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# **The Employee-Organization Relationship and Organizational Citizenship Behavior**

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## **Abstract**

Drawing upon social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, we review the employee-organization relationship (EOR). A number of EOR frameworks share common theoretical ground yet have developed independently: psychological contracts, perceived organizational support, employment relationship, social and economic exchange and idiosyncratic deals. We examine the empirical evidence linking each of the frameworks to employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Relationships based on minimal investment (quasi spot contracts and transactional psychological contracts) and psychological contract breach are negatively related to OCB. Economic exchange is unrelated to OCB. Relationships that demonstrate investment, support, fulfilment of obligations and granting of i-deals are positively related to OCB as they signal a trusting and benefit conferring relationship. We outline challenges and future research directions that address the 'value addedness' of the EOR frameworks, OCB as discretionary reciprocation, temporality and OCB and finally, potential points of integration to provide a more comprehensive understanding of OCB.

**Keywords:** Employee-organization relationship, psychological contracts, perceived organizational support, idiosyncratic deals, social and economic exchange, inducement-contribution model, social exchange theory, reciprocity, organizational citizenship behavior

*Give as much as you take, all shall be very well (Mauss, 1950, p71)*

The quote aptly illustrates the norm of reciprocity underpinning social exchange relationships and serves as a basis for this review of the employee-organization relationship (EOR) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The EOR is “an overarching term to describe the relationship between the employee and organization” (Shore et al., 2004, p.292). It encompasses a number of frameworks to include psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1989), perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), employment relationship (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997) alongside more recent frameworks such as social and economic exchange (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006) and idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006). Although these frameworks developed independently and are distinct, they share common ground in capturing the relationship (or some element of it) that employees develop with their organization or the relationship the organization develops with a group of employees. They also share their theoretical foundation in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the inducements-contribution model (March & Simon, 1958).

Social exchange theory (SET) is one of the most influential conceptual frameworks for understanding behavior in organizations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005); a prominent micro theory in *Academy of Management Journal* (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007) and one of the most often evoked theories in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Colquitt, Baer, Long, & Halvorsen-Ganepola, 2014). Its versatility is illustrated by the number of phenomena it explains which include: workplace exclusion (Scott, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013), negative employee behaviors (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008; Parzefall & Salin, 2010), customer satisfaction (Zablah, Carlson, Donovan, Maxham, & Brown, 2016), corporate social responsibility (Slack, Corlett, & Morris, 2014) and employee health (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). Our focus here is to examine how the EOR frameworks that draw upon social exchange theory help explain organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Although the origins of OCB can be traced back to Barnard (1938) and Katz (1964), it was Organ and his colleagues who first used the term to capture “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). Organ’s (1988) conceptualization of OCB included five dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue and has received the greatest amount of empirical attention (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). That said, there are a number of different taxonomies of OCB (Borman & Motowidlo,

1993; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994; Morrison, 1994) and Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach's (2000) comprehensive review identify almost 30 potentially different forms of OCB that they organise into seven themes: helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue and self development. Williams and Anderson (1991) subgroup citizenship behaviors dependent upon the target beneficiary such that altruism and courtesy are behaviors directed toward individuals (OCBI) and sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness are behaviors directed toward the organization (OCBO). This subgrouping is germane to this review as we examine whether there is a differential impact of the EOR on OCBO and OCBI.

Our review is organized as follows. First, we present the theoretical foundation of the EOR frameworks by reviewing the tenets of social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity. We then review each of the frameworks prior to examining the empirical evidence linking the EOR to employees' OCB. Finally, we present some reflections on the EOR-OCB relationship and close with some challenges and future research directions.

## **EOR Frameworks**

Understanding the employee-organization relationship from an exchange perspective has captured the attention of researchers as reflected in the number of frameworks that purport to capture some element of this relationship. Three of the frameworks, psychological contracts, idiosyncratic deals and employment relationship capture the resources and contributions in the exchange relationship; the former two from the perspective of the employee and the latter from the perspective of the organization. POS and social and economic exchange capture relationship quality; the amount of support provided (or perceived to be provided) is the key element of POS whereas social and economic exchange capture high and low relationship quality though some consideration is given to the resources exchanged (socio-emotional and economic).

Our inclusion/exclusion decision in terms of EOR frameworks was guided by the criteria of a relational focus, capturing some element of the exchange between the employee and organization (and vice versa) and drawing upon social exchange theory as a theoretical basis. With this in mind, we excluded constructs that draw upon social exchange theory to capture the relationship that develops between an employee and their supervisor such as leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and perceived supervisor support (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). We also exclude organizational justice as it does not capture

the relationship per se that develops between employees and their organization although we do recognize that justice facilitates the development of social exchange relationships (Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, Conlon & Wesson, 2013).

### ***Underpinning Theories in the EOR***

The EOR literature primarily draws upon two theoretical frameworks, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) and the inducements-contribution model (March & Simon, 1958). The inducements-contribution model (March & Simon, 1958) has its roots in Barnard's (1938) notion of "exchange of utilities" and explicitly focuses on the resources exchanged as part of the employee-organization relationship. A key element of this model is the idea that organizations need to provide inducements that are greater in value vis a vis the contribution employees are required to make – it is these contributions that enable the organization to continue to provide future inducements. The organization can only succeed (and survive) as long as the contributions from employees are sufficient to elicit the inducements from the organization which must be "large enough" to elicit those contributions – reflecting a contingent interplay between inducements provided and contributions required.

Although March and Simon (1958) did not explicitly discuss reciprocity, it is implicit in their theorizing. Gouldner (1960) was the first to define reciprocity and outline its functioning. He suggests that the norm of reciprocity is universal and makes two demands of individuals: "(1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them" (Gouldner, 1960 p.171). The obligation to reciprocate is contingent upon the value of the benefit received such that the "debt is in proportion to and varies with- among other things- the intensity of the recipient's need at the time the benefit was bestowed ("a friend in need....."), the resources of the donor ("he gave although he could ill afford it"), the motives imputed to the donor ("without thought of gain"), and the nature of the constraints which are perceived to exist or be absent ("he gave of his own free will") (Gouldner, 1960, p.171). According to Gouldner (1960), when one party gives a benefit, an obligation is created and the recipient is indebted to the donor until such point as he/she repays the benefit.

Blau (1964) is credited with distinguishing social from economic exchange (for a detailed review of the historical development of social exchange theory, see Coyle-Shapiro & Diehl, forthcoming). Social exchange and economic exchange differ along the following dimensions: specificity of the exchange, trust and duration of the relationship. Economic exchange captures a specified exchange where the formal agreement assures that each party

fulfils its obligations to the other (Blau, 1964). Blau (1964) defines social exchange as involving unspecified obligations – “favors that create diffuse future obligations, not precisely specified ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it (p.93). Social exchange takes time to develop, starting with small exchanges. As trust develops so too does the nature of the resources exchanged. As Blau (1964) notes, “...doing a favour demonstrates trust in another; the other’s reciprocation validates this trust as justified” (p 107). According to Blau (1964), the timing of reciprocation is important – “posthaste reciprocation of favors, which implies a refusal to stay indebted for a while and hence an insistence on a more businesslike relationship is condemned as improper” (p 99) as this would demonstrate ingratitude. This would hinder the development of trust. Finally, economic and social exchange differ in terms of duration of the relationship – economic exchange is time limited whereas social exchange is indefinite, ongoing with a longer term orientation. The long term orientation facilitates the development of trust and enables a predictability to develop between the exchange partners in terms of bestowing a benefit, creating an obligation to reciprocate and discharging that obligation.

In sum, social exchange theory posits that social exchange relationships develop slowly as the value of the resources exchanged increases and trust develops through the adherence to the norm of reciprocity. The latter demonstrates each party’s trustworthiness to reciprocate prior benefits received and indebtedness to the other party for a period of time facilitates the development of trust. Having reviewed the theoretical underpinnings of the EOR frameworks, we now examine each in more detail.

### ***Psychological contracts***

Rousseau (1989, p. 123) defines psychological contracts as “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party”. Psychological contract captures an employee’s subjective evaluation of the reciprocal exchange with the organization in terms of what both parties promise to each other. Although psychological contracts can take a variety of forms (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni, 1994; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003), the primary emphasis of empirical investigations has been on transactional and relational contracts. Transactional contracts capture short-term economic relationships where mutual obligations are clearly specified. Relational contracts are characterized by the long-term exchange of socio-emotional resources (Rousseau, 1995)

In comparison to the content of the psychological contract, an individual's evaluation of their psychological contract (fulfilment, breach and violation) has garnered a significant body of empirical evidence. Psychological contract fulfilment is defined as “the extent to which one party to the contract deems the other has met its obligations” (Lee, Liu, Rousseau, Hui, & Chen, 2011, p. 204). In contrast, psychological contract breach is defined as “the cognition that one's organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within one's psychological contract in a manner commensurate with one's contributions” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) whereas violation captures the emotional and affective reaction arising from the experience of psychological contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and, is described as “an intense reaction of outrage, shock, resentment, and anger” (Rousseau, 1989: 129). These evaluations or experiences of the psychological contract are conceptually and empirically distinct. Psychological contract fulfilment and breach capture an individual's cognitive judgement and evaluation, whereas violation captures the emotional reaction. Moreover, fulfilment potentially shapes the relationship positively, while both breach and violation could signal the disruption of the relationship and induce negative change (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, & Chang, in press). Therefore, we would expect a positive association between relational contracts, contract fulfilment and OCB and a negative association between contract breach/violation and OCB.

### ***Perceived Organizational Support***

Perceived organizational support (POS) captures an individual's perception concerning the degree to which an organization values his/her contributions and cares about his/her well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Organizational Support Theory (OST) posits that employees make attributions concerning the organization's intentions behind their receipt of favourable or unfavourable treatment and that favourable discretionary treatment and treatment that fulfils the needs of employees should enhance POS (Kurtessis et al., 2015). Such discretionary treatment signals that the donor genuinely values and respects the recipient and hence POS is thought to fulfil socioemotional needs. On the basis of the norm of reciprocity, POS evokes a felt obligation to care about the welfare of the organization and help the organization achieve its objectives (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The development of organizational support is influenced by the discretionary nature of the favourable treatment received and two meta-analyses support the importance of organizational justice in positively affecting employees' perceptions of organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Additional antecedents include



supervisor support and human resource practices that signal investment in and a positive valuation of employees. Thus, positive treatment of employees creates perceptions of organizational support that in turn creates an obligation to reciprocate and one way of discharging this obligation is for employees to engage in OCB.

### ***Employment Relationships***

Tsui et al. (1997) define the employment relationship as “the employer’s expectations about specific contributions that it desires from employees and the inducements that it uses to effect the desired contributions” (p.1091). Drawing upon the inducement-contribution model and exchange theory (Blau, 1964; March & Simon, 1958), Tsui et al. (1997) outline four approaches based on relative balance between contributions/inducements and whether the content of the inducements/contributions is economic or social. The quasi-spot contract represents a balanced economic exchange that is highly specific, short term in which the employer offers short-term purely economic inducements in return for highly specified outcomes. The second type of balanced relationship is termed mutual investment which presents a balanced social exchange that arises when both the employee and employer have an open ended, long-term investment that is broad in scope. The two unbalanced relationships are: under investment and over investment. The underinvestment approach favors the employer as they expect broad and open-ended obligations from employees in return for short-term economic inducements without committing to a long term relationship. The overinvestment approach favors the employee as the employer offers long-term investment and open ended rewards in return for highly specified employee outcomes. An important distinguishing feature of this framework is that it captures the *employer’s* perspective – how managers view the exchange of inducements and contributions for employees in particular jobs within the organization. Although Tsui et al. (1997) recognize that employees’ expectations are important, they argue that it is the employer who defines the bulk of employment contracts with employees.

These four types of employment relationships are likely to have a differential effect on the extent to which employers expect employees to engage in OCB. In the quasi spot contract, given the highly specific nature of employee contributions in terms of their core job, engagement in OCB is likely to be low as these types of behaviors are not expected by the organization. Citizenship type behaviors are also likely to be low under the over investment approach as those behaviors are unlikely to be expected by the organization. However, how

employees respond to overinvestment by the organization may elicit OCB as a way of alleviating feelings of indebtedness. Tsui et al. (1997) argue that in the underinvestment approach where the organization expects employees to engage in behaviors that help the organization yet at the same time, these employees can be laid off at short notice, OCB is likely to be low. While organizations expect it, employees may not engage in OCB as a way of “rebalancing” the imbalance favoring the employer in that relationship. Finally, in the mutual investment approach, employees receive high investments from the organization in terms of job security, career development and in return, there is an expectation that employees will have the organization’s broad interests and needs in mind and consequently engage in co-operative behaviors that protect and enhance the interests of the organization. Unlike the other EOR frameworks that adopt the perspective of the employee and his/her willingness to engage in OCB based on employer treatment, the attention here is on whether the employer can expect employees to engage in OCB as part of their contributions.

### ***Social and Economic Exchange***

Shore and colleagues (2006) developed a process model based on Blau’s (1964) differentiation between social and economic exchange to focus on the nature of the relationship employees develop with their organization. Drawing on Blau’s (1964) theorizing, the authors differentiated social from economic exchange along the following criteria: trust, investment, time orientation (long-term versus short-term), and socio-emotional versus financial focus of exchange. *Trust* is needed for building a social exchange relationship since risk is taken by the donor as to if, when and how beneficial treatment will be reciprocated. In economic exchange, trust is not needed as there is specification of what is reciprocated as part of the exchange. Social exchange requires *investment* as it begins with small gestures and develops gradually with exchanges of increasing value that facilitate the development of trust and the continuation of the relationship. Given the specificity of economic exchange and the lack of trust required, investment is not an element of economic exchange. Social exchange has a *long-term orientation* since the timing of returns for beneficial treatment is unspecified and diffuse, whereas the relationship is time bound for economic exchange. The nature of resources differ—social exchange emphasizes *socio-emotional* elements (e.g., trust, commitment, support) whereas economic exchange emphasizes *financial and tangible* elements (e.g., pay and benefits). In view of these differences, one would anticipate a positive relationship between social exchange and OCB. Economic exchange and OCB should be unrelated as impersonal

inducements do not signal that employees are valued by the organization (Shore et al., 2006). Hence, the basis of reciprocation is absent.

Shore et al. (2006) developed and validated measures of social (e.g., there is a lot of give and take in my relationship with my organization) and economic (e.g., the most accurate way to describe my work situation is to say that I give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay) exchange which were found to be distinct yet negatively correlated (-.35 to -.52). The authors found differential relations to both antecedents and outcomes supporting the distinctiveness of the two exchanges.

### ***Idiosyncratic deals***

I-deals framework describes an employment relationship wherein its terms are individually agreed. According to Rousseau and colleagues (2006, p. 978), i-deals can be defined as “voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party”. Although i-deals have long existed for star performers, increased labor market pressures and workers' heightened expectations towards their work and employer have made such arrangement more common (c.f. Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016). The majority of empirical studies capture i-deals relating to flexibility and personal/professional development (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). By individualizing employment conditions according to employee needs, employers provide special conditions that employees eventually reciprocate (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010; Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008; Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, & Wu, 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2015).

I-deals can be characterized by the following four features (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006). First, i-deals are individually initiated by either the employer or the employee, although it is more common for an employee to negotiate such an arrangement. Second, the terms of i-deals are heterogeneous, creating differing conditions for employees working in similar positions in the same workplace. For example, some i-deals may be more driven by developmental needs and career aspirations, while some others are geared towards flexibility in working times or specific tasks (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010). Third, i-deals mutually benefit the employee and the employer, so that both parties have their interests served. While employers' interest in i-deals is typically driven by a motivation and need to recruit, retain and reward valued performers, for employees i-deals serve as an indicator of their value (Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013; Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006)

and allow for preferred working conditions and flexibility (Liao et al., 2016). Fourth, the scope of i-deals varies so that the relative proportion of the idiosyncratic to standardized conditions varies (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006). The degree to which such customization is beneficial to the parties involved is presently not known (Liao et al., 2016). I-deals can provide a reason for employees to reciprocate, for example, through OCB especially when an i-deal is construed as a form of organizational support by the recipient (Anand et al., 2010; Rousseau et al., 2006).

Another important aspect of i-deals concerns the co-workers of employees who have negotiated i-deals. As Rousseau and colleagues (2006) observe, i-deals can in fact be considered as an exchange between three parties as the special treatment of one person can create costs for others, especially when resources are constrained. By definition, i-deals create differences among co-workers in conditions of employee-organization relationship and will need to be carefully managed to avoid exacerbation of injustice and eradication of trust (Lai, Rousseau, & Chang, 2009). As a result, co-workers may need to adjust their performance in order to fill the gaps created by the non-standard arrangements granted to i-dealers. For example, co-workers may need to cover up some tasks of a colleague who has negotiated a workload reduction. In such situations, co-worker behaviors may be expected or explicitly agreed and therefore not discretionary; they may at times also involve OCB where the target is either the organization or i-dealer or another colleague affected by the i-deal (Rousseau et al., 2006). Furthermore, co-workers who go an extra mile to compensate for an i-dealer may in return expect reciprocation from the i-dealer, which may take the form of OCB.

The underlying premise of the EOR frameworks covered here is that POS, social exchange, psychological contract fulfilment, i-deals and two types of ER: mutual investment and over investment should be positively associated with citizenship behavior. In contrast, quasi spot contract, psychological contract breach and violation are negatively associated with OCB while economic exchange is unrelated. We now turn to the empirical evidence.

### **Empirical Evidence: Psychological Contracts**

Psychological contract breach has received the greatest empirical attention in terms of its consequences (Conway & Briner, 2009) and not surprising, psychological contract breach has been found to be negatively associated with OCB (Chen, Tsui, & Zhong, 2008; Lo & Aryee, 2003; Robinson, 1996) supporting the idea that employees reciprocate detrimental treatment with a withdrawal of OCB. Conversely, psychological contract fulfilment is positively related

to OCB (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) and Shih & Lin (2012) found that felt obligations mediated the relationship between psychological contract fulfilment and OCB in a Taiwanese sample. Turning to psychological contract content, Zagenczyk, Restubog, Kiewitz, Kiazad, and Tang (2014) provide convergent support based on four studies in the Philippines, that a transactional psychological contract is negatively associated with OCB, consistent with the findings of two studies in China (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Si, Wei, & Li, 2008). In addition, transactional psychological contract was found to be the mediator between employee Machiavellianism and OCB (Zagenczyk et al., 2014). Do these relationships hold true for OCBO and OCBI?

As psychological contracts capture an employee's relationship with their organization, it stands to reason that it should have a greater impact on OCBO than OCBI (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Current empirical evidence is, however, mixed. Turnley, Bolino, Lester, and Bloodgood (2003) found that fulfilment is more strongly associated with OCBO than OCBI, and this pattern is replicated with breach in another study (Rosen, Chang, Johnson, & Levy, 2009). In their longitudinal study, Conway, Kiefer, Hartley, and Briner (2014) empirically established a negative relationship between breach and OCBO but the relationship between breach and OCBI was not significant. The evidence questioning the differential effect of psychological contracts on OCBO and OCBI is contradictory - with breach significantly associated with both OCBO and OCBI and no difference in term of the strength of associations (Chen et al., 2008; Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2007; Suazo & Stone-Romero, 2011). One potential explanation for these mixed findings is culture. All the studies supporting a differential effect were conducted in the US and the UK suggesting that target specific reciprocation may be more prominent in individualistic cultures. Evidence of a differential effect has not yet been demonstrated with an Asian sample (Chen et al., 2008; Restubog et al., 2007; Suazo & Stone-Romero, 2011).

A prominent explanation for the relationship between psychological contract breach/fulfilment although rarely tested empirically is the norm of reciprocity. Recent empirical studies (Bordia et al., 2008; Restubog, Zagenczyk, Bordia, Bordia, & Chapman, 2015) have explicitly tested the motivational intent underlying employees' responses to contract breach and find support for the negative norm of reciprocity as revenge cognitions mediate the relationship between breach and employee deviance. However, for the most part, the relationship between contract fulfilment and positive employee responses is assumed to occur as a result of the positive norm of reciprocity. Coyle-Shapiro (2002) found that

employees engage in reactive and proactive reciprocation to explain the relationship between perceived employer obligations and perceived delivered inducements on OCB – employees reciprocate inducements received but also engage in OCB to ensure that employer obligations materialize into inducements in the future.

Aside from reciprocity, other explanations have been identified. Robinson and Morrison (1995) found that psychological contract breach negatively predicted trust in the employer one year later, and trust fully mediated the relationship between breach and employees' civic virtue behavior. The same mediational effect of trust was demonstrated in two other studies (Lo & Aryee, 2003; Robinson, 1996). Drawing on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), Hui et al. (2004) argue that the instrumentality of OCB, which refers to the degree of how much the employees believe their supervisors value OCB, will mediate the relationship between psychological contract content and OCB. Their findings suggest that relational and balanced contracts enhance the instrumentality of OCB because these relationships are long term and open ended implicitly signalling that OCB is valued. This in turn increases OCB. However, Shih and Chen (2011) failed to find the same mediational effect of instrumentality in the relationship between relational, balanced psychological contract fulfilment and OCB.

Psychological contract breach is likely to undermine employees' feelings of oneness with the organization, and lead to a negative re-evaluation of the organization's attraction to the employee (Wei & Si, 2013; Zagenczyk et al., 2013; Zagenczyk, Gibney, Few, & Scott, 2011). Topa, Francisco, Morales, and Moriano (2009) found that organizational identification mediates the negative relationship between breach and OCB supporting the idea that when employees psychologically detach from a relationship, their behavior follows suit. Restubog, Hornsey, Bordia, and Esposito (2008) integrate trust and organizational identification to explain how contract breach leads to a reduction in OCB. The authors argue that the strength of organizational identification depends on an expectation toward future, which is epitomized by trust in the organization. Empirically, they demonstrate that trust mediates the effect of breach on organizational identification that in turn mediates the effect of trust on OCB.

A meta-analysis conducted by Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, and Bravo (2007) finds that psychological contract breach will initially provoke an affective reaction, which leads to cognitive reaction and then a behavioral consequence. Based on affective-events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), Zhao et al., (2007) found that breach strongly predicts cognitive responses such as commitment, and this relationship is mediated by affective responses such

as mistrust. The meta-analysis found that the cognitive response mediated the effect of affective responses on OCB.

A number of studies have examined individual and cultural moderators in the relationship between breach and OCB. Agreeableness, conscientiousness, empathy, equity sensitivity, and exchange ideology have been found to moderate the relationship between breach and OCB. Employees high in agreeableness or conscientiousness tend to have lower tolerance for negative relational events such as breach, or regard breach as an achievement failure leading to great disappointment. As a result, the effect of breach on OCB is amplified for highly agreeable or conscientious employees (Shih & Chuang, 2013). Employees who possess high levels of empathy are better able to view psychological contract breach from the organization's viewpoint, which mitigates the negative relationship between breach and citizenship behavior (Shih & Chen, 2011). Equity sensitivity refers to the preferences of outcome/input ratios, with individuals high in equity sensitivity preferring over-rewarded situations (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987). It is argued that employees with higher equity sensitivity tend to be more vigilant in monitoring the exchange relationship and are more likely to get even by reducing OCB when they experience breach. Restubog et al., (2007) found that equity sensitivity amplified the negative effect of breach on OCB. Finally, there is a paucity of studies examining how culture impacts employee responses to psychological contracts. Traditionality, which includes values of authority, fatalism, sense of powerlessness, and obedience, has been shown to weaken the negative relationship between breach and OCB in China (Chen et al., 2008).

### **Empirical evidence: Perceived Organizational Support**

Empirical evidence supporting a relationship between POS and OCB is positive and consistent across studies. A number of studies have found a positive relationship between POS and OCB (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) and Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff (1998) found that POS mediated the relationship between procedural justice and three dimensions of OCB: interpersonal helping, personal industry and loyal boosterism but not individual initiative. This finding is consistent with a recent meta-analysis (Colquitt et al., 2013) revealing that the effects of organizational justice on OCB are mediated through social exchange quality (trust, organizational commitment, POS and LMX). Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000) found that POS was positively related to OCBO (and partially mediated the effects of procedural justice) and LMX fully mediated the effects of interactional justice on supervisor

directed OCB. Lavelle, McMahan, and Harris (2009) found support for the target similarity model which proposes target specific links between justice, social exchange and citizenship behavior. Their findings reveal that organizational procedural justice was uniquely associated with POS; supervisor procedural justice explained unique variance in perceived supervisor support while workgroup interactional justice explained unique variance in perceived workgroup support. These different sources of support were differentially related to forms of citizenship behavior such that POS was uniquely related to OCBO; perceived supervisor support related to OCBI directed to supervisors and workgroup support was related to OCBI toward the workgroup. The authors argue that “employees selectively direct their citizenship behavior toward certain beneficiaries depending upon the level of perceived support from these parties” (p.2430)

Three meta –analytic studies provide consistent support for the relationship between POS and OCB. Riggle, Edmondson, and Hansen (2009) found a weak positive relationship between POS and contextual performance ( $r=.26, p<.001$ ) but did not differentiate between the target beneficiary of such behaviors. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found in their meta-analysis of 70 studies that the relationship between POS and OCBI was positive and small whereas the relationship between POS and OCBO was positive and moderate. In a recent meta-analysis of 558 studies, Kurtessis et al. (2015) found that POS was more strongly related to OCBO than OCBI supporting a multifoci perspective on social exchange (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). The empirical evidence suggests that employees reciprocate organizational supportiveness by engaging in OCB and the idea that beneficial treatment should create a felt obligation to care about and aid the organization was explicitly examined by Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001). The authors found that felt obligation mediated the relationship between POS and organizational spontaneity rated by supervisors. This finding supports the central tenet of social exchange theory – the conferring of a benefit creates an obligation to reciprocate.

To determine the direction of influence between POS and OCB, Chen, Eisenberger, Johnson, Sucharski, and Aselage (2009) conducted a longitudinal study measuring POS and extra role performance at two points three years apart. They found that POS was positively related to temporal change in extra role performance but that extra-role performance was not related to temporal change in POS. These findings support the view that POS leads to extra-role performance and as such is consistent with the tenets of social exchange theory. This study did not differentiate between OCBO and OCBI.



Given that the evidence thus far suggests that POS conforms to the predictions of social exchange theory, we now turn our attention to potential boundary conditions and in particular the role of exchange related dispositions and cultural moderators. As social exchange assumes that the reciprocation of valued benefits initiates and facilitates the development of social exchange relationships, individuals may view the receipt of valuable resources with a degree of suspicion stemming from a generalised fear of mistreatment and the vulnerability of being taken advantage of. Eisenberger, Cotterell, and Marvel (1987) identified reciprocation wariness as a generalized cautiousness in reciprocating aid due to a fear of exploitation and this can apply not only to interpersonal relationships but also the employee-organization relationship (Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999). Wary individuals are hesitant to provide aid or return aid as they fear that others will use the norm of reciprocity to exploit them if they respond generously to favourable treatment (Lynch et al., 1999). Lynch et al. (1999) conclude “in deciding whether to work beyond the minimum required in standard job activities and engage in extra-role actions that aid the organization, reciprocation-wary employees consider the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (p477). The authors found that when POS was low, reciprocation wariness was negatively related to extra-role performance as employees’ fear of exploitation reduced their willingness to go “the extra mile”. However, when POS was high, reciprocation wariness was positively related to extra-role performance suggesting that unexpected favourable treatment may reduce anxiety and fear of exploitation amongst wary employees. Exchange ideology captures the extent to which individuals base their concern for the welfare of the organization and their work effort on the favorability of their treatment by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001) such that an individual with a strong exchange ideology would base what they do for the organization on how favourably the organization treats them. Eisenberger et al. (2001) found that the relationship between POS and felt obligation was greater for employees with a strong exchange ideology.

To what extent do these findings hold true in different cultural contexts? Farh, Hackett, and Liang (2007) examined power distance and traditionalism in the relationship between POS and OCB – altruism (OCBI), voice and conscientiousness (OCBO). They found that power distance moderated the relationship between POS and all three dimensions of OCB such that the relationship was stronger for individuals who were low rather than high on power distance. Traditionalism captures “the extent to which an individual endorses the traditional hierarchical role relationships prescribed by Confucian social ethics” (Farh et al., 2007, p717) and the

findings support the moderating role of traditionality in the relationship between POS and OCB such that the relationship is stronger for individuals who are low on traditionality. Knippenberg, Prooijen, and Sleebos (2015) examined the moderating role of collectivism in the relationship between POS and OCB in the Netherlands. The authors argue that collectivists will be less likely to evaluate their relationship with the organization in terms of the exchange of benefits and hence less based on reciprocity. Their findings suggest that POS is positively related to OCB rated by supervisors for employees with less collectivistic values whereas POS was unrelated to OCB for employees with more collectivistic values.

A recent meta-analysis (Rockstuhl, Ang, Shore & Mesdaghinia, 2015) of POS-OCB relationship across 42 countries demonstrate that POS was more strongly related to OCB in vertical collectivist than horizontal-individualist cultures controlling for national differences in regulatory control, political democracy, capital availability and market liquidity. The authors explain this based on the greater interdependence of the self with social institutions and hence organizations are an important source of affiliative need fulfilment and felt obligation to help the organization would have a more influential role in employee behavior.

Overall, the weight of the evidence suggests a positive relationship between POS and OCB and in particular citizenship behavior directed toward the organization. Developing perceptions of organizational support creates an obligation to reciprocate which employees discharge by engaging in OCB which is consistent with social exchange theory. While the thrust of the empirical evidence suggests that this relationship is universal (Rockstuhl et al., 2015), there are exchange and cultural moderators that strengthen (e.g. low wariness, low power distance, low traditionality and low collectivism) this relationship.

### **Empirical evidence: Employment Relationships**

A starting point to note when reviewing the empirical evidence between the ER and OCB is the relative absence (in comparison to the other EOR frameworks) of empirical studies. Tsui et al. (1997) found that the mutual investment approach was associated with higher ratings of OCBO than the quasi spot contract or under investment approaches but was not significantly higher than the over investment approach. These findings suggest that from an organization's perspective, offering open-ended inducements and a high level of social exchange pays off in terms of employee engagement in OCB. This occurs when the exchange is balanced (mutual investment) or skewed in the employee's favor (overinvestment) demonstrating the organization's investment in the relationship. One could speculate that organizational

investment in employees creates an obligation on their part to reciprocate (independent from employer expectations) and this may explain why both the investment approaches are associated with OCB.

Hom et al. (2009) found that mutual investment increased social exchange relative to under investment ERs and quasi-spot contracts. While over investment was also positively related to social exchange, mutual investment was more strongly related. This finding was replicated in an 18 month lagged study that demonstrated that mutual investment and to a lesser extent over investment were positively related to perceptions of social exchange. In a sample of middle managers in China, Song, Tsui, and Law (2009) found that mutual investment approach (as reported by top managers) was positively related to OCB of middle managers (altruism, conscientiousness and civic virtue) while quasi spot contract (as reported by top managers) was negatively related to middle managers' OCB. The authors hypothesize that the mutual investment approach is likely to be interpreted by employees as a social exchange relationship as it signals trust and investment which employees reciprocate by engaging in OCB. Conversely, a quasi-spot contract will signal a short term calculative economic exchange and employees will not contribute beyond their assigned tasks. The study findings did not support the mediating role of social exchange in the relationship between mutual investment and OCB. However, economic exchange mediated the relationship between quasi spot contract and OCB.

In another study of Chinese telcom employees, Wang, Zhou, and Wen (2014) examined the relationship between two employment modes (mutual investment and quasi-spot contract) and OCB rated by supervisors and found that job security partially mediated this relationship. The authors argue that a mutual investment mode leads to perceptions of job security that in turn prompt OCB and the converse would hold true for quasi spot contracts. This finding suggests that benefits (signaling investment by the organization) given to employees provides the basis for reciprocation in the form of OCB. Although OCBO and OCBI were measured, the analysis was done on OCB overall.

The empirical work that exists suggests that mutual investment ER yields better explanatory power in explaining OCB than the other ER modes. Although it would be premature to make any definitive conclusions on the role of social exchange in explaining how ER modes are related to OCB due to the paucity of empirical investigations, a few tentative observations can be made. First, the empirical evidence suggests that quasi spot contracts do

not reflect a level of organizational investment required to prompt employee reciprocation in the form of OCB. Second, it seems that while it is possible that a mutual investment approach can facilitate the development of social exchange relationships prompting employees' to go beyond the call of duty, other mechanisms need to be explored such as job embeddedness (Hom et al., 2009).

### **Empirical evidence: Social and Economic Exchange**

In their development and validation study of social and economic exchange, Shore et al. (2006) found that employee perceptions of their social exchange relationship (with their organization) was positively associated with manager ratings of altruism citizenship behavior while economic exchange was not found to be related to OCB. High levels of POS were related to social exchange and low levels of POS contributed to economic exchange. The study found that social exchange mediated the relationship between POS and OCB. The findings support the idea that social exchange encourages behavior that contributes to organizational goals.

A number of empirical studies have examined the mediating roles of social and economic exchange. Kim, Aryee, Loi, and Kim (2013) found that employees' perceptions of their social exchange relationship with their organization mediated the relationship between Person-Organization Fit and OCBO rated by the supervisor in a South Korean organization. This suggests that organizations can facilitate the development of a social exchange relationship through careful attention to selection processes. Redmond (2013) using a sample of Norwegian employees, found that social exchange positively mediated the relationship between employees' perception of their organization's competency model and OCBO while economic exchange fully mediated the negative relationship between competency model perceptions and OCBO. Jiang and Law (2013) found that social exchange mediated the relationship between procedural justice and OCBI (altruism and courtesy) but social exchange did not mediate the relationship between procedural justice and OCBO (civic virtue, conscientiousness and sportsmanship). Kuvaas and Dysvik (2009) found that social exchange perceptions of temporary workers mediated the relationship between perceived investment in permanent employee development and OCBI. The authors explain this by arguing that temporary workers' perceptions of how permanent employees are treated reflects a climate of trust, co-operation and long term orientation that influences temporary workers' OCB. Additional support for the positive relationship between social exchange and OCB is provided

by Elstad, Christophersen, and Turmo (2011) in a sample of Norwegian teachers and this study found no relationship between economic exchange and OCB.

No empirical investigation has explored cultural moderators in the relationship between social exchange and OCB and the one study that examined reciprocation wariness did not find that it moderated the relationship between social exchange and supervisor directed altruism in a sample of Korean employees. Rather, social exchange was positively related to altruism directed toward the supervisor. The authors speculate that the absence of a moderating role for reciprocation wariness may be because wary employees may carefully manage their altruistic behavior towards their supervisor as this relationship is critical for a successful career.

Overall, the limited evidence paints a consistent picture of the positive relationship between perceptions of social exchange and OCB. However, there is less consistency in terms of a differential relationship between social exchange and OCBO/OCBI.

### **Empirical evidence: Idiosyncratic Deals**

Researchers typically use social exchange theory to explain the effects of i-deals on employee attitudes and behavior such that i-deals are a benefit and hence create obligations to reciprocate the supervisor, the organization or the co-workers who enable such idiosyncrasy (Anand et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2012). As OCB captures discretionary behaviors and i-deals imply a low degree of standardization in the employment relationship, OCB is an especially central outcome variable to consider in research on i-deals. Ng and Lucianetti (2016) argue that i-dealers are likely to reciprocate their special arrangements by engaging in extra-role behaviors especially towards their supervisor who agreed to the i-deal. As mentioned earlier, these special arrangements can trigger OCB from the co-workers of i-dealers (Rousseau et al., 2006). However, studies that have examined the impact of i-deals on the helping behaviors of i-dealers are few and empirical evidence concerning the theorized impact of i-deals on co-workers' engagement in OCB is even more limited. Nonetheless, the existing evidence is aligned with the theoretical assertions made in the literature (e.g. Anand et al., 2010; Huo, Luo, & Tam, 2014).

The studies also identify some mechanisms and boundary conditions to the positive relationship between i-deals and OCB. For example, Anand and colleagues (2010) found that leader-member exchange (LMX) and team member exchange (TMX) affect the impact of i-deals on OCB in such a way that the lower the LMX or TMX quality, the stronger the positive

effect of i-deals on OCB. While LMX influenced both OCBO and OCBI, TMX moderated the relationship between i-deals and OCBO only. In explaining their findings, the authors argue that i-deals can offset poor relationship quality. In other words, while OCB is likely to be common in high LMX and TMX relations even without the presence of ideals, i-deals can be especially powerful in inducing employee reciprocity in low-quality relationships.

Studying i-deals in a Chinese context, Huo and colleagues (2014) found that i-dealers were likely to engage in OCBI and that this relationship was strongest with high perceived visibility and low traditionality. In the same sample, co-workers' beliefs in obtaining future i-deals predicted their engagement in OCBI and was strongest for individuals with high perceptions of others' individualized arrangements and low traditionality. Ng and Lucianetti (2016) in turn established that employees' perceptions of their own i-deals positively predicted different performance indicators, including OCB-I and voice. Further, their study found that witnessing co-workers receiving i-deals was positively related to employees' perceptions of their own deals and that i-deals moderated the direct and the interactive effects of personality characteristics on performance indicators. This, along of the findings of Huo and colleagues (2014) confirms that in the context of i-deals, employees pick up social cues from their environment that guide their work-related attitudes and behavior.

In terms of explanatory mechanisms in the relationship between i-deals and OCB, Ng and Feldman (2015) found that i-deals relating to flexibility fostered trust which in turn positively influenced employee willingness to engage in voice. In other words, i-deals appear to foster high quality exchange relationships characterized by trust, which in turn trigger employees to engage in helping behaviors, operationalized as voice in this particular study. In a series of three studies, Ho and Kong (2015) showed that task related i-deals have a positive impact on OCB through competence need satisfaction. Diverting from the dominant social exchange theory framework in i-deals research, the authors explain this finding through signaling and self-determination theories. Specifically, the authors argue that i-deals indicate employees' value at the workplace, thereby enhancing their sense of competence, which in turn positively contributes to OCB.

Overall, the albeit limited evidence so far shows that i-deals positively influence OCB for both i-dealers and their co-workers. Additional empirical evidence is needed to assess the underpinning mechanisms and boundary conditions to the relationship between i-deals and OCB from the perspective of both the i-dealer and third parties.

## **Reflections on the EOR-OCB Relationship**

What can be gleaned from the empirical evidence thus far? It seems that the EOR does matter in eliciting OCB and more so, the type of relationship is important. Relationships based on minimal investment (quasi spot contracts and transactional psychological contracts) are negatively related to OCB or have no relationship with OCB (economic exchange). Events such as broken promises also trigger a reduction in OCB. Relationships that demonstrate investment, support and the fulfilment of obligations and granting of i-deals are positively related to OCB as they signal a trusting and benefit conferring relationship.

Reciprocity is a dominant although not exclusive explanation for the relationship between EOR and OCB. This is particularly evident for the effects of POS and social exchange and to a lesser degree for mutual investment ER. Empirical evidence in psychological contracts and i-deals have demonstrated additional mechanisms, beyond reciprocity to explain why employees engage in OCB such as organizational identification and competence need satisfaction.

The picture is less clear cut when it comes to the target beneficiary of citizenship type behavior. The weight of the evidence suggests that POS is more strongly related to OCBO than OCBI which makes sense given that the donor of support is the organization. The emerging evidence from i-deals suggests that it is more strongly related to OCB toward the supervisor yet the receipt of an i-deal for a focal employee may trigger OCBI from co-workers. As i-deals need to be negotiated with an authority figure (generally supervisors), it is clear to the employee who has granted the i-deal and hence not surprising that OCB is directed toward that specific individual. The implication for co-workers may be pressure to engage in OCBI or OCBO to pick up slack as a result of an i-deal granted to a focal employee. Research on mutual investment has not differentiated between OCBO and OCBI and therefore no tentative conclusions can be made. The empirical evidence from the psychological contract suggests that it can affect both OCBO and OCBI. While culture may play a role in explaining the absence of a differential effect on OCBO/OCBI, another explanation might be the cloudiness of who is responsible for fulfilling certain obligations. If one looks at the range of employer obligations covered, it is clear that specific obligations pertaining to work (autonomy, training, performance feedback etc.) fall within the domain of the supervisor and hence may explain why psychological contract fulfilment affects both OCBO and OCBI.

## **Challenges and Future Research Directions**

In reviewing the empirical evidence, it is clear that the EOR serves as a basis to understanding OCB yet there are a number of challenges and future research directions and we focus on a few: (a) “value addedness” of the EOR constructs (b) OCB as discretionary reciprocation or part of the EOR? (c) temporality and OCB and (d) expanding a social exchange explanation for OCB.

### ***Value Addedness?***

To what extent do the EOR constructs add value to understanding OCB? To begin to address this issue, we examine empirical studies that have concurrently included two EOR frameworks. A developing strand of research has raised a question of whether social exchange relationships buffer or intensify the effects of negative events (i.e. psychological contract breach) on employees’ engagement in OCB. Two competing views are empirically supported. First, a support perspective postulates that high quality exchange relationships will have a protective effect and buffer the effects of psychological contract breach on OCB (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008) such that high quality relationships engender positive cognitive biases (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), and provides the frame of reference through which an individual interprets events consistent with prior beliefs (Dulac et al., 2008).

In contrast, a betrayal perspective posits that higher quality relationships will elicit a positive frame of reference for employees and when employees’ experience contract breach, they will reduce their OCB because of the inconsistency between the event experienced and the relationship itself (Bal, Chiaburu, & Jansen, 2010; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). For example, Bal et al. (2010) found that POS moderated the relationship between contract breach and OCB in an intensifying manner such that when POS was high, employees responded to contract breach by reducing their OCBO. The same effect was found for social exchange and LMX, such that the negative relationship between contract breach and OCBO was intensified when employees perceive a high social exchange relationship with their organization (Bal et al., 2010), and breach had a stronger negative relationship with OCB under conditions of high LMX (Restubog, Bordia, Tang, & Krebs 2010). What is clear is that the quality of employees’ relationship with their organization (as operationalized through POS or social exchange) provides the relational context in which employees to a greater or lesser degree reciprocate employer treatment by engaging in OCB. Anand et al.’s (2010) findings suggest that i-deals can act as a substitute for poor quality relationships such that individuals in low LMX relationships engage in as much OCBO when they are the recipient of an i-deal as those in high



LMX relationships. As noted by the authors, “i-deals offer a potential remedy for relational challenges...” (p.982). This is an avenue ripe for future research – under what conditions do relationships buffer or intensify the effects of a lack of resources on employees’ OCB? Can resources substitute for poor relationships or can they, like an ‘anchoring event’ (resources at a critical point in time when needed) (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) fundamentally alter the nature of the relationship and its consequences for employee engagement in OCB ?

In attempting to disentangle the effects of multiple EOR frameworks on OCB, a simple response is “it’s complicated!” (See Figure 1). If the frameworks are broadly classified into those that focus on the resources exchanged (mutual investment, i-deals, PC breach and fulfilment), the empirical evidence suggests that resources lead to the development of the relationship (social exchange and POS) that in turn prompts reciprocation in the form of OCB. Proceeding from left to right in Figure 1 is consistent with how relationships *develop* from a social exchange perspective. However, in ongoing relationships, the relationship itself provides the lens (positive or negative) through which employees evaluate the inducements offered (or not) with potential consequences for OCB. In addition, the relationship itself can moderate the relationship between resources and OCB as discussed above. Resources can have a direct effect on OCB as evidenced by the empirical studies on psychological contracts and i-deals. Finally, OCB can be conceptualized as employees’ contribution to the relationship (reciprocation for past inducements or relationship quality) that becomes a subsequent benefit to the organization that creates an obligation for the organization to discharge and so on as the cycle continues. This explains the feedback loop from OCB to the resources provided to employees. If employees’ perceive that the organization is not reciprocating their OCB, this may begin to negatively alter employees’ view of the resources provided and undermine the quality of the relationship. Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, and LePine (2015) introduce the term citizenship fatigue which they define as “a state in which employees feel worn out, tired, or on edge attributed to engaging in OCB” (p57). Using conservation of resources theory, the authors find support for the argument that engagement in OCB is associated with greater citizenship fatigue when POS is low compared to when POS is high. This suggests that organizational support buffers the effects of OCB on citizenship fatigue (which is negatively related to subsequent OCB) such that employees consistently engage in OCB in supportive relationships. Future research could integrate social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory to examine the consequences of OCB for future engagement in OCB – to what extent do

employees become unable (the draining effect) or unwilling (the “nonreciprocation” effect) to sustain their OCB over time?

“It’s complicated” also reflects that research downplays temporality as aptly noted by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) who state that “usual tests of SET focus on relatively discrete sets of contingent transactions.....the possibility exists that the transaction series has gone on for some time and/or could continue into the future” (p.889). To elicit OCB as a form of reciprocation, there need to be a basis: resources, the relationship or both. However, employees not only engage in reactive reciprocation where they reciprocate inducements received but they may also engage in proactive reciprocation whereby they engage in OCB, for example, to ensure continuity or future delivery of inducements (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). Korsgaard, Meglino, Lester, and Jeong (2010) find empirical support through experiments of the dual social exchange mechanisms that underlie prosocial behavior: (a) expected reciprocity which is based the expectation of future benefits and (b) obligation to reciprocate based on the receipt of past benefits. Therefore, employee engagement in OCB which is the outcome of the EOR at a point in time becomes an input into the next cycle of transactions. Almost exclusively, empirical research treats OCB as an outcome yet as an employee contribution to the organization, it becomes an input into what is potentially an ongoing series of “giving and taking” – whether OCB is an output or input depends on the temporal perspective taken.

### ***OCB as Discretionary Reciprocation or Part of the EOR?***

Organ (1990) views OCB as a contribution employees can use to “rebalance” the treatment from the organization – lowering or raising it contingent upon fair treatment. As such, it is within the discretion of the employee to decide whether to engage or withhold OCB. Research has challenged the discretionary nature of OCB and Morrison (1994) argued that employees vary in terms of how broadly or narrowly they define their job responsibilities and found that employees were more likely to engage in citizenship type behaviors if they defined those behaviors as in-role. To what extent is OCB an integral part of the employee-organization relationship such that organizations expect employees to engage in OCB as part of their contributions? Jia, Shaw, Tsui, and Park's (2013) measure of a mutual investment ER captures elements of OCB (initiative to make constructive suggestions, adopt new ideas and methods actively to improve work, continuously improve work procedures and methods, and take initiative to carry out new or challenging assignments) suggesting that in social exchange relationships, citizenship type behaviors may be part of the “deal”. In the POS literature, the

reciprocity norm would trigger employees' felt obligation to care about the organization and as Eisenberger et al. (2001) note "meeting obligations helps employees maintain the positive self-image of those who repay debts, avoid the social stigma associated with the reciprocity norm's violation..." (p42). In psychological contract research, employee obligations to their employer may include citizenship type behaviors such as volunteering to do tasks that fall outside my job description (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003), make personal sacrifices for this organization, take this organization's concerns personally (Rousseau, 2000), assist your colleagues in their work, work extra hours to get your job done, take personal initiative to attend additional training courses (De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003). Citizenship type behaviors, therefore, may be expected from employers as part of a mutual investment approach or employees may view those behaviors as their part of the reciprocal obligations that exist between them and their employer. As Mauss (1950) noted in his seminal work that provided the foundation for subsequent development of social exchange theory, there is no such thing as a free gift – "a gift is received with a burden attached" (p.41).

Recent empirical work on OCB has highlighted the role of *citizenship pressure* as a specific job demand that can arise from internal or external forces (Bolino, Turnley, Gilstrap, & Suazo, 2010). Empirically, Bolino et al. (2010) find support for the positive association between citizenship pressure and OCB and highlight the need for additional work to uncover potential antecedents of citizenship pressure. From an EOR vantage point, the source of citizenship pressure may emanate from the exchange relationship that develops between an employee and employer as employees are motivated to meet employer expectations or fulfil their obligations to their employer. In this respect, the citizenship pressure may be nothing more than employees striving to keep their side of the deal. One would anticipate that citizenship pressure would be stronger for mutual investment approaches, relational psychological contracts and less (at best) for quasi spot contracts and economic exchange, all things equal. Likewise, in established ongoing and stable social exchange relationships, employees may consistently engage in OCB to the point that it is habitual (Bolino, Harvey, & Bachrach, 2012). The extent to which long term social exchange relationships drive habitual OCB from employees deserves future research attention. One might anticipate that employees' habitual OCB that is unreciprocated by the organization may trigger employees' to view their relationship as unbalanced (in favor of the organization), thereby changing the relationship itself to one that is potentially exploitative.

### ***Temporality and OCB***

Empirical research on the EOR and employee contributions (i.e. OCB) has not paid adequate attention to the temporal element in social exchange relationships. Timing is important according to Blau (1964) – “posthaste reciprocation of favors, which implies a refusal to stay indebted for a while and hence an insistence on a more businesslike relationship is condemned as improper” (p.99) as this would signal ingratitude. This has implications for the timing of OCB. Furthermore, Gouldner (1960) argued that the obligation to reciprocate is contingent upon the value of the benefit received such that the “debt is in proportion to and varies with- among other things- the intensity of the recipient’s need at the time the benefit was bestowed (“a friend in need....”), the resources of the donor (“he gave although he could ill afford it”), the motives imputed to the donor (“without thought of gain”), and the nature of the constraints which are perceived to exist or be absent (“he gave of his own free will”) (Gouldner, 1960, p.171). From a social exchange theory stance, one would expect a time lag between employer treatment and employees’ OCB and perhaps the magnitude of OCB would vary contingent upon employees’ need at the time of the employer’s treatment. If employees are reciprocating employer treatment, one would anticipate that the nature and intensity of OCB would ebb and flow over time.

Although the EOR literature has remained quite silent on temporality, it is gaining traction in OCB research. In their recent theoretical work, Bolino and colleagues (2012, p. 127) argue that OCB is an “ongoing, dynamic, and time-dependent outcome of an active process of feedback-driven goal pursuit” and call researchers to systematically examine how OCB changes over time. In addition to the dynamic nature of OCB, researchers have noted that OCB consumes time and may thus have consequences for task performance.

Indeed, time represents a crucial resource when performing OCB (Mueller & Kamdar, 2011). Given the limited resources employees have available, there is a need to manage the tension between task performance and OCB engagement. Rapp, Bachrach, and Rapp (2013) found that an inverted U-shaped relationship between OCB and task performance varies depending on time management skills. Specifically, they (2013: 670) found that managers more skilled in time management were “more efficient in demonstrating OCB and more effective in “cashing in” their OCB with coworkers”. Consequently, they create more value from OCB than less skilled time managers because they are more effective in managing their OCB contributions as well as the further reciprocal exchanges initiated by these behaviors. Joireman, Daniels, George-Falvy, and Kamdar (2006) argue that engagement in OCB presents a social dilemma for employees as it promises costs in the short run and benefits only in the long run.

Consistent with this argument, they found that the likelihood of engaging in OCB was higher among those high in empathy and concern with future consequences; and less likely among those instructed to imagine they would leave their company in three months.

Turning to fluctuations in OCB, explaining OCB through affective events theory (AET) draws attention to daily events as triggers for helping behaviors. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) argue that emotions are a proximal predictor of behavior because emotions have the ability to preoccupy individuals and guide behavior into new directions, thereby creating a tendency to behave in untypical ways. Consistent with their predictions made in line with AET, Spence, Brown, Keeping, and Lian (2014) found that momentary feelings of gratitude predict daily fluctuations in OCB. The author (2014: 730) conclude that “meaningful within-person variation in the construct [OCB] exists” and that their study “provides additional impetus for researchers to devote greater attention to *when* individuals will and will not engage in OCB” (emphasis added). Drawing on conservation of resources theory (COR), researchers have argued that OCB can be exhausting for employees and consume their resources (Bolino et al., 2015). For example, coworkers filling in the gaps for i-dealers may well reduce their OCB over time as their resources get depleted. Furthermore, repeated failure by the organization to reciprocate employee OCB may over time begin to negatively alter employees’ view of the resources provided and undermine the quality of the relationship, ultimately leading to reductions in OCB (Bolino et al., 2015).

Future research in the EOR could more fully incorporate temporality to empirical investigations of its effect on OCB. Specifically, how does time facilitate or hinder the demonstration of gratitude for a benefit received and hence reciprocation through OCB? Is time important to the occurrence of OCB –do organizations value OCB that occurs when it is needed or is it stability that is important? Does timing matter to the beneficiary?

### ***Expanding a Social Exchange Explanation for OCB***

SET provides strong theoretical and empirical arguments for examining and explaining various employee attitudes and behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As this chapter demonstrates, the EOR frameworks convincingly explain the occurrence of OCB as employee reciprocation for treatment received. However, existing research points to alternative explanations for employee engagement in OCB that can independently or in interaction with SET provide a more comprehensive understanding of OCB.

Rioux and Penner (2001) present three motives for engaging in OCB. These include *prosocial values* referring to a desire to be helpful and to build positive relationships with

others, *organizational concern* capturing the wish for the company to do well and *impression management* (IM) concerning the attempt to appear in a positive light to colleagues, and to obtain rewards. The first two reflect the “good soldier” motives captured in the original spirit of OCB (Organ, 1988). The third, captures a more instrumental “good actor” motive to be helpful to the organization. Empirical evidence indicates that these three motives play a role in predicting employee engagement in OCB and each count for unique variance in OCB (Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006; Finkelstein, 2006; Grant & Mayer, 2009; Rioux & Penner, 2001). While an expectation for *employer* reciprocity is bound to be integral to the extrinsic IM motivation, the expectation of “pay-back” plays less of a role when OCB is driven by prosocial values and good actor motive. For example, personality (e.g. pro-active personality, conscientiousness, emotional stability), values and moral identity may explain employee motivations to be a good actor and the resulting engagement in OCB (Bolino et al., 2006; Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, & Gardner, 2011; Grant & Mayer, 2009).

Another alternative explanation for engagement in OCB stems from affect and emotions, highlighting the importance of positive and negative events at work in line with affective events theory (AET) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Spector and Fox (2002) propose that positive and negative situations at work elicit corresponding positive and negative emotional reactions and that positive emotions are associated with OCBs, and negative emotions are associated with CWBs. Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, and Hulin (2009) showed that OCBs (and CWBs) are triggered by affect-generating events that employees experience at work such that positive events result in positive affect and consequent acts of citizenship, whereas negative events induce negative affect and eventually lead to CWBs. Spector and Fox (2010a; 2010b) have also argued that employees may engage in OCBs because they feel guilty about having behaved in ways that harm or hurt the organization or other employees. In other words, feelings of guilt resulting from CWBs may motivate employees to perform OCBs. Further, conceptualizing gratitude as a positive emotion, Spence and colleagues (2014) found that gratitude is a significant, positive predictor of OCB, especially targeting supervisors and coworkers (versus the organization). This finding is aligned with Lee and Allen's (2002) study that shows that OCB-O is driven more by cognition, while OCBI is driven more by affect. According to Lee and Allen (2002: 133), OCBI is more likely to be an “expression of employees’ affect at work,” and is less likely to reflect an employee’s deliberate attempt to restore balance in social exchange. Consequently, affect and emotions present opportunities to expand the SET based reasoning for employees engaging in OCB. Social learning theory can also be used as a framework to explain in OCB as a group level phenomenon. For example,

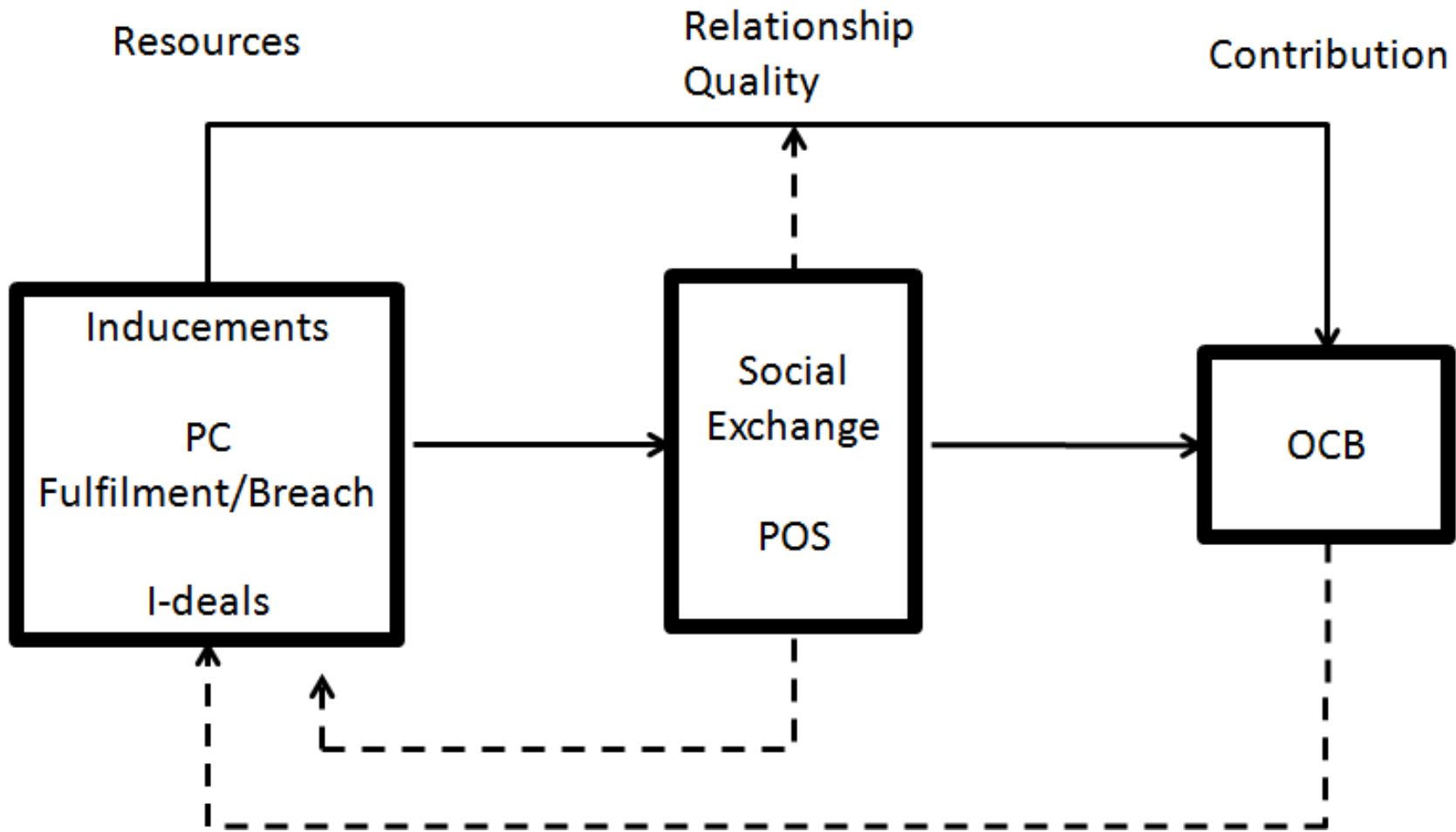
Mayer and colleagues (2009) stressed the role of social learning theory to complement social exchange theory in order to explain the relationship between ethical leadership and OCBs. In line with social learning theory, they found that leaders serve as role models for subordinates. Specifically, ethical leaders set an example for the appropriate way to behave for employees – including OCB - who imitate the behavior of their leaders. In an earlier study, Ehrhart and Naumann (2004) suggested that the establishment and maintenance of OCB norms in work units rely on a cyclical relationship between different level processes, namely individual and group-level, and ultimately offer an explanation for how OCB norms are established and maintained in work groups.

Finally, complementing the studies stemming from SET, recent research has pointed to the importance of mutual understanding and balance in the exchange relationship. A recent study by Matta, Scott, Koopman, and Conlon (2015) showed that employees were more likely to engage in higher levels of OCB-O and OCB-I, when they and their respective leader agreed on the quality of their LMX relationship, and less so when their perceptions diverged, irrespective of whether LMX was low or high. Drawing on Heider's balance theory (1958), the authors explain that perceived asymmetry in evaluations of the relationship creates tension, uncertainty, and discomfort, thereby supporting the assertions of SET regarding the drive towards equilibrium (Blau 1964).

## **Conclusions**

Social exchange theory provides an important theoretical basis to understanding OCB in the workplace and this is supported by the empirical evidence reviewed here. Although the norm of reciprocity is a dominant explanation for why employees engage in OCB as they reciprocate the resources received or the quality of the relationship they have with their organization, it is by no means the only explanation. Despite the expanding number of empirical studies linking the EOR to OCB, there are a number of challenges to advancing understanding of these linkages: the complexity of the interrelationships between the EOR frameworks and OCB and the role of time; the extent to which OCB is expected as part of the employee-organization exchange relationship; greater integration between SET and other theories to more fully comprehend when, why and for how long employees engage in OCB.

Figure 1: EOR Frameworks and OCB





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