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## Helping and Deviant Behavior

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What is the influence of task conflict and task interdependence?

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### *Abstract*

*Organizations increasingly use teams to accomplish the task. Two behaviors are important for the outcomes of organizations, namely helping behavior and deviant behavior. Helping behavior is a beneficial outcome for an organization and deviant behavior is an unfavorable outcome for an organization. It is important to know more about the determinants of these behaviors. The aim of this scenario study is to research the influence of task conflict and task interdependence on helping behavior and deviant behavior. The first concept investigated is the influence of task conflict on the relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior. The second concept examined is the influence of task interdependence on the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior. Results show that task conflict had a positive effect on deviant behavior. Task interdependence had a positive influence on the negative relation between task conflict and deviant behavior.*

## Introduction

Organizations nowadays rely much on teams to accomplish their goals (c.f., Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). It is important for these organizations to know how people work under certain circumstances and what processes are important in work teams. The behavior of team members influences the outcomes of teams and how well the work is done. Two important behavioral outcomes that are being investigated in this paper are helping behavior and deviant behavior. Helping behavior is one of the examples of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Organizational Citizenship Behavior is defined by Bachrach, Powell and Bendoly (2006) as “the individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (p.193). Helping behavior is defined in this paper as voluntarily assisting other group members in work related areas (Ng & VanDyne, 2005). This research will focus on the influences of task conflict and task interdependence on helping behavior. The second concept that will be researched in this study is the influence of task conflict and task interdependence on deviant behavior. Deviant behavior is defined as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p 556).

Helping behavior is beneficial for teams because it is likely to enhance team performance (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). When a member is behind in work, helping is beneficial for the outcomes of the team (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Sharing resources and knowledge are also aspects of helping that increase the outcome of the team. Working with teams increasingly makes helping behavior a part

of the culture of an organization (Bachrach, Powell & Bendoly, 2006). Managers even evaluate members of team on their helping skills and this phenomenon makes helping behavior an important topic to research (Bachrach, Powell & Bendoly, 2006). Although the determinants of helping behavior have been studied in the past (Allen, Sargent, & Bradley, 2003; Cleavenger, Gardner, & Mhatre, 2007; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991; Ng & VanDyne, 2005), little research has been done on the effect that task conflict has on the relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior. This is important to study because teams play a major role in organizations and it is beneficial to know what influence task conflict has on a task interdependent team and the helping behavior of that team. Task interdependence is defined as “the extent to which employees depend on other members of their team in order to carry out their work effectively” (Bachrach, Powell & Bendoly, 2006, p 194).

The influence of conflict on the relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior will be investigated in this paper. Conflict, in general, is defined as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Wall & Callister, 1995, p 519). There are different sorts of conflict, for example relational conflict, process conflict, and task conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). This research focuses on task conflict. Task conflict is defined as “disagreements among group members about the tasks being performed” (Jehn, 1995, p 258). Examples of a task conflict are opposing points of view about the procedures and organizational policies, judgments and interpretation of facts and about how the task should be done. Previous research suggests that when task interdependence is positive, that is, the more team members are dependent upon each other to complete the task, the more helping behavior team members will display (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). However, ample research on workgroups and teams

found that conflict is likely to occur wherever people need to interact and work together to get the job done (Wall & Callister, 1995), which raises the question what will happen when both task interdependence and task conflict occur in teams. This is important to know because task conflict might influence the behavior of team members.

The second focus of this research will be on deviant behavior. Deviant behavior is considered to be negatively related to team effectiveness or performance (Dalal, 2005; LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Examples of deviant behavior are theft, fraud, absenteeism or verbal or physical aggression (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Deviant behavior can be directed at the members of the team, which is called interpersonal deviance. Deviant behavior can also be directed at the organization, which is called organizational deviance (Tobin, 2001). The focus in this paper lies on interpersonal deviant behavior. The productivity of a team will be lower when members are behaving deviant and as a result the costs for the organizations are high (Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

Members of organizations that work in teams are likely to have more contact with the members of that team than with other members of the organization and conflict will therefore be more likely to occur (Cleavenger, Gardner & Mhatre, 2007). For this reason, it is important to examine the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior. Past research showed that conflict has a positive influence on deviant behavior (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). This research will investigate the moderating role of task interdependence on this positive relationship.

To summarize, it is important to investigate the effects of both task interdependence and task conflict on helping and deviant behavior. Helping and deviance are behaviors that may have far reaching consequences. Helping behavior

can result in outcomes being raised to a higher level like for example higher performances of a team (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Deviant behavior on the other hand will decrease the performance of groups and the organizations (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). There is little known about the simultaneous effects of task conflict and task interdependence on these behaviors. The results of this study should enhance our knowledge about the influences of these behaviors within teams. With teams increasingly becoming a part of organizations, task conflict and task interdependence are more likely to become part of teams. Therefore, it is beneficial to know how task conflict and task interdependence influence helping behavior and deviant behavior. The additional value of this study is the moderating role of task conflict on the relation between task interdependence and helping behavior. Although it has not been researched before, task conflict might influence the helping behavior of an interdependent team.

## Theory and hypotheses

The first research question in this paper will focus on the moderating role that task conflict has on the relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior. This results in the following research question, which is summarized in Figure 1:

*How does task conflict moderate the positive link between task interdependence and helping behavior?*

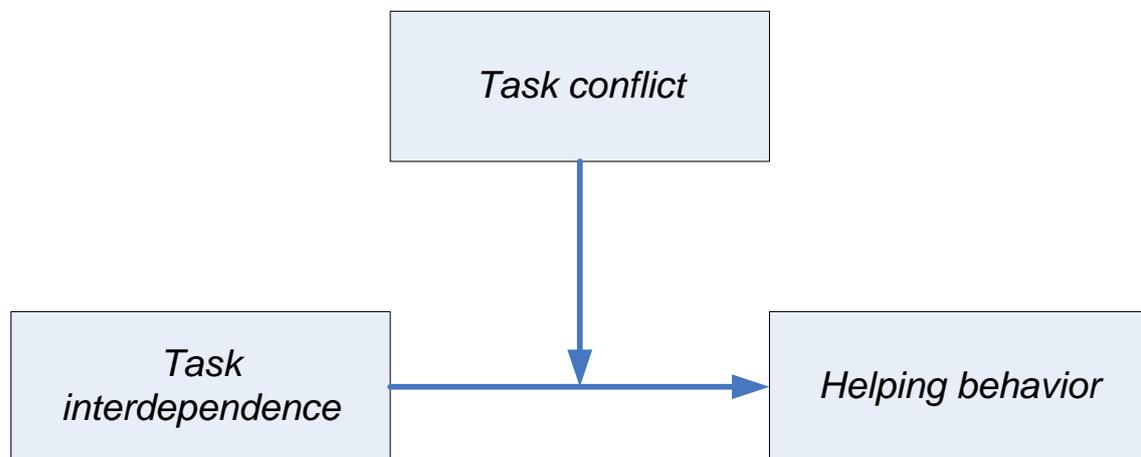


Figure 1. Process model of the first research question.

### *Task interdependence and helping behavior*

Research revealed that task interdependence has a positive effect on OCB (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991; Ng & VanDyne, 2005). When team members are highly task interdependent, members have to rely on each other to accomplish their tasks. They have to work together to fulfill the task.

The result of their work depends on the work of others. This will make helping more likely to occur. Furthermore, the more team members are dependent on each other for completing the groups' task, the greater the felt responsibility towards other team members (Cleavenger, Gardner & Mhatre, 2007; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). People work more and intensely with the other team members and team members see the results of the work of the other members. This makes team members more likely to feel responsible for the work outcomes of other members of the team. (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991) This felt responsibility is likely to increase the helping behavior within groups.

In addition, task interdependence also increases the amount of interaction between team members (Anderson & Williams, 1996; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Team members under task interdependence have to work together to finish a task and this will require more interaction. When individuals need help the increase in communication will make it more likely that team members share that need for help more. Therefore helping will be more likely through this increase in communication.

Whenever people work together on a task under high interdependence, the need to coordinate the task and the need to help each other will also increase, because people have to depend on each other to accomplish the task (Cleavenger, Gardner & Mhatre, 2007). Furthermore, task interdependence may also positively influence the norms towards cooperation and the expectations of helping behavior (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006; Cleavenger, Gardner & Mhatre, 2007; Ng & VanDyne, 2005). Team members who are task interdependent have higher norms toward cooperation and have higher expectations of helping behavior (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006), which is likely to increase the amount of helping behavior. When someone helps a team member, the norm of the team or even the organization can be

that this favor should and will be returned in the future. Team members are also more attracted to help a member who can return the favor in the future (Cleavenger, Gardner & Mhatre, 2007). These norms with regard to helping behavior can also be seen as a strategy to invest in future relationships among the members of the team. These norms to reciprocate the helping behavior will also increase the amount of helping that will be displayed in task interdependent teams. Based on the literature discussed above, I expect a positive influence of task interdependence on helping behavior. Thus:

*Hypothesis 1(H1): Task interdependence has a positive influence on helping behavior.*

This relationship is summarized in Figure 2:

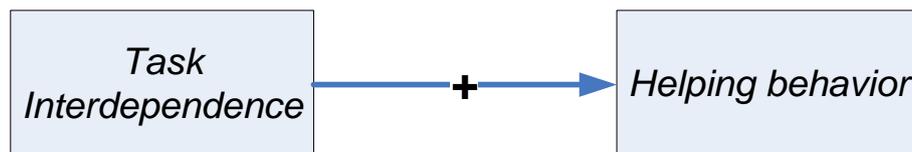


Figure 2: Hypothesis 1.

*The influence of task conflict on the relationship between task interdependence and helping*

Task conflict is known to have positive outcomes for the group (c.f., Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). For example, the creativity, performance, and decision making by the group can all be improved through task conflict (Amason, 2006; Jehn, 1995; Jehn

& Bendersky, 2006). This can be explained in terms of the cognitive aspects of a task conflict (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). When a task conflict is at hand, people are bound to exchange more information, which leads to better group decisions and better performance (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2006; Wall & Callister, 1995).

Cognitive aspects influence better outcomes of task conflict in a way that people who have disagreements about how a task should be done, will discuss some aspects of this task more thoroughly and with less restrictions because members of the group just want the best possible outcome and they also want to be right (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). This process of more communication happens because under conflict some aspects of the task are being discussed which would be less discussed without conflict (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006) and there are fewer restrictions. Under task conflict people are more critical and this makes the decisions and performance better (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2006; Wall & Callister, 1995). The increase in communication and discussion makes it clear to other members of the group that some people are, for example, behind at work or have problems with the task. This will make helping behavior more likely, because people now know what kind of problems and aspects the other members need help with. Under high task interdependence this increase in communication and discussion will be more likely to occur, because people depend on each other to accomplish the task and the importance of helping each other is also higher (Bachrach, Powell & Bendoly, 2006) compared to low task interdependence situations.

Task interdependence is thought to have an intensifying effect on processes such as communication (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006; Saavedra, Earley & Van Dyne, 1993). These increases in interaction and communication can intensify the effect that task conflict has on helping behavior. Task interdependent teams interact and

communicate more. Task conflict is also known for its increases in communication. The increase in communication will make helping more likely to occur because problems that team members have with a task are more likely to be communicated towards each other.

The positive influence of task conflict on the relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior leads to the second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2(H2): Task conflict will increase the positive relationship between task interdependence and helping behavior.*

This relationship is summarized in Figure 3.

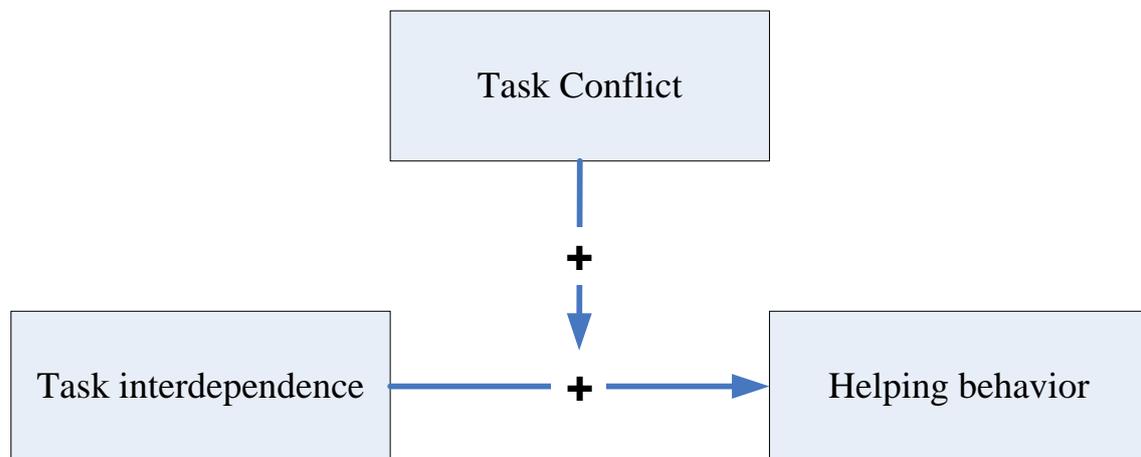


Figure 3. Hypothesis 2.

The second research question in this paper focuses on the moderating role that task interdependence has on the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior. This results in the following research question, which is summarized in Figure 4:

*Does task interdependence influence the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior?*

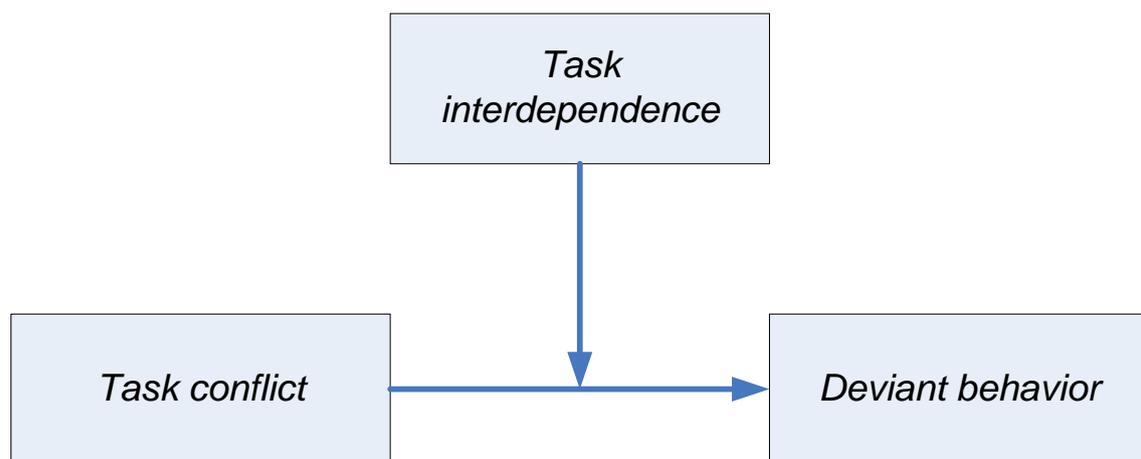


Figure 4. Process model of the second research question.

#### *Task conflict and counterproductive behavior*

Previous research has revealed that conflict with coworkers has a negative influence on counterproductive work behavior or deviant behavior (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). This negative relationship between conflict and deviant behavior is explained by considering that conflict with coworkers is a social stressor. A social stressor is a social event that results in stress. Social stressors have a mayor influence on group member's behavior, because it causes feelings of anger and tension, job dissatisfaction and withdrawal (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992;

DeDreu & Weingart, 2003; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001). Behaviors that have been proven to be influenced by social stressors such as conflict are sabotage, interpersonal aggression, and hostility (Chen & Spector, 1992; Lau, Tung Au & Ho, 2003). Conflict triggers feelings of anger, frustration, and overall negative affect (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox, Spector & Rodopman, 2004). These negative feelings are likely to increase deviant behavior (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox, Spector & Rodopman, 2004; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001). Team members who feel this negative affect will show deviant behavior toward the team members whom they have a conflict with to loose this negative affect, but the deviant behavior might also be a coping strategy to loose the negative affect that is felt by the person in conflict.

Another way in which task conflict can increase the amount of deviant behavior is by the decline in satisfaction with the group during conflict (DeDreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). Under task conflict members of a team dislike their team members more and are thus less willing to remain a member of the team. These negative influences of task conflict make deviant behavior more likely. When members do not like each other and are dissatisfied with the job, the amount of deviant behavior will increase (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Glew, 1996). When people are less committed to remain a member of the group, deviance is more likely to occur. The consequence of deviant behavior, for instance, having to leave the group, is not that unfavorable compared to when the member was more satisfied with his membership (Lee & Allen, 2002).

This section discussed literature that describes the negative influence that task conflict has on deviant behavior. As a result the third hypothesis is formulated as follows and is summarized in Figure 5:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Task conflict will increase the amount of deviant behavior.*

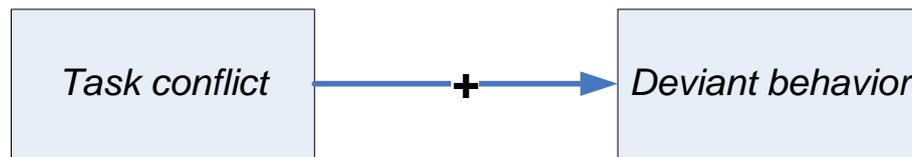


Figure 5. Hypothesis 3.

*The influence of task interdependence on the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior*

When task conflict is at stake, deviant behavior will increase (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). The influence of task interdependence on the relation between task conflict and deviant behavior will be researched. Task interdependence has been shown to increase the positive outcomes of task conflict (c.f., Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky).

One way in which task interdependence is thought to increase the positive outcomes of task conflict is that task interdependence increases the amount of individual communication and interaction among members of the group (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). Increased communication and interaction leads to more debate about, for example, different ways to accomplish a goal in a work group. These increases will make the needs of team members more visible and therefore a team member will be less likely to act in a deviant way.

Under task interdependence the contribution of a team member to the final outcome of the team is also more visible to the other team members (Van der Vegt, Emans & Van der Vliert, 2001). This leads to fewer opportunities for a member under

high task interdependence to behave in a deviant way, because members of the team will detect this behavior earlier.

Task interdependence increases the norms of cooperation and helping within a group (Bachrach, Powell & Bendoly, 2006). In addition, this norm of cooperation makes members of a team under high task interdependence in more need to work together on a task because otherwise the outcome of this task will be lower and worse (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). This makes it less likely that a member of a team will show deviant behavior under high task interdependence, because this member would ruin his own outcome, as a member of the group outcome.

The negative influence of task interdependence on the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior leads to the fourth hypothesis as summarized in Figure 6:

*Hypothesis 4(H4): Task interdependence will decrease the positive relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior.*

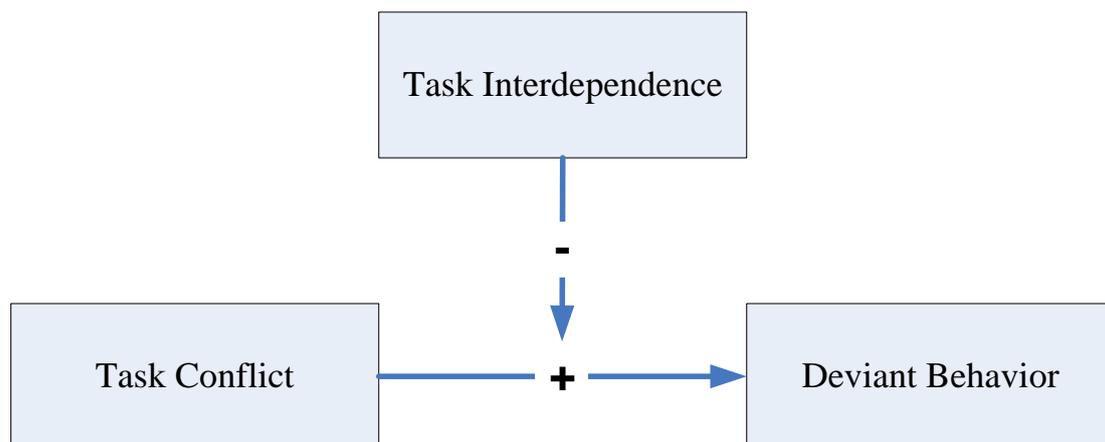


Figure 6. Hypothesis 4.

## Method

### Design

This study has a 2 (conflict yes or no) by 2 (task interdependence high or low) factorial design.

For measuring the first research question two variables were manipulated. The first independent variable that was manipulated was task interdependence. Half of the scenarios contained information that led the participant to believe that they were working in a team under high interdependence and the other half of the scenarios led participants to believe that they did not work in a team under task interdependence. The second independent variable that was manipulated was task conflict. Half of the scenarios led the participants to believe that there was task conflict within their team and the other half of the scenarios led participants to believe that there was no task conflict. Table 1 summarizes which variables were manipulated in which condition. Appendix 1 will contain a complete overview of the scenarios.

*Table 1. Manipulation of Independent variables.*

	Task Interdependence	Task Conflict
Condition 1	Yes	No
Condition 2	Yes	Yes
Condition 3	No	Yes
Condition 4	No	No

After reading the scenario the dependent variables were measured. The first dependent variable that was measured to test the first research question is helping behavior. Helping behavior was measured using a Dutch translation of the helping behavior questionnaire used by Mackensie, Podsakoff and Feters(1991). The second dependent variable that was measured is deviant behavior.

## **Participants**

88 Participants were involved in this study, 22 participants per condition. Participants in this study were people from both the student population and the working population. There were 44 male and 44 female participants. The mean age of the participants was 37.44 with a minimum age of 18, a maximum age of 64 and a standard deviation of 15.58. All participants had the Dutch nationality, with 4 respondents that did not answer this question.

## **Procedure**

This study is a scenario study. The participants received a scenario in which all variables were manipulated. After reading the scenario, participants filled in a questionnaire to measure the dependent variable and to determine if the independent variables were well manipulated

The scenario that was used led participants to believe that they were working in a team to organize a benefit concert. They had various tasks to accomplish their goal. Half of the participants were given the condition in which they were task interdependent. The other half of the participants were told that they were not task

interdependent. After reading the first scenario they had to fill out question to control for the manipulation. After filling out the item that checked the task interdependence scenario the scenario which manipulated task conflict was presented. Half of the participants were assigned the scenario that told them that they had a task conflict within their team. The other half of the participants were led to believe that there was no task conflict within their team.

After reading the second part of the scenario the participants were asked to fill out the rest of the questionnaire.

## Measures

*Helping behavior.* Helping behavior was measured using a Dutch translation of the helping behavior questionnaire used by Mackensie, Podsakoff and Feters (1991). This scale contains 4 items. Items that are included in this scale are “I am willing to give my time to others who have work-related problems” and “I help other team members who have heavy work loads” that were measured by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which means strongly disagree to 7 which means strongly agree with the statement. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .86$ .

*Deviant behavior.* Deviant behavior was measured using a Dutch translation of the scale developed by Robinson and Bennett (2000) to measure interpersonal deviant behavior. This scale contains seven items. Examples of items are: “*Made fun of someone at work*”, “*Said something hurtful to someone at work*” and “*Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work*”. The answers were measured by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which means strongly disagree with the statement to 7

which means strongly agree with the statement. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .88$ .

*Task conflict.* To check how well the task conflict condition was manipulated the scale contained some items that measured the level of task conflict the participants thought that they were reading about in the scenario. Task conflict was measured by using a Dutch translation of a scale developed by Jehn and Mannix (2001). The scale contained 3 items. Examples of those items are “*How much conflict of ideas is there in your work group?*” and “*How frequently do you have disagreements within your work group about work issues?*”. The items were translated and adjusted to be answered with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which means strongly disagree with the statement to 7 which means strongly agree with the statement. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .84$

*Task interdependence.* To check how well the task interdependence condition was manipulated the scale contained some items that measured the level of task interdependence the participants thought that they were reading about in the scenario. Task interdependence was measured by using a Dutch translation of a scale by Pearce and Gregersen (1991). The scale contained 3 items. Examples of those items are “*I have to work closely with my colleagues to do my work properly*” and “*In order to complete their work, my colleagues have to obtain information from each other*”. The items were translated and adjusted to be answered with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which means strongly disagree with the statement to 7 which means strongly agree with the statement. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .68$ .

## Results

### Manipulation checks

To check if the conditions were well manipulated 2 one-way ANOVA's were conducted. First a manipulation check for the variable task interdependence was done. People in the task interdependent condition scored significantly higher on the interdependence scale,  $M = 6.24$ , ( $SD = .85$ ), than people who were told that they were not task interdependent,  $M = 5.34$  ( $SD = 1.42$ ),  $F(1, 86) = 13.22$ ,  $p < .00$ .

The second manipulation check that was done was for the task conflict variable. People in the task conflict condition scored significantly higher on the task conflict scale,  $M = 3.77$  ( $SD = 1.25$ ), than people who were in the low task conflict condition,  $M = 1.69$  ( $SD = .99$ ),  $F(1, 86) = 75.1$ ,  $p < .00$ .

### Hypotheses testing

The first hypothesis predicted that task interdependence has a positive influence on helping behavior. This hypothesis was not significant,  $F(1, 84) = .06$ ,  $p < .82$ . Participants who were in the task interdependence condition had no significant higher scores on helping,  $M = 5.21$  ( $SD = 1.20$ ), than participants who were in the low task interdependence condition,  $M = 5.28$  ( $SD = 1.43$ ).

The second hypothesis predicted an interaction effect such that task conflict increases the positive relation between task interdependence and helping behavior. The results did not support the hypothesis,  $F(1, 84) = .78$ ,  $p < .38$ . Task conflict did not increase the positive relationship between task interdependence and helping.

Table 2 provides the mean and standard deviation scores on helping behavior for the different conditions.

*Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores Helping Behavior*

Condition Interdependence	Condition Conflict	Mean	Standard Deviation
No	No	5.84	1.12
	Yes	4.69	1.51
	Total	5.28	1.43
Yes	No	5.54	1.13
	Yes	4.86	1.20
	Total	5.21	1.20
Total	No	5.69	1.12
	Yes	4.78	1.35
	Total	5.24	1.31

Additional to the hypotheses, I found a main effect for task conflict on helping behavior  $F(1, 84) = 11.85, p < .001$ . People who were in the task conflict condition reported lower scores on helping behavior,  $M = 4.78 (SD = 1.35)$ , than people who were in the low task conflict condition,  $M = 5.69 (SD = 1.12)$ .

The third and fourth hypotheses predicted effects concerning interpersonal helping behavior. The third hypothesis predicted that task conflict would increase the amount of interpersonal deviant behavior. This hypothesis was significant,  $F(1, 84) = .46, p < .02$ . People who were in the task conflict condition reported higher scores on the interpersonal deviance scale,  $M = 1.75 (SD = 1.09)$ , than people who were in the low task conflict condition,  $M = 1.36 (SD = .41)$ .

The fourth hypothesis predicted that task interdependence decreases the positive relationship between task conflict and interpersonal deviant behavior. This

hypothesis was significant,  $F(1, 84) = 4.94, p < .03$ . The mean and standard deviation scores are summarized in Table 3.

*Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores Deviant Behavior*

Condition Interdependence	Condition Conflict	Mean	Standard Deviation
No	No	1.22	0.31
	Yes	2.00	1.35
	Total	1.60	1.04
Yes	No	1.48	0.45
	Yes	1.51	0.70
	Total	1.50	0.58
Total	No	1.36	0.41
	Yes	1.75	1.09
	Total	1.55	0.83

Participants who were experiencing task conflict under high task interdependence reported less deviant behavior,  $M = 1.51$  ( $SD = .70$ ), than individuals that were in the condition with high task conflict and low task interdependence,  $M = 2.00$  ( $SD = 1.35$ ). This significant result is visualized in Figure 7.

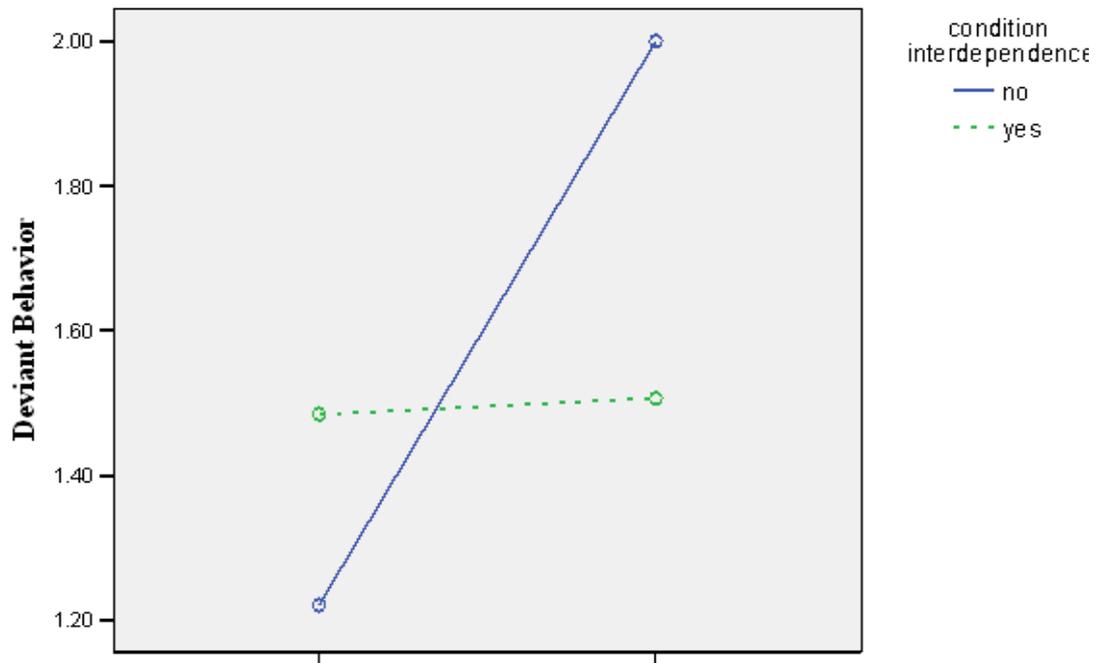


Figure 7. Interaction Task Interdependence and Task Conflict on Deviant Behavior.

## Additional results

In addition to helping and deviant behavior, the level of commitment to the team and the perception of team performance was measured. Commitment was measured with a Dutch translation of the scale used by Van der Vegt and Emans (2000). Examples of these items are “*I am proud to be a member of this team*” and “*I am proud to a member of this team and not another team*”. The items could be answered on a scale from 1 to 7. The reliability of this scale was  $\alpha = .85$ . The mean score of the scale was 5.20, ( $SD = 1.24$ ). A univariate ANOVA revealed that task conflict had a significant effect on commitment,  $F(1, 84) = 22.78, p < .00$ . When participants were led to believe they were experiencing task conflict, they scored lower on the commitment scale,  $M = 4.62 (SD = 1.18)$  than when they were in the low task conflict condition,  $M = 5.74 (SD = 1.03)$ .

Subjective performance was measured with a Dutch translation of the Expanded Delft Measurement (Roe, Dienes, Ten Horn, & Zinovieva, 1995). Examples of items used in this scale are “*Our team performs better than other teams*” and “*Our team deserves a positive evaluation*”. The items could be answered on a scale from 1 to 7. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .76$ . The mean score of the scale was 4.36 ( $SD = 1.16$ ). Task conflict had a significant effect on subjective performance,  $F(1, 84) = 40.09, p > .00$ . Participants in the task conflict condition rated their subjective performance lower,  $M = 3.69 (SD = 1.06)$  than participants who were in the low task conflict condition,  $M = 5.00 (SD = .85)$ .

## Discussion

This study was conducted to find effects of task interdependence and task conflict on helping behavior and interpersonal deviant behavior. These two behaviors are important to examine because they influence outcomes of teams and even organizations. Helping behavior is a beneficial outcome for a team, because it increases transfer of knowledge and helping is likely to increase team performance (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Deviant behavior on the other hand is unfavorable for teams because it decreases performance and effectiveness (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Dalal 2005; LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002).

The results from this scenario study suggest that, first of all, task conflict decreased the amount of helping behavior compared to individuals that did not experience task conflict. This effect is consistent with a study from Ng & Van Dyne (2005) who found that task conflict negatively influenced helping behavior.

Second, the results show a positive relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior, that is, participants that experienced task conflict did report more interpersonal deviant behavior than participants who did not experience task conflict. This is consistent with past findings concerning this relation (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006). Negative feelings and dissatisfactions associated with task conflict make interpersonal deviant behavior more likely to occur consistent with the results found in this study.

Finally, task interdependence moderated the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior such that participants under task conflict who were task

interdependent reported less interpersonal deviant behavior than individuals who were not task interdependent.

The effects found on deviant behavior have an additional value to the existing theories. Past research revealed the negative effects of task conflict on processes and outcomes of teams like deviant behavior, helping behavior, performance and commitment (Amason, 1996; Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992; Ng & VanDyne, 2005; Wall & Callister, 1995). The results of this study are consistent with these theories and experiments. This study revealed that task conflict had a negative effect on deviant behavior and helping behavior of team members, because people who experienced task conflict were more likely to act in a deviant manner and less likely to help. An additional value of this study is that this study also found that task interdependence had influence on the negative relation between task conflict and deviant behavior. Consistent with past research the additional results revealed that performance and commitment were also negatively affected by task conflict.

The negative effect of task conflict on deviant behavior was decreased by task interdependence and this outcome is valuable to theories concerning this subject. This relation is consistent with theories that predict that task interdependence will increase communication (Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). Which makes the needs of team members more visible to other team members and this might make deviant behavior less likely to occur.

Another way in which task interdependence might positively influence the negative relation between task conflict and interpersonal deviant behavior is that being interdependent means that the final outcome is more visible to all team members which makes the opportunity for deviant behavior less likely (Van der Vegt, Emans & Van der Vliert, 2001). This finding is important for many organizations

working with teams, because organizations can now detect teams that are more likely to act in a deviant manner.

Predictions concerning helping behavior were not confirmed. Task interdependence did not increase the amount of helping behavior within a team and task conflict did not increase the predicted positive relation between task interdependence and helping behavior. These findings are inconsistent with past research that predicted that task interdependence would have a positive effect on helping behavior (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006; Ng & VanDyne, 2005; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). Past research also predicted that task conflict might positively influence the relation between task interdependence and helping behavior through increasing interaction and communication in interdependent teams (Amason, 2006; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2006). The data of this research did not support these theories.

An explanation for not finding an effect for task interdependence and task conflict on helping behavior in contradiction with most theories could be found in the high scores that the participants gave on helping behavior. Between the conditions there were differences found in response on how likely individuals were to help a team member, but all helping scores were high. Participants in all conditions responded that they would be likely to help other team members. Individuals tend to answer the questionnaire in a favorable manner. Participants want to give a positive image of themselves and helping another team member is a favorable and positive answer to maintain a positive self-image (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2002).

Another explanation for not finding such an effect of task interdependence and task conflict on helping behavior could be that the scenario that manipulated task interdependence was not well understood by the participants. Participants in the not

task interdependent condition did report high levels of interdependence, in spite of the manipulation and the explanation of the study to answer the questions concerning this particular situation and not their real life experiences. Data concerning the measures of the task interdependence scale indicate that individuals might answer the scale with their own working experience in mind and not with the scenario manipulating task interdependence.

### **Strength and shortcomings of the research**

The design of this research had some strong aspects and some shortcomings. A strong aspect of this study was that through the scenarios two constructs could be manipulated without confounding variables and the manipulations can be well checked. In a field study this would be harder to attain, because other influences are hard to be left out of the study (Hughes, 1998; Jackson & LePine, 2003). Using a scenario study makes it easier to measure constructs isolated from the real world and thus makes it a suitable method in this study. Participants could focus on the scenarios of task conflict and task interdependency while leaving all other variables that are available in the real world behind. The scenarios in this study were designed to measure the effects of task conflict and task interdependence on deviant behavior and helping behavior and confounding variables were therefore excluded in this study and the manipulations could be directly measured.

However, the manipulation of task interdependence needs refinement. Participants answered in all condition that they experienced high task interdependence. Although the high task interdependent scenario revealed higher scores on task interdependence, the overall scores on this scale were high. This could

be caused by the fact that most individuals are familiar with teams that work under high task interdependence and therefore participants might be more likely to answer the questions with high scores. Another method to research this topic might make the results easier to generalize. A study in a more realistic setting like a laboratory in which individuals meet face to face might make manipulations more realistic for participants. Teams that are interacting longer might make the manipulations even more realistic. This could be attained through research in real life settings like for instance an organization.

## **Recommendations**

Future research should be focused on underlying processes that might increase helping behavior. Although this study did not reveal an effect of task interdependence on helping behavior, past research did find such an effect (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006, Pearce & Gregersen, 1991; Ng & VanDyne, 2005). Task interdependence has a positive influence on cooperation within teams (Bachrach, Powell, & Bendoly, 2006). Future research might focus on the influence of task interdependence on cooperation when task conflict is at stake. Cooperation is likely to increase helping behavior, which makes this an interesting construct to study in the context of helping behavior.

The possible influence of task conflict should be further investigated. Communication might be a key aspect in research on the influence of task conflict. Task conflict is known to increase communication and information exchange (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2006; Wall & Callister, 1995). Looking at the way in which information is exchanged might be interesting for future research. When task conflict

is at stake communication might, although increased, be more negative. The negative way in which individuals communicate might influence their helping behavior.

The influence of a potential negative communication style induced by task conflict might also be interesting to examine in the context of deviant behavior. Negative communication might trigger negative feelings, which are known to increase deviant behavior (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox, Spector & Rodopman, 2004; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001).

Another recommendation with regard to deviant behavior could be to research the impact of commitment on deviant behavior. This research had additional results that revealed that commitment was lower under task conflict. Past research showed that lower commitment has a negative influence on deviant behavior (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001; Lau, Au & Ho, 2003; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Glew, 1996). Researching the relationship between task conflict and deviant behavior with commitment as mediator would be worthwhile to examine, because commitment might influence this relation.

## **Practical implications**

The results of this study have additional value to the study of helping behavior and deviant behavior. The results can help managers compose their teams in such a manner that helping behavior will be most likely to happen and deviant behavior will be less likely to happen.

Teams that are highly interdependent might be less vulnerable for interpersonal deviant behaviour when they are facing task conflict. Managers could be paying more attention to teams that lack task interdependence with a task conflict,

because those teams are more likely to show interpersonal deviance, which is an unfortunate and costly outcome for the organization.

This study revealed that task conflict had negative influence on team outcomes and processes. Training a team in a way that they can have a constructive conflict, through adjusting their norms towards conflict (Rispen, Jehn & Thatcher, 2005) might help managers to decrease the amount of negative outcomes of task conflict and might help them to increase positive outcomes of task conflict.

## **Conclusion**

This study revealed that task interdependence and task conflict are relevant constructs to research within the context of behaviors within teams. Helping behavior is a beneficial behavior within the context of organizations and this study revealed some underlying constructs that make the occurrence of helping behavior clearer.

Deviant behavior on the other hand is an unfortunate behavioral outcome in the context of an organization and a team. This study discovered some underlying processes that might decrease and increase the occurrence of such behavior.

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## Appendix 1

### Condition task interdependence:

*Stelt u zich voor dat u werkt in een team van vier personen bij evenementenbureau Jojo. De leden van het team zijn Persoon A, B, C en u. Uw teamleden en u zijn verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van een benefietconcert. Alle teamleden hebben **verschillende vaardigheden** die bijdragen aan de organisatie van het benefietconcert. Persoon A is verantwoordelijk voor het boeken van artiesten, Persoon B is verantwoordelijk voor de financiën, Persoon C is verantwoordelijk voor het in orde brengen van de lokatie en u bent verantwoordelijk voor het draaiboek voor het concert. Om het concert goed te regelen zijn uw teamleden en u **volledig van elkaar afhankelijk**. U en uw teamleden hebben allemaal de kennis en expertise van elkaar nodig om tot het gewenste resultaat te komen, namelijk ieder een deel van de avond te laten slagen.*

### Condition no task interdependence:

*Stelt u zich voor dat u werkt in een team van vier personen bij evenementenbureau Jojo. De leden van het team zijn Persoon A, Persoon B, Persoon C en u. Uw teamleden en u zijn verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van een benefietconcert. Alle teamleden hebben **dezelfde vaardigheden** die bijdragen aan de organisatie van het benefietconcert. Uw teamleden en u kunnen allemaal artiesten boeken, de financiën bijhouden, de lokatie in orde brengen en een draaiboek maken. U bent allen verantwoordelijk voor een deel van de avond, waarvoor u allemaal zelf alle onderdelen regelt. U bent dus **niet afhankelijk** van uw teamleden om tot het gewenste resultaat te komen namelijk een geslaagd benefietconcert en veel geld ophalen voor het goede doel.*

### Condition task conflict:

*Bij het boeken van de hoofdact van het concert hebben uw teamleden en u de populaire band Ramoon 5 op het oog. U besluit allen de band anderhalf uur te willen boeken. Aan het einde van de vergadering deelt Persoon A mede dat ze de band gelijk gaat boeken voor een optreden van anderhalf uur. Iedereen is er tevreden over zo'n*

populaire band als slotact. U plant vervolgens de band Ramoon 5 in om anderhalf uur op te treden als slotact, zoals tijdens de vergadering is afgesproken. Bij de volgende vergadering vertelt Persoon A dat ze een optreden van anderhalf uur toch te lang vindt. Persoon B zegt dat hij ook liever een korter optreden zou willen, zodat er geld overblijft om extra parkeerplaatsen te huren. Persoon C zegt dat de belichting niet geregeld kan worden voor zo'n lang optreden. U hebt echter het hele draaiboek al in elkaar en wilt dat de band wel de volledige anderhalf uur komt optreden. Er volgt een **conflict over de taak**. Er volgt een **stevige discussie** waarbij Persoon A, Persoon B en Persoon C de band slechts een half uur willen laten optreden en u de band de volledige anderhalf uur wil laten optreden. Er gaan **veel argumenten** heen en weer over de duur van het optreden.

#### Condition no task conflict

Bij het boeken van de hoofdact van het concert heeft Persoon A de populaire band Ramoon 5 op het oog en ze zijn nog vrij voor de avond van het benefietconcert. Iedereen is enthousiast over deze band. Persoon B vertelt tijdens de volgende vergadering dat er voldoende budget is om deze band te boeken en Persoon C zegt dat het podium op de lokatie voldoende uitgerust is voor deze band. U vertelt dat ze prima als slotact in het draaiboek passen en aan het einde van de vergadering deelt Persoon A mede dat ze de band gelijk gaat boeken. Iedereen is er **tevreden** over zo'n populaire band als slotact.