

# Dynamic Trajectories and Formation Mechanisms of Employee Organizational Citizenship Behavior: An Organizational Socialization Perspective

**Authors:** Zhang Jingting, Wang Bin, Fu Jingtao, Wang Bin

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## Abstract

The increasingly complex and volatile market competitive environment has placed higher demands on organizational flexibility and adaptability. In this context, employees' organizational citizenship behavior is particularly important, as it can effectively enhance an organization's survival capability and core competitiveness in uncertain environments and improve organizational performance. Although substantial research has focused on employees' organizational citizenship behavior, researchers have predominantly adopted a relatively static research paradigm, neglecting the long-term dynamic trends of organizational citizenship behavior. From an organizational socialization perspective, this study focuses on the long-term dynamic trends of organizational citizenship behavior among new employees and employees experiencing job changes, explores the internal mechanisms and boundary conditions influencing these dynamic trends, and aims to provide referential theoretical foundations for cultivating and stimulating sustained high-level organizational citizenship behavior among employees.

## Full Text

### Preamble

#### Exploring the Trajectories of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Its Influencing Factors and Boundary Conditions from the Organizational Socialization Perspective

ZHANG Liangting<sup>1</sup>, WANG Bin<sup>2</sup>, FU Jingtao<sup>1</sup>

(1 Management School of Hainan University, Haikou 570228)

(2 School of Management, Shanghai University, Shanghai 200444)

## Abstract

The increasingly complex and volatile competitive environment demands greater organizational flexibility and adaptability, making employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) particularly critical as it effectively enhances organizational viability, core competitiveness, and performance in uncertain environments. Although substantial research has examined OCB, most studies adopt a relatively static paradigm, neglecting its long-term dynamic trajectories. Grounded in organizational socialization theory, this study focuses on the longitudinal dynamic patterns of OCB among newcomers and job changers, exploring the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions that shape these trajectories. Our aim is to provide a theoretical framework for cultivating and sustaining high levels of OCB over time.

**Keywords:** Organizational Citizenship Behavior; Dynamic; Organizational Socialization; Mechanism

## 1. Problem Statement

Organizational citizenship behavior refers to actions that maintain and enhance the social and psychological environment of an organization to support task performance [?]. The demonstration of OCB holds significant importance for individuals, teams, and organizations alike. Existing literature demonstrates that OCB can improve employee performance evaluations and job satisfaction [?, ?, ?], while also helping teams correct errors, enhance decision-making efficiency, and promote innovation and core competitiveness [?, ?, ?]. However, maintaining consistently high levels of OCB over the long term presents considerable challenges, as we often observe helpful or vocal employees becoming passive or silent. Consequently, how to motivate and sustain high levels of OCB has become a key concern for both managers and researchers.

Although OCB research has yielded fruitful findings, the vast majority employs static models as their foundation. While static models can explain why some employees exhibit more OCB than others at a given point in time, they cannot account for within-individual variability in OCB over time, thus failing to adequately address practical management questions. In fact, existing research has revealed that OCB possesses dynamic characteristics and demonstrates intra-individual variability over time [?, ?, ?, ?]. Therefore, examining OCB from a dynamic perspective can provide deeper insights into its nature and guide efforts to motivate and sustain high levels of OCB. To date, however, dynamic studies of employee OCB remain extremely limited.

Within the limited body of dynamic OCB research, scholars have primarily employed two approaches: cross-lagged designs [?, ?, ?] and experience sampling methods [?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?]. While both approaches can reveal dynamic changes in OCB to some extent, each has limitations. Cross-lagged designs only measure OCB changes between two time points, which can lead to erroneous conclusions and increase the probability of Type II errors. Experience sampling methods,

meanwhile, can only capture relatively short-term fluctuations in OCB, with substantial variability that fails to accurately reflect long-term patterns.

Over the long term, employees develop relatively stable behavioral patterns as accumulated work experience and increased information acquisition reduce their perceived uncertainty and enhance their ability to predict environmental demands. In such contexts, employees tend to maintain stable behavioral patterns to preserve the status quo, and once formed, these patterns become resistant to external influences [?, ?]. Therefore, if organizations wish employees to demonstrate sustained high levels of OCB, they must intervene before these stable patterns crystallize—specifically during the organizational socialization stage for newcomers or when existing employees undergo job changes or work adjustments. Organizational socialization is defined as the process through which individuals learn and reconstruct their values, abilities, and behaviors to meet organizational role requirements and become integrated organizational members [?]. This process is relatively lengthy, substantially impactful, and universal for all employees, during which behavioral patterns undergo significant changes. Examining OCB trajectories during organizational socialization and analyzing potential explanatory variables and boundary conditions can provide a framework for organizations to shape specific behavioral patterns and cultivate stable, sustained OCB. Additionally, considering that OCB is a multidimensional construct, this study aims to differentiate OCB types within the organizational socialization perspective to further refine dynamic OCB theory.

This study addresses four key questions: (1) What are the trajectories of employee OCB from an organizational socialization perspective? (2) Do these trajectories differ significantly across different employee groups and OCB types? (3) What are the primary explanatory variables affecting OCB trajectories, and how effectively do they explain these changes? (4) What are the main boundary conditions affecting OCB trajectories, and how do they influence these patterns?

## 2.1 Dynamic Research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior refers to actions that maintain and enhance the social and psychological environment to support task performance [?]. A review of OCB research reveals that most studies adopt static perspectives and cross-sectional data, with only a small body of work employing dynamic perspectives and longitudinal data (referred to herein as dynamic models). Among the limited dynamic studies (focusing only on articles published in high-level journals, summarized in Table 1 ), some scholars have used cross-lagged designs to examine time-varying correlations between OCB and other variables to investigate causal relationships. For example, Raver et al. (2012) demonstrated that team helping norms predict future helping behaviors among team members. Studies using experience sampling methods have typically employed relatively short time intervals as the basis for examining OCB dynamics. For instance, Koopman (2016) used a cognitive-affective process framework and con-

servation of resources theory to conduct a ten-day experience sampling study of 82 employees, finding that daily OCB influenced subjective well-being through positive affect.

**Table 1** Current State of Dynamic OCB Research

Representative Literature	Research Limitations (Theoretical)
Raver et al., 2012; Vigoda-Gadot & Angert, 2007; Blakely et al., 2003; Koys, 2001; Donaldson et al., 2000	Linear research primarily measuring OCB changes between only two time points, 容易产生错误的研究结论, thus increasing Type II error probability.
Hafenbrack et al., 2020; Chuang et al., 2019; Koopman, 2016; Dalal et al., 2014; Glomb et al., 2011; Dalal et al., 2009; Ilies et al., 2006	Linear research only capturing short-term changes (minutes, hours, days, or weeks) in OCB influenced by affect or emotions, with large fluctuations that cannot accurately reflect long-term patterns.

Existing dynamic research remains fragmented, lacking a unified theoretical framework to explain employee OCB trajectories.

## 2.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is a lengthy dynamic process, and existing research on its relationship with OCB has primarily adopted dynamic perspectives to examine how specific socialization content (e.g., task mastery, interpersonal relationships, organizational politics, language, organizational goals and values, history) and socialization strategies (organization-driven and individual proactive strategies) influence OCB, with most studies focusing on newcomers. For example, Benzinger (2016) found that differential socialization strategies for temporary and permanent workers enhanced information-seeking behaviors and accelerated socialization. However, research examining OCB changes from the process perspective of organizational socialization remains rare. In fact, organizational socialization is essentially a process of uncertainty reduction, for which uncertainty reduction theory provides a reasonable explanation. When newcomers enter an organization or existing employees experience job adjustments, changes in work roles, relationship networks, or organizational environments create high levels of perceived uncertainty [?]. Individuals adopt various proactive socialization strategies (such as OCB) to understand their role positioning, recognize others' behavioral preferences, and internalize organizational values, thereby reducing uncertainty [?] and enhancing environmental predictability. Changes in perceived uncertainty subsequently influence the selection of proactive socialization strategies. Thus, uncertainty reduction theory can explain OCB changes, providing a foundation for this study to explore OCB trajectory-

ries from the organizational socialization process perspective and understand the underlying logic of OCB changes.

### 2.3 Literature Review

A systematic review reveals that despite rich research findings on OCB, several areas require improvement.

First, dynamic OCB research remains limited and focuses on short-term changes. Although scholars have called for deeper investigation into OCB' s dynamic processes [?], few studies have addressed this. Among the limited dynamic studies, researchers have primarily used experience sampling methods to examine short-term effects of affect and emotions on OCB. While this approach captures within-individual variability, it only reflects short-term fluctuations with substantial volatility, failing to accurately depict long-term trajectories. Understanding long-term OCB patterns is essential for effectively motivating sustained high levels of OCB.

Second, the role of organizational socialization processes in shaping OCB has been neglected. Existing research has focused primarily on how specific socialization content and strategies influence OCB, limiting our understanding of this relationship. Analyzing OCB trajectories from the organizational socialization process perspective is crucial for deepening our comprehension of this relationship and predicting career success.

Third, dynamic comparative analyses across OCB dimensions remain unexplored. Although studies have examined causal relationships between different OCB dimensions and other variables, none have investigated temporal differences in trajectories across dimensions. In reality, the magnitude of change differs across OCB dimensions over time. Therefore, differentiating OCB types and examining trajectory differences during organizational socialization can provide nuanced understanding and guide efforts to motivate different types of OCB.

Finally, there is a lack of a unified, dynamic framework explaining the causes and boundary conditions of OCB changes. While existing research has examined various factors (e.g., OCB motives) from multiple perspectives, most studies rely on single time points and lack attention to dynamic effects. Among the few dynamic studies, scholars have selected different factors based on their research perspectives without a unified theoretical framework to clearly explain the internal mechanisms and boundary conditions of OCB changes, preventing comprehensive understanding of OCB' s dynamic nature.

### 3. Research Framework

Based on the above analysis, this study integrates organizational socialization theory, AMO (ability-motivation-opportunity) theory, and OCB literature to examine long-term OCB trajectories during organizational socialization. We introduce dynamic comparative analysis techniques to clarify differences in OCB

trajectories across employee groups (newcomers vs. job changers) and OCB dimensions. Furthermore, we investigate factors influencing these trajectories and their boundary conditions to guide efforts in sustaining high OCB levels and decelerating potential declines. This research comprises three main components:

### 3.1 Study 1: Dynamic Trajectories of OCB for Newcomers and Job Changers from an Organizational Socialization Perspective

As noted, organizational socialization is essentially an uncertainty reduction process, with uncertainty reduction theory playing an important role in explaining behavioral changes over time [?]. However, this theory has limitations. First, it can only explain linear changes, whereas mainstream organizational socialization research suggests non-linear patterns such as U-shaped curves [?, ?] and learning curves [?]. Additionally, a meta-analysis found an inverted U-shaped relationship between OCB and organizational tenure [?], indicating that OCB trajectories during socialization likely follow non-linear rather than linear patterns. Second, uncertainty reduction theory focuses solely on environmental changes while neglecting individual agency in managing uncertainty. In reality, employees' abilities, motivations, and opportunities to engage in OCB change during socialization, further determining their willingness and capacity to reduce environmental uncertainty. Therefore, to address these limitations, we introduce AMO theory to refine our understanding of OCB changes and enhance our comprehension of the socialization process.

AMO theory posits that the combination of ability, motivation, and opportunity effectively predicts employee behavior development [?]. Ability refers to knowledge and skills that enable specific behaviors; motivation refers to the willingness to exhibit behaviors; and opportunity refers to situational conditions that facilitate or inhibit behaviors. Examining these three factors allows us to infer the intensity and sustainability of OCB [?], helping predict OCB trajectories during socialization. Therefore, this study simultaneously considers uncertainty reduction theory and AMO theory to explain potential OCB changes.

During the initial socialization stage, when employees encounter new tasks, work methods, or environments, their perceived uncertainty is high, creating strong motivation to reduce uncertainty through OCB. However, at this stage, employees lack the necessary abilities (knowledge and skills) to demonstrate OCB—they don't know how or when to perform such behaviors [?]. Additionally, without established social networks, they lack access to information and support, resulting in few opportunities to exhibit OCB. Consequently, despite high motivation, OCB remains at low levels due to insufficient ability and opportunity.

As socialization progresses, employees clarify role requirements, actively seek information, explore their environment, and interact more deeply with colleagues. They gradually learn how to demonstrate OCB, enhancing their abilities. Through continuous and frequent communication with colleagues and

leaders, employees develop and expand their social networks, gaining more information and support, thereby increasing opportunities for OCB. Moreover, uncertainty remains relatively high during this stage, maintaining strong motivation. Consequently, OCB increases steadily over time.

In the later socialization stage, as uncertainty decreases and employees develop deeper understanding of their jobs, accumulate resources, and establish robust social networks, both abilities and opportunities for OCB reach high levels. However, motivation declines as uncertainty diminishes. Although employees have the ability and opportunity, they lack the willingness to demonstrate OCB, causing OCB levels to decline after peaking and then stabilize. Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 1:** As organizational socialization and resocialization deepen, OCB among newcomers and job changers will follow an inverted U-shaped trajectory.

### 3.2 Study 2: Dynamic Comparative Analysis of OCB Trajectories from an Organizational Socialization Perspective

After identifying OCB trajectories during socialization, this study further examines differences across employee groups and OCB dimensions.

**Dynamic comparison across employee groups.** Using organizational socialization degree as the grouping criterion, we categorize employees into newcomers and job changers, both experiencing organizational socialization processes. Research indicates that individuals experience varying degrees of uncertainty during socialization because different levels of socialization or career transitions create different magnitudes of impact. Those experiencing stronger impacts perceive higher uncertainty and stress, resulting in longer adjustment periods and greater behavioral changes [?]. Given these differences, we argue it is necessary to distinguish between employees undergoing different degrees of socialization to clarify trajectory differences. Compared to newcomers, job changers experience lower uncertainty and stress because they have already accumulated resources, built social networks, and are familiar with organizational rules and implicit norms. Consequently, they possess stronger abilities and opportunities to demonstrate OCB, higher motivation to reduce uncertainty, and can adapt more quickly with shorter adjustment cycles, resulting in smaller OCB changes. Research shows that resocialized employees typically exhibit smaller behavioral and cognitive adjustments than newcomers [?]. Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 2:** Compared to newcomers, job changers will exhibit smaller rates of change in OCB.

**Dynamic comparison across OCB dimensions.** OCB research has identified over 30 distinct types. Given resource constraints, this study cannot examine all types. Focusing on the organizational socialization perspective, we use risk characteristics as the classification criterion, dividing OCB into affilia-

tive and challenging behaviors. Affiliative behaviors maintain the status quo by supporting existing workflows and interpersonal relationships, while challenging behaviors question and improve existing processes. Research shows that although employees exhibit various OCB types, their willingness and frequency differ—some behaviors (e.g., affiliative) are demonstrated more frequently, while others (e.g., challenging) less so [?]. This pattern is particularly pronounced during socialization, as newcomers and job changers show stronger preferences for certain OCB types.

Specifically, both newcomers and job changers face high environmental uncertainty, stress, and anxiety during socialization. Although they may have the ability and opportunity to provide unique insights or initiate changes, they often remain silent to avoid damaging relationships [?]. Conversely, affiliative behaviors carry lower risk, help build interpersonal relationships, acquire information and resources, and create positive impressions. Therefore, both newcomers and job changers are willing to demonstrate more affiliative behaviors. While individuals have similar abilities and opportunities for both behavior types, their willingness differs significantly—affiliative motivation far exceeds challenging motivation. Moreover, affiliative motivation changes with uncertainty perception, whereas challenging motivation, due to its risky nature, is less affected by uncertainty. Consequently, affiliative behaviors show greater magnitude of change than challenging behaviors during socialization. Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 3:** Compared to high-risk challenging behaviors, both newcomers and job changers will demonstrate more affiliative behaviors, with affiliative behaviors showing greater rates of change during socialization and resocialization.

### 3.3 Study 3: Explanatory Variables and Boundary Conditions Affecting OCB Trajectories from an Organizational Socialization Perspective

After identifying OCB trajectories and comparative differences, this study further investigates explanatory variables and boundary conditions to clarify the internal mechanisms and contextual factors shaping OCB changes during socialization.

Based on uncertainty reduction theory and AMO theory, we focus on ability, motivation, and opportunity variables for three reasons. First, organizational socialization is essentially a learning and assimilation process [?]. The learning process emphasizes understanding role expectations, tasks, and environment, while assimilation focuses on relationship building and organizational integration. Therefore, information acquisition, task characteristics, environmental attributes, and relationship construction all influence socialization and subsequent OCB. Second, AMO theory suggests that only by simultaneously considering ability, motivation, and opportunity can we accurately predict behavior. Third, because this study examines long-term OCB trajectories during socialization, we exclude state-level variables. While states affect OCB, their effects

are temporary and lack temporal continuity [?]. In contrast, trait, cognitive, and environmental variables are relatively stable and continuous, making them better predictors of long-term OCB trajectories.

Accordingly, we examine: (1) **Ability**: learning ability and relationship construction ability; (2) **Motivation**: uncertainty reduction motivation and OCB motives (impression management, prosocial, and organizational concern motives); and (3) **Opportunity**: task interdependence and transformational leadership as contextual facilitators. Static research has shown both task interdependence and transformational leadership effectively predict OCB [?, ?]. Among these, ability and opportunity factors are relatively stable, while motivational factors change with internal or external conditions, requiring dynamic analysis. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

### **Figure 1** Influencing Factors and Boundary Conditions of OCB Trajectories

**(1) Influence of learning ability on OCB trajectories.** Learning ability refers to the capacity to continuously acquire knowledge and information to adapt to environmental changes, improving cognitive and behavioral patterns for survival and development [?]. Employees with strong learning ability demonstrate greater information acquisition and problem-solving skills during socialization, facilitating OCB to accelerate socialization. Information acquisition skills help them quickly understand how and when to demonstrate OCB, particularly affiliative behaviors that expand social networks, which in turn facilitate further information acquisition [?]. Problem-solving skills enable them to exhibit challenging behaviors when identifying organizational problems, improving work environments and reducing negative impacts on socialization. Additionally, strong learners possess autonomous motivation, sustaining high OCB levels to adapt to environmental demands, resulting in smaller temporal changes. Conversely, weak learners lack adaptive capacity and do not proactively use OCB to reduce uncertainty, maintaining low OCB levels. Their OCB expression depends heavily on environmental support, creating larger temporal fluctuations. Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 4:** Learning ability positively influences the mean levels of affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**Hypothesis 5:** Learning ability negatively influences the rates of change in affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**(2) Influence of relationship construction ability on OCB trajectories.** Relationship construction ability refers to the capacity to build and maintain good relationships, value close others' opinions, and achieve harmonious coexistence [?]. Employees with strong relationship construction ability focus on building and maintaining social networks, exhibiting more affiliative behaviors and fewer challenging behaviors that might damage relationships. Their strong relationship skills enable them to sustain high levels of affiliative behavior over time with minimal fluctuation. For challenging behaviors, they can use relationship skills to mitigate interpersonal risks, also showing smaller temporal

changes. Conversely, weak relationship builders find relationship construction difficult and only exhibit affiliative behaviors when necessary, creating large fluctuations based on varying relationship needs. They also cannot effectively manage conflicts from challenging behaviors, exhibiting such behaviors only in specific situations where interpersonal damage is unlikely. Therefore, their challenging behaviors show large temporal fluctuations tied to environmental cues. We propose:

**Hypothesis 6:** Relationship construction ability positively influences the mean level of affiliative behaviors.

**Hypothesis 7:** Relationship construction ability negatively influences the mean level of challenging behaviors.

**Hypothesis 8:** Relationship construction ability negatively influences the rates of change in both affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**(3) Influence of OCB motives on trajectories.** Organizational socialization is fundamentally an uncertainty reduction process in which uncertainty reduction motivation plays a key role. While Studies 1 and 2 discussed how OCB reduces uncertainty, they treated this motivation as a default condition without direct measurement. Study 3 explicitly incorporates uncertainty reduction motivation as a crucial explanatory variable. Additionally, OCB is an autonomous behavior closely related to its motives, which can be categorized as impression management, prosocial, and organizational concern motives [?]. Research shows these motives change over time [?], requiring dynamic examination.

Impression management motivation—maintaining a positive image to obtain rewards—emerges when individuals need material or social resources, such as during socialization. In this stage, employees want to make good impressions to build relationships and reduce uncertainty. Affiliative behaviors demonstrate dedication and helpfulness, while challenging behaviors showcase competence, both enhancing evaluations and performance. Thus, impression management motivation promotes OCB.

Prosocial motivation—desiring to help others and build positive relationships—makes individuals more attentive to others' needs during socialization, leading to affiliative behaviors that accelerate assimilation and reduce uncertainty.

Organizational concern motivation—wanting to maximize organizational benefits—leads employees to connect their development with the organization's during socialization, exhibiting challenging behaviors to solve problems and improve work methods.

These motives are not mutually exclusive but coexist, with different motives dominating at different times. Early in socialization, uncertainty reduction and impression management motives may dominate, leading to high OCB levels for information acquisition and relationship building. As socialization progresses and uncertainty decreases, prosocial and organizational concern motives become

more important. Thus, changes in OCB motives affect OCB trajectories. We propose:

**Hypothesis 9:** Uncertainty reduction and impression management motives positively influence the mean levels of affiliative and challenging behaviors; prosocial motivation positively influences affiliative behaviors; organizational concern motivation positively influences challenging behaviors.

**Hypothesis 10:** The rates of change in uncertainty reduction and impression management motives positively influence the rates of change in affiliative and challenging behaviors; the rate of change in prosocial motivation positively influences the rate of change in affiliative behaviors; the rate of change in organizational concern motivation positively influences the rate of change in challenging behaviors.

**(4) Influence of task interdependence on OCB trajectories.** Task interdependence refers to the degree to which employees depend on information, resources, and member support to complete work tasks [?]. High task interdependence demands greater information acquisition and relationship building because employees must obtain resources from others to achieve goals. This creates frequent information exchange and close coordination, providing opportunities for OCB. Affiliative behaviors help build social networks and meet collaboration demands, while challenging behaviors facilitate information acquisition and support high performance requirements. Therefore, high task interdependence promotes both behavior types. Due to high demands for information and relationship building, employees must continuously demonstrate high levels of both behaviors to complete tasks, resulting in smaller temporal changes. In low interdependence situations, employees can accomplish goals independently, exhibiting OCB only when internal needs arise (e.g., resource acquisition), which fluctuates substantially, creating larger temporal changes. We propose:

**Hypothesis 11:** Task interdependence positively influences the mean levels of affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**Hypothesis 12:** Task interdependence negatively influences the rates of change in affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**(5) Influence of transformational leadership on OCB trajectories.** Transformational leadership involves leaders using charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to make employees aware of responsibility importance, stimulate higher-level needs, and maximize potential for high performance [?]. High transformational leadership creates opportunities for OCB through vision inspiration, individualized care, and intellectual stimulation, reducing uncertainty and encouraging both affiliative behaviors (through reciprocity) and challenging behaviors (through intellectual stimulation). In high transformational leadership contexts, employees continuously perceive support and tend to sustain OCB, showing small temporal changes. Conversely, low transformational leadership fails to provide

resources and support, making OCB expression dependent on fluctuating internal needs, resulting in large temporal changes. We propose:

**Hypothesis 13:** Transformational leadership positively influences the mean levels of affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**Hypothesis 14:** Transformational leadership negatively influences the rates of change in affiliative and challenging behaviors.

**(6) Mediating role of OCB motives.** As autonomous behaviors, OCB motives (uncertainty reduction, impression management, prosocial, and organizational concern) are the most direct causes of OCB, while abilities (learning and relationship construction) and opportunities (task interdependence and transformational leadership) are more distal factors that influence OCB through motives. For example, relationship construction ability can enhance prosocial motivation, thereby influencing affiliative behaviors. High task interdependence can stimulate prosocial and organizational concern motives, promoting both behavior types to meet collaboration demands and performance requirements. We propose:

**Hypothesis 15:** OCB motives mediate the relationship between abilities and OCB.

**Hypothesis 16:** OCB motives mediate the relationship between opportunities and OCB.

**(7) Moderating effect of ability-opportunity interaction.** AMO theory states that only by simultaneously considering ability, motivation, and opportunity can we accurately predict behavior. As OCB motives play a key role in OCB expression [?], we treat motives as the main effect and abilities and opportunities as moderators. Specifically, higher ability and more opportunities strengthen the positive effect of OCB motives on OCB, while lower ability and fewer opportunities weaken this effect. Thus, the interaction between ability and opportunity moderates the relationship between OCB motives and OCB. We propose:

**Hypothesis 17:** The interaction between employee ability and opportunity moderates the positive relationship between OCB motives and OCB, such that the positive effect is stronger when both ability is high and opportunities are abundant.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

Based on AMO theory and uncertainty reduction theory, this study systematically examines: (1) long-term OCB trajectories during organizational socialization, (2) differences in trajectories across employee groups and OCB dimensions, and (3) explanatory mechanisms and boundary conditions, providing a theoretical framework for cultivating sustained high-level OCB. We elaborate on three core aspects of our theoretical model.

First, based on AMO theory, we clarify the long-term OCB trajectory during socialization. Organizational socialization is essentially an uncertainty reduction process [?], but uncertainty reduction theory has limitations. It can only explain linear changes, whereas mainstream socialization research suggests non-linear patterns such as U-shaped curves [?, ?] and learning curves [?]. It also neglects individual agency in managing uncertainty. To address these limitations, we introduce AMO theory to refine our understanding of OCB's curvilinear changes from ability, motivation, and opportunity perspectives. Initially, employees lack abilities [?] and opportunities, resulting in low OCB. As socialization progresses, abilities and opportunities increase while motivation remains strong, leading to steady OCB growth. In later stages, abilities and opportunities are high but motivation declines as uncertainty decreases, causing OCB to decline and stabilize.

Second, we construct a comparative model of OCB trajectories across employee groups and dimensions. Different socialization degrees create varying uncertainty levels and impacts. Stronger impacts produce higher uncertainty, longer adjustment periods, and greater behavioral changes [?]. Compared to newcomers, job changers experience lower uncertainty and stress [?] because they have accumulated resources, built social networks, and understand organizational rules, giving them stronger abilities, opportunities, and motivation to reduce uncertainty, resulting in shorter adjustment cycles and smaller OCB changes. Regarding OCB dimensions, we classify OCB into affiliative and challenging behaviors based on risk characteristics. While employees exhibit various OCB types, their willingness differs [?], particularly during socialization. Facing high uncertainty and stress, employees may have abilities and opportunities for challenging behaviors but often remain silent to avoid damaging relationships [?]. Conversely, affiliative behaviors carry lower risk, facilitate relationship building, and create positive impressions, making them more attractive to both newcomers and job changers.

Third, based on AMO theory, we reveal the explanatory mechanisms and boundary conditions for OCB trajectories. Previous dynamic OCB research using experience sampling methods has focused on short-term state variables like affect and emotions [?]. While states affect OCB, their effects are temporary and lack temporal continuity, making them ineffective for explaining long-term trajectories. In contrast, traits, cognitions, and environmental features are relatively stable and continuous [?], better explaining long-term patterns. This study examines ability, motivation, and opportunity variables to provide an integrated framework for long-term OCB trajectories. Specifically, abilities (learning and relationship construction), motives (uncertainty reduction, impression management, prosocial, and organizational concern), and opportunities (task interdependence and transformational leadership) all influence OCB dynamics, with the three-way interaction providing the strongest explanatory power.

This study makes several contributions. **In research perspective**, we integrate organizational socialization theory into dynamic OCB research, using

socialization degree to differentiate employee groups and examining trajectories and their antecedents across groups. Existing dynamic OCB research primarily uses affective perspectives [?], neglecting the socialization process—a lengthy, impactful period of value and behavior reconstruction that significantly affects employee cognition and behavior. Our integration provides a valuable complement to existing research.

**In methodology**, while dynamic theories emerged in the early 1990s, analytical techniques have lagged behind theoretical development. Most dynamic methods address linear relationships, with few methods for curvilinear dynamics, particularly for comparing change rates and magnitudes across groups and dimensions. This study combines calculus with organizational behavior dynamic analysis techniques, extending linear dynamic comparison methods to curvilinear dynamics. This advances dynamic analytical techniques and provides empirical support for dynamic difference models.

**In research content**, we introduce relatively stable yet temporally dynamic variables as explanatory factors and boundary conditions, innovatively exploring OCB trajectory formation mechanisms. Existing dynamic OCB research has focused on state variables with temporary effects and no temporal continuity, limiting their ability to explain long-term trajectories. Trait, cognitive, and environmental variables are more stable and continuous [?], better explaining long-term patterns. Additionally, previous dynamic OCB research lacks a unified explanatory framework. By introducing AMO theory to examine the explanatory power of ability, motivation, and opportunity variables, we provide theoretical support for dynamic OCB research and deepen OCB theory.

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