

RESEARCH REPORTS

Perceived Organizational Support and Police Performance: The Moderating Influence of Socioemotional Needs

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Police patrol officers were surveyed to investigate how the strength of socioemotional needs affects the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and work performance. The association of POS with driving-under-the-influence arrests and speeding citations generally increased with strength of the needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and social approval. Patrol officers with strong socioemotional needs, but not those with weak needs, showed a positive relationship between POS and performance. The findings are consistent with social exchange views that maintain (a) work effort is encouraged by the receipt of socioemotional resources, (b) POS fulfills a variety of socioemotional needs, and (c) the value of POS and the obligation to reciprocate with high performance increase with the strength of socioemotional needs.

Social exchange interpretations of employer–employee relationships maintain that workers trade effort and loyalty to their organization for such tangible incentives as pay and fringe benefits and such socioemotional benefits as esteem, approval, and caring (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Gould, 1979; Levinson, 1965; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Rousseau, 1989, 1990; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Contributing to this exchange process may be the norm of reciprocity, which holds that the receipt of benefits incurs an obligation to repay the donor (Gouldner, 1960). On the basis of the reciprocity norm, employees receiving greater resources would be expected to compensate their employers with higher levels of performance (Angle & Perry, 1983; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rousseau & Parks, 1993).

Eisenberger et al. (1986) suggested that employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which their employer values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Such perceived organizational support (POS) may be encouraged by employees' tendency to ascribe human-like traits or characteristics to organizations (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Levinson (1965) noted that organizational policies and decisions carried out by

agents of the organization are often viewed as indications of the organization's intent rather than being attributed solely to the inclinations of particular individuals.

Research has shown POS to be influenced by policies, procedures, and decisions indicative of the organization's concern with employee welfare and positive valuation of employee contributions. POS was found positively related to the following: perceived sufficiency of financial inducements and family-oriented actions (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994); high-quality employee–supervisor relationships, favorable developmental training experiences, and promotions (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997); participation in goal setting and receipt of performance feedback (Hutchison & Garstka, 1996); low role conflict and ambiguity (Jones, Flynn, & Kelloway, 1995); and procedural justice in performance-appraisal decisions (Fasolo, 1995). According to social exchange theory, organizational actions favorable to employees should contribute more to POS if employees view them as voluntary rather than as the result of external constraints such as government regulations, union pressures, or competitive wages paid by alternative employers (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995). The favorableness of job conditions such as promotion practices, reward systems, fringe benefits, and training opportunities was found to have a stronger relationship with POS when employees believed that these conditions represented discretionary actions of the organization rather than being the result of external constraints (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997).

Work-related outcomes found positively related to POS

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include affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Hutchison & Garstka, 1996; Jones, Flynn, & Kelloway, 1995; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Shore & Tetrick, 1991; Wayne et al., 1997), evaluative and objective measures of in-role job performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990), help given coworkers (Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997; Witt, 1991), constructive suggestions for improving the operations of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990), and influence tactics designed by employees to make supervisors aware of their dedication and accomplishments (Shore & Wayne, 1993). POS was found negatively related to absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990) and turnover intentions (Guzzo et al., 1994; Wayne et al., 1997).

Less attention has been given to the mechanisms presumed to underlie the positive relationship between POS and work-related outcomes. Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed that POS would increase performance by conveying to employees the organization's propensity to notice and reward increased performance. Consistent with this view, POS was found positively associated with expectancies of reward for greater effort (Eisenberger et al., 1990). POS was also assumed to serve as a socioemotional resource for employees. Just as perceived support from friends and relatives may fulfill socioemotional needs in interpersonal relationships (Cobb, 1976; S. Cohen & Wills, 1985), POS was assumed to meet important socioemotional needs in the workplace such as those for respect, caring, and approval (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In accord with this view, the relationship between nurses' length of contact with AIDS patients and negative affect was lessened by high levels of POS (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993). George et al. suggested that POS may have protected nurses from the detrimental effects of stress by bolstering their self-esteem and communicating that the organization cared about their well-being.

According to social exchange accounts that emphasize the norm of reciprocity (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995; Rousseau & Parks, 1993), the organization's fulfillment of socioemotional needs should create an obligation to reciprocate with greater work effort. The obligation to repay organizational support with performance is considered to be a motive that drives work performance. Social exchange theorists have argued that violation of the norm of reciprocity produces discomfort that people seek to dispel by repaying their obligations (e.g., Greenberg, 1980). Consistent with this view, repayment of POS has been found to be related to the employee's degree of acceptance of the reciprocity norm (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The extent of this obligation would also depend on the strength of the employees' socioemotional needs. Within interpersonal relationships, argued

Gouldner (1960, p. 171), "the value of the benefit [received from others] and hence the debt is in proportion to and varies with—among other things—the intensity of the recipient's need at the time the benefit was bestowed." In this view, the receipt of resources should be valued more, and create a greater obligation to reciprocate, among individuals with high needs compared with those who have low needs. If this view is applied to the relationship between employees and the work organization, individuals with strong socioemotional needs should find POS very rewarding, thus producing a greater obligation to repay the organization with high performance.

Most research concerning individual differences in needs for socioemotional resources comes from personality theorists (e.g., Blau, 1964; Buss, 1983; Crowne & Marlow, 1964; Foa & Foa, 1982; Hill, 1987, 1991; Martin, 1984). Hill (1987) argued that the motivation for social contact has a major influence on human behavior, and he described several such needs including (a) the need for praise and recognition (more commonly termed *need for esteem*), (b) the need to receive affection and cognitive stimulation (more commonly termed *need for affiliation*), and (c) the need for consolation and sympathy when experiencing distress (more commonly termed *need for emotional support*). In addition to socioemotional needs involving social contact, Crowne and Marlow (1964) argued that there is a motive to present oneself in favorable, socially desirable ways. Martin (1984) suggested that to protect their self-concept, individuals with a high need for social approval seek powerful others' favorable evaluations; they attempt to act in socially appropriate ways and avoid inappropriate actions that would produce negative evaluations.

POS may help fulfill these socioemotional needs and create an obligation to repay the organization with increased performance. POS should increase employees' inferences that the organization judges them as superior performers and is proud of their accomplishments, which would help satisfy the need for esteem. POS is also suggested to convey to employees that the organization is committed to them and accepts them as welcomed members, which would help satisfy the need for affiliation. POS should strengthen employees' expectation that the organization would provide sympathetic understanding and material aid to deal with stressful situations at work or home, which would help meet the need for emotional support. Finally, POS may strengthen the perception that the organization is satisfied that the employee is acting in accord with established norms and policies, thereby meeting the need for social approval. In sum, POS should be especially satisfying for employees with high needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval. On the basis of the norm of reciprocity, POS should create an added obligation in employees with strong socioemo-

tional needs to work hard on behalf of the organization's goals.

We selected state police patrol officers to study the possible moderating effects of socioemotional needs on the relationship between POS and performance. Previous research showed a positive relationship between POS and the issuance of discretionary citations, which ran the gamut from minor speeding citations to arrests for observed criminal violations (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Eisenberger et al. noted that patrol officers typically lack discretionary control over many kinds of performance such as the number of occasions they are called to the scene of accidents or the time spent in court waiting to testify. The present study focused on the more discretionary activities of state police patrol officers: making arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI) and issuing citations to speeders. Such objective measures have the advantage of eliminating the evaluation bias associated with the use of supervisory evaluations. We predicted that the relationship of POS with DUI arrests and speeding citations would be greater for those patrol officers with high needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and social approval.

The importance of DUI arrests and speeding citations for meeting the state police department's basic stated mission, reducing vehicular accidents, had been stressed in the patrol officers' training. DUI arrests were given greater emphasis than speeding citations as a means of preventing injuries and deaths. Because of the abundance of motorists who regularly surpassed the state's speed limits, informal monthly norms governed the minimal acceptable number of speeding citations to be issued by the patrol officers. Because opportunities to observe substance-influenced driving were considered more limited, informal norms for DUI arrests had not been established. However, discussions with patrol officers indicated that they could alter their frequency of DUI arrests, depending on their willingness to watch for erratic drivers and to tolerate the tedious activities consequent to each such arrest (paper work, removal of vehicle, etc.). We expected that individual differences in obligations to the organization might have a somewhat greater influence on DUI arrests than traffic citations.

Method

Sample

We administered a survey assessing POS and the four socioemotional needs to employees of an eastern U.S. state police department. Of the 331 uniformed employees of the department, we obtained complete data for 308 employees (93%). Monthly reports of DUI arrests and speeding citations were available for 92 of these employees who were patrol officers assigned to patrol duty for a minimum of 12 months. The mean age of the

entire sample was 34.4 years ($SD = 8.4$) with a mean of 9.4 years ($SD = 7.2$) tenure. The mean age of patrol officers was 28.8 years ($SD = 4.4$) with a mean of 4.9 years ($SD = 3.91$) of tenure. The majority of both the entire department (78%) and the patrol officers (87.1%) was male.

Measures

POS. Prior studies surveying a wide variety of occupations and organizations have provided evidence for the high internal reliability and unidimensional nature of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990; Settoon et al., 1996; Shore & Tetrick, 1991; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997). We selected 11 high-loading items from the source article (Eisenberger et al., 1986) that seemed applicable to a wide diversity of organizations; these were Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 27. The source publication reported that the loadings of these items on the POS factor ranged from .67 to .84, with an average loading of .75. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The items assessed employee beliefs concerning the orientation of the organization toward the employee on the following issues: consideration of the employee's goals and values, concern over the employee's well-being, willingness to take advantage of the employee, satisfaction with the employee as a member of the organization, satisfaction with employee's performance, likely outcomes of the employee's requests for special favors, and likely responses to the employee's complaints.

Socioemotional needs. We measured the need for esteem, affiliation, and emotional support with Hill's (1987) attention, positive-stimulation, and emotional support scales, respectively. We chose to use Hill's conceptually based needs measures because the wording is sufficiently broad to be applicable to widely divergent samples of participants. Hill found these scales to be unrelated to the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD). The need for social approval was measured by the short form of the Martin-Larsen Approval Motivation Scale (MLAM; Martin, 1984). We chose the MLAM over the MCSD because the MLAM is purported to measure approval seeking whereas the MCSD is presumed to measure defensive denial (Martin, 1984).

The items from all scales were self-descriptive statements concerning individuals' preferences for engaging in social interaction in different situations. For example, strong agreement with the item "I like to be around people when I am the center of attention" is purported to indicate high need for esteem, whereas strong agreement with the item "In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be" is purported to indicate a high need for social approval. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). A complete listing of the individual items can be seen in Table 1.

Performance measures. To obtain a count of the number of DUI arrests and speeding citations issued by the patrol officers, we obtained performance data for police patrol officers for a 12-month period prior to the administration of the survey. Means for the year were 368.7 ($SD = 209.2$) for speeding citations

Table 1
Socioemotional Needs Items and Factor Loadings

Item	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
1. One of my greatest sources of comfort when things get rough is being with other people. ^a	.80	-.06	-.11	-.02
2. When I feel unhappy or kind of depressed, I usually try to be around other people who make me feel better. ^a	.77	-.04	-.10	.13
3. It seems like whenever something bad or disturbing happens to me I often just want to be with a close, reliable friend. ^a	.73	-.01	.05	.07
4. During times when I have to go through something painful, I usually find that having someone with me makes it less painful. ^a	.72	-.04	-.04	.19
5. When I have not done very well on something that is very important to me, I can get to feeling better simply by being around other people. ^a	.63	.07	-.02	.17
6. I usually have the greatest need to have other people around me when I feel upset about something. ^a	.57	.20	-.16	.10
7. I seldom feel the need to make excuses or apologize for my behavior.	.26	.05	.16	-.09
8. I am willing to argue only if I know that my friends will back me up. ^a	.01	.74	-.09	-.02
9. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be. ^a	.06	.73	-.13	.04
10. I find it difficult to talk about my ideas if they are contrary to group opinion. ^a	.06	.72	.05	.05
11. I change my opinion (or the way that I do things) in order to please someone else. ^a	.11	.67	-.07	-.03
12. I am careful at parties and social gatherings for fear that I will do or say things that others won't like. ^a	.04	.54	-.01	-.10
13. If there is any criticism or anyone says anything bad about me, I can take it. (R)	-.08	.30	.05	.02
14. I would rather be myself than well thought of. (R)	.16	.30	-.13	-.29
15. I often have a strong need to be around people who are impressed with what I am and what I do. ^a	.01	.00	-.83	-.01
16. I mainly like to be around others who think I am an important, exciting person. ^a	.13	.03	-.81	.01
17. I like to be around people when I am the center of attention. ^a	-.10	-.06	-.79	-.04
18. I often have a strong desire to get people I am around to notice me and appreciate what I am like. ^a	.14	.14	-.69	.01
19. I mainly like people who seem strongly drawn to me and who seem infatuated with me. ^a	.03	.05	-.66	-.03
20. I don't like being with people who may give me less than positive feedback about myself. ^a	-.03	.20	-.50	-.10
21. I think it would be satisfying if I could have very close friendships with quite a few people.	.27	.06	-.38	.21
22. It is not important to me that I behave "properly" in social situations. (R)	.06	-.02	.28	-.10
23. One of the most enjoyable things I can think of that I like to do is just watching people and seeing what they are like. ^a	-.06	.02	-.01	.81
24. I think being close to others, listening to them, and relating to them on a one-to-one level is one of my favorite and most satisfying pastimes. ^a	.19	.01	-.09	.75
25. Just being around others and finding out about them is one of the most interesting things I can think of doing. ^a	.25	-.13	-.13	.71
26. I feel like I have really accomplished something valuable when I am able to get close to someone. ^a	.32	-.11	.23	.62
27. I would find it very satisfying to be able to form new friendships with whomever I liked. ^a	.23	.03	-.02	.60
28. I usually do not change my position when people disagree with me. (R)	-.10	.30	.18	.31

Note. Factor 1 = need for emotional support, Factor 2 = need for approval, Factor 3 = need for esteem, and Factor 4 = need for affiliation. (R) = Reverse scored. These four factors accounted for 23.9, 11.3, 7.6, and 5.8% of the total variance, respectively. $N = 308$. Reprinted from "Affiliation Motivation: People Who Need People . . . but in Different Ways," by C. A. Hill, 1987, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, p. 1011. Copyright 1987 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission.

^a Items retained for final scales.

and 17.9 ($SD = 13.6$) for DUI arrests. Patrol officers were aware that an ongoing tally of these behaviors was kept by the department. Because of the greater density of traffic, patrol officers assigned to urban areas had an increased opportunity to make DUI arrests and issue speeding citations. To control for the patrol officers' assigned location, we separately converted the number of DUI arrests and speeding citations to standardized scores based on the individual officer's performance per month relative to other officers assigned to the same regional area (termed *troop*). Specifically, we subtracted the troop's average number of DUI arrests (or speeding citations) from the patrol

officer's performance, and we divided this difference by the standard deviation of the troop's scores. We added the resultant standard scores for 12 months and then divided by 12 to obtain the average monthly performance.

Procedure

The investigators administered the questionnaire during regular work hours to groups of employees at the department's state headquarters and local troop headquarters. The employees received written and spoken assurances of confidentiality from the

researchers and high-level department managers and received spoken assurances from officials of the police union. We obtained monthly tallies of DUI arrests, speeding citations, and patrol time for each patrol officer from department records. We used names supplied by employees on the envelope containing the questionnaire to match patrol officer's responses with the performance variables. We obtained officers' rank for the entire sample from department records. Rank was coded as follows: 1 = recruit, 2 = trooper, 3 = trooper first class, 4 = corporal, 5 = corporal first class, 6 = corporal senior, 7 = corporal master, 8 = sergeant, 9 = lieutenant, 10 = captain, 11 = major, 12 = lieutenant colonel, and 13 = colonel.

Results

Factor Analyses, Descriptive Statistics, and Correlations

To assess whether the 11 items used to measure POS formed a single factor, we conducted a principal components analysis on the entire sample of state police employees ($N = 308$). The break in the scree plot suggested a single factor that accounted for 57% of the total variance. Factor loadings ranged from .56 to .88, with an average of .75. Because each item loaded highly on the single factor, all items were used to compute the total scale score. To assess whether the four needs scales represented unique constructs, we conducted a principal components analysis with oblique rotation on all employees. The break in the scree plot suggested the plausibility of either a three-factor solution or a four-factor solution. The four-factor solution corresponded best to the four needs hypothesized on the basis of prior theory and empirical research (e.g., Hill, 1987); these consisted of the need for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval. The needs-scale items and their factor loadings are given in Table 1. To be retained for the final scales, an item was required to have a loading on its primary factor of at least .40 (see Stevens, 1996, p. 372) and to have a squared loading at least three times as great as its squared cross loading on any other factor.

Correlations between all the measures are presented in Table 2. As expected, we found low to moderate positive correlations among the needs scales, with the need-for-affiliation scale and emotional support scale displaying the strongest relationship. The internal reliabilities of the needs scales were high relative to the correlations between them, suggesting that the scales were measuring independent constructs. Nunally (1967, p. 211) stated that with sample sizes of at least 300, it is rare to find differences of greater than 20 points between the correlation and the internal reliabilities of two scales measuring the same construct. All the needs scales met this criterion in both the overall sample and the patrol officer sample. On the basis of these considerations, we investigated the moderat-

ing effect of each need separately in subsequent analyses. POS did not show a reliable relationship with any of the needs. As expected, there was a strong positive relationship between the numbers of DUI arrests and speeding citations.

The means and standard deviations of the total sample and the patrol officer sample are also given in Table 2. To examine whether the patrol officers differed from other state police employees on POS or any of the socioemotional needs, we conducted *t*-tests. The two samples seemed comparable on the attitudinal dimensions. We found no reliable differences between patrol officers and other employees on POS, $t(306) = -0.57$, $p = .57$, need for approval, $t(306) = -0.59$, $p = .55$, need for affiliation, $t(306) = 1.79$, $p = .07$, and need for emotional support, $t(306) = -.16$, $p = .87$. We found a significant difference between the two samples for need for esteem, $t(306) = -2.57$, $p = .01$; however, with rank controlled, this effect was no longer reliable, $t(305) = 0.76$, $p = .44$.

Regression Analyses

We examined the moderating effect of each socioemotional need on the relationship between POS and performance. We carried out separate analyses for DUI arrests and speeding citations. Department managers suggested that, because of social norms, lower ranking officers tended to make more DUI arrests and issue more speeding citations than higher ranking officers. In addition, time actually on patrol, as opposed to time engaged in administrative responsibilities and court appearances, was considered an important influence both on DUI arrests and speeding citations. As can be seen in Table 2, both rank and patrol time were significantly related to DUI arrests and speeding citations; thus, we used both as covariates to reduce error variance (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

We carried out hierarchical regression analyses to test the moderating effect of each socioemotional need on the relationship between POS and the two performance measures. As recommended by Aiken and West (1991), we centered all predictor variables, and we constructed the interaction terms by multiplying POS times the appropriate need score. We used J. Cohen and Cohen's (1983) step-up procedure for hierarchical regression to assess the overall effects of the covariates (rank and patrol time), main effects (POS and relevant socioemotional need), and their interaction. In the first step, we entered the covariates into the equation. Next, we entered the two main-effect predictors as a block. The final step assessed the effect of the interaction term after partialing out the effects of the covariates and the main-effect predictors. Of primary interest were the interactions between POS and each socioemotional need.

Table 2
Correlations, Reliabilities, and Descriptive Statistics of Measures

Variable	Total sample		Patrol officers		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>									
1. Rank	4.63	2.50	3.02	1.00	—	—	-.19**	-.18**	-.18**	-.01	.09	—	—
2. Patrol time ^a	—	—	96.34	33.87	-.63**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Need for approval	2.94	1.01	3.00	0.99	-.03	-.02	.72	.35**	.24**	.08	.11	—	—
4. Need for esteem	3.07	1.12	3.30	1.18	-.22**	.20	.19	.84	.33**	.26**	.02	—	—
5. Need for emotional support	4.26	1.19	4.28	1.18	-.17	.03	.16	.46**	.86	.52**	.08	—	—
6. Need for affiliation	4.37	1.18	4.20	1.09	-.29**	.16	.11	.45**	.66**	.85	.02	—	—
7. POS	4.85	1.11	4.93	0.91	-.06	.01	-.04	.01	.10	.20	.82	—	—
8. DUI arrests	—	—	-.012	0.45	-.41**	.42**	-.07	.11	.14	.12	.08	—	—
9. Speeding citations	—	—	-.003	0.65	-.48**	.48**	.04	.19	.18	.12	.11	.65**	—

Note. POS = perceived organizational support; DUI = driving under the influence. $N = 308$ for total-sample statistics, all comparisons above the diagonal, and for Cronbach's alphas in bold. $N = 92$ for patrol-officer statistics and all comparisons below the diagonal. Cronbach's alphas for patrol-officer sample were .72 for need for approval, .86 for need for esteem, .85 for need for emotional support, .83 for need for affiliation, and .84 for POS. DUI arrests and speeding citations were averaged z scores.

^a Monthly average in hours.

** $p < .05$.

Table 3 shows the final models for each of the regression equations and the changes of explained variance with the addition of each block. The covariates (rank and patrol time) accounted for a reliable amount of variance in both DUI arrests and speeding citations in each of the analyses. In no cases did addition of the main-effect block account for a reliable increase in explained variance. Interactions between POS and the needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval were reliable for DUI arrests and, with the exception of the interaction involving social approval, for speeding citations. Simple-effects tests examined the relationship of POS and performance measure at high need strength (one standard deviation above the mean) and at low need strength (one standard deviation below the mean; Aiken & West, 1991; J. Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Results are shown Table 4. There was a reliable positive relationship between POS and DUI arrests for officers with high needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval. We also obtained a reliable positive relationship between POS and speeding citations for officers with high needs for esteem, affiliation, and emotional support. The relationship between POS and speeding citations for officers high in the need for social approval was in the predicted direction but was not reliable ($p < .10$). For officers with low socioemotional needs, the only statistically significant result was a negative relationship between POS and DUI arrests for officers with a low need for emotional support, although additional nonsignificant trends in the negative direction were found.

Discussion

The strength of police patrol officers' socioemotional needs affected the relationship between POS and work

performance. The association between POS and DUI arrests increased with the needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval. Similar interactions between POS and socioemotional needs were found with speeding citations except for the absence of a reliable interaction involving the need for approval. Among patrol officers with high socioemotional needs, there was generally a positive relationship between POS and performance. Among patrol officers with low socioemotional needs, only the need for emotional support produced a reliable effect, involving DUI arrests, which was negative in direction.

These findings are consistent with social exchange views that maintain (a) work effort is encouraged by the receipt of socioemotional resources (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson, 1965; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & Parks, 1993; Shore & Shore, 1995), (b) POS fulfills a variety of socioemotional needs (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990), and (c) the value of POS and the obligation to reciprocate with high performance increase with the strength of socioemotional needs (cf. Gouldner, 1960). An increased number of DUI arrests and speeding citations would provide a way for patrol officers with strong socioemotional needs to reciprocate high levels of POS. By contrast, patrol officers having weak socioemotional needs would have a lesser obligation to repay their organization's support with increased performance.

The global generalization that employees make concerning the organization's positive valuation of their contributions and concern for their well-being (POS) appears to be an important source of esteem, affiliation, emotional support, and approval in the workplace. By communicat-

Table 3
 Regression of Police Patrol Officer Performance on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Socioemotional Need Strength

Variable	DUI arrests				Speeding citations			
	β	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	F_{\dagger}	β	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	F_{\dagger}
	Block 1							
Rank	-.25**				-.28**			
Patrol time	.25**	.21	.22	12.42***	.27**	.26	.28	17.30***
	Block 2							
POS	.02				.05			
Need for esteem	-.01	.19	.00	0.01	.07	.26	.01	0.82
	Block 3							
POS \times Need for Esteem	.25***	.24	.06	7.01***	.19**	.29	.04	4.29**
	Block 1							
Rank	-.23*				-.29**			
Patrol time	.30**	.21	.22	12.42***	.31***	.26	.28	17.30***
	Block 2							
POS	.01				.04			
Need for affiliation	.01	.19	.01	0.38	-.03	.26	.01	0.57
	Block 3							
POS \times Need for Affiliation	.23**	.23	.04	5.50**	.20**	.29	.04	4.60**
	Block 1							
Rank	-.27**				-.30**			
Patrol time	.29**	.21	.22	12.42***	.31***	.26	.28	17.30***
	Block 2							
POS	.00				.04			
Need for emotional support	.05	.20	.02	1.15	.07	.27	.02	1.50
	Block 3							
POS \times Need for Emotional Support	.33***	.30	.09	12.34***	.23**	.31	.05	6.14**
	Block 1							
Rank	-.32***				-.32***			
Patrol time	.19*	.21	.22	12.42***	.26**	.26	.28	17.30***
	Block 2							
POS	.17*				.13			
Need for approval	-.09	.19	.01	0.63	.03	.26	.01	0.68
	Block 3							
POS \times Need for Approval	.37***	.32	.12	12.46***	.14	.27	.02	2.09

Note. DUI = driving under the influence. β = standardized regression coefficient for variables in final model. Adj. R^2 = cumulative amount of variance explained after entry of blocks adjusted for the number of predictors. ΔR^2 = change in variance accounted for after entry of block. $\dagger F$ ratio for ΔR^2 due to entry of block. $N = 92$.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 4
Simple Effects of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) on Patrol Officer Performance at High and Low Socioemotional Need Strengths

Need level	DUI arrests				Speeding citations			
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
High need for esteem	.12	.29	.05	2.19**	.15	.25	.08	1.97**
Low need for esteem	-.09	-.22	.07	-1.37	-.07	-.12	.10	-0.70
High need for affiliation	.12	.29	.06	2.07**	.18	.31	.08	2.19**
Low need for affiliation	-.11	-.27	.08	-1.39	-.12	-.20	.11	-1.09
High need for emotional support	.19	.46	.05	3.44***	.22	.37	.09	2.44**
Low need for emotional support	-.19	-.46	.07	-2.60**	-.17	-.29	.11	-1.55
High need for approval	.25	.61	.07	3.69***	.18	.31	.10	1.80*
Low need for approval	-.09	-.22	.05	-1.67*	.01	.02	.08	0.13

Note. DUI = driving under the influence. Table shows *t* values for unstandardized regression slopes between POS and criterion at 1 *SD* unit above the mean (High) and 1 *SD* unit below the mean (Low) on the needs scale. β = standardized regression coefficient. *N* = 92.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

ing to employees the organization's recognition of their superior talents and skills, POS may help meet the need for esteem. By conveying the organization's commitment to employees' well-being and satisfaction with their membership, POS may help satisfy the need for affiliation. By encouraging employees to believe that the organization can be counted on to provide sympathy and tangible support in times of personal or work-related distress, POS may help meet the need for emotional support. And by indicating to employees that they are acting in accord with the organization's norms and values, POS may help fulfill the need for social approval.

Gouldner (1960) proposed that aid that meets strong needs is highly valued and leads to an increased reciprocity obligation. We predicted that support from the organization that met strong socioemotional needs would create a greater obligation to reciprocate with high work effort than support that met weak needs. Despite the low statistical power imposed by our limited sample, results generally supported this prediction, showing that the strength of the relationship between POS and performance increased as a function of socioemotional needs. Further, the one unreliable interaction, involving the combined effects of POS and need for approval on speeding citations, was in the predicted direction. Somewhat stronger interaction effects were observed for DUI arrests, as compared with speeding citations, perhaps because of the greater importance the organization placed on DUI arrests and the informal constraints on the minimal number of acceptable speeding citations.

In accord with the view that employees with weak socioemotional needs have a lesser obligation to reciprocate with high work effort, such patrol officers did not show a positive relationship between POS and performance. On

the contrary, patrol officers with a low need for emotional support demonstrated a negative relationship between POS and DUI arrests. With the caveat that similar negative trends for employees low in other needs were unreliable at conventional significance levels, an important topic for future research involves the possibility that employees with low socioemotional needs may view high POS as a bank of good will that provides an opportunity to rest on one's laurels.

Patrol officers with high POS and low socioemotional needs may have felt that the organization would overlook or forgive lessened performance, especially in the case of DUI arrests, which lacked the informal minimal performance standards associated with speeding citations. Poor performance by patrol officers having a combination of high POS and weak needs may be related to social loafing effects in which individuals take advantage of lax scrutiny to reduce efforts made on behalf of the group (Harkins & Szymanski, 1988, 1989; Latane, Williams, & Harkins, 1979).

Our findings are consistent with the view that POS helps fulfill needs related to respect, caring, and approval. In addition, POS might convey a willingness by the organization to provide the resources necessary to aid employees in their desires for personal growth and achievement. For example, employees with a high need for autonomy may welcome POS as an indication that high effort and superior performance will be recognized and rewarded with greater independence in their jobs. Employees high in the need for achievement may value POS as evidence that the organization will afford them opportunities to become more skilled and to surpass personal standards of excellence. Thus, the moderating effect of socioemotional needs on the relationship between POS and performance

might also extend to needs for personal growth and achievement.

Research is needed on other mechanisms, besides the fulfillment of socioemotional needs, responsible for the positive relationship found between POS and performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne et al., 1997; Witt, 1991). POS was assumed to produce high effort-reward expectancies (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and evidence supported that view (Eisenberger et al., 1990). However, no studies have directly examined the assumption that effort-reward expectancies mediate part of the association between POS and performance. The absence in our study of a positive relationship between POS and performance among employees with low socioemotional needs suggests that, for low-needs employees, any effect of POS on the expectancies of high pay and promotion was too weak to overcome social loafing. In the organization we studied, salary increments were determined primarily by seniority rather than performance. Moreover, promotions were infrequent because organizational growth had slowed at a time that a majority of supervisory employees had years of additional service remaining before they reached retirement age. A more positive relationship between POS and performance among employees with low socioemotional needs would be anticipated for organizations in which there was a clear relationship between performance with such tangible rewards as pay increases and promotions.

The present results may be compared with findings that the relationship between teachers' POS and job attendance was greater among those with a strong exchange ideology favoring the trade of work effort for material and symbolic benefits (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Such acceptance of the norm of reciprocity, as applied to the relationship between employee and employer, may be differentiated from socioemotional needs that would influence the value employees place on POS. Some high-needs employees may find the organization's support highly satisfying but, because of a weak exchange ideology regarding their relationship with the organization, decline to base their efforts on POS. Thus, the effect of POS on performance may be influenced by both exchange ideology and socioemotional needs.

As with any cross-sectional study, the present findings do not establish causal relationships among the variables examined. Because records for DUI arrests and speeding citations were available for the 12 months prior to the assessment of POS and socioemotional needs, we compared present beliefs and needs with prior performance. We assume that POS reflects an employee's history of treatment from the organization and that average performance over the past year is related to current and future performance.

Longitudinal research is needed to assess alternative

interpretations of the present findings. For example, high-performing patrol officers with strong socioemotional needs might have convinced themselves that the state police department reciprocated their efforts with greater support, and high-needs, low-performing employees may have convinced themselves that the organization was unsupportive. However, this alternative interpretation implies, contrary to social exchange theory, that employees form conclusions about their support from the organization on the basis of their desires rather than available evidence. Previous research has demonstrated that the favorableness of organizational treatment does affect employees' perceptions of support (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Guzzo et al., 1994; Wayne et al., 1997) and that POS mediates the relationship between favorable treatment and performance (Wayne et al., 1997).

The present findings suggest that the organization plays an important social role in employees' lives. Satisfying socioemotional needs by the communication of respect, caring, and approval has the potential of markedly increasing employees' performance. Employers who convey high POS to employees can influence the nature of reciprocity by providing performance objectives that allow employees with strong socioemotional needs a clear way to repay the organization. For employees with weak socioemotional needs, POS may be used to engender expectancies that meeting objectives will result in more-tangible kinds of rewards.

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Received May 15, 1997

Revision received October 14, 1997

Accepted October 20, 1997 ■