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Does Psychological Contract Breach Decrease Proactive Behaviors? The Moderating Effect of Emotion Regulation

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Abstract

In a set of two studies, based on employees from two countries, we examined how emotion regulation moderates the relationship between psychological contract breach and (a) feelings of violation and (b) proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge). We found that *cognitive change* buffers the negative effect of breach on feelings of violation and knowledge sharing (Study 1, United States). We replicate this result using taking charge as an outcome. In addition, we demonstrate that using high levels of *attentional deployment* as an emotion regulation strategy accentuates the negative effect of both social and generative breach on employees' taking charge (Study 2, the Netherlands). Based on our results, we call for additional research on how emotion regulation modifies the relationship between psychological contract breach and work outcomes.

Keywords

psychological contract breach, taking charge, knowledge sharing

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Proactive behaviors, defined as self-directed and future-focused actions whereby employees aim to bring about change (Bindl & Parker, 2010a; Parker & Collins, 2010), continue to gain acceptance as essential for optimal organizational functioning, especially in contemporary workplaces, characterized by rapid changes (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Despite recent progress in integrating proactive behaviors into more precise theoretical frameworks (e.g., Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, & Gardner, in press; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Bindl & Parker, 2010a for a recent review), a psychological contracts perspective has not been proposed for these outcomes. Psychological contracts represent a useful avenue to understand and predict various employee attitudes and behaviors (Conway & Briner, 2005, Rousseau, 1995; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007), and there are benefits in theorizing on and empirically testing their influence on proactive behaviors.

Employees' estimations of the extent to which the organization has upheld its side of the deal—such as contract breach or fulfillment—have a profound impact on their job attitudes and performance (Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Zhao et al., 2007). We extend these investigations by focusing on knowledge sharing and taking charge, two behaviors that can be considered proactive, as outcomes. Knowledge sharing is “individuals sharing organizationally relevant information, ideas, suggestions, and expertise with one another” (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002, p. 65). Taking charge behaviors represent “voluntary and constructive efforts, by individual employees, to affect organizationally functional change with respect to how work is executed” (Morrison & Phelps, 1999, p. 403). Our outcome space captures behaviors directed toward other individuals (i.e., knowledge sharing) and at the organization (i.e., taking charge). Consistent with Parker and colleagues (2010), taking charge is representative of a more encompassing category of proactive behaviors. Likewise, knowledge sharing implies some degree of proactivity, as noted by Huber (2004) who indicated that “higher levels of competitions that will characterize future environments will cause knowledge sharing and other forms of proactive behaviors to be even more important than they are today” (p. 250). Employees have greater discretion on proactive behaviors than on task performance (Bartol, Liu, Zeng, & Wu, 2009) and may downregulate such behavior in breach situations.

Perceptions of breach can elicit strong emotional reactions, such as feelings of frustration and betrayal (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2002; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). In this research, we refer to emotions as the general affective feelings that arise following a particular event (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Morrison & Robinson, 1997).¹ As contract breach can generate various emotions, employees' emotion regulation strategies may modulate

the consequences of breach (Bal, De Lange, Jansen, & Van der Velde, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2009). Yet lack of empirical studies examining how breach informs employee behaviors as a function of their emotion regulation contrasts with positioning psychological contracts within an affective events framework (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Zhao et al., 2007). It also ignores indications that contract breach is closely linked to employees' emotional experiences and needs more attention (Conway & Briner, 2002; Montes & Zweig, 2009).

Thus, the primary objective of our research is to examine how emotion regulation strategies moderate the relationship between psychological contract breach and proactive behaviors. Contract breaches can stir up a range of emotional reactions: employees can feel angry, frustrated, dissatisfied, or betrayed (Conway & Briner, 2005). Research on emotion regulation has shown that individuals can use forms of emotion regulation, such as attentional deployment and cognitive change, to regulate such emotions (Diefendorff, Richard, & Yang, 2008; Gross, 2001). We focus on two regulatory strategies because they capture different interventions used after a situational cue (e.g., a psychological contract breach) has been elicited. Consistent with Diefendorff and colleagues (2008), *attentional deployment* involves "focusing one's attention away from the emotion-provoking event or target" (p. 499). However, *cognitive change* (e.g., reappraisal or reframing) strategies consists of "reappraising or reinterpreting situations so as to modify their subjective meaning" (Diefendorff et al., 2008, p. 499).² In this research, we focus on employees' typical emotion regulation strategies by assessing how they respond to negative events (Diefendorff et al., 2008).

Our investigation presents an integrated set of two studies, conducted in the United States and the Netherlands. Exploring how emotion regulation influences the relationship between contract breach and proactive work behaviors, we address a largely overlooked theme within psychological contract research. In doing so, we aim to offer three contributions to the existing literature. First, we investigate psychological contract breach in connection with work behaviors of a proactive type (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010). Breach has deleterious consequences for employees' effort and performance (Zhao et al., 2007). This is not however employees' first line of defense. Instead of starting to perform poorly (i.e., reduce their task performance), employees are more likely to disengage from behaviors they have more discretion on. Indeed, breach has been connected with increased neglect and decreased feelings of obligation toward their organization (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). We extend this logic (and prior studies) by examining breach consequences on proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge) as outcomes.

Second, we extend the psychological contract literature, where researchers forwarded conceptual arguments (Robinson & Morrison, 1995) and demonstrated empirically that psychological contract breach leads to associated strain, negative emotions, and negative affect toward the organization (e.g., Conway & Briner, 2002; Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). If emotions are likely to be associated with breach, another layer of complexity is needed in existing models. We thus incorporate emotion regulation strategies and examine when they diminish or accentuate breach outcomes.

Finally, by testing interaction effects, our study broadens the range of solutions for employee–organization relationships. On one hand, employers are more likely to have difficulties in upholding their side of the deal due to increased economic downturn and market conditions (Adkins, Werbel, & Farh, 2001; Zhao et al., 2007). On the other hand, the same organization may explicitly request, or convey through implicit channels, that employees’ proactive behaviors are necessary for increased effectiveness and gains in competitive advantage. Given the negative association between breach and proactive behaviors (e.g., Ng, Feldman, & Lam, 2010), academics and practitioners need a better understanding of what modifies the strength of the relationship between breach and such proactive behaviors. More precisely, our two studies add to research where individual differences were examined as moderators in the relations of psychological contract breach and performance outcomes (i.e., conscientiousness; Orvis, Dudley, & Cortina, 2008). One advantage of our moderators—capturing emotion regulation strategies—over studies examining individual differences is that while individuals can change to a lesser extent their traits, they can nevertheless modify how they self-regulate. Stated differently, emotion regulation strategies are more amenable to individual and organizational interventions.

Psychological Contract Breach and Diminished Proactive Behaviors

Rousseau (1995) defined the psychological contract as employees’ beliefs concerning mutual obligations between the employee and the organization (Conway & Briner, 2005). When organizations do not fulfill their obligations, employees experience psychological contract breach (i.e., cognitions that the organization has failed to deliver its obligations toward the employee; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Affective reactions follow, including feelings of anger and betrayal (i.e., contract violation; Robinson & Morrison, 2000)

or feeling upset, dissatisfied, or sad (Conway & Briner, 2005), together with lower productivity (Zhao et al., 2007).

In addition to performing their day-to-day tasks, employees increasingly engage in proactive forms of behavior, such as changing suboptimal procedures, speaking up with ideas for improvement, or sharing information with their coworkers (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006), all important for work effectiveness (Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010). Such proactive actions introduce positive modifications at work yet are less likely to be perceived as required to the same extent as is task performance.

Proactive behaviors (e.g., taking charge) can be perceived by employees as part of their work roles and subject to rewards (e.g., Marinova, Moon, & Van Dyne, 2010), yet employees regard them more discretionary compared with task performance. As a result, under psychological contract breach conditions, employees are most likely to reduce their proactive behaviors rather than to curtail their task performance. Even though employees can react to breach by diminishing both prosocial and proactive work behaviors (Zhao et al., 2007), in this research, we focus on proactive behaviors as an outcome. Consistent with our perspective, Suazo (2009) found that contract breach diminished employees' initiative (a form of proactive behavior)—including contributing ideas, providing constructive suggestions, and presenting creative solutions—to a greater extent than it reduced their loyalty (prosocial behaviors).

Psychological Contract Breach, Feelings of Violations, and Diminished Proactive Behaviors

Previous research on psychological contracts has indicated that contract breach has a profound impact on attitudes and behaviors (Conway & Briner, 2005; Zhao et al., 2007). In their recent meta-analysis, Zhao and colleagues (2007) relied on affective events theory to explain these relations. Accordingly, negative workplace events cause negative emotional reactions, such as anger or frustration (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). These “feelings of violation” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 230) color employees' perceptions of the job and influence their level of effort. Contract breach leads to affective reactions, which leads to diminished effort and behavioral engagement. In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960), the employee and the organization have mutual obligations toward each other. When employees perceive that their employer has not reciprocated their contributions, they will react with emotions such as anger and frustration, in line with

affective events theory. Furthermore, they may restore the social exchange balance by lowering the level of their contributions (Bal et al., 2008).

Not receiving enough in return for contributions to the organization will therefore be coded negatively by employees. Subsequently, and in line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Taylor & Tekleab, 2004), contract breach as an imbalance in exchanges will affect employee contributions. Subsequent decreased task performance (or in-role behaviors) may be sanctioned by the organization or the supervisor because of organizational performance norms (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003). As a result, employees may likely engage in downward adjustments in discretionary actions, including proactive behaviors.

Additional reasons for employees to downregulate proactive behaviors are negative affective outcomes originating from breach. Fulfillment of psychological contract leads to employees' feeling more supported and generates higher positive and lower negative affect (Guerrero & Herrbach, 2008). By extension, contract breach would generate deleterious affective reactions. Given the importance of employees' positive affect as a precondition for employees' proactive behaviors (e.g., Bindl & Parker, 2010b; Parker et al., 2010), we surmise that breaches, due to the negative affect they generate, will prompt employees to be less proactive.

Hypothesis 1a: Psychological contract breach will be positively related to feelings of violation.

Hypothesis 1b: Psychological contract breach will be negatively related to employee proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge).

Emotion Regulation Strategies and Proactive Behaviors

Gross (1998) defined emotion regulation as “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (p. 275). Emotion regulation may be automatic or controlled and may be executed consciously or unconsciously (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Emotion regulation strategies are partly genetic, but they also develop over time, due to temperamental, maturational, and social changes (John & Gross, 2004, 2007). For instance, over time, people may learn the best emotion regulation strategies to use at work. A dominant emotion regulation strategy may be present, although utilization of strategies may vary across situations and time (Gross & Thompson, 2007).

When an event has occurred and negative emotions result, individuals may use moving away forms of attentional deployment or confront the situation directly through cognitive change (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999). Although it is possible for people to prefer one emotion regulation strategy, the two types are not mutually exclusive. Individuals can reappraise a situation or distract themselves from it, depending both on their preferences and on the situation. Despite individuals having a natural tendency to use one of these two possible strategies (e.g., people high on openness to experience are more likely to employ cognitive change; John & Gross, 2007), depending on a situation, they may consciously select only one of them. In what follows, while recognizing the distinctiveness of attentional deployment and cognitive change, we also note that both can be used by the same individual.

Attentional deployment refers to how individuals direct their attention within a given situation to modify their emotions. For example, they may look for distraction, by moving attention away from the situation altogether, or they may concentrate on an activity unrelated to the emotion-provoking situation (John & Gross, 2007). Individuals may direct their attention to something else than what caused the negative emotion. Employees involved in a conflict at work might distract themselves through social activities (e.g., going out with their friends) or concentrate on a non-work-related activity (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Thus, attentional deployment may take many forms, including physical withdrawal and redirection of attention.

In contrast, *cognitive change* involves a mental redirection of the emotional reaction. It refers to changing how one appraises the situation to alter its emotional significance. Cognitive change is directed at the possible meaning people attach to events that elicit emotions, such that the emotional impact is modified. Reframing a negative event in a positive light can thus affect the associated emotion. For instance, through focusing on the positive aspects of a conflict at work (e.g., discovering better ways of working among colleagues), people reappraise the situation such that the meaning of an event changes.

Although Gross and Thompson (2007) stated that there is no single best emotion regulation strategy, research has shown that cognitive change generates more positive outcomes in the long run than attentional deployment (Gross, 1998, 2001; Gross & John, 2003). Attentional deployment focuses on distraction from negative situations, in an effort to modify a person's mood and make it more neutral (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007). However, distraction may not be that easy because it may be difficult for people to draw attention away from negative stimuli. More importantly, even though distraction may

cause temporary relief, negative feelings may come back over time. Distraction as an emotion regulation strategy needs working memory and thus costs energy and cognitive resources (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007). Moreover, because distraction leaves the source of the negative emotion intact, it is not a substitute for problem solving. Accordingly, Van Dillen and Koole (2007) argued that distraction might even contribute to a vicious circle of maladaptive behavior because an individual withdraws from a problematic situation instead of focusing on solving the problem.

Empirical support for this line of argumentation has been provided by Van Dillen and Koole (2007) who showed that high working memory resources were needed for distraction to be effective and decrease negative mood. Therefore, to be able to effectively distract oneself, one has to devote significant cognitive resources to the very task of sustaining distraction. Cognitive resources for other activities become limited. Moreover, distraction is only effective temporarily (Sheppes & Meiran, 2007), whereas cognitive change strategies are not subject to such time constraints (Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2011). Extending these findings to a work context, we propose that individuals who use attentional deployment strategies are less likely to engage in proactive behaviors because of their tendency to move away (i.e., use distraction) from problematic situations.

Conversely, we expect a positive influence of cognitive change on the same outcomes. As cognitive change is focused on avoiding a discrepancy between what has happened and the experienced emotions, it involves lower resource expenditure than distraction does (Gross & John, 2003). Indeed, in an ego depletion context, individuals have limited resources for self-control (Sheppes & Meiran, 2008). As cognitive change is directed toward integrating one's emotions with a situation, the individual's ego is not depleted by engaging in this emotion regulation strategy. As a result, cognitive resources can be devoted to achieve higher levels of performance. In sum, we expect a negative relationship between attentional deployment and a positive relationship between cognitive change and employees' proactive behaviors.

Hypothesis 2a: Attentional deployment will have a negative relationship with employee proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge).

Hypothesis 2b: Cognitive change will have a positive relationship with employee proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge).

Emotion Regulation as Moderator in the Relationships Between Contract Breach and Outcomes

In what follows, we examine the role of emotion regulation strategies as moderators of the relationship between breach and outcomes. Individuals who attempt to concentrate on other activities after experiencing a negative event will have more difficulties focusing on proactive behaviors when they experience psychological contract breach. Attentional deployment may even be detrimental for proactive behaviors as it refers to distancing from the target (the organization) involved (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007). In line with the argument of Van Dillen and Koole (2007), attentional deployment may only temporarily (i.e., hours or days after a breach occurs) reduce the effect of a contract breach, which may continue to remain problematic in the long run. This is because the source of the negative emotion is still intact, creating a possible vicious cycle of maladaptive behaviors. Accordingly, Sheppes and Meiran (2007, 2008) showed that people who distracted themselves after seeing a sad film clip performed worse on memory tasks because distraction from negative emotions inhibited them to focus on their tasks. Moreover, Knight and coauthors (2007) demonstrated that when people are distracted, they tend to rely on automatically controlled behavior. This may inhibit proactive engagement, which is effortful and goal directed (Parker et al., 2010). By extension, we argue that employees who use distraction aspects of attentional deployment following contract breach will engage in proactive behavior to a lesser extent than employees who engage less in this form of emotion regulation.

In contrast, when individuals tend to seek meaning in events they experience, and thus use cognitive change, they will find better ways of dealing with contract breach, and overcome its negative consequences. Through reevaluating psychological contract breach in a more positive light, employees engaging in cognitive change (e.g., reframing) are able to diminish the negative perceptions related to breach and, consequently, retain current levels of proactive behaviors. Cognitive change will be beneficial in preventing negative outcomes as a result of contract breach as it is aimed at resolving a situation rather than escaping from it. Cognitive changers take on a more optimistic attitude and make an effort to repair negative moods (Gross & John, 2003). Empirical support for the benefits of cognitive change has been offered by Sheppes and Meiran (2007, 2008), who showed that performance on memory tasks was higher for people engaging in cognitive change strategies after seeing a sad film clip than for people engaging in distraction. Accordingly, in a situation

of psychological contract breach, proactive behavior will be less severely influenced for people engaging in cognitive change.

Hypothesis 3a: Attentional deployment will accentuate the positive relationship between psychological contract breach and employees' feelings of violation.

Hypothesis 3b: Cognitive change will attenuate the positive relationship between psychological contract breach and employees' feelings of violation.

Hypothesis 4a: Attentional deployment will accentuate the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and employee proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge).

Hypothesis 4b: Cognitive change will attenuate the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and employee proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge).

Overview of Studies

We present two studies that investigate the role of emotion regulation strategies in the relationships between psychological contract breach and outcomes. In Study 1, we include a global measure of psychological contract breach and examine the moderating impact of emotion regulation strategies (attentional deployment and cognitive change) on the relationships between psychological contract breach and (a) employees' feelings of violation and (b) their knowledge sharing behaviors. In Study 2, while keeping the same two emotional strategies as moderators, we use facet-specific measures for psychological contract breach (global and social; De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003). To increase generalizability, we focus on employees' taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999)—another proactive behavior—as outcome.

Study 1 Method

Participants and Procedure

Data for Study 1 were collected from employees in multiple organizations (all industrial activities from the Standard Industrial Classification [SIC] with the exception of agriculture and mining were represented) in the United States, through a professional association specializing in supply chain. From 500 members who received electronic questionnaires, 124 employees provided usable responses (response rate of 25%). In terms of demographics,

75% of the respondents were male, with 10 years working in their organization ($SD = 9.16$). Educational level varied from professional degrees (9.2%) to high school degree (17.7%), college (40.7%), and advanced degree (34.4%; with the majority in this category being MBA graduates). Information about age was not collected due to a transcription error.

As employees were the only source for all responses in this questionnaire, we introduced several procedural remedies in the study design to minimize common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). First, we informed employees that the responses they provide will remain confidential. Second, we separated questions pertaining to the predictor and criterion on the questionnaire. In between, we inserted two sections containing information unrelated to this study (individual differences and job design questions). According to Podsakoff and colleagues (2003), such procedural remedies reduce biases by diminishing the availability, salience, and relevance of responses provided earlier. In addition, we took non-design-related steps, described in the Results section.

Measures

All measures were anchored on a Likert-type scale, ranging from $1 = strongly disagree$ to $7 = strongly agree$. *Psychological contract breach* ($\alpha = .87$) was measured by asking the employees to rate the extent to which the organization fulfilled or not its obligations to the employees. We used five items from Robinson and Morrison (2000). An illustrative item is, "The organization has broken many of its promises to me even though I've upheld my side of the deal."

Emotion regulation strategies were measured with items developed by Diefendorff and colleagues (2008), based on the framework of Gross (1998; Gross & Thompson, 2007). The questions probe respondents on the extent to which, when a negative event happens to them at work, they engage in a number of actions. The first dimension refers to *attentional deployment* (four items; $\alpha = .79$; e.g., "seek out individuals that make me feel good") and the second to *cognitive change* (four items; $\alpha = .68$; e.g., "reinterpret the situation in a more positive light").

Feelings of violation were measured with four items (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; $\alpha = .94$). An illustrative item is, "I feel betrayed by my organization."

Knowledge sharing was measured with a four-item scale from Faraj and Sproull (2000; $\alpha = .87$; e.g., "I share my special knowledge and expertise with my colleagues").

Analyses

Moderated hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. We controlled for the effects of gender and organizational tenure as it may relate to the dependent variables under study (e.g., Bal et al., 2008; Hunter & Thatcher, 2007). The independent variables were centered before interaction terms were calculated (Aiken & West, 1991). Moreover, squared independent variables were included in the analyses before including the interaction terms (Cortina, 1993). Significant interactions were plotted and simple slopes were calculated for the moderator at one standard deviation below and above the mean, using the procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991).

Results

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using procedures in LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) indicated that our constructs were distinct. Fit statistics, χ^2 (345, $N = 124$) = 102.67; comparative fit index = .95; non-normed fit index = .94; root mean square error of approximation = .09; all indicated adequate fit for our model. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables under study and Table 2 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analyses. Attentional deployment and cognitive change were positively related to each other ($r = .19, p < .05$), indicating coexistence of strategies within individuals.

We used the marker variable approach (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) to determine the extent to which common method may be an issue in our data. Information reported by our respondents on an unrelated construct (i.e., continuance commitment; Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used as a marker. Common method variance is more likely to be present if the significant zero-order correlations for the variables in the study decrease their level of significance when the marker variable is partialled out. Based on our analyses, there were no statistically significant changes in the zero-order correlations after partialling out the marker variable from the correlation matrix. These results suggest that self-report issues are not a major concern in our data set.

Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted that psychological contract breach was positively related to (a) feelings of violation and negatively related to (b) proactive behaviors (i.e., knowledge sharing). Psychological contract breach is positively

Table 1. Study 1 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.75	—							
2. Organizational tenure	10.37	9.16	.14						
3. Psychological contract breach	2.72	1.29	-.08	-.17					
4. Attentional deployment emotion regulation	4.46	1.14	-.17	.16	-.20*				
5. Cognitive change emotion regulation	4.91	0.93	-.12	.11	.05	.19*			
6. Feelings of violation	1.67	1.07	.03	.01	.49***	-.17	-.03		
7. Knowledge sharing	5.84	0.93	-.14	.13	-.23***	-.05	.22*	-.29***	
8. Continuance commitment	4.47	1.62	.03	-.08	.16	.19*	.10	.15	-.14

Note: N = 124. Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male.

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

Table 2. Moderated Regression Analyses Predicting Psychological Contract Violation and Knowledge Sharing, Study 1

	Dependent variables							
	Feelings of violation				Knowledge sharing			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Independent variables								
Gender	-.00	.02	.06	.05	-.16	-.17*	-.15	-.14
Organizational tenure	.01	.17*	.15*	.16*	.18*	.09	.07	.05
PCB		.67***	.51***	.51***		-.20*	-.17	-.15
Attentional deployment		.10	.02	.02		-.15	-.08	-.06
Cognitive change		-.16*	-.16*	-.15		.21*	.25*	.25**
PCB squared			.25***	.22**			.03	.06
Attentional deployment squared			-.12	-.10			.17	.17
Cognitive change squared			-.05	-.07			.06	.09
PCB × Attentional deployment				.09				-.11
PCB × Cognitive change				-.15*				.17*
R^2	.00	.47	.52	.54	.05	.14	.17	.20
ΔR^2		.47***	.06**	.02*	.05	.09**	.03	.03*

Note: PCB = psychological contract breach.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

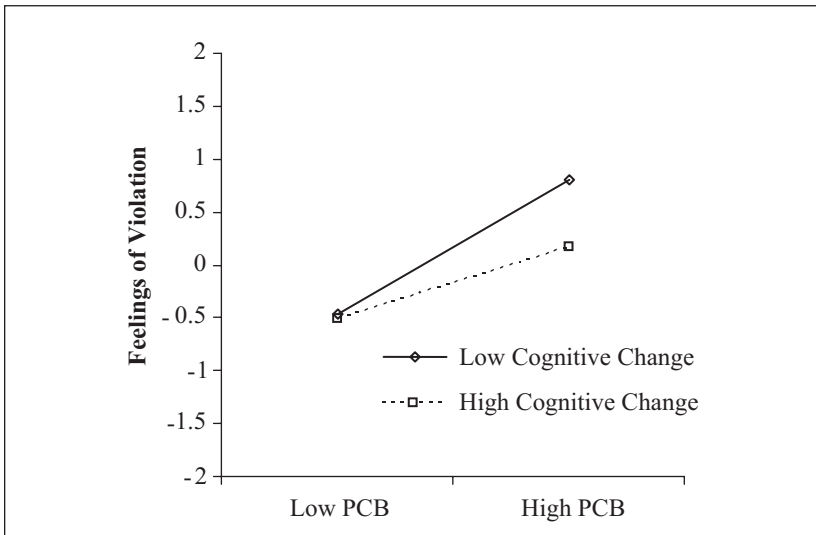


Figure 1. Interaction between psychological contract breach and cognitive change in relation to feelings of violation (Study 1)

correlated with feelings of violation ($r = .49, p < .01$) and negatively correlated with knowledge sharing ($r = -.23, p < .01$), Hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported. Hypothesis 2 predicted a negative relationship between attentional deployment and knowledge sharing and a positive relationship between cognitive change and knowledge sharing. Table 1 shows that neither attentional deployment ($r = .17$) nor cognitive change ($r = .03$) was related to employees' knowledge sharing. Therefore, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are not supported. However, after controlling for the relationships of gender and organizational tenure, psychological contract breach and attentional deployment, cognitive change is positively related to knowledge sharing ($\beta = .25, p < .01$; Table 1).

We predicted in Hypothesis 3 an interaction effect between emotion regulation strategies and psychological contract breach in relation to feelings of violation and knowledge sharing. Table 2 shows the results of the moderated hierarchical regression analyses. Contract breach interacted significantly with cognitive change in relation to feelings of violation ($\beta = -.15, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .02$). Figure 1 shows the interaction pattern. Under conditions of high contract breach, feelings of violation are significantly lower for those with high cognitive change strategies than those with low cognitive change strategies. The slope for those with high cognitive change ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) was less

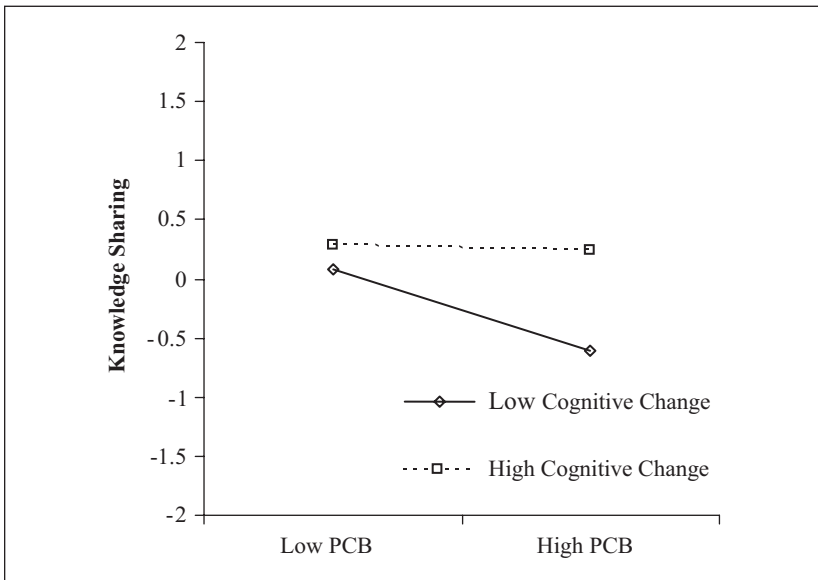


Figure 2. Interaction between psychological contract breach and cognitive change in relation to knowledge sharing (Study 1)

pronounced than for those with low cognitive change ($\beta = .67, p < .001$). However, attentional deployment did not interact significantly with contract breach in relation to feelings of violation ($\beta = .09$). Psychological contract breach interacted significantly with cognitive change in relation to knowledge sharing ($\beta = .17, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .03$). Figure 2 shows the graphical representation of the interaction effect. For people with low cognitive change strategies, psychological contract breach negatively related to knowledge sharing ($\beta = -.35, p < .001$), whereas the relation for those with high cognitive change was nonsignificant ($\beta = -.03$). Finally, the interaction between attentional deployment and contract breach was not significantly related to knowledge sharing ($\beta = -.11$).

Discussion

In sum, Study 1 showed that in line with the hypotheses, contract breach negatively and quite strongly relates to feelings of violation, thereby replicating previous research (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008; Zhao et al., 2007). The current study showed that employees who perceive breaches of their psychological contract are less likely to share their knowledge

with their colleagues, thus possibly withholding important information from peers and supervisors. In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees respond to imbalances in their relationship with their organization by adjusting behaviors and through sharing less information to restore the balance. However, the study also showed that emotion regulation strategies play an important role in how people respond to contract breaches. When people use cognitive change strategies, they not only share more information with their colleagues but also react differently to contract breaches than people with low cognitive change strategies; the relationships of contract breach with feelings of violation and knowledge sharing were stronger for employees who engage less in cognitive change. Thus, employees who self-regulate in the emotional domain by using cognitive change strategies are better at dealing with the negative effects of contract breaches.

We did not find significant moderating effects of attentional deployment with psychological contract breach. This lack of support for the accentuating role of attentional deployment may be explained by the level of specificity of the psychological contract breach measure. Although cognitive change strategies (e.g., viewing things in a more positive light) may be effective to attenuate the negative effects of general perceptions that the employer has broken the psychological contract, such forms of emotion regulation may be insufficient to alleviate the negative effects when employees perceive breach related to specific contract components.

In Study 2, we therefore tested the moderating effects of emotion regulation strategies on the relationship between specific types of contract breach and proactive behaviors. In line with previous research, we distinguish two types of contract breach: social and generative (De Vos et al., 2003; Mor-Barak, 1995). *Social breach* refers to the cognition of an employee that the organization did not fulfill its social obligations, including a challenging job, a good atmosphere at work, and recognition for delivered performance (e.g., Bal, Chiaburu, & Jansen, 2010). *Generative breach* refers to the employee perception of an organizational failure to deliver the opportunity to share the knowledge and experiences and to transmit ideas and values to others in the organization (Mor-Barak, 1995). Generativity motives have been identified as crucial in maintaining and enhancing employee motivation (Dalby, 2006; Mor-Barak, 1995). When the organization fails to facilitate fulfillment of these motives, employees may decrease the level of proactive behaviors toward their organization (Parker & Collins, 2010). In the context of these specific types of contract breach, attentional deployment and cognitive change strategies are more likely to play a pivotal role as influencing the strength of the relationships with proactive behaviors, measured as taking charge.

Study 2 Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were employees in a Dutch consultancy firm. We sent an electronic survey to employees in 2009 and 245 of them responded (response rate 56%). On average, the respondents were 37 years old ($SD = 11.06$), 53% were male, and, on average, they were working for 4.97 years for their company, 23% were in a supervisory position; 75% had a permanent contract with their organization, and 61% worked full-time.

Measures

All measures were rated, unless otherwise stated, on Likert scales ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. *Psychological contract breach* ($\alpha = .90$) was measured with the direct, specific breach scale from Turnley and colleagues (2003). Previous research has shown extensive support for facet-specific measures of psychological contract breach (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; De Vos et al., 2003; Turnley et al., 2003). Respondents assessed the extent to which the amount of the inducement they actually received from their organization was less than or greater than the amount that the organization had promised them. Responses ranged from 1 = *receive much less than promised* to 5 = *receive much more than promised*. Answers were reversed, such that a higher score indicated higher contract breach.

Social breach ($\alpha = .89$) was measured with seven items from De Vos and colleagues (2003), such as “a good atmosphere at work,” “recognition for the work I do,” “a challenging job,” and “participation in decision making.” For *generative breach* ($\alpha = .90$), we adapted four items from Mor-Barak’s (1995) meaning of work scale. Example items are “a chance to teach and train others” and “a chance to use and demonstrate my skills and abilities.”

Attentional deployment ($\alpha = .73$) and *cognitive change* ($\alpha = .76$) were measured with the same scales as in Study 1 (Diefendorff et al., 2008).

Taking charge ($\alpha = .92$) was assessed with the 10-item scale from Morrison and Phelps (1999). Previous research (e.g., Chiaburu & Baker, 2006) found the scale to be reliable ($\alpha = .90$). An item reads, “I often try to correct a faulty procedure or practice.”

Analyses

The analyses were similar to those conducted in Study 1. We tested our hypotheses with moderated hierarchical regression analyses, with the independent

variables centered before calculating the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Squared independent variables were entered before the interaction terms (Cortina, 1993). Simple slopes were calculated for the moderator at one standard deviation below and above the mean (Aiken & West, 1991).

Results

A CFA with LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) supported construct distinctiveness. Fit statistics, $\chi^2(345, N = 245) = 845.39$; comparative fit index = .93; nonnormed fit index = .92; root mean square error of approximation = .08; all indicated adequate fit for our model. We present means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables in Table 3 and the results of the hierarchical regression analyses in Table 4. Social breach and generative breach were positively correlated with each other ($r = .59, p < .01$).

Similar to Study 1, we sought to determine the extent to which common method variance is an issue. We used again the marker variable approach (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). We used the same unrelated construct (i.e., continuance commitment; Allen & Meyer, 1990) as marker. We obtained no significant changes in the zero-order correlations by partialling out the marker variable from the correlation matrix. We are thus able to conclude that self-report issues are not a major concern in our data.

For space reasons on the second questionnaire, we did not replicate our Hypothesis 1a from Study 1 (breach to feelings of violation) in Study 2. In Hypothesis 1b, we predicted that psychological contract breach was negatively related to proactive behaviors (i.e., taking charge). Table 3 shows that both social and generative breach are indeed negatively correlated with taking initiative (social: $r = -.21, p < .01$ and generative: $r = -.26, p < .01$); Hypothesis 1b is supported. In Hypothesis 2, we proposed that attentional deployment is negatively related and cognitive change is positively related to taking charge. Attentional deployment was not significantly related to taking charge ($r = -.08, ns$), whereas cognitive change was positively related to it ($r = .22, p < .01$), although Hypothesis 2a is not supported, Hypothesis 2b received support.

We surmised in Hypothesis 3 that attentional deployment and cognitive change will act as moderators in the relationship between psychological contract breach and taking charge. Attentional deployment moderated the relationship between social breach and taking charge ($\beta = -.15, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .02$). Figure 3 presents the graphical representation of the interaction effect. For employees who use low levels of attentional deployment as emotion regulation, the relationship between social breach and taking charge was nonsignificant ($\beta = -.08$), whereas the relationship was negative for those

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations of the Study 2 Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.47	—							
2. Organizational tenure	4.97	6.77	.21**						
3. Social breach	3.24	0.67	.05	.05					
4. Generative breach	3.12	0.76	.04	.05	.59**				
5. Attentional deployment emotion regulation	2.95	0.68	-.15*	-.17*	.02	.03			
6. Cognitive change emotion regulation	3.13	0.65	.08	.05	-.08	-.05	.29**		
7. Taking charge	3.33	0.61	.14*	.07	-.21**	-.26**	-.08	.22**	
8. Continuance commitment	2.48	0.60	-.00	.14*	-.21**	-.08	.15*	-.01	-.03

Note: N = 245. Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male.

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

Table 4. Moderated Regression Analyses of Taking Charge on Psychological Contract Breach and Emotion Regulation Strategies for Study 2

	Taking charge			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Independent variables				
Gender	.13*	.13*	.14*	.15*
Organizational tenure	.04	.03	.03	.04
SCB		-.18***	-.21***	-.23***
Attentional deployment		-.13	-.14	-.16*
Cognitive change		.25***	.27***	.28***
SCB squared			.09	.11
Attentional deployment squared			-.07	-.06
Cognitive change squared			.12	.11
SCB × Attentional deployment				-.15*
SCB × Cognitive change				.05
R^2	.02	.12	.14	.16
ΔR^2	.02	.10***	.02	.02*
Independent variables				
Gender	.13*	.13*	.14*	.14*
Organizational tenure	.04	.03	.03	.03
GCB		-.24***	-.27***	-.27***
Attentional deployment		-.13*	-.14*	-.16**
Cognitive change		.25***	.28***	.28***
GCB squared			.05	.08
Attentional deployment squared			-.04	-.04
Cognitive change squared			.14*	.15*
GCB × Attentional deployment				-.16*
GCB × Cognitive change				.14*
R^2	.02	.15	.17	.20
ΔR^2	.02	.13***	.02	.02*

Note: SCB = social contract breach; GCB = generative contract breach.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

with high attentional deployment ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$). Contrary to our expectations, the interaction between social breach and cognitive change was non-significant ($\beta = .05$).

Concerning generative breach, the interaction between this form of breach and attentional deployment in relation to taking charge was significant

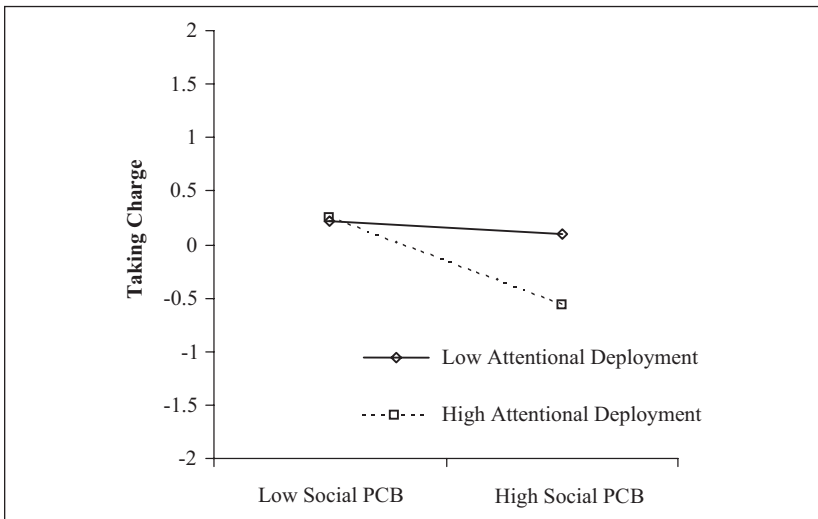


Figure 3. Interactions between social psychological contract breach and attentional deployment in relation to taking charge (Study 2)

($\beta = -.16, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .02$). Figure 4 shows the plot of the interaction. The relationship was nonsignificant for low attentional deployment employees ($\beta = -.09, ns$) and negative for high attentional deployment employees ($\beta = -.25, p < .001$). Finally, the interaction between generative breach and cognitive change was significant ($\beta = .14, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .02$). Figure 5 presents the interaction effect. The slope for low cognitive change workers was negative ($\beta = -.24, p < .001$), whereas the slope for high cognitive change workers was nonsignificant ($\beta = -.10, ns$). Hypothesis 3a received full support and Hypothesis 3b received partial support. The negative relationships of both social and generative breach with taking charge behaviors were stronger for people with high attentional deployment strategies than for people with low attentional deployment strategies. Moreover, the relationship of generative breach with taking charge was also stronger for those with low cognitive change strategies than for people with high cognitive change strategies.

General Discussion

Psychological contract breach has negative influences on employees' attitudes and both task and contextual forms of performance (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler,

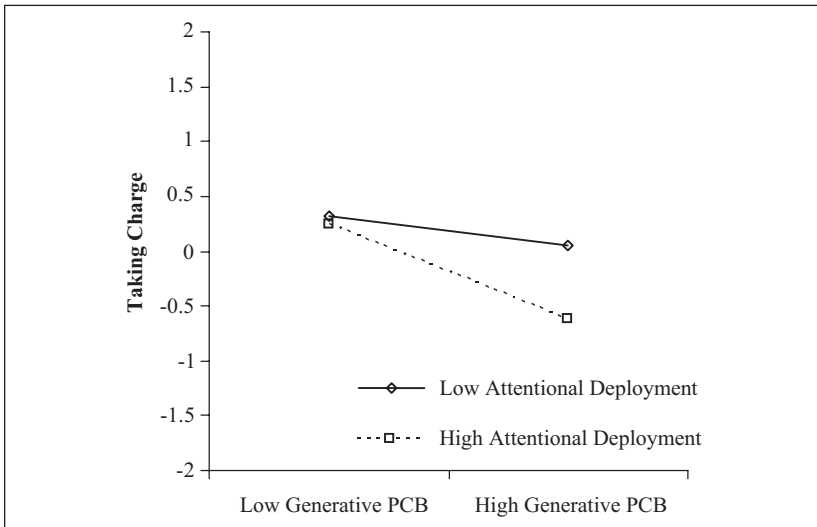


Figure 4. Interactions between generative psychological contract breach and attentional deployment in relation to taking charge (Study 2)

2000; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005; Zhao et al., 2007). Even though breach “can be viewed as an affective event” (Zhao et al., 2007, p. 669) and affective reactions are proximal to employers not upholding their side of the deal (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003), past research has failed to examine the role of emotion regulation strategies in the relationship between breach and outcomes. For example, negative affective and emotional reactions of employees who experience contract breach are high levels of affect-based cynicism and emotional exhaustion (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). Likewise, breach leads to negative emotions such as feeling betrayed and hurt (Conway & Briner, 2002). Both previous theory-building efforts (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and empirical studies show the benefit of clarifying relationships between psychological contracts and outcomes by specifying moderators (e.g., Bal et al., 2010; Conway & Briner, 2002; Kickul & Lester, 2001; Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2007; Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

When psychological contract breach is examined in connection with behaviors employees have discretion on, it is believed that breach leads to disengagement in prosocial actions such as citizenship (e.g., Robinson & Morrison, 1995). If employees’ contracts are not fulfilled, they can also decide to

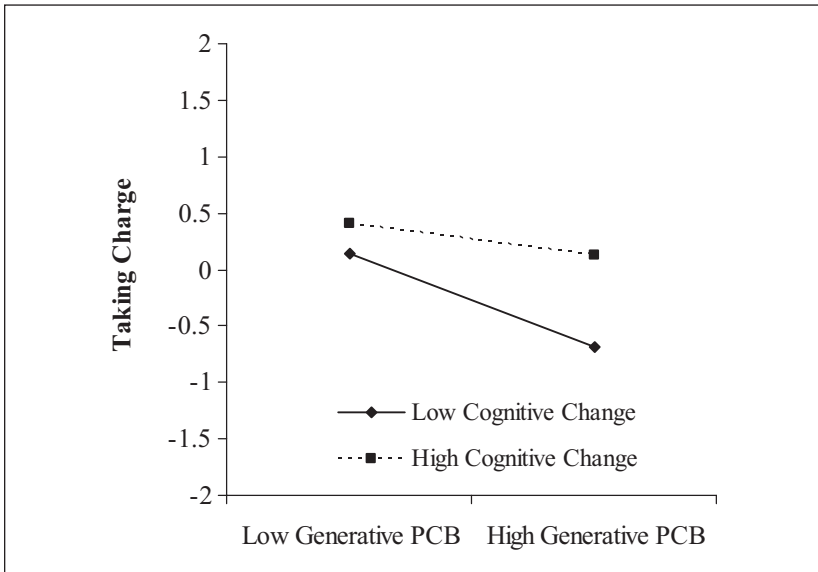


Figure 5. Interactions between generative psychological contract breach and cognitive change in relation to taking charge (Study 2)

diminish their involvement in actions that are discretionary and *proactive* (rather than prosocial)—through diminished knowledge sharing and taking charge, two behaviors important in numerous settings (Lin, 2010). To remain competitive, organizations are at advantage if they encourage exchanges of ideas among their employees through knowledge sharing and if their employees are proactive as change agents. Yet when breaches in the psychological contract appear, they stifle proactivity by making the employees more neglectful and feel less obligated toward the organization. Current findings in the psychological contract literature seem to point toward the conclusion that because most moderators influencing the relationship between breach and outcomes received weak support, “it appears that employees *generally* react negatively to breach” (Conway & Briner, 2005, p. 79, emphasis added).

In this study, we advance a more nuanced view of breach and reactions to it, by testing emotion regulation strategies as moderators. Based on emotion regulation theory (Gross, 1998), employees’ reactions to contract breach should be differentiated, based on how they self-regulate. Our findings suggest that one factor mitigating the negative impact of psychological contract breach on proactive behaviors is employees’ regulation of corresponding

emotions. Specifically, when engaging in cognitive change, employees are less likely to experience feelings of breach and less inclined to diminish important proactive actions such as sharing knowledge with their colleagues and taking charge at work. In contrast, attentional deployment forms of emotion regulation will accentuate the detrimental effects of both social and generative forms of breach on proactive employee actions such as taking charge. Thus, our results present preliminary evidence—across two studies, two forms of proactive behavior, variations in measuring psychological contract breach, and two different countries—for the moderating effects of cognitive change and attentional deployment in the relationship between contract breach and proactive behaviors.

We found no relationships of attentional deployment with knowledge sharing, meaning that even though people may distract themselves from negative events in the workplace, they still share knowledge. Possibly because knowledge sharing has also a reactive component (Faraj & Sproull, 2000), employees engaged in high attentional deployment will still share knowledge when they are requested to do so by others. Furthermore, we did not find significant interactions of attentional deployment with contract breach in relation to violation and knowledge sharing (Study 1) and for the interaction of cognitive change with social breach in relation to taking charge (Study 2). This may be due to the severity of contract breach for the employment relationship, which may prompt employees to use distraction regardless of their preferred emotion regulation strategy, leading to attention deployment not to accentuate this relationship. Finally, cognitive change did not moderate the relationship of social breach with taking charge. It may be that social components, such as recognition and a challenging job, play a central role in the psychological contract (Turnley et al., 2003), such that breach of these components cannot be easily attenuated by emotion regulation. In line with research on psychological contract thresholds (Rigotti, 2009), breach of social obligations crosses a threshold and thus cannot be repaired through cognitive reframing. Conversely, generative components may refer to more discretionary forms of obligations and are easier to reframe.

Managerial Implications

If psychological contract breaches happen, it is useful for managers to know which employees are less likely to diminish proactive behaviors, such as knowledge sharing and taking charge, as a result. In general, subordinates who regulate their emotions through cognitive change experience lower feelings of

violations and do not diminish information shared with others. Likewise, they do not reduce the extent to which they pay attention to organizational inefficiencies and take charge to remedy them. Employees who engage in attentional deployment will diminish their taking charge when organizations do not uphold their side of the deal. Knowing employees' typical regulation strategies will be useful for managers and help them allocate resources, especially when psychological contract breach issues happen in the organization independent of their will and control.

However, as opposed to personality traits which are less malleable, emotion regulation strategies can be learned and modified, and employees have a choice whether to use one regulation strategy or another. Organizations can attempt to socialize or train employees to rely to a greater extent on cognitive antecedent-based forms of emotion regulation. For decreasing attentional deployment, encouraging employees to be authentic and engage in ongoing self-awareness may reduce utilization of these strategies (e.g., Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). Despite the existence of possible paths for intervention following breach, we emphasize however that knowing what buffers the negative consequences of psychological contract breach should not provide a license to engage in such breaches.

Limitations, Strengths, and Future Research

We note several limitations of our research. First, our study design is cross-sectional and therefore limits conclusions related to causality. We based our hypotheses, however, on psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1995) and existing research (Zhao et al., 2007). Longitudinal designs with a time lag between psychological contract breach measurement and assessment of the outcomes (e.g., Ng et al., 2010) could offer more credibility to the proposed relationships. Second, we used information reported by employees. Although interactions are less sensitive to data origination from one source (e.g., Evans, 1985), we used procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff and coauthors (2003) to decrease common method-related issues and relied on the Lindell and Whitney (2001) approach to determine to what extent common method variance is an issue in our data. Prior studies examining proactive behaviors used self-reported data (e.g., De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007; Parker et al., 2006). As noted by Parker and coauthors (2010), proactivity is not always welcomed by supervisors or colleagues and can be assessed negatively. Even though we have no reason to believe that common method design was a significant problem in our studies, we encourage future

studies where proactive behaviors are measured from a different source (e.g., coworkers or supervisors), if these respondents have the opportunity to observe the incumbents' work behaviors. Furthermore, the reliabilities of the emotion regulation measures were not optimal. One possibility to improve psychometric properties is to capture in greater detail *specific* aspects of emotion regulation, including forms of attentional deployment (e.g., concentration) and cognitive change (e.g., problem solving). Finally, our sample sizes are relatively small and response rates could be improved (especially in our first study). Thus, future research on larger samples may be necessary, especially to detect interactions.

The set of studies has several strengths. First, we relied on employees from two countries (the United States and the Netherlands). Corroborating results across different national and cultural settings is important, given differences in breach perceptions and their relationship to outcomes (Kickul, Lester, & Belgio, 2004; Rousseau & Schalk, 2000), and increases the generalizability of our findings. Second, we used different constructs indicative of proactive behaviors—knowledge sharing in Study 1 and taking charge in Study 2—to capture multiple criteria (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker & Collins, 2010). Finally, we investigated both unitary (Study 1) and multidimensional forms of psychological contract breach (i.e., generative and social; Study 2) to determine the extent to which finer grained conceptualizations of breach make a difference. Notwithstanding the positive aspects, several directions of research remain valuable.

Future Research

Due to the multidimensional nature of breach, employees' reactions to it, and the multiple components of affect regulation, other self-regulation aspects may be further integrated. Gross (1998) positioned *affect* regulation as superordinate to emotion regulation and to other forms of regulation (such as coping). It is thus possible to situate reactions to psychological contract breaches in this broader context of regulating affect. If so, other regulatory strategies, including mood repair and regulation (Morris & Reilly, 1987; Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999), coping strategies (Carver & Scheier, 1994; Carver, Scheier, & Kumari Weintraub, 1989), and even ego-defense mechanisms (Laughlin, 1970) can modulate breach influences and need more attention.

We also note that additional attention needs to be directed to the extent to which particular forms of breach trigger specific modes of emotion regulation, independent of how employees elect to self-regulate. For example,

cognitive reframing may be chosen for low-intensity breach regarding peripheral issues, while such a strategy might be overwhelmed for breaches with high intensity or on issues important to the employees. Conversely, temporary annoyances (e.g., unfair work arrangement of only temporary nature) may be dealt through attentional mechanisms, as opposed to permanent changes, more likely to trigger cognitive change. Thus, even though breach negatively influences outcomes for employees, sometimes certain emotion regulation strategies (such as attention deployment) may be beneficial for employees to retain well-being. More importantly, future research should investigate the role of emotion regulation for outcomes important to the employee rather than to the organization.

From another direction, we were not able to test for the role of emotion regulation in the duration and intensity of contract breaches. It is nevertheless possible for temporary breaches to be related to attentional deployment and for longer lasting breach—harming the employment relationship more severely—to have cognitive change as a more frequent strategy (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007). Overall, time-based approaches should be built in future models more explicitly (e.g., Duffy, Shaw, Hoobler, & Tepper, 2010). Alternative explanations of the results should also be investigated in future research. For instance, previous studies have shown that employees with a strong relationship with the organization react differently to breaches than those with poor relationships (Bal et al., 2010; Dulac et al., 2008). It might be that employees with strong relationships are more inclined to reappraise contract breach, such that the effects of breach are mitigated, whereas employees with poor relationships will engage in attentional deployment. Given that preferences to use specific regulation strategies as a function of employees' relationship with their organization may confound results, future research should explore this issue.³

In addition, as contract breaches may covary with obstruction from one's organization (Gibney, Zagencyk, & Masters, 2009), new research can examine the extent to which the effects of self-regulation expand to such organization-based impediments. Likewise, a closer integration between psychological contract theory and the bases of proactive behaviors may be attempted. Employees may downregulate behavioral responses (e.g., reduced citizenship) not just to organizational treatment but more so to *discrepancies* between what is promised and what is fulfilled (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Yet while discrepancies may diminish employees' citizenship, they may foster proactive behaviors (see posited *positive* connection between stressors and initiative; Parker et al., 2010). It is therefore plausible and worth investigating

under what circumstances (e.g., short periods of time; Ng et al., 2010) breach fuels proactivity, when does it degrade it, and what emotion regulation strategies modify the relationship.

Even though psychological contract is empirically distinct from employees' perceived inequity (Kickul, Lester, & Finkl, 2002) from a theory development standpoint, it is nevertheless worth considering conceptual similarities (Le, Schmidt, Harter, & Lauver, 2010) between breach and inequity (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Employees can thus experience inequity from both unfair distribution of outcomes and organizations not upholding their side of the deal. A fruitful area of investigation, then, is the extent to which emotion regulation strategies operate in a similar way when employees experience inequity from sources other than or due to causes different than breach, such as injustice (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Scott & Colquitt, 2007), abusive supervision (Wu & Hu, 2009), or lack of adequate social exchanges in the work context (Cardona, Lawrence, & Bentler, 2004; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Cole, Schaninger, & Harris, 2002; Ng & Sorensen, 2008).

Finally, the outcome space can be likewise enlarged. Although behaviors other than knowledge sharing can be considered closer to the overall concept of proactivity (Parker & Collins, 2010), employees share knowledge to enact impactful changes (Huber, 2004). As Grant and Ashford (2008) state, "proactivity is not limited to a unique set of actions, such as feedback-seeking or taking charge. Rather, proactivity is a process that can be applied to any set of actions through anticipating, planning, and striving to have an impact" (p. 9). Such observations can spark research on a broader set of proactive outcomes than the ones we examined in this study.

Conclusion

As argued by reviewers of the psychological contract literature, "while there is likely to be a great number of potential factors moderating employees' reactions to breach, only a few have been examined" (Conway & Briner, 2005, p. 79). From a host of possible moderators, we followed the need to examine the psychological contract and the "role it plays in influencing employees' emotions following a breach of contract" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 252). As our studies suggest, strategies used by employees to manage emotions may modify their resulting proactive behaviors. Future research is necessary to investigate other psychological factors mitigating the influence of breach as well as the extent to which the results obtained in these studies generalize to other behaviors, whether proactive, prosocial, or task related.

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Notes

1. We are aware of the conceptual differences among affect, mood, and emotions (Gross, 1998; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Yet psychological contract research has used the term emotions to encompass all of these (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Zhao et al., 2007), and consistent with the psychological contract literature, in this study, emotion is used to refer to affect, emotions, and moods.
2. We note nevertheless that, in addition to directing attention *away* from the stimulus (i.e., distraction), attentional deployment can also encompass actions directing attention *toward* it (e.g., concentration, rumination; Gross, 1998, p. 284). These latter forms are not examined in this study.
3. We thank anonymous reviewers for pointing out the possibility for these relationships.

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