

Organizational Citizenship Behavior in the People's Republic of China

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In recent years, Western scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)—employees' behavior and actions that are not specifically designated in their formal job duties. Almost the entire body of empirical research on OCB is based on studies conducted in the United States, using U.S. employee populations as samples. Taking an inductive approach, we examined forms of OCB in the People's Republic of China (China). From a diverse sample of 158 employees and managers in 72 state-owned, collective, town and village, foreign-invested, and private enterprises in China, we collected 726 OCB incidents or items that were commonly observed in the workplace. We then subjected these to a content analysis to identify major forms of OCB. Results of our analysis revealed 10 dimensions of OCB, with at least one dimension not evident at all in the Western literature, and four that do not figure importantly in established OCB measures. The type of organizations influenced the reporting of several forms of OCB. Results suggested that Chinese formulation of OCB differs from that in the West, and is embedded in its unique social and cultural context. We discuss these results in terms of their implications for future research in OCB.

Key words: organizational citizenship behavior (OCB); national culture; China

Introduction

Nearly four decades ago, Katz (1964) pointed out the importance of a class of discretionary and spontaneous behaviors that are beyond explicit role requirements, but that are essential for organizational effectiveness. Smith et al. (1983), in a report of empirical research on the nature and antecedents of such behaviors, conceptualize these contributions as “organizational citizenship behavior” (OCB), later defined by Organ as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ 1988, p. 4). In subsequent research, several related concepts of OCB have been proposed and examined, including extra-role behavior (Van Dyne et al. 1995, Van Dyne and LePine 1998), civic citizenship (Graham 1991, Van Dyne et al. 1994), prosocial behavior (Brief and Motowidlo 1986), organizational spontaneity (George and Brief 1992), and contextual performance (Motowidlo et al. 1997). Recent discussions in this area (George and Brief 1992, Organ 1997) question whether such behavioral contributions must unambiguously lie outside the general sense of what is “the job” or whether they might be “rewarded”. Nevertheless, there is some general agreement on these

forms of contribution. They can be distinguished from “task” or “technical performance;” they have a more volitional and spontaneous character than “core job” contributions; they are somewhat better predicted by attitudinal and dispositional measures than technical task performance, and they more generally have positive effects on the social, psychological, organizational, and political contexts, than on the technical context.

The partitioning and measurement of OCB derive historically from three sources. One of these sources is the taxonomy offered, presumably on a priori grounds, in the original article by Katz (1964): The taxonomy is cooperative activities with fellow members, actions protective of the system or subsystem, creative ideas for improvement, self-training for increased individual responsibility, and gestures that nurture a benign view of the organization by its external stakeholders and constituents.

A second source (Smith et al. 1983) comprise interviews with lower-level managers, who were asked to describe actions that they like their subordinates to perform but that they could not require, and for which they could not promise any specific, definite reward (other than gratitude). Initial versions of OCB measures based on those interviews yielded two major factors:

altruism, consisting of those discretionary behaviors that aid a specific other person or small group in task-related matters; and compliance, a general label for more “impersonal” contributions in the form of yeoman adherence to the rules and policies regarding punctuality, attendance, workplace governance, and use of time on the job. Organ (1988) suggests that additional distinguishable dimensions of OCB might include courtesy (constructive gestures that help prevent problems for coworkers), sportsmanship (tolerating in good spirit the occasional hardships and deprivations that unpredictably befall individuals in the course of organizational endeavors), and civic virtue (constructive involvement in the political life of the organization).

The third source on the nature and makeup of OCB follows from classic Greek philosophy on the concept of citizenship, as in Graham (1991) and Van Dyne et al. (1994). This perspective suggests “loyalty” and “boosterism” as significant forms of OCB, but also argues for the importance of principled dissent from organization practices and challenges to the status quo.

The alternative perspectives afforded by these sources have, not surprisingly, yielded overlapping but far-from-identical categories and measures of OCB. From these

sources, we identify nine major OCB dimensions, summarized in Table 1.

What is true of all three sources, or perspectives, is their anchoring in a Western, usually North American, cultural context. Not much is known about the meaningfulness and heuristic value of OCB concepts and categories in other social and cultural environments. With the exception of Farh et al. (1997), the current concept of OCB and its related measures have all been developed in a Western sociocultural context. We do not know if the current dimensions of OCB as identified in the Western literature are culture invariant.

George and Jones (1997) note the importance of contextual factors as shapers of OCB. Some potentially important contextual factors, such as industry, technology, and job function, have been reviewed by Organ and Ryan (1995), but with inconclusive findings.

Largely unexamined to this point, however, are the contextual dimensions having to do with a societal culture and an economic institutional framework. Such contexts might pervasively condition the nature, meaning, and importance of various forms of discretionary contributions to the effectiveness of organizations. However, these two dimensions, to date, have not been

Table 1 OCB Dimensions in the Western Literature

Dimension	Definition	Source
Altruism	Discretionary behavior that has the effect of helping a specific other person with an organizationally relevant task or problem.	Smith et al. 1983, Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990. Similar dimensions also include helping (Van Dyne and LePine 1998) and interpersonal helping (Graham 1989, Moorman and Blakely 1995).
Conscientiousness	Discretionary behavior on the part of an employee that goes well beyond the minimum role requirements of the organization, in the areas of attendance, obeying rules and regulations, breaks, and so forth.	Smith et al. 1983, Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990. Similar dimensions also include obedience (Graham 1989, Van Dyne et al. 1994) and personal industry (Graham 1989, Moorman and Blakely 1995).
Sportsmanship	Willingness of employees to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining—to avoid complaining, petty grievances, railing against real or imagined slights, and making federal cases out of small potatoes.	Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990.
Courtesy	Discretionary behavior on the part of an individual aimed at preventing work-related problems with others.	Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990.
Civic virtue	Behavior on the part of individuals indicating that they responsibly participate in, are involved in, or are concerned about the life of the organization.	Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990.
Functional participation	Participatory contribution in which individuals focus on themselves rather than others in their organizations (e.g., performing additional work activities, volunteering for special assignments).	Van Dyne et al. 1994.
Advocacy participation	Behavior targeted at others in an organization and reflecting a willingness to be controversial, such as encouraging quiet people to speak up in meetings and helping coworkers think for themselves.	Van Dyne et al. 1994. Similar dimension is individual initiative (Graham 1989, Moorman and Blakely 1995).
Loyalty	Allegiance to an organization and promotion of its interests.	Graham 1989, Van Dyne et al. 1994. Similar dimension is loyal boosterism (Graham 1989, Moorman and Blakely 1995).
Voice	Promotive behavior that emphasizes the expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize.	Van Dyne et al. 1995, Van Dyne and LePine 1998.

variables, but “constants” in United States–based studies. We do not know whether OCB as we now think of it would reflect the same dimensionality in a different societal culture or in a different system of economic organization.

In comparing and contrasting four different research strategies for comparative multi-society studies, Hofstede (1984, 35) states that “If we want to prove universality of micro-level laws, it is more meaningful to test them in Sweden, Japan, and Zambia than in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.” Thus, an appropriate test for the invariant structure of OCB would compare it as manifested in one cultural context, the United States, with a context of demonstrably different traditions and economic systems. We suggest that the People’s Republic of China (China) provides that different context. This is not to say that either the United States or China provides a homogeneous set of forces that act upon the organizations in the respective countries. However, the prevailing paradigms for collective economic and social arrangements differ substantially in the two countries. While no doubt other countries might have been identified with similarly different paradigms, there is good reason to look at China because of its anticipated importance in the 21st century global economy.

In this article, we seek to understand the content domain of OCB in China. We first present a logical analysis of why national culture makes a difference in terms of which spontaneous contributions are likely to aid organizational effectiveness. We then examine the dimensions that actually emerge from the analysis of OCB incidents in China, as compared to those commonly investigated in the OCB literature. Finally, we analyze the impact of organization type on the distribution of different forms of OCB. This research helps us not only understand the dimensions of OCB in China, but also determine which dimensions in the literature are more *etic* (universal) or *emic* (culture specific), and how different economic institutions may shape OCB in China.

National Culture and OCB

Why might we expect the meaning and internal structure of OCB in China to be different from that which has developed in North American studies? By definition, OCB must, over time and in the aggregate, enhance organizational effectiveness. Thus, how do the cultural and institutional environments of the United States and China differ to suggest correlated differences in the factors that enhance or threaten organizational effectiveness?

Organization theorists such as Daft (1992) and Jones (1998) cite two means by which managers measure organizational effectiveness. The *external* or *system resource* approach looks at the input side of organizational systems and reflects how well the organization manages

and controls its external environment. The *internal systems* approach emphasizes the technical dimension of efficiency or innovation, or both. Ultimately, of course, organizations are concerned about both of these criteria, whether in the United States or China. The issue, though, is how tightly these two criteria (external resource control or internal systems efficiency) are linked, or the extent to which the one is seen as contingent upon the other. We posit that in China the external resource dimension of effectiveness will, overall, loom more salient in the concerns of managers, and that internal systems are, compared to the United States, less deterministic in the acquisition, retention, and control of resources.

The U.S. economy features a highly developed legal and regulatory context for transacting business. Thus, most of the interactions between a firm and its environment are guided by formal contracts, rule of law, and avenues of redress for violations. These are not matters to which the rank and file’s OCB could contribute, nor are such issues much affected by personal relationships between internal staff and outside parties.

In China, by contrast, the absence of commercial ground rules comparable to those in the U.S. economy means that the firm is vulnerable to capricious enforcement of such legal and regulatory codes as do exist (Ahlstrom et al. 2000). Local bureaucrats can, by fiat, impose taxes on a firm and force it to discontinue selling a certain product, or even to exit the industry altogether (Child 1994). The lack of a well-developed and tractable due process system means that in order to protect itself from such capricious threats to its effectiveness, a firm must develop a deep reservoir of external support for its practices and institutional presence. This involves not only good personal relationships between its top managers and local government leaders, but also a generalized sense in the community that it is a positive contributor to the welfare of the locality. One way this reputation can be maintained and enhanced is the visible involvement by the firm’s employees in both formal and informal activities benefiting the community. Therefore, we might well anticipate that an important component of OCB in China would involve discretionary prosocial gestures by internal staff in the surrounding community.

The legal and commercial infrastructure of North America provides a more level playing field with its commercial ground rules, but the rationale for this infrastructure is a free market in which firms compete on price and quality. To compete, a firm must achieve a high order of efficiency in its internal operations. We would expect, then, that a significant portion of what we characterize as OCB would be those spontaneous behaviors that enhance and sustain efficiency. And indeed, when we look at the dimensions of OCB in Table 1, we find that many of them represent contributions that enhance labor efficiency. The more productive the use of labor,

the lower the price at which products can be marketed and still yield a profit margin.

In China, however, buying and selling transactions among firms, though not utterly insensitive to price, depend in some measure on the trust inherent in personal relationships. A relationship of long standing, and many reciprocated favors, renders customers somewhat less sensitive to price differentials from competing vendors. Thus, a firm's internal efficiencies are not as urgent as in the United States, and we expect that OCB in China would not be so dominated by considerations of labor efficiency.

The free market economy of the United States emphasizes not only price, but also challenges to improve the quality of products and otherwise adapt to respond to new markets and competitor thrusts. Thus, an important form of OCB would involve initiatives taken by members to change the organization. Change initiatives almost invariably invite resistance and conflict. However, interpersonal conflict is generally not seen as purely negative in the United States. Indeed, it is almost a cliché in introductory textbooks of management that "conflict can be a positive force" if it is constructive, bounded, and task focused. The assumption is that conflict is healthy and can be managed. This assumption is not unreasonable, because U.S. culture tends toward individualism—individuals belong to and identify with numerous overlapping groups rather one large in-group—and thus there is usually little risk that conflict between individuals or small groups will escalate to a level that threatens the viability of the whole firm. Organizational change is needed for organizations to remain competitive, and, regardless of the conflict that is endemic to organizational change, initiatives for change will be encouraged.

In a highly collectivist culture such as China, organizational members relate more readily to an in-group based on extended family, place of origin, or networks of other ties and interests, such as alma mater (Farh et al. 1998). History (China's history in particular) documents that collectivist cultures are riven with periodic spasms of large-scale, intense conflict between large factions; see, e.g., the three-generational narrative *Wild Swans* (Chang 1991). Even instances of petty disagreement can, and often do, develop into bitter conflict at a major level between in-groups and out-groups, affecting not only organizational affairs, but also spilling over into the community. Escalation of conflict presents serious risks. Thus, in China we would likely find less inclination to consider as OCB those actions that challenge the status quo or stir up disagreement. We would probably see considerably more appreciation for spontaneous gestures that help preserve harmony and head off potential conflict.

Another implication of cultural collectivism has to do with the more personal forms of OCB. In North

America, the OCB "altruism" or "helping" is defined as assistance given to coworkers for job-related matters—i.e., the help is given to the coworker because the coworker is just that, a colleague defined by work roles. In a culture emphasizing more in-group versus out-group, we might not see helping as constrained to assistance in job operations. The coworker is also considered a friend, neighbor, comrade, and fellow community member. In Chinese firms, then, OCB might well include assistance on a purely personal level, e.g., helping coworkers with family problems or dwelling repairs, or ministering to them when they are ill.

To be sure, U.S. firms sometimes exploit opportunities for external resource control that have little to do with internal efficiency or innovation. The amount of money spent on lobbying and institutional advertising testifies to corporate concern for the political and social environment. Conversely, in China, even state-owned enterprises (SOEs) cannot utterly ignore efficiencies of internal operation, and one would expect to find some cases in which managers of SOEs use efficiency measures to acquire, retain, or reinforce political support for their domains. Still, noting China's long-standing traditions and the relatively higher incidence of market imperfections than in the United States, the above review leads us to expect that prevailing forms of OCB in China may be quite different from those described in the Western OCB literature. We expect to find OCB that (a) extends beyond considerations for internal efficiency, (b) indicates concern for harmonious social relationships at the workplace, (c) involves employees' personal lives, and (d) strengthens the firm's standing in the community.

Influence of Organization Type

Beyond cross-cultural differences, we also expect that the type of organization may influence OCB in China. Before 1979, China was gripped by a system of central planning in which the government owned all production resources and allocated them based on a "quota" system. In this prereform era, SOEs were practically the only firms in China. Beginning in 1980, the government began to allow enterprises with different ownership structures, such as foreign-invested enterprises (FIEs) (wholly owned and Sino-foreign joint ventures), private-owned enterprises (POEs), and town or village cooperatives. Unlike SOE, which are owned and supported by the government, these alternate forms of organizations operate in a semireformed market economy with intense competition (Boisot and Child 1988). As the reforms widened in the 1990s, SOEs also faced increasing competition in the market. Still, they continue to operate in a more regulated and thus more protective environment than non-SOEs, especially POEs and FIEs.

As noted earlier, a free market economy implies competition in price and quality. To compete successfully in China's semireformed market economy, POEs and

FIEs must achieve operational efficiency. In contrast, such internal efficiencies are not as urgent in SOEs. Therefore, we might expect that important OCB in SOEs would not be so dominated by considerations of workforce efficiency as would POEs and FIEs. Because economic transactions involving SOEs do not occur in a free market structure such as the United States, and because access to resources hinge on the beneficence of the external political environment (at national, provincial, and local levels), we anticipate that salient forms of OCB in China's SOEs will include contributions that go beyond efficiency or product quality and are more likely to extend beyond the workplace to include behavior in the community.

Method

Overview

To identify the major dimensions of OCB in China, we used an inductive approach, which called for gathering descriptions of behavioral incidents from respondents and then classifying them into a number of categories by content analysis with an agreement index constructed using multiple judges (Hinkin 1998, Kerlinger 1986). This approach is appropriate because there is little theory to guide a priori notions about specific forms of OCB in China (cf. Hinkin 1998). We sampled a diverse group of Chinese employees, presented them with a broad definition of OCB based on Organ (1988), and then asked them to provide examples of OCB that they observed in practice. We proceeded with an item selection and classification process, which culminated in 10 OCB dimensions. We then compared Chinese OCB dimensions with their Western counterparts. We also used logistic regression analysis to examine the effects of organization type on the reporting of OCB incidents in each dimension while controlling for respondent position, demographics, and geographical differences.

Sample Characteristics

To collect the data, we recruited the help of four mainland professors in Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen to distribute the OCB survey in various training classes. The final sample consisted of 158 Chinese participants in varied job functions from 72 enterprises, ranging across diverse industries and technologies. Among them, 58% were male, 55% were in supervisory positions, and 44% had at least an undergraduate education. In terms of regions, 63% of the sample was collected from Shanghai, 22% from Beijing, and 15% from Shenzhen. In terms of organization type, 39% of the participants were from SOEs, 31% from FIEs, 16% from government agencies or mixed typed organizations, 9% from POEs, 3% from collective enterprises, and 1% from town and village enterprises. Thus, our sample was highly diverse,

and given the fact that the average number of respondents from each organization was just over two, it is unlikely that any particular industry, technology, or job function exerted disproportionate weight on the nature of the items generated.

Generation of Item Pool and Reliability Test

The 158 respondents generated a total of 726 items (4.6 items per respondent), all of which were transcribed onto 3" × 4" cards. The two Chinese authors of this paper and a Chinese doctoral student screened all items based on two criteria: (a) the item must have clear meaning in the Chinese language; and (b) the item must refer to employee behavior. Sixty-one items (8.4%) were considered "nonusable" (unclear meaning in Chinese or did not refer to a behavior) and were discarded, resulting in 665 usable items. The three-person screening panel then classified the 665 items into categories based on similarity of item content. After several iterations, they agreed on a 27-category system, which could classify all 665 usable items into mutually exclusive categories.

To test the reliability of our designated categories, we recruited nine Chinese doctoral students to serve as test judges. They worked in three separate panels, with each panel focused on one-third of the 665-item pool. All judges went through a two-hour training session in which they were taught to be familiar with the definition of each category; they then tried some practice items. Upon completion of the training, the nine judges worked independently to classify the assigned items from their panels into the 27 categories. Since each item in the pool was classified by three test judges independently, there were four possible outcomes: (a) full agreement—all three test judges classified the item correctly into its designated category; (b) two agreements—two of the three judges classified the item correctly; (c) one agreement; and (d) zero agreement. Results show that 74% of the items were classified exactly the way as the researchers had intended, 15% had two agreements, and 11% had one or zero agreement. We eliminated the latter group and retained 595 clear items for subsequent analysis.

Results

Forming OCB Dimensions

Table 2 presents a description of the 27 categories and frequency of distribution of the 595 items. In the interest of scientific parsimony, we set out to reduce the categories to a more manageable number using two guiding principles. First, we collapsed conceptually similar categories into broader, more abstract dimensions. Second, we eliminated dimensions that had very few items. Our working assumption was that if a category or dimension had few items, it suggested that either most Chinese respondents did not consider such behavior as

Table 2 OCB Categories and Dimensions in China

Categories for Incidents	Frequency	Percent	Emerging OCB Dimensions
#1 Engage in self-training	65	10.9	<i>Self-training*</i>
#2 Volunteer for overtime work	52	8.7	<i>Taking initiative</i>
#3 Contribute to public welfare (e.g., donate blood, plant trees)	45	7.6	<i>Social welfare participation*</i>
#4 Keep workplace clean and neat	42	7.1	<i>Keeping workplace clean*</i>
#5 Participate in activities organized by employee groups (e.g., games)	39	6.6	<i>Group activity participation</i>
#6 Make constructive suggestions	38	6.4	<i>Voice</i>
#7 Promote company image and products to outsiders	38	6.4	<i>Promoting company image</i>
#8 Help coworkers in nonwork matters	37	6.2	<i>Helping coworkers</i>
#9 Take on extra responsibilities	32	5.4	<i>Taking initiative</i>
#10 Save company resources (e.g., equipment, electricity)	31	5.2	<i>Protecting and saving company resources*</i>
#11 Help colleagues in work-related matters	31	5.2	<i>Helping coworkers</i>
#12 Maintain harmonious relationships and diffuse conflict	28	4.7	<i>Interpersonal harmony*</i>
#13 Prohibit behavior harmful to organization	18	3.0	<i>Voice</i>
#14 Comply with social norms (e.g., be honest, do not spit)	15	2.5	Dropped
#15 Serve community (e.g., assist elders)	14	2.4	<i>Social welfare participation*</i>
#16 Exercise to keep fit	12	2.0	Dropped
#17 Share useful work-related information	11	1.8	<i>Taking initiative</i>
#18 Use personal resources to aid company (e.g., personal social connections)	11	1.8	<i>Protecting and saving company resources*</i>
#19 Participate in company-organized group activities	10	1.7	<i>Group activity participation</i>
#20 Defend company against disasters	5	0.8	<i>Protecting and saving company resources*</i>
#21 Cooperate at work	5	0.8	Dropped
#22 Indoctrinate others with correct political thought	4	0.7	Dropped
#23 Participate in union activities	3	0.5	Dropped
#24 Refer others to work for company	3	0.5	Dropped
#25 Communicate within the firm	2	0.3	Dropped
#26 Be patriotic	2	0.3	Dropped
#27 Obey company rules	2	0.3	Dropped
TOTAL	595	99.8	

Note. Dimensions marked with an asterisk (*) are extended dimensions.

OCB, or that such behavior occurred relatively infrequently. In either case, we decided to focus on the more prevalent forms for further analysis.

The two Chinese authors and one Chinese doctoral student worked independently in combining OCB categories into broader, conceptually meaningful dimensions. We then reviewed one another's results, held hours of discussion, then reached a consensus. We identified 10 major OCB dimensions from the 27 categories, as shown in the column "Emerging OCB Dimensions" of Table 2. Nine categories were eliminated from further analysis because they were distinct, and each comprised less than 2.5% of the item pool. We divided the 10 dimensions into two groups: (a) common dimensions—those whose content domain resembled the nine major OCB dimensions in the Western literature listed in Table 1; and (b) extended dimensions—those whose content domain did not match those in Table 1.

Common OCB Dimensions

The first common dimension is *taking initiative*: behavior that indicates one's willingness to take on additional responsibilities such as voluntarily working overtime (#2), performing extra duties (#9), and sharing useful

work-related information (#17). It resembles *conscientiousness* (Smith et al. 1983), functional participation (Van Dyne et al. 1994), and job dedication (Van Scotter and Motowidlo 1996). This dimension is the most frequently mentioned, accounting for 95 items (16% of the total 595 items).

The second common dimension, *helping coworkers*, refers to helping colleagues in work-related matters (#11) or nonwork matters (#8), and is similar to *altruism* (Smith et al. 1983) or helping (Van Dyne and LePine 1998) in Western literature. However, helping coworkers in China is broader in scope than its Western counterparts in that it includes helping with work-related matters (31 items) as well as nonwork matters (37 items); together these account for 11.4% of the items.

The third common dimension is *voice*: making constructive suggestions (#6) or speaking up to prohibit harmful behavior to the firm (#13). This dimension is broader than that of Van Dyne and LePine (1998) because it also includes prohibitive voice aimed at preventing others from doing harm to the firm. Voice included 9.4% (56 items) of the OCB items.

The fourth common dimension is *group activity participation*, which refers to participating in activities

organized by the firm (#19) or by special groups of employees (#5). This dimension is similar to *civic virtue* (Organ 1988, Podsakoff et al. 1990), but the items refer mainly to activities organized by employee groups, which is quite different from the U.S. literature. This dimension comprises 49 items, or 8.2% of the total.

The final common dimension is *promoting company image* (#7), which is similar to *loyalty* (Van Dyne et al. 1994) and loyal boosterism (Moorman and Blakely 1995). It includes 6.4% (38) of the OCB items.

Extended OCB Dimensions

The first extended dimension is *self-training* (#1), which refers to improving one's own knowledge or working skills. It includes 65 items (10.9%) and is similar to self-development as described by George and Brief (1992). Despite George and Brief's call for research on self-development, past research has overlooked this potential OCB dimension (Podsakoff et al. 2000).

The second extended dimension is *social welfare participation*, which refers to employees' participation in activities of public welfare (#3) or community service (#15). Fifty-nine OCB items (9.9%) were classified into this dimension. It has not been discussed in prior OCB literature.

The third Chinese dimension is *protecting and saving company resources*, which includes actions that save company resources (#10), use personal resources (e.g., money, information, social capital) to aid the company (#18), and protect the company from disasters (e.g., fire or flood) (#20). It includes 47 items (7.9%). Although noted by Katz (1964) and George and Brief (1992), this dimension has been neglected in the Western OCB literature (Podsakoff et al. 2000).

The fourth extended dimension is *keeping the workplace clean* (#4), which has 42 items (7.1%). Organ (1988) suggests that cleanliness at the workplace is considered a form of conscientiousness in many organizations, and Van Dyne et al. (1994) include it in their measure of obedience, but it has not been investigated as a separate OCB dimension in the Western literature (Podsakoff et al. 2000).

The fifth and final extended dimension is *interpersonal harmony* (#12), which refers to employee actions aimed at facilitating and preserving harmonious relations in the workplace. It includes 28 items (4.7%). Organ (1988) once suggested "peace-making" as a form of OCB, but this dimension has been neglected in the Western OCB literature (Podsakoff et al. 2000).

Influence of Organization Type

To assess the impact of organization type on the distribution of incidents across dimensions, we performed a logistic regression on each dimension. In every case, all incidents belonging to a given dimension were coded as "1," and the rest (those that did not belong to

that dimension) were coded as "0." Logistic regression allows us to predict the likelihood of OCB incidents to occur in a given dimension using a set of predictors. It models a linear relationship between the predictors and the logarithmic odds of the dichotomous dependent variable. We included respondent age, gender (1 = male; 0 = female), education, and position (1 = supervisory; 0 = nonsupervisory) in the equation as controls. We also included two dummy variables (Area 1 and Area 2) to control for city differences. Table 3 presents the results of logistic regression analysis for OCB dimensions.¹

To assess the impact of organization type, we coded SOEs as "1" and FIEs and POEs as "0." We omitted respondents from collective and town and village enterprises because their cases were too few (less than 5% of the sample) for a meaningful analysis. For common dimensions, organization type had a significant effect only on *taking initiative*. Specifically, employees from non-SOEs were more likely to report taking initiative than those from SOEs (21.3% versus 12.4%). For extended dimensions, organization type had a significant effect on *social welfare participation* and *protecting and saving company resources*. As expected, employees from SOEs were more likely to report social welfare participation (19% versus 5.4%) than those from non-SOEs, whereas employees from non-SOEs reported more incidents of protecting and saving company resources than those from SOEs (11.3% versus 4.8%). The above results were generally consistent with our predictions that (a) employees from SOEs reported fewer of the internal efficiency-oriented OCB than those from non-SOEs (i.e., taking initiative, saving and protecting resources), and (b) employees from SOEs reported more of the community-oriented OCB than those from non-SOEs (i.e., participation in social welfare).

Discussion

Using an inductive approach to explore the content domain of OCB in China, we identified 10 major OCB dimensions. Five of them—taking initiative, helping coworkers, voice, group activity participation, and promoting company image—are similar to those that have been empirically investigated in the Western OCB literature. This suggests that these five dimensions have broad applicability across cultures. However, the specific behaviors that constitute the construct domain of these dimensions are far from identical. For example, helping coworkers in China includes nonwork helping, which is typically not considered part of altruism in the United States.

Why do Chinese employees consider nonwork helping as OCB? Before the reform era, SOEs provided employees with comprehensive benefits. As reforms deepen and market competition heats up, organizations can no longer afford such care. The 1990s saw dramatic cutbacks in health care, child care, employee assistance, and

Table 3 Results of Logistic Regression Analyses^a (N = 463)

OCB Dimensions	Control Variables						Independent Variable Org. Type B	Model Statistics ^b
	Area 1 B	Area 2 B	Age B	Gender B	Education B	Position B		
Common Dimensions								
Taking initiative	0.221 (0.610)	-0.069 (0.342)	0.174 (0.139)	-0.277 (0.281)	0.351 (0.187)	0.212 (0.303)	-0.699** (0.273)	16.264*
Helping coworkers	0.001 (0.800)	0.134 (0.395)	-0.324 (0.180)	0.512 (0.364)	-0.018 (0.206)	0.577 (0.378)	-0.524 (0.335)	13.284
Voice	0.712 (0.692)	0.431 (0.403)	0.226 (0.197)	-0.418 (0.353)	0.447 (0.250)	0.697 (0.414)	-0.174 (0.341)	17.225*
Group activity participation	-0.095 (1.093)	-0.090 (0.648)	-0.567** (0.217)	-0.598 (0.390)	-0.788** (0.252)	0.516 (0.431)	0.678 (0.401)	25.846**
Promoting company image	-0.365 (1.070)	-0.220 (0.499)	-0.041 (0.218)	-0.292 (0.411)	0.456 (0.277)	-0.061 (0.444)	-0.159 (0.401)	4.365
Extended Dimensions								
Self-training	-6.186 (14.593)	-2.673** (1.035)	-0.312 (0.166)	0.504 (0.366)	-0.113 (0.183)	0.177 (0.344)	0.662 (0.340)	33.039**
Social welfare participation	0.287 (1.112)	-0.543 (0.827)	0.353* (0.172)	-0.065 (0.366)	-0.620** (0.242)	-1.014** (0.366)	0.964** (0.373)	42.114**
Protecting or saving resources	1.166 (0.701)	0.508 (0.477)	0.174 (0.185)	0.121 (0.386)	0.304 (0.281)	-0.807* (0.405)	-0.969* (0.399)	15.452*
Keeping workplace clean	0.163 (1.089)	0.911 (0.471)	-0.037 (0.207)	0.798 (0.455)	0.020 (0.266)	-0.039 (0.420)	-0.244 (0.387)	9.008
Interpersonal harmony	-5.355 (14.577)	0.117 (0.523)	0.353 (0.237)	-0.173 (0.473)	0.826* (0.364)	0.025 (0.512)	-0.340 (0.454)	11.621

Note. ^aStandard errors are in parentheses. Coding scheme for independent variables are as follows: Area 1 (1 = Shenzhen; 0 = Beijing or Shanghai); Area 2 (1 = Beijing; 0 = Shenzhen or Shanghai); Gender (1 = male; 0 = female); Position (1 = supervisory; 0 = nonsupervisory); Type of organization (1 = SOEs; 0 = FIEs or POEs).

^bThe model statistics are a global chi-square for logistic regression.

* $p < 0.5$; ** $p < 0.01$.

employment security. Helping coworkers cope with personal crises becomes an important form of OCB because it helps the firm meet employee needs and is instrumental in building a cohesive workforce. Including nonwork helping as OCB also reflects a Chinese cultural tendency to mix the private and public spheres of life. A study of Chinese leadership shows that leader consideration (“benevolence”) typically includes behavior that demonstrates individualized, holistic concern for subordinates’ personal and familial well-being (Farh and Cheng 2000). Researchers who wish to study altruism across cultures need to be sensitive to these differences.

Extended Dimensions of OCB in China

Among the five extended dimensions of OCB, self-training, protecting and saving company resources, and keeping the workplace clean have been mentioned by Western authors, but have not been empirically investigated. Clearly, these behaviors are not unique to China. But why do they emerge in our Chinese sample but not figure prominently in the Western OCB literature? We suspect that the salience of these three OCB dimensions in China compared with the United States may be related to stages of economic development. Because China is at an earlier stage of economic development, organizational support for training, development, and maintenance is

more limited than in the United States. Employees’ willingness to invest in self-training and to maintain a clean workplace thus represents salient and important forms of OCB. Similarly, due to the scarcity of resources in China, conserving resources such as office supplies and electricity becomes a salient form of OCB that cuts organizational costs. Future researchers should investigate the relative importance of these three OCB dimensions across societies.

Interpersonal harmony has not been proposed as an OCB dimension in the Western literature. However, Farh et al. (1997) found it to be one of the two emic OCB dimensions in Taiwan. The Chinese have long been known for their concern for harmony and unity (solidarity) in social relationships (Yang 1993). Trompenaars (1996) differentiated cultures in which we engage others in *specific* areas of life from cultures in which we engage others *diffusely* in multiple areas of our lives. He measured specificity and diffuseness in different national cultures, and found China to have the most diffuse culture. Thus, we would expect conflict in Chinese organizations to be more likely to escalate than in a more specific culture such as the United States. The Chinese tend to see avoidance of conflict as functional and appropriate, whereas Westerners tend to see it as evasive and counterproductive (e.g., Kirkbride et al. 1991). Future

research should investigate whether the interpersonal harmony OCB contributes in varying degrees to organizational effectiveness in different societal cultures.

Among the five extended dimensions, social welfare participation is probably unique to China because of its association with the communist legacy. Under the central planning system before 1979, state-sanctioned activities (such as donating blood, planting trees, and adherence to the one-child-per-family policy) were often regarded as “quotas” and allocated to organizations to fulfill. Meeting these quotas was important to a firm’s survival because a good relationship with the government guaranteed a supply of scarce resources and enhanced the firm’s social standing in the eyes of powerful party bureaucrats. Although such rigid practices are increasingly abandoned in current economic reforms, their legacy hangs on, especially in SOEs. It is thus not surprising that participation in social welfare activities has emerged as a major form of OCB for employees in SOEs, but much less so for employees in POEs or FIEs.

Western OCB Dimensions Not Found in China

Three major dimensions of OCB in Western literature did not emerge in our Chinese sample, including our Taiwan sample: sportsmanship, courtesy, and advocacy participation (Farh et al. 1997). Lam et al. (1999) found that in comparison with employees from Australia and the United States, employees from Hong Kong (China) and Japan were more likely to consider sportsmanship and courtesy as in-role behaviors. Such a difference was not found with altruism, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. It is possible that Chinese employees in this study also considered courtesy and sportsmanship to be largely in-role behavior and thus not OCB. It is also possible that sportsmanship matters more in a low-uncertainty-avoidance, low-power-distance culture, in which individuals might reasonably challenge decisions and actions by managers; in a higher-power-distance and risk-aversion culture, such challenges might be expected to be rare, in any case.

Advocacy participation invites controversy (Van Dyne et al. 1994); this is less palatable to Chinese, who favor interpersonal harmony (Yang 1993). Thus, advocacy participation may be rare in Chinese organizations, and even when displayed might not be regarded as conducive to organizational effectiveness.

Influences of Organization Type

As expected, organization type had a strong influence on the reporting of OCB on several dimensions. Compared with employees from non-SOEs, SOE employees tended to report more social welfare participation and fewer incidents of taking initiative and protecting and saving company resources. These differences are consistent with our expectation that state employees are influenced by the legacy of prereform policies of the

communist government. State employees probably participated more in social welfare activities because their companies were more dependent on the state, and were less concerned about taking initiative and saving company resources because they were partially shielded from the full force of market competition.

Corporate Transformation in China

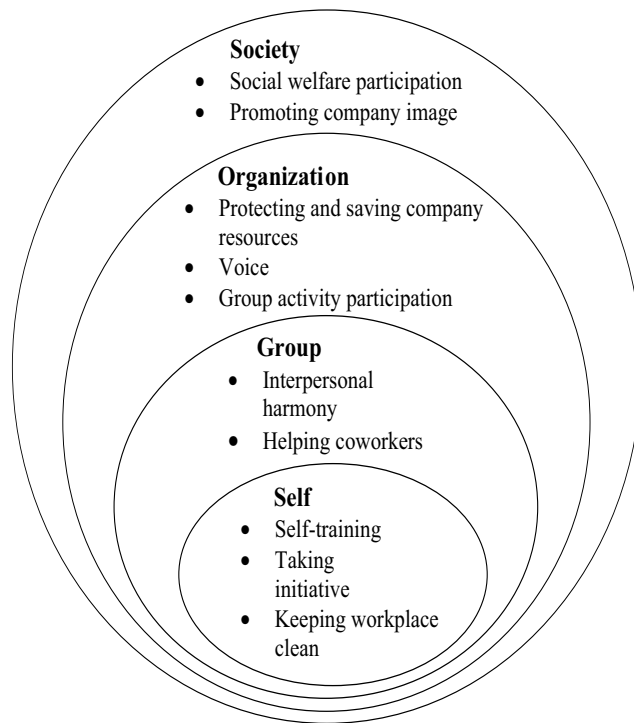
Inevitably, the title of this special issue of *Organization Science* raises the question of whether the nature and structure of OCB must change as China transforms itself into a major power in the global marketplace. Any attempted response to this question is premature, because as yet we do not have much evidence as to whether such changes have occurred in OCB in other societies that have already gone far toward making this transition. Nonetheless, from anecdotal and indirect evidence, we might speculate that much of what inheres in the collectivist framework of Chinese norms and values will endure as China’s global economic status changes. For example, Taiwan has for some time now emulated the United States in building a legal-regulatory framework that undergirds free markets, yet Farh et al. (1997) found evidence that traditional Chinese values still influence how Taiwanese employees think about OCB.

Nevertheless, we also expect that as China’s transformation continues apace, enhanced sensitivity to the efficiency-promotion forms of OCB will occur. Managers who leaven ideology with pragmatism will, we suspect, notice and appreciate the spontaneous contributions in the form of saving time, reducing waste, accelerating the learning curve of coworkers, and improving operations. If the labor force responds to a more open market with increased mobility, some of the in-group sentiments that to date have patterned informal employee behavior will have weaker influences on OCB. In effect, OCB incidents that occur in an individual and organizational context will be more salient, and those that occur within the focus of the in-group and the community will be less salient.

Toward a New Classification of OCB: The Concentric Model

Existing schemes for partitioning OCB have been based on the target beneficiary—coworker, supervisor, organization—of discretionary contributions (Smith et al. 1983, Williams and Anderson 1991, Barr and Pawar 1995). Such schemes could not adequately account for the 10 dimensions of OCB we found in China. How would one classify social welfare participation and self-training? A new framework is needed.

The diverse OCB dimensions found in China suggest that it may be more fruitful to classify OCB based on foci or contexts of action, rather than on the intended target or beneficiary of the action. We propose a concentric model to classify OCB. In this model, OCB can be

Figure 1 A Concentric Model of OCB Dimensions

classified into four domains based on the focus or context of action: self, group, organization, and society (see Figure 1). The self domain includes contributions that in principle could be rendered anonymously, privately, and purely as a matter of one's own volition. Three types of OCB in China—self-training, taking initiative, and keeping the workplace clean—fit in this focus. The group domain includes those contributions that cannot be meaningfully or practically divorced from a context of interaction with peers. Interpersonal harmony and helping coworkers both fall into this focus. OCB with an organizational focus includes those contributions that must engage some organizationally relevant attribute, such as corporate resources, governance, workflow, or technology. Here we would locate OCB dimensions such as protecting and saving company resources, voice, and group activity participation. These activities do not relate to specific people, yet they contribute to general organizational effectiveness. The society focus subsumes those contributions that can be enacted only across the boundary of the organization or in its external environment with outside stakeholders. Social welfare participation and protecting company image fit this description.

We might speculate, tentatively, that the relative importance of these various OCB foci relate to some general aspects of culture. In cultures marked by relatively high individualism, low power distance, a well-developed legal infrastructure, and role specificity, as in North America and the Northwestern European countries, one might expect emphasis on those contributions

that individuals can readily render on their own, but within the context in which they relate to the formal organization and its attributes—i.e., the dominant foci would be “self” and “organization.” Here, individuals would expect to have fairly broad latitude for personal initiative; they would expect interaction with others to occur largely in the context of organizational role relevance, and they would aid others in task-relevant concerns to sustain and enhance systems and processes. External foci would not be so significant in a milieu girded by a sophisticated structure of law, contracts, and ready acceptance of free market principles. By contrast, in cultures marked by collectivism, high power distance, and diffuse roles, relatively more emphasis would occur in the “group” and “society” foci. Individuals have less latitude for unilateral actions; relatively more of what they contribute would hinge on approval by higher status figures and group acceptance. Interactions with the group would diffuse organizational and personal roles, and preservation of harmony would be critical. Absent the formal and impersonal mechanisms for linking with external stakeholders, much potential for OCB resides in the contributions that participants can render in the social environment—in the form of contributions to the community, reputation for honor and virtue, and good favor among those (i.e. vendors, suppliers, and bureaucrats) whose goodwill substitutes for an impersonal regulatory infrastructure.

Conclusion

In closing, this article contributes to our understanding of OCB in several important ways. First and foremost, our study, as did Farh et al.'s (1997) study of Taiwan, shows that what is considered to be OCB may vary markedly across cultural boundaries. Culture conditions our belief about what behaviors contribute to organizational effectiveness. Because the Chinese believe that conflict is harmful to organizations, interpersonal harmony emerges as a major form of OCB in China, including Taiwan. Culture also shapes our criteria for organizational effectiveness. In the Chinese tradition, SOEs are expected to support government promoted social causes. Employee participation in social welfare activities that help the firm fulfill such an obligation naturally contributes to organizational effectiveness.

Second, our study also found self-training to be an important OCB dimension. Unlike other forms of OCB, self-training contributes to organizational effectiveness by making employees themselves more productive. In a knowledge-centered society, self-training may play a more important role in the future.

Third, our study extends the work of Farh et al. (1997) in demonstrating that OCB does not simply vary across national boundaries, but also across organization types in a single society. Future studies should examine the differences in OCB in forms and intensity across different

organizational fields (e.g., for-profit versus not-for-profit, service versus manufacturing).

Fourth, we proposed a concentric model to classify the many different forms of OCB. Although this model is preliminary, it goes beyond the OCBI/OCBO model popular in the literature and has implications for future cross-cultural research on OCB.

Finally, the results here have some relevance to the issue of just what kind of construct OCB should be. Law et al. (1998) have rightly noted the ambiguities and inconsistencies regarding the relationships between the larger construct of OCB and its varied and overlapping dimensions, as described by various writers. Some researchers have focused on the separate components of OCB (e.g., helping, courtesy, civic virtue), implicitly treating it as an aggregate or composite construct formed by some linear combination of its specific forms. Others have written about OCB in such a manner as to imply, whether intended or not, that it is a latent construct underlying the common variance in the specific dimensions, much as “*g*” is regarded as the underlying construct of cognitive ability. As Law et al. (1998) note, these alternative forms of relating the construct to its dimensions have vastly different implications for research design, particularly for studies that explore the antecedents and consequences of OCB.

The research here, the underlying premises that gird it, and our interpretations of the results would seem to argue more for a view of OCB as an aggregate or composite construct vis-à-vis its dimensions. Otherwise, it is hard to understand how the important dimensions of OCB could vary by culture and by organization form within that culture. Furthermore, our concentric model suggests that context or focus—self, group, organization, external environment—defines the “feasible set” for particular forms of OCB. If, as we suspect, different cultures, different organizations, and different jobs within organizations covary with the importance of one focus or another, we would not expect a high order of correlation between the specific OCB dimensions.

A metaanalytic study by LePine et al. (2002) finds empirical results favoring an interpretation of OCB as a latent construct; not only were the specific dimensions found to correlate on the order of 0.50 and higher, but the estimated population correlations between predictors (satisfaction, commitment, fairness, leader support, conscientiousness as a trait) and the dimensions were virtually identical. However, they also acknowledge that correlated method variance—in the form of same-source ratings by supervisors of subordinates on all dimensions—could have substantially inflated these correlations.

We suggest that future research and theory development treat OCB as a construct defined by its composite in its various foci, with OCB in each focus predicted by different variables (or at least variables differently

weighted) and by its particular contributions to organizational effectiveness. For example, OCB in the focus or context of the external environment plausibly contributes to organizational effectiveness by facilitating the acquisition of resources or inputs, while OCB in the context of the self contributes by improved operational efficiency, and OCB in the organizational context contributes by aiding innovation.

Limitations

There are several major constraints of this study that limit the generalizability of its findings. First, although we obtained a diverse group of respondents from 72 organizations in three major Chinese cities, our sample may not be representative of the working population there. Thus, our findings are exploratory in nature and need to be confirmed in future research before broad generalizations can be made. Second, while our study found that forms of OCB varied between the United States and China, and between different economic institutions, we did not include or control other potentially relevant contextual shapers of OCB in our study (e.g., industry, technology, strategic orientation of the firm). Future research should include these contextual factors in a single study so that the effects of context on OCB can be more fully examined. Third, our findings may be conditioned by the nature of the work being done by the respondents in this study. For example, some form of OCB (e.g., keeping the workplace clean) may be more appropriate to nonprofessional positions, but not to professionals, and others (e.g., helping coworkers) would seem appropriate to those who work closely with others, but not to those who work in isolation in the field. In other words, what is considered to be salient forms of OCB may depend on how the job is defined, where the job falls in the value chain, and its expected relationship to outsiders (Boudreau and Ramstad 2003). Since our sample of workers might not be random across jobs, it may be that the nature of the jobs that happen to comprise the sample explains some of the relationships observed, rather than the broad cultural and institutional differences. Also, Welbourne et al. (1998) suggest that the salience of OCB as a dimension of performance varies as a function of the larger roles, not just jobs, and that participants are expected to enact within various work contexts. Future researchers should explore these possibilities.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Tai Young Kim, Anne Tsui, George Milkovich, and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. They also want to thank Wang Hui for his assistance in content analysis. A paper that reported content analysis results of a pilot study of this research was published in a book chapter (Farh et al.

2002) in an edited volume by Anne Tsui and C. M. Lau. This research was supported by grants from the Research Grant Council of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project: HKUST 6245/97H).

Endnote

¹We also analysed the data set at person level using multiple regression analysis. We examined the effect of organization type on the frequency of OCB items by dimension while including the same set of control variables. We found similar patterns of results. Due to space constraints, we omitted reporting this finding. We also omitted a table that reports the number and percentage of OCB items in each dimension by respondent position and organization type. This table is available from the first author. Moreover, representative items for each dimension can be found in Farh et al. (2002).

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