THESIS

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL INJUSTICE:

ARE INJUSTICE AND JUSTICE POLAR OPPOSITES?

Submitted by

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY CHRISTA PALMER ENTITLED UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE: ARE INJUSTICE AND JUSTICE POLAR OPPOSITES? BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE.

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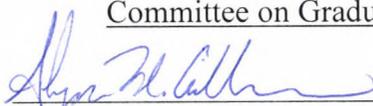
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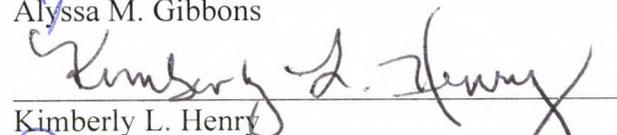
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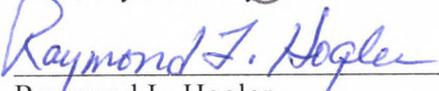
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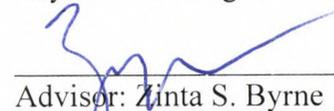
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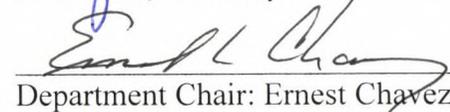
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL INJUSTICE: ARE JUSTICE AND

INJUSTICE POLAR OPPOSITES?

The goal of this study is to clarify our understanding of organizational injustice.

It appears that the extant research has assumed that organizational justice is bipolar, with

injustice being its opposite construct. Based on this assumption, organizational injustice

has been equated with low levels of organizational justice, and has been measured

accordingly. However, the bipolar assumption has yet to be empirically tested, giving

validity to the use of existing scales of justice for the measurement of injustice. The

present study removes all assumptions of the relationship between organizational justice

and injustice. A model and understanding of injustice is developed based on qualitative

analysis of employees' experiences of both justice and injustice. Semi-structured

interviews are conducted to extract experiences of organizational injustice, and the role of

emotion in the experience of justice and injustice. The qualitative data is analyzed using

the grounded theory approach, and it is concluded that organizational justice and injustice

are *not* bipolar constructs occupying a single continuum of perceptions. Results call for a

more accurate measurement tool of injustice.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizational justice refers to people's perceptions of fairness in the workplace (Greenberg, 1987). When an employee experiences justice in the workplace, his or her expectations have been met regarding what is deserved (Cohen, 1991). In contrast, an experience of injustice is a violation of social, moral, and fairness norms accompanied by feelings of outrage, anger, and resentment (Bies, 1987; Fine, 1983). Experiences of injustice in the workplace have pervasive negative consequences for the individual victim, as well as the organization as a whole (Harlos & Pinder, 1999). For example, research has shown that organizational injustice, as it is currently defined and measured, is associated with strong negative emotions (Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008), poor mental and physical health of employees (Elovainio, Kivimäki, & Vahtera, 2002; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999; Tepper, 2001), job stress and job strain (Francis & Barling, 2005; Greenberg, 2006), employee theft (Shapiro, Trevino, & Victor, 1995), workplace aggression (Kennedy, Homant, & Homant, 2004), counterproductive work behaviors (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001), turnover intentions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), and burnout (Moliner, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, & Cropanzano, 2005). This body of research underscores the importance of understanding and preventing organizational injustice; however, the tools currently used to measure injustice may limit our understanding of injustice and its consequences. Despite its value, much of the existing research appears to be an investigation of the consequences of

low levels of organizational *justice*, which may not necessarily capture the magnitude or extensiveness of consequences of organizational *in*justice.

When considering experiences of injustice, current measures of (in)justice seem inadequate for describing violations of moral norms. Current justice items, which are used for assessing injustice, are positively worded or tend not to be expressive of incidences of violations. For example, one item from a commonly used scale asks, "To what extent has your supervisor communicated details in a timely manner?" (Colquitt, 2001). It appears that no research to date has examined the validity of using low endorsement of these items to capture the domain space of injustice, nor has any research to date explicitly assessed the relationship between organizational justice and injustice. That is, are the two polar opposites on a single continuum?

The role of emotion in experiences of organizational justice and injustice may help clarify whether justice and injustice represent opposite constructs. If the association between injustice and negative emotion is asymmetrical to the association between justice and positive emotion, one might conclude that injustice is separate from justice. That is, polar opposites should be expected to demonstrate symmetrical associations with other constructs. Current theory and past research have supported a relationship between injustice and strong negative emotions; however, there is less support for the role of positive emotion in experiencing justice (Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008). Positive emotion may be associated more strongly with the favorability of the outcome of an event than with the fairness of an event (Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999), suggesting that the relationship between justice and positive emotion may be weaker than the relationship between injustice and negative emotion. Further, current justice items (e.g., Colquitt,

2001; Moorman, 1991) do not assess the role of emotion in experiencing justice (or injustice). Hence, one aim of the present research is to determine if there is a meaningful difference in the role of emotion for experiencing justice and injustice.

If it is empirically determined that organizational justice and injustice are polar opposites along a single continuum and that low levels of justice do represent injustice, the current study would provide strong support for the efficacy of using measures of organizational justice to assess organizational injustice. However, if it is found that organizational justice and injustice are not bipolar constructs, these findings would indicate that low levels of justice do not represent or fully capture the domain of injustice. With such an outcome, measures of organizational justice should not be used to measure injustice, justifying a new tool for measuring organizational injustice.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to understand employees' experiences of injustice by: 1) comparing and contrasting perceptions of justice and injustice, 2) examining the role of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice, and 3) either validating the use of current measures of injustice or supporting the development of a new measure of injustice. To achieve these goals, qualitative methods are employed. Semi-structured interviews are used to ask employees about their experiences of injustice at work, their experiences of justice at work, and their perceptions of how experiences of justice and injustice are similar and different. Responses that indicate a potential role of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice are also compared, and employees' perceptions of how justice and injustice are similar and different are analyzed. Based on these interviews, the themes that emerge from employees' descriptions of injustice are be contrasted with the emergent themes from employees' descriptions of justice.

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Employees' experiences of injustice form the construct definition and taxonomy of injustice, which is compared to the formed definition and existing taxonomies of justice. The current study contributes to the extant literature by: 1) examining untested assumptions about the relationship between justice and injustice, 2) better understanding the role of emotion in organizational justice and injustice, and 3) either providing justification for use of existing justice measures to measure injustice or by offering support for the development of a measure of injustice that has actually been designed to measure injustice, rather than justice.

Understanding Organizational Justice

With no assessment tool available that was specifically developed to measure injustice, much of the existing research on injustice has used measures of justice to assess injustice (e.g., Elovainio et al., 2002; Francis & Barling, 2005; Shapiro, et al., 1995); hence presenting consequences of low levels of justice as consequences of injustice (e.g., Jones, 2009; Moliner, et al., 2005; Tepper, 2001). This measurement strategy is based on the assumption that a lack of organizational justice is equivalent to the presence of organizational injustice, and that the lack of organizational injustice is equivalent to the presence of organizational justice. To understand why this assumption should at the very least be questioned, it is helpful to first review the research on organizational justice.

Wave I: Distributive Justice

The development of the study of organizational justice has often been described as developing in waves (Byrne & Cropanzano, 2001; Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). The first wave of organizational justice research focused on *distributive justice*, or the fairness of the outcomes and resources received at work (Adams, 1963,

1965; Deutsch, 1975, 1985; Homans, 1961). Distributive justice is often attributed to Adams' theory of inequity (1963, 1965), which postulates that perceptions of equity (justice) are based on a comparison of one's own outcomes to someone else's outcomes. Adams proposed that employees compare the ratio of what they put in to their work (inputs, e.g., effort and experience) to what they get from their work (outputs, e.g., pay and rewards) to others' ratios of inputs - outputs. Outcomes are viewed as fair if ones own ratio of inputs to outputs is seen as equitable to others ratios of inputs to outputs (Deutsch, 1985).

Similar to Homans' (1961) theories of fairness in non-work related social situations, Adams proposed that when inequity is perceived, feelings of guilt or anger result. Specifically, if the inequity is in one's own favor, such as an overpayment, the inequity results in feelings of guilt. If the inequity is unfavorable, referred to as underpayment, the inequity results in feelings of anger. Adams extended Homans' ideas by discussing potential behavioral and cognitive reactions to perceived inequity. According to Adams, perceptions of inequity lead to tension or distress, as well as a natural drive to reduce that tension and regain equity. In order to re-establish equity, one may make either cognitive or behavioral changes. For example, by cognitively changing the value placed on ones' own inputs (e.g., how much one's own time and effort is valued), the outcome may again be perceived as fair. Alternatively, one may make behavioral changes and invest less time and effort in a situation so that the output is more in line with the input level, restoring equity. Adams' equity theory has received substantial support (for a review, see Colquitt et al., 2005). However, situations of

overpayment (inequity in one's own favor) have not elicited the same degree of equity-restoring responses as situations of underpayment (i.e., Greenberg, 1988).

During the first wave of justice research, we have gained an understanding of how employees perceive fairness in relation to the outcomes and rewards they receive at work, and also a preliminary understanding of how employees react when outcomes are perceived as unfair. Implications for organizations from this wave of research include the need to focus on distributing outcomes and rewards in a way that is perceived equitable by employees, and that employees compare themselves to others when forming justice judgments. However, justice researchers soon realized that overall justice perceptions were based on more than just fairness of outcomes, which led to the second wave of justice research.

Wave II: Procedural Justice

The second wave of organizational justice research focused on the fairness of the process followed by an organization to distribute resources and outcomes, termed *procedural justice* (Leventhal, 1980; Thibault & Walker, 1975). The construct of procedural justice was first introduced by Thibault and Walker as the fairness of legal proceedings, or the fairness of the process followed to resolve legal disputes. Thibault and Walker recognized that an individual's overall perception of the fairness of a trial was influenced not only by the outcome of the trial, but also by the process followed to reach that outcome. Specifically, Thibault and Walker highlighted the importance of voice (the ability to give one's opinion during the process) and decision-control (the ability to have some perceived control over the final decision) in perceptions of a fair trial. Leventhal extended the ideas of Thibault and Walker beyond legal dispute contexts

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to processes used in organizations. Leventhal (1980) proposed that there are six rules used to determine the fairness of procedures: consistency (how consistent the procedures are across time and persons), bias suppression (whether or not the procedures are affected by bias or self-interest), accuracy (the extent to which procedures are based on valid information and void of error), correctability (whether or not there is an opportunity to appeal the procedures), representativeness (the extent to which procedures reflect the concerns and needs of all persons affected), and ethicality (the extent to which procedures are consistent with moral and ethical values). Following Leventhal's expansion of procedural fairness beyond the courtroom, Folger and Greenberg (1985) strongly emphasized the connections between procedural fairness and organizational science. Folger and Greenberg are often credited for bringing procedural justice concepts into research and practice in organizations (Byrne & Cropanzano, 2001).

The second wave of organizational justice research expanded upon the first wave by including the fairness of procedures within the framework of justice perceptions. There is substantial support for procedural justice as distinct from distributive justice, and for the associations between procedural justice and positive workplace outcomes (for a review, see Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Research on procedural justice brought to light that perceptions of the fairness of outcomes are not sufficient to account for overall perceptions of justice. The implications of the cumulative findings from this wave of research are that organizations need to ensure the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcomes in addition to the fairness of the outcomes. People care about how decisions are made, not just the outcome of the decision.

Wave III: Interactional Justice

The third wave of organizational justice research focused on *interactional justice*, or the fairness of interpersonal communication during the implementation of organizational procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986). The construct of interactional justice adds to distributive and procedural justice by focusing on the fairness of how supervisors treat their subordinates. Bies and Moag (1986) proposed four components of interactional justice: truthfulness (the extent to which the supervisor or manager is open and honest in discussing procedures and outcomes), justification (the extent to which the supervisor or manager provides an adequate explanation of the outcome), respect (the extent to which the supervisor treats the employee with dignity and sincerity), and propriety (the extent to which the supervisor avoids improper questions or comments). Research has consistently supported interactional justice as a distinct construct from distributive and procedural justice, though all three types are moderately correlated (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Moorman, 1991).

It was later proposed that interactional justice has two distinct subcategories: *interpersonal justice*, fairness related to being treated with respect and propriety, and *informational justice*, fairness related to the truthfulness and justification for outcomes (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1993). Many organizational justice researchers have embraced this four-type taxonomy (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice; e.g., Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Other researchers instead maintain a three-type taxonomy (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice; e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), wherein informational and interpersonal justices are subsumed within interactional justice. The three-type taxonomy of justice is often chosen for reasons of parsimony and when the distinction between informational

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and interpersonal justice is not relevant to the research question (e.g., Ambrose &
Schminke). The four-type taxonomy of justice is often chosen in an attempt to clarify the
construct of justice in more detail and when the separation of informational and
interpersonal justice is meaningful (e.g., Colquitt & Shaw, 2005).

Expanding on the research of waves one and two, justice researchers in wave
three clarified the importance of interpersonal relations in determining overall
perceptions of fairness and unfairness. Not only must organizations ensure that the
outcomes given to employees are fair and based on fair procedures, but also that the
communications related to procedures are fair. Further, the communications between
employees and supervisors represent a third way that employees may perceive a lack of
fairness, or injustice. The implication of this third wave is that there is an essential
people component in justice perceptions. Organizational fairness is based on more than
input – output ratios and procedures. Perceptions of fairness also incorporate how
employees are treated by others during the implementation of decisions.

The current understanding of organizational justice is reflective of the substantial
contributions of each wave of research. An employee's perception of fairness in the
workplace depends on what the employee receives (distributive justice), the decision-
making process behind what the employee receives (procedural justice), and the personal
interactions involved in the decision-making process (interactional justice, or
informational and interpersonal justice).

Wave IV: Present Day

The current wave of organizational justice is focused on integration – integrating
the different types of organizational justice, and integrating organizational justice with

the concerns of today's organizations (Byrne & Cropanzano, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2005). One body of research has focused on construct clarification by examining the construct validity of different types of organizational justice (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001; for a review, see Colquitt & Shaw, 2005). Other recent research has focused more on the effects of perceptions of high and low levels of the various types of organizational justice (see Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

Currently, there appears to be an increased interest in understanding the antecedents and consequences of low levels of organizational justice and injustice (e.g., Barclay & Skarlicki, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Greenberg, 2006; Jones, 2009). However, the interest in antecedents and consequences of organizational injustice has grown more quickly than advancements in the potential for accurately capturing this construct. The present research will add to the significant works of the four waves of justice research by exploring the construct and measurement of organizational injustice.

Understanding Organizational Injustice

Our current understanding of organizational injustice is based overwhelmingly on our understanding of organizational justice. Injustice has been examined as the opposite of justice and measured as equivalent to low levels of justice or as the absence of justice. Still, the current study is not the first to focus on injustice. Notable exceptions in the literature have contributed greatly to our nascent understanding of injustice. This small but significant body of work provides support for a conceptual distinction between justice and injustice by defining the construct of injustice (e.g., Bies, 1987; Bies & Tripp, 2002; Harlos & Pinder, 1999), and by examining the relationship between injustice and negative emotion (e.g., Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998). Research focused on the

consequences of low levels of organizational justice, assumed to be equivalent to injustice (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Elovainio, Kivimäki, & Vahtera, 2002; Francis & Barling, 2005), provides further justification for the need to accurately understand injustice in the workplace.

Definitions of Organizational Injustice

Organizational injustice is more than a judgment of how fair outcomes and processes appear. It is more than simply not getting expectations met regarding outcomes, procedures, and interactions at work. Instead, organizational injustice is a violation of social and fairness norms that causes moral outrage, anger, and resentment in those affected (Bies, 1987; Bies & Tripp, 2002). This definition is consistent with Fine (1983) who defined social injustice as "at minimum, a violation of a moral contract for goods, services, opportunities and/or treatment" (p. 16). Bies and colleagues began with the premise that to understand organizational justice, you have to start with injustice. Consistent with this approach, Bies and Moag (1986) sought to understand the emotional and cognitive experience of injustice (for an overview, see Bies, 2001), concluding that justice and injustice are distinct phenomena. Whereas experiences of justice occur when expectations are met, experiences of injustice go beyond unmet expectations to violations of what employees feel they deserve, accompanied by feelings of defenselessness, anger, and resentment (Bies & Tripp, 2002).

Harlos and Pinder (1999) also argued that organizational injustice must be considered separately from organizational justice, in order to understand the range, complexity, and dimensionality of employees' experiences of injustice. Instead of focusing on developing an overall conceptual definition, the authors focused on the

structure of injustice. The authors developed a taxonomy of injustice based on structured interviews with managerial/professional workers and clerical/line workers in two different organizations. In addition to three types of injustice mirroring the three-type taxonomy of justice (distributive injustice, procedural injustice, and interactional injustice), a fourth type of injustice emerged: systematic injustice, representing perceived injustice involving company-wide policies and practices. Harlos and Pinder make no direct comparison between their emergent taxonomy of justice and existing taxonomies of injustice. What one may take away from this work is that organizational injustice should be separated from justice, but also that it may be possible to understand injustice within a complimentary framework to justice.

We have yet to effectively map "the psychological geography of injustice" (Bies & Tripp, 2001, p. 204). However, we have begun to understand organizational injustice as its own construct, and also how injustice and justice may potentially be understood within a similar conceptual framework. The limited research focused specifically on defining injustice provides supportive evidence against the assumed bipolarity of justice.

The Role of Negative Emotion in Organizational Injustice

One reason that organizational injustice may not be the polar opposite of justice is based on the role of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice. Whereas the role of intense emotions is central to definitions of injustice (Bies, 1987; Bies & Tripp, 2002), the role of emotion is less clear for justice. Research consistently associates injustice with distress, anger, and guilt (Mikula et al., 1998); however, traditional conceptualizations of justice do not explicitly connect experiences of justice with strong positive emotions. Conceivably, these asymmetric relationships with emotion are due to

an important difference in the role of affect between experiences of justice and injustice that has largely been ignored.

Several lines of research outside the realm of organizational psychology have empirically supported negative emotion as intertwined with experiences of injustice. For example, descriptive investigations of injustice experiences outside of the work context have consistently supported the role of emotion in experiences of injustice. In one series of investigations, participants were asked to recall prior experiences of injustice, in any domain in life (Mikula, 1986, 1987). In describing these experiences, the majority of participants reported feelings of anger and rage, whereas others recalled feeling helpless, in despair, disappointed, upset, and aroused. Clayton (1992) provided further support for anger as the primary reaction to social injustice, followed by frustration and disappointment. Mikula et al. (1998) also strengthened these conclusions, finding that events perceived as unfair most frequently elicited anger, followed by feelings of disgust and sadness. Further, Mikula et al. extended this line of research by showing these negative emotional reactions to be relatively intense and long-lasting.

In addition to the research from areas outside of organizational psychology, the relationship between organizational injustice and negative emotion experienced by employees has received considerable theoretical and empirical support (Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008). Theoretical support stems from models derived to explain the process of perceiving an event or outcome at work as unfair. For example, the deontic justice model (Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005) pulls from evolutionary theories to propose that physiological and psychological distress are natural reactions to injustice. According to this model, strong emotional reactions to injustice are adaptive. These reactions cause

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physiological arousal, which leads us to act and respond to a potentially harmful (unfair) situation and allows us to survive.

Fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001) also supports the relationship between injustice and negative affect. According to this theory, individuals evaluate a behavior or outcome in terms of three possible alternatives: 1) What would have happened if the behavior had not occurred? 2) Could the perpetrator have behaved differently? and 3) Should the perpetrator have behaved that way? If individuals perceive that the behavior could have been avoided, should have been avoided, and that another behavior would have yielded better outcomes, strong perceptions of unfairness result. According to Folger and Cropanzano, these perceptions of unfairness lead to anger, which is likely to lead to behavioral retaliation.

In their integrated model of perceived unfairness, Rutte and Messick (1995) proposed that reactions to injustice are only evoked when an important received outcome is perceived as unfavorable. Once the outcome is perceived as going against the employee's best interest, three questions follow: 1) Is the outcome unfair? 2) Who is responsible for the outcome? and 3) What does the outcome imply for one's standing in the organization? If the outcome is perceived as unfair, the employee seeks to understand who is responsible for the unfairness. Once responsibility is determined, the next step is to determine how the unfair outcome affects the employee's status at work. According to Rutte and Messick, the employee will experience distress when the outcome is perceived as unfair, especially if the unfair outcome negatively impacts the employee's status.

Empirical research has supported the basic premise of the aforementioned theories: that perceptions of injustice lead to strong negative emotions, which lead to

negative behavioral responses. Bies and Tripp (1996) found that employees experience "white hot emotions" (p. 254) in reaction to injustice at work. These emotions, which included anger, bitterness, and feeling shattered, were subsequently related to employees seeking revenge for the injustice. Furthermore, negative affect has been shown to mediate the relationship between experiencing injustice and retaliation in the form of protest (Vermunt, Wit, Van den Bos, & Lind, 1996), and as a necessary condition for any attempt to restore equity (Hassebrauck, 1987).

Although there is impressive theoretical and empirical support connecting experiences of injustice with negative emotion, this is not the case for experiences of justice and positive emotion. There is limited research supporting a correlation between positive emotion and justice (e.g., Austin & Walster, 1974); however, much of the research in this area is inconsistent and conflicting (Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008). Further, justice perceptions and reactions have generally been viewed as cold, cognitive responses, and not emotionally laden (Barsky & Kaplan, 2007). Without considering the differential role of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice, it is likely that our current understanding of these two constructs is inaccurate. Our current understanding has assumed that justice and injustice are polar opposites, yet the associations between justice and injustice with emotion do not appear symmetrical. Recent advances in research showing the negative consequences of low levels of organizational justice (and potentially of injustice) highlight the need to improve our understanding and measurement in this area.

Consequences of Organizational Injustice

The negative consequences of not experiencing justice highlight the practical importance of understanding injustice and testing the validity of current assumptions regarding justice and injustice. Although much of the existing research is based on the assumption that injustice is equivalent to low levels of justice, this body of research provides preliminary support for negative health consequences and negative retaliation behaviors when employees experience organizational injustice. Specifically, research supporting negative health consequences of injustice has shown that low levels of organizational justice are related to low levels of self-reported overall health, higher levels of minor psychiatric problems, and a higher number of recorded sick days (Elovainio, Kivimäki, & Vahtera, 2002); low levels of justice are predictive of future symptoms and diagnoses of depression (Tepper, 2001); and finally, low levels of justice are associated with psychological strain (Francis & Barling, 2005) and with burnout (Moliner, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, Ramos, & Cropanzano, 2005). In addition to negative health consequences for employees experiencing low levels of justice, injustice is also likely related to negative behavioral reactions directed at the organization. For example, experiencing low levels of justice is related to counter-productive work behaviors (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001), and observing injustice in the workplace is related to higher levels of support for aggression and retaliation in the workplace (Kennedy, Homant, & Homant, 2004). Though this body of research does provide evidence suggesting that experiences of injustice lead to negative consequences for the employee and the organization (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Gilliland, 2008), the current measurement of injustice may not accurately capture the breadth or severity of these consequences, or provide the right insight into how injustice can be prevented.

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There is no scale developed and validated specifically to measure organizational injustice as its own construct. Without a scale developed specifically for this construct, researchers have instead used organizational justice measures to assess injustice. This practice is based on the assumption that organizational justice scales are valid for assessing injustice. However, this assumption has not yet been tested, calling into question the validity of the use of justice scales for measuring injustice.

Recently, attention has been given to the limitations of current organizational justice measures. Gilliland (2008) notes that although validated scales of organizational justice (i.e., Colquitt, 2001; Moorman, 1991) allow for consistency and comparability across studies, it is possible that by using them to measure injustice we are limiting our understanding of the underlying constructs and processes. Specifically, Gilliland (2008) argues that current measures of organizational justice capture moderate levels of justice well, but do not accurately measure perceptions of high levels of justice and perceptions of injustice. Unfortunately, the perceptions of injustice that are missed are likely the strongest predictors of behavioral responses to fairness perceptions (Gilliland, Benson, & Schepers, 1998).

The asymmetrical impact of experiences of injustice over experiences of justice is supported by the 'negativity bias' (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). This bias states that negative events (i.e., events that are perceived as severely unjust) are more salient, potent, and perceived as more important than positive events. Hence, people react more strongly to negative events that trigger perceptions of injustice than to events perceived as fair.

Furthermore, if the role of affect is stronger in perceptions of organizational injustice, this too will heighten the impact of these negative experiences (Clayton, 1992).

To date, there is not enough conclusive evidence to indicate that the current measures of organizational justice are inadequate for assessing injustice, however there is enough evidence to cast doubt on the assumption that low scores on measures of organizational justice are equivalent to high levels of organizational injustice (Bobko, 1985; Gilliland, 2008). Further support for testing this assumption comes from research on the separation of positive- and negative-valent attitudes. Separating positive and negative processes of an attitude or evaluation in psychological theory and measurement allows for positive and negative processes to operate independently and to have unique antecedents and consequences (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). Examining perceptions of injustice independently from perceptions of justice will allow for a better understanding of how these perceptions are formed and the unique consequences that may follow from each.

From a psychometric perspective, the validity of the bipolar assumption inherent in organizational justice research also raises doubt over the current methods of measuring organizational injustice. Specifically, the bipolar assumption of organizational justice holds that justice and injustice are exact opposites, existing at opposite ends of the same, single continuum (Bobko, 1985; Segura & González-Romá, 2003). This means that high levels of organizational justice represent low levels of organizational injustice and low levels of organizational justice represent high levels of organizational injustice (see Figure 1). However, if the assumption of bipolarity is invalid, organizational justice and injustice may be two unipolar constructs on the same dimension. This would indicate

that there is no overlap between perceptions of justice and injustice, allowing for a point in the middle of the spectrum where neither justice nor injustice is experienced (see Figure 2). Alternatively, organizational justice and injustice could be represented as two separate and distinct constructs, each existing on its own spectrum (see Figure 3). Hence, if the assumption of bipolarity is invalidated and organizational justice and injustice emerge as either two unipolar constructs on the same spectrum or as two separate and distinct constructs, the current justice scales are not valid for assessing injustice.

Other research areas have dealt with similar issues in the initial measurement of their constructs and have found the bipolar assumption to be invalid. Five examples from the areas of health science, personality psychology, gender studies, and organizational psychology illustrate the bipolarity assumption and the possible positive consequences of removing the bipolarity assumption. The first example involves the concepts of health and illness. Millstein and Irwin (1987) showed that peoples' concepts of physical health and illness represent two separate and unique, yet related constructs (similar to Figure 3), rather than two opposite ends of one spectrum. Similarly, Keyes (2005) showed that mental health and illness represent two correlated unipolar dimensions (similar to Figure 3).

The second illustration comes from personality psychology using the constructs of positive and negative affectivity (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Watson and Tellegen define positive affectivity as the generalized tendency to experience positive emotions, and negative affectivity as the generalized tendency to experience negative emotions. Like health and illness, positive and negative affectivity may appear to be complete opposites (bipolar constructs). However, research (e.g., Tellegen, Watson, & Clark,

1999; Watson &Tellegen, 1985) has supported them as independent and uncorrelated dimensions (similar to Figure 3), meaning that one's level of positive affectivity has no relationship to one's level of negative affectivity.

The third illustration involves the gender-type personality constructs of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity refers to one's general tendency to act in accordance with traditional masculine roles (i.e., agentic and independent), and femininity refers to one's general tendency to act in accordance with traditional feminine roles (i.e., relationship-oriented and nurturing). Though masculinity and femininity were initially conceptualized and measured as bipolar opposites, further research supports them as unique and distinct constructs existing on separate conceptual dimensions (Bobko, 1985; similar to Figure 3). This distinction originated in the recognition of a third gender-type personality construct, androgyny, which refers to one's general tendency to be feminine and masculine simultaneously.

The final two examples of removing the assumptions of bipolarity come from organizational psychology and the constructs of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and organizational trust/distrust. Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory of job satisfaction seemed to go against a logical understanding of job satisfaction by claiming that the absence of job satisfaction is not equivalent to job dissatisfaction, nor is the absence of job dissatisfaction equivalent to job satisfaction (Bockman, 1971; Herzberg, 1959, 1966). Herzberg found evidence for factors affecting job dissatisfaction as separate and distinct from the factors affecting job satisfaction. These results support his proposition that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are separate unipolar constructs instead of bipolar constructs on one single dimension (similar to Figure 2). Although Herzberg's

motivator-hygiene theory remains controversial, there is evidence to support the basic proposition that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are distinct constructs (Bockman, 1971; Knoop, 1998).

Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) proposed that organizational trust and distrust are not bipolar constructs, but rather two distinct constructs on separate continuums (similar to Figure 3). In support of this argument, the authors distinguish between low trust, the absence of positive expectations regarding others' beneficial conduct, and high distrust, the presence of negative expectations regarding other' harmful conduct. Further, trust and distrust have unique antecedents and consequences, as does ambivalence (when one feels neither trust nor distrust). The distinction between trust and distrust has been supported empirically through qualitative work on the development of trust and distrust (Searle & Ball, 2004), and quantitative work factor analyzing survey items of trust and distrust (e.g., Huang & Dastmalchian, 2004).

In each of these examples, two constructs that were originally considered bipolar opposites were later shown to fit a different relational model. In the cases of health and illness, positive and negative affectivity, masculinity and femininity, and trust and distrust, the two constructs were shown to exist on distinct dimensions (similar to Figure 3). In the case of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, evidence supports the two constructs as two unipolar constructs instead (similar to Figure 2). Without moving beyond the bipolarity assumption, our understanding of well-being, gender, personality, and employee attitudes would be an inaccurate representation of the true constructs (Bobko, 1985). In order to gain a more accurate understanding of justice and injustice, the bipolarity assumption must be tested.

Overview of The Current Study

The goal of the current study is to understand the nature of organizational injustice and to ensure that the measurement of organizational injustice accurately reflects employees' definition and understanding of injustice. In order to reach this goal, the following research questions will be answered using qualitative methods:

Research Question 1: Do the constructs of organizational justice and injustice represent polar opposites of a single dimension?

Research Question 2: Is the role of affect in experiencing injustice symmetrical to the role of affect in experiencing justice?

Research Question 3: Does the current structure of organizational justice accurately represent the structure of organizational injustice?

Research Question 4: Are current measures of organizational justice valid for assessing organizational injustice?

Qualitative data were collected on employees' experiences of organizational injustice. Interviews with employees holding various positions in several different organizations were conducted to obtain descriptions of incidences of both justice and injustice in their workplaces. Using a grounded theory approach, the qualitative data served as the basis for defining organizational injustice as a construct, for gauging the impact of negative emotion within experiences of injustice, and for determining the structure of organizational injustice. Based on the understanding and structure of injustice derived from the interviews, organizational injustice was compared with organizational justice, both as it was defined in the existing literature and as it was defined through content analysis of the interviews.

In making a decision as to whether the bipolarity assumption of justice holds or not, one must a priori have an idea of what the data should look like. Based on an extensive review of the literature, it was decided that evidence in support of justice and injustice as bipolar would appear as follows: 1) the emergent themes from experiences of organizational justice are congruent with the emergent themes from experiences of organizational injustice, 2) employees describe justice experiences as directly opposite from injustice experiences, 3) the emotional association with injustice is symmetrical to the emotional association with justice, and 4) employees are unable to describe a situation that was neither fair nor unfair. (That is, they are unable to describe a situation void of a fairness judgment). Evidence in support of justice and injustice as *not* bipolar (and as either two unipolar constructs on a single continuum or as two distinct bipolar constructs on separate continuums) would appear as follows: 1) the emergent themes from experiences of organizational justice are *not* congruent with the emergent themes from experiences of organizational justice, 2) employees do *not* describe justice experiences as directly opposite from injustice experiences, 3) the emotional association with injustice is *asymmetrical* to the emotional association with justice, and 4) employees are able to describe a situation that was neither fair nor unfair. If there is no evidence to dispute the two as bipolar constructs, the current strategy for measuring injustice with measures of organizational justice will be supported. If evidence is found to question the bipolarity assumption, organizational justice measures will be shown to be invalid for assessing organizational injustice.

METHOD

Methods for data collection and data analysis were based on the grounded theory approach to qualitative research. The grounded theory approach was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and the basic methodology of grounded theory has subsequently been described in various guides to qualitative and applied research methods (e.g., Giles, 2002; Gray, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). The grounded theory approach was chosen for the current study for its established strengths in generating new theory regarding relationships between constructs (Creswell, 1998; Henwood, 1996).

Participants

A theoretical sample of participants who have experienced both justice and injustice in the workplace were recruited to participate in structured one-on-one interviews. A theoretical sample is one that contributes most to the development of new theory within a grounded theory framework (Creswell, 1998). In the current study, this translates into including only participants who have experienced both justice and injustice in the workplace so that these experiences may be more directly compared and contrasted. Participants were recruited using several approaches. First, all members of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce were invited to participate via an electronic advertisement within a weekly e-newsletter. Second, participants were contacted directly via e-mail through the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce database. Third, local

businesses (in the Fort Collins and Denver areas) were contacted in person by the researcher and flyers advertising the study were posted in employee break rooms. Finally, a local group of job-seeking professionals was contacted directly by the researcher and an invitation to participate was presented to the group during a weekly meeting.

A total of 32 individuals participated in the initial stage of the study (the online demographics and screening survey), with 18 participants completing the study in its entirety (the online survey and one-on-one interview). According to the principles of grounded theory (e.g., Creswell, 1998), the total number of participants needed for this study is dependent on the point of content saturation. The point of saturation occurs when additional interviews are no longer providing new information. Based on guides to research using grounded theory (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and on prior qualitative research in organizational psychology (e.g., Harlos & Pinder, 1999; Muller, Creed, Waters, & Machin, 2005) it was anticipated that this number was likely to be within the range of 20-30, and unlikely to exceed 40. In the present study, the total sample of 18 participants was deemed acceptable due to the recurring themes visible in the data. Individuals volunteered to participate, with a small incentive (a gift certificate to a local restaurant) offered as a raffle prize to those who agree to be interviewed.

Methods for Data Collection

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection in order to facilitate rapport and allow for participants to comfortably express their feelings and personal experiences. Prior to each interview, participants were asked to complete a short demographics survey online to gather data regarding age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, tenure, ask whether they had experienced both justice and

injustice at work, and whether they had both positive and negative experiences at work more generally (see Appendix A for complete list of survey items). The purpose of the demographics survey was two-fold. The first purpose was to ensure that a wide range of individuals (based on age, gender, occupation, and tenure) was included in the study. Secondly, the demographics survey served to screen out individuals who had not experienced both justice and injustice at work, as well as those who only reported negative experiences at work. Such individuals were screened out in order to allow for direct comparisons between experiences of justice and injustice and to ensure that results were not based on an overly disgruntled sample. Eight respondents were screened out based on these guidelines, resulting in 24 potential participants for the interview portion of the study. Eighteen of the 24 responded to the invitation to continue the study, yielding a 75% response rate. Nine of the participants included in the study were currently unemployed, and were instructed to complete the survey with regards to their most recent job.

Following completion of the online demographics survey, participants who passed the screening questions were invited to participate in the second phase of the study, semi-structured interviews. The prompts within the semi-structured interviews utilize Flanagan's (1954) critical incidents method. Participants were asked to describe their own experiences of injustice and justice in the workplace in as much detail as possible. Along with each experience provided, participants were asked to reflect on what precisely about that experience made it an example of 'injustice' or an example of 'justice', and how they would define 'injustice' and 'justice' at work. Finally, participants were asked to compare their experiences of justice with their experiences of

injustice, and to describe a situation that could not be categorized as just or unjust (in order to investigate the possibility of ambivalence, or a point where neither justice nor injustice is present). See Appendix B for complete list of prompts. All prompts were pilot tested to ensure clarity, elicit follow-up prompts, and to confirm the estimated amount of time required for each interview. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to one hour. With permission from each participant, all responses given within the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated by the interviews was analyzed via coding using the software program NVivo 8.0 (QSR, 2008) according to the grounded theory approach (Giles, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The goal of grounded theory research is to generate theory from the data (a 'ground-up' approach; Giles, 2002). Accordingly, data analysis begins with coding the interview text 'line-by-line' (Charmaz, 1995), and gradually moves from descriptive coding to more meaningful theory or model building. Whereas critics have opposed all non-quantitative approaches to research (e.g., Morgan, 1996, 1998), others have argued that transparent qualitative research is more objective than even the strictest quantitative methods (Woolgar, 1988). The following description of the data analysis conducted in the current study is written according to the guidelines provided by Bringer, Johnston, and Brackenridge (2004), stressing transparency in the writing of grounded theory research.

In the current study, the data analysis process began with open coding, wherein the researcher generated novel descriptive codes for each meaningful piece of data. Taken together, these descriptive codes formed the basis of the coding scheme for each

topic (e.g., justice or injustice). In the first stage of open coding, interview responses were separated by prompts (e.g., answers to the prompt 'What does injustice in the workplace mean to you') and then by topic (e.g., injustice), so that all responses to prompts within one topic would be coded using the same coding scheme. Next, the data were coded by topic, generating descriptive codes for each meaningful piece (complete thought) of each response. After several novel codes were generated for each topic, most responses fit well within the existing coding scheme (slowing down and eventually stopping the process of novel code generation). It is also important to note that in this stage, and all further stages of data analysis, responses were categorized with as many codes as would accurately describe the text. This means that some responses were coded with just one code, whereas others were coded with many. The pattern of overlapping codes (or responses with multiple codes) served to inform the model-building stage of this study.

The secondary analysis of the data consisted of axial coding (Straus & Corbin, 1998). In this stage, the descriptive codes generated in open coding were integrated into broader, more conceptual groupings (Giles, 2002). The coding takes place at a higher level of abstraction, with the focus on coding for concepts rather than descriptors. Though there exists some disagreement in the grounded theory literature about how one should conduct secondary analysis (e.g., Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the consensus appears to be that the concepts must be grounded in the data yet also may be informed by relevant literature and theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). The goal is to stay as close to the data as possible without utterly disregarding the relevant existing published work in an area. In the present study, the

coding scheme from the previous stage was brought to a more conceptual level by exploring potential overlap among codes and by using relevant models of justice (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001) and injustice (e.g., Harlos & Pinder, 1999) to inform the coding scheme.

In the final analysis stage, models of the coding schemes for each topic were developed by grouping similar nodes together under 'parent' (or 'tree') nodes, and the data were thoroughly checked to ensure the model accurately represented the interview responses at hand. Although there is no definitive 'end point' for data analysis within the grounded theory approach (Rennie, 2000), leaders in the field have offered some suggestions. Specifically, following the criteria set forth by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992), final analysis came to an end once it was deemed that: 1) there was a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied, and 2) the analysis had moved to a conceptually rich understanding. The ultimate test of qualitative research is that it accurately reflects the world through the eyes of the participants (Mason, 2002). No value or statistic can be used to test the accuracy of the findings for this purpose; however, every attempt was made throughout the data analysis process to reach this goal.

Based on the aforementioned process of data analysis, the structure of injustice was then examined and compared to that of justice. Emotional reactions to justice were directly compared to emotional reactions of injustice to support either a separation of these two constructs or an integration of these two constructs based on the role of emotion. Finally, interview responses regarding participants' own perceptions of how experiences of justice are similar and different to experiences of injustice were analyzed

in order to determine if employees perceived these constructs as bipolar or as separate and distinct.

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis are organized as follows: 1) demographic survey results; 2) qualitative results regarding the structure of injustice and justice; 3) qualitative results regarding the role of emotion in experiences of injustice and justice; and 4) qualitative results regarding participants' perceptions of how justice and injustice may be modeled (e.g., as direct opposites or as separate constructs). Each of the four research questions is addressed within the relevant section(s). Descriptions of codes, examples, and quotes from the interviews are provided throughout the results for the purposes of illustration and transparency (Bringer, Honston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Richards, 2005).

Demographic Survey Results

Of the 32 participants who completed the demographic survey, 50% were male and the majority were White/Caucasian (94%). The most common industry was high tech/IT (n = 11), followed by education (n = 5), healthcare (n = 4), and manufacturing (n = 3). Please see Table 1 for the means and standard deviations of all quantitative variables for all participants who completed the survey. Of the 18 participants who completed both the demographic survey and an interview, 44% were male and the majority was White/Caucasian (94%). The most common industry was high tech/IT (n = 6), followed by education (n = 4), business/finance (n = 2), and manufacturing (n = 2). Self-described jobs and occupations ranged from blue collar or entry-level positions (e.g., server, reference desk staff) to professional senior-level positions (e.g., business

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development manager, school administrator). Fifty percent of the sample was unemployed. Unemployed individuals were considered qualified to participate if they had been previously employed full-time. As nearly all interviews focused on or at least included previous jobs and employers, there was no apparent reason to disqualify potential participants based on current employment status. Please see Table 2 for the means and standard deviations of all quantitative variables for all participants who completed both the survey and the interview.

Emergent Structure of Injustice and Justice

In the open coding stage, 14 descriptive codes emerged from interview responses regarding participants' own definitions of injustice and personal experiences of injustice. Table 3 lists each of these codes along with a corresponding description. To illustrate, *forced behavior or compliance* was used to describe one interviewee's experience of feeling that he was forced to go on a pointless assignment by a supervisor, "[He] wanted me to leave three days later. For no reason – there was nothing to be accomplished by this trip, but he wanted to put me in a different place I guess. So I didn't have much choice but to do it."

Nine descriptive codes emerged from interview responses regarding participants' own definitions of justice and personal experiences of justice. Table 4 lists each of these codes along with a corresponding description. To illustrate, *balance in action and reaction* was used to describe pieces of interview responses that referenced receiving a reward or punishment that fit the positive or negative employee behaviors, such as one man's explanation of justice "[Justice is] being rewarded or awarded for your efforts. Maybe not totally monetary awards, but just being told you've done a good job or when a

project gets done on time your supervisor tells you out of the blue, just 'thank you very much'."

In the secondary analysis (axial coding) stage, descriptive codes generated from definitions and experiences of justice and injustice were combined and redefined to reflect higher levels of abstraction. This resulted in two more conceptual sets of codes for the constructs of justice and injustice. This process was guided primarily by identifying interview passages with multiple codes attached and exploring the existing overlap among codes with NVivo, as well as by breaking down more complex and frequently referenced codes into more meaningful specific codes (Bazely, 2007; Sin, 2007). Several codes remained similar from the first stage, although their descriptions and passages included within the codes were often altered to more accurately fit the coding scheme. Nine axial codes were formed for injustice. Table 5 contains a full list, corresponding descriptions, and example passages for each of the nine injustice codes. To illustrate, interview passages coded under *being shown no regard as a person* included perceptions of harmful or negative interpersonal treatment at work, "Injustice to me means being treated in a manner that affronts my dignity."

Eight axial codes were formed for justice. Table 6 contains a full list, corresponding descriptions, and example passages for each of the eight justice codes. To illustrate, several individuals described an experience of justice in which they were provided with an opportunity they felt they had earned. After applying for a higher-level position in her company, one woman describes, "I get an interview and even though there may be an outside candidate that may have more qualifications, they're willing to take

the risk on me because I've put in my time and the hours and so they're giving me the opportunity to grow and move up. I think that's a real fair thing."

In the final analysis, frameworks were constructed to better model the constructs of justice and injustice as portrayed in the interviews (Glaser, 1978). This process consisted of creating coding trees, wherein the axial codes from the secondary analysis were grouped together as 'child codes' under broader, 'parent codes' at an even higher level of abstraction (Bazely, 2007; Sin, 2007). At this stage, it is considered appropriate to inform the emergent models with the relevant existing knowledge in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). Thus, models of justice and injustice found in a review of the literature (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001; Harlos & Pinder, 1999) were examined for potential ties with the axial coding schemes from the data.

In examining existing models of justice, both the three-type taxonomy (distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice; e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) and four-type taxonomy (distributive justice, procedural justice, informational justice, and interpersonal justice; e.g., Colquitt, 2001) were taken into account. The axial codes for justice in the current data seemed more consistent with the three-type taxonomy, with three codes similar to definitions of distributive justice (*getting due rewards/pay/credit; getting due opportunities; getting due punishments*), two codes similar to procedural justice (*information-based decisions; involvement in decision-making*), and two codes similar to interactional justice (*equal or consistent treatment; trust, honesty, and respect)*. The three-type taxonomy of justice, as well as the highly similar four-type taxonomy of injustice proposed by Harlos and Pinder (1999)

(distributive injustice, procedural injustice, interactional injustice, and systematic injustice), appeared most consistent with the axial codes for injustice. Two codes appear consistent with distributive injustice (*not getting due rewards/pay/credit; not getting due opportunities*), three with procedural injustice (*having no say in decision-making; unequal application of rules or guidelines; unrealistic or unattainable expectations*), and three with interactional injustice (*unequal treatment; being shown no regard as a person; bad surprises*).

Two axial codes, one for injustice and one for justice, did not seem to fit within the existing frameworks: *abuse of power* (injustice), and *doing the 'right' thing* (justice). Closer investigation of these two codes showed that *abuse of power* had a near 100% overlap with the other injustice axial codes (all interview passages coded under *abuse of power* were also coded under another axial code), while *doing the 'right' thing* had virtually no overlap with the other justice axial codes (all interview passages coded under *doing the 'right' thing* were not coded under another axial code). These two patterns indicate that *abuse of power* is best described as an underlying theme of injustice experiences rather than a distinct category or type of experiences, while *doing the 'right' thing* does appear to be a distinct type of justice in the present data.

Taking all of the aforementioned information into account, two models are developed based on employees' perceptions and experiences: one model for injustice (see Figure 4) and one for justice (see Figure 5). A thoughtful comparison of these two emergent models sheds light on Research Question 1 (*do the constructs of organizational justice and injustice represent polar opposites of a single dimension?*) and Research Question 3 (*does the current structure of organizational justice accurately represent the*

structure of organizational injustice?). The similarities between the overall structures of injustice and justice are hard to ignore. Both models resemble the structure of the existing three-type taxonomy of justice. The category of *not getting what's deserved* in the injustice model is comparable to *getting what's deserved* in the justice model, and to distributive justice in the justice literature (Adams, 1963, 1965; Deutsch, 1975, 1985; Homans, 1961). The category of *unfair rules/guidelines/expectations* in the injustice model is comparable to *fair decision-making processes* in the justice model, and to procedural justice in the justice literature (Leventhal, 1980; Thibault & Walker, 1975). The category of *unfair treatment* in the injustice model is comparable to *fair treatment* in the justice model, and to interactional justice in the justice literature (Bies & Moag, 1986). Differences between the models are visible at a more detailed level. For example, the inclusion of *bad surprises* within the emergent injustice framework and the specific focus on *fair decision-making processes* (as opposed to rules and procedures more generally) in the emergent justice framework illustrate that participants did make some distinction regarding what types of experiences to label as justice and what types to label as injustice.

In sum, these results indicate that the construct of injustice may be accurately understood in a complimentary framework to that of justice, showing some support for justice and injustice as existing on the same dimension. More evidence is needed, however, to determine if the differences in justice and injustice experiences are significant enough to warrant a complete separation of these two constructs, or if justice and injustice are best understood as two unipolar constructs existing on one dimension.

Analysis of the role of emotion in justice and injustice experiences sheds light on this issue.

The Role of Emotion

In order to explore the potentially differential roles of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice, all experiences provided in the interviews were coded for any emotional words or indicators. The goal of this portion of the analysis was not to develop a model or theory of emotion, but rather to compare the emotional indicators within experiences of justice and injustice. Thus, only basic open coding was required. Results of the open coding revealed an apparent disconnect between the frequency and intensity of emotional indicators provided in experiences of injustice and experiences of justice. Within experiences of injustice, eleven participants (61%) included at least one mention of a negative emotional reaction, five participants (28%) included at least two negative emotional indicators, and three participants (17%) included at least three. Seven participants described reactions of anger or violent cognitions. For example, in describing his reaction to how his employer handled a situation, one man recalled, "as I sat there thinking about it, I got more and more angry but there wasn't anything I could do," and another, "I mean I was *livid*." Four participants described reactions of devastation or feeling generally upset. For example, in one woman's description of her experience of injustice, "I was so emotional about it for so long. I'm the type of person that doesn't typically say anything unless it's really bothering me, so when I do react I'm very upset." Three described feeling ambushed, frustrated, or disgusted. For example, "I was pretty disgusted with how it was handled." Within experiences of justice, four participants (22%) included at least one positive emotional reaction, and one participant (6%)

included two. All four participants described reactions of 'feeling good' or general satisfaction. For example, "It just, it felt good," and, "That was satisfying – very satisfying."

These data shed considerable light on Research Question 2: *is the role of affect in experiencing injustice symmetrical to the role of affect in experiencing justice?* Without any prompts directly assessing emotional reactions, the majority of interview responses revealed some negative emotional response to experiences of injustice. Less than one quarter of interviewees mentioned a positive emotional response to experiences of justice. Further, the intensity of the negative affect associated with injustice (e.g., anger, disgust, feeling "livid") appears to be at a higher level than that of the positive affect associated with justice (e.g., satisfaction, feeling "good"). Based on the apparent differences in frequency and intensity of emotional reactions to justice as compared to injustice, the data support an asymmetrical role of affect.

Modeling Justice and Injustice Together

In order to understand the relationship between justice and injustice and develop a full model with both constructs, responses to two prompts were analyzed: "*Have you ever experienced a situation at work that was neither fair nor unfair?*" and "*How would you compare and contrast your experiences of justice (fairness) with your experiences of injustice (unfairness)?*" The coding process followed for analyzing responses to the '*neither fair nor unfair*' prompt required open coding to describe: 1) if the individual had ever experienced such a situation, 2) how often such situations were experienced, and 3) what these neutral experiences were like for the individual. In analyzing responses to the '*compare/contrast*' prompt, open coding was used first to describe different emergent

themes in the responses, followed by axial coding to create a more meaningful model of individuals' perceptions of the relationship between justice and injustice. In the final analysis stage, coding schemes from both prompts were examined together in order to get a complete understanding of how justice and injustice may best be modeled.

Responses to the *'neither fair nor unfair'* prompt revealed that the vast majority of interviewees (94%, n=17) had experienced a situation that was neither fair nor unfair. Ten participants responded that they often experienced such neutral situations (coded as *often experiencing neutral situations*), stating that the majority of everyday work is neither fair nor unfair. For example, "Most days of work are like that. Where it's just sort of – that's the way it is. I don't think most days in my work-life have been feeling like somebody's treating me injustly or somebody's treating me justly – its just sort of status quo." Often, participants would mention that the majority of their work experiences simply did not have a high enough impact on them to be considered justice or injustice. For example, "There's a lot of things that don't necessarily have that level of impact so you're not going to get wrapped around the axel about it one way or another." Seven participants cited one or two specific examples of neutral situations (coded as *rarely/occasionally experiencing neutral situations*). These participants would often explain that they had both positive and negative reactions to certain experiences, leading them to see how it was fair *and* unfair, and conclude that it was neither or both. For example, "Well yeah, what I went through in April in May – when I got laid off – it was either neither or both." Only one participant had never experienced a situation that was neither fair nor unfair, noting that everything could be interpreted as fair or unfair to some degree, "I think you've got to be on one side or the other. You're either gonna be

like 'yeah, that was fair' or 'that was unfair' – I don't think there's really a middle road for that. You either think you got treated correctly or you didn't get treated correctly. It's kind of a two-sided fence I think so, no, I don't think there's room in the middle." Overall, the results provide strong support for the common (though not unanimous) perception of a neutral point between justice and injustice.

Open-coding and axial coding of the *'compare/contrast'* prompt revealed two broader conceptual themes that seemed to best categorize and make sense of the data. The first theme, *injustice is x and justice is y*, included six participants who compared and contrasted these two constructs by providing one sample situation and explaining how the situation could turn to one of justice (when *x* happens) or one of injustice (when *y* happens). For example, "[T]here's this statement 'quid-pro-quo' or 'win-win', and I think if both parties win then it's fair. If one party makes out over the other party, then it's not fair." The second theme, *perception*, included five participants who compared and contrasted the two constructs by explaining that it simply depends on one's own perception. These responses focused on how most experiences can be perceived as either experiences of justice or as experiences of injustice depending on the individual's own background, views, and experiences. For example, "[W]hat seems fair to you may seem unfair to another person. Everyone looks at things through their own lenses and sees things based on their own sets of experiences." In all responses to this prompt, no participants described justice and injustice as opposites. However, one participant did refer to her definition of justice as "going in the opposite direction of the injustice definition" at one point during the interview. So while all but one interviewee did not describe justice and injustice as direct opposites at any point throughout the interview, it

remains difficult to determine if they perceived the constructs as completely separate and distinct.

In sum, responses to these two prompts, *"Have you ever experienced a situation at work that was neither fair nor unfair?"* and *"How would you compare and contrast your experiences of justice (fairness) with your experiences of injustice (unfairness)?"* do provide some answers to the posed research questions. In response to Research Question 1, regarding whether or not organizational justice and injustice represent polar opposites of one dimension, the prevalence of neutral experiences (experiences that were perceived as neither fair nor unfair) provide support against the polar opposites model. The data support a model of injustice and justice as either two unipolar constructs on one dimension or two separate and distinct bipolar constructs. Further, the ways in which participants compared and contrasted their own experiences of justice and injustice do not support any one particular model, and certainly do not support justice and injustice as polar opposites. In response to Research Question 4, regarding whether current measures of organizational justice are valid for assessing organizational injustice, the lack of support for a single bipolar model would lead to a negative conclusion. Based on these data, serious concerns are raised regarding the use of justice measures for measuring injustice.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to: determine whether the constructs of organizational justice and injustice represent polar opposites of a single dimension (*Research Question 1*); determine if the role of affect in experiencing injustice is symmetrical to the role of affect in experiencing justice (*Research Question 2*); compare the structure of organizational justice to the structure of organizational injustice (*Research Question 3*); and assess the validity of organizational justice measures for assessing organizational injustice (*Research Question 4*). The results of the qualitative analyses provide initial support for: (1) organizational justice and injustice as *not* polar opposites of a single construct dimension, (2) the asymmetrical role of emotion in experiences of justice and injustice, (3) some similarities and some potential differences between the structure of organizational justice and the structure of injustice, and (4) a new way of measuring organizational injustice. The following discussion will expand on each of these conclusions, point out important limitations of this study, and provide recommendations for future research to further test these important claims.

The strongest support organizational justice and injustice as *not* two ends of one bipolar construct (and for the constructs as either two unipolar constructs on a single continuum or as two distinct bipolar constructs on separate continuums) comes from the asymmetrical role of emotion in participants' own experiences of justice and injustice, the prevalence of neutral experiences, and the comparisons provided of justice and

injustice as something other than 'opposites'. The differences in emergent themes between justice and injustice, while worth exploring further, do not seem glaring enough to provide support for or against the bipolar assumption of justice. Overall, three out of the four possible pieces of evidence point against the bipolar assumption of justice.

The observed frequency and intensity of negative emotional reactions to experiences of injustice is consistent with current definitions (Bies, 1987; Bies & Tripp, 2002) and research (Mikula et al., 1998) on injustice as its own construct. The relatively low frequency and intensity of positive emotional reactions to experiences of justice (as opposed to injustice) is also not surprising, given that current definitions and models of justice do not explicitly connect justice with any emotion. The results of this study help to confirm empirical and theoretical findings in organizational psychological research connecting negative emotional reactions to experiences of injustice (Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008). Fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001) provides one framework for understanding the strong emotional response to experiences of injustice. According to fairness theory, there is a natural negative response (a 'deontic response') when a victim of injustice is able to hold someone or something morally accountable for the negative experience (Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005). Further, the relational approaches integrated in fairness theory, including group value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and interactional justice (Bies, 1986), explain more specifically the negative emotional reactions to interpersonal forms of injustice. Interpersonal forms of injustice often involve violations of trust, feeling personally demeaned and insulted, or feeling marginalized from a group. A victim of these forms of injustice is especially likely to see

a specific person or group as morally accountable, and thus to experience a strong negative response (Folger et al., 2005).

As is evident from the results of the current study, feeling that one's trust has been violated or feeling demeaned by a personal comment at work can elicit strong negative reactions. According to fairness theory, these are natural reactions to the perception of someone else's voluntary violation of moral norms and expectations in social situations (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). The negative emotions associated with injustice at work (e.g., anger, frustration, feeling upset) are also highly similar to negative emotions found to be associated with social injustice more generally (Clayton, 1992; Mikula, 1986, 1987; Mikula et al, 1998), suggesting that organizational injustice may be best viewed as a component of the broader social injustice.

The prevalence of experiences perceived as neither fair nor unfair (neutral experiences) provides the second piece of evidence against the bipolar assumption of organizational justice. In order for the bipolar assumption to hold, there must be complete overlap between organizational justice and injustice. High levels of justice must represent low levels of injustice and low levels of justice must represent high levels of injustice (see Figure 1). This model allows for no possible neutral point. Experiences must fall somewhere between low justice (high injustice) and high justice (low injustice). However, all but one participant in the current study perceived experiences as neutral either daily (n = 10) or occasionally (n = 7), supporting justice and injustice as *non-overlapping* constructs. Further support against a bipolar conceptualization stems from participants own comparisons of justice and injustice. Only one interviewee described justice and injustice as opposites, while many of the interviewees struggled to compare or

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contrast the two constructs at all. For example, "Compare and contrast – I think that's tough to do. Because they are such different situations." Organizational justice and injustice appear to be either two unipolar constructs on the same spectrum (see Figure 2) or two separate and distinct constructs (see Figure 3). The question now turns to: *which model fits best?*

The emergent models of organizational justice and injustice developed in this study can begin to address this question. Results of the qualitative analysis show the two models as similar, though not identical. The similarities would lend support for a model with two unipolar constructs on the same spectrum, whereas the differences support a model with two separate and distinct constructs. The apparent asymmetrical role of emotion also supports justice and injustice as separate and distinct constructs. Ultimately, more research is required to provide a definitive answer to this research question. The trend for examining the bipolar assumption in other construct domains is towards taking a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, a mixed methods approach has been successful in supporting trust and distrust as separate and distinct constructs. Qualitative methods were used to understand the differences in how perceptions of trust and distrust develop (Searle & Bell, 2004), and quantitative methods were used to factor analyze survey items of trust and distrust (e.g., Huang & Dastmalchian, 2004). Both methodologies have converged to support trust and distrust as two separate bipolar constructs existing on separate continuums. Qualitative approaches have been used to show the ways in which the two constructs are different (e.g., differences in how each is developed), and quantitative approaches have been used to investigate how both constructs can best be measured and modeled. The addition of a

quantitative study on the nature of justice and injustice could help to determine the most appropriate model for these two constructs.

The literature on organizational trust and distrust provides one model that may prove especially useful for understanding organizational justice and injustice: the *trust-distrust-absence triangle* (Saunders & Thornhill, 2004). This model is based on the conceptualization of trust and distrust as separate, yet related dimensions (as proposed by Lewicki et al., 1998). This conceptualization produces four possible combinations of trust and distrust: 1) low trust/ low distrust, considered a state of ambivalence; 2) high trust/ low distrust, leading to a willingness to be vulnerable; 3) low trust/ high mistrust, leading to an unwillingness to be vulnerable; and 4) high trust/ high mistrust, a state of conflicting thoughts about one's willingness to be vulnerable. Qualitative and quantitative analyses showed that the first three combinations of trust and distrust were quite commonly experienced in the population, but that the high trust/ high distrust combination never occurred in its extreme form. Employees could only feel *both* trusting and distrustful to a small extent, but could not feel highly trusting and highly distrustful at once. The *trust-distrust-absence triangle* was developed to illustrate this pattern of experiences.

Adapting such a model to organizational justice and injustice seems appropriate given the results of the current study. Specifically, all but one participant identified 'neutral experiences', or experiences that were not perceived as fair or unfair. Several participants explained an experience as either *neither* or *both* justice and injustice to some extent simultaneously. For example, one participant described his experiences as a teacher facing different expectations from his school system based on the cultural

backgrounds of his students. "I think its fair that they're trying to look out for the students who are Spanish speakers and get them the best education that they can, but its also a little unfair that just because I have a higher population of students, that I'm required to do that." Yet intuitively it seems unreasonable for one to perceive an experience as both highly fair and highly unfair at the same time, similar to our apparent inability to be both highly trustful and highly distrustful at once. A *justice-injustice-absence triangle* model (see Figure 5) may be a good starting point for future research. Ultimately, the question of which model fits best will require more research, perhaps a mixed methods approach. These results at the very least provide possible alternative hypotheses to test.

Limitations

The results of this study must be viewed with respect to its limitations. Most notably, the conclusions drawn from these results are limited by the small sample size, the inclusion of several unemployed participants, and the limitations inherent to qualitative methodology (specifically, the grounded theory approach). The meaning and implications of each limitation identified above are explored in the following paragraphs.

The sample size in the current study (N = 18) is markedly smaller than what is typically seen in quantitative psychological research. Though the final sample size was slightly smaller than proposed range of sufficient values (20-30), it remains consistent with grounded theory research guides (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and with recent grounded theory research in organizational psychology (e.g., Overeem, Wollersheim, Driessen, Lombarts, Van de Ven, Grol, & Arah, 2009; Rowland & Parry, 2009). In conducting grounded theory research, the range and representativeness of the

sample is more important than the quantitative number of individuals (Giles, 2002). The participants in the current study, though small in number, did cover a wide range of ages (from 24 to 61), experience (tenure ranging from 2 weeks to 19 years in current job, from 5 months to 35 years in current industry), and occupations (covering 18 different occupations, from teacher to market engineer to strategic business planner). Further, recurrent themes were apparent very early on in the data collection and analysis process. This indicates that similar content themes were emerging from individuals varying greatly in demographic characteristics and individual experiences, and that each additional participant was contributing less and less novel information (a sign of content saturation, Creswell, 1998). Additional participants would likely have provided redundant information.

A second possible limitation is the inclusion of nine unemployed participants, comprising one half of the total sample. Although all participants (those who were and were not currently employed) drew mainly on workplace experiences at previous jobs and employers, one potential concern for including unemployed participants is that their employment status would somehow bias their memories and perceptions of fairness in the workplace. To explore this potential bias, two steps were taken. First, quantitative responses to the demographic survey items regarding job and supervisor satisfaction were analyzed to determine if there were significant differences between the employed and unemployed groups. Results of the t-test for comparing means showed no significant differences between the mean satisfaction of employed participants with their jobs (4.6) and supervisors (4.7), and the mean satisfaction of unemployed participants with their most recent jobs (4.3) and supervisors (4.0). This is especially noteworthy because the

unemployed participants' ratings were based on the job from which they were laid off. Second, the coding themes generated by employed participants were compared to those generated by unemployed participants using the 'queries' function in NVivo (Bazely, 2007). The queries function allows for a direct comparison of the number of individuals in each group who gave a response that was coded in each axial code. The largest distinctions between groups were seen in the following themes (all related to injustice): *unrealistic or unattainable expectations* (which included 4 more unemployed participants than employed), *unequal application of rules or procedures* (which included 4 more employed participants than unemployed), and *bad surprises* (which included 4 more unemployed participants than employed). Although this comparison revealed slight differences between groups, the unemployed and employed responses seem similar enough to be considered together.

A final noteworthy limitation involves an acknowledgement of the weaknesses associated with the qualitative methodology chosen for this study. Though there remain a handful of critics who adamantly oppose all qualitative research on the basis of its subjectivity (e.g., Morgan, 1996, 1998), the field of psychology as a whole seems to have begun embracing qualitative research with open arms (see Henwood & Nelson, 1995). However, the weaknesses of qualitative research must be acknowledged in conjunction with the strengths in order for qualitative research to thrive. First, there is subjectivity involved in all qualitative research. In the current study, there is subjectivity associated with the ways in which participants perceived, recalled, and related their experiences, as well as subjectivity associated with the ways in which the researcher interpreted and coded the responses. Although this may limit the generalizability of results, it is a

necessary price to pay in the attempt to understand injustice from an employee's point of view (Maxwell, 1992). Arguably, *all* research (quantitative and qualitative methods alike) involves some subjectivity (Woolgar, 1988). It may be argued that qualitative researchers have the advantage of being aware and sensitive to their own subjectivity and are thus better able to account for their potentially biased inclinations (Smith, 1996). Second, it should be noted that not all qualitative methodologies are the same. The grounded theory approach utilized in this study is associated with unique limitations itself. Specifically, the grounded theory approach (unlike traditional content analysis methods) does not necessarily require multiple coders in the data analysis process (Henwood, 1996). The use of a single coder prohibits any traditional estimates of reliability or validity to be made. However, this is not at odds with the purpose of grounded theory research. The success of grounded theory research is dependent on the researcher's ability to get close enough to the data in order to build a theoretical model from the ground up.

Future Directions

The results of the current study suggest that existing measures of organizational justice are not valid for measuring organizational injustice. Future research should build from this conclusion by developing a useful and valid measure of organizational injustice as its own construct. The emergent model of injustice could be used as a basis for developing a scale blueprint and writing items that better represent this construct.

An important next step following from these results involves a quantitative comparison of organizational justice and injustice in order to better conclude which of the non-bipolar models best describes these constructs for the larger population. As stated previously, a mixed methods approach (combining qualitative and quantitative research

methods) has been used in other lines of research examining the bipolar assumption with different constructs. The strengths of this combined approach are illustrated in the organizational trust and distrust literature, which has combined qualitative (e.g., Searle & Bell, 2004) and quantitative research (e.g., Huang & Dastmalchian, 2004; Saunders & Thornhill, 2004) to support trust and distrust as separate and distinct constructs.

Another future direction should be to re-examine the relationship between organizational injustice and important individual and organizational outcomes studied in past research to explore potentially different effects based on a more accurate understanding of injustice. Research supports the importance of injustice in predicting employee health outcomes (Elovainio, Kivimäki, & Vahtera, 2002; Rousseau, Salek, Aubé, & Morin, 2009; Tepper, 2001; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999), job stress and job strain (Francis & Barling, 2005; Greenberg, 2006), employee theft (Shapiro, Trevino, & Victor, 1995), workplace aggression (Kennedy, Homant, & Homant, 2004) counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Jones, 2009; Kelloway, Francis, Prosser, & Cameron, 2010), turnover intentions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), and burnout (Moliner, Martínez-Tur, Peiró, & Cropanzano, 2005). However, this existing research is based on measuring injustice as low levels of justice. Moving forward in this area, with a more accurate understanding and measure of injustice, will likely provide even stronger support for the importance of this construct and potentially expose relationships that have not yet been explored.

Conclusion

This study appears to be a first in critically examining the untested assumptions of justice and injustice made in organizational psychology. Based on qualitative analysis of

in-depth interview responses, it is concluded that 1) organizational injustice and justice are *not* polar opposites of a single construct dimension, 2) there exists an asymmetrical role of affect in experiences of justice and injustice (supporting the two constructs as separate and distinct), and 3) an accurate model of justice and injustice should include a 'neutral point' to allow for ambivalent experiences (those that are considered neither fair nor unfair). Taken together, these three conclusions build a strong case against the use of current scales of justice for measuring injustice.

Future research should build upon these results by developing a valid measurement tool for organizational injustice, exploring alternate models of justice and injustice (possibly the proposed *justice-injustice-absence triangle)*, and re-examining negative consequences of injustice using more accurate understanding and measurement of the construct. The results of this study show that experiences of injustice are strongly emotionally laden, often having lasting negative effects on the individual. The better we can understand organizational injustice as a construct, the more effective we may be in preventing such damaging experiences.

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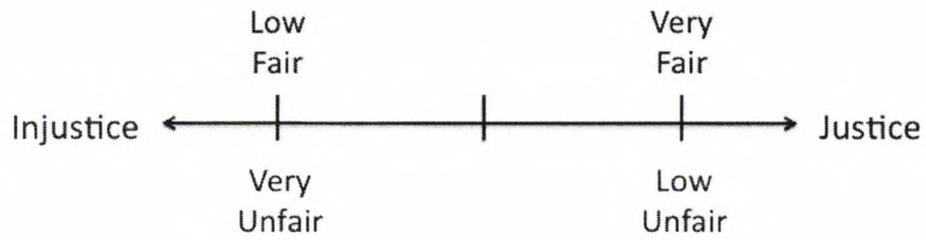
*Figure 1.* Organizational justice and injustice as bipolar constructs.
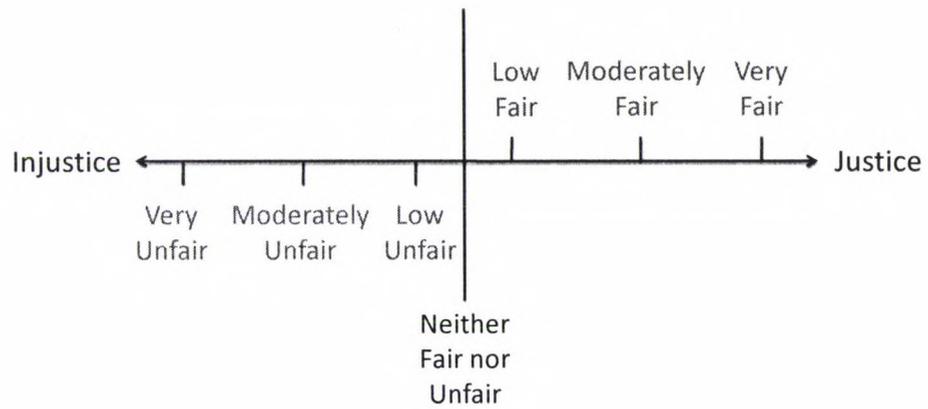
Figure 2. Organizational justice and injustice as two unipolar constructs along the same dimension.
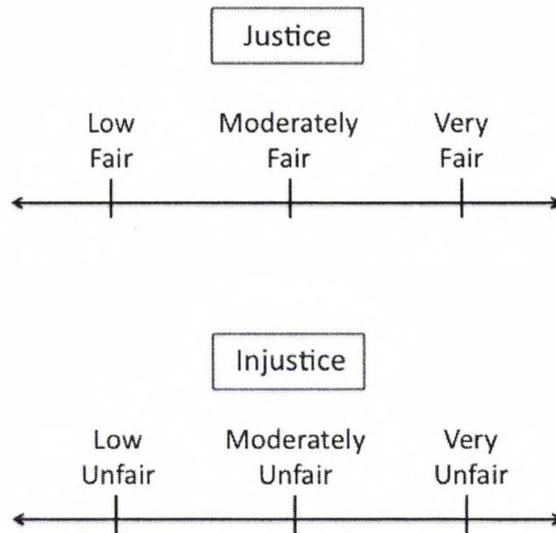
Figure 3. Organizational justice and injustice as two separate (related) constructs.
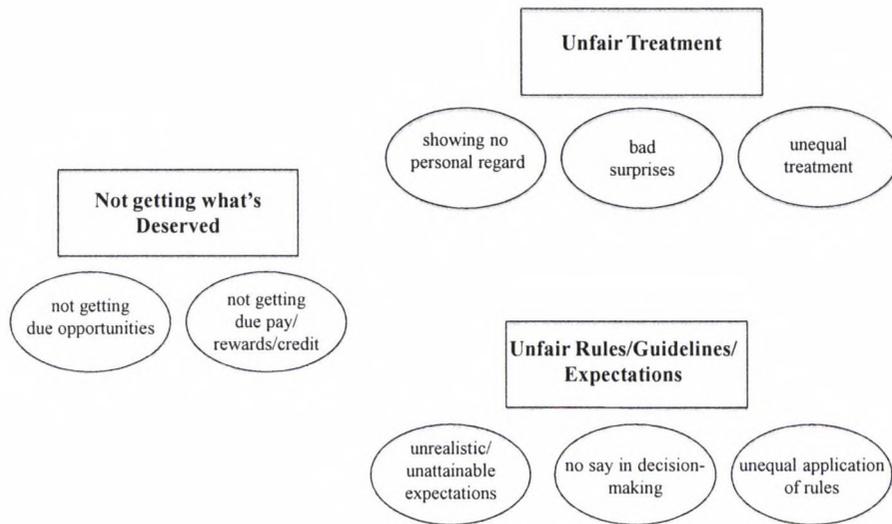
Figure 4. An emergent model of injustice.
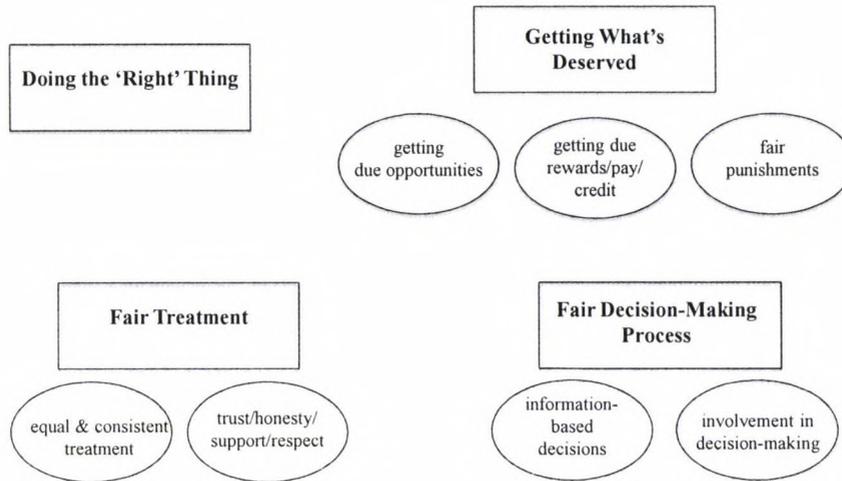
Figure 5. An emergent model of justice.
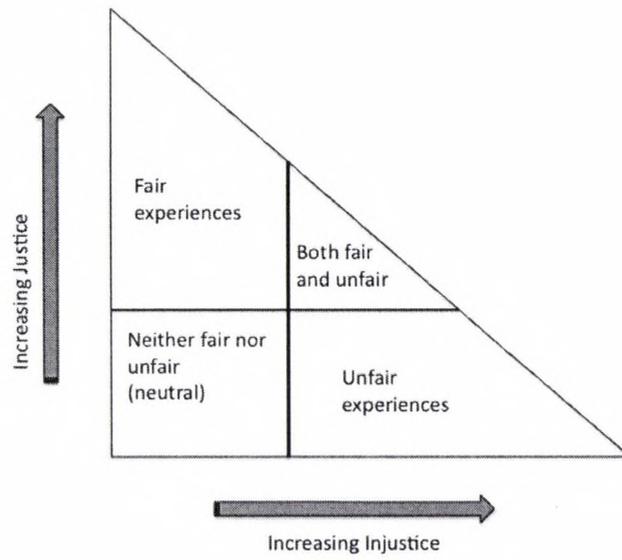
Figure 6. Justice-injustice-absence triangle model.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Quantitative Demographic Survey Variables: Full

Sample

Variable	M	SD
Job tenure	4.77	6.00
Occupation tenure	10.95	10.17
Industry tenure	12.50	10.96
Employer tenure	6.04	8.30
Age	43.78	12.44
Current job satisfaction	4.47	1.56
Current supervisor satisfaction	4.31	1.94

Note. $N = 32$.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Quantitative Demographic Survey Variables:

Full Interview Sample

Variable	M	SD
Job tenure	5.20	6.18
Occupation tenure	13.91	10.67
Industry tenure	13.55	11.25
Employer tenure	6.67	9.18
Age	43.89	12.83
Current job satisfaction	4.44	1.46
Current supervisor satisfaction	4.33	2.09

Note: N = 18.

Table 3

Descriptive Codes for Injustice Definitions and Experiences

Code name	Description
Having no say in decision making	The inability to impact organizational decisions that affected the individual
Unspoken expectations	The individual does not have a clear idea of what is expected
Unattainable expectations	Perceived expectations seem unreasonable or impossible
Inconsistent rules or guidelines	The rules of a supervisor or guidelines of an organization seem to change across time or situation
Unequal application of rules or procedures	The way rules and guidelines are carried out is not equal across individuals
Not being provided with due opportunities	Believing that one deserves certain opportunities but is not offered them.
Unequal pay/ rewards/ consequences	Believing that one deserves a positive bonus, monetary or otherwise, and does not get it.
Forced behavior or compliance	Feeling that individuals in the organization are forcing one to do something by threatening or bullying
A sense of power imbalance	Perceiving injustice based solely on a difference in rank or title in the organization
Personal attacks	Feeling as if one is being singled out for negative treatment

Being shown no regard as a person	Feeling as if one is not cared about as a human being
Mistreatment or inappropriate treatment	Instances of injustice based on personal treatment by another employee
Bad surprises	Unexpected negative treatment or negative outcomes
Unequal treatment	Perceiving treatment from a supervisor or other organizational representative to be different across individuals.

Table 4

Descriptive Codes for Justice Definitions and Experiences

Code name	Description
Being treated in an open and honest manner	Experiences focused on honesty and openness on behalf of a supervisor or the organization
Respect	Perceiving justice experiences as involving high levels of respect
Concern for people	Feeling that others in the organization care about the individual
Fact-based decisions	Perceiving an important decision as being based on facts and not subjective judgment
Doing the right or moral thing	References to an individual or organization doing 'what's right'
Righting a wrong	Turning a negative, possibly unjust, situation into a positive, just situation
Balance in action and reaction	Perceiving the outcome to fit the behavior
Equal rewards or compensation	All are provided the same pay or rewards
Being provided due opportunities	Being offered the opportunities one thinks are deserved

Table 5

Axial Codes for Injustice Definitions and Experiences

Code name	Description	Example passage
Unequal treatment	Favoritism; one group or one individual is treated differently based on illegitimate reasons	Injustice … for me its when one staff member is favored over another, or given special privileges that others aren't given or just not dealt with in the same manner. So it could also mean that someone is discriminated against, or so its positive and negative – you know, anyone not being treated the same as others.
Showing no regard for the person	Not caring and not valuing the employee as a person; seeing people as cost instead of as human beings; feeling attacked or singled-out; disrespect	Injustice to me means being treated in a manner that affronts my dignity. To be demanded to do unreasonable things – to do things that are beneath the level expected of a professional or of a person at a certain level in a team in the workplace
Bad surprises	Feeling like the rug is pulled out from under one's feet; being left in the dark in a discussion or decision-making process	You're being told to work hard and work long and do the best you can on this new product and [told] this is your responsibility, your baby, this is your thing and then right as we start you know selling them to lots of people its like "tschoo" the rug gets jerked out from under you. It's like, no we were just kidding. It's like the carrot in front of your face all the time.
Not getting due opportunities	Not getting the opportunities one believes are deserved	I had been volunteering for a year and a half, a paid position came up, and I had been discussing that paid position with the head of the department for over 6 months. We had had serious conversations to the point of, if I could hire you I would – this is what the job would be paid, hours that would be required - and when the job actually got posted I wasn't even granted an interview.
Not getting due pay/ rewards/ credit	Not getting the pay, rewards, or credit one believes are deserved	[I]f you provide a service or provide something at work of value and you're not either rewarded or seen as being the person that provided it, its somewhat unfair. If someone ends up taking that idea and running with it – you feel like that concept was taken for granted or taken from you. It can be very unfair. I mean in the workforce even a simple thank-you can be all you need.

No say in decision-making	Not getting the chance to voice an opinion or have any impact on decisions affecting oneself	[T]hat was unfair because we didn't have a say in how do we think that we could better serve the English learners, but it was more-so we're being told that this is the way you have to do it. And you know the teachers are the ones who are kind of suffering the consequences because we have to operate on those changes, with having students leave the classroom but still being responsible for their education.
Unequal application of rules/ guidelines	Perceiving the rules to change in different circumstances; when identical situations are dealt with differently	I can think of an instance in my workplace where there was a person who partook of alcohol – one was fired and one was not. On the job. And I didn't think that was right at all. One of the people was full-time management and one was an hourly person. The hourly person got fired, management person did not.
Unrealistic/ unattainable expectations	An employer expects more than is realistic; makes impossible demands	[T]hose bosses who you just can't please no matter what you do - they're just wanting more and more and more, and you're never gonna please them – that makes you kinda feel that you're unjust because the target's never there. You're trying to hit a moving target.
Abuse of power	Cases of power imbalance; feeling like a relationship is not reciprocal because one person has the upper hand; abuse of power or rank; feeling forced to do something by a power figure	I feel a lot of people have the mentality that there's a master and servant relationship – I think it's just ingrained in us. But that mentality causes some people to feel that they are better just because they are in a position that's higher. So, when I see injustice is when somebody has that feeling towards someone – that they are lesser than they are or have less rights than the manager.

Table 6

Axial Codes for Justice Definitions and Experiences

Code name	Description	Example passage
Equal or consistent treatment	Being treated the same as others by a supervisor or other organizational representative	I just feel like justice and fairness is about equality mostly, just because so many people are different, and they're going to perceive fairness in a different way, so I think if you kind of keep it consistent with how you're working with them – how you're talking with them - I think that shows justice in the workplace.
Trust/ honesty/ respect	Feeling trusted or supported by the company or by individuals within the company; feeling respected; feeling that decisions are made and discussed in an open and honest way	I think justice or fairness in the workplace is just respecting everyone who is in the building, who is associated with it – and I don't think that if your id level is where, like in my situation we have a principal, we have a vice principal, you know paraprofessionals, we have classroom teachers – you know it seems like we try to keep everything on the same playing level and everybody respects everybody.
Getting due rewards/ pay/ credit	Receiving rewards, monetary or otherwise, that one feels one has deserved	I worked with a girl who was titled 'office assistant' which wasn't really what she did and finally she got the title 'office manager'. She was working within her contract, going over and above, and people realized that her title – her job wouldn't change any – but they gave her the proper title and gave her the proper money to do the job that she did. And it came out of our raises – came out of the raises of the people she was supporting – and we thought it was great because she was getting what she deserved.
Getting due opportunities	Being provided with the opportunities one feels one has deserved	Justice is giving you a try.

Getting due punishments	Situations where the punishment fits the infraction	The infraction should fit – the response should be commensurate with the infraction. And that is to say – there are some things you have to have zero tolerance for, at some point, in my opinion. If people abuse alcohol and drugs and come to work and operate equipment that may place others at harms way – you try to help those folks, but ultimately if they can't modify their behavior they have to find a new way to get it to work – they can't do that. BUT, if somebody shows up late, they get a verbal warning – if it continues they get a written warning, and then after a certain number of times if its important to the organization you let them go.
Information- or fact-based decisions	Employment decisions perceived as being based on 'relevant' information; decisions based on facts and not subjective opinion	This supervisor has the skills I guess to be able to not only adequately look at the artifacts of our preparation, like our lesson plan and the books for the kids, but she's also very good at listening … closely… to our interaction with the students and the students' interaction with us. So I think it's just that really close engagement by her with what people are saying and how people are doing it.
Involvement in the decision-making process	Being actively involved in a decision that affects one personally	Taking everybody's perspective – because we're all there working, kind of doing the same job. Some of us are more in the front lines I guess, dealing with the kids and stuff – so when we can feel that our input is being implemented that feels pretty fair. We had a good say in what was going on and they weren't like 'oh that idea won't work' – you know, they really gave us a lot of power in figuring out what worked best for us since we were in the front lines of it.
Doing the 'right thing'	When an organization or individual within an organization is perceived as doing the 'right' or moral thing	It's very rare when a company says WE made a mistake and we did something that was not appropriate. So, I think in that instance I was actually proud to work for that company – that it was a very just company to work for. I have worked for companies that understand the words 'this is the right thing to do' – it may not be the cost-effective thing to do but it's the RIGHT thing to do.

Appendix A: Demographic Survey

The following information is being collected to help us ensure that we have reached a wide range of people with our survey. This information will not be used to identify individual responses in any way. To ensure your information is kept anonymous and confidential, please create a fake ID for this screening survey.

Supply the last 2 digits of your home telephone number followed by the day of the month on which you were born (dd), followed by the last 2 digits of your drivers license number. Ex: 260599.

Fake ID# (see above) _____

1. What is your current job title? _____

2. How long have you held this job title? _____

3. What is your current occupation? _____

4. How many years have you been in this occupation? _____

5. Have you ever worked in another occupation? Please indicate: Yes / No
   If yes, please list prior occupations held: _____

_____

6. What is your current business category or industry (for example, restaurants, education, consulting, health care)? _____

7. How many years have you been in this industry? _____

8. How many years have you been with your current employer? _____

9. In what year were you born? _____

10. What is your gender? Please indicate one: Male   /   Female

11. How would you describe your ethnicity? _____

The following questions ask about your attitudes and experiences at work – both at your current job and at any job you have held. Please select the response that you feel best represents your attitudes, perceptions, and experiences.

12. How satisfied are you with your current job?

not at all satisfied			neutral			very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. How satisfied are you with your current supervisor?

not at all satisfied			neutral			very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Have you ever been treated with justice (or been treated fairly) at work?

                      YES   NO

15. Have you ever been treated with injustice (or been treated extremely unfairly) at work?

                      YES   NO

16. Have you ever really liked your coworkers?

                      YES   NO

17. Have you ever really disliked your coworkers?

                      YES   NO

18. Have you ever loved your job – either your current job or a previous job?

                      YES   NO

19. Have you ever hated your job – either your current job or a previous job?

                      YES   NO

Appendix B: Interview Prompts

1. a) What does injustice in the workplace mean to you? (What does it mean to experience injustice at work?)

   b) Using as much detail as possible, please describe the most recent time where you experienced injustice at work. (What happened leading up to this experience? What happened afterward? What does it look like? What does it feel like?)

   c) What was it about this experience that made it injustice?

   (1b and 1c will be repeated, asking participants to describe other experiences of injustice.)

2. a) What does justice in the workplace mean to you? (What does it mean to experience justice at work?)

   b) Using as much detail as possible, please describe the most recent time where you experienced justice at work. (What happened leading up to this experience? What happened afterwards? What does it look like? What does it feel like?)

   c) What was it about this experience that made it injustice?

   (2b and 2c will be repeated, asking participants to describe other experiences of justice.)

3. Compare and contrast your experience(s) of injustice with your experience(s) of justice?

4. Have you experienced a situation at work that was neither fair nor unfair? (What did it look like? What did it feel like?)

   b) What made this experience neither fair nor unfair?

   c) If you haven't ever had this experience, why do you think that is?