Episode 156: Kevin Rose

**KL:** Katie Linder

**KR:** Kevin Rose

**KL:** You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode one hundred and fifty-six.

[Intro music]

# Segment 1:

**KL:** Welcome to “Research in Action,” a weekly podcast about topics and issues related to research in higher education featuring experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, research director at Oregon State University Ecampus, a national leader in online education. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Visit our website at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

On today's episode, I'm joined by Dr. Kevin Rose, an assistant professor of organizational leadership and learning at the University of Louisville. Before beginning his faculty role. He worked in various training and development areas including executive education and small business development. He is active in organizations such as the Academy of Human Resource Development and the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. His research focuses on understanding and improving the lives of people at work with emphasis on constructs such as organizational citizenship behaviors, leadership, and engagement.

Thanks so much for joining me on the podcast today, Kevin.

**KR:** Yeah, thank you so much. I'm honored to be here!

**KL:** So I am super excited to talk with you about some of your research on organizational citizenship. And first, why don’t we define that for our audience? When you talk about organizational citizenship, what do you mean?

**KR:** Sure. So the idea of organizational citizenship has been discussed in the literature for almost - maybe three or four decades now. Um and really it's - it's kind of simple when we think about it. It's a set of behaviors that we exhibit in the workplace that have kind of three common characteristics. The first is that these behaviors are discretionary, or what we call ‘extra rolls’. So they are behaviors that are not part of our job descriptions, they are outside of what we would normally consider our jobs. They're also positive behaviors, so things like helping and assisting others. And then lastly, they contribute to organizational success sort of in the aggregate. So when you take these behaviors as a whole, they are contributing in some way to a positive environment, to increased time on projects, uh completion to, you know, increase profit margins - that kind of stuff. So there's some sort of positive effect in the - in the overall sense.

**KL:** Okay. So I wonder if we can dive into some specific examples. What are some of the ways that you might see organizational citizenship in the workplace? What are some ways that people might be demonstrating this?

**KR:** So what we've seen through literature is that there's a couple ways of looking at OCBs: Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. One of the ways that I like to think about OCBs, is that they’re - they can be categorized into sort of two - into two categories based on the object of the behavior. So you can have behaviors that are directed towards individuals and you can have behaviors that are directed towards the organization. So to give you some specific examples, it might be like when you have a co-worker, for example, who has been on vacation or is going on vacation, and you have no kind of formal obligation to help this person out, but you just do because, you know that - you know when you're up to go on vacation, that you would like that for yourself, right? So, you help out. It could be behavior like speaking positively about the organization when you're not really required to do so, right? If that's not really part of your job, talking positively about - about your company or about your - your organization. Maybe attending organizational events that you don't really have to do – you don’t really have to be there but, - but you go to show your support. Something that is – has - was pretty common – um, when people saw sort of the downturn in the economy, organizations experienced kind of adverse environments, you know, they had to cut employees, or, you know, we weren't getting raises as frequently as we would like. And so in those adverse circumstances, you know, when you sort of said - employees would say, “Well, you know what? I know it's tough right now, but I'm ‘going to keep at it. I'm going to keep working hard.” That's also actually an example of citizenship kind of behavior.

**KL:** Okay, so I'm curious because I could see how this could overlap maybe with emotional labor that we might see in the workplace, and then it could be even a gender component. So I - for example, in my workplace in the past week, we had a pizza party because we moved buildings - and the people who planned the pizza party, you know, would that be a kind of like organizational citizenship behavior, where they're not necessarily required to do it, but it's something they're kind of taking on for the good of the group?

**KR:** That is a fabulous example. Yes, exactly. So - so yes, that's - it has a lot of overlaps with some other constructs that we talked about in the literature. So things like emotional labor, even employee engagement; it has some overlap with that. Discretionary behavior, pro-social behavior - All of these kinds of things that are positive that we don't have to do, but we do them anyway. All of those kinds of things are - are this idea of organizational citizenship. I'll give you a personal example. For me - you mentioned, you know, the planning of the pizza party - that's a wonderful example. Personally what I like to do - I like to… one of my hobbies is baking, and I love, I love to, you know, bake some cookies, or bake a cake, or do whatever and I just bring it in for my - my co-workers and we just share, and have a good time and talk, and obviously it's not anything that's part of my job. Sometimes I wish it were, but it's not. And, you know - so doing that is just - it just sort of builds camaraderie, it's - it's a positive behavior, it sort of creates this - this, you know, social cohesion, if you will. But yeah, it's exactly those kinds of behaviors that - that sort of add up to this this idea of organizational citizenship.

**KL:** So I'm curious, Kevin, if you have found any kind of gender dynamics or if there’s discussion of gender dynamics of how this works out. Our listeners know my background is in women and gender studies, and so I'm always kind of looking for things like this. But I would imagine that when it comes to emotional labor or organizational citizenship behavior, the people who might feel more compelled to do some of this labor would be women, potentially. I mean, is that something that's showing up in the literature or do you see any patterns there?

**KR:** Yeah, yeah, that's a great question. So there is a line of research that emerged probably in - the in the late 90’s and the early aughts, and it was this idea of compulsory citizenship behavior, where rather than feeling like these were voluntary behaviors people felt like, you know, “I feel like I have to do them.” It’s not necessarily required, but it's like “Well, there's a lot of pressure to do these things.” And so if we - when we look at the differences between men and women on these kinds of behaviors, we do find that typically women will exhibit these behaviors more often, and it's exactly to what you're talking about. It's this idea that, you know, maybe there's a little bit more pressure to do these things. Maybe, you know, those sort of - these antiquated notions of gender roles and - and you know, what we're supposed to be doing in the organization, and how we're supposed to be behaving in an organization are, you know - that there's a bleed over from that social aspect into the - into the workspace, and I think that has a lot to do with it. So yeah, I think you're right on point, that - that there is - there is that issue, and some women may feel like, you know, “I kind of have to do these things.” Maybe - maybe it goes from the space of, you know, a completely voluntary behavior to you know, “I feel a lot of pressure, like I have to do these things. I have to volunteer for committees. I have to kind of step up a little bit more than maybe my male colleagues - like they have to.”

**KL:** Mhm. Mhm. Well and we definitely see this too, I think, in faculty positions, and particularly faculty of color who may take on certain kinds of emotional labor than others. But I know you're talking about workplaces much broader than academia. This is certainly where we’re situated. I'm really curious about why this kind of component is important for the work place? You mentioned it kind of makes things run smoothly, it gives kind of a more positive culture. Are there other elements or benefits of organizational citizenship that, you know, are reasons why it should be nurtured? Yeah, so I think exactly like you said, I'll just reiterate that, that it - it's this idea that it improves cohesion, that it sort of it helps the machinery of the organization, and just moves a little bit more effectively. So if you think about the way in which we get things done, you know particularly these days we work in teams, multidisciplinary teams, cross-departmental teams. We're always working with people, right? Organizations are fundamentally a social - social construct, a social thing, right? It's many people coming together to get things done, and in order for that to happen, in order for that to happen effectively, it's not just about telling people, “Okay, this is your task and this is my task, and we will do these tasks independently, and we will do them exactly as prescribed on our job duties.” Rather, we know just intuitively that it makes sense to sometimes step outside of those job duties to get things done, and - and you know, if we think about sort of where this this idea of organizational citizenship is rooted, which is in the in the theory of social exchange that you know, I give a little bit to the relationship or to the organization and the relationship or the organization gives a little bit back to me, right? There's a there's a back and forth. There's a give and a take. And - and so it does help to get things done, right? So you think about any time you've needed to get something done a little bit more quickly, or to make a slight exception to a rule, or to just have help with something, you're more apt to get that sort of behavior if you have also given those kinds of behaviors in the past, right? So it is a little bit about this - this give and take, and I think that's what - that's what does help kind of organizations get - get the work done. It really is a really fascinating part of, you know, just doing work that's not really captured on a job description.

**KL:** Mhm. I love those examples. I'm curious to how companies or supervisors, what are the structures for maybe supporting effective organizational citizenship. You know, within our organization here, we actually have a committee that focuses on kind of like fun in the workplace, and planning events and things like that that people can voluntarily join. But I also could imagine there could be trainings around this or other kinds of - kind of - I think of companies that have like officers for culture, like Chief Culture Officers that are trying to kind of build this stuff up. What are some structures that you've seen that you think are effective?

**KR:** Yes. I've been asked this question quite a bit before, and I get this question a lot actually from managers who are like, “You know, I really like these kinds of behaviors, I lack what this idea is, this is a really cool thing that, you know - like if people are giving to the organization, that if they're giving to each other I will create this cohesion.” And so I get this question a lot from - from managers, from supervisors who are like, “How can I encourage these behaviors more?” And there's an interesting paradox here, and that is that organizational citizenship behavior, those specific behaviors - the definition is that these behaviors are discretionary, right? That they are voluntarily provided. So when I when I talk to managers about this, I'll often say the first thing to understand is that you cannot require these kinds of behaviors. You cannot in any way sort of compel people to go above and beyond, which is another way of framing this conversation - is going above and beyond. You can't compel people to do that. Once you do that, it is by definition not organizational citizenship, and it's just not going to work the same way. So again, connecting back to this idea of social exchange, my best advice to managers and leaders is really to create those positive cultures that engender this kind of behavior that - that provide a space for people to feel included, to feel welcome, to feel like they can bring their whole selves to work. These are not ideas that are new or unique to this idea of work citizenship. We - we talk about in the space of engagement, we talk about it in the space of organizational culture, we talk about it in the space of job satisfaction. All of these things are very much related. I think things like treating people fairly, being understanding of individual situations, and - and maybe most importantly for a leader or a manager is really leading by example. So if employees will see or can see that a manager or a supervisor also exhibits these behaviors that, you know, they - he or she will go above and beyond their job duties to get things done, I think it's a - it's a really good signal to employees that those kinds of behaviors are welcomed and encouraged in the - in the team or the organization.

**KL:** To what degree, Kevin, do you see organizations or companies rewarding these behaviors? So I think about like Kudos programs or, you know, ways that you can kind of thank a co-worker for doing something that maybe was above and beyond what their typical role was. Is that something that should be encouraged when you're trying to create a culture like this, or should people really be trying to do it for more intrinsic purposes?

**KR:** That's a really great question, and it kind of gets to this - this fundamental question about what a - what a citizenship behavior is in an organization. When the construct was first being researched many, many, many years ago, it was just sort of stated that, you know, these behaviors are unrewarded, right? They don't get rewarded formally, and - and you know, you don't get - you know, any sort of pay raise or citation on your annual review, or anything like that. It's just - you just do them because you feel like you want to give back to the organization. But over time what we found out through research, is that that's not exactly the case. What the literature tells us and what the research tells us is that really what reality is, is that these behaviors can actually be informally rewarded. So as you're as you're mentioning things like, you know, kudos messages, or you know, what we sort of used to call ‘attaboys’ and that sort of stuff - pats on the back and just, you know, thank yous and that sort of thing, actually go a long way to - to help these behaviors be manifested in the organization. But - but that's kind of the key point, is that once you start to formally reward and formally recognize these kinds of behaviors, it kind of transitions these behaviors from this idea of “I do this completely out of, you know, a voluntary mindset. I do this completely, you know, out of discretion - my own personal discretion” and it takes it into an area where maybe, “I'm getting rewarded for this, so maybe I should do more of this.” And it just kind of blurs that line between what isn't citizenship behavior and what is just you know, this is this is kind of becoming part of your job role. So it's a really interesting discussion that we have in the literature about where that line is between rewarding these behaviors, maybe formally or informally, and how they impact kind of this performance idea of employees.

**KL:** Alright. Well thank you, Kevin, for giving us kind of a more general overview of organizational citizenship. We're going to take a brief break. When we come back, we're going to hear a little bit more from Kevin about his research on military to civilian transitions. Back in a moment.

The “Research in Action” podcast discusses research in higher education that has a direct and immediate impact on faculty, staff, and students across the world, including topics that directly benefit student success. Here at my own institution, student success is a top priority and we all work toward that common goal. Oregon State University Ecampus student success counselors recently developed the dynamic Ecampus Learning Community, where all online students can receive robust support, with student success coaching throughout their academic journey, establish an academic support network, and build lasting connections with their peers around the world. More than 90% of students accepted the invitation when it launched, and it's been a resounding success. Tour the community yourself at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/elc.

# Segment 2:

**KL:** Kevin, I would love to hear a little bit more about your research on military to civilian transitions. What were you hoping to explore with this research?

**KR:** So this is a really important area of research for a few reasons. So we know that in recent years, about a quarter million service members transition from the military - from active duty military into the civilian workforce. So number one, that's a lot of people. Number two, these individuals who are coming out of the military are often highly trained, they’re highly credentialed, they are motivated, they are driven, and they make excellent employees for organizations, but one of the things that that we often know… So any of us who are familiar with - with, you know, military life or culture and civilian life or culture, is that there are some, or there can be some dramatic cultural differences between these two settings. So if we think about them from an organizational perspective, we know that in any organization, there are different organizational cultures and the military, and all branches of the military are different. They're very different from each other, they're very different from civilian organizations, and so we're interested in knowing specifically how military members were making sense of these transitions from, you know, maybe a long career in the military where culture was a bit different than a civilian workforce. Um how they - they made sense of that, how they, you know, coped with those changes, what they found challenging, what they found particularly positive, those kinds of things. So we approached it from that perspective, really trying to help, - kind of help bridge that gap between military and civilian to help, you know - help with some understanding their about what those transitions might be like for these individuals.

**KL:** Mhm. So I'm curious, you know, it sounds like there are so many different angles that you could have taken with this particular research, but I know that at least some of your work has really focused on at the organizational citizenship piece in particular. What was it that made this a particularly good fit to kind of explore that phenomenon, and are there other areas that you're kind of digging into more specifically to help with that, like you said, that transition between the two cultures?

**KR:** Yeah. So let me - let me provide a little bit of contextual detail for that. So in what we looked at in particular with this study and with maybe of a couple of others, is that we specifically looked at army transition, so I don't want to necessarily make these broad generalizations to all - all branches of the military. And the reason we focused on army, was because in the army, they have some governing values, just like any organization would, but they have seven governing values. And one of those is what they call ‘selfless service’, and I'm just going to quote what the army says about selfless service. They - one of the ways they describe it is quote, “The basic building block of all selfless service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort.” So to me, when I when we saw that, we thought well that as a value of the organization is almost just like organizational citizenship. It's almost the same idea. And so we saw this really interesting parallel between what we've been studying in, you know, more traditional organizational settings, organizational citizenship, and this idea that the army has of selfless service, they were very parallel kinds of ideas. As a matter of fact, if you look at some of the early literature on organizational citizenship, it's actually often referred to as ‘the good soldier syndrome.’ And so there's these really interesting parallels and intersections between these two ideas in these to work forces. So that was one of the - kind of one of the main reasons we wanted to talk about that, is that, you know, there's this idea in the army that it's - it's kind of part of your job, or it's sort of expected, or it's sort of in this culture -baked into this culture that the members of the army they go above and beyond. That's just kind of what they do and who they are. And so, you know, we thought, “Well sense that's not always part of what a civilian organizational culture might look like, how do these individuals make sense of this and how are they sort of wrestling with these differences, specifically with that idea?

**KL:** Okay, that sounds fascinating. I’d love to hear a little bit more about your design. How did you design the study or the studies that you've been working with around these questions, and what is some of the data that you're looking at to collect?

**KR:** So this was a qualitative study largely, so we interviewed soldiers who had transitioned - at the time of the study, it was within the previous five years - uh had transition from the army into a civilian workforce. So they sort of had that experience, and that experience for them transitioning was more or less fresh in their minds, right? So we didn't necessarily want to include folks who maybe had transitioned awhile back. So we tried to include people who were - or we looked for people who were kind of, you know, had that that sort of fresh experience with that transition. And so we did interviews with them and some follow-up interviews to just kind of understand what, you know, what they thought about this transition and how they made sense specifically of that idea of selfless service or organizational citizenship. So we talked to them about that idea specifically, but then other things came up, of course. So, you know, they talked about different cultural ideas, they talked about even things as interesting as, you know, “where do I sit in a meeting?” because that's an important cultural artifact in the army. You know, “how do I how do I identify my - my higher-ups?” How do I know that, you know, so and so is a boss, or a manager, or director? How do I know that?” Because in the army, you can tell just by looking at someone - what's on their uniform, you know “Well, they have a higher rank than I do.” So, you know, all these sort of cultural differences sort of came to the - to the fore as well, and it was interesting to hear about some of those things and how they how they made sense of those differences.

**KL:** So when you go into a project like this, I'm curious if you're thinking about the ultimate outcomes, dissemination, the audience, in terms of are you wanting to give this information to people who are taking on people who are coming out of the military as employees so they can better understand the culture that they're coming out of? Or are you thinking more about the military personnel who are transitioning and trying to give them kind of a heads-up of the things that they would experience, or both? You know, like what are the kinds of outcomes you're hoping from a study like this, in terms of who you're helping with those transitions?

**KR:** I would say that it - that it's both, but largely I would say that our audience would be - for this study in for some of the other work that we've done here, would largely have been civilian employers. So - so we sort of targeted our - our outlet or our findings for these studies to folks who would be hiring former military members, and trying to give them the tools, and tips, and tricks, and strategies on how to best recruit on board to retain military members and how to - how to, you know, really help them become maybe more acclimated to a civilian workforce. The army does an incredible job already of helping soldiers transition out of the army, so they have a lot of support resources ranging from things as simple as how do you create a resume - how do you create a civilian resume because it looks much different than a military resume, how do you fit a resume, how do you talk to an employer, how do you understand what the culture looks like? So they have a transition program and transition processes for soldiers, but often we don't have those same kinds of transition or onboarding programs in organizations, particularly in smaller organizations. Some larger organizations do have those kinds of mechanisms, you know, they - they have onboarding programs, they have mentor programs, they have other kinds of tools that they can use to really target and help civilian members - I'm sorry, military members transition into the civilian workforce. But - so we wanted to sort of bolster what was - what was being done on the civilian side, more so than on the military side.

**KL:** Okay, so I'm really curious about some of your findings from this research. What are some of the things that came out of this that you think are helpful for those particular audiences to know?

**KR:**  Yeah. So it all stems back to this idea that I talked about just a little bit earlier, which was there's an interesting parallel between this idea of organizational citizenship and this idea of selfless service. And again, this was rooted in the context of the army, so in other military context this may not be exactly the case. But some of our findings showed that - for example, military members sort of have this idea of going above and beyond, as I said earlier - kind of baked into what they do on a day-to-day basis. So it's nothing to them to think that they need to kind of go outside of their prescribed job duties to help somebody or to you know to do a little bit of extra effort for the team or for the organization. They often don't even question those things. They do them because it's kind of – in one sense it's kind of become part of their job. So when they transition into civilian into a civilian workforce, some of the folks that we talked to indicated that they find that that's not the case in a civilian workforce. They told us things like, “It seemed to be that civilian employees are a little bit more after themselves, maybe a little bit more selfish, maybe a little bit less willing to - to go above and beyond voluntarily” and so they struggled with those things. They struggled with, you know, why – “Why doesn't my supervisor always have my back? Why doesn’t my coworker, you know pitch in when needed? Why aren't these things happening?” Because for them, not always, but for them, many times those are just assumed. People just do those kinds of things in the - in the army, because that's their culture, that's what they're asked to do. And so it was this interesting way of looking at these behaviors from a, kind of a compulsory standpoint; we do these things, this is important to us. Versus a non-compulsory standpoint; it's completely voluntary. If you don't do them, oh, well! You know, it's not part of your job. So you're not going to get in trouble if you don't do these things. And so that's what they struggled with most, is how do they make sense of that? And how do they - how do they sort of protect themselves in some way from being the person who's always been asked to do extra and always being asked to, you know, to sort of pitch in a little bit more?

**KL:** So I'm really curious, Kevin, how this applies to environments like academia where, especially pre-tenure folks may be very concerned with things like collegiality, which can be hard to measure, but often gets weighed in with a tenure decision. And also there are, you know, service obligations and things like that - that are in tension with, oftentimes time for writing or time for, you know, other obligations related to tenure. And while I know this is not part of your study, you know, I'm wondering if you see other applications outside of some of these environments to - how do you make some of these judgment calls around when you should kind of give a little bit more and when you should be maybe protecting your time for something else, because it's it is part of your job or is more of a requirement than some of these organizational citizenship pieces.

**KR:** I love that you asked that question. So I've been working in higher education for - gosh. I don't even know how long now, but I've been - I was working in my entire education previously as staff, I've now been working in higher education as faculty. So I've kind of seen seeing a lot of experience in higher education and there have actually been some interesting studies on this idea of organizational citizenship in academia and for faculty, so I'm so glad you asked that question. What the studies have found is that for pre-tenured faculty and for academics at large that often time these discretionary behaviors can be harmful to a career, particularly as you mentioned, with pre-tenure faculty. If a faculty member really should be focusing and - and reserving that time for writing or for teaching - whatever situation they may be in, these behaviors can - can detract from some of that if it's not managed well. That’s - that's - I think it's sometimes unique to academia, because of the tenure process, because as a promotion process. Because you know, a tenure committee, whether they're looking at teaching, or looking at research, or both, they may not always have a tangible way of measuring, you know, “Kevin is just a good guy and we like him, and he brings in nice cookies every once in a while.” You know, that doesn't really matter in a lot of ways to - to my promotion case, and so - so yeah. In a lot of ways these kinds of behaviors have to be measured, they have to be done. You know, you have to you have to protect your time I think is what that boils down to and -and it's an interesting. It's an interesting difference that - that perhaps academics have then say maybe corporate employees. That, you know - in the corporate world, you know promotions maybe happen a little bit more easily, there's not such a rigid process. You know, raises can happen maybe a little bit more - more frequently or there's more flexibility there, so these behaviors kind of get weighed in to what a supervisor thinks. You know, should - you know - why we should promote a person. And so yeah, I think it's a really good point that these kinds of behaviors are really contextual. We talked about three different places, three different context in which these behaviors are manifested differently. The military civilian workforce and even academic workforce, they’re different in these - in these different cases, they have different outcomes, they have different - we have different reasons for doing them in all three contexts.

**KL:** Well, Kevin, this has been a fascinating view of organizational citizenship research. Thank you so much for your time, and for coming on the show and sharing about your work.

**KR:** Thank you so much. I appreciate being here.

**KL:** Thanks also to our listeners for joining us for this week's episode of “Research in Action.” I'm Katie Linder, and we'll be back next week with a new episode.

Show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses, can be found at the show’s website at [ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast](http://www.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast).

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# Bonus Clip:

**KL:** In this bonus clip for episode 156 of the “Research in Action” podcast, Dr. Kevin Rose shares what's next for him and his research pipeline. Take a listen.

Kevin, what is next for you in your research pipeline? What's feeling really exciting for you right now?

**KR:** So one of the areas that I am super excited to start looking at is this idea of friendship at work. So, you know, related to this idea of citizenship and how we know that - that organizational citizenship is sort of the product of the social environment of an organization, you know, we also know intuitively that we - we have friends at work, we like to see our co-workers sometimes, you know, sometimes we develop really long lasting bonds from, you know - from the co-workers that we - that we have. And so that's something that I'm super, super excited about it. I think for me personally, it's - so one of my best friends -Actually, maybe three of my best friends are - I have met because of work, because of the jobs that I have been doing. And these are previous jobs, current jobs, but you know, we all kind of we build our social networks maybe at work that - that happens. But I'm interested in this idea of friendship and how we - how we build those friendships at work, how it helps our work, how it maybe detracts from work, maybe it makes us more satisfied with our jobs, maybe it takes away from that. I'm not really sure. I think there's a lot that we could ask there about - about this idea of these - these really strong bonds that we can form with individuals at work.

**KL:** That sounds really exciting. Thanks so much for sharing about that.

**KR:** Absolutely. Thank you!

**KL:** You've just heard a bonus clip from episode 156 of the “Research in Action” podcast with Dr. Kevin Rose, sharing what's next for him and his research pipeline. Thanks for listening.