** | .17* |
| Level of Education | -.08 | -.09 | -.09 | -.09 | -09 | -.08 |
| Last PM Review | -.15* | -.16* | -.13† | -.08 | -.08 | -.05 |
| IPT | | -.10 | -.07 | | .01 | .04 |
| Continuance Commitment | | | .26** | | | .24** |
| $R^2$ | .16** | .17** | .23** | .13** | .13** | .18** |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .01 | .06** | | .00 | .05** |

*Note: N=168. Standardized regression coefficients are reported*
***= p<.01, *=p<.05, †=p<.10.*

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