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DO FAIRNESS AND EQUITY MATTER?

An Examination of Organizational Justice Among Correctional Officers in Adult Prisons

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The concepts of justice and fairness are commonly examined in the literature on criminal justice, except for the issues affecting organizational justice in the workplace. Organizational justice has two properties: distributive justice (the focus on the outcome of a decision) and procedural justice (the decision-making process that leads to the outcome). The authors surveyed 1,200 correctional officers across one state's prison system. Both organizational justice dimensions were leading predictors of job stress and variants of organizational commitment (i.e., climate for learning and type of organizational climate). Procedural justice was related to individual perceptions of fear and perceived risk of inmate victimization. A positive work environment was more likely to occur when employees had a moderate to high sense of equity, which influenced factors related to acceptance of change, stronger commitment to the organization, and better understanding and agreement with organizational goals. Study findings reaffirm the need for administrators to support organizational justice through expanded use of work team processes whereby staff are involved in assessing organizational functionality and recommending improvements.

Keywords: correctional agencies; organizational justice; organizational study; fear and risk

The correctional environment is considered one of the most stressful work environments. Rates of employee retention range between 12% and 15% (Hill, 2004; Lambert, 2001; Lommel, 2004; Tewksbury, 2003), even though these positions are generally governmental positions, where one would expect stable retention rates. Despite various explanations for turnover owing to environmental factors, the correctional personnel literature fails to adequately consider how employees' perceptions of fairness affect the work environment. A recent article by Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin (2007) examined this issue and

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found that organizational justice as a whole is a consistent predictor of organizational commitment, whereas distributive justice (equity) is related to job stress and procedural justice (fairness) influences job satisfaction.

In the management literature, employees' perceptions of fairness are shown to be factors that affect the positive and negative attitudes/behaviors toward the organization (Cobb & Frey, 1996; Kwong & Leung, 2002; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Lowe & Vondanovich, 1995; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). The general hypothesis is that employees who favorably view the environment as being reasonable are more likely to support the goals of the organization, including efforts to improve operations. Similarly, employees who express discontent and feel victimized by the organization tend to be less supportive of organizational goals, even those efforts intended to improve operations. In a prison setting, the staff are instrumental to a safe and well-managed facility. In this respect, research on staff perceptions of the organization is important for the security of prison institutions and for better understanding the adoption and implementation of practices to improve the prison environment.

A paucity of research exists on the work environment of prisons, particularly on correctional officers and the factors that affect their perception of the prison environment. Even rudimentary questions regarding whether the line staff (officers) perceive the administration and management to be fair have not been adequately addressed. The overall organizational literature emphasizes the importance of organizational justice as a factor that can mitigate negative work environments and serve as a facilitator of organizational change (Citera & Rentsch, 1993; Folger & Skarlicki, 1999; Lines, 2005). This study seeks to add to the organizational literature on prisons and the importance of organizational justice. It assesses the perception of correctional officers in one state correctional system on measures of organizational commitment, job frustration, management quality, and levels of staff victimization. Officer characteristics and type of correctional institutions are examined in terms of their effect on organizational variables. The article concludes with recommendations on the next steps for research in this area, as well as a commentary on the importance of team processes on perception of the workplace.

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

The organizational literature identifies two facets of organizational justice: procedural and distributive. Distributive justice focuses on the outcome of a decision or an event (Folger, 1977; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Jones, 1998), and procedural justice assesses the decision-making process that leads to the outcome (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1989). Both forms of organizational justice are part of the organizational environment.

These two constructs of organizational justice are viewed as being distinct (Greenberg, 1986; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1990). Although an individual may disagree with the outcome of a decision, he or she may perceive the process as being fair, and this perception of fairness influences the acceptance of the decision. One's confidence in the process facilitates a greater commitment to the goals of the organization. Interaction of the two constructs is evident (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; De Cremer, 2005; Tyler, 1989; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Adverse outcomes promote a closer inspection of the process regarding how decisions are made; inadequacies in the decision-making process can fuel discontentment.

For example, when employees believe that their annual evaluation was not handled fairly, they are less open to criticism in the form of unsatisfactory ratings. They are more likely to question the integrity of the decision maker (e.g., a supervisor) in terms of how promotions, annual merit increases, and other decisions are distributed in the organization.

The general organizational literature examines the relationship between procedural and distributive justice and organizational factors such as commitment, legitimacy, trust, job satisfaction, and leadership. Perceived justice and fairness have been found to interact with or predict the level of organizational commitment (Cobb & Frey, 1996; Kwong & Leung, 2002; Lind & Tyler, 1988; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Employees who believe that they are treated fairly are more likely to report higher levels of commitment to the goals of the organization. Respect among employees is more likely to occur when there is a stronger sense of trust in the organization, including an elevated level of legitimacy of the organizational goals (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990). Research suggests that the opportunity for voice, or being heard, increases perceptions of procedural justice (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992), even in the absence of influence on decision-making power (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990). Employees who maintain a level of disrespect of the process or outcome are likely to be cynical about their future with an organization (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993) and less likely to be satisfied with their job/employer (Baron 1985; Cobb & Frey, 1996; Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Lowe & Vondanovich, 1995).

Staff's perceptions of fairness affect a number of dimensions regarding the legitimacy of organizational decisions. *Legitimacy* refers to the degree to which the staff (a) believe that a decision was within the authority of the organization and (b) support the goals of the organizations. Staff are more amenable to change when it is perceived as being legitimate (LaFree, 1998; Tyler, 1990). Legitimacy affects the likelihood that change will occur. Management can exercise control over legitimacy via its actions. Increases in staff's perception of legitimacy are more likely to occur when employees have the ability to affect policies and procedures, when interaction occurs between intraorganizational departments regarding assessment procedures, and when staff are aware of policies for handling criticisms and negative actions that may surface (Lines, 2005).

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE: A CRIMINAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

Within the criminal justice realm, organizational justice is more commonly assessed in terms of the legitimacy of the system (Casper, Tyler, & Fisher, 1988; Halsted, Bromley, & Cochran, 2000; Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, & Sherman, 1997; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 2001). Legitimacy at the individual level differs from that at the organizational level. *Organizational justice* refers to the emphasis on equity within the work environment that affects the day-to-day routine within the prison, such as a fair administrative process to handle disciplinary hearings. The management and human resources arena is beset with literature on how negative attitudes and behaviors in an organization are a product of perceived inequities in the processes and decisions that organizations make (Cohen, 1987; Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Mueller, Boyer, Price, & Iverson, 1994; Mueller, Iverson, & Jo, 1999; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1989). In a prison environment, the lack of organizational justice increases work hazards and unsafe facilities in which violence is more likely to occur (see Byrne, Hummer, & Taxman, 2007).

Thus far, only two studies have examined the impact of factors influencing organizational justice among correctional personnel (Lambert, 2002; Lambert et al., 2007). In these studies, the authors surveyed correctional staff at one prison, concerning their perceptions of organizational justice, work commitment, and job satisfaction. The research found a relationship between job satisfaction and organizational justice where satisfied correctional employees were likely to view the process and procedures as being equitable. The current study seeks to add to this limited body of literature by expanding the measures of organizational justice and by including a broader sample of correctional officers working in various prisons across one state.

In the correctional field, studies have considered variations in individual and work characteristics as explanatory variables for stress, job satisfaction, and support for various goals, such as rehabilitation and punishment. Officers with higher levels of job stress and job uncertainty are more likely to be dissatisfied with their employment (Grossi, Keil, & Vito, 1996; Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, & Wolfe, 1991). The source of stress and dissatisfaction is typically associated with, not inmates (Britton, 1997; Cheek & Miller, 1983; Wiggins, 1989), but rather discontent with supervisors, lack of participation in the decision-making process, and job independence (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986). Britton (1997) found that individual characteristics are not main contributions to officers' perceptions of the work environment. Although the literature in the field is limited, the work in other disciplines on the impact of organizational justice is relevant given the concerns about the workplace safety issues of prisons.

METHOD

This study is part of a comprehensive examination of organizational issues within the prison system of one mid-Atlantic state. The overall study measures organizational climate variants among administrators, treatment staff, and correctional officers within the prisons in the state; the current study focuses on the correctional officers, are on the frontline of contact with inmates and who exercise considerable street-level bureaucracy as they carry out the mission of the prison system. Correctional officers' sense of fairness in the workplace is likely to influence their attitudes and their perceptions of the leadership, their commitment to the organization, and their job frustration. The current study investigates the following hypotheses:

- Officers who perceive fairness in the distribution and procedures at the prison and organization are more likely to report a higher sense of positive organizational climate, indicate a higher commitment to the organization, and identify their supervisors as role models.
- Officers who perceive fairness in the distribution and procedures at the institution are less likely to experience job stress.
- Officers who perceive fairness in the distribution and procedures at the institution are less likely to be fearful of inmate or officer victimization and so perceive their personal risk as being low.

These hypotheses were examined while controlling for age, assignment to prisons of varying security levels, gender, length of time at current job, educational level, and ethnic status of the officer.

TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample and the General Correctional Staff in the Prison System

	<i>Sample</i> (n = 1,231)	<i>DOC^a</i> (N = 6,606)
Gender		
Male	68	68
Female	32	32
Race		
White	51	49
Non-White	49	51
Age		
20–29	9	
30–39	25	
40–49	37	
50–59	26	
60 and older	3	
Average age (in years)	43.44	39.40
Highest level of education		
High school/GED	69	
Associate degree	16	
Bachelor degree	7	
Some graduate	7	
MBA/master's degree	1	
Security level		
Level 1	18	14
Level 2	43	27
Level 3	22	32
Level 4, 5, 6	17	27
Length at current job		
Less than 1 year	16	
1–5 years	35	
6–10 years	25	
11–15 years	13	
More than 15 years	11	
Average number of years working in the DOC	6.9	5.14

Note. In percentages (unless noted otherwise). DOC = Department of Corrections.

a. Values not listed were not available from the personnel office of the state prison system.

SURVEY PROCEDURES

This study involved a census of all correctional line staff at each prison institution. In February 2006, a survey packet was mailed to each institution, and it contained individual surveys for all correctional line staff within the institution ($N = 6,606$). Initial examination of response rates revealed a low rate of return from a number of the larger facilities. The facilities were contacted to readminister the survey instrument. Conversations with staff revealed concerns about confidentiality, the length of the survey, and the unwillingness of administration to allow staff to complete the surveys during work hours. The research team sent a letter regarding confidentiality procedures to all wardens to share with their staff. In late April 2006, surveys were remailed to all sites with a response rate less than 30%. The final number of completed line staff surveys was 1,231 (18.23%).

Table 1 reports the current sample's characteristics. As shown, most respondents were male (68%); most completed no more education than high school or equivalent; most had been

employed in their current job for between 1 and 5 years; and most were employed in the most prevalent prison facilities, a Level 2 (low–medium) facility. The table also indicates that half the respondents were White, with the largest category of non-White respondents being African American. The average age of the respondents was 43.44 years, which is slightly older than what is typically reported for samples of correctional officers. Table 1 provides available data on all security staff employed by the same correctional department, to examine issues of bias in the sample. Few differences existed between the respondents and the general population of correctional officers. The largest difference was the respondents were more likely to be from the minimum security (level 2) as compared to the other security levels. All others were underrepresented.

MEASURES

The study used a number of well-respected scales to measure key variables. The following describes these measures.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Leadership style. A 10-item scale was used to measure two styles of leadership: transformational and transactional (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Moorman, 1990). Six items measured transformational leadership through attitudinal statements surrounding a leader's vision, motivation, listening, encouragement, and direction, with an alpha of .88. Transactional leadership consisted of four items that examined an employee's perception of a leader's ability to recognize others, provision of clear goals and objectives, and knowledge of the day-to-day activities; the alpha coefficient is .89. Higher scores on either measure indicate a perception of a strong and interactive leader.

In this study, we limited the analysis to transactional leadership, given the theoretical relevancy to hypotheses contributed by the general human resources and management literature (Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999). That is, transactional leaders consider the reward–punishment benefit to further an exchange relationship between the leader and the employee, where the leadership style seeks to inspire and explain job performance expectations. The expected positive relationship will then foster a perception that the leadership is fair in the decision-making process.

Climate for learning. Four aspects of the employee's perceptions of the climate involve the organization's openness to change, as adapted from Scott and Bruce (1994) and Orthner, Cook, Sabah, and Rosenfeld (2004)—namely, future goals and visions (alpha = .73), performance (alpha = .70), openness/innovation (alpha = .83), and risk. All the dimensions combined two items (except for the single item, risk). Higher scores indicate that officers agree that the organizational units work well together and that there is an atmosphere that supports change.

Organizational climate. The concept of organizational climate examines three dimensions: cynicism, positive attribution, and intradepartmental coordination. Cynicism or skepticism is

measured with five items based on the work of Tesluk, Farr, Mathieu, and Vance (1995), which portray an officer's pessimism about the organization's ability to change. The alpha coefficient is .85, where lower scores indicate less cynical attitudes or a belief that the organization can change. Positive attribution can be referred to as *perspectives taking*, which is adopted from Parker and Axtell (2001) to gauge the extent to which the officers understand the role of treatment staff. Positive attribution consists of seven items with an alpha of .83. The final item involves intradepartmental coordination, which measures the cohesiveness and level of cooperation between corrections and treatment staff in achieving institutional goals through working together; it also examines the respect that officers have for treatment staff in a general sense. The composite measure consists of eight items with an alpha of .90. Higher scores reveal a stronger sense of understanding the treatment staff's point of view

Job stress. The variable of job stress consists of three items based on the work of Peters, O'Connor, and Rudolf (1980), with a corresponding 5-point Likert-type scale. The items ask whether the job is very frustrating and whether it creates a sense of stress because of the frustration. Higher scores indicate higher levels of job-related stress. The alpha coefficient for job stress is .72.

Levels of staff victimization. Staff victimization encompasses perceptions of fear and risk of victimization by inmates or other staff. Staff victimization consists of 22 items that were adapted from prior research to fit the adult prison setting (see Gordon, Moriarty, & Grant, 2003). Factor analysis revealed two salient scales: fear of victimization from an inmate (alpha = .90) and risk of victimization from an inmate (alpha = .91). The responses for the scales preserve the range of attributes found with each original item (1 = *very afraid*, 4 = *rarely afraid*).

Factor analysis also produced two scales related to officer-to-officer victimization. Low alpha levels required us to treat each variable as a single item. As such, four variables are considered in relation to organizational justice: the fear and perceived risk of being attacked by another officer and the fear and perceived risk of retaliation from an officer if one informs a supervisor about a sexual/romantic relationship with an inmate.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Two primary independent variables were used: procedural justice and distributive justice. The original procedural and distributive justice measures of Sweeney and McFarlin (1997) were modified for the current study (see appendix). The scale has 13 items tapping into procedural justice with a 5-point Likert scale (*never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, and always*). The items encompass fairness in the process of routine performance feedback, where higher scores indicate a stronger perception of procedural justice or fairness being exercised. The variable of procedural justice has a mean of 2.62 ($SD = 0.757$); the alpha is .85.

The survey contained nine items with the same 5-point matrix scale (*never to always*) to measure distributive justice. Three items originally included by Sweeney and McFarlin (1997) were not used, owing to context relevancy. The items measure employees' perceptions of the equitable allocation of rewards. A number of items were dropped because of low correlations, including "Under the present system, employee recognition is seldom

TABLE 2: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Justice, Climate, and Culture

	M	SD
Procedural justice	2.62	0.757
Distributive justice	2.58	0.563
Cynicism	2.73	1.000
Positive attributes	3.01	0.698
Intradepartmental coordination	2.99	0.724
Vision and goals	3.00	0.946
Performance	2.91	0.963
Openness	2.59	0.999
Risk	2.73	1.170
Job stress	3.41	0.992
Transactional leadership	2.99	0.978

Note. Range = 1–5.

related to employee performance,” “Performance evaluations do influence personnel actions taken in this organization,” and “My performance rating presents a fair and accurate picture of my actual job performance.” The distributive justice measure includes six items with the original 5-point scale preserved and with a mean of 2.58 ($SD = 0.563$); the alpha is .76. Higher scores on distributive justice reflect more favorable attitudes that the organization is consistent in the process of rewarding employees.

As with the larger literature, each item was treated as an individual construct. A correlation matrix was conducted to examine significant relationships.¹ The variable was maintained when the strength of the relationship was considered at a safe level (.41 or below) to move ahead with multivariate models.

CONTROL VARIABLES

A number of items were considered in the analysis to examine the impact of the primary independent variables on the dependent models. As such, the following items were included in multivariate analysis: age of the officer, in years; security level of the prison (Level 1–low = 1; Level 1–high = 2; Level 2 = 3; Level 3 = 4; Level 4, 5, 6 = 5); gender (male = 1, female = 0); length of time at current job, in months; education (high school graduate = 1, associate degree = 2, bachelor degree = 3, some graduate = 4, MBA/master’s = 5); and race (White = 0, non-White = 1).

RESULTS

The study examined hypotheses regarding how perception of fairness affects organizational climate, commitment to goals, job stress, and officers’ assessment of supervisory leadership and safety within the prison walls. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the primary variables of interest. Organizational justice variables demonstrate low levels of support for fairness and equity. The average response fell within the *rarely* to *sometimes* range. A series of ordinary least squares regressions were conducted to examine the impact of procedural and distributive justice on the perceptions of the organizations.² Before presenting these results, however, we think it important to consider the influence of control variables

TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics of Victimization From Inmates or Other Officers

	M	SD
Inmate		
Fear of inmate attack	3.08	.718
Perceived risk of inmate attack	3.00	.722
Officer		
Fear of officer attack	3.83	.551
Fear of officer retaliation	3.62	.803
Risk of officer attack	3.76	.637
Risk of officer retaliation	3.38	.929

Note. Range = 1–4.

on procedural and organizational justice. The results reveal that the age of the officer and the length of time employed were consistent predictors of both procedural justice (.089, $p < .01$; $-.135$, $p < .000$) and distributive justice (.105, $p < .05$; $-.134$, $p < .000$). Older officers and those employed in their current positions for a shorter amount of time were more likely to view the work environment as being fair. No statistically significant differences occurred by race or security level.

The measures of work environment are reliable predictors of the importance of procedural and distributive justice in the employees' perception of the work environment. A positive work environment is more likely to occur when the employee views that the organization has just procedures (.285, $p < .000$) and so applies them equally (.081, $p < .01$). The data indicate that dimensions of equity in the workplace significantly contribute to lower levels of skepticism about change ($-.513$, $p < .000$) and to higher levels of respect and support for the multiple roles within the organization (.401, $p < .000$; .148, $p < .000$). Likewise, employees who perceived a sense of fairness in the procedures and outcomes were more likely to express a shared understanding of organizational goals (.402, $p < .000$; .114, $p < .000$), clear performance guidelines and periodic exchange concerning individual performance (.502, $p < .000$; .117, $p < .000$), a willingness to present new ideas (.544, $p < .000$; .142, $p < .000$), and the ability to take risks (.457, $p < .000$; .119, $p < .000$). Lower levels of job stress were experienced among officers who perceived the environment as being just ($-.410$, $p < .000$). Finally, officers with high perceptions of equity viewed management as being transactional, meaning that the supervisory staff recognize strong performers who have clear goals, and are knowledgeable of and engaged with daily activities (.486, $p < .000$; .222, $p < .000$). Across all the above models, the strength of the relationships (as indicated by the standardized betas) was higher for the assessment of the process as being fair (procedural justice) than for that of the outcomes (distributive justice); such a finding is consistent with the larger literature (Greenberg, 1990; Lambert, 2002; Lambert et al., 2007).

Table 3 reveals the distributional properties of the variables regarding fear and perceived risk of victimization (1 = *very afraid*, 4 = *rarely afraid*). As shown, the average response across all staff victimization measures was in the midrange area of *afraid*; officers reported higher levels of fear and perceived risk from inmates than from other officers.

Tables 4 and 5 examine the effect of organizational justice measures on the employees' perceptions of safety and security in their work environment. The analysis considered inmate-related threats (Table 4) and staff-to-staff threats (Table 5). Table 4 reveals procedural justice as a significant predictor of fear and risk of inmate victimization, whereas

TABLE 4: Regression Model Predicting Perceptions of Fear and Risk of Victimization by Inmates, by Organizational Variables and Correctional Officer Characteristics

	<i>Fear</i>		<i>Risk</i>	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β
Procedural justice	.103 (.03)	.111**	.130 (.03)	.135***
Distributive justice	-.010 (.04)	-.008	.042 (.04)	.032
Age	.001 (.00)	.015	.006 (.00)	.083**
Security level	-.108 (.02)	-.161***	-.136 (.02)	-.197***
Gender	.248 (.05)	.161***	.022 (.05)	.014
Length of time at current job	-.001 (.00)	-.011	-.002 (.00)	-.013
Education	.080 (.02)	.105**	.069 (.02)	.090**
Race	-.217 (.04)	-.153***	-.226 (.04)	-.155***
<i>R</i> ²	.105		.102	
<i>F</i> test	14.36***		14.21***	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$.

TABLE 5: Models Predicting Perceptions of Fear and Risk of Victimization by Officers, by Organizational Variables and Officer Characteristics

	<i>Fear Attack</i>		<i>Fear Retaliation</i>		<i>Risk Attack</i>		<i>Risk Retaliation</i>	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β
Procedural justice	.077 (.03)	.097**	.139 (.04)	.128**	.032 (.03)	.035	.136 (.05)	.106**
Distributive justice	-.047 (.04)	-.039	.022 (.06)	.013	.039 (.05)	.028	.097 (.07)	.049
Age	.003 (.00)	.049	.000 (.00)	.005	.004 (.00)	.042	.004 (.00)	.042
Security level	-.001 (.01)	-.002	-.038 (.02)	-.054	-.035 (.01)	-.058	-.041 (.02)	-.049
Gender	.001 (.04)	.001	-.005 (.05)	-.003	.051 (.04)	.038	.065 (.06)	.034
Length of time at current job	-.003 (.00)	-.033	-.004 (.00)	-.037	-.006 (.00)	-.064*	-.003 (.00)	-.024
Education	-.018 (.01)	-.030	.006 (.02)	.007	.017 (.02)	.026	-.001 (.03)	-.001
Race	-.152 (.03)	-.138***	-.071 (.05)	-.047	-.188 (.04)	-.149***	-.249 (.06)	-.139***
<i>R</i> ²	.022		.026		.043		.040	
<i>F</i> test	3.612***		3.159**		5.210***		5.909***	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$.

distributive justice does not involve a statistically significant relationship. Generally, lower perceptions of fear and risk of inmate victimization were found for officers who reported the work environment to be equitable, but the beta coefficient was weak. In other words, correctional officers' level of fear for and perceived risk of inmates was lower when they possessed a stronger feeling of a just work environment, which is in the hypothesized direction. A few additional and consistent predictors of fear and perceived risk of inmate victimization are shown in Table 4: security level, education, and race. Specifically, higher levels of fear and risk of inmate victimization are revealed among non-White officers and officers employed at higher-security institutions. Also, lower levels of fear and risk are reported among officers who have higher education levels.

Table 5 presents the findings for staff-to-staff risk factors. Officers who possessed a sense of equity in the work environment were less fearful of being attacked by a fellow officer and less fearful of retaliation if they reported another officer engaged in a sexual/romantic relationship with an inmate. Likewise, the risk of retaliation was significantly related to procedural

justice. The officer's race remained an important predictor of fear of being attacked and fear/risk of retaliation by a fellow officer. The direction indicates that non-White officers possessed higher levels of fear and risk of officer-to-officer victimization.

DISCUSSION

This research adds to the small body of literature devoted to factors that affect organizational justice, particularly as it relates to the work environment among correctional officers. The research expands on work conducted by Lambert (2002) and Lambert et al. (2007) by using more comprehensive measures of procedural and distributive justice and by including officers who work in a range of institutional settings. Lambert (2002) found support for both dimensions of justice as an influence on job satisfaction and for procedural justice as a more salient predictor of organizational commitment. In the 2007 study, both dimensions of organizational justice significantly affected organizational commitment, whereas distributive justice was a predictor of job stress. The current study uncovered consistent support of both organizational justice dimensions as leading predictors of job stress and variants of organization commitment (i.e., climate for learning and type of organizational climate). In addition, procedural justice is dependably related to individual perceptions of fear and perceived risk of inmate/officer victimization.

Although this study expanded the sample size and provided more robust measures of organizational justice than prior work has, it is not without limitations. The data are from self-reports, and the low response rate suggests that the sample may not be representative of correctional officers working in a particular system. Also, the study did not include any objective measures of outcomes, such as use of sick leave or transfer rates to other institutions. These objective measures would add to a discussion of the impact of correctional officers' perceptions on organizational outcomes.

The study overall found that the organizational justice hypotheses are supported. Both procedural justice and distributive justice are related to dimensions of organizational climate, climate for learning, and leadership style. However, it appears that procedural justice was the only significant factor that affected the employees' perception of fear and risk in the work environment—particularly, fear from other inmates. Such findings demonstrate that a need to understand more about organizational justice and how it affects the work setting in prison management.

An emphasis on the organization, including the importance of the organizational factors on outcomes, is undergoing a revival in research in the corrections field. It expands earlier work by Rudolph Moos (1970) on the correctional milieu but focuses more on issues related to understanding organizational change in difficult work environments such as prisons. We cannot say that these organizational constructs present an absolute solution to the current correctional woes, but they do provide insight into the dimensions of organizational change that will need attention for innovations to be successful in the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of change in the workplace. Perceptions of equity in the workplace are critical factors that need more attention from administrators. The findings, along with similar findings within the criminal justice system and workforce research overall, make the factor of fairness a significant contender for administrators to contemplate. These findings suggest that involving staff in change processes from the onset are important factors that lead to better

acceptance of new innovations, such as treatment or educational programs, changes in shift schedules, or other components that influence the daily schedule in a prison.

Most interesting is that both justice dimensions were significant across organizational commitment models in the expected directions, even though the average response for procedural and distributive justice was relatively low. That is, the mean for both variables fell in the category of *rarely*, or 2 on a 5-point scale. The relevance of the results, taken within this context, is that more equitable perceptions can significantly affect the work environment. The lesson learned by such findings is that a positive work environment is more likely to occur when employees have a moderate to high sense of equity, which influences factors related to acceptance of change, stronger commitment to the organization, and better understanding or agreement with organizational goals. An interactive leader can create a positive workplace to facilitate change through the use of management techniques that involve staff in various forms of decision-making or team-based processes.

Correctional managers do not often think that procedures for reward and punishment systems for employees are valuable. These procedures are usually considered administrative and are therefore not drawn on to improve the climate to facilitate other changes. Such factors as consistency, equity, and fairness in employee relations provide a level of trust with the decision-making process and, to some degree, the decision maker as well. A sense of respect or value should result in a mutually beneficial relationship for the employee and employer and so increase the longevity of the relationship (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Conversely, inconsistent adherence to, or a lack of, structured procedures will result in distrust in the organization and, potentially, the supervisor. Such a disconnect with the organization can lead to a lack of motivation. More important, low feelings of equity result in noncooperative actions to the achievement of the organizational goals (Konovsky, 2000).

A key to the sense of justice within an organization lies with the quality of leadership. As shown, individuals who sense workplace equity also classify supervisory staff as transactional leaders, or leaders who are involved and are dedicated to staff involvement. The qualities of effective leadership in creating a cooperative environment are respect, honesty, and keeping promises (Clawson, 1999). These leadership qualities facilitate effective organizations, even in difficult work settings such as prisons. Such leadership can create an open exchange of information and ideas, thereby ultimately creating a positive work environment.

Open exchanges of information and ideas are important factors in any organization but more so within the context of a correctional setting. When the management of an organization begins a path of open dialogue, it typically transcends to all levels of the organization. Within the prison culture, this dialogue could result in a stronger understanding of the various roles within the institution (i.e., between correctional officers and treatment staff) and so ultimately benefit the safety and security of the environment. The importance of this point is illustrated through an appreciative inquiry model conducted by Liebling, Price, and Elliott (1999). Staff report that a quiet day consists of "life at best . . . when there is a feeling of teamwork ('when we all pull together'), and of support, mainly from immediate colleagues but also from wider management. The lack of tension and confrontation made a good day" (p. 81). This notion transcends the importance of continual communication on the overall environment. That is, when staff and leadership coexist in a respectful way, it seems plausible that defusing tensions among inmates can occur more readily. Consistency among staff in their roles as peacekeepers is vitally important to maintain safety and security within

prison. In addition, officers' ability to maintain a secure environment should be improved when staff are all in accord with the organizational goals.

The larger literature on organizational justice reveals that the absence of fairness and equity in the workplace results in negative actions, attitudes, and influences (Konovsky, 2000). The human resources and management literature refers to the concept of citizenship behaviors (see Konovsky & Organ, 1996; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Skarlicki & Latham, 1997). Moreover, according to this body of research, a perceived lack of organizational justice, especially with regard to procedural justice, assists in explaining a higher likelihood of employee theft and retaliatory behaviors (Greenberg, 1993; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Because of the nature of the prison environment, a high level of organizational justice should become priority through a consideration of the negative behaviors that can result in its absence (i.e., enabling illegal behaviors to occur within the prison and/or supplying the means).

This idea may also help to explain the expected direction between procedural justice and perceptions of inmate victimization. Recall that individuals who report low levels of procedural justice have increased levels of fear and perceived risk of inmate victimization. Employees who perceived inequity in the process may have increased cynicism toward the organization and management of the institution, which may promote concerns with the daily operations of the facility, including their own safety and security.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study demonstrated the importance of assessing the level of organizational justice within the prison environment. The largest lesson learned is that the general notion of treating others with respect, or "the way in which you would like to be treated," is a core factor in creating a positive environment to move an organization forward. This study adds to a small body of literature on how organizational justice affects organizational change, culture, and commitment, as well as the correctional officer's perception of risk and fear in the workplace. As expected, the study found support for the importance of organizational justice constructs. More work in this area is needed to understand dimensions that affect organizational change in prisons, given the difficulty of adopting new programs and services for offenders in a security-focused organizational culture. With the renewed interest in reentry and in using prisons as the starting point for the reentry process, organizational research can contribute to an understanding of how to change the prison culture to improve service delivery and offender outcomes.

APPENDIX

Measures of Procedural and Distributive Justice

Officers were asked to respond to each statement by selecting from *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *frequently*, and *always*. These items were used to construct the scales of procedural and distributive justice (available upon request to the primary author).

1. I am unclear about what determines promotion in this facility.
2. I am promptly told when there is a change in policy, rules, or regulations that affect me.

(continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

3. It's really not possible to change things around here.
 4. There are adequate procedures to get my performance rating reconsidered if necessary.
 5. I understand the performance evaluation system being used in this organization.
 6. When changes are made in this organization, the employees usually lose out in the end.
 7. Affirmative action policies have helped advance the employment opportunities in this facility.
 8. In general, disciplinary actions taken in this organization are fair and justified.
 9. I am not afraid to "blow the whistle" on things I find wrong with this facility.
 10. If I were subject to involuntary personal action, I believe my agency would adequately inform me of my grievance and appeal rights.
 11. I am aware of the specific steps I must take to have a personnel action against me reconsidered.
 12. The procedures used to evaluate performance have been fair and objective.
 13. In the past, I have been aware of what standards have been used to evaluate my performance.
 14. Promotions within this organization usually depend on how well a person performs on his/her job.
 15. Under the present system, employee recognition is seldom related to employee performance.
 16. Performance evaluations do influence personnel actions taken in this organization.
 17. My supervisor evaluates my performance on things not related to my job.
 18. I will be demoted or removed from my position if I perform my job poorly.
 19. My performance rating presents a fair and accurate picture of my actual job performance.
 20. I will be promoted or given a better job if I perform especially well.
 21. My own hard work will lead to recognition as a good performer
 22. I will receive a formal acknowledgement from my organization if I perform especially well.
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NOTES

1. The correlation matrix is available upon request from the corresponding author.
2. Models are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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