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Group Cohesion as an Enhancement to the Justice–Affective Commitment Relationship

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Using a social exchange framework, the present study explores the role of group cohesion as a moderator of the relationship between the four dimensions of organizational justice and affective commitment. The hypotheses are tested using a sample of 142 employees of a pharmaceutical company. Results indicate that the relationship between distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice and affective commitment was stronger for individuals who reported high levels of work group cohesion. The relationship between procedural justice and affective commitment was unaffected by work group cohesion. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *commitment; group cohesion; organizational justice*

In recent years, job hopping has become much more acceptable and may even be the norm among today's workforce (Jayson, 2004). As employee loyalty continues to diminish, managers are faced with the challenge of retaining top talent and building affective commitment to the organization. One of the most frequently examined predictors of affective commitment to the organization is organizational justice (e.g., Camerman, Cropanzano, & Vandenberghe, 2007). In fact, according to two meta-analyses, affective commitment has been the most heavily researched outcome of organizational justice since 1975 (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). However, these same meta-analyses

also indicate that procedural justice and distributive justice have dominated organizational justice research for the past 30 years, while informational and interpersonal justice have virtually been ignored (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). This is particularly true when justice is examined in relation to the outcome of affective commitment. Colquitt et al. (2001) included 53 studies examining the procedural justice–affective commitment link in their meta-analysis, whereas just 10 studies were available for informational justice and only 2 studies were available for interpersonal justice. Thus, there is a dramatic need for justice research that focuses on all four dimensions of justice, as although they are clearly related, they may vary in their potential to predict important outcomes, such as affective commitment.

Additionally, research that extends beyond examining the direct effects of justice on affective commitment may be valuable. Several authors have called for the exploration of the effects of moderator variables, as our knowledge and understanding of the justice–commitment link could be substantially improved (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005). Given recent directions in justice research that suggest justice perceptions develop largely based on one's social context or work group (Colquitt & Jackson, 2006; Liao & Rupp, 2005), one potentially powerful moderating variable of the justice–commitment relationship is group cohesion. Research suggests that the benefits of group cohesion extend beyond satisfaction with one's immediate work group to organizationally directed attitudes and that team contexts enhance the importance of justice perceptions (Colquitt & Jackson, 2006). Specifically, several studies have shown affective commitment to the broader organization increases among individuals who are members of highly cohesive work groups (Kidwell, Mossholder, & Bennett, 1997; Yoon, Baker, & Ko, 1994). Hence, the current study was designed to explore the moderating effect of individual perceptions of group cohesion on the justice–commitment relationship. We draw on social exchange theory for the development of our hypotheses.

Social Exchange Theory

Early conceptualizations of social exchange theory can be traced to Gouldner (1960), who maintained that to maximize one's own outcomes, individuals engage in helping behaviors to generate feelings of reciprocity. Blau (1964) expanded on the notion of reciprocity and suggested that over

time these mutual exchanges serve as the basis of social exchange relationships. When applied to organizations, the essential tenet of social exchange theory is that individuals and organizations enter into reciprocal relationships in which the organization provides a supportive, fair, and just environment in exchange for loyalty and affective commitment on the part of the employee (Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002).

Social exchange theory in the context of the workplace often has been used as an underlying framework for explaining attitudes and behaviors in response to organizational and managerial actions (e.g., Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Erdogan, Liden, & Kraimer, 2006; Masterson, Lewis-McClear, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Scott & Colquitt, 2007). For example, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) found that feelings of affective commitment are positively related to employee perceptions of organizational rewards, including recognition for good work and opportunity for advancement and high earnings as well as feelings of supervisor support. Social exchange theory is especially well suited when examining the four dimensions of justice because it explains exchange relationships with both the organization and individuals.

Organizational Justice and Affective Commitment

The earliest research concerning organizational justice focused on distributive justice. Adams (1963) proposed that individuals were concerned primarily about the fairness of outcomes. He suggested that individuals have less concern over the actual objective amount of an outcome but are rather more concerned with the amount relative to what others are receiving. Hence, the process of determining the level of justice present is subjective. Distributive justice, then, reflects the perceived fairness of one's outcomes (Greenberg, 1990). The study of procedural justice evolved with Thibaut and Walker's (1975) work, which distinguished fair process from fair decisions. They found that individuals were satisfied as long as they had process control, even if they did not have decision control. Essentially, if individuals perceived the procedures used to determine outcome decisions to be fair (i.e., procedural fairness), they would be satisfied even in the absence of distributive justice. Leventhal (1980) later introduced the study of procedural justice to organizational settings and developed further guidelines for promoting procedural justice. Leventhal's rules essentially maintain that procedures should be consistent across people and time, unbiased, and correctable if poor decisions are made. Procedures should be ethical

and accurate such that they are based on valid information and facts. Finally, procedures should be representative such that they represent all parties' concerns. Although both forms of justice have been found to be related to many of the same outcomes (e.g., affective commitment), a prominent theme recurring in much of the early research was, "Which matters most: distributive justice or procedural justice?" Although some early scholars advocated a distributive dominance model (e.g., Leventhal, 1980), other scholars argued for a two-factor model in which procedural justice would be a stronger predictor of system-related outcomes and distributive justice would be a stronger predictor of person-related outcomes (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993). System-related outcomes, such as affective commitment or trust in one's supervisor, are those that involve making judgments about the organization or its agents (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Person-related outcomes, such as pay satisfaction, directly affect the individual (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). In recent years, empirical results have been mixed, with some research supporting procedural justice as the stronger predictor of affective commitment (Harvey & Haines, 2005; Lambert, Cluse-Tolar, Pasupuleti, Hall, & Jenkins, 2005) and some research supporting distributive justice as the stronger predictor (Clay-Warner, Hegtvold, & Roman, 2005; Farmer, Beehr, & Love, 2003; Schappe, 1998).

Two other dimensions of organizational justice that are beginning to receive increased research attention are interpersonal justice and informational justice. Interpersonal justice reflects one's perceptions of the quality of interaction with one's supervisor in the justice context (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002). High-quality interactions occur when individuals are treated with dignity and respect by their supervisor (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Informational justice refers to explanations and information provided to employees by their supervisors and whether the information is communicated in a thorough and timely fashion (Colquitt, 2001). Until recently, both of these dimensions were subsumed under interactional justice, which was often conceptualized as a part of procedural justice. However, research addressing the dimensionality of justice has generally confirmed the distinctness of these two dimensions from each other and both from procedural justice (Colquitt, 2001).

The multifoci approach to justice suggests that individuals target their reciprocal efforts toward those who they believe are responsible for the positive actions (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Perceptions of procedural and distributive justice should predict organizationally relevant outcomes, as reward procedures and their respective outcomes are largely determined by organizational policies. Perceptions of interpersonal and informational

justice should predict supervisory relevant outcomes as they encompass relationships with individuals' supervisors (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). For example, an organization that has fair policies that result in favorable outcomes for employees reflects high procedural and distributive justice. In this case, employees would be expected to reciprocate with feelings of loyalty and affective commitment toward the organization. Similarly, individuals who feel his or her supervisor is supportive and informative reflects high interpersonal and informational justice. Hence, feelings of commitment would be directed toward the supervisor. However, this approach has been expanded to recognize cross-foci effects. For example, some research has found that organizationally directed outcomes occur in response to perceptions of both interactional justice as well as procedural justice (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002).

Organizational commitment consists of three components: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Affective commitment refers to the employee's level of involvement and emotional attachment to the organization. Continuance commitment results when employees perceive the cost of leaving is too high. For example, some employees remain because of salary level or length of vacation time earned. Finally, normative commitment is when employees feel obligated to stay with the organization. Because individuals who are affectively committed to the organization are more willing to pursue the goals of the organization and more likely to perform citizenship behaviors (Moorman & Byrne, 2005), this element of commitment has been the most frequently examined in relation to organizational justice (Colquitt et al., 2001). Specifically, feelings of affective commitment toward the organization can be considered an important part of reciprocating perceptions of fair treatment, whereas continuance or normative commitment occurs because of a felt need or obligation. Thus, in the present study, we focus exclusively on affective commitment as the dependent variable, as it is the commitment dimension that most closely aligns with our theory.

As part of social exchange theory, the norm of reciprocity suggests that individuals feel obligated to repay the provider when they are treated well (Gouldner, 1960). In the context of the work environment, perceptions of fair treatment by the organization (i.e., procedural and distributive justice) and the supervisor (i.e., interpersonal and informational justice) should instill a sense of indebtedness on the part of employees (Moorman & Byrne, 2005). The repayment can come in the form of positive attitudes, including affective commitment toward the organization (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). For example, using a social exchange framework,

Wayne et al. (2002) examined data from 211 employee–supervisor dyads and found that perceptions of procedural and distributive justice lead to increased perceived organizational support, which in turn lead to increased affective commitment. We expect reciprocation aimed toward the organization to occur whether the source of the fair treatment is the organization, the supervisor, or both. This is because employees will be more likely to consider the long term when they view the work environment as fair (Moorman & Byrne, 2005) and will thus form emotional ties to the organization:

Hypothesis 1: All four forms of justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational) are positively related to affective commitment.

Group Cohesion as an Enhancement

Work group cohesion has often been examined for its effects on organizational outcomes, including performance, affective commitment (Wech, Mossholder, Steel, & Bennett, 1998), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Kidwell et al., 1997). Perceptions of group cohesion include both individuals' membership attitudes and behaviors toward their group (Friedkin, 2004). Attitudes denoting individual perceptions of high cohesion include a strong desire to remain a part of one's group, loyalty to the group, and identification with the group (Friedkin, 2004). Trust, cooperation, and friendship among group members also indicate a high level of cohesion. Behaviors that indicate perceptions of high cohesion include the decision to strengthen group ties and contribute to group tasks. Social identity theory suggests that the more members identify with their respective groups, the more likely they are to actively contribute to the welfare of the group and work toward common goals (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Indeed, empirical research indicates that members of these groups display higher affective commitment (Griffith, 1988; Wech et al., 1998) and have higher unit performance than groups with low perceived cohesion (Pillai & Williams, 2004). Furthermore, as other studies demonstrate and social exchange theory supports, members of these groups exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs and groups, perform more organizational citizenship behaviors (Kidwell et al., 1997), and have lower levels of absenteeism (Keller, 1986).

Affective commitment to the organization can be strengthened through several means that exist within the organization. First, the quality of the dyadic relationship between the individual and supervisor can affect affective commitment (Pillai & Williams, 2004). Second, the degree of perceptions of cohesion in one's immediate work group can affect affective commitment

(Wech et al., 1998). Finally, broad perceptions of organizational support (Self, Holt, & Schaninger, 2005) and organizational justice (Martin & Bennett, 1996) can increase affective commitment. Thus, there are multiple measures that can be taken to increase employee loyalty. Given that past research has established the relationship between each of these variables and affective commitment independently, the question arises as to what kind of impact on affective commitment would occur when these variables are combined. We propose that there will be a multiplicative effect on affective commitment.

The emotional ties to the organization may be strengthened if individuals perceive they are part of a highly cohesive work group in which they have interpersonal attachments. For example, coming to work each day and being surrounded by supportive and friendly coworkers make the workplace much more desirable and enjoyable. When this occurs in an organization in which there are perceptions of fair policies, procedures, and outcomes (i.e., high procedural and distributive justice), it is likely that strong feelings of affective commitment develop toward both other individuals and the organization. This is because less conflict would be expected among employees as decisions would have been made fairly. More specifically, when individuals have high perceived levels of group cohesion, perceptions of justice can strengthen feelings of commitment.

In contrast, an organization may be perceived as highly supportive in terms of policies and procedures but may lack supportive and friendly coworkers or consist of coworkers who are aloof. In this instance, the workplace is far less enjoyable and individuals are not likely to develop interpersonal attachments that are an inherent part of cohesive work groups. Under these conditions, justice becomes far less critical in the formation of feelings of commitment as it is likely that perceptions of justice are unable to serve as a substitute for perceptions of low work group cohesion. In other words, when individuals perceive low cohesion among their work group, not even perceptions of justice in the workplace can make up for the lack of supportive and friendly coworkers. Broad feelings of affective commitment directed toward the organization may be limited. Thus, we argue that the link between justice and affective commitment will be strengthened under perceptions of high group cohesion:

Hypothesis 2: Individual perceptions of work group cohesion moderate the relationship between all four forms of justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational) and affective commitment such that the relationship will be stronger for individuals with perceptions of high work group cohesion than low work group cohesion.

Method

Sample

Data were collected on site from 142 lab employees of a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility located in the United States. Each of the participants worked in one of three areas of the facility: quality control, research and development, or bioanalytical. All lab employees of the facility were asked by management to attend one of two sequential sessions to complete the survey and were given 45-min release time to attend the session. The researchers administered the survey and encouraged respondents to answer honestly. Employees were assured confidentiality and anonymity. The sample comprised 51% males and 49% females with a mean age of 33.76. To help protect the anonymity of the respondents and to encourage a strong response, tenure was measured categorically (0 = *less than 1 year*, 1 = *1 to 5 years*, and 2 = *more than 5 years*). Responses to the tenure question produced an average of 1.4.

Measures

Cohesion. Perceptions of work group cohesion were measured using the six-item scale developed by Podsakoff, Niehoff, MacKenzie, and Williams (1993). A sample item was, "My work group members know that they can depend on each other." Responses were made on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .94.

Justice. Each of the four dimensions of justice was measured with the 20-item scale developed by Colquitt (2001). Specifically, procedural justice was measured by seven items, distributive justice was measured by four items, interpersonal justice was measured by four items, and informational justice was measured by five items. By way of example, for procedural justice, we asked, "To what extent have you been able to express your views and feelings?" and for distributive justice, we asked, "Are your outcomes appropriate for the work you have completed?" The interpersonal and information items referred to the person responsible for implementing procedures. An interpersonal sample item was, "To what extent has s/he treated you with respect?" and a sample informational item was, "To what extent has (he/she) explained the procedures thoroughly?" Each item was responded to on a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = not at all and 7 = to a great extent. The Cronbach alphas were .91 for procedural, .97 for distributive, .95 for interpersonal, and .91 for informational.

Affective commitment. This variable was measured using eight items designed to measure affective commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1997). A sample item was, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." This scale was responded to on a 7-point Likert-type scale with anchors of 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Control variables. On the basis of a review of the literature, we identified three variables expected to covary with our independent and dependent variables and that we concluded should be controlled in our data analyses (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Lok & Crawford, 2001). These included gender, age, and organizational tenure. We controlled for the respondent's gender because research has demonstrated that men and women express affective commitment differently (Colbert & Kwon, 2000; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Gender was coded 0 for male and 1 for female. Age was controlled because the level of affective commitment increases with age (Lok & Crawford, 2001). Finally, we controlled for organizational tenure because the longer one has worked for an organization, the stronger his or her emotional ties (Mathieu & Hamel, 1989; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Analyses

Given the nature of the hypotheses under investigation, we used hierarchical moderated regression analysis (HMRA; Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) to test our predictions. In the first step, we entered the control variables. Our justice independent variable was entered in the second step, a different one in each of the four analyses. Regardless of the independent variable, group cohesion, our moderator, was entered in the third step. Finally, the interaction term between justice and group cohesion was entered in the fourth step of the analyses. The independent and moderating variables were centered prior to including them in the regression equation, and the interaction term was created with the centered variables (Cohen et al., 2003).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are reported in Table 1.

Common Method Variance

As with all self-report data, there was the potential for the occurrence of method variance to influence the results. To test for the extent of method

Table 1
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Affective commitment	3.55	1.08								
2. Group cohesion	3.29	1.00	.36***							
3. Distributive justice	3.47	1.64	.25**	.40***						
4. Procedural justice	3.24	1.25	.38***	.51***	.69***					
5. Interpersonal justice	4.35	1.64	.39***	.47***	.52***	.67***				
6. Interactional justice	4.16	1.43	.39***	.50***	.60***	.71***	.85***			
7. Age	33.76	8.97	.01	-.01	.08	.07	.12	.05		
8. Gender	0.51	0.50	.14	.01	.04	.07	.07	.01	.07	
9. Organizational tenure	1.37	0.66	-.03	-.01	-.11	-.03	.05	.07	.48***	.20*

Note: *N* = 138. Gender was coded as 0 = *male* and 1 = *female*. Organizational tenure was measured categorically (0 = < 1 year, 1 = 1 to 5 years, 2 = more than 5 years).

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

variance in the current data, we implemented the procedure described by Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989) and recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). Following this approach, four models are estimated: a null measurement model, a model with a single method factor, a multi-factor “trait” measurement model, and a trait measurement model with an additional method factor. If the measurement (i.e., “trait”) model is representative of the constructs in the study, it should fit significantly better than either the null or the one-factor models. Furthermore, if a method factor exists, the model with a method factor will fit the data significantly better than the measurement model. An added advantage of this approach is that this analysis allows for the partitioning of variance accounted for by different factors and unique sources. More specifically, the sum of the squared loadings can be used to index the total amount of variation caused by trait factors, method factors, and unique variance.

Results from these analyses, shown in Table 2, indicated that the measurement model fit the data well and significantly better than either the null or one-factor models. These results offer some support for the idea that our measures were independent and unique from one another. With respect to common method variance, although the method factor slightly improved model fit, it accounted for the same amount of method variance (25%) observed by Williams et al. (1989). The results of these analyses suggested that although the measurement model adequately fit the data, it benefited from the addition of a method factor. However, the gain in fit was quite

Table 2
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Model	X^2	df	$X^2_{diff}{}^a(df)$	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Null	16,588.90	561	15,574.08 (49)**			
One factor	4,318.55	527	3,303.73 (15)**	.84	.81	.211
Measurement model	1,014.82	512	—	.97	.94	.078
Measurement model with method factor	757.95	478	256.87 (34)**	.98	.95	.060

Note: CFI = Confirmatory Factor Analysis; NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. $N = 138$.

a. compared to the measurement model.

** $p < .01$.

small, and more importantly, the method factor accounted for an expected amount of variation in the data. Therefore, the results suggested that common method variance, although present, is not a pervasive problem in this study and that the relationships observed represented substantive rather than artifactual effects.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 proposed that all four forms of justice and affective commitment were positively related. Results for this hypothesis are offered in Step 2 of the HMRA presented in Table 3. These results indicated that the relationship between justice and affective commitment after controlling for age, gender, and organizational tenure is positive and significant for all forms of justice, which provided support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the relationship between justice and affective commitment was moderated by perceptions of group cohesion, such that in contexts characterized by perceptions of high levels of group cohesion, the positive relationship between justice and affective commitment was stronger than when group cohesion was perceived to be low. Results pertaining to Hypothesis 2 are displayed in Step 4 of the analysis presented in Table 3. These results indicated that the interaction between three of the four types of justice (i.e., all forms except procedural justice) and group cohesion is significantly and positively associated with affective commitment.

To determine whether these significant interactions provided support for Hypothesis 2, we graphed them using a procedure similar to that used by Stone and Hollenbeck (1989), plotting two slopes: one at 1 standard

Table 3
Hierarchical Moderation Regression Results for Affective Commitment

Independent Variables	Procedural Justice ^a			Distributive Justice ^b			Interpersonal Justice ^b			Informational Justice ^b		
	B	R ²	ΔR ²	B	R ²	ΔR ²	B	R ²	ΔR ²	B	R ²	ΔR
Step 1: Controls		0.023	0.023		0.022	0.022		0.025	0.025		0.025	0.025
Gender	.318*			.315*			.339*			.339*		
Age	0.004			0.004			0.004			0.004		
Organizational tenure	-.126			-.028			-.127			-.127		
Step 2: Independent Variables		.145***	.122***		.077***	.055**		.165***	.140***		.182***	.157***
Gender	0.235			0.277			0.27			.335*		
Age	0			-.001			-.001			0.004		
Organizational tenure	-.086			-.048			-.122			-.183		
Independent variable	.294***			.158**			.247***			.297***		
Step 3: Moderator		.184*	.039**		.154**	.077**		.207**	.042**		.215*	.033*
Gender	0.25			0.285			.281*			.327*		
Age	0.002			0.002			0.001			0.004		
Organizational tenure	-.106			-.093			-.126			-.170		
Independent variable	.196*			0.077			.173**			.216**		
Group cohesion	.245*			.325**			.251**			.229*		
Step 4: Interaction		0.185	0.005		.178*	.024*		.193*	.021*		.213*	.032*
Gender	0.249			.322*			.294*			.343*		
Age	0.003			0.005			0.004			0.007		
Organizational tenure	-.101			-.081			-.128			-.168		
Independent variable	.188*			0.077			.177**			.212**		
Group cohesion	.279**			.392***			.300**			.302**		
Independent Variable × Moderator	0.06			.103*			.091*			.128*		

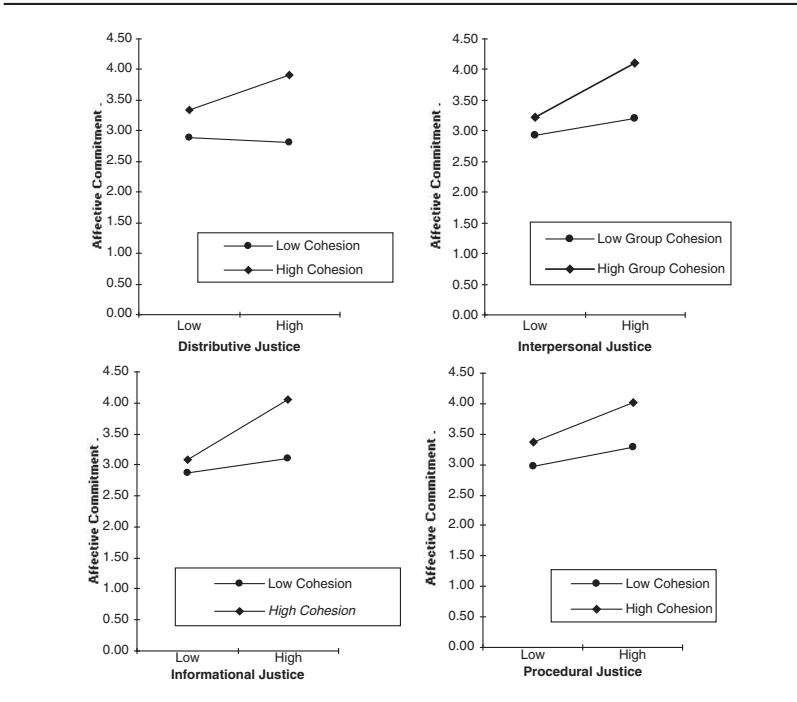
Note: Betas are unstandardized regression coefficients.

a. N = 142.

b. N = 140.

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

Figure 1
Graphs of Interactions Between Group Cohesion and
Four Forms of Justice on Affective Commitment



deviation below the mean and one at 1 standard deviation above the mean. The plots are shown in Figure 1. For informational purposes, we also graphed the interaction for procedural justice but did not interpret this graph because it was not significant. Consistent with Hypothesis 2 and as demonstrated via simple slope tests for the significant interactions (Cohen et al., 2003), among employees reporting high levels of group cohesion, the positive relationship between justice and affective commitment was significantly stronger ($t = 2.34$ for distributive justice, $t = 3.56$ for interpersonal justice, and $t = 3.93$ for informational justice) than for those employees reporting low levels of group cohesion ($t < 1$ for distributive justice, $t < 1$ for interpersonal justice, and $t < 1$ for informational justice). Thus, the form of the interactions confirms the relationships predicted in Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

As trends toward diminished employee loyalty continue, identifying ways to strengthen the employer–employee bond is essential. Our research accomplished this challenge by identifying individual perceptions of work group cohesion as one important variable under the control of the organization that can strengthen the relationship between employees and their organizations. First, this study examined the relationships between the four dimensions of justice and affective commitment using a recently developed measure of organizational justice (i.e., Colquitt, 2001). Second, the moderating effect of perceptions of group cohesion on the relationship between all four dimensions of justice and affective commitment was explored.

With respect to our first objective, support was found for three of the four forms of justice. Specifically, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice were positively related to affective commitment after controlling for age, gender, and tenure. Although the zero-order correlation between distributive justice and affective commitment was significant, distributive justice was unrelated to affective commitment after controlling for these variables. These results perhaps support two previous views found within the organizational justice literature. First, the finding that procedural justice was positively related to affective commitment whereas distributive justice was unrelated to affective commitment provides support for Sweeney and McFarlin's (1993) two-factor model. Recall that their model suggests procedural justice is a stronger predictor than distributive justice of system-related outcomes such as affective commitment. Another early view found in the justice literature is that interactional justice comprises both interpersonal and informational justice and that both are part of procedural justice (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). To the extent that this is the case, then both of these forms of justice would be predictive of system-related outcomes (i.e., affective commitment) as proposed by Sweeney and McFarlin (1993). As suggested by social exchange theory, when individuals are treated well, they experience a felt obligation to reciprocate and direct these efforts toward the provider. It is possible that these respondents perceive treatment by their supervisors as an extension of general treatment by the organization and so respond with stronger emotional ties to the organization.

Hypothesis 2 stated that individual perceptions of group cohesion would positively moderate the relationships between all four dimensions of justice and affective commitment. Support was found for three of the four types of justice. Specifically, group cohesion strengthened the distributive, interpersonal, and interactional justice–affective commitment relationships. This

finding was somewhat in contrast with previous work that showed interpersonal attachment enhanced affective commitment to the broader organization (Wech et al., 1998; Yoon et al., 1994). Our findings indicated this is not necessarily the case when perceptions of organizational justice are low. As shown in Figure 1, at low levels of perceived justice, perceived group cohesion had very little effect on affective commitment. However, when perceptions of justice are high, the perceived level of group cohesion had a strong effect on affective commitment to the organization, especially when cohesion was high. Although much research finds that perceptions of justice lead to increased affective commitment to the organization (Colquitt et al., 2001), our findings suggest these feelings would be stronger among members who perceive they are part of highly cohesive work groups.

Although perceptions of group cohesion did not moderate the relationship between procedural justice and affective commitment, the pattern was similar to that for the other types of justice. The fact that cohesion was not a significant moderator of the procedural justice–affective commitment relationship suggested that procedural justice may indeed be critically essential. It is often suggested that procedural justice is the most influential form of justice of organizationally directed attitudes and behaviors (Greenberg, 1990). Thus, it may be difficult for any positive aspects of the work environment to make up for poor procedural justice.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study has several strengths as well as limitations. First, this study confirmed the justice–affective commitment relationship for three of the four dimensions of justice using a recent four-composite measure of justice (Colquitt, 2001). This helped to further solidify justice as an important predictor of employee affective attitudes. Second, this study contributed to the justice literature by identifying individual perceptions of work group cohesion as a moderator of the justice–affective commitment relationship. Limitations included the use of self reports, thus introducing the possibility of common method bias. However, results from our Confirmatory Factor Analysis analyses indicate that common method variance is not a substantial influence on our reported results. Additionally, all of the data were gathered from a single organization, thereby potentially limiting the generalizability of our results. Future research should explore whether these findings hold in other industries and organizations and even perhaps cross-culturally. For example, in occupations that require little interaction or in which there is little task interdependence, perceptions of group cohesion may not moderate the justice–affective commitment relationship.

Implications and Future Research

The finding that individual perceptions of work group cohesion enhanced the justice–commitment relationship has important theoretical implications for the justice and group literature as well as managerial implications. Traditionally, justice has been examined in relation to individual employee attitudes and behaviors in response to their perceptions of their treatment by the organization. Our results contribute to a growing body of literature that highlights the importance of examining justice perceptions in group contexts (Colquitt & Jackson, 2006; Simons & Roberson, 2003). Social interactions between group members enable their own justice perceptions to be influenced as they learn of others' treatment. Thus, the more cohesive the work group is perceived to be, the more likely they will develop shared perceptions of the justice climate as a result of these interactions (Liao & Rupp, 2005). For both the group literature as well as the justice literature, these results lend support to the adage "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (von Bertalanffy, 1972). In other words, when perceptions of justice and cohesion are examined in combination, the maximum potential effects on affective commitment become visible. By examining either justice perceptions or group cohesion alone, we may be minimizing the potential effects on employee affective commitment.

For organizations that exhibit perceptions of high levels of justice, managers should focus their efforts on team building to greatly enhance affective commitment of team members to the organization. It may be worthwhile for these managers to not only practice team building exercises but allow team members to participate in the hiring process of new employees to further develop cohesive work groups. Research indicates that members with similar attitudes can enhance perceived group cohesiveness (Shaw, 1981). Thus, by giving employees input into the selection process, they may be able to attract those with similar attitudes. Managers also can enhance cohesion by providing group members with clear, attainable goals as well as feedback toward these goals (Shaw, 1981). Moreover, as members work toward goals and achieve success, they will become a more cohesive group.

Unfortunately, for organizations that exhibit low perceived levels of justice, perceptions of work group cohesion does not provide the same level of benefits. Thus, low justice organizations should begin by developing policies and practices that can be administered equally and consistently throughout the organization. This would improve perceptions of procedural justice. Additionally, managerial training that focuses on communication effectiveness might improve perceptions of informational justice. Perceptions of interpersonal

justice also might be improved through self-awareness training designed to improve interpersonal effectiveness. Further research can address more specific ways of bolstering individual perceptions of group cohesion as well as other tools that can enhance the justice–affective commitment relationship.

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