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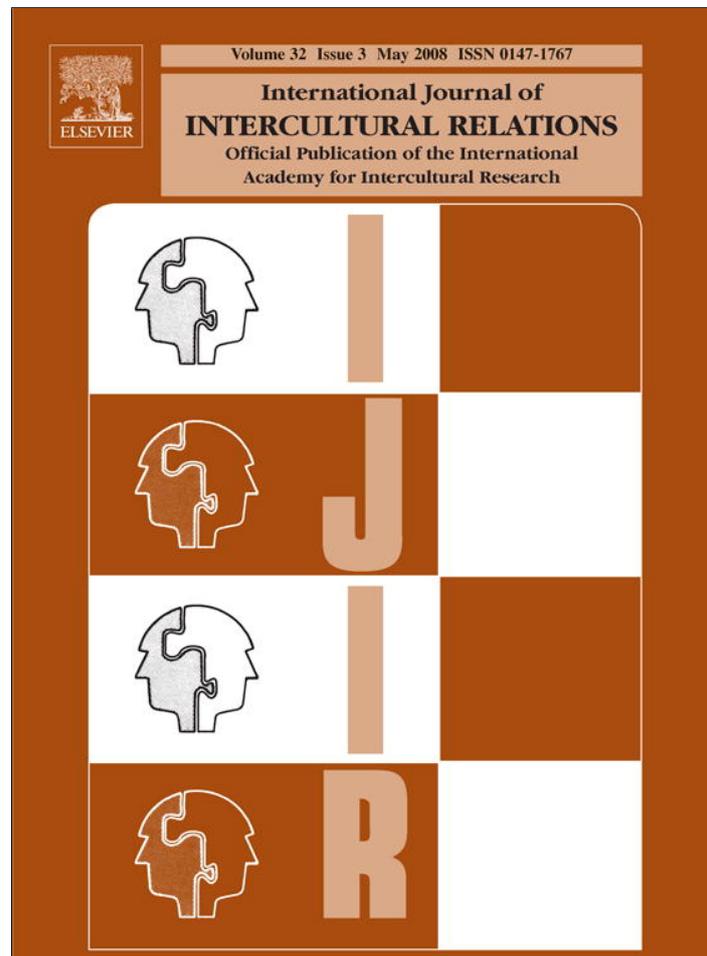
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# Culture's influence on the perception of OCB as in-role or extra-role

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## Abstract

The relationship between dimensions of individual level culture-related variables (social axioms) and the categorization of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) as in-role versus extra-role was explored within a Canadian sample. In order to appropriately address levels-of-analysis issues, this study focused on the relationship between two variables at the same level of analysis: individual social beliefs and individual perceptions of what constitutes OCB. Results indicate that the extent to which each of the OCB dimensions were viewed as in-role versus extra-role varied considerably among participants and that this variation could in part be predicted by social beliefs. The implications of understanding culture's effect on employee work behaviours and attitudes are discussed.

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*Keywords:* Social axioms; Organizational citizenship behaviours

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## 1. Introduction

Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) have been defined as behaviours that an employee voluntarily engages in that promote the effectiveness of the organization but are not explicitly rewarded by the organization (Organ, 1988). Behaviours in this category consist of those that an employee may engage in at his or her discretion, and that facilitate the effectiveness of the organization, and promote the organization's interests (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Typical examples of behavioural items used to measure OCB include: "Is ready to help or to lend a helping hand to those around him/her;" "Reads and keeps up with agency/company announcements, messages, memos, etc.;" and "Considers the impact of his/her actions on others" (Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1991).

The OCB definition has not gone unchallenged. In their meta-analysis of OCB, LePine, Erez, and Johnson (2002) discuss the need to shift attention away from the antecedents and outcomes of OCB toward a focus on a more careful explication of the OCB construct itself and its dimensions. In explicating the OCB construct more fully it is important to consider the factors that influence what is considered to be OCB and according to whom. This is important because there is evidence to suggest that variation exists in how individuals implicitly define and measure OCB (e.g., Morrison, 1994; Vandenberg, Lance, & Taylor, 2005), as some individuals may view specific behaviours as in-role while others may view these same behaviours as extra-role. One possible contributor to this variation is the cumulative effect of

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culture (e.g., social culture) and culture-related variables (e.g., learned social beliefs). Social culture shapes behavioural norms, perceptions, and expectations in a myriad of settings (Triandis, 1994) and is typically learned during early cultural socialization. Learned social beliefs are internally held beliefs and can be characterized as being relatively resistant to change and exerting a strong effect on the perceptions and evaluations of multiple social exchanges—including the employer–employee exchange. In order to examine one aspect of the relationship between culture-related variables and workplace perceptions, this research examined the extent to which learned social beliefs affect the perceptions of OCB as in-role or extra-role.

### 1.1. *Organizational citizenship behaviours*

Although the debate over the best way to define OCB has not been resolved, and researchers have often expressed concern over OCB's definitional qualifiers (Bolino, Turnley, & Niehoff, 2004), the underlying question is whether employees do in fact voluntarily engage in OCB or more broadly, whether OCB is in fact discretionary or extra-role. Some researchers have responded to this debate by redefining OCB by dropping the extra-role qualifier (e.g., Organ, 1997), while others have insisted that retaining it is important for greater conceptual clarity and construct validity (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). One thing that has become apparent in support of the latter position is that measurable differences have been documented in what specific behaviours are viewed as OCB depending on who is doing the viewing.

Morrison's (1994) study, for example, demonstrated this point well. Her results indicated that the boundary between what is perceived as in-role versus extra-role (i.e., job breadth) varies across employees and between employees and their supervisors. Vandenberg et al. (2005) also found that ratings of OCB differed between managers, subordinates and individuals, and in fact, that different conceptual frameworks were used to interpret individual organizational citizenship behaviours. Similar variations were found by Pond, Nacoste, Mohr, and Rodriguez (1997) in a study of 144 managerial employees in the United States, by Lam, Hui, and Law (1999) in their cross-cultural study examining 431 independent dyads from four nations (i.e., Australia, China-Hong Kong, Japan and the United States), and by Vey and Campbell (2004) in their study with 248 undergraduates in the United States.

There is also evidence that from a practical perspective this distinction has utility, since the perceptions of OCB as in-role may relate to employee engagement in such behaviour. Morrison (1994), for example, suggested that individuals who engage in OCB may do so because they define those behaviours as in-role. Although Morrison (1994) did not directly test this proposition, more recent empirical work by Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler, and Purcell (2004) provides evidence in support of Morrison's assertion. In fact, their results indicated that "employees who define behaviours as in-role engage in those behaviours to a greater degree than employees who define them as extra-role" (p. 97). Based on their results, these researchers conclude that the distinction between in-role and extra-role is important for understanding an individual's motivation to engage in such behaviours. Kamdar, McAllister, and Turban (2006) also found that employee definitions of behaviours as in-role versus extra-role were related to employee work behaviour. In their investigation with an Indian sample of 220 engineers and their immediate supervisors from an oil refinery, Kamdar et al. found that employees perceiving OCB as extra-role were less inclined to engage in those behaviours.

### 1.2. *Psychological antecedents of OCB*

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) noted that organizational citizenship behaviours "shape the organizational, social, and psychological context that serves as the critical catalyst for task activities and processes" (p. 71). Given this crucial relationship, there are important implications for delineating and understanding the antecedents of such behaviour. Numerous antecedents of OCB have been examined (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Some personality factors may predispose an individual to engage in OCB. Fok, Hartmandy, Patti, and Razek (2000), for example, found that there were individual differences in the performance of organizational citizenship behaviour, and that individuals who were more benevolent were also more likely to engage in OCB. A meta-analysis of OCB and personality factors (Organ & Ryan, 1995) examined the relationship between OCB and four personality factors: conscientiousness, agreeableness, positive affectivity and negative affectivity. Organ and Ryan (1995) found that, of these four, only conscientiousness correlated with OCB. Borman, Penner, Allen, and Motowidlo (2001) updated this meta-analysis and concluded that there is, indeed, a strong relationship between personality and OCB, with conscientiousness and dependability showing the strongest relationship of the personality constructs examined.

Personality characteristics may also be related to the perception of OCB as in-role versus extra-role. Kamdar et al. (2006) demonstrated that, for example, individual differences in reciprocation wariness, empathic concern, and perspective taking function jointly as determinants of whether OCB is perceived as in-role versus extra-role. More specifically, they found that people high in reciprocation wariness were less inclined to view loyal boosterism as in-role and that people high in empathic concern and perspective taking were more inclined to view interpersonal helping as in-role. Individual values, or ethics, also appear to play a role in determining the extent to which an employee will engage in OCB (Turnipseed, 2002). In addition to these factors (i.e., personality and individual values/ethics), individual-level culture-related variables may influence both how an employee conceptualizes OCB as well as the likelihood of an employee engaging in that behaviour.

### 1.3. OCB and culture-related variables

There is a paucity of empirical research explicitly examining the role of culture-related variables in the performance of OCB. In fact, in a review of both empirical and theoretical literature, Podsakoff et al. (2000) did not even list culture-related variables as antecedents of OCB, nor did LePine et al. (2002) in a critical review and meta-analysis of the literature on OCB. A relationship between culture-related variables and OCB has, in a general sense, been hypothesized by some researchers. Moorman and Blakely (1995), for example, argued that individuals from collectivist cultures will exhibit higher levels of OCB than those from individualist cultures, based on the assumption that individuals in collectivist cultures will place greater emphasis on harmony and interpersonal helping within one's in-group than individuals in individualist cultures.

Empirical OCB work at a cultural level of measurement and analysis is scarce and, the work of Turnipseed and Murkison (2000) is one of the few examples of work in this area. In a study examining differences between the Romanian and the American contexts, these researchers found that OCB differed significantly between the two samples of manufacturing employees. Hui, Lee, and Rousseau (2004) provide another example of research looking at the relationship between national context and OCB. Hui et al. (2004) examined the relationship between psychological contracts and OCB in China, arguing that Chinese culture provides an environment where "employees experience employment as relational, based on trust and mutual support" (p. 314) and that, in this environment, employees can be expected to "be particularly motivated to behave in ways that strengthen their relationship with their employer" (p. 314). In this study, nationality served as a proxy for culture, with the implicit assumption that the collectivism which others have suggested typifies Chinese culture (Bond, 1996; Hofstede, 1984) would enhance the frequency of OCB performance in China.

Culture-related variables can be conceptualized and measured at multiple levels and therefore when conducting research incorporating these variables the choice of which level to analyze is critical (Hofstede, Bond, & Luk, 1993). At one level, culture-related variables may be viewed as representing societal norms of values, beliefs, and behaviour. While these variables may describe the society or culture in general, they do not necessarily reflect any given individual society member's values, beliefs, or behaviours. At the individual level, measuring culture-related variables typically involves a direct measure of the values, beliefs, and behaviour of the individual, with the assumption that these values, beliefs, and behaviours have been shaped by the context within which the individual has developed, as well as being shaped by the reinforcement provided by the social context within which they are demonstrated. To inappropriately cross levels of analysis, for example, assuming that a culture-related value or belief measured at the societal level represents the value of belief of those in a sample of individuals drawn from that society (i.e., ecological fallacy), or, for example, assuming that the results of a sample of individual responses reflect the society as a whole (i.e., misspecification), may well result in spurious conclusions.

Several ways of avoiding these fallacies and the attendant spurious conclusions exist—one of which is to retain the analysis at a single level, such as that of the individual (Hofstede et al., 1993). Although retaining the analysis at a single level may prove useful, there are certainly drawbacks associated with it. One such limitation is that the researcher is unable to rule out the influence of relevant variables existing at other levels of analysis. Another limitation is that due to the single level measurement, the researcher is unable to convincingly argue that any demonstrated individual differences are the result of culture effects. It is very hard to make the argument that individual differences are reflecting culture or anything but individual idiosyncrasies especially when the measurement and analysis remain at the individual level.

Despite this drawback, there are a few studies that have attempted to explore the relationship between culture-related beliefs, values, and/or orientations as well as OCB at the individual level (e.g., Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997; Moorman & Blakely, 1995). In this type of research, the person or individual serves as the unit of analysis for all variables, and the research remains solely at the individual level. These studies have demonstrated that culture-related beliefs/values/orientations may influence employee performance of OCB as well as the relationships between OCB and other variables.

Moorman and Blakely (1995), for example, looked at individualism and collectivism within a single-nation sample and examined whether American individuals who indicated more collectivist beliefs, values, and norms would be more likely to self report performance of OCB. According to the researchers, the results demonstrate that collectivist norms and values (but not beliefs) are correlated with higher levels of employee performance of OCB. Another example can be seen with the work of Farh et al. (1997) who demonstrated that, although the individual-level cultural variables of “traditionality and modernity had little impact on citizenship behaviour” (p. 429), they did have moderating effects on the relationship between OCB and organizational justice.

#### *1.4. Generalized social beliefs as a reflection of culture*

Generally, it has been established that the construct of social beliefs helps to explain and predict social behaviours (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, & Chemonges-Nielson, 2004; Leung et al., 2002). The approach to understanding culture and culture-related variables by focusing on the generalized belief systems of individuals is based on the presumption that these generalized social beliefs are more predictive of “domain specific” psychological constructs than are values (Leung & Bond, 2004, p. 131). Grounded in expectancy theory, this research suggests that individuals draw on their beliefs about how the world works when determining how to act, and that these beliefs are therefore predictive of behaviour (Leung, Bond, & Schwartz, 1995). Leung, Bond and their colleagues termed these general social beliefs “social axioms” and defined them as “generalized beliefs about oneself, the social and physical environment, or the spiritual world, and [that] are in the form of an assertion about the relationship between two entities or concepts” (Leung et al., 2002, p. 289).

Social axioms are acquired naturally as a product of personal experiences and socialization (Bond et al., 2004b), and are therefore strongly affected by an individual’s social context or culture. This way of assessing cultural influences on attitudes and behaviours differs from traditional measures of culture and culture-related variables which focus on values (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992). While values refer to a judgment of what is important and desirable, such as “Wars are bad,” social axioms embody contingencies between two entities or occurrences, such as “Wars will lead to the destruction of civilization” (Leung et al., 2002). Thus, social axioms may be more readily accessible than values to individuals in determining their behaviour in a given situation, as beliefs are more concrete and more comprehensive in nature than values (Singelis, Hubbard, Her, & An, 2003), and may therefore be more predictive of attitudes and behaviours.

The Social Axioms Survey (SAS; Leung et al., 2002) was developed by reviewing previous research on beliefs conducted in Europe and North America as well as with input from 358 participants in Hong Kong (Asia) and 203 participants in Venezuela (South America), and was validated in a series of multinational studies, first in five nations (Leung et al., 2002) and later in 41 cultural groups across the globe (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, DeCarrasquel, et al., 2004; Leung & Bond, 2004). Factor analyses of the data collected in these studies yielded five reliable factors: social cynicism, social flexibility, reward for application, fate control, and religiosity. Social cynicism refers to a negative belief regarding human nature and events (e.g., “Powerful people tend to exploit others”). Social flexibility connotes a sense that there are many possible ways to achieve a given end, that rigidly prescribed rules are not always necessary, and that outcomes are not always certain (e.g., “People may have opposite behaviours on different occasions”). Reward for application reflects the idea that hard work will bring rewards (e.g., “One will succeed if he/she really tries”). The dimension of fate control indicates a belief that external and impersonal forces impact social events (e.g., “All things in the future have been predetermined”), while the dimension of religiosity indicates a belief that there are influential spiritual forces in the world and that religious institutions have a positive effect (e.g., “Belief in a religion makes people good citizens”). An additional factor, Interpersonal Harmony, was identified in the German sample reported in Leung et al. (2002). This dimension reflects individuals’ beliefs regarding the causes of harmony between individuals (e.g., “A pleasant interpersonal environment and a sense of well being lead to better performance”).

In a research project with 7590 university students from 40 cultural groups and 2338 adults from 13 cultural groups (Leung & Bond, 2004), the SAS factors were shown to correlate with a wide variety of societal variables (e.g., per capita GDP, population growth, women's status) and psychological indicators (e.g., life satisfaction, positive and negative affects, work ethics). At the aggregate- or cultural-level of analysis, these data support the idea that these social axioms are etic (culturally universal) psychological constructs.

At the individual level of analysis, research has shown that the SAS factors have differential relationships with a number of psychological constructs in various cultures. Social axioms were found to relate to: (1) locus of control, interpersonal trust, social desirability, cognitive flexibility, and paranormal beliefs in a U.S. female college sample (Singelis et al., 2003); (2) behavioural outcomes including volunteerism, superstitious practices, religious services attendance, and prayers and meditation in a group of undergraduate students in Canada (Van Bavel et al., 2002, as cited by Leung & Bond, 2004); (3) the fear of losing out (*Kiasu*) among university students in Singapore (Ward & Ramakrishna, 2003, as cited by Leung & Bond, 2004); and (4) self-interest tendency in a sample in Germany (Rupf & Boehnke, 2002, as cited by Leung & Bond, 2004). In a study by Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, and Chemonges-Nielson (2004), social axioms successfully predicted conflict resolution styles, vocational choice, and coping style of university students in Hong Kong after controlling for the effect of values. In short, research on the SAS supports the ecological validity of its dimensions across cultures, the convergent and divergent validities of the scale with various socioeconomic indices and psychological correlates, and its predictive power of behavioural outcomes beyond that of cultural values.

## 2. The current study: individual level culture and OCB

The current study was designed to explore the relationship between generalized social beliefs (social axioms) and perceptions of OCB. While values have been used in previous research as a measure of culture, using social axioms within the context of OCB research allows for a more direct examination of the individual-level relationship between culture-related variables and perceptions of OCB. This is accomplished by aggregating individual endorsement of statements representing social axioms. This latter analysis treats the SAS dimensions as quasi-individual difference characteristics and thus captures variations among people. Therefore, in effect, some of the variability in implicit OCB definitions can be examined by looking at the impact that variations in social axioms have on the perceptions of OCB.

In particular, then, the intention of this study was to explore the relationship between individual level culture-related variables, or social axioms, and the categorization of OCB as in-role versus extra-role within Canada—specifically, the degree to which the SAS dimensions predict the categorization of OCB as in-role versus extra-role. As empirical attention to social beliefs is a relatively recent phenomenon, research in this area is scant, and there is little previous work to inform and direct specific hypotheses. However, we offer the following hypotheses and rationale.

Given that generalized social beliefs have been shown to predict various individual psychological constructs and/or perceptions, it is similarly predicted that such beliefs will also usefully predict perceptions of OCB in general as in-role versus extra-role.

**Hypothesis 1.** Generalized social beliefs will predict the extent to which all OCB dimensions are viewed as in-role versus extra-role.

In addition to the general hypothesis that social beliefs will affect OCB, several specific predictions are also made with respect to unique contributions of certain culturally transmitted social beliefs to specific OCB. Given that social cynicism reflects a negative attitude toward social interactions and institutions, it is expected that this dimension will negatively predict perceptions of OCB as in-role behaviours, as those who view the world cynically will be more likely to view behaviours that are not explicitly prescribed or rewarded by their organization as extra-role, suggesting the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to reward for application will positively predict perceptions of OCB as in-role behaviours.

Those individuals who strongly endorse beliefs related to social flexibility tend to believe that there are many ways to achieve an end, and they do not view rigid prescriptions as necessary. In holding these beliefs, such individuals may

not hold rigid role boundaries and may instead view a larger variety of behaviours as potentially part of their job (i.e., in-role). This suggests the following:

**Hypothesis 3.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to social flexibility is expected to uniquely and positively predict perceptions of OCB as in-role behaviours.

Individuals who see many means to an end and those who believe that hard work pays off are more likely to view OCB as an expected part of their work behaviour that can be rewarded. Research on OCB and performance appraisals supports this assertion in that it has been demonstrated that managers reward employee performance of OCB. In fact, OCB consistently accounted for a larger proportion of the variance in managerial evaluations than objective performance data (Mackenzie et al., 1991; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994). If employees are aware of the weight that OCB have for their evaluations, they may work harder and perform OCB on a regular basis, thereby defining such behaviours as typical, in-role and work related. This therefore suggests the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to reward for application will uniquely and positively predict perceptions of OCB as in-role behaviours.

As Interpersonal Harmony is an interpersonally-oriented dimension, it is expected to impact those OCB that are related to helping co-workers, with a strong endorsement of Interpersonal Harmony resulting in these behaviours being viewed as in-role. It is thought that Interpersonal Harmony will not affect perceptions of other forms of OCB, suggesting the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to interpersonal harmony will provide a unique contribution to predicting these OCB dimensions as in-role behaviours.

Religiosity taps into the idea that there is a higher power and a higher order that affect behaviour outcomes. Therefore, it is expected to affect beliefs related to OCB that reflect conscientiousness or fair play, with those who strongly endorse religiosity exhibiting a stronger belief that these types of OCB are in-role. This suggests the following hypothesis,

**Hypothesis 6.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to religiosity will provide a unique contribution to predicting OCB related to conscientiousness as in-role behaviours.

Individuals who strongly endorse fate control believe that a tenuous relationship exists between individual effort and outcomes. Therefore a strong belief in fate control is expected to be related to the belief that OCB specifically categorized as conscientious or volunteerism behaviours are more likely to be viewed as extra-role than in-role, suggesting the final hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 7.** A strong endorsement of beliefs related to fate control will provide unique contributions to the prediction of OCB related to conscientiousness or volunteerism being perceived as extra-role behaviours.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

Three hundred sixty three undergraduate students from a university in southwestern Ontario in Canada participated in this study. The gender composition was relatively evenly distributed with 174 (47.9%) males and 189 (52.1%) females. The mean age of the sample was 21.40 (S.D. = 4.5) years. The participants represented three ethnic backgrounds: 71.9% Caucasian/White European, 21.2% Asian, and 6.9% Black/African. The three groups did not differ significantly in reported levels of parents' education and income levels, but did differ in terms of how recently they had moved to Canada. Those in the Caucasian/White European group were mostly third generation immigrants (73.1%) while those in the Asian group were almost equally spread between first, 1.5, and second generations (22.1, 11.7, and 27.3, respectively) as were those who identified themselves as belonging to the Black/African group (36.0, 28.0, and 28.0, respectively). Only 1% of the Caucasian sample identified themselves as an international student, while 39% of the Asian group and 8% of the Black/African group did so.

### 3.2. Measures

#### 3.2.1. The social axioms survey

The 82-item SAS (Leung et al., 2002) was used to measure individual level culture-related variables or generalized (social) beliefs. Participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with each belief statement on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. The internal consistency of the SAS across three studies (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, & Chemonges-Nielson, 2004; Leung et al., 2002; Singelis et al., 2003) was demonstrated by Cronbach's alphas for corresponding factors in the following ranges: .64–.80 for social cynicism, .45–.72 for social flexibility, .53–.78 for reward for application, .56–.81 for religiosity and .54–.70 for fate control. Data on the internal consistency for Interpersonal Harmony were not available. It has been contended that the low internal consistency of some of the SAS factors may be due to the breadth and range of items necessary to extract general beliefs with a pancultural measures from a wide variety of cultures (Leung et al., 2002; Singelis et al., 2003).

#### 3.2.2. Organizational citizenship behaviours

As disagreement exists regarding the specific behaviours that may be considered OCB, a list of organizational citizenship behaviours was generated from items included in previous research by Moorman and Blakely (1995), Morrison (1994), and Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). The intention was to create as large a list as possible of OCB-type behaviours that had been used in prior research. Redundant items were removed, leaving 57 items. Participants were asked to indicate, using a 5-point Likert scale format, the extent to which they believed that a particular behaviour was an in-role versus an extra-role behaviour (1 = *in-role*, 2 = *somewhat in-role*, 3 = *undecided*, 4 = *somewhat extra-role*, 5 = *extra-role*).

### 3.3. Analysis of data

#### 3.3.1. OCB dimensions

There is no consensus in the literature about the dimensionality of the OCB construct (see, for example, LePine et al., 2002). Previous researchers have suggested that OCB is best conceptualized as comprising a range of factors, including two factors (e.g., Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983), four factors (e.g., Moorman & Blakely, 1995), and five factors (e.g., Organ, 1988). Since this dimensionality is unclear and further, since the models from this previous work resulted from categorizing these behaviours according to the extent to which they were performed rather than according to perceptions of these behaviours as in-role versus extra-role, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the OCB items to determine the underlying factor structure for the items included in the survey. Before testing the hypotheses, therefore, a factor analysis using principal components analysis was conducted. Fifteen factors emerged, accounting for 60% of the variance. Based on an examination of the scree plot and the Eigenvalues, it was determined that a five factors solution provided the most parsimonious solution, so the items were factor analyzed again, again using principal components analysis and followed by a varimax rotation, forcing a five factor solution. This factor solution accounted for 37% of the variance.

The five factors were labeled conscientiousness, initiative, volunteerism, boosterism, and sportsmanship, based on the similarity of the items in each scale to items published in previous research. These five factors are defined as follows: conscientiousness—going well beyond minimally required levels of attendance, punctuality, housekeeping, conserving resources, and related matters of internal maintenance (Organ, 1990, p. 96); initiative—actions and communications to others focused on improving individual and group performance (Moorman & Blakely, 1995, p. 130); volunteerism—volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of one's own job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p. 82); boosterism—promotion of the organizational image to outsiders (Moorman & Blakely, 1995, p. 130); and sportsmanship—tolerating the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without whining and grievances (Organ, 1990, p. 96). Items that had similar loadings on more than one factor were eliminated from further analysis, as were items that reduced the reliability of the scale. Cronbach alphas of the final scales were adequate (Nunnally, 1978). The final factor structure may be found in Table 1. Despite the similarity of these dimensions to those published in other work, it is important to note that the factor structure that emerged was based on participants' perceptions of whether or not specific behaviours were extra-role or in-role, rather, as in previous research, the extent to which these behaviours were actually engaged in.

Table 1  
OCB factor loadings

	OCB-C	OCB-I	OCB-V	OCB-B	OCB-S
<b>Conscientiousness</b>					
Keeping up with developments in the company	0.29	0.19	-0.12	0.13	-0.24
Conscientiously following company regulations and procedures	0.60	0.06	-0.17	-0.02	-0.15
Returning phone calls and responds to other messages and requests for information promptly	0.62	0.14	0.04	0.05	-0.15
Being punctual every day	0.70	0.06	-0.15	0.01	-0.02
Not taking unnecessary time off of work	0.52	0.09	-0.05	0.12	0.00
Doing highest quality work	0.65	0.24	0.02	0.05	-0.17
Informing ahead of time if time off is needed	0.67	0.27	-0.08	0.08	-0.12
Being mindful of how own behaviour affects others	0.52	0.40	0.10	-0.04	-0.01
Not spending time in conversation unrelated to work	0.43	0.08	0.00	0.25	0.00
Coming to work early if needed	0.43	0.16	0.27	0.07	-0.14
Obeying rules, regulations and procedures	0.64	0.05	-0.12	0.14	-0.13
Treating others with respect	0.48	0.32	-0.09	0.08	0.00
Performing duties with unusually few errors	0.58	-0.20	0.19	0.12	0.05
Performing duties with extra special care	0.46	0.12	0.20	0.33	-0.05
Always meeting or beating deadlines for completing work	0.51	0.05	0.14	0.32	-0.06
<b>Initiative</b>					
Being willing to risk disapproval in order to express his/her beliefs about what's best for the company	0.11	0.41	0.07	0.06	-0.18
Using own judgment to assess what is best for the organization	0.20	0.38	0.02	0.13	0.10
Helping to make others more productive	0.16	0.44	0.33	0.01	-0.07
Informing others in order to prevent unanticipated problems	0.37	0.47	0.23	-0.05	-0.03
Informing others of job related problems they do not know	0.27	0.50	0.18	0.04	-0.01
Trying to make the organization the best it can be	0.26	0.40	0.18	0.32	-0.17
For issues that may have serious consequences, expressing opinions honestly even when others may disagree	0.25	0.45	0.00	0.20	-0.10
Often motivating others to express their ideas and opinions	0.09	0.65	0.19	0.21	0.04
Encouraging others to try new and more effective ways of doing their job	-0.06	0.67	0.15	0.22	0.07
Encouraging hesitant or quiet co-workers to voice their opinions when they otherwise might not speak up	-0.12	0.70	0.18	0.25	0.04
Making innovative suggestions to improve department	0.28	0.35	0.21	0.07	-0.19
Frequently communicating to co-workers suggestions on how the group can improve	0.16	0.52	0.15	0.25	-0.05
<b>Volunteerism</b>					
Turning in budgets, sales projections, expense reports, etc. Earlier than is required	-0.01	-0.10	0.45	0.20	-0.12
Helping others who have been absent	0.19	0.24	0.47	-0.13	-0.07
Volunteering for things that are not required	-0.21	0.08	0.59	0.03	-0.05
Helping others who have heavy work loads	0.03	0.27	0.55	-0.15	-0.09
Assisting supervisor with his or her work	-0.02	0.05	0.46	0.07	-0.10
Attending functions not required that help company image	-0.07	0.14	0.40	0.18	-0.04
Volunteering without being asked	0.10	0.17	0.54	0.11	0.02
Covering for late/absent people	-0.03	0.07	0.43	-0.12	0.15
Attending meetings that are not mandatory	0.00	0.07	0.40	0.23	0.09
Arriving early to prepare for the day	0.11	0.16	0.54	0.16	0.11
Working late or through lunch	-0.03	0.06	0.58	0.10	0.06
Helping to organize departmental get-togethers	-0.14	0.05	0.41	0.23	0.05
<b>Boosterism</b>					
Defending the organization when outsiders criticize it	0.15	0.19	0.16	0.70	-0.02
Defending the organization when others criticize it	0.13	0.18	0.07	0.70	-0.01
Encouraging friends and family to utilize organization products	0.05	0.16	0.11	0.54	0.07
Showing pride when representing the organization in public	0.26	0.25	0.07	0.62	-0.03
<b>Sportsmanship</b>					
Taking undeserved work breaks ( <i>r</i> )	-0.15	0.03	-0.02	0.04	0.74
Coasting toward the end of the day ( <i>r</i> )	-0.12	-0.07	0.04	-0.08	0.71
Consuming a lot of time complaining about trivial matters ( <i>r</i> )	-0.12	-0.02	-0.04	-0.13	0.67
Making problems bigger than they actually are ( <i>r</i> )	-0.27	-0.02	-0.09	0.02	0.61

Table 2

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach alphas and correlations for the subscales of the SAS and the OCB

	<i>M</i>	S.D.	Alpha	SC	RA	<i>R</i>	OCB-C	OCB-V	OCB-I	OCB-S	OCB-B
Social cynicism	2.71	0.69	.78		.16**	.00	.28**	-.02	-.07	-.12*	.07
Reward for application	4.11	0.55	.68			.25**	-.17**	-.05	-.13*	.09	-.03
Religiosity	3.37	0.84	.75				.08	.04	.05	-.01	.07
OCB—conscientiousness	0.97	0.72	.86					.16**	.51**	-.33**	.37**
OCB—volunteerism	1.89	0.76	.79						.51**	-.05	.30**
OCB—initiative	2.81	0.63	.74							-.17**	.43**
OCB—sportsmanship	2.92	0.83	.73								-.09
OCB—boosterism	2.09	1.02	.78								

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Overall, the extent to which each of these factors was viewed as in-role versus extra-role varied considerably. Being a conscientious employee was viewed very strongly as being in-role rather than extra-role ( $M = 0.94$ ,  $S.D. = .72$ ) while at the other extreme, volunteerism ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $S.D. = .62$ ) and sportsmanship ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $S.D. = .83$ ) were viewed as extra-role behaviours (see Table 2 for means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for all variables).

### 3.3.2. Social axioms survey

The internal consistency of the scales in the Social Axioms Survey was consistent with that found in previous research (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, DeCarrasquel, et al., 2004; Leung et al., 2002; Singelis et al., 2003). Some of the Cronbach's alphas were somewhat low. An item analysis was conducted to determine if the reliability could be increased for this sample. An inspection of the items in each scale showed that removal of items would not increase the

Table 3

Summary of hierarchical regressions predicting OCB dimensions

	OCB-C	OCB-I	OCB-V	OCB-B	OCB-S
Step one					
Age	-.138**	-.093	-.092	-.011	.131*
Gender	-.076	.069	.123*	.000	-.056
$R^2$	.025***	.013	.024**	.000	.020*
Step two					
Age	-.132*	-.094	-.108*	-.010	.126*
Gender	-.042	.081	.103*	.006	-.074
Caucasian vs. non-Caucasian	-.229***	-.178	-.082	-.047	.071
Asian vs. non-Asian	-.026	-.104	-.244**	-.002	-.054
$R^2$	.077***	.025	.056***	.002	.034*
$\Delta R^2$	.052***	.012	.032**	.002	.014
Step three					
Age	-.113*	-.085	-.110*	-.010	.113*
Gender	-.043	.068	.096	.000	-.083
Caucasian vs. non-Caucasian	-.134	-.134	-.058	-.003	.038
Asian vs. non-Asian	.035	-.078	-.232*	.017	-.064
Social cynicism	.265***	.088	.034	.079	-.123*
Reward for application	-.254***	-.156**	-.032	-.065	.105
Religiosity	.144**	.079	.053	.086	-.025
$R^2$	.187***	.051*	.060***	.015	.054**
$\Delta R^2$	.110***	.027*	.004	.012	.020

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

internal consistency of the scale; therefore three scales were removed from further analyses: social flexibility, fate control, and interpersonal harmony.

### 3.4. Hypothesis testing

Since previous research has shown that culture-related variables may have some impact on the conceptualization, dimensionality and performance of OCB, hierarchical regressions were performed in order to assess the extent to which generalized social beliefs predict individuals' perceptions of what is in-role and what is extra-role behaviour. A hierarchical regression analysis was undertaken with covariates identified in previous research entered into the equation first in order to remove some of the covariance between factors. Age and gender were therefore entered into the equation on the first step of the hierarchical analysis. Ethnic background (White/Caucasian European, Asian, or Black/African) was used as a proxy for social culture, and entered into the regression equation on the second step. At the third step, all six social axiom dimensions were entered as a block (results for all regression equations may be found in Table 3).

**Hypothesis 1**, that generalized social beliefs are, as a group, predictive of perceptions of whether or not OCB-type behaviours are considered in-role or extra-role was therefore tested using the significance of the regression equations for each. **Hypotheses 3, 5 and 7** were not tested due to the low reliabilities of the dependent variable in the hypotheses. The other hypotheses were tested using the significance of the beta-weights for specific social belief variables in the regression equation predicting the particular OCB perceptions.

## 4. Results

Generalized social beliefs strongly predicted perceptions of whether or not behaviours consistent with being a conscientious employee are in-role or extra-role. While the equation including only ethnic background variables was significant, adding social beliefs to the equation significantly increased its ability to predict perceptions of conscientiousness, predicting 23% of the variance. Specifically, reward for application and social flexibility positively predicted perceptions of conscientious organizational behaviours as in-role behaviours, while social cynicism, fate control, and religiosity positively predicted perceptions of conscientious behaviours as extra-role behaviours.

Both reward for application and social flexibility were found to relate to perceptions of volunteerism, but in opposite directions. Reward for application positively predicted perceptions of volunteerism behaviours as in-role behaviours, while social flexibility predicted the perception of these behaviours as extra-role. These social beliefs were not able to significantly improve the predictability of the equation, however, beyond the predictive ability of ethnicity alone.

Ethnicity was not able to predict sportsmanship behaviours, but when generalized social beliefs were added to the equation, the equation became significant. The only social belief that was related to sportsmanship behaviours was social flexibility, with higher social flexibility corresponding with greater perceptions that this type of behaviour is extra-role. Initiative was predicted by the full model, but only when social beliefs were added into the equation, and even then only 5% of the variance was explained. The only significant predictor for this factor was reward for application, with a stronger endorsement of this factor predicting these behaviours to be categorized as more in-role than extra-role. The regression model was not able to predict boosterism behaviours.

### 4.1.1. Hypotheses results

**Hypothesis 1** asserted that generalized social beliefs will predict the extent to which all OCB dimensions will be viewed as in-role versus extra-role. There is partial support for this assertion. More specifically, as already indicated there was only partial support for **Hypothesis 2**, as higher levels of social cynicism resulted in lower perceptions of OCB as in-role for only the OCB dimension of conscientiousness. Contrary to expectations, social cynicism did not predict the other OCB dimensions in this study.

Initiative was positively predicted by reward for application. Conscientiousness, however, was negative predicted, contrary to expectations, providing only partial support for **Hypothesis 4**.

**Hypothesis 6** was not supported as religiosity also did not significantly predict any of the OCB dimensions.

## 5. Discussion

Discussions about the difficulties associated with the conceptualization of the OCB construct are common in the literature (e.g., Becker & Vance, 1993; Lam et al., 1999; Morrison, 1994; Motowidlo, 2003; Organ, 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Schnake, 1991; Van Dyne et al., 1995; Werner, 1994). These discussions often centre on fundamental issues of definitional components and dimensionality. A point of concern is whether the conceptualization and definition of OCB should include the extra-role qualifier. There are proponents who advocate the continued inclusion of the extra-role qualifier (e.g., Van Dyne et al., 1995) and those who advocate the redefinition and exclusion of this qualifier (e.g., Organ, 1997). Irrespective of the inclusion/noninclusion debate, a case can be made for the utility of being able to identify factors that increase the probability that employees view certain behaviours as extra-role versus in-role (e.g., Van Dyne et al., 1995). This study attempted to do just that by focusing on the definitional in-role versus extra-role qualifier and exploring the influence that culture, in the form of generalized social beliefs, has on the extent to which OCB dimensions are viewed as in-role versus extra-role. In general, the results of this study provide evidence that generalized social beliefs can help predict an individual's view of organizational citizenship behaviours as in-role versus extra-role.

The specific hypotheses used in this study focused on specific OCB dimensions rather than a global OCB construct. The OCB dimensions used in this study emerged from a factor analysis conducted with the sample for this study. While the factor analysis was based on the extent to which individuals viewed the items as in-role versus extra-role, the five factors that emerged are conceptually similar to OCB dimensions previously identified in the literature: conscientiousness (e.g., Organ, 1988), initiative (e.g., George & Brief, 1992), volunteerism (e.g., Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), boosterism (e.g., Moorman & Blakely, 1995), and sportsmanship (e.g., Organ, 1988). This similarity is especially interesting when one considers that past factor analyses were usually based on responses representing the extent to which the OCB were *behaviours performed* by respondents while the analysis in this study was based on responses representing the *perceptions* of the OCB as in-role versus extra-role.

### 5.1. *The influence of generalized social beliefs*

The results of this study suggest that an individual's generalized social beliefs can be useful in predicting the extent to which OCB dimensions are viewed as in-role versus extra-role. On the one hand, in line with more common conceptualizations of OCB as extra-role as well as with the original hypotheses of this study, individuals who strongly endorsed social beliefs reflecting social cynicism (H2) were more likely to view OCB as extra-role, particularly conscientiousness and sportsmanship behaviours. Similar to these results but contrary to the hypothesis, individuals who strongly endorsed social beliefs reflecting religiosity (H6) were more likely to view the OCB dimension of conscientiousness as extra-role.

On the other hand, contrary to the common conceptualization of OCB as extra-role, yet in line with the original hypotheses of this study, those individuals who endorsed a strong belief in reward for application (H4) were more likely to conceptualize OCB as in-role, especially conscientiousness and initiative.

In a multicultural social context or in a multinational organization, an understanding of the role that culture-related variables plays in employee attitudes and behaviours is critical. The practical implications of managing diverse workers, some of whom view a particular behaviour as part of the job while others view that same behaviour as going above and beyond the call of duty, are far reaching. Such differences in both behaviours and perspectives may affect performance appraisals, inter-employee relations, and employee morale in general.

### 5.2. *Measurement of OCB*

Clearly, the measurement of OCB can prove to be a tricky task as evidenced, in part, by the differences in perceptions of what behaviours are in-role versus extra-role and by extension what constitutes OCB (Lam et al., 1999; Morrison, 1994; Van Dyne et al., 1995). There are many other issues that can complicate the measurement of OCB further, for example, the choice of measurement instruments, the choice of who fills out the measurement instrument, and more generally, the alignment of levels of theory, measurement, and analysis.

Researchers have an array of OCB measurement instruments from which to choose. In this research, common OCB instrument items were combined into a single scale. Including commonly used items demonstrated that the

categorization of these items as in-role versus extra-role can vary in relation to an individual's generalized social beliefs. Perhaps future research can take this line of reasoning further and attempt to uncover a relationship between patterns of endorsed generalized social beliefs and specific behaviours perceived to fall into the content domain of OCB. Patterns may emerge that are unique for specific work contexts. Steps can be taken to identify context specific items relevant to the sample under study. This may prove to be of use in furthering the applicability of OCB cross-culturally.

### 5.3. *Theory, measurement, and analysis*

Misalignment of theory, measurement and analysis can complicate the assessment of OCB, especially in cross-cultural research. Prior research attempting to link culture-related variables and OCB has measured and analyzed OCB at the individual level, while using a framework that draws from the national cultural level. The focus in this study was the relationship between two variables at the same level of analysis, namely, individual social beliefs and individual perceptions of what constitutes OCB. This is an important step because it helps researchers to avoid erroneously generalizing theoretical findings across levels of analysis. Not only are both OCB and social beliefs conceptualized and measured at the individual level of analysis, but the focus is on individuals' *perceptions* of both constructs.

### 5.4. *Limitations and future directions*

A potential limitation of this study that is of particular importance revolves around the sample used. While no significant differences emerged with respect to participants' socioeconomic status, as referenced by parent's education and income, the data for this study were collected from an undergraduate student sample with a mean age of 21 years. Compared to the mean age of the workforce in Canada (i.e., 39 years, [Statistics Canada, 2001](#)), the sample used for this study is relatively young and therefore would likely have less experience working in an organizational setting. The use of students may be warranted, though, as this research was intended to capture culturally learned norms rather than work experience, and was focused on the perceptions of work behaviours.

Confining the study of culture-related variables and OCB to the individual level of analysis has positive as well as negative points. On the positive side, conducting research that remains at the individual level helps to avoid inconsistencies in levels of theory, measurement, and analysis. Furthermore, research at this level provides a basis to develop detailed micro theories of organizational behaviour. On the negative side, however, focus solely on the individual level precludes the consideration of other levels which may ultimately result in biased results ([House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995](#)) and deficient theories. The deficiency is, in large part, due to the tendency of researchers to apply general psychological and/or organizational behaviour theories "to the study of behaviour as though behaviour is context free" (p. 77, [House et al., 1995](#)). No behaviour, however, is context free.

While this research used a single level of theory and analysis, incorporating a multi-level model in future research of the relation between culture and OCB may lead to the development of a more thorough understanding of the impact of generalized social beliefs on the perceptions and performance of OCB. Researchers interested in organizational phenomena have increasingly been noting the disadvantages of conducting only single level research (see [House et al., 1995](#); [Kozlowski & Klein, 2000](#); [Rousseau, 1985](#)). Most of the research on OCB, in particular, has historically focused on the individual level of analysis ([Schnake & Dumler, 2003](#)), although more recently additional theoretical attention has been paid to multi-level models of OCB (see [Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004](#); [Fischer, Ferreira, Assmar, Redford, & Harb, 2005](#); [Karam & Kwantes, 2006](#); [Schnake & Dumler, 2003](#), as examples of theoretical work that has begun to address the gap with regard to cross-level and multi-level research on OCB). The multi-level nature of the organizational citizenship phenomenon itself, as well as the multi-level nature of the context in which OCB occurs necessitates both single level analyses for the micro-level of understanding the phenomenon, but also a move beyond single level research.

Recognizing that organizations function within a social cultural context, and in line with the call for multi-level and cross-level research on OCB, it may be particularly fruitful to conduct research that increases understanding of the influence that organizational or unit context has on OCB. In particular, more empirical work is needed on the influence that context may have on the relationship between the perceptions of OCB as in-role versus extra-role and the actual performance of these behaviours. While preliminary empirical evidence exists that suggests that an employee's perception of OCB as in-role versus extra-role is positively related to his/her actual performance of these behaviours

(e.g., Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004; Kamdar et al., 2006), this relationship may be affected by variables at multiple levels of theory and analysis. For example, in an organization or unit where unit level OCB has emerged and is stable, an employee may engage more frequently in a particular OCB-type behaviour, even though he/she views it as extra-role behaviour. Alternately, an employee with personality characteristics that would increase their tendency to view behaviours as extra-role may, when embedded in a unit where unit level OCB is a norm, view these same behaviours as in-role. Here, within this multi-level framework, unit level OCB as a contextual variable could alter the perceptions or attitude toward OCB which may in turn alter the relationship with the performance of OCB.

Finally, understanding both the nature of OCB and the context in which it occurs is critical in an increasingly multicultural workforce across the globe. On the one hand, some employees may have generalized belief systems that result in their viewing OCB-type behaviours as in-role. These employees may work along side other employees who hold different beliefs and who therefore view the same behaviour as extra-role. Managing a multicultural workforce where some employees define their job more broadly, that is, with more tasks viewed as in-role, and others more narrowly, that is with more tasks viewed as extra-role has potential applications to performance appraisals, reward allocation, and in turn, employee perceptions of organizational justice, of person/organization fit, and in turn, potential behaviours such as turnover and withdrawal.

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