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Justice climate, past, present and future: Models of structure and emergence

Deborah E. RUPP

Michael R. BASHSHUR
Singapore Management University, mbashshur@smu.edu.sg

Hui LIAO

JUSTICE CLIMATE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE: MODELS OF STRUCTURE AND EMERGENCE

Deborah E. Rupp, Michael Bashshur and Hui Liao

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews research on multi-level organizational justice. The first half of the chapter provides the historical context for this issue, discusses organizational-level antecedents to individual-level justice perceptions (i.e., culture and organizational structure), and then focuses on the study of justice climate. A summary model depicts the justice climate findings to date and gives recommendations for future research. The second half of the chapter discusses the process of justice climate emergence. Pulling from classical bottom-up and top-down climate emergence models as well as contemporary justice theory, it outlines a theoretical model whereby individual differences and environmental characteristics interact to influence justice judgments. Through a process of information sharing, shared and unique experiences, and interactions among group members, a justice climate emerges. The chapter concludes by presenting ideas about how such a process might be empirically modeled.

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INTRODUCTION

As recently as 2000, reviews of the justice literature were noting the virtually complete absence of multi-level analyses of organizational justice (Konovsky, 2000). Only a few multi-level justice studies were in print at that time, and the justice community knew very little about justice at the unit level (Ehrhart, 2004). Just five years later, a number of multi-level justice studies have been published, and many see this multi-level trend as a fruitful and exciting challenge for the justice community. This chapter seeks to outline this challenge explicitly, reviewing what we know at present and outlining ways in which research in this area might proceed.

We will begin our journey with a brief overview of the justice literature, leading up to what we consider to be significant precursors to the multi-level justice movement. We then review in detail the multi-level justice literature to date, which includes both unit-level antecedents to individual-level justice perceptions (i.e., culture and organizational structure) and unit-level justice perceptions (i.e., justice climate) as antecedents of multi-level outcomes. Next, we discuss the processes by which a justice climate emerges and the theories particularly pertinent to this phenomenon. The chapter concludes with an identification of areas that might be fruitful candidates for future research and presents a theoretical model that might serve as a catalyst for future hypothesizing about justice climate.

THE HISTORY OF JUSTICE AS AN INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CONSTRUCT

Types of Justice

The topic of workplace justice has risen to become a major area of inquiry within the organizational sciences (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Scott, 2005; Cropanzano & Rupp, 2003). For decades, the term *justice* has referred to employees' individual perceptions of how fairly they individually feel they are treated at work (Colquitt & Shaw, 2005). Justice has not been treated as an attitude, motive, or emotion per se, but rather as a class of motivated behavior (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001a). That is, employees are said to experience and respond to events that take place at work, and the sense of (in)justice that results from these experiences guides their subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, research has shown that justice reactions are

fueled by a number of motives, including self-interest, relational concerns, and morality (see Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001b, for a review).

Over the decades, three classes of events have been identified as especially relevant in this psychological process. The first class includes outcomes such as pay, promotions, and the like. The perceived fairness of outcomes is referred to as *distributive justice* and has its roots in research on equity theory (Adams, 1965). A second class of events entails the procedures that are used to arrive at such outcomes. Known as *procedural justice*, these fairness judgments were largely described by Thibaut and Walker's (1975, 1978) control theory, and were advanced with the criteria proposed by Leventhal (1976, 1980), which included consistency, correctability, lack of bias, representativeness, and ethicality. A final class of behaviors evaluated by employees involves the general treatment that employees receive from those in authority over them. Proposed by Bies and Moag (1986), this type of justice is referred to as *interactional justice*. Greenberg (1993a, 1993b) later proposed a subdivision of interactional justice that includes fairness judgments made about the information provided about procedures (*informational justice*) and the basic interpersonal behaviors directed at the employee (*interpersonal justice*).

This classic typology of justice perceptions has served as a conceptual backbone for the field. Although there has not always been agreement on the distinctiveness of these constructs (see Ambrose & Arnaud, 2005; Bies, 2005), empirical research clearly supports a four-factor structure (Colquitt, 2001), and meta-analytic evidence shows that the four types show different patterns of relationships with both antecedents and consequences (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

The meta-analytic evidence also suggests that the various types of justice judgments are quite influential in predicting a wide range of important workplace outcomes (Bartel & Hays, 1999; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002). These include outcomes of relevance to organizations, such as job performance, citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment, employee theft, workplace aggression, turnover, and counterproductivity, as well as outcomes of relevance to employees, such as job satisfaction, health, and stress. Reflecting the broad influence of employee justice perceptions, the discussion of justice has begun infiltrating research on selection and staffing (Gilliland, 1993), performance appraisal (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995), conflict resolution (Shapiro & Rosen, 1994), layoffs (Konovsky & Brockner, 1993), sexual harassment (Adams-Roy & Barling, 1998), discrimination claims (Goldman, 2001), labor relations (Skarlicki & Latham, 1996), and many other topics within

industrial/organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resources management. If one theme has emerged from the last 40 years of research, it is that justice matters.

Sources of Justice

A more recent wrinkle in the justice literature has been a theoretical push to increase the specificity with which justice constructs are measured (Colquitt & Shaw, 2005). That is, justice researchers of late have lobbied the research community not only to carefully consider and measure the type of justice (i.e., distributive, procedural), but also to measure its source. This approach has been termed the *multifoci* approach (Cropanzano et al., 2001a, 2001b), in that it argues that justice stems from multiple foci within the organization, including supervisors, the organization as a whole, coworkers, customers, and other parties. Indeed, employees might be treated quite fairly by one source, but rather unfairly by another. Hence, failing to specify the source of justice in justice measures, or averaging across sources, could at worst lead to spurious results or at best yield justice effects that are difficult to interpret.

Malatesta and Byrne (1997) were the first to propose the multifoci idea, positing that procedural justice is an organizationally referenced variable, because policies and procedures are typically seen as being passed down from the organization, whereas interactional justice is a supervisory-referenced variable, because the supervisor is often the direct contact and therefore the source of interpersonal treatment. Consequently, it was hypothesized that procedural justice should best predict outcomes directed at the organization, whereas interactional justice should best predict outcomes directed at the supervisor. There is a certain eye-for-an-eye flavor to these notions. That is, a basic assumption within this model is that injustice is reciprocated to the source of the injustice as opposed to other sources. This notion has been supported for the most part (e.g., see Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000), although "spillover" to other sources has been detected in some studies (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Liao & Rupp, 2005).

Byrne (1999) eventually expanded the multifoci model by crossing justice type (i.e., procedural, interactional) with justice source (i.e., organization, supervisor), arguing that employees can make multiple types of justice judgments about multiple sources. Empirical support for this notion has been promising. For example, Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) found that supervisor-focused procedural and interactional justice predicted supervisory-directed citizenship behaviors, job performance, and organizationally focused citizenship behaviors, whereas organizationally focused procedural and interactional justice predicted organizationally directed citizenship behaviors only. Likewise, Liao and Rupp (2005) measured procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice coming from both the supervisor and the organization. They found (with a few exceptions) these variables to predict multifoci commitment, satisfaction, and citizenship. Rupp et al. (2004) extended this research by including coworkers as a source of justice. They found, using a sample of prison guards, that coworker-focused procedural and interactional justice predicted commitment to and satisfaction with coworkers. Finally, Rupp and Spencer (in press) introduced customers as a source of justice, finding in a laboratory study that interactional justice coming from customers affected participants' emotional labor.

The multifoci justice research has made a theoretical contribution as well. Beginning with the work of Masterson et al. (2000), multifoci justice research took a solid social exchange perspective. That is, it was argued that acts of injustice are reciprocated to their original source because justice engenders social exchange relationships, and the quality of these relationships, in turn, mediates multifoci justice effects. For example, Masterson et al. (2000) found leader–member exchange to mediate the effect of interactional justice on supervisory-directed outcomes, and they perceived organizational support to mediate the effect of procedural justice on organizationally directed outcomes. Cropanzano, Prehar, and Chen (2002) obtained similar results. Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) found that social exchange with a supervisor mediates supervisor-focused procedural and interaction justice effects, whereas social exchange with the organization mediates organizationally focused procedural and organizationally focused justice effects. Finally, Rupp et al. (2004) found coworker-focused procedural and interactional justice effects to be mediated by team member exchange.

Shifting from Individual- to Unit-Level Considerations

Although multifoci justice research was not multi-level in either its conception or in its onset, it is important to understand this research from a historical perspective (at least for us) because it has served as an impetus for multi-level justice considerations. That is, the multifoci movement, along with the increased attention paid to teams in organizations (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Colquitt, Zapata-Phelan, & Roberson, 2005; Cropanzano & Schminke, 2001; Devine, Clayton, Philips, Dunford, & Melner, 1999; Konovsky, 2000; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003) and the rise in multi-level research in general (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) caused justice researchers to shift their attention

away from the *what* of justice and toward the *who* of justice. In considering the perpetrator (i.e., the source of justice), we became inherently aware that employees must interact with and form relationships with many people, groups, and entities at work. This web of relationships – the quality of which is largely determined by the justice stemming from each source – can create unique social environments for individuals.

The next logical step in this theoretical line of reasoning was to ask two questions:

- How do the various sources of justice interact with one another to form an overall atmosphere regarding how well employees perceive themselves to be treated?
- To what extent do individuals who have common relational webs (e.g., work on the same team, have the same boss) come to share perceptions about how fairly they as a group are treated?

Research questions surrounding the issue of unit-level justice or justice climate have certainly been incubating, just waiting to evolve.

THE EMERGENCE OF MULTI-LEVEL JUSTICE RESEARCH

Organizational-Level Antecedents to Individual-Level Justice Perceptions

Before embarking on a larger discussion of justice climate, it is necessary to point out that this is not the only multi-level application addressed by the justice literature. Indeed, an important collection of studies have considered multi-level antecedents of individual-level justice perceptions. At large, these studies surround the effects of both culture (Leung, 2005) and organizational structure (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003) on fairness perceptions. We will briefly discuss these two avenues of research before turning our attention to unit-level justice perceptions.

The Effects of Culture

Research that has considered the influence of culture on employee justice perceptions has argued that substantial culturally based differences are present in the justice perception formation process, the relative importance placed on the various justice types, and the behavioral and attitudinal reactions following a perceived injustice (James, 1993; Greenberg, 2001; Lam, Schaubroeck, & Aryee, 2002). The empirical evidence to date is generally supportive of these arguments.

For example, Blader, Chang, and Tyler (2001) found culture to moderate the effect of procedural injustice on workplace retaliation, with employees in Taiwan showing less of a propensity to retaliate. Pillai, Williams, and Tan (2001) presented evidence that procedural and distributive justices were related to satisfaction, commitment, and trust across four different cultures, but the relative importance of the justice types varied by culture. Brockner et al. (2001) showed voice (a key component of procedural justice) to be more important to individuals in low-power-distance (versus high-power-distance) cultures.

Li (2004) reported results from a meta-analysis that synthesized the cross-cultural justice research to date. His findings suggested that although distributive and procedural justice perceptions were related to employee attitudes in all cultures, the magnitude of the correlations varied across cultures – most notably, across those cultures that differed in terms of their power distance. Finally, Bashshur and Rupp (2004) studied the measurement equivalence of justice across four cultures. Justice measures were shown to be metrically equivalent across cultures. Further, results indicated that the construct of justice can be measured in the same way across cultures, and that both the factor structure and the strength of the relationships between manifest indicators and latent constructs are equivalent across cultures. However, in line with previous cross-cultural justice work, the experience of a specific just or unjust behavior was heavily influenced by the expectations related to treatment in the workplace. In other words, depending on what was typically expected to occur in the workplace, the same behavior by a supervisor could be rated as very unfair or as neutral by respondents from different cultures.

The Effects of Organizational Structure

Cropanzano and Greenberg (1997) were among the first to propose theoretically that employees' environmental contexts help shape their justice perceptions. Ambrose, Schminke, and their colleagues have shown empirically across several studies that a number of structural aspects within an organization affect workplace fairness. In a study analyzing samples from 11 different organizations, Schminke, Ambrose, and Cropanzano (2000) found a relationship between the concentration of authority within an organization (termed "centralization") and the perceptions of procedural justice. That is, more injustice was perceived when employees had fewer opportunities to participate in decision making and when power to make decisions was concentrated among those high in the authority hierarchy. Organizational size was also discovered

to make a difference, with more interactional justice being found among employees in larger organizations.

Schminke, Cropanzano, and Rupp (2002) extended these findings by considering the role of organizational structure on three types of justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) using a sample of employees grouped into 45 departments across 35 organizations. Their results reaffirmed that centralization exerted effects on employee justice perceptions. These researchers also found main effects for formalization – that is, the extent to which policies and procedures are well documented by the organization – with more fairness being perceived in departments with higher levels of formalization. Lastly, these authors found that many of the main effects were moderated by the employees' level within the organization, with a weaker effect of structure occurring among those employees at higher hierarchical levels. This finding was interpreted through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). That is, the authors posited that employees at higher levels in the organizational hierarchy are more likely to be engaged in high-quality social exchange relationships with the organization, and therefore are less influenced by structure.

Another multi-level study of the influence on organizational structure on workplace justice was conducted by Ambrose and Schminke (2003). This time, rather than structure acting as an antecedent to the formation of justice perceptions, structure moderated reactions to injustice. Taking both a multifoci and a social exchange perspective, this study, which was conducted in 102 departments of 68 organizations, revealed that interactional justice predicted supervisory trust most strongly in organic organizations (i.e., organizations with decentralized, loose, flexible structures), whereas procedural justice predicted perceived organizational support most strongly in mechanistic organizations (i.e., organizations characterized by centralized power, hierarchical communication, uniformity, and formality). Based on the results of these studies, it appears that policy makers should consider how the structure and design of workplace environments shape how organizations and the people in them influence individual employees.

The Evolution of Justice Climate Research

For the purpose of this chapter, the research on organizational and cultural effects on justice perceptions is very important. Not only does it represent two lines of multi-level justice research, but, like the research on multifoci justice described earlier, this research has also served to "broaden the minds" of those trained with a strict "micro" orientation. That is, it has made us aware of environmental influences in both forming justice judgments and moderating reactions to unfair events. Furthermore, these multi-level designs required the collection of data from employees who could be clustered in meaningful groups (e.g., teams, departments, organizations). It was only natural that the research community shift its thinking toward not only how individuals working within the same team, group, or organization might have *shared* perceptions regarding their treatment by authorities, but also how a *climate* for justice could emerge within groups that might predict outcomes above and beyond the effects of individual-level justice perceptions.

This shift in thinking was simultaneously spurred by other trends occurring within the organizational sciences at that time. First, the last decade has observed an increase in the use of team-based work systems within organizations, and as a result, an increase in the amount of research focused on team settings (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Colquitt et al., 2005; Cropanzano & Schminke, 2001; Devine et al., 1999; Konovsky, 2000). Second, multi-level perspectives have been very much on the rise, as single-level analyses have been recognized to represent incomplete methods for understanding complex organizational phenomena. Organizations are now (correctly) being treated as integrated systems with individual and organizational characteristics that interact and combine to shape individual and organizational outcomes (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Third, contemporary theoretical models of workplace justice have revealed that justice concerns are not always self-interested (Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005); instead, people also care about the treatment of others (Colquitt, 2004), and "third-party" justice effects (i.e., emotional, attitudinal, or behavioral reactions upon witnessing another being treated unfairly) are far more common than was once thought (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001).

Together, these influences have catalyzed the development of a very exciting new line of inquiry within workplace justice: that of justice climate. The following sections review the justice climate research to date. The remainder of the chapter then seeks to integrate these findings into a theoretical model and makes suggestions for fruitful areas of future research.

Justice Climate

General Justice Climate

To our knowledge, the first study that took justice beyond individual-level perceptions was carried out by Mossholder, Bennett, and Martin (1998). These authors argued for the existence of a "context" for procedural justice.

This paper was based on the arguments of Tyler and Lind (1992), who stated that when the organization violates procedural norms with respect to one employee, this action can easily be seen as a violation to all members of the work unit. Mossholder et al. further argued that when multiple group members perceive themselves as being treated in a similar way by authorities, "justice perceptions ... may emerge in the aggregate" (1998, p. 132). This study was influential not only as the first justice climate paper, but also because Mossholder and colleagues, in setting-up the theoretical justification for their hypotheses, brought together past research findings from yet another area of justice research that has great implications for the study of justice climate – namely, third-party justice effects (Ambrose, Harland, & Kulik, 1991; Colquitt, 2004; Folger, Rosenfield, Grove, & Corkran, 1979; James & Cropanzano, 1994; Miller, Jackson, Mueller, & Schersching, 1987; Steil, 1983). Collectively, this research has shown that the treatment of others often affects one's own justice judgments.

In their study, Mossholder et al. hypothesized that a climate for procedural justice would emerge within workgroups and that unit-level procedural justice would predict individual-level job attitudes (satisfaction and commitment). Random coefficients modeling (RCM) (via hierarchical linear modeling, HLM) was employed on a sample of employees within 53 bank branches. The authors found support for their predictions, with procedural justice climate predicting 20% of the variance in job satisfaction (no multilevel effect was found for commitment).

Naumann and Bennett (2000) extended the Mossholder et al. findings by placing more emphasis on the definition and measurement of procedural justice climate as well as the development of justice climate within workgroups. Pulling from the workgroup climate literature, these researchers defined procedural justice climate as "a distinct group-level cognition about how a work group as a whole is treated" (Naumann & Bennett, 2000, p. 882) and measured their climate variable via an aggregate of how group members perceived the group to be treated in terms of procedural justice. They predicted that group cohesion, demographic similarity among group members, and the manager's visibility would increase the likelihood of an emergence of justice climate; and that procedural justice climate would predict organizational commitment and helping behavior. Using a sample of employees taken from 40 bank branches, HLM analyses revealed that cohesion and visibility – but not demographic similarity – predicted the emergence of procedural justice climate. As in the work of Mossholder et al., procedural justice climate did not predict commitment, although it did predict employee-helping behaviors.

Ehrhart (2004) expanded the Naumann and Bennett findings by testing a model whereby procedural justice climate predicted *unit-level* helping behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors, OCB). This model proposed that the relationship between servant leadership and unit-level OCB would be mediated by procedural justice climate. It was tested using an employee sample from a grocery store chain. Employees were grouped into one of 249 departments. Using structural equations modeling (SEM), Ehrhart found that this unit-level model fit the data well. The model was not compared with an individual-level model, however, hindering our ability to determine the relative strength of the unit-level effects above and beyond the individual-level effects.

Justice Climate within Team Settings

Other justice climate research has turned its attention to teams. That is, rather than simply testing for justice climate effects within departments or work units, this line of research has considered how a context for procedural justice emerges within intact teams (e.g., manufacturing teams, project teams, product development teams). For example, Colquitt, Noe, and Jackson (2002) conducted a study using 88 semiautonomous teams within 6 automobile parts manufacturing plants. These authors proposed several hypotheses based on the extant justice theories (e.g., the relational model, the instrumental model, fairness heuristic theory) linking procedural justice climate within teams to team performance. Regression analyses revealed that smaller, more collective teams were shown to possess more favorable procedural justice climate levels, and procedural justice climate level positively predicted team performance and negatively predicted team-level absenteeism. This investigation was the first study of its kind to measure both justice and performance at the team level of analysis.

Research has continued to explore justice within team settings, although these studies have not necessarily incorporated multi-level methodology (see Colquitt et al., 2005, for a comprehensive review of this research). For example, a study by Colquitt (2004) looked at the consistency between how team members feel they are personally treated and how they feel their teammates are treated in terms of procedural justice. Results from both a student team sample and a laboratory study showed that this consistency matters. Consistency predicted role performance, especially in interdependent teams consisting of members who were sensitive to equity concerns. As will be discussed later, the target of justice (i.e., the focal "victim" or referent) is quite relevant both theoretically and psychometrically to the study of justice climate.

Organizational-Level Justice Climate

Simons and Roberson (2003) extended the findings of Mossholder et al., Naumann and Bennett, and Colquitt et al. by expanding their focus to the *organizational* level of analysis and considering not only procedural justice climate, but also interpersonal justice climate within organizations. Using a very large sample of employees from nearly 100 hotel properties, these authors used SEM to test a model whereby procedural and interpersonal justice predicted commitment and satisfaction, which in turn predicted outcomes such as discretionary service behavior, intent to remain, guest service satisfaction, and employee turnover.

This model was tested by collapsing the data in three ways: as individual-level data, as aggregated by department, and as aggregated by organization (i.e., hotel property). Although this analytical strategy (i.e., using SEM rather than HLM) did not allow the authors to test for incremental unit- and organizational-level effects (over and above individual-level effects – that is, nested models – were not compared), and although the models did not show exactly parallel prediction of outcomes, for the most part all three models fit the data quite well. This outcome provides evidence for the existence of justice climate within both teams and organizations.

Multitype Multifoci Multi-level Justice

To review, the justice climate research supports the existence of both procedural justice climate and interpersonal justice climate, and these justice climates predict a wide range of outcomes such as job attitudes, performance, and citizenship behaviors. Liao and Rupp (2005) sought to further expand the justice climate research by explicitly integrating the multifoci justice literature model discussed earlier with that described in the multi-level justice literature. These authors proposed that a number of justice climates exist within workgroups surrounding the multiple types and sources of justice. They argued for the existence of six distinct justice climate variables: *organizationally focused* procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice climate, and *supervisory-focused* procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice climate.

Consistent with the multifoci justice literature (Malatesta & Byrne, 1997; Masterson et al., 2000; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002), Liao and Rupp hypothesized that the organizationally focused justice climate variables would predict individual-level attitudes and behaviors directed at the organization, and that the supervisory-focused justice climate variables would predict individual-level attitudes and behaviors directed at the supervisor. In addition, their work was among the first multi-level justice studies to incorporate an individual difference variable as a moderator. That is, Liao and Rupp predicted that the effects of multifoci justice climate on multifoci outcomes would be moderated by individual differences in group members' justice orientations (the extent to which they internalize justice as a moral virtue and pay attention to issues of justice around them).

This model was tested using RCM (via HLM) on a sample of 49 workgroups taken from 9 different organizations. Results were generally supportive, albeit with many exceptions. In general, organizationally focused justice climate (procedural, informational, and interpersonal) was found to predict commitment to the organization, whereas supervisory-focused justice climate (procedural, informational, and interpersonal) was found to predict both commitment to and satisfaction with the supervisor. Organizational citizenship behavior was predicted by organizationally focused procedural and informational justice climate only.

Liao and Rupp's work, of course, was only a preliminary study of multi-level multifoci justice research in that differential hypotheses were not made for the different types of justice climate, nor for the same type of justice at multiple levels of analysis. Indeed, we have merely begun to scrape the surface in terms of understanding the world of justice as it manifests itself at levels beyond that of individual employees.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The justice literature is, at present, perfectly situated in its evolution to take on a systematic investigation into the antecedents and consequences of justice climate. The literature is rich and comprehensive, and some multi-level investigations have already been embarked upon. At this point, a summary model serves to illustrate what we know with regard to the multi-level nomological network that contains justice climate.

Fig. 1 graphically depicts this model. It is nothing more than a summary of the links between constructs that have been shown thus far in past research. Readers can imagine this figure floating in three-dimensional space, with the four levels depicted hovering over one another. Individuals are over-arched by groups, which are over-arched by organizations, which are over-arched by culture. Indeed, the research to date implies a nomological net for each level (although the nets are incomplete at some levels). Research also implies several cross-level effects whereby a variable at one level (e.g., justice climate) affects constructs at other levels (e.g., individual-level attitudes and behaviors). Readers will notice that the nomological networks are

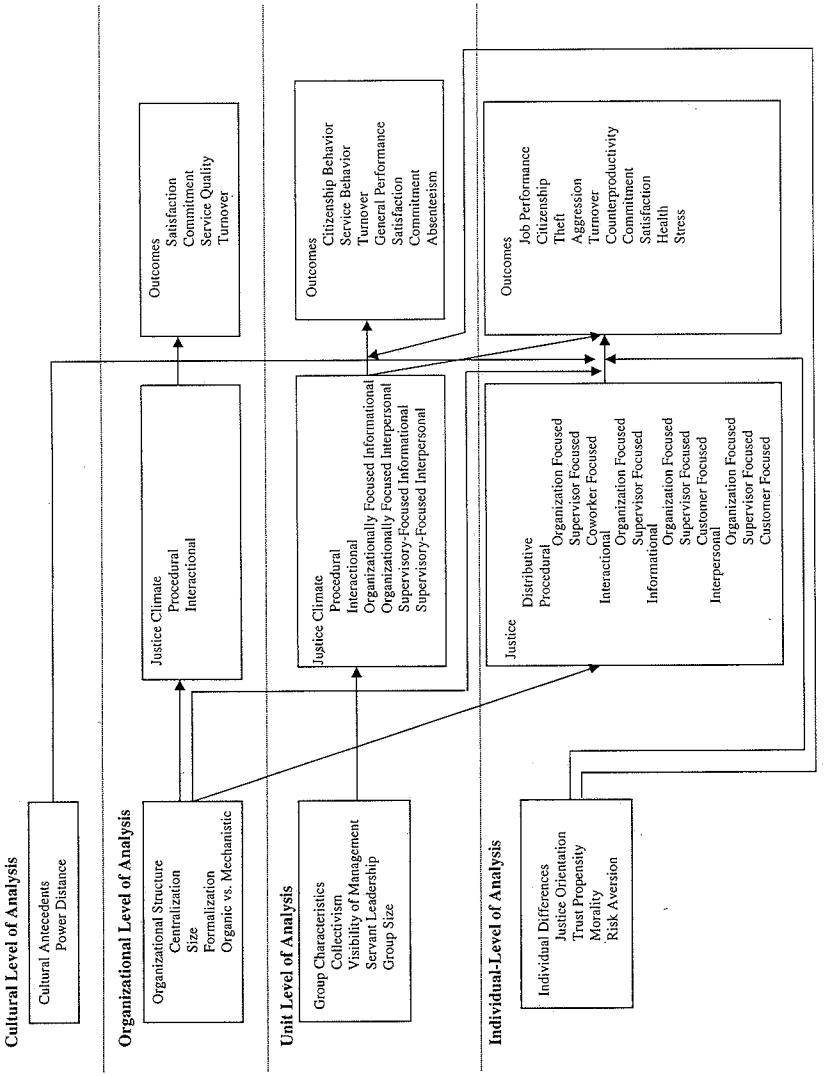

Fig. 1. Generalized Summary Model of Justice Climate's Nomological Network.

incomplete at some levels. For example, at the individual level of analysis, we see that there are no foci under distributive justice, and coworker justice is only listed under procedural justice. This is not to suggest that any foci are not relevant to any individual type of justice, but rather, this is all the justice community has explored thus far.

In addition, the model is grossly overgeneralized in that it simply links groups of constructs but does not illustrate the specific connections between specific variables. It does, however, give a sense of where attention has been directed to date. Indeed, justice considerations have been taken into account at the individual, group/team, and organizational levels of analysis, and some attempt has been made to distinguish between types and sources of justice at each of these levels. Research has also begun to explore the links between justice climate and outcomes at multiple levels of analysis. Some attention has been devoted to both the contextual and the individual difference variables that affect justice climates. Finally, a small amount of research has been conducted that considers culture and personality as moderators of justice effects. Despite these advances, several untested areas remain within justice climate's nomological network. The following sections outline five areas that are in need of attention as the research on justice climate moves forward.

Multifoci Research and More Differential Hypotheses

First, more research is needed that explores justice climate from a multifoci perspective. At present, the multifoci literature is especially well situated to extend itself theoretically into multi-level investigations. Whereas some initial headway has made here (e.g., Bashshur, Rupp, & Christopher, 2004; Liao & Rupp, 2005; Ng, Rupp, & Drasgow, 2005), the research undertaken to date has merely scratched the surface of what could become a much more comprehensive collection of research propositions. The major need at present is an investigation of the *differential* effects of different types and sources of justice climate at the unit level of analysis (indeed, this type of research is needed in the general, individual-level multifoci justice literature as well) and an examination of the *differential* effects of the justice climate at different levels of analysis.

This last point – that is, theorizing about how the effects of justice are *different* at different levels of analysis – is of particular importance. For example, Dietz, Robinson, Folger, Baron, and Schulz (2003) were unsuccessful in predicting workplace aggression with procedural justice climate. Assuming this failure was not due to a Type II error, this finding is actually quite pertinent to future multi-level justice research, in that it shows that

justice climate is much more than individual-level justice perceptions averaged up. Rather, justice at different levels of analysis might have both different antecedents and different outcomes, and future research will need to further explore both the process of emergence and the construct validity of multi-level justice.

Boundary Conditions

Second, future multi-level justice research needs to examine the boundary conditions of justice climate effects. As Hall and Rosenthal (1991, p. 447) pointed out, "If we want to know how well we are doing in the biological, psychological, and social sciences, an index that will serve us well is how far we have advanced in our understanding of the moderator variables of our field." Similarly, to advance our understanding of *how* and *when* justice climate influences multi-level outcomes, future research needs to go beyond assessing its main effects and examine potential moderators of such effects.

The work of Ambrose and Schminke (2003) is especially relevant to an exploration of situational moderators. These authors found that the effects of individual-level justice perceptions on organizational trust were moderated by organizational structure. Future research might consider linking the levels of analysis to an even greater extent and theorizing about how structural variables such as the ones explored by these authors might moderate justice climate effects. In terms of individual differences, the limited studies along this line show that the effects of justice climate and justice context on individual attitudes and behaviors are contingent on enduring individual characteristics such as justice orientation (Liao & Rupp, 2005) and social value orientation (Liao, Rupp, Ko, Nam, & Bashshur, 2005). Additional theory-driven efforts might further our understanding of which factors may constrain or enhance the effects of justice climate. The work of Colquitt, Judge, Scott, and Shaw (2004) might be a great place to start in extending this line of research. These authors were among the first to show compelling results for a set of theoretically derived personality variables (i.e., trust, morality, risk aversion) as moderators of individual-level justice effects. Future research looking at moderators of justice climate may want to begin with these variables in forming hypotheses based on contemporary justice theories.

The Measurement of Justice Climate

Our third recommendation as research on the antecedents and consequences of justice climate moves forward is to carefully consider how justice climate is best operationalized and consequently measured. Using the classic multi-level

terminology, researchers need to develop *composition models*. Chan (1998) specified a number of composition models, which link constructs at different levels. *Direct consensus* models are probably the most commonly used models for aggregation (Chan, 1998). This approach typically focuses on the group level, but uses aggregations of responses from individuals given some minimal level of within-group agreement of scores. Mossholder et al. (1998), Simons and Roberson (2003), Liao and Rupp (2005), and Bashshur et al. (2004) used this type of composition model to measure justice climate. This approach involves collecting procedural and/or interactional justice perceptions from individuals and aggregating these perceptions to the group level. Employees are asked individually how fairly they feel *they themselves* are treated (e.g., an item might read "*I* am treated with dignity and respect," to which the employee responds by indicating his or her level of agreement). After item ratings are averaged to obtain an overall justice rating for each individual employee, and assuming that there exists sufficient within-group agreement and between-group dissimilarity, the scores for employees within a team, department, or organization are then averaged to form a justice climate variable for that unit.

The *referent shift* approach differs in terms of the referent of interest. Instead of simply aggregating each group member's assessment of his or her treatment into some group-level construct (as is done in the direct consensus approach), the referent shift approach refers specifically to the treatment that the group receives. Again, akin to the direct consensus approach, there is a shared component to the referent shift approach: Some minimal level of agreement in the perceptions of group members must be observed to say that a climate exists. This approach, however, results in a new form of the conceptual construct that is distinct from the original one. For example, while justice climate using a referent shift approach assesses the justice experiences of the group, the outcome is not the same thing as the sum of each individual's treatment within the group. This composition model was used by Naumann and Bennett (2000), Colquitt et al. (2002), Dietz and colleagues (2003), and Ehrhart (2004) to measure justice climate.

In an effort to explore the issue of composition model choice in the study of justice climate, Bashshur et al. (2004) compared the within- and between-group agreement indices using an array of composition models as well as general and specific sources of justice (direct consensus, multifoci direct consensus, referent shift, and multifoci referent shift models). Results indicated that referent shift models led to more agreement within groups and a better ability to distinguish between groups than did direct consensus models. In addition, the process of focusing respondents' attentions on a specific

source for justice seemed to increase within-group agreement for both direct consensus and referent shift approaches.

An interesting result of this approach was that it became possible to observe patterns of agreement levels for each type and source of justice. The largest increases in average group agreement levels when moving from a direct consensus approach to a referent shift approach arose when assessing interpersonal and distributive justice climates (e.g., the average r_{wg} value jumped from 0.60 to 0.78 when moving from a general direct consensus model to a general referent shift model). Theoretically, this is an interesting trend. Equity theory research (Adams, 1965) suggests that it is one's own outcome versus some relevant target that is important in assessing distributive justice – that perceptions of distributive justice are, in fact, relative. This idea implies that by focusing items intended to measure a group-level construct (justice climate) at the individual level (as is done with the direct consensus approach), we are introducing noise into the construct, because each individual in the group may achieve different outcomes. By forcing all respondents to focus on the same target (i.e., the group as a whole), the referent shift approach increases within-group agreement and more accurately assesses the group-level nature of the construct.

The same might be said for the assessment of interpersonal justice climate. Given that employees in the same group can experience dramatically different relationships with their supervisors, the fact that within-group agreement indices were lower in the direct consensus approach as compared to the referent shift approach should not be surprising. Again, the referent shift approach forces all respondents to focus on the same level of interest – the group. An individual may have a negative relationship with his or her supervisor, yet, when asked about how the group as whole is treated, may respond quite positively.

Given these findings, although direct consensus measures have been used with some success in the literature (even by us), we do not feel they are theoretically ideal for measuring justice climate because of the disconnect between the true referent of interest (the group) and the actual referent alluded to in the items (the self). Because the referent shift approach uses the group rather than the individual as the construct's referent (Chan, 1998; Chen, Mathieu, & Bliese, 2004), measurement and theory are more closely linked in that the justice items, although still rated by employees individually, refer to the experiences of the group as opposed to the experiences of the individual employee. Given that justice climate researchers are interested in what group-level justice perceptions are and how they affect important outcomes, we find ourselves agreeing with the recent recommendations of multi-level researchers (Hofmann & Jones, 2004; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) that the referent shift approach, with its explicit focus on the group level, is the more appropriate approach for measuring climate in general and justice climate in particular.

Climate Strength

Alternatively called "climate consensus" (Lindell & Brandt, 2000), *climate strength* (Chan, 1998) refers to the basic notion that the amount of within-group agreement should, independently of the mean level of agreement (Lindell & Brandt, 2000), affect organizational outcomes (or at the very least moderate the effect of mean levels of climate on outcomes). To date, the findings have been mixed, with some researchers reporting strong effects for climate strength (Colquitt et al., 2002) and others reporting no incremental explanatory power for the construct (Lindell & Brandt, 2000).

Part of the problem with assessing the effects of climate strength may lie in the fact that climate strength is at least partially dependent on mean levels of climate. As the mean for the group increases, there results a certain restriction of range such that levels of agreement also increase. This multicollinearity makes it difficult to partial out the effects of climate strength from climate level. Although a variety of indices (e.g., $r_{wg(j)}$, James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) have been offered to assess climate strength, each seems to have its own set of problems.

Ostroff, Kinicki, and Tamkins (2003) offer a different approach to assessing climate strength that is independent of many of the problems that trouble the typical measures of agreement. They discuss three aspects of climate strength: agreement-based strength, system-based strength, and alignment-based strength. *Agreement-based strength* deals with the issues of climate strength as they have been discussed thus far. It simply assesses the extent to which group members agree in their perceptions of the environment. System-based strength and alignment-based strength, however, involve a different focus. *System-based strength* refers to the extent to which the climate is pervasive in an organization. An organization is said to possess high system-based strength when it has strong socialization and training programs in place and sanctions for behaving in ways not congruent with the group norms. *Alignment-based strength* deals with the extent to which organizational climate is aligned with actual organizational practices. It is an assessment of the congruence between organizational foci. In situations characterized by a lack of congruence across foci, the contingencies are "ambiguously interpreted across individuals ... and do not generate uniform expectancies concerning the desired behavior" (Ostroff et al., 2003, p. 583).

Given that we have argued for multiple sources of justice climate, we extend this idea of alignment-based strength to include the idea that, aside from an alignment between policies and actual practices, climates from different sources (for example, a justice climate from supervisors versus a justice climate from the organization) may be out of alignment. Note that this approach to strength is independent of mean levels, as it is simply the amount of alignment that is hypothesized to affect the strength of climate on outcomes. Groups with misaligned climates are deemed to have *inconsistent climate.* However, when all sources (e.g., supervisor, organization) are either very just or very unjust, then the prediction of outcomes – whether it be in a positive or a negative direction – will be stronger.

Bashshur et al. (2004) examined this proposition by comparing groups according to their levels of justice climate. These researchers assessed climate according to the Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen (1980) climate model described later in this chapter. That is, justice climate was assessed based on the likelihood of punishments or rewards given specific justice behaviors coming from supervisors versus coworkers. In only 10 of 47 groups in the sample did participants, on average, report that a negative relationship or no relationship between supervisor and coworker contingencies. In other words, in 10 of 47 groups, the same type of behavior was rewarded or punished by supervisors, but ignored by colleagues. In the remaining groups, the relationship between supervisor rewards and coworker rewards was measured as $r = 0.70$ at the least. In a nonparametric test of the differences in means on a variety of outcomes, aligned groups were found to have higher levels of satisfaction with supervision, affective commitment, normative commitment, and supervisor-rated organizational citizenship than did nonaligned groups.

This initial test of the effects of alignment strength on climate–outcome relationships provides some encouraging support for this new approach to climate strength. While the results are not conclusive (we did not find circumstances in which one climate was positive while another was negative), it does represent a tentative step toward a theoretically interesting and new approach.

Statistically Modeling Multi-level Hypotheses

As the theoretical thinking about justice becomes increasingly multi-level, it becomes necessary to think critically about the statistical techniques employed to test hypotheses. Typically, in justice climate research, the conceptual model is multi-level or cross-level in nature, with predictors

spanning both the individual level (e.g., individual-level justice perceptions) and the group level (e.g., group-level justice climate). In addition, the data are often hierarchical in nature, with employees nested in higher-level units such as workgroups. Thus observations from the same workgroup may be interdependent of each other, violating the statistical independence assumption of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. As a result, the OLS estimates of standard errors may be biased, and test statistics may not be valid. To avoid these potential problems, researchers may adopt RCM and cross-level operator analysis (CLOP). A comparison of the similarities and differences among these methods can be found in Klein et al. (2000).

For example, HLM is an RCM technique that has been used in extant multi-level justice research. HLM explicitly accounts for the nested nature of data and can simultaneously estimate the effects of factors at different levels on individual-level outcomes while maintaining appropriate levels of analysis for the predictors (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). HLM can be applied to test a *two-level incremental model* of the justice climate effects. In this case, researchers are interested in the *incremental* effects of the group-level justice climate on individual attitudinal and behavioral outcomes after controlling for individual-level justice perceptions. In the justice climate literature, such a technique was used in the studies of Mossholder et al. (1998), Naumann and Bennett (2000), and Liao and Rupp (2005). These studies found an incremental effect of justice climate on outcomes over and above the effects of individual-level justice perceptions.

HLM can also be applied to test a *cross-level moderation model* of the justice climate effects. In this case, researchers may be interested in whether the group-level justice climate moderates the relationship between an individual-level predictor and an individual-level outcome variable. For example, Liao and Rupp (2005) detected an interaction between supervisor-focused procedural justice climate and individual differences in justice orientation on supervisory-directed commitment and satisfaction. An even more direct illustration of this type of model was presented by Ng et al. (2005), who found that the relationship between conscientiousness and contextual performance (specifically, job dedication and dutifulness) was moderated by organization-focused justice climate. Interestingly, and in line with this chapter's discussion of emergence, no effects were found for individual-level justice–conscientiousness interactions. As such, these results evidence the utility of cross-level theorizing in organizational behavior. A more detailed discussion of testing multi-level incremental models and cross-level moderation models can be found in Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) and Hofmann and Gavin (1998).

THE PROCESS OF EMERGENCE

We now turn our attention to the process by which a climate for justice emerges within workgroups. The following sections present several theories that offer different perspectives on how such a process might occur. These perspectives can be divided into two major categories:

- *Bottom-up* models, which posit processes by which individuals within workgroups come to develop a shared cognition about how the group as a whole is treated.
- *Top-down* models, which posit processes by which the organization imposes structures and contingencies on the group, which causes climate to emerge.

We categorize the various theoretical perspectives as best we can, although – as is obvious from our writing – many of the perspectives make mention of both top-down and bottom-up influences.

Bottom-Up Processes of Climate Emergence

Although justice perceptions have their origin at the individual level of analysis, the collection of individual perceptions within groups may lead to the formation of a shared, collective cognition or climate. This type of emergence process has been referred to as *bottom-up* emergence in multi-level research (see Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Several theories provide the theoretical underpinnings for the bottom-up emergence of justice climate, including theories of social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), socialization (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), and attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) (Schneider, 1975). Empirical research has provided evidence for the hypothetical processes proposed by each of these perspectives in the formation of other climate variables (e.g., technical updating climate, Kozlowski & Hults, 1987; innovation climate, Anderson & West, 1998; safety climate, Hofmann & Stetzer, 1996; and service climate, Schneider, 1990). Below we briefly describe how each of these perspectives is relevant to the study of justice climate.

Social Information Processing Theory

Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) argues that individuals use information gathered from others in their direct social contexts to form judgments about organizational practices, values, and norms.

Given that members of the same group are exposed to the same policies, leaders, and other contextual characteristics (Naumann & Bennett, 2000), they will possess shared information and form common perceptions regarding how fairly they are treated by multiple parties within the organization. In other words, this perspective would argue that because group members are often affected by the same procedures, may receive similar outcomes or rewards, and may be treated in a similar fashion by supervisors, the organization, customers, and other parties, a shared evaluation of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice may form about each of these sources. A similar phenomenon – that of *contagious justice* – has been proposed in the justice literature. This perspective argues that "the often ambiguous and emotionally charged nature of justice events compels organizational actors to engage in social talk and arrive at a shared, socially constructed interpretation of justice" (Degoey, 2000, p. 51).

Attraction–Selection–Attrition

The ASA perspective (Schneider, 1975) proposes that individuals of similar characteristics are attracted to, selected into, and retained by the same group. Consequently, this model implies that over time, a workgroup will consist of individuals with similar values and perceptions. In the words of Schneider (1987), "The people make the place." Rooted in the work of Payne and Pugh (1976) and Naylor et al.(1980), this intriguing theoretical perspective places special emphasis on the similarity of individual differences between members of a workgroup. As individuals with similar backgrounds, values, and interests are selected into or attracted to the group, homogeneity is said to increase. As homogeneity increases, individuals are expected to perceive the work environment in a similar manner. While a compelling theory, only limited support has been found for this model in the general climate literature.

However, pertinent to the present investigation is the question of which individual differences might group members come to be similar on through an ASA process, which will lead them to form similar justice perceptions. Whereas the justice literature has shown that broad personality constructs are generally not predictive of justice perceptions (Colquitt et al., 2004), a small set of justice-related individual difference constructs might fit this category, including equity sensitivity (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987), sensitivity to befallen injustice (Schmitt, 1996; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999), justice orientation (Rupp, Byrne, & Wadlington, 2003; Liao & Rupp, 2005), and morality (Folger et al., 2005; Rupp, 2003).

Further, Colquitt et al. (2004) showed that the effect of individual-level justice perceptions on task performance and theft were moderated by

morality, trust propensity, and risk aversion. An ASA perspective would argue that perhaps over time, this interaction of personality and individual justice perceptions might influence the emergence of justice climate within groups. Of course, both the notion of similarity on justice-relevant personality characteristics predicting justice climate and the idea of a personality × justice perception interaction affecting justice climate emergence are in need of empirical testing before strong conclusions can be drawn regarding these ideas.

Socialization

We know from the socialization literature that coworkers are the key agents in the socialization process, and that a new employee will come to learn, via interactions with existing members, the procedures dictating how things are generally carried out and how people are generally treated in their workgroups (see Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Similarly, Kozlowski and Bell (2003) point out that through social- and work-based interactions among group members, workgroups tend to develop relatively stable mental models and shared meanings. Consequently, climate formation occurs through a reciprocal process by which the group influences the individual through socialization, and the individual attempts to influence the group, "to accommodate to their unique attributes and needs" (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003, p. 341). This constitutes a slight divergence from the traditional ASA framework, which would argue that unique individuals would seek to leave the group. ASA may work to homogenize the workgroup to some extent, but the socialization process discussed by Kozlowski and Bell may maintain a group's climate dynamic as members seek to exert their influence.

The question then becomes, How would the socialization process affect the emergence of justice climate? We believe the process would be similar to that described in our discussion of the social information possessing model, with a slightly different twist. That is, a socialization perspective, like the social information processing perspective, would suggest that a climate for justice would emerge within a workgroup simply because group members are likely to be recipients of the same experiences (e.g., outcomes, processes, interpersonal treatment by various sources). However, this approach would argue that, in addition to climate being influenced by shared experiences, group members will attempt to exert influence on the climate based on their unique set of experiences and personality characteristics. Thus, the justice climate emerges as a result of the shared *and* unique justice perceptions experienced by group members.

Top-Down Processes of Climate Emergence

Many climate researchers have pointed out that individuals do not exist in a vacuum (James & Jones, 1974; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Just as group members interact to share perceptions, meanings, and interpretations, which over time may stabilize around some common view of the organizational climate, so, too, do *top-down* processes such as organizational policies, practices, and procedures influence how climates are formed within groups. In discussing top-down climate emergence, we will focus on a classic model of climate, the Naylor et al. (1980) model, which has important implications for the study of justice climate in particular.

Drawing on earlier work (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970; James & Jones, 1974; Schneider, 1975), Naylor et al. proposed a model of climate emergence that specifies a role for both the external environment and the individual in shaping climate perceptions. These researchers argued that climate exists at three levels: the objective environment (Level 1 climate), the individual perceptions of that objective environment (Level 2 climate), and the evaluation of the psychological characteristics based on that objective environment (Level 3 climate). Climate was said to be measurable at any or all of these levels.

Pulling from Campbell et al. (1970), it was argued that psychological climate (Level 3 climate in their terminology) is based on the individual perceptions of climate contingencies in the environment. Climate contingencies refer to the pattern in which behaviors relevant to the focal construct are rewarded and punished in the work environment. Of course, this pattern of rewards and punishments does not emerge spontaneously. That is, features of the organization such as structure (e.g., size, centrality) act as antecedents to the *formal* policies, which in turn shape the *actual* policies in the organization, and eventually the system of rewards and punishments. Indeed, our earlier discussion of the effect of organizational structure on justice perceptions is certainly relevant here as well.

Most important to our discussion of justice climate is that, according to this model, climate at Level 1 and Level 2 are at least partially defined in terms of specific contingencies. For example, Hulin, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1996) developed a measure of tolerance for sexual harassment based on the Naylor et al. (1980) model of climate. Their measure of the contingencies inherent in an organization for sexually harassing behavior predicted occurrences of sexual harassment as well as work-related psychological and physical outcomes. Although Naylor et al. preferred to think about climate as a construct that exists only at the individual level (now

commonly referred to as psychological climate), as has been amply discussed through this chapter, subsequent research has demonstrated that, in fact, the average of the group members' perceptions, given a certain threshold of variability and agreement, is useful in predicting both group and individual behavior and attitudes.

Naylor et al. were not alone in emphasizing the importance of organizational attributes in shaping climate. Payne and Pugh (1976) postulated a model that placed organizational context and structure as antecedents of organizational climate. They argued that the purpose, size, and resources of an organization (the context), in combination with the authority system, status system, and structure of roles (organizational structure), should drive the extent to which a climate emerges. For example, an organization that prides itself on being on the cutting edge and that has a relatively flat organizational structure should lead to the emergence of a risk-taking climate. To date, however, this top-down model of climate emergence has received only modest support (Jones & James, 1979; Payne & Pugh, 1976).

In terms of justice climate, we argue that, although in general justice climate might emerge through both bottom-up and top-down influences, differential propositions can be made regarding which type of emergence process will be more influential in the formation of different types of justice climate. Recall from this chapter's historical overview of the justice literature that multiple types (distributive, procedural, interactional) and sources (organization, supervisor, coworkers) have been identified as differentially relevant in the prediction of important outcomes. For example, whereas procedural and distributive justice climate might emerge via a top-down process because policies and outcomes are often handed down from above, interactional justice climate might emerge from the bottom-up as employees experience interpersonal treatment personally while at the same time witnessing how others around them, both internal and external to the group, are treated, creating a venue for shared cognitions to materialize. It is somewhat more difficult to postulate where source-based justice climates might fall in terms of emergence. The next section devotes further attention to this issue.

Multiple Sources of Climate

Early models of organizational climate emphasized the top-down, leader-driven nature of climate. As Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) argued, leaders can act as filters for all of the organizational policies, procedures, and practices. However, it is important to consider the argument implicit in the

work of many modern climate researchers (e.g., Anderson & West, 1998; Kidwell & Bennett, 1993; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003) – namely, that punishment and rewards can come from the workgroup as well. Indeed, the climate shaped by the workgroup is expected to be more informal than that shaped by the leader or organization. The rules are not encoded in organizational policies, but there is a clear understanding of the punishments, such as social ostracism, and the rewards, such as an invitation to lunch, that exist for specific behaviors.

As a result, one set of values and beliefs that the organization espouses may be filtered through the leader, while simultaneously another set of values or beliefs *around the same construct* may emerge from within the workgroup. Indeed, Schneider (1975) has long argued that the concept of organizational climate is not unidimensional. Our work, which provides evidence for distinct justice climate constructs, crossed by type and source/foci, is based on this notion (Bashshur et al., 2004; Liao & Rupp, 2005). From the perspective of Naylor et al. (1980), this is actually a reasonable proposition. If climate predominantly comes from shared perceptions of punishments and rewards, then it is possible to have two separate climates for the same construct. One behavior may be punished or rewarded by the leadership, while the same behavior is differentially punished or rewarded by coworkers.

Of course, these two sources of climate need not be incongruent. To the extent that employees agree with the values or policies of management, these two influences on climate are likely to be complementary. In contrast, if conflict exists between employees and management, these sources are likely to contradict each other. Looking at climate from this multifoci perspective provides a multitude of interesting, yet untested research questions and makes for a range of interesting possibilities, not the least of which is the intriguing idea of interactions among sources of climate. Some work has already begun that examines how aligned and misaligned sources influence individual employees' behavior (e.g., see Bashshur et al., 2004; Ostroff et al., 2003).

How Does Justice Climate Relate to Other Climates?

Katz and Kahn (1978) define climates as collective beliefs. These beliefs are transferred to new group members via a combination of socialization processes interacting with the physical and social environments. As such, climate is said to develop in a process similar to Schneider's ASA theory – that is, it originates from the types of people attracted, selected, and retained by an

organization. In addition, climate is a product of physical layout, traditions, history, methods of communication, and so on. Similarly, Schneider defined climate as the "shared perceptions of employees concerning the practices, procedures, and kinds of behaviors that get rewarded and supported in a particular setting" (1990, p. 384). He argued that because multiple climates can exist simultaneously in the same organization, one must think of climate as a specific construct with a specific referent. Climates have to be climates "for something" (e.g., innovation, service).

This early argument that a climate must be "for something" has led to the proliferation of "climates" noted in the literature. Currently there exist climates "for" constructs ranging from a climate for safety to a climate for top management, including, it must be admitted, a number of climates for justice. These "specific climates" (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003, p. 605) focus on a rather narrow bandwidth of the climate construct space. Of course, it is this very specificity that makes them so useful in predicting outcomes (e.g., climates for safety predict safe behavior; Carr et al., 2003). The downside of this process is that researchers are left with a "staggering number" (Parker et al., 2003, p. 391) of climate dimensions to deal with when trying to assess the influence of the work environment on employees. Any attempt to synthesize or integrate climate perceptions is hampered by the sheer numbers of climate dimensions. If for nothing else than to reduce overlap among constructs and to impose some order on the range of climate dimensions, it becomes important to place this array of climates into some sort of taxonomy. Also of interest for the purposes of this chapter is a determination of where justice climate fits within this cornucopia of climates. Fortunately, at least three such taxonomies already exist.

Kopelman, Brief, and Guzzo (1990) argue that five dimensions cover the common aspects of psychological climate (note that at least two of these three taxonomies focus on psychological climate–individual perceptions, but there is no reason that these dimensions cannot be said to reside at the organizational level as well given sufficient agreement among group members). These dimensions – *means emphasis*, *goals emphasis*, *task support*, *reward orientation*, and *socioemotional support* – do seem to relate to employee attitudes and motivations. In addition, as Lindell and Brandt (2000) point out, the core climates (such as a strong goal emphasis) that emerge from these functions do not prohibit the emergence of specific climates. The fact that an organization has a strong goal emphasis alone does not specify which goal (e.g., safety or service – in other words, which specific climate) is being emphasized. As such, each specific climate can be classified within a particular core dimension. However, the rather narrow range of dimensions

in the Kopelman et al. classification scheme does not seem to capture all possible manifestations of climate (not even justice climate).

Alternatively, Ostroff (1993) proposed a framework consisting of 12 dimensions of climate with three higher-order facets: *affective*, *cognitive*, and *instrumental*. The affective higher-order facet relates to involvement with people and encompasses the lower-order dimensions of *participation*, *cooperation*, *warmth*, and *social rewards*. The cognitive facet relates to the self's or others' psychological involvement in work and encompasses the dimensions of *growth*, *innovation*, *autonomy*, and *intrinsic rewards*. Finally, the instrumental facet relates to task involvement and getting things done; it encompasses the lower-order dimensions of *achievement*, *hierarchy*, *structure*, and *extrinsic rewards*. While some researchers have enjoyed success when using this taxonomy as an organizing framework (Carr et al., 2003), it is frequently difficult to make a judgment regarding where a particular specific climate should be assigned. For example, justice climate, with its dimensions of interpersonal, informational, procedural, and distributive justice, could fit into any one of the three higher-order facets.

Finally, James and colleagues (Jones & James, 1979; James & James, 1989; James & McIntyre, 1996) proposed a five-dimensional structure of workplace perceptions (psychological climate): *leader support and facilitation* (leader characteristics); *role stress and lack of harmony* (role characteristics); *job challenge and autonomy* (job characteristics); *workgroup cooperation, warmth, and friendliness* (workgroup characteristics); and *organization and subsystem* (organizational characteristics). Each of these dimensions includes at least three lower-order dimensions and seems to be invariant over a large number of organizations (James & James, 1989; James & Sells, 1981). Further, James and coauthors have asserted that the correlations they have observed among the four first-order factors are best explained by some higher-level, general psychological climate factor, a "PC_g." This general factor is said to reflect the idea that people respond to their environments based on their perceptions of the potential benefits or harm to them inherent in that environment (James & McIntyre, 1996). This notion echoes the earlier contentions of Schneider (1990) and Naylor et al. (1980) that climate reflects some assessment of the rewards and punishments inherent in a system. James simply takes this point, which initially referred to a specific climate, and applies it to climate in general.

The intuitive appeal of this approach lies in the fact that it clearly links climate to organizational attributes, much as earlier theories regarding specific climates tried to link those perceptions to organizational features. Given the definitions of climate as assessments of organizational contexts, this approach, as contrasted to the two prior approaches, demonstrates how

organizational attributes such as job features or leader features translate into climate dimensions. In addition, given the focus on organizational attributes, this taxonomy is both broad enough and flexible enough to subsume most, if not all, of the specific justice climates currently proposed. For example, as noted earlier, justice climate can be looked at as coming from a supervisor, from the organization, or from both. In the James et al. approach, a climate for justice, if deemed to be coming from the supervisor, would fit within the leader support and facilitation factor; by contrast, a climate for justice shaped by the organization would fit under the organizational characteristics factor.

In essence, this framework provides a structure of climate dimensions. Specific climates, such as a climate for justice, fit within broader climate dimensions that are based on characteristics of the environment such as leader support and facilitation. By placing the specific climates such as climate for justice within a broader taxonomy, we hope to clarify how the different climates "for something" relate to one another and coexist within the broader general climate space.

In their discussion of PC_g, James and colleagues were concentrating solely on the level of the individual – on the perceptions of each individual of his or her environment. Nevertheless, there is no reason that PC_g and its four subfacets should not exist at the organizational or group level. Given enough agreement within groups, leader support and facilitation, role stress and lack of harmony, and so on, there should be something that researchers can aggregate to the group level and examine for its effects on group and individual attitudes and behaviors. This endeavor would mean that there may be something we can call C_g – a general higher-order climate. Of course, this work has yet to be done.

Proposing a Model of Justice Climate Emergence

Whereas the extant multi-level justice research has begun to give solid attention to the antecedents and consequences of justice climate (as noted earlier in this chapter), far-less emphasis has been placed on the psychological process by which justice climate emerges. Although the concept of justice climate is firmly grounded in organizational theories such as social informational processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), attraction–selection–attrition (Schneider, 1975), and socialization (Louis et al., 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993), future research should test explicitly the emergence of justice climate using longitudinal or experimental designs, and incorporate factors at the individual level (e.g., individual past justice

experiences), group level (e.g., group norms), and organizational level (e.g., organizational structure) to examine their joint impact on the formation of justice context. The work of Naumann and Bennett (2000), which considered the antecedents of group cohesion and visibility of management; the work of Ehrhart (2004), which considered servant leadership; the work of Colquitt et al. (2002), which examined the role of team size and collectivism; and, of course, the research on organizational structure's effects on justice perceptions (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003) represent positive steps in this direction.

That said, the authors of this chapter have been struggling both with theoretically laying out a process model for justice climate emergence and with identifying solid methodological procedures for modeling the emergence process itself. Our first (public) attempt at a theoretical model is presented in Fig. 2.

This model not only pulls from the bottom-up and top-down theories of climate emergence presented earlier in this chapter, but also reflects Cropanzano et al.'s (2001a, 2001b) integrative model of organizational justice. It integrates two major paradigms through which justice has been explored over the decades: the *event paradigm*, in which individuals evaluate isolated events, resulting in state-like justice perceptions, and the *social entity paradigm*, whereby individuals make more stable judgments about a particular social entity (e.g., supervisors) across events and situations. Our model posits that both individual differences and environmental characteristics affect how events are perceived by individuals and, over time, influence their social entity justice judgments. Individuals then come together, bringing along these judgments. Through the processes of information sharing, experience sharing, socialization, and individual influences, these persons collectively form a shared perception of social entity justice. This same process would occur to form shared justice perceptions regarding each type (e.g., procedural, interactional) and source (e.g., supervisor, customers) of justice climate. As explained earlier, each of these climates may be similar or different depending on the events leading up to the individual justice judgments and the interactions between group members over time. Furthermore, these climates might be hierarchically arranged according to the taxonomic model presented in the last section.

Empirically Modeling Justice Climate Emergence

The emergence of even a single justice climate variable is complex and dynamic, making the task of empirically modeling emergence quite a daunting undertaking. Whereas we do not have a clear answer about how exactly one

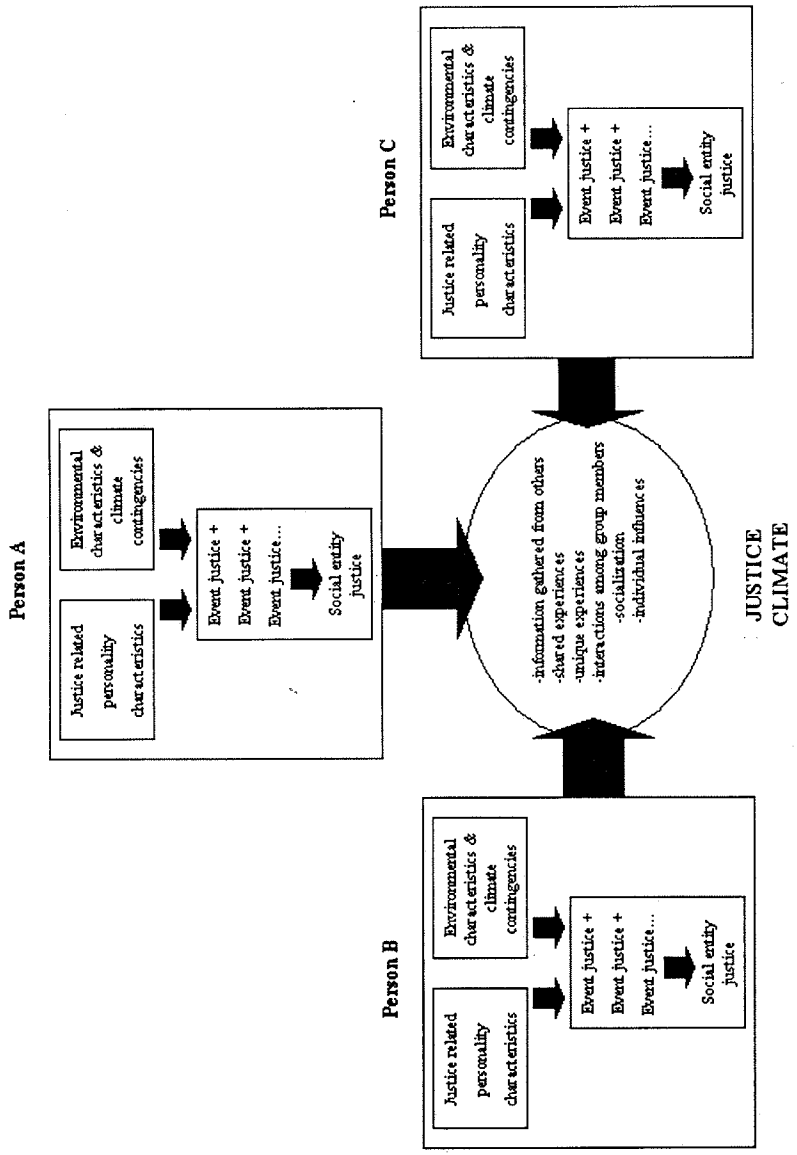

Fig. 2. Proposed Model of Justice Climate Emergence.

might empirically trace the emergence of justice climate, we have some ideas that might catalyze a dialogue on the topic. To model climate emergence, multiple measurement techniques and methodologies must be employed. Trait measurement will be needed to tap individual differences. Experience sampling could be used to model the process by which event judgments lead to social entity evaluations over time within persons. Social network mapping could be used to tap the shared and unique experiences and relational patterns between persons.

Finally, another potentially useful technique is the NK model of rugged fitness landscapes (Kauffman, 1993). Originating in physics and now being applied in biology to model evolutionary processes, this technique has yet to be applied to the modeling of psychological phenomenon. N refers to the n traits that an individual is composed of (expressed as a vector), and K refers to the episodic links that enable or constrain the expression of n traits. Such a process would involve developing a solid theory or theories regarding the justice climate emergence process, building a decision model based on the parameters implied in the theory, conducting a simulation study based on the theoretical model (which would simulate longitudinal, within-persons data), and comparing a cross-sectional employee sample to the simulated sample to test for emergence. Admittedly, much remains unknown about this method, but it might show promise for the study of multi-level justice.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed issues pertinent to multi-level justice research and ideally will serve as a catalyst for future research in this area. Multi-level justice has emerged as an exciting new area of research within organizational justice. A burgeoning body of literature has examined the multi-level antecedents of individual justice perceptions, the emergence of justice climate from individual justice perceptions, and the effects of justice climate on multi-level workplace outcomes above and beyond the effects of individual-level justice perceptions. In addition, the models proposed by the organizational climate and multi-level literatures align nicely with the theoretical arguments made within the justice community. Over the past few years, justice researchers have come a long way in conceptualizing and empirically examining multi-level justice issues, yet much more needs to be done to further our understanding of how justice fits into the inherently multi-level, integrated systems of organizations. We look forward to watching the literature on multi-level justice unfold and evolve from this pivotal point in its existence.

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EXAMINING JUSTICE CLIMATE: ISSUES OF FIT, SIMPLICITY, AND CONTENT

Maureen L. Ambrose and Marshall Schminke

ABSTRACT

The chapter by Rupp, Bashur, and Liao (in this volume) is rich with ideas for the study of a justice climate. This comment on their chapter focuses on three areas that flow from their presentation: issues in modeling climate strength, complexity and simplicity in conceptualizing a justice climate, and an alternative conceptualization of a justice climate. Specifically, it describes how polynomial regression and response surface methodology may assist researchers in examining climate fit. The comment also describes the benefits of a simplified view of a justice climate – one focusing on the overall justice climate. Finally, it develops a framework for examining a climate for justice – a climate that promotes fair behavior in organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter by Rupp, Bashur, and Liao (this volume) is rich with ideas for the study of a justice climate. This comment on their chapter focuses on

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EDITED BY

FRED DANSEREAU
State University of New York at Buffalo, USA

FRANCIS J. YAMMARINO
State University of New York at Binghamton, USA

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