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Job Creep: A Reactance Theory Perspective on Organizational Citizenship Behavior as Overfulfillment of Obligations

LINN VAN DYNE AND JENNIFER BUTLER ELLIS

9.1 A reactance theory perspective on OCB as overfulfillment

"Doing more with less" characterizes many employee jobs and employment relationships in most organizations these days. This is because competitive pressures have triggered downsizing, reorganization, flattened hierarchies, and layoffs (Cappelli et al. 1997; Rousseau 1997). Large numbers of employees have lost their jobs and many fear the possibility of future cutbacks (Brockner et al. 1986). Accordingly, employees often feel they must protect their employment status by making sure that their contributions to the organization exceed their obligations. Overfulfillment of contributions such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) signals commitment and loyalty—causing employees to believe or hope that they are enhancing their job security. When employees feel ongoing pressure to do more than the requirements of their jobs, we refer to this as "job creep." We define job creep as the slow and subtle expansion of employee job duties that is not officially recognized by the organization. Job creep changes the fundamental nature of the employment relationship by causing supervisors and work group peers to assume that a specific employee will take responsibility for certain tasks or activities, even though this is not part of the job and even though they get no formal tangible or intangible recognition.

In this chapter, we develop a theoretical model based on reactance theory (Brehm 1966; Brehm and Brehm 1981) that predicts consequences of job creep for employees and their work group peers (see Figure. 9.1). This conceptual approach complements existing work on employment relationships and psychological contracts because fulfillment of obligations is a critical indicator of the quality of employment relationships. For example, the expanding literature on psychological contracts (Rousseau 1989, 1990, 1995) conceptualizes employment as based on two-way exchanges where employees and organizations have mutual obligations.

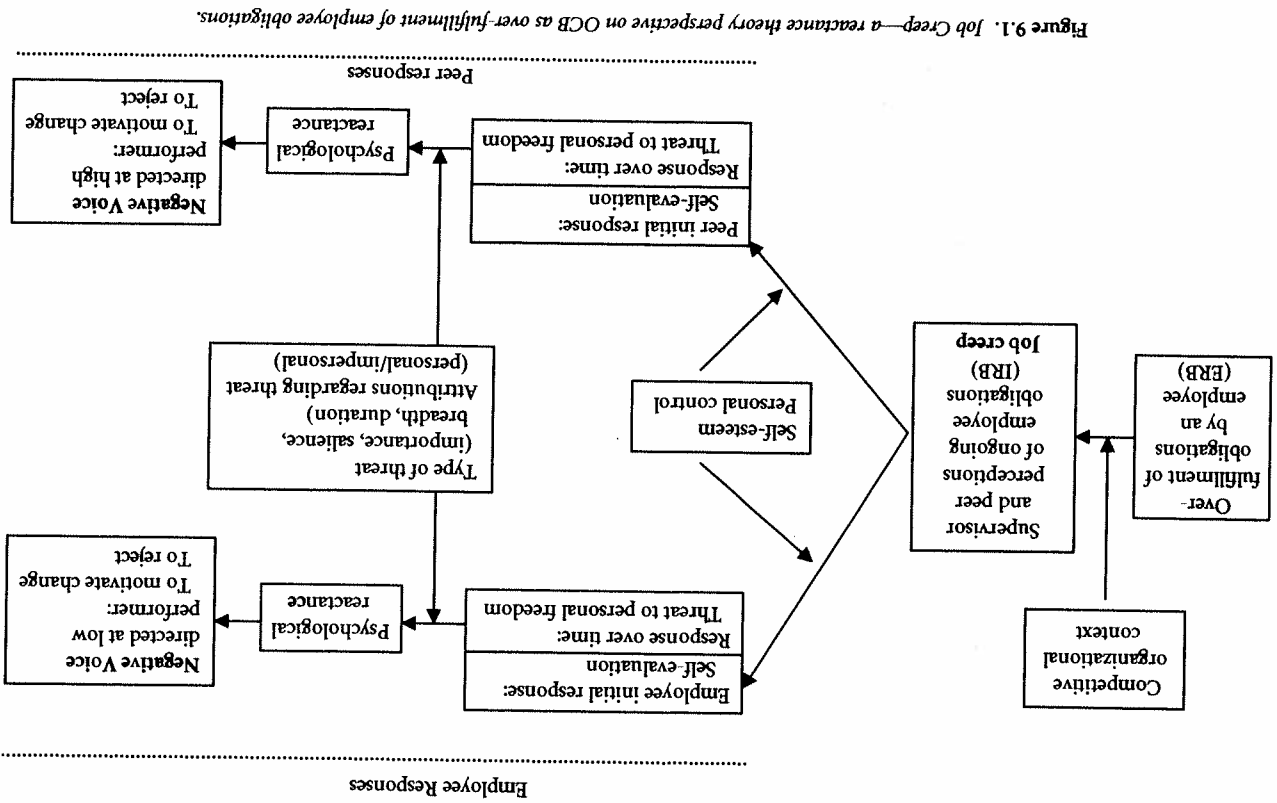
THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP: EXAMINING
PSYCHOLOGICAL + CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Consistent with this emphasis on mutual obligations, the OCB literature draws on social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Blau 1964) to predict and explain the positive relationship of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and fair treatment with citizenship (Organ 1988). Thus, a series of reciprocal exchanges characterizes ongoing employment where both employees and organizations expect to have their contributions recognized and reciprocated. In this chapter, we focus on situations where employees feel that the norm of reciprocity is not applied. Sometimes managers may not notice employee OCB. Furthermore, managers may not view OCB as overfulfillment of obligations. Alternatively, managers may be constrained (budget constraints, promotion freezes, downsizing that requires everyone to do more with less) and unable to provide tangible or intangible recognition to employees. Finally, in some cases, managers may intentionally fail to recognize OCB, knowing that there are few job alternatives in the external labor market. In each of these examples, employees perceive that they overfulfill their obligations to the organization. They also perceive that the organization does not respond according to the norm of reciprocity, and thus they experience job creep. In sum, the model in this chapter focuses on situations where employees perceive that the employer is violating the norm of reciprocity.

To date, the majority of research on psychological contracts has focused on employee perceptions that the employer has violated the psychological contract (Robinson et al. 1994; Morrison and Robinson 1997; Robinson and Morrison 2000; Bunderson 2001; Thompson and Bunderson 2003). Violation occurs when employees believe that employers have not fulfilled their obligations. This is an important stream of research because it demonstrates that lower satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship, and intention to remain in the organization typically follow perceived violation of obligations (Robinson and Rousseau 1994; Robinson 1996; Turnley and Feldman 1999a). More recently, scholars have expanded their thinking about psychological contracts and employment relationships. For example, Coyle-Shapiro (2002) and Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002) emphasized the two-way nature of employment relationships and the benefits of considering more than just the employee's perspective. This could include the employer's perspective, as well as the perspective of work group peers. Other recent approaches have begun to consider the effects of fulfillment (Turnley et al. 2003), discrepancies and excess in inducements and contributions (Turnley and Feldman 1999b; Lambert et al. 2002), escalating citizenship (Bolino and Turnley 2002), and acts of positive deviance (Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2003). These new approaches are promising and consistent with our model of job creep.

In this chapter, we have three objectives generally aimed at advancing research on employment relationships. First, responding to contemporary pressures on employment relationships, we introduce the concept of job creep which we define as the slow and subtle expansion of employee job duties such that extra-role behavior (ERB) becomes viewed as in-role behavior (IRB) and employees feel ongoing pressure to do more than the official requirements of their jobs. Based on changes in perceived obligations, we propose that job creep changes the fundamental nature of



the employment relationship. Second, we draw on reactance theory to develop an initial theoretical framework that predicts the consequences of job creep for employees and their work group peers. Third, we differentiate two types of negative voice and predict that job creep can lead to negative voice when employees try to regain a sense that their overfulfillment does not represent obligations but instead is discretionary behavior.

In this research, we integrate concepts from the literatures on psychological contracts, organizational citizenship, and reactance theory. Thus, this framework is distinctive based on this specific theoretical integration. In addition, two aspects of our approach to the employment relationship differ from that of most prior research. First, most psychological contract research has focused on underfulfillment of obligations (i.e. violation and breach) and emphasizes a negative discrepancy. In contrast, we focus on overfulfillment of obligations (excess contributions) and emphasize a positive discrepancy (Ellis 2001; Lambert et al. 2002). Second, prior research has primarily emphasized the employee perspective and has only recently considered multiple perspectives on employment relationships (Lester et al. 2002). In our research, we include both actor (employee) and observer (peer) perspectives. Thus, we explicitly acknowledge that employment relationships occur within a system of relationships where the behavior of one employee has spillover effects on others in the work group (Howard 1995). In sum, combining past research with our framework should help scholars advance our understanding of employment relationships because fulfillment can be equal to, more than, or less than obligations, and because employment relationships occur in a complex system of relationships involving individual employees and their work group peers.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. We start by describing job creep in more detail and link it to existing literature on psychological contracts and extra-role behavior. We then draw on reactance theory to develop our initial model of employee reactions to job creep. The model includes specific propositions describing how job creep influences employee self-evaluations, leading to employee reactance and negative voice based on employee efforts to regain a sense that excess contributions are indeed discretionary rather than obligations. We then shift our focus from the employee to the work group peers and describe similar reactance processes for the peers that again lead to negative voice. We conclude by discussing theoretical and practical implications, making recommendations for future research.

9.1.1 Job creep

Job creep is the gradual and informal expansion of role responsibilities where discretionary contributions (such as OCB) become viewed as in-role obligations by supervisors and peers. Drawing on the social cognition literature, we suggest that job creep is influenced by the persistence of expectations and people's tendency to expect past behavior to continue in the future (Anderson 1955; Ross et al. 1975). In other words, if an employee repeatedly exceeds role obligations, observers such as supervisors and work group peers develop schemas that this behavior will persist.

Accordingly, observers expect the overfulfillment to continue. These heightened expectations for contributions represent job creep because they are not formally recognized or rewarded. Instead, employees experience ongoing pressure to make contributions that exceed their formal role obligations. In sum, job creep blurs the boundary between ERB and IRB.

The large literature on OCB (Organ 1988) is relevant to job creep because it shows that employees often make contributions to their organizations that are not explicitly specified as job requirements (Podsakoff et al. 2000; LePine et al. 2002). For example, some employees fulfill work obligations at exceptionally high levels (unusually high conscientiousness), assist co-workers with heavy work loads (helping), and speak up to make suggestions for change (voice). Research demonstrates three primary reasons why employees engage in OCB. First, employees may be reciprocating positive inducements they have received from the organization (Organ 1988). Second, they may be fulfilling their own needs (such as concern for others or prosocial values) (McNeely and Meglino 1994; Rioux and Penner 2001). Third, they may be engaging in impression management to conform to group norms or to enhance their own self-interest (Bolino 1999). Regardless of motive or combination of motives, none of these behaviors are included explicitly in job descriptions. They require judgment and initiative because they cannot be specified in advance and they are not explicitly rewarded (Van Dyne et al. 1995). Sometimes referred to as discretionary behaviors, organizational citizenship is increasingly important to organizations because contemporary approaches to management such as work teams and empowerment emphasize the benefits of proactive employee behavior and initiative (Farr and Ford 1990; Spreitzer, 1996; Morrison and Phelps 1999; Seibert et al. 2001; Campbell 2000; Crant 2000).

Several other literatures beyond the domain of OCB also provide insights that are relevant to our focus on job creep. Here, we focus on other types of proactive employee efforts to influence the nature of their jobs and the role boundaries of these jobs. One of the earliest literatures to address this issue is Katz and Kahn's (1966, 1978) work on spontaneous role behavior. Graen (1976) described employee role-making (i.e. efforts to modify job scope to fit personal idiosyncratic preferences) and West (1987) studied role innovation at work. More recently, Frese and colleagues have described the concept of initiative (Frese et al. 1996; Frese and Fay 2001). Finally, a recent theoretical framework described job crafting as the process employees use to change job boundaries to reconceptualize their jobs in ways that are personally meaningful (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001).

Also important to the idea of job creep is the literature on role boundaries. An interesting set of papers in the OCB literature addresses the issue of role obligations and OCB. For example, researchers have demonstrated that employees and supervisors often have different views about what is a role obligation and what is discretionary behavior (Morrison 1994; Lam et al. 1999). Van Dyne et al. (1995) developed three conceptual explanations for why role perceptions can vary: (a) across persons (actors and observers); (b) across contexts; and (c) across time. In addition, Parker et al. (1997), Parker (1998), and Welbourne et al. (1998) have argued

that organizations often deliberately encourage employees to expand their role conceptualizations proactively. When this occurs, employees take initiative to do more than what has been traditionally specified in their job descriptions. Overall, these arguments are consistent with Tepper et al.'s (2001) results demonstrating higher frequency of behaviors construed by employees as IRB.

Overall, we view our work on job creep as complementary to these other approaches and suggest that the combined consideration of OCB, ERB, spontaneous behavior, role-making, job crafting, and job creep will further enrich our understanding of employee initiative and employment relationships. At the same time, we emphasize that job creep is not the same as these proactive behaviors. Instead, we propose that job creep is a consequence of these behaviors—job creep occurs when employees overfulfill obligations and perceive that the organization does not respond based on the norm of reciprocity. Several examples may help to clarify the difference between job creep and OCB. Although there is evidence that OCB is sometimes viewed as IRB by employees (see e.g. Morrison 1994), Podsakoff et al. (2000) concluded (based on their in-depth review of the literature) that OCB is generally viewed as non-required or volitional behavior that is not specified in advance. Examples of OCB include helping co-workers with heavy workloads, staying late to finish a special report, and making suggestions that might improve work processes. In each case, OCB emphasizes employee judgment and choice. Thus, the behaviors are typically viewed as discretionary.

In contrast, examples of job creep would include the following. Job creep could occur when supervisors encourage employees to help co-workers who are behind in their work on an ongoing basis, but provide no extra tangible or intangible recognition (violating the norm of reciprocity). For example, although helping might not be formally written into a job description, supervisors can use a variety of techniques (such as direct commands, threats, persuasion, requests, and peer pressure) to reinforce expanded role responsibilities. When employees feel ongoing pressure to help those with heavy workloads, what was originally a volitional or discretionary behavior becomes transformed into an obligation. Similarly, if one employee develops a reputation for speaking up and making constructive suggestions for change, work-group peers could develop the habit of waiting for this person to take the initiative and suggest solutions to problems. In each of these cases, pressure from supervisors and peers reduces the employee's sense that the behavior is volitional. Instead, ongoing overfulfillment becomes expected behavior, part of the job, and an employee obligation. In sum, we propose that ERB can become transformed into IRB, resulting in informal expansion of job responsibilities and increased employee obligations.

Proposition 1 *Overfulfillment of obligations by an employee (e.g. OCB) leads to job creep (higher supervisor and peer perceptions of employee obligations).*

9.1.2 Context

We do not, however, propose that ERB will always be transformed into IRB. Instead, consistent with our emphasis on contemporary trends in organizations and in

employment relationships (Rousseau 1997), we acknowledge the important role of context (Cappelli and Sherer 1991). Although scholars have recommended increased attention to the role of context for many years (Mowday and Sutton 1993), it is only recently that context has become a key consideration in theory development (Johns 2001; Rousseau and Fried 2001). In our model, we propose that context is a critical consideration because job creep will be more likely to occur when external factors increase competitive pressures (Cappelli 1997).

For example, when pressure to improve performance causes an organization to downsize and reorganize, the remaining employees typically must pick up additional responsibilities. Similarly, in a weak economy where employees have relatively few alternative job opportunities, two simultaneous processes may increase the likelihood that discretionary behavior will be transformed into role obligations. First, when employees have few job options, they have less bargaining power and organizations may expect more from these employees (Hulin et al. 1985). At the same time, a weak economy with few job alternatives may induce employees to overfulfill their obligations as an attempt to increase job security. In other words, these two forces combine to increase the probability of job creep, based on context. Thus, we propose that the competitive nature of the external organizational context will moderate the relationship we have proposed in Proposition 1 such that job creep (transformation of ERB into IRB) will be more likely when organizations are under severe competitive pressure to cut costs, improve products and services, and increase profits.

Proposition 2 *Transformation of ERB into IRB will be more likely when organizations are under heavy competitive pressure.*

9.2 An initial model of employee reactions to job creep

In this section of the chapter, we develop propositions for the consequences of job creep for employees and for their work group peers. Drawing on reactance theory, we propose that social comparison of self with others (in this case with work group peers) will cause those who overfulfill their obligations to experience psychological reactance. When discretionary behavior becomes viewed as a role obligation, reactance theory predicts that employees will take action to regain their sense of personal freedom (Wicklund 1974; Brehm and Brehm 1981). In considering behavioral responses to psychological reactance, we introduce the concept of negative voice. Negative voice (such as complaints and criticism) occurs when reactance causes those who experience job creep to speak up in an effort to regain a sense of personal control. For example, the employee might use voice directly to motivate peers who do not engage in overfulfillment to improve their performance (LePine and Van Dyne 2001a). Alternatively, the employee might use voice indirectly to criticize, reject, or ostracize peers who do not overfulfill their obligations. In each of these cases, the employee is using voice to transform IRB back into ERB.

We propose a similar reactance process for work group peers who observe a colleague overfulfill obligations. To work group peers, the employee who overfulfills

obligations represents a threat to personal freedom because the peers may experience pressure to change their own performance and also start to overfulfill their contributions. This is consistent with the logic proposed by Bolino and Turnley (2002) in their discussion of escalating citizenship behavior. Consistent with reactance theory, our model predicts that peers will also engage in negative voice. This could include voice intended to motivate the high performing co-worker to reduce contributions so that the discrepancy no longer exists. It also could include voice directed at rejecting or ostracizing the employee who has overfulfilled the obligations.

9.2.1 Employee reactions to job creep

When job creep occurs, employees may initially feel pleased that others entrust them with additional responsibilities. Expanded job scope can imply competence and capability, leading to positive self-evaluation. When supervisors and/or peers act through an employee has additional, ongoing responsibilities, social comparison processes should cause a sense of pride and superiority, leading to self-enhancement (Gecas 1982; Brewer and Weber 1994; Mussweiler and Bodenhausen 2002). This would be consistent with the Lake Wobegon effect that suggests most people judge themselves as "better than average" (Zuckerman and Jost 2001). Thus, we propose that when job creep occurs, similarities and differences between co-workers become increasingly salient. For example, if supervisors act as though some employees have greater obligations than others, the employee who has been overfulfilling obligations may feel exceptional and deserving of special treatment.

Furthermore, the desire to appear "better than average" often leads employees to make self-serving comparisons (Taylor and Brown 1988; Dunning et al. 1989; Zuckerman and Jost 2001) that yield personal psychological benefits. In the case of job creep, employees who overfulfill obligations will experience self-enhancement by comparing themselves to work group peers. This increases self-worth and indicates their centrality and importance in organizational networks (Krackhardt, 1987). In sum, those who overfulfill obligations will experience self-enhancement.

Proposition 3a *Higher supervisor and peer perceptions of an employee's ongoing obligations will lead initially to positive self-evaluation by that employee.*

Although we have predicted that initial reactions to job creep will be positive for employees who overfulfill obligations, we now need to qualify the time frame for this prediction. Here, we propose that if employees feel ongoing pressure to work longer hours or if they feel others always expect them to assume responsibility for unexpected projects, their initial positive feelings of self-enhancement will weaken over time and be replaced by a sense of threat to personal freedom. Freedom is the belief that an individual can choose to participate in a specific behavior (Brehm and Brehm 1981: 35). When job creep occurs, employees lose the feeling that their behavior is optional and in addition, they receive no raise or promotion. Instead, they feel obligated to make specific contributions and no longer have freedom of choice.

When employees feel that they must regularly perform additional responsibilities (but without formal recognition), their behavior is not discretionary. In addition, overfulfillment can be personally costly. For example, regularly working longer hours reduces time available for family and personal interests. Trying to "do more with less" all the time is stressful. In contrast, if an employee chooses occasionally to stay late or take on an extra project, this is discretionary behavior that enhances self-evaluation. When contributions that were initially intended as discretionary become an unofficial but ongoing part of the role, the employee's freedom is restricted. In sum, we predict that job creep (the informal but ongoing expansion of role obligations) represents a personal threat to employee discretion, judgment, and freedom.

Proposition 3b *Over time, higher supervisor and peer perceptions of an employee's ongoing obligations will threaten that employee's sense of personal freedom.*

Reactance theory emphasizes the important moderating role of individual differences in strengthening or weakening the intensity of threat to personal freedom. For example, Brehm and Brehm (1981) theorized that internal locus of control, type A personality, and self-consciousness would accentuate the effect of threat to personal freedom. Although empirical results for type A and self-consciousness are inconsistent, results for internal locus of control are strong. For example, Chertulnik and Citrin (1974) demonstrated stronger reactance for those with internal locus of control.

Extending prior research and theory, we focus on the more contemporary concept of self-esteem as a key individual difference that most likely influences reactance processes. This is because our focus is employee behavior in organizations and because research demonstrates that self-esteem moderates employee reactions and behavior at work (Brockner 1988). Self-esteem is an individual's degree of positive self-worth (Coopersmith 1981). It indicates the degree to which individuals believe they are capable, significant, successful, and worthy. Those with high self-esteem exhibit more initiative and assertiveness than those with low self-esteem (Crandall 1973). They also conform less (Wells and Marwell 1976). Applying this to our model suggests that job creep (the unofficial expansion of perceived role obligations) will represent a greater threat to personal freedom for those with high self-esteem than for those with low self-esteem.

A second individual difference that is relevant to employee attitudes and behaviors at work is personal control (Greenberger and Strasser 1986; Greenberger et al. 1989). Personal control is an individual's cognitive beliefs about ability to influence the environment. Unlike locus of control (Rotter 1966), however, personal control is not a stable individual difference. Instead, personal control beliefs can change over time. Past research in work organizations has demonstrated that personal control triggers cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. In general, those with higher personal control are more proactive in their responses to the environment and in their attempts to influence their environment (Greenberger et al. 1988; Greenberger et al. 1989).

Recognizing the emphasis placed by Brehm and Brehm (1981) on the role of individual differences in the reactance process, we combine the above two paragraphs to

predict that self-esteem and personal control will moderate the relationship between job creep and threat to personal freedom. We expect that job creep will be more threatening to the personal freedom of those with high self-esteem and to those with high personal control (compared to low self-esteem and low personal control). Thus, the relationship between job creep and threat to personal freedom will be stronger for those with high self-esteem (than those with low self-esteem). It also will be stronger for those with high personal control (than those low in personal control).

Proposition 4 *Self-esteem and personal control will moderate the relationship between job creep and threat to personal freedom, such that the link will be stronger for employees with high self-esteem and high personal control.*

9.2.2 Psychological reactance

According to Brehm and Brehm (1981), threat to personal freedom triggers reactance. Psychological reactance is an internal, psychological state that includes self-perceptions as well as subjective beliefs about personal abrogation of freedom. Reactance is a motivational state that can be intense and can represent strong urges. Furthermore, reactance is not a generic reaction to loss of freedom and is not a diffuse emotional state. Instead, "the direct manifestation of reactance is behavior directed toward restoring the freedom in question" (Brehm and Brehm 1981: 4).

In our case, employees who overfulfill obligations undoubtedly start out feeling that their behavior is volitional. If job creep occurs, however, the scope of the job is informally expanded and what was discretionary becomes an obligation. Over time, these unrecognized obligations may cause the employee to feel overwhelmed, exhausted, frustrated, cynical, and angry (Maslach and Leiter 1999) because their personal freedom is reduced. When people expect to control or influence an outcome and then feel that they have lost this freedom, reactance occurs such that larger perceived losses increase reactance (Brehm and Brehm 1981). In applying this to our model, we suggest that the greater the loss of perceived freedom associated with unofficial job creep, the stronger the reactance feelings of injustice, frustration, anger, and hostility (Miller 2001). If employees perceive little threat to their freedom, there will be little psychological reactance. On the other hand, if employees perceive significant threat to their independence, psychological reactance will be stronger.

Proposition 5 *The larger the perceived threat to personal freedom, the stronger the employee's psychological reactance.*

Other characteristics of the threat (beyond magnitude) also influence the intensity of reactance. For example, reactance theory research has demonstrated that type of threat and attributions about the threat intensify the level of reactance. We discuss each below.

Reactance theory stresses four specific attributes of threat to personal freedom that accentuate the effects of threat on psychological reactance: importance, salience,

breadth, and duration. If an individual views a threat as personally relevant, the link between threat and reactance will be stronger. If job creep focuses on an area of work that is related to an employee's identity or core values (importance), this will strengthen the effect of the magnitude of the threat on reactance. For example, the more value an employee places on freedom to choose whether or not to engage in ERB, the stronger the reactance when ERB is transformed into IRB.

Threats also vary in terms of their visibility (salience), scope (breadth), and time horizon (duration). Each of these, according to reactance research, will strengthen the relationship between magnitude of threat and reactance (Brehm and Sensenig 1966). For our job creep application, this suggests a moderating role for more obvious threats such as explicit requests to expand obligations without recognition (salience). It also suggests an interaction between size of threat (magnitude) and scope (breadth) of threat. Finally, for threats with an ongoing pattern of loss such as implied permanently expanded obligations (duration), the effect of magnitude of threat on reactance will be further strengthened. Thus, we propose a moderated relationship.

Proposition 6a *The link between threat to personal freedom and psychological reactance will be stronger when the threatened freedom is important, salient, broad, and ongoing.*

Individual attributions for whether the loss of freedom is personal or impersonal is another important characteristic that influences psychological reactance (Brehm and Brehm 1981). For example, if an individual imputes an impersonal motive as the reason for the loss of personal freedom, this will weaken the link between threat and reactance. If employees believe that others in the organization have expanded role obligations (job creep), this will weaken the effects of perceived loss. On the other hand, if specific employees feel that they have been singled out for job creep and that others do not have additional informal obligations, their attributions and sense-making will accentuate the link between threat and reactance. According to reactance theory and research, personal attributions imply intentional and ongoing loss of freedom whereas impersonal attributions imply unintentional and temporary loss of freedom. In other words, the negative effect of threat to personal freedom on reactance will be stronger when employees make personal attributions than when they make impersonal attributions.

Proposition 6b *The link between threat to personal freedom and psychological reactance will be stronger when attributions are personal.*

9.3 Negative voice as a response to psychological reactance

9.3.1 Voice and types of voice

Existing management research on voice has adopted two contrasting conceptualizations of voice. The first approach uses the term voice to describe speaking-up

behavior such as when employees proactively make suggestions for change (Rusbult et al. 1988; Withey and Cooper 1989; Farrell and Rusbult 1992; Van Dyne et al. 1995; Janssen et al. 1998; LePine and Van Dyne 1998; Frese et al. 1999; Zhou and George 2001). These verbal expressions are intended as positive suggestions. The second conceptualization of voice describes the presence of due process procedures that enhance justice judgments and facilitate employee participation in decision-making (Folger 1977; Bies and Shapiro 1988; Lind et al. 1990). Although both conceptualizations have merit and address important managerial issues, we focus in this paper on the first conceptualization (i.e. voice as an employee behavior rather than an organizational process) due to our interest in employee behavior directed at increasing personal freedom and control (Brehm and Brehm 1981).

In addition, the management literature uses a variety of terms to refer to employee voice behavior. Of these, the most common term is the word *voice* itself. This includes research on the exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect (EVLN) framework (Hirschman 1970; Farrell 1983; Rusbult et al. 1988; Withey and Cooper 1989). It also includes more recent work that focuses specifically on voice as proactive and constructively intended speaking-up behavior (Van Dyne et al. 1995; LePine and Van Dyne 1998, 2001*b*; Van Dyne and LePine 1998; Zhou and George 2001; Avery and Quinones 2002).

In addition to the above research that uses the specific term of voice, there are a number of other voice-like constructs that emphasize speaking up and making suggestions. This includes the civic virtue form of organizational citizenship (Organ 1988; Graham 1991, 2000; Robinson and Morrison 1995; Robinson 1996) that includes proactively speaking up and participating in organizational affairs. Advocacy participation, a similar voice-like construct, has been defined as a constructive and proactive voice such as expressing high standards, challenging others, and making suggestions for change (Van Dyne et al. 1994). Another positive, change-oriented construct is constructive suggestions that include actively proposing ways to improve individual, group, or organizational functioning (George and Brief 1992; Frese et al. 1999; Zhou and George 2001). Other relevant, prosocial behaviors such as championing, taking charge, issue selling, and reformist dissent also involve verbal expressions intended to benefit the larger collective (Howell and Higgins 1990; Dutton and Ashford 1993; Parker 1993; Morrison and Phelps 1999). In sum, although these constructs have not been explicitly labeled "voice," each represents verbal expression of ideas, information, and opinions with the goal of making positive and cooperative contributions to the organization.

9.3.2 Negative voice

In commenting on the voice literature, Withey and Cooper (1989) speculated that prior research may have combined different types of voice into one construct and that this may have confounded research findings. Accordingly, they suggested the benefits of developing a more fine-grained conceptualization of employee

voice. Following up on this recommendation, Van Dyne et al. (2003) introduced a multidimensional framework that differentiated prosocial voice (i.e. other-oriented expression of ideas, information, and opinions for constructive ways to improve work and work organizations, based on cooperative motives), defensive voice (i.e. self-protective expression, based on fear), and acquiescent voice (i.e. disengaged expressions based on resignation). Further extending this framework, we now focus on negative forms of voice that may have relevance to job creep and reactance.

When roles and obligations expand (e.g. ERB becomes transformed into IRB), employees may engage in non-problem focused reactance by complaining and communicating their frustration (expressive voice). Alternatively, they may use problem-focused expressions to try to change the situation (instrumental voice). These two responses parallel the differences between expressive aggression and instrumental aggression (Buss 1961) and between expressive complaints and instrumental complaints (Kowalski 1996). For expressive voice, the focus is self-oriented catharsis (e.g. venting frustrations and personal feelings). For instrumental voice, the focus is other-oriented attempts to change the situation and reduce perceived threats to personal freedom (Brehm and Brehm 1981).

For this section of our framework, we draw on LePine and Van Dyne's (2001*a*) typology of employee responses to low performing peers that emphasized helping directed at peers. In this chapter, we extend their conceptualization to include negative voice that is directed at low performing peers. We focus on two forms of instrumental voice and exclude expressive voice because our predictions are based on reactance theory and instrumental employee efforts to increase feelings of personal control and freedom (rather than simply venting frustrations). The two types of instrumental voice that we address are: (a) voice directed at *motivating* change so that peers also overfulfill obligations; and (b) voice directed at *ostracizing* or *rejecting* peers who do not overfulfill obligations. In both cases, the objective is to enhance perceived personal freedom by reducing pressure to overfulfill obligations. We refer to these forms of voice as negative voice because they can appear aggressive and may harm others in the workplace. By explicitly differentiating types of voice, we aim to improve our ability to predict and understand voice behavior.

We also contrast motivating voice and rejecting voice in terms of directness. Direct voice occurs when an employee complains or criticizes directly to the target of their loss. For example, an employee may feel that their obligations have been expanded because low-performing co-workers do not fulfill their work responsibilities. In this instance, direct voice would include complaints or criticism made directly to low-performers to motivate them to increase their contributions. As another example, direct voice could be used to motivate others to overfulfill obligations so that extra work is distributed more equally across employees. This could include verbal threats, harsh or punitive feedback (Moss and Martinko 1998), motivational exhortations to increase contributions, warnings such as "I'm not going to help you next time," or directive pep talks (LePine and Van Dyne 2001*a*). If successful, these motivating forms of voice would increase personal freedom and allow employees a greater sense that overfulfillment is volitional and not an obligation.

Indirect voice occurs when an employee complains or criticizes a peer to others (not directly to the target). This could include gossiping and scapegoating about a co-worker to others in efforts to ostracize or reject the peer from the group (LePine and Van Dyne 2001a). As an example, Morrison and Milliken (2000) suggested that employees may respond to a lack of control by engaging in workplace sabotage. This could include complaining about a low performing co-worker or engaging in work-related, professional gossip to harm the peer's reputation (Kurland and Pelled 2000). Alternatively, indirect voice could focus on those who do not overfulfill obligations. In this case, an employee could retaliate by covertly complaining to others and blaming the target peer for inequitable distribution of work (Skarlicki and Folger 1997). Indirect voice should cause the target peer to feel rejected and feel more of an outsider than an insider (Stamper and Masterson 2002). Over time, this should increase the likelihood of the target peer voluntarily or involuntarily leaving the work group. In either case, these indirect forms of voice cause the target peer to be ostracized and rejected, while simultaneously reducing pressure on others to overfulfill obligations (Kowalski 1997).

In sum, we propose that job creep expands role responsibilities, threatens perceived freedom (the personal choice to engage or not engage in discretionary behavior), and leads to psychological reactance which triggers instrumental voice (motivating voice or rejecting voice) aimed at restoring personal freedom. Consistent with reactance theory research (Brehm and Brehm 1981), we predict that the higher the psychological reactance, the more likely the use of instrumental voice to eliminate the need for ongoing overfulfillment. When people feel pressure to overfulfill their obligations (e.g. their helping is no longer discretionary), they may comply at first but will eventually develop feelings of reactance and resistance. Over time, psychological reactance will be directed at restoring the specific freedom that has been threatened (the choice to engage in ERB). Accordingly, the higher the reactance, the more the individual will want to re-establish feelings of control directed at the threatened freedom.

Proposition 7 *The higher the psychological reactance, the more likely the employee will engage in negative forms of voice (e.g. trying to motivate a peer to overfulfill or trying to reject a low performing peer) so that overfulfillment is no longer needed.*

9.4 Peer reactions to job creep

Thus far, we have focused on the effects of job creep on those who overfulfill obligations. Extending our model, we now propose that work group peers are also subject to reactance processes. Basically we use the same logic and propose parallel relationships, with one primary exception. In contrast to the initial positive reaction of employees who overfulfill obligations (Proposition 3a: Self-enhancement), we argue that spillover effects will be negative for work group peers. This is for three reasons. First, peers who are not subject to job creep may feel ignored or unappreciated by the supervisor because they were not entrusted with additional job responsibilities.

Second, this may cause peers to question their value to the organization and engage in negative self-evaluation. Self-evaluation depends heavily on comparisons with others (Brewer and Weber 1994; Mussweiler and Bodenhausen 2002). In our situation where one employee overfulfills obligations, other members of the work group suffer from contrast effects. This may lead to self-deprecation and feelings of failure and incompetence. Accordingly, we propose that having a co-worker who experiences job creep will trigger contrast effects and negative reactions from peers, leading to self-deprecation. Furthermore, peers may feel that this discrepancy in contributions may threaten their job security or put pressure on them to increase their contributions (such as engaging in overfulfillment themselves). Over time, these contrast effects will reduce the peers' sense of personal freedom.

Proposition 8a *Higher supervisor perceptions of an employee's ongoing obligations will lead to negative self-evaluation by work group peers (self-deprecation).*

Proposition 8b *Over time, higher supervisor perceptions of an employee's ongoing obligations will threaten work group peers' sense of personal freedom.*

For the remainder of the model illustrated in Figure 9.1, the logic and form of our propositions for peers parallel that of the employee who overfulfills obligations. Thus, individual differences will also intensify peer reactions to observed job creep such that those with high self-esteem and high personal control will experience a more intense threat to personal freedom when a work group peer overfulfills role obligations.

Proposition 9 *Individual differences will moderate the relationship between supervisor perceptions of an employee's ongoing obligations and the reactions of work group peers, such that the link will be stronger for peers with high self-esteem and personal control.*

Similarly, magnitude of threat will influence psychological reactance of peers such that larger perceived threats trigger stronger reactance. For example, if overfulfillment by one employee causes the supervisor to raise expectations for all employees, this creates pressure for peers to stay late, take on additional assignments, and increase their contributions without formal recognition (no promotions and no raises). This increase in obligations represents a personal threat to employee discretion, judgment, and freedom, such that greater threats heighten peer reactions. Likewise, characteristics of the threat and attributions regarding the threat will also moderate the relationship between threat and reactance.

Proposition 10 *The larger the perceived threat to personal freedom, the stronger the peers' psychological reactance.*

Proposition 11a *The link between threat to personal freedom and peer psychological reactance will be stronger when the threatened freedom is important, salient, broad, and ongoing in duration.*

Proposition 11b *The link between threat to personal freedom and peer psychological reactance will be weaker when peer attributions are impersonal (compared to personal).*

9.4.1 Peer use of negative voice as a response to job creep

When peers experience psychological reactance because a co-worker overfulfills obligations and creates pressure on them to increase their contributions, these peers may use negative forms of instrumental voice in efforts to restore the freedom and control they have lost (Barker 1993; Hackman 1992). Thus, work group peers might use direct voice to try and motivate the high performing peer to conform and stop overfulfilling obligations (Kiesler and Kiesler 1969). This would reduce the discrepancy and negative contrast effects, thus reducing pressure to increase contributions. By minimizing the variance in performance, work group peers can regain freedom to perform at status quo levels and increase their feelings of control and personal freedom. In extreme cases, peers may sabotage the work of an employee who overfulfills obligations (Analoui 1995).

Alternatively, work group peers might use indirect voice to try and reject or eject the high performing peer from the group. This could include making disparaging comments or gossiping to other co-workers about the high performer. In addition, peers could use indirect voice to sabotage the reputation of a co-worker who overfulfills obligations. This would isolate and ostracize the high performer, reducing contrast effects and threats to personal freedom of the peers. Ultimately, peer pressure might cause the high performer to change behavior or leave the group. By motivating the high performer to change (i.e. reduce their work contributions) or by rejecting the high performer and encouraging them to leave the work group, peers regain freedom to work at status quo levels. In sum, we propose that peers will use proactive negative voice to enhance their sense of influence and feelings of personal freedom.

Proposition 12. The higher the psychological reactance, the more likely peers will engage in negative forms of proactive voice (such as trying to motivate those who overfulfill obligations to conform to typical performance levels or trying to reject the high performer so that the individual leaves the group or is ejected from the group) so that comparisons are no longer negative.

9.5 Discussion

This chapter integrates past literature on psychological contracts, organizational citizenship, and reactance theory to develop a framework for predicting employee reactions to job creep. Job creep is the gradual and informal expansion of role responsibilities that occurs when employee contributions to the organization exceed their formal obligations (overfulfillment of obligations). One key contribution of this chapter is introducing the construct of job creep. We suggest that job creep has increasingly salient implications for employees, supervisors, and work group peers during economic downturns. In addition, this chapter makes several important contributions to the literature on employment relationships.

First, our research is distinct because it focuses on fulfillment of employee obligations. In contrast, most existing research on psychological contracts and most

research on individual-organizational relationships tend to focus upon perceptions that the employer has violated their obligations (Robinson and Rousseau 1994; Robinson 1996; Morrison and Robinson 1997; Robinson and Morrison 2000; Turnley and Feldman 2000; Thompson and Bunderson 2003). Second, our approach is unique in its focus on positive discrepancies or overfulfillment of employee obligations. In contrast, most prior research has emphasized negative discrepancies (i.e. perceived employer violations and insufficient fulfillment of obligations). Third, most research on employment relationships and failure to fulfill obligations has adopted the employee perspective. Because the employment relationships and psychological contracts are necessarily embedded in a broader context and involve multiple two-way obligations, it is also important to examine additional perspectives (such as that of work group peers).

Thus, this chapter has examined previously neglected aspects of work relationships, including positive discrepancies and overfulfillment of obligations, as well as multiple perspectives of employees, peers, and supervisors. Although a few recent papers acknowledge overfulfillment, positive violations, and positive discrepancies (Ellis 2001; Lambert et al. 2002; Turnley et al. 2003), more research and theoretical development is needed to explore the antecedents and consequences of the overfulfillment of obligations. Furthermore, it is important to consider both employee and observer perceptions (e.g. supervisor and peers) on fulfillment because they represent the other half of the relationship. In sum, this theoretical framework is another step toward a more complete view of employment relationships.

Another important contribution of the chapter is the conceptualization of two specific forms of negative voice (motivating voice and rejecting voice). Based on reactance theory, we have predicted that one employee response to job creep and threats to personal freedom is proactive voice directed toward restoring the lost freedom. Thus, we have argued that employees and their work group peers will use complaints and criticism (both directly and indirectly) in attempts to reduce the sense of threat and personal loss (Brehm and Brehm 1981). In the case of job creep, where an employee's exceptional contributions become viewed as in-role obligations by supervisors and peers, we have predicted that the high performing employee will use negative voice directly to try and motivate others to increase their contributions or indirectly to reject others from the group so that contributions are distributed more equitably across employees and so that overfulfillment is discretionary behavior and not an obligation.

Adopting multiple perspectives, we have also proposed that work group peers will experience feelings of reactance when a co-worker overfulfills obligations. To work group peers, the employee who overfulfills obligations represents a threat because contrast effects create peer pressure on others to change performance and increase contributions. Adopting an approach that parallels the employee part of the model, we predicted that peers will use direct and indirect negative voice to regain their own sense of personal freedom and control. Thus, peers will use direct voice to motivate those who overfulfill obligations to lower their contributions. In addition, peers will also use indirect voice to reject those with exceptionally high performance so

that contributions are distributed more equitably and so that overfulfillment is discretionary behavior and not an obligation.

Thus, a key point in our model is that employees and their work group peers both use negative voice in efforts to restore personal freedoms. To the high performing employee who overfulfills obligations, low performers are perceived as deviant and thus become the most salient targets for negative voice. In contrast, for work group peers, the high performer is the deviant who becomes the most salient target of direct and indirect negative voice. In both cases, employees and their peers are motivated to regain a sense of personal control over ongoing obligations and restore personal feelings of freedom to choose whether or not to engage in overfulfillment of obligations.

9.5.1 Future research

In our model, we have applied reactance theory to organizational work settings where employees have embedded and ongoing relationships. To date, most of the prior research on reactance has been done in laboratory settings. This has been useful in establishing the fundamental principles that form the core of reactance theory. To test our model, however, we recommend that researchers focus primarily on field research. This is because our predictions are based on embedded and ongoing work relationships among employees, their supervisors, and their work group peers.

Although our model is relatively complex, it is under-identified. Future research should consider additional antecedents, consequences, and perspectives to expand and enrich this initial framework. In addition, future research could consider additional factors that trigger or strengthen reactance. Perhaps reactance to job creep is influenced by employee initial motives for overfulfilling obligations. For example, those who are motivated by impression management goals may be more sensitive to job creep than those who are motivated by personal values such as prosocial orientation. Additionally, it would be beneficial to consider an expanded set of individual difference factors that may influence the reactance process. For example, those who are high in dominance, extroversion, or equity sensitivity may be more assertive in their attempts to restore personal freedom whereas those who are high in benevolence might have weaker reactions. Another idea for future research is considering boundary conditions that may limit peer reactance to overfulfillment. For example, weak group norms for performance (leading to greater variance in employee fulfillment of obligations) may reduce conformity pressures on peers, reduce their feelings of reactance, and reduce their use of negative voice. Alternatively, when work group peers have weak role identity, negative social comparisons will be less salient to them and less likely to generate reactance. Finally, it is possible that job creep is more common in some industries, some types of jobs, or some cultures.

There also would be benefits to considering other consequences of reactance. For those who overfulfill obligations, this could include stress, emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, lower job satisfaction, and burnout. For example, if employees feel overwhelmed by their expanded obligations and unable to accomplish their work, this can lead to burnout or emotional exhaustion (Maslach and Leiter 1999;

Demerouti et al. 2001; Cropanzano et al. 2003). On the other hand, work group peers may experience feelings of guilt when confronted with a co-worker who regularly overfulfills obligations (Baumeister et al. 1994). Over time, feelings of guilt may develop into feelings of resentment. Other peer reactions could include decreased satisfaction, motivation, and a desire to leave the organization. Future research also could consider other targets of employee and peer reactance such as supervisors, family, and friends. In sum, we view this model as a first step in thinking about responses to job creep.

9.5.2 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have introduced the concept of job creep and, based on reactance theory, have developed a theoretical framework that predicts employee and peer reactions to job creep. Given competitive pressures to "do more with less," we have argued that job creep occurs for many employees in many organizations. Job creep is the gradual and informal expansion of role responsibilities such that discretionary contributions (e.g. OCB) become viewed as in-role obligations by supervisors and peers. Job creep changes the fundamental nature of the employment relationship between employees and other parties to the relationship (peers, supervisors, and the organization) by changing perceptions of what an employee is obligated to contribute to the organization. When job creep occurs, employees experience pressure to overfulfill their obligations on an ongoing basis. In other words, job creep blurs the boundary between ERB, which is composed of discretionary contributions, and IRB, which is composed of required contributions. We conclude by recommending that future research should refine this initial conceptualization of job creep and test the predictions in the model.

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Edited by

JACQUELINE A-M. COYLE-SHAPIO
LYNN M. SHORE
M. SUSAN TAYLOR
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