

**ACQUIRING VS. CONSERVING RESOURCES: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF  
DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE ON EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION IN ACADEMIA**

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A Dissertation Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department  
of Psychology  
University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
Amanda L. Palmer  
May 2017

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## ABSTRACT

Approximately 25% of the general working population in the United States suffers from high rates of emotional exhaustion (Shanafelt et al., 2015). The primary component of workplace burnout, emotional exhaustion is very costly among employees and their employers (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Distributive justice predicts emotional exhaustion in employees working outside of academia; however, the relationship has not been thoroughly examined within faculty populations (Cole et al., 2010; Frenkel et al., 2012; Howard & Cordes, 2010; Tepper, 2000; Ferron, 2013; Sun, 2002). Furthermore, new evidence comparing the resource conservation against resource acquisition sides of the conservation of resources (COR) theory suggest that there are competing individual differences that influence the degree to which an individual responds to stressors in the environment, such as low levels of distributive justice (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). With the current study, I tested the effectiveness of the competing sides of COR as well as how voice and conscientiousness interact as boundary conditions for the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion. Results from analyses of data collected from 219 tenured and tenure-track faculty revealed that neither voice nor conscientiousness independently moderated the relationship. The interaction of combined voice and conscientiousness as moderators approached significance. Following the resource acquisition side of COR, the effects tended to be stronger among individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness and weaker among individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness. Following the resource conservationist side of COR, the relationship tended to be weaker among individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness. When comparing simple slopes, there were no significant differences, and I offer guidance for future studies that aim to test these competing sides of COR in a similar

manner. These findings potentially expand the understanding of COR theory and inform practitioners on strategies they may use to help shield employees from emotional exhaustion.

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## Chapter I

“We teach our students that fairness and the market are two different things. The market is all about matching supply and demand and trying to tailor compensation to get and retain the best people you can while not paying too much to everyone else. Fairness is paying everyone the same. To some extent, you can do one or the other. The more we focus on fairness, the more we risk losing our (best) people or people with unusual situations. The more we say we want certain people and will do whatever is necessary to get them, the more we inject unfairness and inequity into the workplace. There is no easy answer.” – J. Bidell (Knowledge@Wharton, 2013)

Research, teaching, and service are the three well known criteria by which tenured and tenure-track faculty at academic institutions are evaluated and compensated (Centra, 1983; Feldman, 2007). Although it sounds simple, the three criteria are difficult to quantify because departments (and sub areas within the departments) tend to approach evaluating these three criteria differently. For example, whereas one group in a department may prioritize grant revenue production, another group may prioritize the quality of journal publications. These different approaches to weighing performance criteria may seem harmless until it is time to determine employee rewards, such as merit pay, promotions, and development opportunities. A merit system that is implemented differently for different groups (especially if it lacks transparency) has the potential for making the employees feel that their pay is unfair (Adams, 1965; Folger & Konovsky, 1989).

Unfortunately, many faculty members feel that their pay is unfair (Card, Mas, Moretti, & Saez, 2011). Commonly called distributive justice (the perceptions of fairness surrounding

compensation), these feelings of inequity can have a large impact on employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, incivility, organizational commitment, evaluation of authority, withdrawal, negative job attitudes, performance, and emotional exhaustion (Cole, Bernerth, Walter, & Holt, 2010; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Poter, & Ng, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Surprisingly, despite the anecdotal perceptions of unfairness surrounding salary of faculty, the effects of distributive justice for faculty members has not been examined often (Ferron, 2013).

The relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is well established for many employee groups outside of academia (Cole et al., 2010, Tepper, 2000, Frenkel, Li, & Restubog, 2012, Howard & Cordes, 2010). However, the boundary conditions of this relationship may not be fully discovered. These boundary conditions are particularly important to study because an organization is limited to how much it may be able to improve justice conditions, and the relationship between reward allocation and faculty outcomes has yielded null to significant effect sizes for faculty populations (Hearn, 1999; Sun, 2002; Walster, Bercheid, & Walster, 1973; Ferron, 2013). With the current study, I attempt to address both of these opportunities by examining the relationships using competing sides of conservation of resources theory (COR). COR scholars have revealed that employees may respond differently to compensation inequity in their environment with the motivations to either acquire or conserve resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Ng & Feldeman, 2012). For example, when experiencing inequity, employees can: (1) focus on the benefits of the job instead of low pay (i.e., good healthcare or tenure), (2) concentrate on the positive aspects of the situation relative to the market (i.e., at least they have a job during the slumped economy), (3) question the compensation structure (i.e.,

request a raise), or (4) quit (knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu, 2013). I focus on the third response to inequity within the framework of resource conservationist vs. acquisitionist strategies. I argue that voice behavior and conscientiousness reflect the likelihood to which individuals effectively conserve or acquire resources in the face of perceived inequity.

### **Emotional Exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion is the degree to which employees feel emotionally overextended by their work (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1982). A popular construct of interest to scientists and practitioners, it affects organizational functioning, mission readiness, and employee quality of work life (Cherniss, 1993; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Kahill, 1988, Maslach, 1982; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Characterized by chronic states of emotional and physical depletion, emotional exhaustion is the major component of workplace burnout (Kahill, 1988; Maslach, 1982; Freudenberger, 1974).

Workplace burnout has been of interest to scholars for the past five decades. Originally coined by Freudenberger (1975), the subsequent conceptualizations of workplace burnout consistently included emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1982; Pines & Aronson, 1981). Most scholars today use Maslach's (1982) three-factor model of burnout, which includes depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment in addition to emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization, or cynicism, is the extent to which individuals act cruelly and unsympathetically toward the people in their work place (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Leiter, 1988). Diminished personal accomplishment is the degree to which employees feel reduced competence and professional achievement when working with others (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Maslach & Leiter, 1988). Distinct from the other components of burnout, emotional exhaustion is the component most related to workplace outcomes, such as role stress, work pressure,

performance, and turnover (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2002; Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Personal and environmental factors both influence workplace burnout (Burke, Shearer, & Descza, 1984; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Leiter & Maslach, 1986; Shaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In a meta-analysis investigating personal factors that predict workplace burnout, Alcaron, Eschleman, and Bowling (2009) found four of the Big 5 personality traits – conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, and extraversion – along with self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, positive affectivity, optimism, and hardiness to be negatively related to burnout (Bono & Judge, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Maddi, 1999).

Data indicate that workplace environmental factors influence burnout more strongly than individual factors, such as personality (Burke, Shearer, & Descza, 1984; Golembiewski & Scicchitano, 1983; Leiter & Maslach, 1986). These workplace predictors can be interaction-based or job-based. Interaction-based determinants of burnout include direct care of clients, managing difficult client problems, and low coworker support. Job-based correlates of burnout include work load demands, time pressure, shift work, role ambiguity, physical discomfort, lack of autonomy, skill utilization, contingent rewards, job involvement, and work pressure (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Shaefeli & Bakker, 2004).

Scholars argue that emotional exhaustion is the first response to strains in the environment that affect burnout. Employees first are overwhelmed by personal or environmental demands, and then they distance themselves from coworkers as a way to cope. The weakened relationships and emotional exhaustion causes employees to lose interest in their work or experience resentment toward coworkers or clients. This leads employees to experience further diminished personal accomplishment and cynicism (Leiter, 1990; 1991; Leiter & Maslach,

1988). As emotional exhaustion is considered the central aspect of the burnout, and one most strongly related to faculty outcomes (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Leiter, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Zohar, 1997; Lackritz, 2004), I focused on emotional exhaustion in this paper.

University professors at research institutions experience burnout at rates like other professionals with similar educational backgrounds (i.e, physicians) because of their high degree of interaction with students, staff, and administrators, as well as the high degree of job ambiguity they may face when being evaluated for their performance (Blix, Cruise, Mitchell, & Blix, 1994; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; 1999; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Positive correlates of emotional exhaustion within faculty members include teaching load, number of graduate students, time grading, office hours, grant money, service time, and number of service activities (Lackritz, 2004). Also, female, minority, and lower ranked faculty members tend to experience greater emotional exhaustion than their male, non-minority, and higher ranked (i.e., full professor) counterparts (Golub, Johns, Weiss, Ramesh, & Ossoff, 2008; Leiter, 1993).

### **Conservation of Resources Theory**

How does emotional exhaustion occur? Conservation of resources theory (COR) states that individuals are motivated to cultivate, protect, acquire, and conserve resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources have been defined as anything that an individual values, and are typically classified as objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies (Gorgievski, Halbesleben, & Bakker, 2011; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). Three tenets of the conservation of resources theory include: (1) resource gain is less salient than resource loss and is more likely to occur among individuals who have invested resources and already gained resources, (2) resource loss is more likely to occur among individuals who are already experiencing resource loss, and

(3) resource loss will prompt employee defensive strategies to conserve resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees can go into spirals of resource loss when they are not able to replenish resources (Wilk & Moynihan, 2005).

COR theory has become extremely popular in the last three decades because it addresses the effect of stressors and resources on employees and their workplace (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2001). Whereas similar theories predicting dimensions of burnout (i.e., job demands-resource model) provide broad interpretations of how stressors (emotional, physical, and job demands) influence strain (i.e., burnout) and well-being, COR theory explains the psychological motivations of individuals experiencing stress in their environment (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli 2007). Studies examining emotional exhaustion in organizations have applied COR theory to explain the psychological process by which stressors and strains deplete individuals of resources (Halbesleben et al. 2014; Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). For example, individuals who tend to try to prevent resource loss by expending additional resources (i.e., acquire resources instead of conserve resources) are more likely to face emotional exhaustion in the face of stressors (Halbesleben, Paustian, Underdahl, Kacmar, & Carlson, 2012; Wallace & Chen, 2006), thus indicating it would be more effective to conserve resources in the face of resource loss. In contrast, some scholars suggest that individuals who attempt to acquire resources may be able to reduce the effect of stressors (Ng & Feldman, 2012).

I aim to test investigate these competing schools of thought by testing the effectiveness of competing resource acquisitionist and resource conservationist motivations of COR. Research conducted in the past decades have surfaced a handful of psychological constructs (i.e., work role innovation, P-O fit, internal network, and commitment) that are helpful in determining an

individual's psychological motivation in the face of stressors (Kiazad, Seibert, & Kraimer, 2014). Most recently scholars have examined voice (and managerial practices that enable voice) within the resource acquisition vs. resource conservation framework (Ng & Feldman, 2012; Qin, Direnzo, Xu, & Duan, 2014; Sguera, Bagozzi, Huy, Boss, & Boss, 2016). Voice behavior may be considered resource draining as it takes time, and presents a social risk for bring up opinions of views that may challenge the status quo (Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Detert & Burris, 2007; Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea, & Frey, 2007; Ng & Feldman, 2012; Organ 1988). Voice can be considered costly, and not demonstrating voice behavior could be considered a resource conservationist strategy; however, voice behavior can also be regarded as a self-serving change agent (advancing productivity, a career, and job performance) and could be considered a resource acquisitionist strategy (Dundun & Gollan, 2007; Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea, & Frey, 2007; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Qin et al., 2014). In short, the degree of voice behavior may be a useful assessment of an individual's motivation to either gain or protect resources in the face of inequity (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea, & Frey, 2007; Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Detert & Burris, 2007).

### **Distributive Justice**

Justice has been of interest to scholars since Aristotle circa 400 B.C., and it is widely thought of as an ideal for modern societies (i.e., utilitarianism; Hobbes, 1651; Locke, 1698). The turning point of justice research was when scholars started conceptualizing justice as how it was perceived by individuals, rather than what absolute rewards and resources were distributed (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg & Bies, 1992; Tyler, 1994).

There are three types of justice widely cited in contemporary academic literature – distributive, procedural, and interactional (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001;

Roch & Shanock, 2006). Distributive justice is the degree to which individuals perceive equitable rewards for their inputs within organizations (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1987; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice is the degree to which individuals believe that the organizational policies and practices determining reward allocations are being implemented fairly (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Lastly, interactional justice is the degree to which employees perceive they are being treated with dignity and respect (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Whereas interactional and procedural justice largely affects global employee attitudes toward authorities and institutions (e.g., organizational commitment and supervisor support), distributive justice has a greater effect on the localized work outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1990; Lind & Tyler, 1988; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993).

Perceptions of distributive justice are guided by resources, control, and relational judgments (Tyler, 1994). In resource-based judgments, individuals may compare what others receive and what they presently receive with what they received in the past (Crosby, 1976; Folger & Martin, 1986). In control-based judgments, individuals perceive the amount of control they have over presentation of evidence and decisions being made (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1994). In relational-based judgments, individuals perceive whether they receive the respect, neutrality, and trust to which they believe that they are entitled, given their standing in the organization (Tyler, 1989; 1994).

Theories regarding why individuals care about distributive justice have exposed two different motives. One is relational-driven, and the other is resource-driven. Employees are impacted by the relational judgments they make because it indicates their status and value in the organization, and individuals are motivated to maintain high status (i.e., positive self-concept; Shrauger, 1975). In comparison, the resource-driven model (based in social exchange and equity

theory; Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964) posits that employees are motivated to maximize the extent to which their input of resources (e.g., works published and courses taught) are fairly rewarded and acknowledged by outputs of the organization (e.g., pay, benefits, etc.).

Therefore, although there may be clear differences in reward allocation, frustrations toward injustice are very subjective. For example, perceptions of distributive justice may depend on many individual factors, such as the chosen referent group of the individual. The theory of relative deprivation (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949) most famously explains this concept in military research. Stouffer and colleagues found that when being promoted to similar levels, one group of soldiers felt their promotion was fair because they compared themselves with members of an out-group that was promoted at high rates, whereas others felt the promotion was unfair because they compared themselves with members of their in-group that were promoted at the same rate (Stouffer et al., 1949).

Distributive justice perceptions in an organization may also be based on factors that go beyond the organizations' control. For example, there are many factors (i.e., base contract and outside salary) that may determine pay for faculty that are not influenced by administrators. Faculty salary can be derived into four sources – base contract (9-10 months), extra contract (2-3 months), special services (summer work or special workshops), and outside earnings through consulting (Hearn, 1999). These four sources may be influenced differently depending on the grants received and outside offers as well as available departmental funds (Blackaby, Booth, & Frank, 2005). Thus, even if administrators attempt to be just in determining faculty pay, the other determining factors may not be allocated justly (i.e., grants, etc.). Consequently, the faculty can be left perceiving inequity.

Equity theory suggests that individuals compare outcomes received by their organization with inputs they contribute to their work place (Adams, 1963; 1965). Employee inputs include education, intelligence, and experience, and they receive outcomes from the organization in the form of pay, promotions, and benefits (Adams, 1963; 1965; Colquitt et al., 2001; Homans, 1961). As described by equity theory, employees: (1) form expectations regarding what they should be paid given their inputs (i.e., work and education), (2) compare the outputs from the organization (i.e., pay and benefits) with those expectations, and (3) compare the ratio of their inputs/outputs with the inputs/outputs of their colleagues with similar positions (Adams, 1963). If there are discrepancies in the comparison, then employees are likely to perceive the pay as inequitable, and they will work to restore equity because they feel distressed (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987; Judge & Colquitt, 2004). Unequitable pay is emotionally upsetting among employees because it lowers their felt status within the organization and signifies an inequitable exchange of resources (Blau, 1964; Maslach et al., 2001).

Fair compensation acts as both a financial resource as well as a goodwill gesture from the organization (Cole et al., 2010). Thus, employees perceiving low distributive justice are not receiving their expected resources based upon their resource investment. This depletion of resources and the anticipation of ongoing low levels of resources likely yield emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1982).

As explained by equity theory, workers who experience an imbalance in their workplace inputs to outputs ratio are distressed because their expectations are not met (Adams, 1965; Judge & Colquitt, 2004). These workers then spend extra resources contemplating how to handle the imbalance (Cole et al., 2010). Employees are motivated to expend extra resources to return to

equitable relations when there are imbalances; however, the process can be frustrating and resource draining (Colquitt et al., 2013).

For example, employees may be bitter that their coworkers have higher salaries and think that it is due to preferential treatment. This animosity can create divisions between employees and hinder levels of socio-emotional support that is ordinarily exchanged between coworkers (Colquitt et al., 2013) – a source of valued resources. At the same time, employees may be at risk for a resource loss spiral because they may extend additional resources to investigate the source of the inequity (Greenberg, 1993; 2006). These employees may spend valuable time and energy approaching their supervisor or human resources department to advocate for a raise. Alternatively, they may suffer from psycho-social repercussions (i.e., lack of sleep) ruminating how to address the inequity (Greenberg, 1993; 2006). In other words, perceptions of low levels of distributive justice likely force employees to spend resources to cope and are also likely to reduce the availability of resources in the form of social capital (i.e., group cohesion).

Following equity theory in conceptualizing justice as providing resources to tenured and tenure-track faculty, I expect faculty to similarly become emotionally exhausted in the face of insufficient rewards and fairness (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; 1999). Faculty members who perceive low distributive justice are unlikely to feel that they are compensated fairly for their inputs and may suffer psycho-social repercussions as well as increased resource demand when investigating the reason behind their compensation. In support of this argument, and aligning with prior findings establishing the negative relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion, I expect faculty emotional exhaustion to decrease as distributive justice increases (Cole et al., 2010; Tepper, 2000; Frenkel et al., 2012; Howard & Cordes, 2010).

*Hypothesis 1.* Distributive justice is negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

### **Moderating the Distributive Justice and Emotional Exhaustion Relationship**

Equity theory is useful in explaining high level trends of employee behavior in the face of variations of distributive justice (i.e., withhold inputs to match the amount of outputs). It has been useful in explaining how organizations can mitigate lower levels of distributive justice (i.e., provide alternative rewards); however, it lacks in explaining more nuanced responses that may be more pertinent among individuals based upon the context, personality, or other coping behaviors at that time (Vermunt & Steensma, 2005). For that reason, scholars tend to involve other theories (i.e., broaden and build and conservation of resources theory) to explain moderation in the main effects of justice on employee outcomes (Fredrickson, 2001; Hobfoll, 1989; Janssen, Lam, & Huang, 2009). Moderators are useful in organizational research because equity or lack thereof may not be handled in the same way for every individual (Baron & Kenny, 1986; James & Brett, 1984; Zedeck, 1971). For example, the relationship between distributive justice and psychological distress was moderated by coworker support, such that prison employees who worked in contexts with higher coworker support encountered less psychological distress in the face of distributive injustice than those who perceived lower levels of coworker support (Rousseau, Salek, Aube, & Morrin, 2009). Two-way interactions like these are often found in scholarly articles and help to inform when the relationship between the predictor and outcome variable may depend on the characteristic of an individual.

Employees often differ on many attributes, and it is likely that there are additional moderators that may also influence the degree that the predictor influences the outcome

as well as interplay with the first moderator in determining the relationship between the predictor and outcome (Dawson & Richter, 2006; Dawson, 2014). For example, the experience of the employee may influence how the level of autonomy impacts the relationship between training and job performance, whereby training has a greater impact on performance for inexperienced employees with autonomy than any effect that could be detected by using one moderator (experience or autonomy alone). I argue that both voice and conscientiousness are useful in positioning the theory to describe subtle differences in how employees may cope with perceived inequity.

### **Voice as a Moderator**

Voice behavior is the degree to which individuals suggest changes to their work environment for the benefit of the greater work group or to improve their personal circumstances (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). The construct was coined by Hirschman (1970), who discussed the importance of employees addressing issues in their work environments. Since then, voice has been examined to serve as a mechanism by which employees are improving organizational processes, expressing new ideas, implementing innovation, and preventing problematic organizational policies and practices (Axtel, Holman, & Wall, 2006; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). This behavior has been categorized as a type of citizenship behavior; however, it is distinct by the degree to which it may cause conflict instead of compromise. Voice behavior goes beyond simply helping others; it reflects behavior that may challenge the norms and status quo of organizations (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Although the people in the organization may disagree with the voice actors on what they are suggesting, voice is meant to benefit the organization and/or the self (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Ng & Feldman, 2012).

Historically, many scholars avoided empirically researching voice because of the inconclusive findings and conceptual definitions of the construct (Gordon, 1988; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Withey & Cooper, 1989). However, voice became more popular once Van Dyne and LePine introduced a streamlined definition in addition to an operational measure (1998). They explained that voice was the expression of a critique of workplace policies, practices, or behavior. In addition, they suggested three mechanisms by which voice improves organizations: (1) it directs the attention of leadership to areas they may have missed, (2) it points out improved methods of doing things, and (3) it corrects complications in the way work is being performed (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Whereas an example of organizational citizenship behavior is helping struggling coworkers finish work assignments, an example of voice behavior is suggesting different work schedules or arrangements to superiors to prevent overwhelming workloads (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Voice behavior is the mechanism by which meaningful employee driven changes can occur in the workplace, and it can be vital for organizational success (Grant, 2013; Hirschman, 1970; Lin & Johnson, 2015; Morrison, 2011).

Following LePine and Van Dyne, other scholars have since attempted to divide voice into different dimensions. For example, Maynes and Podsakoff (2014) divided voice into four components – supportive, constructive, defensive, and destructive voice. Supportive voice is similar to organizational loyalty, defending and promoting workplace policies and practices when they are being attacked (Graham, 1991; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Constructive voice is change-oriented and meant to critique the status quo (Gordon, 1988; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Defensive voice resists damaging changes to the work environment (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Lastly, destructive voice demeans and is directed to harm workplace policies and practices (i.e., bad-mouthing organizational policies; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014).

I conceptualize voice as the unidimensional construct originally intended by LePine and Van Dyne (1998). Although the multi-dimensional forms of voice are gaining empirical support, I argue that unidimensional nature of voice can provide a stepping stone for future scholars wishing to investigate multidimensional forms of voice.

As described previously, COR theory states that individuals are motivated to protect, conserve, and obtain resources in their environment to fulfill their work demands (Hobfoll, 1989). Moreover, individuals are motivated to protect the limited resources they have (e.g., avoid resource costly behavior) and to spend extra resources to gain resources in the future. These two aspects of COR theory work against each other when it comes to voice behavior. Employees may choose to: (1) not engage in voice behavior to conserve resources, or (2) engage in voice behavior if they view it as a method to improve their role in the organization, thus acquiring resources (Ng & Feldman, 2012; Qin et al., 2014; Sguera et. al, 2016)).

In a study investigating the impact of voice behavior, job strain, and performance, Ng and Feldman (2012) offered competing hypotheses to investigate resource conservation vs. resource acquisition sides of the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989). They found that employees only engaged in voice when they had the available resources. These findings lend support to the resource conserving side of COR when observing voice instead of the resource acquisition side of COR.

I believe that Ng and Feldman's resource acquisition argument is compelling, and given another context, may receive empirical support. Indeed, I argue that voice behavior can lead to less emotional exhaustion in the face of negative work environments; however, it depends on the work culture and the extent to which individuals have the capacity to voice objections in a

conscientious manner. For example, a work culture that celebrates novel ideas is unlikely to yield stress when going against the status quo.

I believe that academia presents the unique work environment to re-test the resource acquisition side of COR (Hobfoll, 1989). Faculty in research-oriented universities are promoted and published to the extent to which they create knowledge and ideas. This contrasts with other workers who may not be rewarded (and maybe even punished) for challenging the status quo. Thus, I argue that challenging the existing state of affairs is one way in which resources are acquired within academic professions. Accordingly, I suggest that for faculty, voice behavior, if implemented effectively, may reduce the impact of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion.

In understanding the degree to which distributive justice impacts emotional exhaustion, it is arguably important to examine it within the context of how individuals may operate to reduce the experience of negative outcomes (i.e., high emotional exhaustion) and increase the experience of positive outcomes (i.e., low emotional exhaustion). I argue that voice behavior, serves as a change agent of improvement for organizations and self can reduce the effect of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion (Bolino et al., 2004; Ng & Feldman, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). However, voice behavior alone may be considered a costly behavior by some individuals and it may prompt them to refrain from displaying voice in an effort to conserve resources (thus reducing the effect of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion (Ng & Feldman, 2012). As either behavior may motivate similar changes in the effect of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion, I propose competing hypotheses for the relationship:

*Hypothesis 2a.* The relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is moderated by voice behavior, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) among individuals demonstrating higher (lower) voice behavior.

*Hypothesis 2b.* The relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is moderated by voice behavior, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) among individuals demonstrating lower (higher) voice behavior.

### **Conscientiousness as a Moderator**

I suggest that individual differences in conscientiousness affect the degree to which individuals may be able to implement voice effectively to help reduce emotional exhaustion. Conscientiousness is a personality trait that expresses the extent to which individuals are dutiful, achievement striving, purposeful, and exacting in their work (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Healey & Ellis, 2007). Conscientiousness is one of the personality traits within the Five Factor Model (FFM) taxonomy of personality and is the most predictive of task performance, teamwork, and accountability (Barrick et al., 2001; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado 1997).

Five factor models of personality within organizational research emerged in the 1940's and 50's when five factors tended to account for variance that many other factors (e.g., 16) were attempting to measure (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Cattell, 1943; 1947, Fiske, 1949). The FFM has withstood decades of empirical tests, diverse samples, theoretical frameworks, and measurement methods (Bond, Nakazato, & Shiraishi, 1975; Conley, 1985; Costa & McCrae, 1988; Digman & Inouye, 1986; Digman & Takemoto-Chock, 1981; Goldberg, 1981; Lorr & Youniss, 1973; Watson, 1989). The FFM of personality is useful in selection because it predicts meaningful work place outcomes while being relatively independent of general mental ability (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1985). Although the names changed over the years, many of the scholars identified traits relating to the five factors that are commonly used today – openness to

new experiences, agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability (Barrick et al., 2001; Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Openness to new experiences is the extent to which individuals try new things and are imaginative, cultured, curious, and appreciate art (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hakel, 1974; McCrae & Costa, 1985). Agreeableness reflects the extent to which individuals are kind, warm-hearted, understanding, and cooperative (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1981; Guilford, Shneidman, Zimmerman, 1949). Extraversion is the degree to which individuals are social, active, and assertive (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1985; Smith, 1967). Emotional stability reflects the extent to which individuals experience low levels of anxiety, worry, and insecurity (Barrick & Mount, 1991; John, 1989; McCrae & Costa, 1985).

Despite its utility, the FFM has faced a lot of criticism regarding the fakability of the assessment (Kelly, Miles, & Terman, 1936; Hough & Furnham, 2003; Smith & Robie, 2004). As many of the measures rely on self-reported behaviors (i.e., indicate the extent to which you are the life of the party), many academics and practitioners have worried about the degree to which participants provide socially desirable responses instead of responding based upon their true personality (Hogan, Barrett, & Hogan, 2007). However, scholars have found that social desirability indicators have a very slight effect on the degree to which personality predicted performance and other work place outcomes (Ellingson, Smith, & Sackett, 2001; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996; Schmitt & Oswald, 2006). Thus personality, has maintained its wide empirical and practical appeal.

Conscientiousness is one of the most studied factors of the FFM because it has been the factor consistently correlated with positive health-related behaviors (Bogg & Roberts, 2013), objective and subjective measures of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), organizational

citizenship behaviors (Organ & Ryan, 1995), reduced levels of work family conflict (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2002), and job satisfaction, (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002) across job types and employment levels.

There are several measures used to assess conscientiousness of employees who vary in length and response type. For example, Hendriks Five-Factor Personality Inventory contains 20 conscientiousness items; participants respond to how much the trait is applicable to them (Hendriks, Hofstee, & De Raad, 1999). Shorter scales have emerged that contain similar reliability, convergent, discriminant, and criterion-related validity as the longer scales (i.e., mini-IPIP; Goldberg, 1999; Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, Lucas, 2006). Non-Likert-type scales have also been developed to reduce applicant faking (i.e., forced choice and subtle vs. overt content items); however, there is still disagreement as to the effectiveness of these new measurement methods (Bartram, 1996; Heggstad, Morrison, Reeve, & McCloy, 2006; Hogan et al., 2007).

Conscientiousness has been found to moderate many relationships, including strengthening the positive relationship between employee engagement and supervisor-rated task and contextual performance (Bakker, Demerouti, & Lieke, 2012; Demerouti, 2006), decreasing the effect of role clarity on psychological distress and job satisfaction (Miller, Griffin, & Hart, 1999) and increasing the effect of person-organization fit on job choice (Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007).

Individuals high in conscientiousness pay attention to details and can manage stressors better than individuals low in conscientiousness (Bidjerano & Dai, 2007; David & Suls, 1999; Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000). In contrast, individuals low in conscientiousness are less attuned to work details and may find themselves overwhelmed with stressors in the environment (Barrick et al., 2001; McCrae & John, 1992). Individuals low in conscientiousness, due to their lower

attention to detail, may not also be aware of the relevant and necessary interdepartmental stakeholders who should be addressed in times of crisis (i.e., low pay, role overload).

Conscientiousness is often regarded as a resource (Penney, Hunter, & Perry, 2011), thus, I suggest that in the presence of inequity, individuals low in conscientiousness may be more likely to mismanage their resources in the presence of workplace stressors and experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion than individuals high in conscientiousness. Moreover, when perceiving fairness in the environment, individuals high in conscientiousness tend to have more positive workplace reactions than individuals low in conscientiousness (Burnett, Williamson, & Bartol, 2005). Thus, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 3.* The relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is moderated by conscientiousness, such that the relationship is stronger (weaker) among individuals low (high) in conscientiousness.

### **Joint Effects of Voice Behavior and Conscientiousness**

Together, voice behavior and conscientiousness form two important employee characteristics: (1) the degree to which employees are critically speaking up to change and influence workplace policies, practices, and behavior, and (2) the extent to which employees are organized and exacting in their work.

Expanding on Ng and Feldman's (2012) hypotheses, I argue that voice and conscientiousness together influence the extent to which employees can acquire resources (those high in voice and conscientiousness), conserve resources (those low in voice and high in conscientiousness), or further lose resources (those high in voice and low in conscientiousness). I describe all four combinations of voice behavior and conscientiousness to explain how they may be important in determining how distributive justice impacts levels of emotional exhaustion.

*High Voice and High Conscientiousness.* These employees suggest improvements to the organization. When perceiving low distributive justice, these employees are likely to provide relevant examples of what the coworkers and leadership can do to remedy the inequity. All things being equal, because they are high in conscientiousness, their expressions of voice are likely relevant and exacting to the issues at hand. Moreover, conscientiousness itself is a personal resource that helps workers deal with job demands (Halbesleben, Harvey, & Bolino, 2009); hence, individuals high in conscientiousness are likely to experience comparatively low levels of emotional exhaustion. On the continuum of resource acquisition vs. resource conservationist motivations behind conservation of resources theory, these employees are motivated by resource acquisition. And with effectiveness of voice and strong work habits, these individuals are unlikely to be negatively impacted by low levels of distributive justice. That is, the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is likely to be relatively weak among these individuals.

*Low Voice and High Conscientiousness.* These workers are not likely to challenge the organization to change policies and practices. That is, even when perceiving low distributive justice, they are likely to remain silent. As with the individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness described above, high levels of conscientiousness likely constitute a personal resource that somewhat shields these individuals from emotional exhaustion. Motivated by resource conservation (low in voice), they likely find ways to manage their resources effectively even in the face of resource loss (i.e., strategize other ways to deal with the inequity). Whereas these employees are likely to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion than the individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness because they perceive inequity and do not manifest voice to address it, the levels are unlikely to be high. Hence, the relationship

between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is likely to be weak-to-moderate among these individuals.

*High Voice and Low Conscientiousness.* Because of their low levels of conscientiousness, these individuals are likely to experience moderate-to-high levels of emotional exhaustion regardless of the levels of distributive justice in the environment. They aim to acquire resources (high in voice), and they are likely to speak up about departmental matters. However, because they are low in conscientiousness, their suggestions are likely to be relatively poorly prepared and delivered. As employees are vulnerable when they have already experienced resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989), these workers are vulnerable to even greater resource drain because they do not possess the personal resources associated with conscientiousness. That is, their ineffective manifestations of voice likely negate or minimize the psychological benefits of expressing voice. Compared to the high in voice and high in conscientiousness and low in voice and high in conscientiousness, these workers are likely to have not only a higher baseline of emotional exhaustion (i.e., among those reporting high levels of justice) but also levels of emotional exhaustion among those reporting low levels of justice. Accordingly, I argue that the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is likely to be relatively strong among these individuals.

*Low Voice and Low Conscientiousness.* When faced perceiving distributive injustice, these workers are unlikely to suggest changes to the system. They are also unlikely to have strategies to address or cope with the inequity in a successful manner. As they don't have the resources similar to those high in conscientiousness, nor the motivation to challenge the organization, they likely experience relatively high levels of emotional exhaustion. These employees likely engage in resource conservationist behaviors because they are not likely to

protest the status quo. However, they may not be able to conserve resources as well as individuals high in conscientiousness because they may not be aware of the multiple sources to pull resources. Even though these individuals may experience greater resource drain than those high in conscientiousness, the effect of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion is likely to be moderate among these individuals because resource conservation is likely to be passive during both high and low levels of distributive justice. I present the conceptual model in Figure 1.

In line with the above-described four combinations of conscientiousness and voice, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4.* The negative relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion is moderated by the joint effects of voice behavior and conscientiousness, whereby: (1) the relationship is weak among individuals high in voice behavior and high in conscientiousness; (2) the relationship is weak-to-moderate among individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness; (3) the relationship is strongest among individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness; and (4) the relationship is moderate among individuals low in voice and low in conscientiousness.

### **Control Variables**

I controlled for hierarchical rank because the tenure process is stressful; that is, untenured faculty may experience more emotional exhaustion than tenured faculty (Magnuson, 2002). Due to the nature in which the survey was introduced to the sample (a study investigating workplace issues related to gender), I controlled for sex. Emotional stability is related to emotional exhaustion and may detract from conscientiousness in the model; thus, I controlled for emotional stability. I controlled for minority status because minorities have been historically

underrepresented in academic institutions and may experience different levels of emotional exhaustion than non-minorities (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

## Chapter II

### Method

#### Participants

I surveyed 1,001 tenured and tenure-track faculty members at a university in the USA. Of the 1,001, 22% completed the scales used in the analyses for a sample of 219 individuals. The sample was comprised of 50.7% men, 7.2% minorities, 29.9% assistant professors, 41.2% associate professors, and 30% full professors. Participants were coded into either a non-minority or minority group by their self-reported ethnicity and/or race. Participants indicating their gender were coded as 1 = male and 2 = female.

#### Materials

I present in Appendices A-D the items in each scale.

**Distributive Justice.** I used three items (e.g., “Your compensation is fair, relative to the performance of others”) from the distributive justice scale by Colquitt (2001). Items were presented on a 5-point -Likert-type scale from 1 = “To a small extent” to 5 = “To a large extent” (only the poles were labeled, and the middle indicators were left blank). High scores represent high levels of distributive justice.

**Emotional Exhaustion.** I employed five items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach et al., 1996). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with the items (e.g., “I feel used up at the end of the day”). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 5 = “Strongly agree.” High scores represent high levels of emotional exhaustion.

**Voice.** I used three items from Van Dyne and Lepine (1998) to measure the extent to which individuals shared their opinion regarding department issues publicly. Participants

indicated the extent to which they agreed with the items (e.g., “I communicate my opinions about work issues to others in my department, even if my opinion is different than others”). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 5 = “Strongly agree.” High scores represent high levels of voice.

**Personality.** I used four items to measure conscientious (e.g., “I like order”) and four items to measure emotional stability (e.g., “I have frequent mood swings.”) from the Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, and Lucas (2006) mini-IPIP scale. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 5 = “Strongly agree.” High scores represent high levels of conscientiousness.

## Chapter III

### Results

As faculty members were nested within departments, I analyzed the degree of variance attributed to the department level before proceeding with the analysis. The intraclass correlation (ICC) was .07, which is below the .10 normally regarded as a strong value in nested data (Snijders & Bosker, 2011; Hedges & Hedberg, 2007). Thus, I proceeded with analyzing the data at the individual level.

I then ran a Chi-square analysis to test the representativeness of the sample to the greater survey population. The results suggested that the sample was representative in terms of tenure ( $\chi^2(2, N = 221) = 2.39, p = .30$ , minority status ( $\chi^2(1, N = 221) = .99, p = .32$ , and gender  $\chi^2(2, N = 221) = 1.05, p = .60$ ).

I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the data were loading adequately on the intended latent factors. To do this, I compared the: (1) four-factor to the three-factor model (voice and conscientiousness combined on one-factor), (2) three-factor to the two-factor model (keeping emotional exhaustion as the only unique factor), and (3) two-factor to a one-factor model (all variables loaded on the same factor). I present the results in Table 1 and Table 2. The conventional cut-off values are CFI and TLI  $> .95$ , and RMSEA  $< .06$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Ullman, 2001). The four-factor model was the only model with fit indices that aligned with the conventional cut-off values (see Table 1). As expected, the two-factor model was a better fit than the one-factor model:  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 279.28, p < .001$ ; the three-factor model was a better fit than the two-factor model:  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 738.89, p < .001$ ; and the four-factor model was a better fit than the three-factor model:  $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 106.50, p < .001$ . Hence, I used the latent factors as originally intended by the scales in the subsequent analyses.

I then ran a common method variance (CMV) analysis to assess the degree to which the self-reporting method style of the survey accounted for variance. I used the “method factor” approach to complete my CMV analysis (Table 2). I loaded all the study measures onto an unmeasured “method” factor and then analyzed the relationships among the residualized variables. Although some scholars regard this approach as unfeasible because it can remove trait (latent construct) variances if traits have common causes (James & James, 1989; Conway & Lance, 2010), I did not encounter this problem.

Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) indicated more faith can be attributed to the results if less than 25% of the variance in the model is accounted for by the common method. When I added a method factor in the model to test this, I found that 12% of the variance was due to the common method. Therefore, it is unlikely that the common method impacted the relationships tested in the model.

Descriptive statistics (scale means and reliabilities) and correlations of the variables of interest are presented in Table 3. I used a multiple regression model to test my hypotheses and present the results in Table 4. As reflected in Table 4 and consistent with Hypothesis 1, distributive justice was negatively related to emotional exhaustion ( $B = -.22$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .000$ ). As shown in Table 4, depicted in Figures 2 and 3, and inconsistent with Hypotheses 2 (a and b) and 3, the negative relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion was moderated neither by voice ( $B = .01$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .87$ ) nor conscientiousness ( $B = -.04$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .49$ ).

Inconsistent with Hypothesis 4, conscientiousness and voice failed to jointly moderate the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion ( $B = .12$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .10$ ). However, as the three-way interaction approached significance, I examined the simple slopes to

determine the extent to which the four slopes in differed in magnitude. As presented in Figure 4, the individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness and the individuals low in voice and low in conscientiousness had the weakest slopes, which were not significantly different ( $t(219) = -.28, p = .78$ ). Although the two strongest slopes were among the individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness and low in voice and high in conscientiousness, these slopes were not significantly different ( $t(219) = -1.19, p = .24$ ). Collectively, these findings provide some support for Hypothesis 4. The only slope difference approaching significance was the difference between the individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness and the individuals low in conscientiousness and high in voice ( $t(219) = -1.82, p = .07$ ).

## **Chapter IV**

### **Discussion**

I investigated the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion among faculty members and tested the effectiveness of theoretically competing sides of COR theory in order to inform theory and practice. Consistent with previous work, I predicted and found that distributive justice and emotional exhaustion are negatively related. I predicted that the relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion are moderated independently by: (1) conscientiousness and (2) voice. The analyses revealed that neither voice nor conscientiousness moderated the relationship. I predicted that an individuals' level of voice could impact the relationship in either direction – strengthening the negative relationship as a form of coping and advocacy, or weakening the relationship because voice consumes resources. However, among tenured and tenure-track faculty who displayed high and low levels of voice behavior, the relationships between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion were very similar. That is, faculty high and low in voice behavior experienced relatively similar decreases in emotional exhaustion in the face of increased distributive justice. I argue that non-significant 2-way interactions can have many potential impacts on COR theory: (1) a more broad understanding of COR may be more appropriate when considering the effect of stressors (such as distributive justice) on emotional exhaustion, and (2) these moderators – operating independently – did not accurately depict resource maintenance (i.e., acquisition vs. conservation) and motivations as I hypothesized, or (3) there may be other moderators in the relationship that were left out that could better depict the psychological phenomenon. As the three-way interaction depicting the joint effects of conscientiousness and voice behavior approached significance more closely than either two-way interaction alone, I explore the three-way interaction to advance

COR theory and application discussion.

I predicted that the negative relationship between distributive justice and emotional exhaustion was: (1) weakest among individuals high in voice behavior and high in conscientiousness, (2) weak-to-moderate among individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness, (3) moderate among individuals low in voice and low in conscientiousness, and (4) strongest among individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness. The three-way interaction approached significance, and the pattern largely followed resource acquisition and resource conservation motives that I hypothesized. The simple slopes of the three-way interaction revealed that the relationship was weak among individuals high in voice behavior and high in conscientiousness. I argue that employees who are high in conscientiousness and display high amounts of voice behavior are not as impacted by shifts in distributive justice as employees with less resources (i.e., lower conscientiousness), because they are more likely to use voice behavior as a mechanism to advocate for changes and have the capacity (high conscientiousness) to effectively enact change.

Also, as expected, the relationship was weak-to-moderate among individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness. These individuals report higher levels of emotional exhaustion on average than those individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness when encountering low levels of distributive justice; they may not be using voice as a mechanism to cope. As expected, they appear to be effectively conserving resources (the slope is still relatively flat); however, because they don't have resilient resource acquisition power as do individuals high in both voice and conscientiousness, they still experience some relief in situations of high distributive justice. Due to lower levels of voice, these individuals may be limited to the extent by which they would be motivated to acquire resources in other stressful situations (i.e., abusive

supervision and work-family conflict).

Unexpectedly, the relationship was weak among individuals low in voice and low in conscientiousness. Surprisingly, the slope was flatter than the slope of individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness, whom I expected to be more effective at conserving resources. Whereas I expected individuals low in voice and low in conscientiousness to experience overall greater levels of emotional exhaustion, I also expected them to be more likely to be impacted by the changing justice levels because hypothesized ineffective conservationist tendencies. On the contrary, this finding indicates that low-conscientiousness faculty members who displayed low levels of voice behavior tended to experience similar levels of emotional exhaustion when operating in climates of both low and high distributive justice. Perhaps these individuals are so resource depleted that changes to the justice climate aren't enough to impact their overall emotional exhaustion. For example, they may encounter other external pressures contributing to their exhaustion outside of justice. As previously mentioned, academic environments may have certain norms in place in which a certain degree of voice behavior and conscientiousness is expected and thus by displaying low levels of both, they may have high emotional exhaustion regardless of how they try to conserve resources.

As expected, the relationship was strongest among individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness, although the slope was not statistically different from the slope of the personnel low in voice and high in conscientiousness. These individuals when encountering climates of low distributive justice may have been motivated to acquire resources; however, due to their low levels of conscientiousness were doing so ineffectively. They thus experienced some of the greatest levels of emotional exhaustion. It was therefore not surprising to see the strong decline in emotional exhaustion when these individuals encountered high levels of distributive

justice because the absence of the stressor (low distributive justice) allowed the individuals to free up resources that were being spent without returns.

Although the trends of the slopes for the three-way interactions seemed to be encouraging, it is important to note that the simple slopes tests failed to indicate a significant difference amongst any of the four combinations. Keeping that in mind, these findings seem to support the idea that failing to acquire resources (high voice behavior and low conscientiousness), was related to more variance in emotional exhaustion than among individuals who were effectively acquiring, or effectively and ineffectively conserving resources (due the steeper slope). It may be useful for future studies to investigate behaviors closer to resource acquisition vs. resource conservation in an attempt to parse out these strategies, particularly for groups lower in conscientiousness so that the link is more clearly depicted in the data. Future efforts will most likely involve more metrics surrounding resource acquisition and conservation, other than the 3-item measure of voice used in the current study, to best understand the phenomenon.

The study potentially offers four contributions to the literature. First, although prior studies examining faculty and rewards more broadly have not indicated that rewards act as a potential stressor (Cole et al., 2010; Frenkel et al., 2012; Howard & Cordes, 2010; Tepper, 2000; Ferron, 2013; Sun, 2002), my findings suggest that faculty may face inequity perceptions that impact performance-related outcomes (i.e., emotional exhaustion). These findings align with studies investigating employees operating in other high-volume human service areas (i.e., healthcare) that have also applied equity theory to explain how a lack of resources (i.e., compensation or social resources) are related to emotional exhaustion (van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Baunk, 1998).

Although the finding is in line with other studies examining distributive justice's negative relationship with emotional exhaustion in the general working population, the effect found in the current study was smaller (i.e., -.20 compared to ranges of -.34 to -.42 respectively) (Cole et al., 2010; Frenkel et al., 2012). There could be several reasons why the correlation is smaller for faculty compared to general working populations. First, distributive justice (or lack thereof) in academia may not encroach on quality of life as much as employees working in other sectors who may experience more restrictions in earning potential and career alternatives. Second, faculty members tend to have other revenue avenues open to them (i.e., consulting, etc.), and may compensate income in other areas if they feel they aren't being paid enough. Lastly, as many studies reporting burnout in faculty reported, emotional exhaustion tends to occur when faculty have substantial amounts of interaction with internal and external customers (Blix et al., 1994). Thus, it is not surprising that while the correlation is significant, it is smaller than among other groups of employees.

Second, although scholars have used competing sides of COR theory as a framework to explain relationships between stressors and strains (Ng & Feldman, 2012), the present study offered a model by which one can examine the effectiveness of the strategies through voice and conscientiousness. Although I did not find support for the two-way interactions, the overall three-way interaction approached significance. This finding points to attention to the need of possibly considering the individual moderators jointly and that employees engage with stressors may not fully depend on their level of resources at that time, but some greater person-situation approach that considers such individual factors as personality along with some types of indicators of greater resource engagement motivation (i.e., voice).

Furthermore, the pattern of the three-way interaction seems to suggest that neither

resource acquisitionist or resource conservationist strategies may completely shield an employee from becoming emotionally exhausted in the face of stressors. The results show that individuals who were hypothesized resource acquisitionists as well as resource conservationists tended to maintain similar levels of emotional exhaustion even in the face of changes of distributive justice. The base line levels of emotional exhaustion differed depending on the levels of the moderations in combination (i.e., lowest for those with high values of voice and conscientiousness and highest for weak levels of voice and conscientiousness), and perhaps this may indicate that voice and conscientiousness tell more about baseline resources than actual motivational resource engagement strategies.

Third, although there were no hypotheses surrounding the direct relationship between voice and emotional exhaustion, I found that voice was negatively related to emotional exhaustion. This finding is interesting to consider since scholars argue that employees need a certain amount of resources to express voice (Ng & Feldman, 2012). In this study, faculty that are participating in greater voice behavior are also experiencing less emotional exhaustion. This negative relationship also provides support as to how faculty, operating in contexts that may tend to reward challenging the status-quo, may use voice as a resource acquisition strategy if more voice is related to less emotional exhaustion.

The last contribution of the study is the theoretical novelty of the rationale supporting the hypotheses. To my knowledge, scholars have previously not attempted to parse out resource acquisitionist vs. resource conservationist mechanisms and their effectiveness. I hope the current study will help others move closer to a comprehensive understanding of COR, its limitations, and its boundary conditions. Although none of my planned interaction hypotheses were significant, the three-way interaction between distributive justice, voice, and conscientiousness approached

significance and may encourage further examination with larger samples.

## **Implications**

The current study offers insights for practitioners on what organizations can do to address emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is very costly, as it leads to turnover and reduced productivity. Hence, any organizational intervention that could reduce emotional exhaustion is of utility (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). The findings in the current paper suggest that organizations would benefit from efforts to decrease perceptions of distributive justice for faculty, and particularly try to encourage avenues by which faculty can be involved in compensation and reward structure decision-making. Any formalized process that could make voice behavior less resource-demanding particularly in the face of stressors could be very instrumental in decreasing the felt exhaustion of workers. Some companies have been successful at instrumenting “warm lines” where workers can anonymously call and report anticipations of stressors (i.e., incivility) before there is an actual formal issue to address. Perhaps implementing some sort of informal reporting mechanism by which faculty could make a business case for reward and compensation reallocation would be of utility.

These avenues may be particularly important because it can guide faculty toward effective ways to address stressors in their environment. This would be particularly helpful perhaps for those faculty low in conscientiousness who display high voice behavior that may be liquidating their resources inefficiently. Although I suggest voice behavior as a mechanism by which individuals are deploying resource acquisition or resource conservation strategies, there is little empirical evidence for such claims. These clear limitations lead me to suggest many opportunities for scholars to improve on my research.

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

I emphasize many limitations to the study. First, the sample was small. Also, as the sample is made up of tenured and tenure-track faculty, there is a limitation to the extent to which these findings can be applied to general working populations. Third, the conscientiousness scale had a reliability coefficient of .59 and was restricted in assessing the range of conscientiousness. Hence, I suggest that scholars may want to use other items or scales when assessing conscientiousness amongst faculty populations.

I suggest that scholars employ items more targeted toward resource conservation and acquisition as well as investigate strategy effectiveness when wanting to compare the competing sides of COR theory. While my study used empirically validated scales, I made several novel assumptions of the application of voice and conscientiousness that add risk to theoretical foundation of the study without further validation.

It may also be helpful for scholars to examine the variables of interest in this study longitudinally. This would allow the constructs to be measured over time, and may be helpful particularly when looking at resource acquisition and resource conservation sides of COR. For example, perhaps employees engaging in resource conservation can conserve resources quickly, whereas it may take time for individuals to enact the organizational changes they are attempting to make when using voice to acquire resources.

Although I avoided investigating facet-level conscientiousness and voice behavior to limit the complexity of the study and to protect participants against survey fatigue, I encourage scholars to consider using multiple facets of conscientiousness. Indeed, several scholars believe that two facets of conscientiousness are duty and achievement-striving (Ashton, 1998; Hough, 1992; Moon, 2001; Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008; Paunonen & Jackson, 2000). These two facets may have competing influences on the degree to which individuals advocate for

change in the workplace. For example, conscientious individuals high in dutifulness may advocate for change in the organization because they have a high sense of responsibility and commitment toward positive change even if it could cause political self-harm (Brockner, 1992; Moon, 2001; Moon et al., 2008; Staw & Ross, 1980). The achievement-striving component of conscientiousness influences the extent to which individuals are self-motivated and not act in any way that may be politically risky (Moon et al., 2008). These alternative forms of conscientiousness may have been a contributing factor to the null findings. Future studies of this kind might benefit from assessing multiple facets of conscientiousness in the model.

Voice behavior has similarly begun to be broken down into multiple facets. For example, some scholars have categorized voice behavior into prohibitive and promotive voice (Liang et al., 2012; Lin & Johnson, 2015; Wei, Zhang, & Chen, 2015). The goal for prohibitive voice is to change or stop things that are already happening in the environment (preventing organizational failure). The goal of promotive voice is to improve organizational functioning. Prohibitive voice is often associated with whistleblowing behavior and can sometimes provoke conflict and disagreement with others (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Thus, prohibitive voice may require more resources than promotive voice because it is potentially riskier for the voice actors (Liang et al., 2012; Lin & Johnson, 2015). As certain forms of voice may be related differentially to resources than others, perhaps it would be useful for future studies to also examine facet-level voice along with facet-level conscientiousness when comparing resource acquisitionist vs. resource conservationist strategies in COR theory.

Finally, scholars may want to investigate other personality constructs that may contribute to an individual's motivation to acquire or conserve resources. In this study, emotional stability served as a control variable, but it would be reasonable to posit that individuals high in emotional

stability or extraversion may also be related to the effectiveness by which one could conserve or acquiring resources (Bakker et al., 2006).

## **Conclusion**

I conducted a test of the effectiveness of resource acquisition and resource conservation of COR theory by assessing the joint effects of conscientiousness and voice behavior on emotional exhaustion. In line with COR and equity theory, I found that distributive justice was negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Hypothesis 1). Contrary to COR, I found that neither voice behavior nor conscientiousness moderated the negative relationship (Hypotheses 2 and 3). I also found that the joint voice behavior and conscientiousness interaction in predicting the distributive justice and emotional exhaustion relationship only approached significance (Hypothesis 4). The joint effects of conscientiousness and voice behavior tended to follow the hypothesized pattern in that following the resource acquisition side of COR, the effects of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion tended to be stronger among individuals high in voice and low in conscientiousness and weaker among individuals high in voice and high in conscientiousness. Following the resource conservationist side of COR, the relationship tended to be weaker among individuals low in voice and high in conscientiousness. Individuals low in conscientiousness and low in voice did not follow the hypothesized pattern. Insignificant differences amongst the slopes may reflect the need for greater tailoring of scales (possibly by examining facet level voice or conscientiousness) or other factors (i.e., including extraversion) to the model.

The findings provide alternative approaches to conceptualizing resource acquisition and resource conservation mechanisms in COR. The findings also highlight that distributive justice, even among faculty can be associated with emotional exhaustion. Interventions that are meant to

increase the avenues by which faculty can address inequity and increase voice, especially among individuals low in conscientiousness, may be impactful.

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Table 1.  
*Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Nested Models*

Model	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$ difference	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Four-factor	84	154.21		.05	.97	.96
Three-factor	87	260.71	106.5**	.07	.92	.89
Two-factor	89	998.89	738.89**	.17	.59	.45
One-factor	90	1278.17	279.28**	.19	.46	.28

*Note.*  $N=219$ . CFI = Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation, TLI = Tucker Lewis Index. \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2.  
*Standardized and Squared Factor Loadings from Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Parameter	Method Latent Factor		Trait Latent Factor	
	Standardized	Squared	Standardized	Squared
<u>Distributive Justice</u>				
DJ1	0.600	0.36	0.70	0.48
DJ2	0.700	0.49	0.63	0.40
DJ3	0.642	0.41	0.70	0.49
<u>Voice</u>				
V1	0.123	0.02	0.84	0.70
V2	0.032	0.00	0.82	0.66
V3	-0.093	0.01	0.89	0.79
<u>Emotional Exhaustion</u>				
EE1	-0.326	0.11	0.84	0.70
EE2	-0.435	0.19	0.69	0.47
EE3	-0.227	0.05	0.73	0.53
EE4	-0.129	0.02	0.70	0.49
EE5	-0.363	0.13	0.72	0.51
<u>Conscientiousness</u>				
C1	0.002	0.00	0.92	0.84
C2	0.038	0.00	0.46	0.21
C3	0.151	0.02	0.21	0.04
C4	0.153	0.02	0.22	0.05

Table 3.

*Intercorrelation Matrix.*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.42	0.67	---							
2. Minority Status	0.06	0.23	0.06	---						
3. Rank	2.32	1.2	0.09	0.05	---					
4. Emotional Stability	3.68	0.8	-.160*	0.00	-.193**	0.72				
5. Distributive Justice	3.12	1.39	-.139*	-0.12	0.12	0.04	0.95			
6. Voice	4.02	0.83	-0.08	0.06	-.211**	0.09	0.04	0.84		
7. Emotional Exhaustion	2.60	0.93	.124*	0.03	0.05	-.350**	-.363**	-.193**	0.59	
8. Conscientiousness	4.04	0.66	-0.09	-0.06	0.06	.282**	0.02	0.07	-.167*	0.89

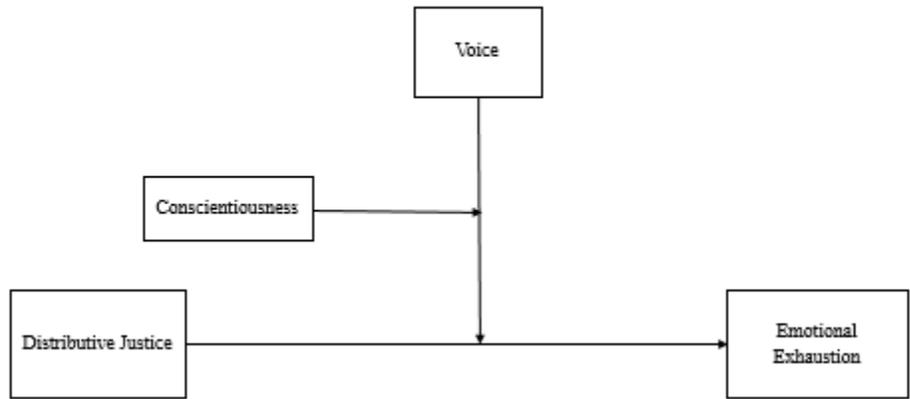
*Note.* N = 219. \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ . Two-tailed test. Reliability estimates ( $\alpha$ ) are reported on the diagonal. Tenure was coded as Assistant = 1, Associate = 2, and Full professor = 3. Minority status was coded as 0 = Majority and 1 = Minority (e.g., Black or African American, Hispanic, and Native American).

Table 4.

*Emotional Exhaustion Regressed on the Predictors*

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	2.52**	0.08	2.57**	0.08	2.58**	0.08	2.59*	0.08
Minority Status	0.17	0.23	0.03	0.21	0.04	0.22	0.01	0.22
Rank	-0.05	0.08	-0.07	0.08	-0.07	0.08	-0.07	0.08
Gender	0.12	0.11	0.05	0.10	0.04	0.10	0.02	0.10
Emotional Stability	-0.39**	0.08	-0.34**	0.07	-0.35**	0.07	-0.33*	0.07
Voice			-0.17**	0.07	-0.19*	0.08	-0.19*	0.08
Conscientiousness			-0.13	0.09	-0.12	0.09	-0.14	0.09
Distributive justice			-0.22**	0.04	-0.22*	0.04	-0.23*	0.04
Distributive Justice x Voice					0.01	0.05	0.03	0.05
Distributive Justice x Conscientiousness					-0.04	0.06	-0.05	0.06
Voice x Conscientiousness					-0.12	0.11	-0.04	0.12
Distributive Justice x Voice x Conscientiousness							0.12	0.07
$R^2$	0.14		0.27		0.28			0.29
Adjusted $R^2$	0.12		0.25		0.24			0.25
$\Delta R^2$	0.14**		0.13**		0.01			0.01

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$



*Figure 1.* Theoretical Model



Figure 2. Interaction of distributive justice and conscientiousness on emotional exhaustion.  $N = 219$



Figure 3. Interaction of distributive justice and voice on emotional exhaustion.  $N = 219$

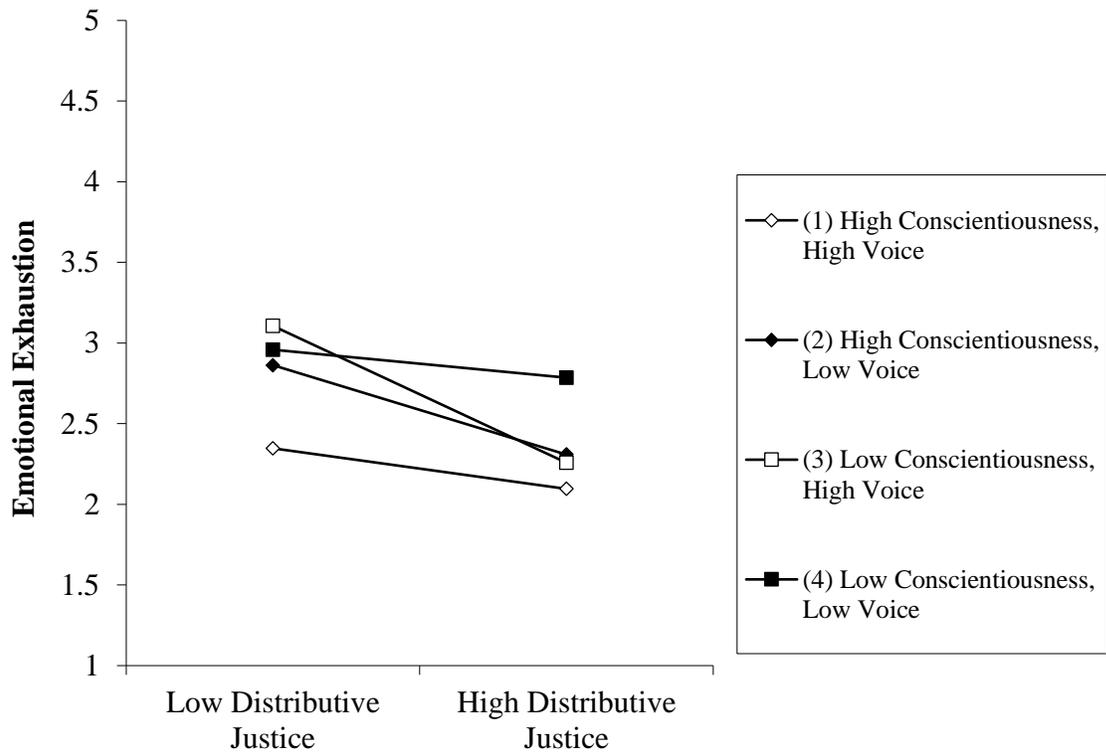


Figure 4. Interaction of voice, conscientiousness on the negative effect of distributive justice on emotional exhaustion.  $N = 219$

## Appendix A

### Distributive Justice

(As presented to participants online)

The following items refer to decisions made about your COMPENSATION and MERIT REVIEW PROCESS.

Please indicate to what extent.

	To a small extent				To a large extent
Your compensation is fair, relative to the performance of others.	<input type="radio"/>				
Your compensation reflects what you have contributed to the university.	<input type="radio"/>				
Your compensation is fair, given your performance.	<input type="radio"/>				

## Appendix B

### Emotional Exhaustion

(As presented to participants online)

The following sets of questions are about your perceptions of working in your DEPARTMENT.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel emotionally drained from my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel used up at the end of the day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day of work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing my work is really a strain for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel burned out from work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix C

### Voice

(As presented to participants online)

The following sets of questions are about your perceptions of working in your DEPARTMENT.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect my department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicate my opinions about work issues to others in my department, even if my opinion is different than others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get involved in issues that affect the quality of work life in this department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix D

### Conscientiousness

(As presented to participants online)

Please use the rating scale to describe how accurately each statement describes you. Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I make a mess of things (R).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often forget to put things back in their proper place. (R)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get chores done right away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like order.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix D

### Emotional Stability

(As presented to participants online)

Please use the rating scale to describe how accurately each statement describes you. Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am relaxed most of the time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seldom feel sad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have frequent mood swings. (R)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get upset easily. (R)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>