

# **THE EFFECTS OF OCB ON WORK GROUP CONFLICT**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined how Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) climate affected levels of task and relationship conflict within work groups. Moderating effects were provided by the attributions the participants gave to the OCB activity. Participants were 141 employees of various fast-food restaurants in a western Canadian city. Each participant completed a questionnaire assessing OCB climate in the workgroup, to what they attributed the OCB, and the levels of conflict present in the work group. As predicted, OCB climate does affect levels of relationship and task conflict although, surprisingly in the same direction. The results of this study suggest that there is a correlation between OCB climate and conflict in workgroups.

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## **Introduction**

As work groups become more prevalent in the workforce of the twenty-first century, researchers and managers devote their attention to the design of the effective unit. Intragroup conflict is an inevitable result of the use of work groups. Conflict in its proper form can have positive effects such as increased decision quality. When work groups sort out differences of opinion and ideas, decision making improves. The conflict helps tweak strategies and augment collaborations. Conflict can also improve understanding and commitment in work groups. Understanding is increased through the dialogue around problems solved and commitment is enhanced due to the trust and value consensus that results from conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

Unfortunately, decision quality can also be a casualty of conflict due to the distraction and resultant reduction in cognitive efficiency that conflict brings. In addition, the conflict can result in work group member disengagement from the decision making process. If the conflict is of the form that creates discord amongst co-workers it could preclude any feelings of accomplishment. All of this can result in the loss of member satisfaction and a decline in performance of the firm (Amason, Hochwater, Thompson, & Harrison, 1995).

Due to the diverse and sometimes confusing effects of conflict, it needs to be better understood so that an optimal work environment can be achieved. Conflict between individuals in the workplace occurs for many reasons. Disagreement over job responsibility or unrelated topics; such as discrimination and lack of courtesy, are but a few causes of conflict. Yet supervisors and employees alike should seek to cultivate the

forms of conflict that enhance the quality of decisions and productivity, while monitoring and mastering those which disrupt performance.

Conflict has been widely studied as a predictor for performance. It has been both an enhancer and detractor for performance. Therefore, it is important to examine antecedents that may influence positive conflict and decrease negative conflict. Yet, few studies have examined potential antecedents of conflict.

At the same time, there have been more than two hundred papers published on the topic of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), most in the past eight years (Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004). The majority of these studies have to do with antecedents to an employee's OCB. The consequences of it have not been well examined. While OCB constructs are of great interest in organizational behavior research, there exist no studies testing this construct as a possible predictor for conflict. Management tends to focus on both OCB and conflict as predictors of performance. The practice of OCB in the workplace can create an OCB climate that is perceptible by work group members. These perceptions are developed on a day-to-day basis. Employees observe what happens to and around them, draw conclusions, and act accordingly. Their perceptions, therefore, provide work group members with direction on how they should act based on the behavior they value. So, these perceptions become a major factor in creating a climate (Tepper et al., 2004).

Witnessing or being the recipient of an act of OCB gives a co-worker the idea that OCB is practiced at the firm and perhaps even that it is a norm that is expected. It would increase trust levels between co-workers. Perceived "just" treatment by management or rewarding OCB could be a factors in the creation of climate as well. This notion could

precede a reciprocal act of support that would reinforce the strength of the OCB climate (Tjosvold, Ding, Hui, & Hu, 2003) and impact the levels and types of conflict employed by group members. I will examine the possibility that conflict, as my criterion variable, can be affected by unit level OCB. The effect of OCB climate on conflict, because of its subsequent impact on team performance, is the reason for this study. How organizational citizenship climate affects levels of task and relationship conflict will be determined. I will also examine the moderating effects of co-workers' attributions for OCB on this relationship.

### *Theoretical Background*

#### *Conflict*

Considerable research has been done on conflict reflecting its importance as an organizational behavior construct. Conflict is a multi-faceted construct with both positive and negative implications in the workplace. I will discuss both dimensions of conflict and explain their contrasting effects.

There is general agreement regarding the two forms that conflict can take. Task conflict, also known as cognitive, or C-type conflict, is disagreement among team members focusing on substantive, issue-related differences of opinion that tend to enhance team effectiveness (Amason et al., 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). It is a natural part of the teamwork process because it makes team decision making more effective. Task conflict challenges ineffective decisions and develops more adequate approaches to problems by bringing diverse perspectives together to increase understanding (Tjosvold et al., 2003; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). When teammates challenge a thinker to justify



opinion, change perspective, or examine underlying assumptions behind an idea, task conflict improves the decision making process. Not only does it build understanding and commitment to team goals and decisions, it promotes acceptance of those decisions due to the fact that open communication and the integration of the group's various skills facilitate agreement among group members (Amason et al., 1995). Thus, team members are "buying into" better decisions that are destined to be more effectively implemented due to the enhanced commitment. Parties are challenged to push further into the process due to the synergies created by this interaction. These synergies promote challenges to standing assumptions and a synthesis of ideas. Jehn and Mannix (2001) found that a difference of opinion, especially on complex tasks is beneficial to group performance. The results of their study showed there were significant differences in task conflict between high and low performers. Jehn and Chatman (2000) found, in their study of Chinese work groups, that avoiding task conflict was generally ineffective for promoting successful teamwork and that "positive approaches to conflict contribute to employee performance".

Relationship conflict, also known as affective, or A-type conflict, is disagreements and incompatibilities among group members about personal issues that are not task related, such as social events, gossip, or world events. It is characterized by hostility, distrust, cynicism, and indifference and thus obstructs open communication and integration. These negative affectations impact communication patterns among group members, diminishing both the amount and the quality of idea sharing (Amason et al., 1995). In fact, these emotions could cause teammates to ignore each other completely, breaking a possibly productive link within the unit (Amason et al., 1995). When

relationship conflict appears, not only does the quality of solutions decline, but so does cohesiveness and empathy. This is due to the fact that group members no longer see themselves as part of the team because disgruntled members disassociate themselves from the team's actions (Amason et al., 1995). Employees in this situation are less likely to commit to decisions made without their participation. Additionally, after having been burned by relationship conflict, these members are unlikely to participate in future group tasks (Amason et al., 1995). Performance is affected by disrupted coordination between members (Tjosvold et al., 2003) and team members suffer inhibited cognitive functioning due to the distraction of the conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Jehn and Mannix (2001) had results that showed high performers have low, steady levels of relationship conflict in the early and middle blocks of their complex task completion with slightly rising levels at the end. At their peak, however, the relationship conflict levels of the high performers never reach those of low performing groups.

### ***Organizational Citizenship Climate***

This study will predict a causal relationship between OCB climate and conflict. OCB is a range of extra-role activities performed by individuals. It is behaviour not accounted for in the formal, contractual, in-role expectations that make up a job description (Organ, 1988). It is over and above that which is contractually agreed upon. OCB could be likened to "going the extra mile" as it refers to what the employee chooses to do to aid organizational functioning and efficiency. Examples could be offering your coffee-maker for co-workers to use, volunteering to organize the retirement party, or working through lunch. It is an employee's discretionary behavior and includes altruistic

behaviors such as helping a fellow worker on an organizationally relevant task, and behaviors related to conscientiousness, such as performing more than the minimum required duties, working late or taking on extra responsibility. For effective organizational functioning, extra-role spontaneity and innovation are essential. Studies done by Podsakoff, Ahearne, and MacKenzie, (1997) showed that OCB accounted for 19% of performance quantity, over 18% of the variance in performance quality, about 25% of the variance in financial efficiency indicators (operating efficiency), and about 38% of the variance in customer service indicators (customer satisfaction, customer complaints). These gains result from OCB enhancing co-worker or managerial productivity or increasing the organization's ability to attract and retain superior employees. It could also result from the organization being better able to react to environmental changes (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

OCB makes organizations more attractive places to work for one's co-workers. It was suggested by Katz (1964) that a worker's willingness to cooperate and assist other employees is indispensable and he wrote of the importance of *esprit de corps* and loyalty as contributions to the strength of the organization. This reinforces the significance of OCB as a climate factor conducive to performance.

Climate can be defined as the meanings that people give to features of the environment which serve as the frame of reference for guiding appropriate and adaptive task behaviors. When measured at the individual level it is known as psychological climate. When individuals agree upon their perceptions of the environment they share, a unit level climate can emerge (Richardson & Vandenberg, 2005). If it is normal for organization environments to support the individual beyond contractual obligations and

for the individual to reciprocate or for co-workers to mutually perform OCB for each other's sake, a climate of OCB should develop.

An OCB climate can facilitate a positive expectation of others which is an integral component of trust. Work group members learn to depend on each other and feel less vulnerable doing so. Their feeling that there is risk involved with OCB is reduced and that leads to the development of OCB norms and therefore a climate conducive to supportive behavior. More supportive behavior brings greater levels of trust and the climate is strengthened. The fact that OCB directed at the individual or the organization can be raised to create a unit level climate makes OCB a relevant predictor in this study. That is, if there exists an environment where individuals are supportive toward other members and the organization it may preempt the occurrence of personal friction between work group members. This should theoretically decrease levels of relationship conflict. An OCB climate should also increase task conflict levels due to the resultant development of trust between colleagues and the value consensus that may accompany it.

OCB can be directed toward the organization or the individual co-worker. While hypothesizing the effects of OCB climate on conflict the two forms of OCB need to be delineated. OCB directed toward the organization (OCBO) refers to conscientiousness, obeying rules, and practicing diligence. OCBO functions as a more impersonal form of citizenship directed at accomplishing organizational goals. High levels of OCB directed toward the organization may reduce negative effects of conflict as individuals see beyond their own personal needs to the needs of the organization. Yet, these manifestations of OCB, while welcomed by management and significant for productivity, are likely to have less to do with levels of conflict in the work group than does OCBI which is directed

toward the individual. OCBI include acts such as altruism and have immediate effects on individuals with an indirect contribution to the organization. Therefore, OCBI may explicitly impact levels of conflict between work group members. Similar suggestions of the differences between these two constructs were tested by Kaufman, Stamper, and Tesluk (2001) who found that perceived organizational support significantly affected OCBO but not OCBI. OCBO is related to organizational level issues rather than personal interaction. The conflict being measured in this study is between the individuals in the work group not between group members and management. Because we are talking about organizational citizenship climate we will now refer to OCB as OC climate. OCBI will now be OCBIC (climate) and OCBO is now OCBOC.

Unlike OCBOs which are behaviours directed at the organization, the OCBI climate constitutes citizenship behaviours that directly engage members of the work group. Therefore, regarding the relationship between an OCBI climate and conflict, OCBI more than OCBOs should create a climate that affects relationship conflict and task conflict.

Hypothesis 1: Of OCBIC and OCBOC, only OCBIC will significantly predict anticipated associations to relationship and task conflict.

The relationship between OC climates and conflict can be further delineated. The enhancement of a friendly work environment as a result of OCBI would bring about decreased levels of relationship conflict due to the fact that altruistic acts prevent negative attitudes from developing. A voluntary act of kindness extended to a co-worker

preempts personal animosity that could result in workplace interaction. “Cooperative, considerate and helpful acts assist co-worker’s performance” (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996) and acts such as peacemaking help to prevent, resolve or mitigate unconstructive interpersonal conflict ( Podsakoff et al., 2000). Events such as these create a cooperative atmosphere. Exhibiting OCBI can be considered as a method of maintaining balance in the relationship between employee and supervisor and between workers in the same group.

The presence of OCBI can itself make a job more satisfying for the recipient and the actor. It makes firms more desirable places to work and therefore attracts workers who value interpersonal relationships with co-workers. The altruistic nature of the OCBI act should result in prevention or alleviation of relationship conflict by facilitating a climate conducive to supportive behavior that supersedes friction between co-workers. Therefore, I expect that as OC climate increases, levels of relationship conflict will decrease.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant negative relationship between levels of OCBI climate (OCBIC) and relationship conflict within work units.

At the same time, task conflict would be enhanced by a positive OC climate due to the resulting feelings of job satisfaction and loyalty. OCB results in high consensus of work values. High value consensus will provide an atmosphere in which task-related conflicts are more easily expressed (Jehn & Mannix, 2001) because co-workers enjoy a level of trust between them. That trust becomes the basis for a climate where challenging

co-workers for the purpose of enhancing productivity and decision quality is non-threatening. It is accepted that everyone is working towards the same goal of a more effective organization and the exchange of differing points of view is a positive means of moving toward that goal. This conflict is constructive, avoiding it; ineffectual (Tjosvold et al., 2003). Individuals may not agree on how problems should be solved but they agree on the methods and philosophy for achieving solutions.

Being the recipient of OCBI could cause an employee to reciprocate with inspired interaction toward fellow group members, to help them make better decisions relevant to the task at hand. An OC climate should enable employees to engage in task related conflict.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant positive relationship between levels of OCBIC and task conflict within work units.

### ***Co-worker Attributions for OCB***

Co-workers may attribute the cause of others' OCB behavior; feeling those acts were performed for either self-serving or well-intentioned reasons (Tepper et al., 2004).

Attributions for the cause of OCBI come from people's innate need to understand and control the environment. They therefore become "naïve psychologists" to try to give causal explanations for what happens (Heider, 1958). Their beliefs about causation influence their expectations which in turn influence subsequent behavior. Attribution theory is concerned with perceived causes of events and the consequences of those perceptions. The theory articulates how perceptions influence behavior and is the basis

for personal theory building that translates into individual actions and motivation strategies.

When we attribute we normally are looking to explain cause or responsibility and we generally explain it as due to either the person or the situation. We use attributions to make those causal explanations. The theory is made up of a number of attribution perspectives. Weiner's (1986) theory of achievement motivation is a self-attribution theory concerned with how individuals explain their own successes and failures and the consequences of those explanations. Green and Mitchell's (1979) model of behavior focuses on how observers assign responsibility for the outcomes of others. It describes how observers decide whether the outcome is derived by actions of the individual involved or circumstances beyond their control. Green and Mitchell's (1979) perspective is used within this study as the attribution made by an observer to the cause of an individual's behaviour will be investigated.

### ***OCB Versus Self-Serving Attributions***

While acts of OCB are generally thought to have a positive influence on employee attitudes and behavior, Tepper and his colleagues have suggested that under certain circumstances OCB may produce negative outcomes depending upon the attributions others make about the purpose of the behavior. OCB may be interpreted as reflecting self-enhancing motivations as opposed to altruism or conscientiousness (Tepper et al., 2004). That is, citizenship behavior may be either altruistically or politically motivated.

Theory and research about organizational politics has proliferated in parallel to recent studies on organizational citizenship. Most research in this realm has focused on



organizational politics as they influence the performance evaluation process, the personnel selection process, career progress and mobility, and compensation.

While OCB and political behavior may seemingly be opposite of each other, studies have shown that the actual behaviors are quite similar. The important differentiating feature between them is not the behavior but the motives attributed to the actor by the perceiver.

Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) proposed a taxonomy of political influence tactics. They classified these tactics into two dimensions: assertive-defensive and tactical-strategic.

**Table 1**  
**Political Influence Tactics**

	Defensive	Assertive
Tactical	<p><b>Tactical-defensive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ apologies</li> <li>▪ excuses and justification</li> <li>▪ disclaimers</li> <li>▪ self-handicapping</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tactical-assertive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ingratiation</li> <li>• intimidation</li> <li>• self-promotion</li> <li>• exemplification</li> <li>• verbal claims of organizational success</li> </ul>
Strategic	<p><b>Strategic-defensive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ learned helplessness</li> <li>▪ self-handicapping like alcoholism and drug abuse</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strategic-assertive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any action aimed at enhancing one's reputation</li> </ul>

The 2 x 2 represents the behaviors used to achieve political ends in organizational relationships between co-workers or between workers and supervisors. The defensive-assertive dichotomy illustrates the strategic posture of the actor while the tactical-

strategic contrast differentiates between acts as they develop and long term strategies.

The behavior of this tactical-assertive or strategic-assertive political action would mirror OCB.

Organ (1988) was the first to define OCB but he avoided the issue of intention or motive. He argued that “the conditions that increase or decrease the likelihood of its performance were not essential for its appreciation, nor to the recognition, definition or understanding of it.” He separated intention from the definition of OCB. It could be called OCB whether the act was self-serving or altruistic. This clouds the water. It could be argued that, while altruism is the primary motive for OCB, performing that act could create an expectation for reciprocity by the actor (Ferris, Bhawuk, Fedor, & Judge, 1995). Altruism is defined as doing good for others at personal cost to yourself. This stands in contrast to reinforcement-based approaches to human behavior which contend that individuals are motivated to maximize their gains. However, OCB, by definition, is extra-role so any performance of it could enhance the standing of the actor in the eyes of the supervisor. So, while the construct is rooted in altruism, it is easy to see how its performance could be construed as political (Ferris et al., 1995). Instead of attributing the action to altruism, as with organizational citizenship, the perceiver may instead attribute the action to politics (Ferris et al., 1995).

Because the behaviors representing organizational politics and organizational citizenship behavior are so similar, the mechanism that differentiates them is the motives or intentions of the actor. However, observers make sense of the actor’s intentionality or hidden motives through the attribution process. The perceiver then reacts to the actor

according to the given meaning which he derives through inferences about the causality of the action (Ferris et al., 1995).

No matter which form of political behavior you speak of, motives or intentions play an important role in their exhibition. An example of this would be ingratiation which happens when an actor tries to covertly influence another. The success of it depends on the actor's concealment of ulterior motivation (Ferris et al., 1995). The actual behavior influences attribution in any situation but must be examined in light of the situation characteristics. Situational appropriateness, as determined by situational and political norms of the employer and the work group is a determining factor in attributions (Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981).

Characteristics of the perceiver influence his attributions of intentionality. If the perceiver is the target of the actor's behavior they are more likely than a bystander to attribute the act to sincerity. Another significant characteristic would be the perceiver's tenure in the work group. More experienced people tend to make attributions of deceitful motives (Ferris et al., 1995). Heider (1958) suggested that attributed intentions are influenced by the feelings the perceiver has for the actor. We tend to interpret action based on prior impressions, good people do good and bad do bad. If an actor is consistent and does what co-workers in their work group do, their behavior is likely to be attributed to altruistic motives. In this study, I anticipate that work group members will make attributions regarding the reasons why their co-workers perform OCB.

It is important to understand how OCB influences affect and its consequences, including productivity, but, how OCB is attributed must be considered. The motivations of actors and observers are a key element in this dynamic yet are rarely conveyed or

understood when and where these interactions take place. Once the perceiver establishes the intentionality of the behavior, the attributions are used by the perceiver to label the actor's behavior. If the behavior is attributed to self-interested, deceitful intentions, it will probably be labeled as politics. If acts are attributed to authentic, sincere motives, it might be called OCB (Ferris et al., 1995).

In this study I suggest that co-workers' attributions for the altruistic behavior will moderate the relationship between OC Climate and conflict because attributing OCB as self-serving will create an atmosphere of cynicism and distrust where co-workers do not draw support from each other but instead battle or practice avoidance. Instead of creating the expected positive environment normally produced through OCBI and as proposed earlier, a negative environment more characteristic of that which creates relationship conflict will occur. Therefore, others' attribution regarding the intentions for OCB behavior will moderate the relationship between OC Climate and conflict such that:

Hypothesis 4: The moderating effect of self-serving attributions will reverse the direction of the OCBIC-conflict relationship of hypothesis 2 so that there will be a positive relationship between the OCBIC and relationship conflict when co-workers attribute OCB to self-serving reasons.

Additionally, attributions of self-serving motivations will influence relationships between co-workers to cause distrust and cynicism which will reduce open communication and inclusion of all group members. Therefore, instead of creating a more cooperative climate conducive to producing effective task conflict (as proposed in

hypothesis 3), the conditions will now have the opposite impact and will be more likely to inhibit member participation. Consequently, the OCBI will be interpreted as politically motivated and reduce the level of task conflict.

Hypothesis 5: The moderating effect of self-serving attributions will reverse the direction of the OCBIC-conflict relationship of hypothesis 3 so that there will be a negative relationship between the OCBIC and task conflict when co-workers attribute OCB to self-serving reasons.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Participants***

This applied research project consisted of a survey instrument used to measure OC Climate, conflict and attributions of OCB within the work unit. The sample consisted of work team members from fast-food restaurants in Southern Alberta. The unit of analysis was the individual, with the level of analysis being the work unit. That is, we analyzed each participant's responses but respondents provided us with their perceptions of OCB and conflict at the work unit level. The only inclusion criterion was membership in a recognizable work group.

Participants were 78% female and 22% male. The average age was 23.23 years but 55% of participants were teenagers and 35% had not finished high school. Of 144 respondents from the 19 restaurants 29% reported being in a supervisory position. Of the individuals who responded to the survey, 62%, named host/cashier as their position in the restaurant. In terms of experience 42% had 1 year or less in the industry, 69% had 2 years or less.

### ***Measures***

The instruments used to gather the data were selected based on the validity and reliability provided in other studies. Refer to Appendix 1 for the scales and items.

I measured the independent variable, OC climate, using the measure developed by Turnley, Bolino, Lester, and Bloodgood (2003) and modified by Tepper et al. (2004). Tepper's intention was to lift the scale to the climate level. Changes were made for this study based on suggestions by restaurant owners. The most recent changes include

corporate language consistent with the organization these work group members work in. Participants used a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. This tool was selected because it measured the relevant elements of OC Climate and because the previous Chronbach’s alpha for this scale is .88 (Turnley et al., 2003).

The scale included both OCBO climate (OCBOC) and OCBIC measures.

OCBOC questions targeted those acts displaying conscientiousness and loyalty to the firm while items measuring OCBIC gauged supportive behavior by members of the unit directed to co-workers.

The instrument decided upon to measure the dependant variable was Jehn’s (1995) Intragroup Conflict Scale. It includes four questions for relationship conflict and five questions devoted to task conflict. This measure has been used often in conflict research since its development and was intended to refer to co-workers within the subject’s “group”. Items have a five-point scale with 1 denoting “no conflict” and 5 representing “a great deal” of conflict. Chronbach’s alpha for Jehn’s relationship conflict questions is .92 and for the task conflict scale is .87.

Attributions about OCB, the moderating variable, were measured by Tepper’s et al. (2004) Attributions for Co-workers’ OCB scale. Literature indicated it to be reliable; the alpha is .96 (Tepper et al., 2004). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale whether their peers performed each interpersonal helping behavior, directed to the organization or to co-workers, for self-serving or well-intentioned reasons. The scale was anchored with the statements; to benefit themselves; to make themselves look good (1) and to benefit the organization and its employees (5). Low scores indicate that

respondents perceive their co-workers' OCB to be politically motivated while high scores show their attributions to be that actors were altruistic.

### ***Control Variable***

Interdependence will be a control variable in the study. Interdependence is the reason groups are formed in the first place and it is a defining characteristic of groups (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993).

One form of interdependence is task interdependence which occurs when group members interact and depend on one another to accomplish the work. Task interdependence demands smooth interaction among group members. Heightened cooperation, communication, and coordination of effort are required (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Task interdependence comes in many forms; based on how the work is divided between work group members:

- 1) pooled interdependence
- 2) sequential interdependence
- 3) reciprocal interdependence
- 4) team interdependence

Pooled interdependence has each team member doing their own work while their individual output, totaled together, constitutes the group production. Sequential interdependence happens where work flows in a certain direction. The assembly line is the best example. As with pooled interdependence, the collection of workers' inputs makes up the unit's output. Reciprocal interdependence occurs when there is a two-way interaction between individuals at work. Worker A can give their input to worker B who



can complete their portion of the job and give it back to worker A to finish the job. With team interdependence, everyone works collaboratively with no temporal or directional aspect to their interaction. Everyone is responsible for every aspect of the entire work group (Comeau & Griffith, 2005). Pooled is the lowest level of interdependence while team constitutes the highest.

As task interdependence increases it can worsen the disruptive elements of group work and at the same time increase the effects of positive influences. As a moderating variable, it demands researchers and managers pay special attention. Jehn et al., (1999) found task interdependence to increase the disruptive effect of some forms of diversity as well as decrease morale. In his seminal work Organ (1988) argued that task interdependence moderates the relationship between OCB and group performance saying that mutual dependencies among co-workers requires spontaneous give-and-take to be effective.

Interdependence can raise levels of OCB as well as increase conflict among work groups. With interdependence, group members will be more communicative and react better to changing scenarios. This brings about shared understandings, values, and norms. On the other hand, task conflict levels would rise as a result of increased interaction and shared responsibility related to goals. Relationship conflict could rise as a result in greater interpersonal interaction.

Interdependence is used as a control variable in this study because it relates to both the predictor and the criterion. The measure used was a survey that comes from Campion et al. (1993) from his goal and task interdependence scales. The six items are

measured on a 5 point scale ranging from slightly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The previous Chronbach's alpha is .72.

### ***Procedure***

Permission was obtained from restaurant owners and/or managers by phone and where necessary with a letter accompanied by the questionnaire. Once granted permission to enter the restaurant, I distributed questionnaires to work group members. Where possible I addressed members as a group to give verbal instructions to enhance understanding of direction contained in the cover letter. I collected those surveys done at that time and left a sealed box on the premises for workers to drop responses. I later returned to pick up the boxes.

276 surveys were distributed in 19 restaurants. 144 participants responded to make the response rate 52%.

## Results

The data in this study will be analyzed using correlation and regression techniques to determine the extent of relationships and the interactions between variables. Factor analysis was used to determine whether the number of variables could be reduced to a list of factors. Correlations, the descriptive statistics, and alpha values for each of the scales appear in Table 1. The correlations measure the strength of the linear relationship between two variables; the stronger the correlation the better one predicts the other.

With the exception of the correlations between interdependence and the two forms of conflict, all correlations were significant. Particularly strong were the Pearson correlations between the two forms of conflict, task and relationship, and between the two forms of OCB. The highest correlation statistic, .794, was between task and relationship conflict indicating a strong positive correlation between the two. This is an indication that the two constructs are more closely associated to each other than Jehn's research had suggested. Statistically we may find it difficult to support some hypotheses because the two constructs may be one in the minds of the participants.

Interdependence was chosen as a control variable because it was thought to have an effect on the dependant variable, forms of OCB, and the criterion variable, forms of conflict. It did have significant effects on OCB but correlations showed the link between it and forms of conflict to be insignificant.

Chronbach's alpha is the standard by which some reliabilities are measured. The alphas in parentheses in the correlation table indicate the reliability of each measure in the questionnaire. An alpha of .70 is the minimum for a scale to be considered a reliable tool. All constructs surpassed that standard with the exception of Interdependence.

Factor analysis uses statistical procedures to reduce data from questionnaires to a few underlying dimensions called factors. It seeks to see if these factors can explain the variation in the original set of variables.

**Table 2**

<b>Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Chronbach's Alpha</b>							
<b>Variable</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.</b> Relationship Conflict	(.90)						
<b>2.</b> Task Conflict	.794*	(.88)					
<b>3.</b> AttI	-.281*	-.250*	(.93)				
<b>4.</b> AttO	-.313*	-.299*	.523*	(.84)			
<b>5.</b> Interdependence	-.135	-.147	.296*	.293*	(.60)		
<b>6.</b> OCBIC	-.533*	-.486*	.489*	.495*	.380*	(.87)	
<b>7.</b> OCBOC	-.420*	-.380*	.442*	.586*	.370*	.693*	(.81)
<b>Mean</b>	2.4097	2.3097	3.4313	3.294	3.35	3.8889	3.3458
<b>S.D.</b>	.87337	.85863	1.05911	.86989	.61083	.76525	.85222

Note: N = 144 All values were derived using listwise deletion.

OCBO = Organizational Citizenship Behavior toward organization climate

OCBI = Organizational Citizenship Behavior toward individuals climate

ATTI = Attribution of OCBI

Chronbach's Alpha values (Standardized Items) are in parentheses

S.D. = Standard Deviation

\* = significant at .05 level

Factor analysis was performed to delineate constructs. Table 3 shows how each question from the survey loaded on each factor. Values of greater than .5 show a good loading (boldfaced values) and when all questions from a construct display a strong loading we have support for the validity of the construct. When a construct holds

together in factor analysis confidence is gained that items are measuring what they are intended to measure.

Some items came out as expected. All OCBIC items loaded significantly on Factor 4. (There was an unexpected loading of an Interdependence item which will be discussed below.) This, combined with the previously discussed high alpha (.81), is indicative of the validity and reliability of the scale. Co-workers' attribution of OCBI (AttI) questions loaded strongly on Factor 2 mirroring the strength of the OCBIC construct itself.

Some items did not load on factors as expected. The factor analysis results showed that all relationship conflict and task conflict items load on to Factor 1. It was expected that the five relationship items would load onto a factor different from the four task conflict items. Results indicate that the separate constructs of relationship conflict and task conflict are a single construct; conflict.

Another distinct construct as revealed by the data (Factor 3) was the attribution of OCBO (AttO) items. Unfortunately OCBOC items loaded on this factor as well as on Factor 5. OCBOC items did not form their own separate factor, instead they loaded together with the AttO as well as with Interdependence items from Factor 5. The rest of the Interdependence items loaded on Factors 4 (OCBIC), 6, and 7. This reveals two weak scales; OCBOC and Interdependence. These results could explain the less than hypothesized significance of OCBOC and Interdependence in relation to the dependant variables.

The link between Interdependence and OCBIC is easily explained but loading on four different factors makes it appear weak as a scale. The fact that half of the items

measured goal interdependence and the others measured task interdependence may have been a factor in the loadings.

The goal interdependence items were more unified than were the task interdependence items. Each loaded onto distinct factors. For both goal and task

**Table 3**  
**Factor Analysis**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factors</i>						
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>Interdependence:</b>							
1. My work goals come directly from the goals of my team.	-.189	.139	.070	.037	<b>.798</b>	-.167	.102
2. My work activities on any given day are determined by my team's goals for that day.	-.188	.188	.085	.137	<b>.752</b>	.064	.152
3. I do very few activities on my job that are not related to the goals of my team.	-.060	.097	.142	-.003	.383	.262	.371
4. I cannot accomplish my tasks without information or materials from other members of my team.	.008	.019	.008	.001	.145	-.002	<b>.884</b>
5. Other members of my team depend on me for information or materials needed to perform their tasks.	.205	-.022	.058	.280	-.079	<b>.747</b>	.214
6. Within my team, jobs performed by team members are related to one another.	.131	.170	.006	<b>.565</b>	.078	.237	.453
<b>OCBOC:</b>							
7. Employees at this location have better work attendance rates than workers in other organizations.	.048	.107	.292	.355	<b>.515</b>	.030	.168
8. Employees at this location do not take extra breaks.	-.042	.116	<b>.537</b>	.346	.281	-.386	.029
9. Employees at this location obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching.	-.259	.088	<b>.563</b>	.241	.337	-.368	.182
10. Employees at this location are conscientious about their work.	-.165	.028	.128	.248	.492	-.152	.103
11. Employees at this location give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.	-.196	.226	.494	.436	.107	-.401	.092
<b>OCBIC:</b>							
12. Employees at this location help others who have been absent and return to work.	-.228	.099	.230	<b>.720</b>	.096	.115	-.049
13. Employees at this location help others who have heavy workloads.	-.319	.290	.187	<b>.727</b>	.112	-.021	.048
14. Employees at this location help others who have work related problems.	-.206	.259	.104	<b>.703</b>	.266	.039	-.125
15. Employees at this location are always ready to lend a helping hand to other employees around them.	-.336	.170	.318	<b>.638</b>	.335	-.021	-.006
16. Employees at this location help new members settle into the job.	-.311	.148	.173	<b>.517</b>	.029	-.434	.164

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factors</i>						
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>Conflict:</b>							
<b>Relationship</b>							
17.How much emotional conflict is there among the members of your group?	<b>.717</b>	-.127	-.121	.003	.058	.225	-.144
18.How much anger is there among members of your group?	<b>.751</b>	-.150	-.149	-.093	-.026	.221	-.112
19.How much personal friction is there in the group during decisions?	<b>.808</b>	-.043	-.065	-.245	-.143	.007	.079
20.How much are personality clashes between members of the group evident?	<b>.755</b>	-.042	-.070	-.139	-.081	.247	-.055
21.How much tension is there in the group during decisions?	<b>.813</b>	-.108	-.061	-.250	-.106	.031	.012
<b>Task</b>							
22.How much disagreement is there among the members of your group over their opinions?	<b>.745</b>	-.056	-.087	-.195	-.207	.097	.093
23.How many disagreements over different ideas are there?	<b>.814</b>	-.047	-.074	-.109	-.107	.009	.090
24.How many differences about the content of decisions does the group have to work through?	<b>.804</b>	-.115	-.128	-.120	-.083	-.131	.097
25.How many differences of opinion are there within the group?	<b>.780</b>	-.051	-.119	.116	-.094	-.137	-.061
<b>AttO:</b>							
26.Employees at this location have better work attendance rates than workers in other organizations.	-.080	.230	<b>.515</b>	.184	.378	.253	-.130
27.Employees at this location do not take extra breaks.	-.038	.108	<b>.706</b>	.280	.070	.019	-.148
28.Employees at this location obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching.	-.166	.179	<b>.770</b>	.053	.110	.007	.030
29.Employees at this location are conscientious about their work.	-.133	.327	<b>.702</b>	.061	.113	.097	.081
30.Employees at this location give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.	-.225	.312	<b>.754</b>	.065	-.019	-.075	.125
<b>AttI:</b>							
31.Employees at this location help others who have been absent and return to work.	-.066	<b>.816</b>	.206	.116	.057	.009	.042
32.Employees at this location help others who have heavy workloads.	-.148	<b>.848</b>	.238	.173	.101	.021	.028
33.Employees at this location help others who have work related problems.	-.097	<b>.826</b>	.197	.134	.151	.075	-.108
34.Employees at this location are always ready to lend a helping hand to other employees around them.	-.158	<b>.834</b>	.174	.189	.137	-.098	.045
35.Employees at this location help new members settle into the job.	-.077	<b>.834</b>	.164	.131	.098	-.135	.131

Note: N = 144

interdependence, items that reflected initiated interdependence loaded separately from items that represented received interdependence. Initiated interdependence has the co-worker taking responsibility for job performance beyond his own while received

interdependence has a group member's performance enhanced by a co-worker's intervention.

Constructs supported by factor analysis were OCBIC, AttO, and AttI while interdependence and OCBOC loaded on multiple factors leading to questions of their validity. The conflict constructs surprisingly loaded on to a single factor suggesting they are more unified than previously thought.

Linear regression was employed to test Hypotheses 1-3; to see if the independent variables of OC Climate had a significant effect on the criterion; conflict variables, while incorporating the control variable (Table 4). A Regression analysis was also used to test Hypotheses 4 and 5 when the moderator variable was added (Table 5).

**Table 4**  
**Regression Table of Predictors on Task and Relationship Conflict**  
**For Hypotheses 2 and 3**

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Relationship Conflict</u>		<u>Task Conflict</u>	
	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
<i>Control Variable</i>				
<b>Interdependence</b>	-.135	.093	-.147	.053
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
<b>OCBI Climate</b>		-.492*		-.439*
<b>OCBO Climate</b>		-.112		-.090
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.018	.297	.022	.237
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	.011	.281	.015	.221

Note: B represents the standardized regression coefficient for each variable

OCBI: OCB directed at the individual climate

OCBO: OCB directed at the organization climate

\*: significant effect,  $p < .05$

Hypothesis 1 stated that of OCBIC and OCBOC, only OCBIC will significantly predict levels of task and relationship conflict. As indicated by the Beta values in Tables 4 and 5 the only significant effects of independent variables on criterion variables came



from OCBIC and effects were significant in every step. Regression results showed significant negative standardized coefficients between OCBIC and both forms of conflict. OCBOC was shown to have negative affects on both relationship and task conflict but neither was statistically significant. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

**Table 5**  
**Regression Table of Interactions on Task and Relationship Conflict**  
**For Hypotheses 4 and 5**

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Relationship Conflict</u>			<u>Task Conflict</u>		
	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 3</u>
	<u><math>\beta</math></u>	<u><math>\beta</math></u>	<u><math>\beta</math></u>	<u><math>\beta</math></u>	<u><math>\beta</math></u>	<u><math>\beta</math></u>
<i>Control Variable</i>						
<b>Inter.</b>	-.112	.121	.109	-.131	.066	.041
<i>Independent Variables</i>						
<b>OCBI Climate</b>		-.478*	-.703*		-.415*	-.590*
<b>OCBO Climate</b>		-.083	.167		-.030	.291
<b>AttI</b>		-.031	-.498		-.014	-.361
<b>AttO</b>		-.038	.273		-.080	.322
<i>Two-way Interactions</i>						
<b>AttI x OCBI Climate</b>			.608			.455
<b>AttO x OCBO Climate</b>			-.506			-.649
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.013	.291	.298	.017	.220	.228
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	.005	.263	.258	.009	.189	.185

Note: OCBI: Organizational Citizenship Behavior directed toward the individual climate  
 OCBO: Organizational Citizenship Behavior directed toward the organization climate  
 AttI: co-workers' attribution of OCBI  
 AttO: co-workers' attribution of OCBO  
 Inter.: Interdependence  
 \*: significant effect,  $p < .05$

In utilizing linear regression methods to test the hypotheses, it was discovered that interdependence does not have a strong effect as a control variable. This is illustrated by its non-significant beta values (see Table 4).

It was then predicted in Hypothesis 2 there would be a negative relationship between OCBIC and relationship conflict in work groups. Regression revealed a significantly negative effect  $-.492$  (see Table 4) so the hypothesis was supported. Relationship conflict was predicted by the Organizational Citizenship climate. The analysis specifically indicated that when the climate of the group showed high levels of citizenship behavior toward individuals, relationship conflict was low.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between levels of OCBIC and task conflict in the sample. This was not supported; the relationship was significantly negative as illustrated by Beta values in Table 4. Speculation that OCBIC would affect task conflict was shown to be correct although the effect was in the direction opposite to what was postulated. Like relationship conflict, task conflict is negatively related to OCBIC.

Interaction is the influence on a dependent variable by combinations of two or more independent variables. The interaction is the effect produced by the independent variable and potential moderator in combination which cannot be accounted for by either treatment alone. If the effect of one treatment is different at different levels of the other treatment, interaction occurs. The moderator alters, or has a contingent effect on the direction and strength of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Hypothesis 4 stated that there would be a positive relationship between OCBIC and relationship conflict when co-workers attribute OCBI to self-serving reasons. As expected, OCBIC was positively related to relationship conflict when co-workers attribute the act as self-serving, as evidenced by Betas in Table 5. It is consistent with

prior theory (Tepper et al., 2004) indicating that the association between OCBIC and relationship conflict is reversed when moderated by the attribution that OCB's were politically motivated. Unfortunately the results were not significant; therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

The final prediction was that there would be a negative relationship between OCBIC and task conflict when co-workers attribute OCBI to self-serving reasons. This was not supported by virtue of the fact that Hypothesis 3 was not supported and Beta values (see Table 5) show this relationship to be positive. The positive relationship between OCBIC and task conflict predicted in Hypothesis 3 did not materialize, so while the AttI did moderate the relationship, it was in the opposite direction to what was expected and again it was non-significant. So both relationships related to task conflict are in the opposite direction to what was proposed. This may be due to the fact that, in the perception of participants in this sample, both task and relationship conflict are one and the same, so they are affected by independent variables in the same way as well.

Overall, Hypothesis 1 and Hypotheses 2 were supported as predicted but Hypotheses 3, 4 and 5 were not supported.

## Discussion

The following are the primary findings of this study. OC climate affects levels of conflict; OCBI affects these levels more than OCBO. Specifically OCBIC reduces relationship conflict. The concept of distinct task and relationship conflict was challenged. Results showed the two to be linked together as one construct, that being relationship conflict. This result added to already existing literature that challenges the notion of task conflict being distinct from relationship conflict or existing in the absence of relationship conflict. These findings also indicate that attribution of OCB matters when predicting how OC climate affects conflict; when OCBI was perceived to have political motivations the direction of its effect on relationship conflict was reversed through to this effect was non-significant. Finally, interdependence was not a factor in this study.

Managers will benefit from the knowledge provided by this work. Seeing the effects of OC climate on conflict, particularly those resulting from OCB directed toward co-workers will inform decisions. The co-existence of task and relationship conflict, possibly as one element can impact management theory. The assumption that task conflict may be cultivated or that it is necessarily a precursor to production is challenged by these results. Also, the acknowledgement of the significance of the attribution of OCB in how it affects conflict levels in the work group will be relevant to the managers in that environment.

### ***Hypotheses Results and Implications***

As indicated above, hypothesis 1 was supported by the data. Correlation data showed both forms of OCB significantly affecting both forms of conflict but regression analysis revealed there was a significant effect on relationship and task conflict only when OCBI was the predictor, not when OCBO was the predictor. This is consistent with prior theory (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) on OCB insofar as it reflects claims that conscientiousness, as an OCB element which is directed at the organization and not co-workers, would be less likely to affect interpersonal interactions such as conflict. Conscientiousness represents efforts to increase one's own efficiency such as working through lunch or attending meetings on time. OCBI, on the other hand, is the altruistic element of OCB. It directly affects interactions with co-workers and would enhance relationships between co-workers. Therefore, a strong OCBI climate should affect levels of an employee's relationship and task conflict. So in the regression analysis I found, as expected, that OCBI climate significantly affected the group level relationship, while OCBOC did not.

Hypothesis 2 was supported with significant negative Betas between OCBI and relationship conflict in regression results. Results indicate that in a climate of supportive behavior, relationship conflict was reduced. A positive OC climate may build positive rapport between work group members.

When the climate showed high levels of organizational citizenship between individuals, relationship conflict levels were low. OCB theorists, back to Organ's seminal work, have been reporting results that illustrate just this type of effect resulting from the spontaneous supportive behavior between co-workers in a group. Organ (1988)

reported assessment of fairness of policy, procedure, supervision and pay all accounting for increased job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness resulting from OCB. This study's dependent variable, forms of conflict, may be influenced by perceived fairness, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness.

OCB affects climate and facilitates positive relations. Attributions of OCB as self-serving did affect the changes made to relationship conflict by OC Climate although the effects were non-significant. The negative relationship between OC Climate and relationship conflict should be significant for managers and a possible starting point for researchers. Future studies could focus on possible moderators or mediators for this relationship.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported. It was speculated that increasing OCBIC would raise the level of task conflict. In fact, the opposite happened. This effect is related to other findings in this research. Relationship conflict and task conflict were shown by the factor data to be a single construct. If all items belong to the same construct, we could expect OCBIC to have the same effect on both forms of conflict. At the same time, these results challenge Jehn's (1992) theory regarding the two distinct elements of relationship and task conflict. This also affected the findings associated with Hypothesis 5 which predicted a reversal to the positive relationship between OCBIC and task conflict due to the interaction of AttI.

Literature on conflict (Jehn, 1992) had made distinctions between task and relationship conflict but this sample did not discriminate between the two. The factor analysis showed conflict to hold together as one measure and the correlation between the

two elements was .794. The unexpectedly high correlation between the two types of conflict also indicates that it is a single construct.

Since the Factor Analysis showed that all conflict items load on one factor, it indicates that all conflict questions may belong to a single construct which is 'conflict'. It could be speculated that the factor is relationship conflict as opposed to task conflict. Support for Hypothesis 2 was as expected and there was some, though non-significant support for Hypothesis 4. The fact that there was a decrease in task conflict in the presence of OCBI, which conflicted with the prediction in Hypothesis 3, suggests that participants did not grasp the differences between relationship and task conflict. This group of employees may misattribute task conflict for relationship conflict. They could wrongly infer that task conflict is personal.

Simons and Peterson (2000) found evidence to support other studies with similar results as possible accounts for why the two are so closely linked. In their study of correlations between relationship and task conflict, they reported that 10 of 11 studies testing the correlation reported a significantly positive relationship existing between the two. Jehn's (1995) study was the exception with a correlation of  $-.17$ . The mean, between studies, of the correlations was  $.47$ . When task conflict exists within the interaction of a work group, so possibly does relationship conflict. Task conflict can create relationship conflict when it persists too much.

Knowing that they seem to exist in tandem, one could further argue that they are a single construct or at least contend that some of the task conflict that existed among our work groups could mistakenly be labeled as relationship conflict since the relationship conflict was probably present anyway. Also, the tasks performed by these work group

members were lower level. These types of jobs include policies and rules that discourage discussion and disagreement regarding performance. So just as with relationship conflict, cognitive conflict may be seen by management and co-workers as a negative in such situations.

Additionally, De Dreu and Weingart's (2003) recent meta-analysis found some evidence that conflict, either task or relationship, may be detrimental to group effectiveness. So our finding of a negative relationship between OC climates and both forms of conflict may be consistent with this research. Any form of conflict may be viewed as one and the same by these participants and as inherently negative.

OCBIC and task conflict had a negative relationship. For that reason Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Hypothesis 5 had predicted that the interaction would reverse the positive relationship between OCBIC and task conflict predicted in Hypothesis 3. While there was a non-significant reversal in the direction of the effect, as in Hypothesis 3, the direction was opposite to what was expected. This again indicates the lack of distinction in the minds of participants between the two forms of conflict which resulted in the similar direction in the effects of OCBIC on relationship and task conflict.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that OCB, interacting with AttI, would reverse the negative association between OCBIC and relationship conflict. Betas reversed direction and were positive but not significant. So, the expected directional effect of attribution was observed. That is, when spontaneous supportive behavior is perceived to be performed for political or self-serving reasons it will increase levels of relationship conflict between work group members. While the attribution effects were weak in this study, it is well worth exploring the effects of attributions of OCB with other populations and in future



studies. This research suggests that attributions of OCB as self-serving or altruistic do affect how people respond to OCB. Motives for OCB do count, contrary to Organ and Ryan's (1995) suggestion.

Interdependence was the control variable in this design but was shown to be a problem construct. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the elements never held together as a construct which leads us to conclude that there was no consistency in measurement of the concept. The low alpha also exposes issues with the measurement of the construct. The six questions asked were made up of three regarding task interdependence (my work goals come directly from the goals of my team, my work activities on any given day are determined by my team's goals for that day, I do very few activities on my job that are not related to the goals of my team). The other three asked about goal interdependence (I cannot accomplish my tasks without information or materials from other members of my team, other members of my team depend on me for information or materials needed to perform their tasks, within my team, jobs performed by team members are related to one another). These did not hold together as a unified construct.

A complex task requires a work group to solve problems collaboratively using productive task conflict. When the complexity of the task is low, the interdependence between work group members is easier to deal with which would result in the interdependence having less effect on levels of conflict. Consequently, simpler tasks (like those performed by work groups in fast-food restaurants) while interactive, may actually have a lesser degree of dependence between members. This could account for low correlations between interdependence and other constructs.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The sample was predominantly age 13-19 (55%) without a depth of experience in the workplace or in work groups. This may have impacted their view of conflict items on the questionnaire. Having experienced little task conflict in the workplace may have them attributing all conflict to relationship conflict. Results from this study design could be added to by expanding it to a wider cross-section of work groups from different industries and job responsibilities to vary the profile of participants.

Unequal gender proportions are not ideal when trying to make a sample resemble a population. The sample of fast-food restaurants is severely biased in this way. So too, may be the results. One might expect females to interpret conflict differently than males in a sample. Women are more likely to use personality conflict as an explanation for disputes about how tasks should be accomplished, interpersonal treatment, or emotional issues (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1994). This could account for some of the higher than expected correlations, and the single factor, between task and relationship conflict. Task conflict could more likely be interpreted as relationship conflict in a group of women than in a sample containing a higher percentage of males. This gender imbalance could also skew results where attribution of OC climate was concerned because the majority of females would increase the rate at which OCB was attributed to political motives. This would mean that the chance of supportive behavior being misattributed to self-serving motives would have been greater.

As Pearson, Ensley and Amason (2002) concluded in their study of Jehn's (2002) Intragroup Conflict Scale, there is reason to doubt the validity of Jehn's constructs. They

concluded her scale was less parsimonious than is desirable and question the distinctiveness of the two forms. They also state that some questions on the conflict scale could reflect personal as well as cognitive motivations. Further evaluation of the validity of Jehn's scale is required.

Common method variance results from a common source reporting on all indicators, predictors, and criterion variables, and can create spurious correlations between variables. Common method variance is a limitation in this study. It is negated somewhat by the use of two levels of the group (managers and group workers) to provide responses. It is a consideration that could have resulted in inflated correlations. While there were surprisingly high correlations between the two forms of conflict it is doubtful it can be linked as much to common method variance as to factors previously discussed.

Conflict questions may have made workers self-conscious about replies. While written and verbal assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were extended, the nature of the topic is such that participants may have been wary of disclosing the levels of conflict present due to their reluctance to offend co-workers or supervisors.

A limitation related to this study was that there was but a single opportunity to collect data. A re-test with the benefit of the passing of time would create an opportunity rich for interpretation. The constructs, conflict and OCB, are each dynamic and evolving. The element of time between questionnaires in a longitudinal study would greatly enhance the validity and reliability of results. While I have argued that the OC climate will affect group conflict, one can argue the opposite relationship, that conflict amongst members would impact OCBs. A longitudinal study would better assess this relationship.

Thus, future research in this realm should also include longitudinal studies, although with the turnover of staff that exists in the fast-food industry it may not yield valid results.

A 1991 study by Pearce and Gregerson found that interdependence affected extra-role behavior (OCB is extra role) when felt-responsibility mediated the relationship. Felt-responsibility was not tested in this study yet it could be speculated that work groups in a fast-food environment would not measure high in felt-responsibility. Knowledge of levels of felt-responsibility would aid in explaining why interdependence was not an effective factor.

## Conclusions

It has been widely studied how conflict affects performance in work groups. This study investigated factors which create task and relationship conflict. OCB is a factor in productivity and job satisfaction among workers in group situations, this study not only helps determine the effects of OCB and the resulting climate but how attributions of this behavior as self-serving rather than altruistic may reverse the effect OCB has on levels of conflict. We built on OCB and conflict theory to test hypotheses never before tested.

Researchers and managers should know the effects of climate on productivity. This study suggests to us what some elements do for a productive climate, how these elements affect each other, and where research can go from here.

What these results mean is that OC climate affects levels of conflict, OCBI affected levels of conflict more than OCBO. This study was the first to show that OCBIC reduces relationship conflict.

The OCB climate specifically directed from one work group member to another (OCBI) has a negative relationship with relationship conflict. This finding is compelling to any student of organizational behavior. Relationship conflict and factors affecting it strongly impact the performance of the firm. What Champion, Medsker, and Higgs (1993) call process characteristics have a large impact on the effectiveness of the work group. Workload sharing, communication, and cooperation all influence the functioning of the work group. Social support was also a factor. These elements all reduce levels of relationship conflict and were found in their study to increase work group effectiveness.

Task conflict has been identified in the literature as a factor that benefits group performance. Unfortunately, this study revealed no distinction between task conflict and relationship conflict.

This study both confirmed and challenged prior theory. The concept of distinct task and relationship conflicts was challenged. The lack of distinction between task and relationship conflict as illustrated by the results of this study (the significantly negative betas highlighting the negative relationship between OCBIC and relationship conflict and between OCBIC and task conflict alike) challenge the findings of noted researchers in the conflict field. These results further the discussion regarding the conflict construct. This study challenges the validity of the task conflict element. The high correlation between the two suggested that there was overlap between them and the fact that Hypothesis 2 was supported (OCBIC and relationship conflict were significantly negatively related) and Hypothesis 3 was not (OCBIC and task conflict were also significantly negatively related) indicated that task conflict was not real in the mind of these fast food work group members. Task conflict does not exist in the absence of relationship conflict and the former was probably interpreted as personal, relationship conflict. These results add to the voices of Simons and Peterson (2000) and others in asking whether the conflict element of task conflict really exists.

Just as findings by Tepper et al. (2004) led us to believe, attribution of OCB matters when predicting how OC climate affects conflict, specifically when attributing OCBI to political motivations reverses trends thereby increasing relationship conflict to a certain extent. Organizational behavior theorists now know that attribution of OC climate must be considered when studying its effects.

Interdependence of the work group was not a factor in this study. This is in contrast to findings by Bachrach, Powell, Bendoly, and Richey (2006) and Langfred (2005) that found interdependence influenced perceptions of the importance of OCB and interdependence affected levels of individual and group autonomy. These results should not be generalized too broadly as it is probable that the lack of effect interdependence had with other variables was likely due to problems with construct measurement as indicated by items not holding as a single factor. Also the task facing these work groups had a low level of complexity and a possible lack of felt responsibility which could have reduced the impact of interdependence as a moderator.

For the practitioner, it reveals the impact of these seemingly subtle variables on work group dynamics. For the researcher it furthers the understanding of factors that affect conflict levels among co-workers and reveals the affects of the OC climate and its attributions on those work group members.

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## Appendix Questionnaire

### Interdependence Scale

**Directions:** In this scale, “team” refers to the people you work with at this location. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example:** If you feel strongly against the statement you could circle number 1.

	Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I do not help my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1. My work goals come directly from the goals of my team.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. My work activities on any given day are determined by my team’s goals for that day.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. I do very few activities on my job that are not related to the goals of my team.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. I cannot accomplish my tasks without information or materials from other members of my team.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Other members of my team depend on me for information or materials needed to perform their tasks.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Within my team, jobs performed by team members are related to one another.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

### OCB Scale: Organization

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example:** If you agree with the statement to a moderate degree you could circle 4.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I fulfill all the responsibilities specified in my job description.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1. Employees at this location have better work attendance rates than workers in other organizations.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Employees at this location do not take extra breaks.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Employees at this location obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Employees at this location are conscientious about their work.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Employees at this location give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

### OCB Scale: Individual

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example:** If you feel strongly against the statement you could circle 1.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like my co-workers but do not help them.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1. Employees at this location help others who have been absent and return to work.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Employees at this location help others who have heavy workloads.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Employees at this location help others who have work related problems.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Employees at this location are always ready to lend a helping hand to other employees around them.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Employees at this location help new members settle into the job.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

## Conflict Scale

**Directions:** In this scale “group” refers to the people you work with at this location.  
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example: If you feel the question strongly applies to your situation, circle 5.**

	None	A small amount	A moderate amount	A significant amount	A great deal
How much do workers interact in the course of doing their job?	1	2	3	4	5

	None	A small amount	A moderate amount	A significant amount	A great deal
1. How much emotional conflict is there among the members of your group?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How much anger is there among members of your group?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How much personal friction is there in the group during decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How much are personality clashes between members of the group evident?	1	2	3	4	5
5. How much tension is there in the group during decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much disagreement is there among the members of your group over their opinions?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How many disagreements over different ideas are there?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How many differences about the content of decisions does the group have to work through?	1	2	3	4	5
9. How many differences of opinion are there within the group?	1	2	3	4	5

### Attribution Scale: Organization

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example:** If you agree with the statement to a moderate degree you could circle 4.

	To benefit themselves; to make themselves look good				To benefit the organization; and its employees
Co-workers fulfill all the responsibilities specified in their job description.	1	2	3	4	5

	To benefit themselves; to make themselves look good				To benefit the organization; and its employees
<b>1. Employees at this location have better work attendance rates than workers in other organizations.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Employees at this location do not take extra breaks.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Employees at this location obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Employees at this location are conscientious about their work.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Employees at this location give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

### Attribution Scale: Individual

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale:

**For example:** If you feel strongly about the statement you could circle 1.

	To benefit themselves; to make themselves look good				To benefit the organization; and its employees
Co-workers complement the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5

	To benefit themselves; to make themselves look good				To benefit the organization; and its employees
<b>1. Employees at this location help others who have been absent and return to work.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Employees at this location help others who have heavy workloads.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Employees at this location help others who have work related problems.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Employees at this location are always ready to lend a helping hand to other employees around them.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Employees at this location help new members settle into the job.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>



**Biographical Info**

**About You**

1. Which of the following applies to your level of formal education:

- have not finished high school \_\_\_\_
- High school \_\_\_\_
- Some post-secondary \_\_\_\_
- Post secondary degree: diploma \_\_\_\_
- Technical degree \_\_\_\_
- Bachelors degree \_\_\_\_
- Masters degree \_\_\_\_
- Doctorate \_\_\_\_

2. Age \_\_\_\_\_

3. Gender      Male    Female

**About Your Occupation**

1. How many years or months do you have in this occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many years or months have you been in this particular position?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many members in your work group? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you in a supervisory/management position? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your current position? \_\_\_\_\_

**Put a checkmark in the following space provided  
to consent to use your answers in this academic study**

(place check here)

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Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you very much for your cooperation.  
Tom Pyne

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