



## Enlightenment political philosophy and organizational citizenship behaviour: Contextualizing historical discourse

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# Enlightenment political philosophy and organizational citizenship behaviour: Contextualizing historical discourse

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## Abstract

Organizational citizenship behaviours are employee contributions that management neither explicitly requires nor formally rewards. While the definition is straightforward, the theoretical meaning of the citizenship construct remains ambiguous. Some regard citizenship behaviours as sacrifice for the good of the whole, while others view them as motivated by long-term self-interest. An influential line of organizational research invokes enlightenment republican political philosophy to conceptualize citizenship behaviours as manifestations of civic virtue. I challenge the suitability of this republican understanding of organizational citizenship. I argue that transposing highly contextualized enlightenment discourse to the modern workplace violates the critical assumptions upon which republican thinkers insisted. Misapplication of republicanism is not only ahistorical, but managerialist and hegemonic, for it normalizes a language of employer privilege and employee obligation. I conclude that republicanism's enlightenment foil – liberalism – provides a more suitable basis for developing the theoretical meaning of organizational citizenship.

## Keywords

Organizational citizenship behaviour, liberalism, republicanism, enlightenment, social exchange theory

## Introduction

Organizational scholarship identifies a category of employee behaviours that benefit the organization but are neither explicitly dictated by managerial authority nor directly recognized by formal reward systems (Organ 1988; Organ et al. 2006). Dubbed organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), these extra-role contributions have been examined extensively for antecedents (Bateman

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and Organ 1983; Konovsky and Organ 1996; Eatough et al. 2011; Kutcher et al. 2010; McNeely and Meglino 1994; Rafferty and Restubog 2011; Smith et al. 1983), for mediators and moderators (Kacmar et al. 2011; Tepper et al. 2000; Tepper and Taylor 2003) and for consequences (Bergeron 2007; Boiral 2009; Podsakoff et al. 2011). Despite the large and growing body of empirical work on OCB, the theoretical substance of the construct remains unsettled. Scholars hold opposing interpretations of why employees contribute to organizations in ways neither explicitly required nor formally rewarded. Some regard citizenship behaviours as sacrifice for the good of the whole; others view them as motivated by long-term self-interest. The divergent representations of OCBs both reflect and inform contrasting understandings of the relationship between the individual worker and the organizational collective. The meaning imparted to the OCB construct, therefore, has important implications for how organizational scholarship represents employee and employer obligations and privileges.

The management literature invokes history and political philosophy to solidify one particular understanding of the OCB construct. Building on Graham's (1986) suggestion that the political properties of the word 'citizenship' be included in investigations of OCB, Organ (1988) identifies 'civic virtue' as one of five OCB dimensions. Choosing 'as a starting point the political heritage of citizenship', Graham (1991: 251) draws analogies between political citizenship and organizational citizenship, which she uses to conceptualize employees as engaged in 'covenantal' relationships with their employing organizations. According to the covenantal model, employees perform citizenship behaviours because, having internalized organizational values and priorities, they are willing to sacrifice their own interests to the good of the whole (Graham and Organ 1993). Van Dyne et al. (1994) derive substantive categories and associated measures of the OCB construct based upon this covenantal model of civic citizenship. Graham (2000) and Graham and Van Dyne (2006) elaborate on various historical manifestations of the citizenship construct, making the OCB literature's first explicit references to classical and enlightenment republicanism. Despite the relatively late appearance of the term 'republicanism' in this stream of writings, republican concepts and discourse are de facto analogues to OCB throughout the literature's development. 'Civic virtue' is republicanism's keystone construct, and the 'covenantal model' of individual-collective relations is simply an abstract expression of historically real republican articulations of citizen-state relations. In sum, when the OCB literature draws analogies between organizational citizenship and political citizenship, the model of political citizenship it references takes historical shape as republicanism.

There is a certain intuitive appeal in linking scholarly conversations about OCB to prominent dialogues in the history of political philosophy. Analogies between political citizenship and organizational citizenship are no doubt useful in helping organizational scholars explore ethical and instrumental dimensions of the employee-employer relationship. Invoking the past to understand the present, however, is a tricky business. The exercise warrants caution; analogies are perhaps as likely to mislead as to inform. A world view carefully constructed to explain relationships between individuals and institutions in a specific time and place may or may not explain much at all about relationships between individuals and different institutions in other times and/or places. The key to determining if a particular world view travels well is to carefully analyse whether its founding assumptions and preconditions define the new context as they did the original. This manner of analysis is the purpose of this article. Political theorists in late-colonial, Revolutionary, and early-national America articulated with clarity and coherence the preconditions, assumptions, objectives, attributes and consequences of the republican understanding of citizenship. They did not merely assert that civic virtue existed; they took great pains to *explain* why, how and in what form sacrifice for the good of the whole would develop out of specific

social conditions. I argue that those conditions do not hold in the modern workplace, and question the value of transposing highly contextualized political discourse to an unfamiliar context that violates all of the critical assumptions upon which republican theorists insisted.

This article is structured as follows. First, I examine the OCB literature, outlining different understandings of the motivational basis for citizenship behaviours. Social exchange theory and impression management research inform fundamentally self-interested interpretations of OCB, while the republican-covenantal model mentioned above highlights the construct's selfless tenor. After elaborating further on the management literature's republican model of organizational citizenship, I detail the republican model of political citizenship prevailing in enlightenment America. I show how three preconditions that enlightenment theorists regarded as indispensable to the development of civic virtue – a voting citizenry, an economically independent citizenry, and a political state the very object of which was the public good – are not only absent from but are contravened by the modern corporation. The ahistorical application of republican discourse to the modern workplace may have consequences beyond academic inaccuracy. The exercise, I argue, is managerialist and, ultimately, hegemonic. By asserting but not causally explaining organizational civic virtue, OCB scholarship normalizes the expectation of employee extra-role sacrifice without justifying corporate claims to that sacrifice. Finally, I describe republicanism's enlightenment foil, liberalism, which highlights self-interest rather than civic virtue as the social adhesive binding individuals to the polity. I conclude that liberalism captures the theoretical meaning of OCB better than republicanism, for it more fully supports empirical work highlighting the fundamentally self-interested nature of OCBs.

Before turning to the body of this article, I should clarify its geographic scope. Empirical analysis of OCB causes and consequences has become thoroughly global, with studies set in such diverse locations as the UK (Organ and Lingl 1995; Snape and Redman 2010), the Netherlands (Krjukova et al. 2009; VanYperen and van den Berg 1999), Norway (Kuvaas and Dysvik 2009), Germany (Van Dick et al. 2007), France (Paille and Grima 2011), Portugal (Rego and Cunha 2010), India (Baral and Bhargava 2010), Turkey (Erturk 2007), Iran (Danaeefard et al. 2010), Pakistan (Haque and Aslam 2010), Jordan (Khasawneh 2011), Azarbayejan (Akbar Ahmadi et al. 2011), China (Kwan et al. 2011) and Japan (Lee et al. 2011). However, theoretical works conceptualizing citizenship behaviours as manifestations of civic virtue invoke the strain of enlightenment republicanism specific to America (Graham 2000; Graham and Van Dyne 2006). Accordingly, my analysis draws explicitly on the American understanding of republicanism and liberalism. When I consider how republicanism and liberalism translate to the 'modern workplace', on the other hand, the workplace in question is not necessarily as geographically constrained. Most empirical studies highlighting the fundamentally self-interested nature of citizenship behaviours have been conducted in the USA (e.g. Morrison 1994; Tepper and Taylor 2003; Vey and Campbell 2004), but that does not necessarily mean that OCBs are not similarly motivated elsewhere. The abstract 'modern workplace' I conceptualize in this article is defined by the classical liberal assumption that self-interest motivates human behaviour, and textured with the liberal language and logic of incentives, contracts, ambition, rewards and reciprocity. While classical liberalism is most closely associated with America (Furner 2005; Lal 2006; Rabkin 1999) and Britain (Gamble 2001), some observers contend that its global relevance is rapidly expanding (Ikenberry 2010). It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the extent to which liberal assumptions define workplaces across different nationalities, but where liberal ideology bears the most significant imprint, the grounds are strongest for my thesis that a republican understanding of the OCB construct is inappropriate.

## The meaning of organizational citizenship behaviour: Interest and sacrifice

The study of what makes a good worker has expanded substantially during the past two decades. Traditionally, organization scholars have measured worker contributions to the organization by the quantity and quality of in-role job tasks performed. In recent decades, however, the scope of studies has broadened to capture employee behaviours that contribute to the organization but do not inhere in strict definitions of job performance (Organ and Konovsky 1989). At a conceptual level, organization theorists have long recognized the importance of employee behaviours that are not captured by traditional measures of job performance. Barnard (1938: 83, original emphasis), for example, described the '*willingness* of persons to contribute efforts to the cooperative system' as 'something different from effectiveness, ability, or value of personal contributions.' Katz and Kahn (1966) distinguished between in-role performance and what they described as spontaneous behaviour. Not until 1983, however, was the OCB construct treated as a distinct variable and measured in a form that has become somewhat standardized (Organ and Ryan 1995). OCBs are defined as behaviours desired – but not formally prescribed and not explicitly rewarded – by an organization. Examples include helping coworkers, punctuality, not wasting time, attending voluntary functions and meetings, and not complaining.

The theoretical significance of the OCB construct, according to its proponents, is 'that it cannot be accounted for by the incentives that sustain in-role behavior' (Organ and Konovsky 1989: 158). What, then, does account for OCB? The literature describes two distinct theoretical rationales underlying the OCB construct. One rationale conceptualizes citizenship behaviour as an essentially self-interested response to incentives not associated with in-role behaviour. Social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Organ 1988, 1990) and impression management interpretations (Bolino 1999; Rioux and Penner 2001) support the self-interest rationale. The second rationale conceptualizes citizenship behaviour as sacrifice for the good of the whole. Organizational scholarship represents this self-sacrifice interpretation with covenantal (Graham 1991; Graham and Organ 1993; Van Dyne et al. 1994) and republican (Graham 2000; Graham and Van Dyne 2006) models of individual–collective relationships.

The social exchange interpretation of the self-interest rationale draws on Blau's (1964) distinction between economic and social exchange. Economic exchange, according to Blau (1964), is contractual, consisting of explicit, precise obligations rendered in return for compensation. Social exchange, in contrast, encompasses diffuse, non-articulated obligations fulfilled in an open-ended stream of transactions. The *quid pro quo* of social exchange is based on trust and the expectation of future interactions, rather than on the enforceable contractual ties of economic exchange. Framed as a component of social exchange, citizenship behaviour is the employee's contribution to a long-run exchange of fairness that does not require a precise accounting and is based on reciprocity (Van Dyne et al. 1994). Good faith guides the form and timing of reciprocating gestures, resulting in citizenship behaviours (Organ 1988). Employees engage in OCBs both to reciprocate and in turn to create an ongoing train of diffuse, ill-defined obligations between their organizations and themselves (Organ 1990).

The role of employee self-interest in the social exchange model is rarely highlighted in the OCB literature (Bolino et al. 2004). Blau's original description of the social exchange concept, however, underscores the fundamentally self-interested character of social exchange. According to Blau (1964: 91), "'Social exchange,'" as the term is used here, refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others.' What distinguishes social exchange from economic exchange, according to Blau, is not the

motivation of the actors involved. In both cases, self-interest constitutes the motivation driving exchange. Rather, what distinguishes social exchange from economic exchange is that the latter is precise and specified while the former is unspecified and diffuse. Thus, in economic exchange, individuals act in order to gain a precise, specified return; in social exchange they act in order to gain a more uncertain return, but a return nonetheless.

The impression management interpretation of the self-interest rationale is subtly but importantly distinct from the social exchange interpretation. The social exchange model depicts employees acting to reciprocate past obligations to the organization and create new ones from the organization. The impression management interpretation shifts the focus from employee motivation to perform citizenship acts and places it instead on employee desire to appear as good citizens. The difference revolves around intent. Presumably, employees acting on impression management motives are unconcerned whether their behaviours incur obligations from the organization in return for *being* good employees, but rather care only that they incur obligations from the organization in return for *appearing to be* good employees. Impression-managing employees are concerned solely with image enhancement and the associated rewards. As Bolino (1999) and Rioux and Penner (2001) show, similarities between impression management strategies and organizational citizenship behaviours make it difficult to distinguish between the two methodologically.

In contrast to self-interest interpretations, the self-sacrifice rationale for OCB conceptualizes organizational citizenship behaviours as 'citizenship responsibilities' (Graham 1991: 254) undertaken by employees whose relationship with their employing organizations is characterized by 'open-ended commitment, mutual trust, and shared values' (Van Dyne et al. 1994: 768). The reference point for this understanding of OCB is the citizen–state relationship. Early articles in this literature model organizational citizenship on the abstract concept of a 'covenantal' citizen–state relationship (Graham 1991; Graham and Organ 1993; Van Dyne et al. 1994); later articles draw connections to republicanism. In terms of their theoretical structure, covenantal and republican models of citizen–state relations are very similar; the primary distinction between the two is that the former is a broad, abstract category while the latter is historically situated. In other words, enlightenment republican thought is a particular historical manifestation of covenantal thought.

Covenantal relationships involve both parties internalizing and committing to a common set of values. According to Van Dyne et al. (1994: 768), 'covenants are existential; they focus on a state of being, and involve intrinsically motivated effort rather than earning something or getting somewhere.' Covenantal relationships include a moral dimension, which involves a shared commitment to a transcendent force, value or principle of goodness. Individuals in covenantal relationships have a 'responsibility to demonstrate a special concern for other's (sic) interests above their own' (Graham 1991: 252). In the context of the firm, covenants imply acceptance and internalization of organizational values (Etzioni 1988). Viewed through the covenantal lens, citizenship behaviours represent something more than reciprocated fairness; they constitute, instead, the 'responsibilities of citizenship' (Graham and Organ 1993: 494) as understood by employees who have internalized organizational values. The covenantal explanation for why employees engage in OCBs, therefore, is distinct from the social exchange rationale. From the social exchange perspective, employees perform extra-role behaviours to reciprocate past fair treatment, and with the expectation that their behaviours will induce future fair treatment. While social exchange involves diffuse obligations that are not specified in explicit contracts, it nonetheless boils down to a quid pro quo relationship fueled by self-interest. In contrast, the covenantal understanding of citizenship behaviour does not portray employees as self-interested actors expecting subsequent reciprocation. Rather, from the

covenantal perspective, employees make extra-role contributions because they have internalized organizational values and priorities. Employees identify so strongly with the organization that organizational interests transcend and subsume their own, rendering any notion of reciprocity irrelevant.

Drawing on political philosophy (Inkeles 1969), Graham (1991) disaggregates the covenantal understanding of OCB into three dimensions: organizational obedience, loyalty and participation. Organizational obedience entails 'respect for rules and instructions, punctuality in attendance and task completion, and stewardship of organizational resources' (Graham 1991: 255). Organizational loyalty, continues Graham, involves 'defending the organization against threats, contributing to its good reputation, and cooperating with others to serve the interests of the whole' (Graham 1991: 255). Finally, organizational participation 'is interest in organizational affairs guided by ideal standards of virtue, validated by an individual's keeping informed, and expressed through full and responsible involvement in organizational governance' (Graham 1991: 255).

The attributes of abstract covenantal relationships are very similar to the features of republican theory discussed in more recent OCB scholarship. Just as the covenantal ideal assumes that individuals have a 'responsibility to demonstrate a special concern for other's (sic) interests above their own' (Graham 1991: 252), 'the republican ideal assumes that moral development is not only desirable but feasible, such that individuals, in whatever roles they fill, become less likely to act in terms only of private interest; they also concern themselves with the welfare of others' (Graham 2000: 69). Much as covenantal discourse stresses participation, 'those who adopt republican values emphasize generalized participation by all citizens' (Graham and Van Dyne 2006: 92). Quoting Sinopoli (1987: 332), Graham (2000: 69) again underscores republicanism's participatory dimension: 'Only by actively taking part in the political life of one's community, by performing one's civic duties, can an individual become a virtuous, well-rounded person.' The 'good citizen' – and 'good worker' – emerging from the OCB literature's appeal to republicanism is the same as the one emerging from its appeal to covenantalism: selfless, participatory and animated by a sense of civic virtue.

Are these appeals valid? The question 'what animates a good worker?' does seem to mirror the question 'what makes a good citizen?'. Americans in the late colonial period and in the newly independent republic troubled over what ties would bind individuals to one another and to larger social and political institutions in the absence of traditionally constituted governmental authority. Many of them adhered to a coherent body of thought called republicanism, which was a historically situated type of covenantal relationship. In the next section, I explore enlightenment understandings of citizen–state relations and analyse their applicability to modern employee–employer relations.

## **Republicanism and organizational citizenship**

The eighteenth-century Americans who conceptualized, proposed and ultimately created a nation had no working blueprint on which to draw. Antiquity offered a few examples of republican states, and England had operated under a constitutional monarchy and emergent parliamentary system for nearly a century, but the contemporary western world contained no fully non-monarchical governments. It was clear what held society together in a monarchy. The innumerable titles, the social rankings and degrees of subordination, the patronage, the multitude of criminal laws with severe penalties, and the vigour of unitary authority – often with the aid of a standing army and an established religious hierarchy – all worked to maintain public order (Wood 1969, 1992). A republican state, however, would possess little of this stabilizing social texture and no sustained coercion from

above. Revolutionaries, proclaimed an exasperated Tory, were destroying ‘not only all authority over us as it now exists, but any and all that it is possible to constitute’ (Boucher 1797: 553). If republicanism were adopted, warned another observer, ‘the bands of society would be dissolved, the harmony of the world confounded, and the order of nature subverted’ (Wood 1969: 66). Americans, therefore, urgently debated what social adhesive would fill the vacuum of authority. In a state resting not only on the consent but also on the obedience, loyalty, participation and sacrifice of the governed, what would animate the ‘the people’ to give of themselves? For adherents to the body of thought termed ‘republicanism’, the answer was *civic virtue* – understood as the sacrifice of private interests for the good of the community (Appleby 1985, 1986; Banning 1986; Pocock 1975; Rodgers 1992; Shalhope 1972; Wood 1969).

The organizational citizenship construct and the eighteenth-century concept of civic virtue represent different responses in different contexts to a commonly felt need – the need for cooperation. Referring to civic virtue, a 1778 sermon warned:

[W]ithout some portion of this generous principle, anarchy and confusion would immediately ensue, the jarring interests of individuals, regarding themselves only, and indifferent to the welfare of others, would still further heighten the distressing scene, and with the assistance of the selfish passions, it would end in the ruin and subversion of the state. (Thornton 1860: 337)

Katz and Kahn (1966: 339) identified the same danger, writ small, in the workplace context: ‘Within every work group in a factory, within any division in a government bureau, or within any department of a university are countless acts of cooperation without which the system would break down.’ Civic virtue protected the state from ruin; organizational citizenship keeps workplace systems from breaking down.

The enlightenment understanding of civic virtue lies at the core of the republican-covenantal interpretation of OCB. In a republic, enlightenment theorist John Dickinson proclaimed in a representative 1768 tract, ‘each individual gives up all private interest that is not consistent with the general good, the interest of the whole body’ (Ford 1895: 397). Dickinson’s notion of republican citizenship echoes in Graham’s (1991: 255) organizational loyalty, defined as ‘identification with and allegiance to an organization’s leaders and the organization as a whole, transcending the parochial interests of individuals, work groups, and departments.’ Organizational loyalty, continues Graham, involves ‘cooperating with others to serve the interests of the whole’ (Graham 1991: 255). Graham’s proposed covenantal organizational citizenship is modelled on precisely the understanding of citizenship possessed by republican thinkers in the Revolutionary era.

The similarities between enlightenment republicanism and so-called republican-covenantal organizational citizenship, however, may not transcend semantics. Asserting that members of a given community are motivated to behave out of concern for the common good does not really explain their motivation at all. Rather, it begs the question: ‘What explains their concern for the common good?’ Enlightenment republicanism addressed that question; the organizational literature’s republican-covenantal rationale for OCB does not. For the former, the development of civic virtue rested on three indispensable preconditions: a voting citizenry, an economically independent citizenry, and a political state the very object of which was the public good. None of the preconditions characterize the modern workplace. Historical analysis of republicanism exposes and highlights the soft underbelly of a model divorced from its foundations.

The first precondition to civic virtue was a citizenry possessed of the vote. The central tenet of the republican tradition is government by the people (Fallon 1989; Sandel 1999), and a republic’s defining feature is that citizens elect their own leaders. Enlightenment theorists contended that by



reversing the monarchical flow of authority, republican government would alter the way that citizens perceived and responded to authority figures. The people would be more willing to obey their new republican rulers, explained John Adams in 1776, for now 'love and not fear will become the spring of their obedience' (Ford 1917: 234). Republican citizens would prove more responsive to their leaders than had monarchical subjects, because republican leaders were of the people's own choosing. Leaders' appeals to the common good would elicit sacrifice and virtuous behaviour among the citizenry. Additionally, the process of voting would enhance virtue by drawing the individual's attention toward the common good and reaffirming the individual's ties to the community as a whole (Schall 2006).

In the workplace context, of course, employees do not elect their managers. Employees do not have the power to remove managers from office in future elections. To the contrary, employers hire employees, and employers have the power to remove employees from their positions. The republican-covenantal relationship between citizenry and leadership does not resemble the employee–employer relationship. No basis exists for proposing that the latter cultivates obedience, loyalty and participation – in other words, civic virtue – in a manner analogous to the former.

The second precondition to civic virtue was an economically independent citizenry. Dependence was the chimera of republican thought. To be completely virtuous citizens, individuals had to be free from dependence and from the petty interests of the marketplace (Wood 1992). Thomas Jefferson explained: '[D]ependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition' (Peden 1954: 165). John Adams (1856: 208) shared Jefferson's concern:

Such is the frailty of the human heart, that very few men who have no property, have any judgment of their own. They talk and vote as they are directed by some man of property, who has attached their minds to his interests.

Only economically independent individuals could be 'disinterested', defined by a 1755 dictionary as being 'superior to regard of private advantage; not influenced by private profit' (Wood 1992: 105). Individuals dependent on other parties for their livelihoods were written off as either subservient to the interests of the parties on whom they depended, or so constrained by their own desperate position that they could not look past their own interests – or both. In any case, dependents were considered incapable of disinterested sacrifice for the common good. Republican theorists insisted that Revolutionary-era Americans, the large majority of whom were independent yeoman farmers, possessed the economic independence to practise civic virtue.

Employees, on the other hand, by definition depend upon employers for compensation. From the republican perspective, then, every behaviour performed within the confines of the employee–employer relationship is necessarily an interested behaviour. Jefferson, Adams and every other republican theorist considered it inconceivable that sacrifice for the common good could exist within a dependency relationship. Republican theory did not admit the distinction between in-role and extra-role behaviours proposed by the organizational citizenship construct. The only distinction that mattered within the republican framework was the distinction between independent and dependent individuals. 'By *Freemen*', explained John Toland, 'I understand men of property, or persons that are able to live of themselves; and those who cannot subsist in this independence, I call *Servants*' (Dickinson 1977: 89, original emphasis). Every behaviour performed by a dependent was simply an interested, dependent behaviour. The employee–employer relationship is inherently a relationship of dependency, and therefore not republican.

The third precondition to civic virtue was a political state the very object of which was the public good. 'The word *republic*,' noted Thomas Paine, 'means the *public good*, or the good of the whole, in contradistinction to the despotic form, which makes the good of the sovereign, or of one man, the only object of the government' (Foner 1945: 372, original emphasis). Samuel West agreed, claiming it was self-evident, 'by both reason and revelation', that the welfare and safety of the people was 'the supreme law of the state – being the true standard and measure' by which all laws and governmental actions were to be judged' (Thornton 1860: 297). Pennsylvania's 1776 constitution stated that:

government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation or community; and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or sett (sic) of men, who are a part only of that community.... (Sales 1999: 350)

Given that the whole object of a republic was the good of the people, republican theorists such as William Smith considered it 'not to be imagined... that the great body of the people can have any interest separate from their country' (Wood 1969: 56). It followed, concluded Thomas Paine, that the 'public good is not a term opposed to the good of individuals; on the contrary, it is the good of every individual collected' (Foner 1945: 372). In short, because the object of a republic was the good of the people, it was natural for the people to sacrifice for the common good.

The object of the modern corporation is a matter of debate. Classical economic theory assumes as the firm's object the maximization of shareholder value; transaction cost economics proposes that the objective of the firm is to avoid costs associated with coordinating activities through market contracts (Coase 1937; Williamson 1979); agency theory identifies conflict between the objectives of shareholders and the objectives of managers (Jensen and Meckling 1976); and stakeholder theory perceives the firm as a constellation of cooperative and competitive objectives (Freeman 1984). No body of theory remotely within the bounds of the capitalist paradigm, however, holds that the whole object of the firm is the good of the workers. The republican connection between virtue and the republic's central purpose, therefore, does not translate to the workplace. No basis exists for proposing that employee sacrifice for the good of the organization arises naturally from the very object of the organization.

The contextual assumptions and conditions undergirding the enlightenment republican concept of civic virtue demonstrate that the self-sacrificing ideal is not a concept to be ordered *à la carte*. The republican notion of civic virtue existed not in isolation, but rather as one element of a larger paradigm. Its import and impact was contingent upon the existence of critical preconditions. In order for the republican model to represent the motivational basis of OCB, it must be linked to contextual attributes defining the workplace. Violated as they are by that workplace context, traditional republican assumptions do not seem to provide the necessary mooring. If alternative foundations and justifications for organizational republicanism exist, they have yet to be explicated in the OCB literature.

The unfounded application of republican-covenantal frameworks to the OCB construct has consequences beyond historical inaccuracy. Defining OCB via the selective and casual application of republicanism is managerialist, in the sense that it represents a managerial point of view and upholds managerial interests. Enlightenment theorists understood that civic virtue taxed citizens. It was a responsibility and obligation that they recognized came at a cost, which is why they were so careful to justify the cost by insisting upon state structures, attributes and objectives designed to serve and involve citizens. Civic virtue was not a behavioural input that republicans defined and described; it was a behavioural outcome that they explained and promoted. The OCB literature, on

the other hand, cultivates a discourse emphasizing employee obligations and responsibilities divorced from any citizenship privileges that may warrant such virtuous behaviour. By asserting but not explaining organizational civic virtue, OCB scholarship normalizes the expectation of employee extra-role sacrifice without justifying corporate claims to that sacrifice. The treatment is, in short, unbalanced.

The normalization of value-laden, culturally sanctified terms like ‘citizenship behaviours’ and ‘civic virtue’ in the scholarly literature may ultimately prove hegemonic. By *hegemonic*, I mean operating so as to frame the interests of the ruling class as universal (Hatch and Cunliffe 2006). Antonio Gramsci’s (Hoare and Smith 1971) analysis of hegemony details the critical role played by intellectuals in shaping civil society and the world of production specifically. As ‘functionaries’ of society’s dominant group, according to Gramsci, intellectuals organize social hegemony, or ‘consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group’ (Hoare and Smith 1971: 12). In Gramscian terms, the ‘dominant group’ in a workplace context is ownership, and the two types of ‘intellectual functionaries’ are scholars who theorize management constructs and language, and practitioners who use management constructs and language. Analysed from this perspective, the OCB construct and associated language in general – and appeals to republican civic virtue in particular – can be interpreted as intellectual devices to organize social hegemony. What distinguishes hegemony from domination is that in the former, the subaltern group *consents* to its own subordination. Framing unrewarded employee effort as ‘civic virtue’ promotes this consent, encouraging employees not only to accede to but to aspire to their own exploitation.

## Liberalism and organizational citizenship

Republican thought did not go unchallenged. Numerous eighteenth-century Americans responded sceptically to all the talk of civic virtue. George Washington stated in 1776 that to expect ordinary people to be ‘influenced by any other principles than those of Interest, is to look for what never did, and I fear never will happen.’ Washington concluded: ‘[T]he few, therefore, who act upon principles of disinterestedness are, comparatively speaking, no more than a drop in the ocean’ (Fitzpatrick 1931: 107–8). A similarly unsentimental Alexander Hamilton stated: ‘[W]e may preach till we are all tired of the theme, the necessity of disinterestedness in republics, without making a single proselyte’ (Syrett 1962: 103). John Jay stated bluntly where he thought human motivation really lay: ‘Public Virtue is not so active as private Love of Gain’ (Butterfield 1961: 210). Many others agreed. According to Virginian Carter Braxton, man’s happiness lay in the practice of private virtue: ‘In this he acts for himself, and with a view of promoting his own particular welfare.’ On the other hand, continued Braxton, civic virtue – ‘a disinterested attachment to the public good, exclusive and independent of all private and selfish interest’ – had ‘never characterized the mass of people in any state.’ (Force 1848: 745). John Stevens dismissed republican theory as just so much idealistic rhetoric. ‘Montesquieu may talk of virtue as the spring to action in a republican government,’ scoffed Stevens, ‘but I trust its force would be found too feeble to produce great exertions without aid of ambition’ (Bailyn 1967: 375). By ‘ambition’, Stevens meant self-interest. ‘It is ambition that constitutes the very life and soul of republican government,’ continued Stevens; ‘As fear and attachment insure obedience to government, so does ambition set its wheels in motion’ (Bailyn 1967: 375).

Washington, Hamilton, Jay, Braxton and Stevens voiced the liberal interpretation of human motivation. Self-interest, maintained enlightenment liberal theorists, animated human behaviour (Banning 1986). They regarded the republican message as a quixotic endeavour to supplant natural

human predilections with contrived ideals. From the liberal perspective, it was not only naive but dangerous to entrust community welfare to the faulty assumption that individuals could be prevailed upon to sacrifice their private interests for the good of the whole. Rather than futilely attempting to eliminate self-serving behaviour, argued liberals, American leaders conceptualizing and creating the new government should focus on directing, controlling, channelling and harnessing self-interest toward the betterment of society. Acquisitive individualism – not civic virtue – would constitute the new social adhesive (Appleby 1985). In contrast to republican theorists' obsession with the good of the whole, liberals envisioned Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' integrating the disparate interests of an otherwise disconnected citizenry (Evensky 2005; Krall 2002). The liberal world view replaced the polity with the economy as the fundamental social system (Appleby 1985). Individuals' pursuit of private ambitions in a competitive society ultimately served the public good, via the market mechanism. The role of government was to protect the sanctity of property and remove impediments to commerce, thus releasing individual energies to act in obedience to market incentives (Winch 1985).

In comparison to republican theory, the meaning of which was deeply embedded in historical context, liberal theory has proven relatively protean (Rabkin 1999). Civic virtue, republican theorists themselves conceded, flourished only under particular conditions. Self-interest, on the other hand, inhered in human nature, according to liberals. Whether or not human nature is intrinsically self-interested remains a point of unresolved debate, but as a concept, self-interest has proven to be flexible and durable. This central tenet of liberal thought stands firm against centuries of change in capitalist social relations and modes of production (Furner 2005; Lal 2006; Machan 2000).

The persistence of liberal assumptions has implications for our understanding of the motivational basis for OCB. The pervasiveness of liberal conceptual language may condition organizational participants to behave self-interestedly. As historian J. G. A. Pocock (1972: 119) writes: 'Men cannot do what they have no means of saying they have done, and what they do must in part be what they can say and conceive that it is.' Conceptual models, in other words, not only help observers make sense of what they observe; they also provide actors with the blueprints for how to act. Citizenship behaviours are what employees have the means of conceiving them as. In the modern workplace, liberal conceptual language provides the means. Liberal explanatory frameworks define the contours of the employee–employer relationship. Employees experience their interactions with employers on the basis of liberal logic. The entire relationship derives from the exchange of labour for pay. Distinctions between in-role and extra-role behaviours should not obfuscate this central, fundamental, pervasive reality. The language and logic of incentives, ambition, rewards and reciprocity permeates American thought in the workplace context. Managers and organization scholars may define citizenship behaviours as extra-role, but if employees performing those behaviours conceive themselves working for rewards, then they are working for rewards.

A substantial body of empirical work suggests that employees do, in fact, conceptualize 'citizenship behaviours' as behaviours to be performed to attain rewards or to avoid punishment. Morrison (1994), for example, finds that employees and supervisors differ in how they define job responsibilities. Behaviours regarded by supervisors as extra-role are perceived by many employees as in-role. Furthermore, employees defining a behaviour as in-role engage in that behaviour with greater frequency than do employees defining the same behaviour as extra-role. In other words, many employees performing behaviours identified by OCB instruments as 'citizenship behaviours' are, in their own minds, simply doing their jobs (Morrison 1994). Vey and Campbell (2004) provide further support for this position; they find that when presented with a list of OCB items and items reflecting in-role behaviour, a vast majority of respondents (85 per cent or more)

categorizes 17 of 30 OCBs as in-role. As is the case with any job responsibility, those employees expect rewards if they perform the behaviours and/or punishment if they do not perform them. Similarly, Hui et al. (2000) find that employees who see OCBs as instrumental to their advancement are more likely to engage in OCBs prior to a promotion decision. The link between citizenship behaviours and individual outcomes in these instances is direct.

Other research indicates that employees may perceive an indirect link between citizenship behaviours and personal gain. A number of studies demonstrate that employee pay cognitions and perceptions of fairness and procedural justice predict OCB (Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2004; Farh et al. 1990; McNeely and Meglino 1994; Moorman 1991; Podsakoff et al. 2000; Tepper et al. 2000; Tepper and Taylor 2003). Constructs such as fairness, reward equity, procedural justice and pay cognition reflect worker awareness of pay and worker perceptions of how fairly managers make decisions regarding pay. For example, McNeely and Meglino (1994: 839) operationalize reward equity with a single item reading: 'I feel that job rewards, salary increases, and such are equitably and fairly distributed among employees in this organization.' Tepper and Taylor (2003: 99) use Moorman's (1991) measure of procedural justice, which includes items such as 'my organization makes decisions in an unbiased manner.' Organ and Konovsky (1989: 160) operationalize pay cognitions with items such as 'How good is your pay compared to similar individuals in this company who have the same job' and 'How good is your pay compared to other people who have the same amount of education as you?'. These constructs capture worker assessments of organizational incentive structures – assessments shown by the studies to influence employee willingness to engage in citizenship behaviours. Employees are more likely to engage in citizenship behaviours when they feel that pay, salary increases and other job rewards are fairly and equitably distributed by management. In other words, employees are most likely to perform OCBs when they expect management to recognize and reward their contributions (Haworth and Levy 2001). Employees motivated to perform OCBs out of concern for the common good would not be influenced by considerations of reward equity. That such considerations do influence employee willingness to engage in OCBs indicates that employees are motivated by self-interest.

Workers appear justified in conceptualizing 'citizenship behaviours' as linked to recognition and rewards. Several studies indicate that when evaluating employees, managers take into account behaviours defined by the OCB construct as 'extra-role'. Werner (1994) and Allen et al. (2000), for example, find that supervisors consider information pertaining to employee extra-role behaviour in determining performance appraisal ratings. Podsakoff et al. (1993) demonstrate that citizenship behaviours influence managers' evaluations of employee effectiveness over and above their objective productivity. Ferris et al. (1994) find that subordinates engaging in OCBs are viewed as better, more committed employees. Many 'citizenship behaviours' are also 'impression-management behaviours' – a reality of which many workers are, undoubtedly, acutely aware (Bolino 1999; Rioux and Penner 2001). Thus, workers have good reason to expect the performance of citizenship behaviours to yield personal gain.

In sum, the findings of OCB research undermine the republican-covenantal explanation of employee motivation to perform citizenship behaviours. The historical conditions on which republican ideals were based do not translate to the modern workplace. The republican paradigm, notes law professor Richard Fallon (1989: 4), 'seems a poor candidate for contemporary adoption'. The OCB research seems to support Fallon's (1989: 4) contention that modern ontology and epistemology are highly uncongenial to the republican assumption that there exists an objective public good apart from individual good. Liberal assumptions pertaining to human motivation do persist, however (Machan 2000; Rabkin 1999), and the research evidence suggests that self-interest indeed informs citizenship behaviour. In general, employees do not conceive themselves sacrificing for

the good of the whole when they perform OCBs. Rather, many employees simply perceive 'citizenship behaviours' as a part of their jobs, while others anticipate indirect effects – via impression management – on individual outcomes. In either case, self-interest explains employee willingness to engage in OCBs.

Despite the evidence suggesting that employees perceive citizenship behaviours as reward-generating, the OCB literature has been curiously hesitant to explicitly conceptualize citizenship behaviours as self-interested (Bolino et al. 2004). Scholars adopting the social exchange perspective have de-emphasized Blau's (1964) incorporation of self-interest in his original description of the concept of social exchange. There are at least two possible explanations for this. One explanation derives, ironically, from the very persistence of liberal thought. Like fish unaware of water, notes historian Joyce Appleby (1985: 471), many individuals move about in a world of invisible liberal assumptions. The tendency, therefore, is to become so conditioned to familiar lenses that the lenses are eventually not even noticed. In other words, the liberal perspective on employee motivation may be so accepted and assumed that it does not evoke explicit comment. If employee self-interest is the assumed cognitive default of organizational scholars, perhaps only interpretations that deviate from that default, however marginally, draw interest. Thus, should an organizational scholar conceptualize OCBs as largely self-interested but somewhat self-sacrificing *relative* to in-role behaviours, the tendency may be for the observer to emphasize self-sacrifice.

A second explanation for the disassociation of self-interest from citizenship behaviour may involve the need to protect the OCB construct's distinctiveness. Citizenship behaviour's integrity as a construct depends upon the maintenance of a clear conceptual distinction between it and in-role behaviour. Citizenship behaviours are proposed to be distinct, in large part, because employees are perceived as performing them for reasons distinct from the reasons they perform in-role behaviours. Motivational distinctions are, at first glance, by definition embedded in the construct. For example, by definition citizenship behaviours 'cannot be accounted for by the incentives that sustain in-role behavior' (Organ and Konovsky 1989: 158). OCBs are defined as 'contributions that participants choose to proffer or withhold without regard to considerations of sanctions or formal incentives' (Organ 1990: 46). Self-interest is not inherently incompatible with either of these definitions – one can conceptualize OCBs as accounted for by non-formal incentives associated with extra-role behaviours. The social exchange perspective is entirely compatible with employee self-interest; the truly defining distinction of social exchange is diffuseness and non-specificity, which are dimensions unrelated to self-interest. Nonetheless, as the organizational literature has grappled with the issue of what distinguishes citizenship behaviour from in-role behaviour, the tendency has been to clarify and highlight distinctions by disassociating OCBs from self-interest.

## Conclusion

Ironically, organizational scholars considering historical analogies find a cautionary note sounded in America's Revolutionary past. Alexander Hamilton understood that models of human behaviour could be dangerously misleading when ripped from their original contexts. Political theorists, he insisted, should think twice about lifting republican ideals from previous centuries and introducing them to Revolutionary America. 'We might as soon reconcile ourselves to the Spartan community of goods and wives, to their iron coin, their long beards, or their black broth,' stated a sarcastic Hamilton. 'It is as ridiculous,' he continued, 'to seek for models in the simple ages of Greece and Rome, as it would be to go in quest of them among the Hottentots and Laplanders' (Stourzh 1970: 70). Seeking historical models for workplace motivations may not be ridiculous, but it is a tricky

business. The models most likely to provide explanatory power are those possessing not only historical roots, but modern currency as well.

By examining enlightenment republicanism's contextual constraints in some detail, I have argued that the republican-covenantal model in general is of doubtful modern currency. If political philosophy provides organizational scholars with a useful model for citizenship behaviour, it is to be found in the liberal rather than the republican tradition. Liberalism's versatility sustains its vigour, which has important implications for the ways in which both organizational scholars and employees themselves conceptualize organizational citizenship. The ubiquity of liberal logic may have made it unremarkable – to the point of invisibility – to those studying citizenship behaviour. At the same time, employees' ready access to liberal lenses on the workplace likely condition them to conceptualize extra-role as well as in-role behaviours as fundamentally tied to rewards. Finally, in drawing attention back to Blau's original description of social exchange, I hope to show that the social exchange interpretation of OCBs is perfectly compatible with the liberal paradigm. Thus, no genuine tension exists between the empirical evidence suggesting that liberal assumptions inform employee understandings of citizenship behaviours, and the dominant social exchange model informing scholarly understandings of the same behaviours.

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