ALL IS FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR, BUT WORK IS A DIFFERENT STORY:

COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSES TO PERCPETIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL INJUSTICE

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Organizational injustice has been a long feared and long dissected topic by many in the business world. However, there is no clear idea of what employees expect from their superior, nor how communication is impacted separately from behavior in times of injustice. Interviews with 21 employees were used to study the expectations employees have of their superiors and how fulfillment of those expectations impacts communication in the workplace. Interview data indicate that employees expect open communication, performance assistance and professional behavior. Interview data also indicates that employee communication is impacted immediately, in the midst of situations and long term, both passively and directly. Several relational and communication management techniques are suggested to assist fulfillment of psychological contracts and decrease negative impacts of organizational behavior.

Keywords: organizational injustice, psychological contracts, conflict, superior-subordinate communication, contract fulfillment, contract breach, expectations, organizational citizenship behavior, communicative response

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"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." – Psalm 28:7. Without Him I am nothing.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations and the world of work are constantly changing and evolving. Today the life of an employee in corporate America is drastically different than it was even as recently as the 1990's. Many things have contributed to this drastic change in the way people work, including increased cultural sensitivity, advances in technology and changes in legislation and workplace demographics (Karoly & Panis, 2004). These changes have led to workplaces that are more cognitively complex, team-based and collaborative, dependent on social skills and technology, time pressured and less geographically confined (Heerwagen, Kelly & Kampschroer, 2010).

At first glance it appears these changes would have a positive impact on the workforce. However, it has been shown many times over that these changes are leading to a decrease in happiness and contentment, as well as the quality of employee-employer relations (Roth & Harter, 2010; The Conference Board; Towers Perrin, 2003). The psychological well-being of employees is seemingly more and more at risk every year. Burnout is a common occurrence and the psychological toll of distress on an employee leads to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, frustration, depression, depletion of resources (physical and emotional, personal and professional), nervousness, sadness and hopelessness (Tepper, 2001).

A possible source for these increased feelings of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and depression is the employer's failure to meet employee expectations for behavior, specifically in times of perceived organizational injustice. Employee expectations are created and implemented through a number of ways, and when communication is not properly utilized in the workplace, employees can find themselves with unmet expectations which, unchecked, have been shown to lead to perceptions of organizational injustice (Arnold, 1996; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Guest, 1998).

Philosophers all the way back to Plato, Aristotle and Socrates debated the topic of justice with passionate interest (Ryan, 1993). Justice is an evaluation of oughtness or rightness. Situations or behaviors are determined as just or unjust when compared to a greater, overlying philosophical system (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Debate concerning justice centers around which overlying philosophical system should be used in a given case. Each philosophical system has a different set of justice rules, for example "the democrats are for freedom, oligarchs for wealth, others for nobleness of birth" (Frost, 1972, p. 136). These clashing philosophical systems suggest that injustice can be a precursor to interpersonal conflict, when consensus cannot be or is not reached.

Perceptions of justice in the workplace greatly impact all parts of an employee's work experience, including mental health and well-being, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), turnover and interpersonal relationships (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). While most of the research has focused on behavioral norms resulting from these justice evaluations, there is a significant and ever-growing body of research on the emotional and health outcomes of organizational injustice on employees (Elovainio, Kivimaki & Helkama, 2001). Employee perceptions of justice in the workplace have been shown to have several positive emotional outcomes such as feelings of pride and self-esteem (Elovainio, Kivimaki & Helkama, 2001; Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Tyler, Degoey & Smith, 1996). Perceptions of injustice towards individuals, particularly those regarding fairness and mistrust, has been shown to predict morbidity and mortality among employees (Haan, Kaplan & Camacho, 1987; Lepore, 1995; Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro & Hallet, 1996; Williams, Barefoot, & Shekelle, 1985).

The lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes a fair or just behavior, action or outcome can lead to problems in the workplace. Interpersonal conflict among superiors and

employees is a leading cause of many of these emotional and behavioral problems (Bies & Moag, 1986; Harlos & Pinder, 1999; Tyler & Bies, 1990). Organizational conflict can also have dramatic consequences on communication in the workplace. How individuals respond communicatively to an injustice depends on the conflict style they use (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Conflict styles are an individual's natural predisposition to particular conflict tactics or strategies. These tactics and strategies are typically independent of situation or context (Cupach, Canary & Spitzberg, 2010). There are five main conflict styles identified by Blake and Mouton (1964): collaborating, compromising, avoiding, accommodating, and competing. Each of the conflict tactics is often used with one of the three communicative conflict management strategies: integrative communication, avoidance, and distributive communication (Bevan, Tidgewell, Bagley, Cusanelli, Harstern, Holbeck & Hale, 2007). Each of the three communicative conflict management strategies represent very unique ways of responding communicatively to conflict. How these communicative tactics are impacted by times of organizational injustice is a rarely studied connection, but holds potential for a wealth of knowledge on the link between communication and organizational injustice. Before a conflict happens, however, there are many frameworks that employees use to form personal opinions about organizational justice and proper expectations. Psychological contracts are one such framework, and when breaches occur conflict arises.

Psychological contracts between employees and employers greatly impact the way people experience life at work (Heerwagen, Kelly & Kampschroer, 2010). A psychological contract is an informal agreement of unwritten rules regarding what each party - employer and employee - expect of each other (Guest & Conway, 2002). The old psychological contract consisted mainly of concerns such as job security and steady advancement within the industry. Due to the

previously mentioned changes and advances in the workplace, however, the new contract focuses more on social aspects such as competency development, continuous training and work/life balance (Heerwagen, Kelly & Kampschroer, 2005). This contract is developed and maintained through communication between employer and employee (Rousseau, 1989).

Psychological contracts are created through a number of informal means. These means include inferences based on: conversations between superior and subordinate and among peers; during pre-employment information gathering and discussions, interviews, job descriptions, and third party communication; observing other superior subordinate interactions; and actions from the past (Guest & Conway, 2002). Breaches of psychological contracts lead to violation, an emotional reaction made up of negative emotional states such as anger, disappointment and betrayal (Conway & Briner, 2002). The intense emotional and behavioral reaction to psychological contract breach exhibits that employees feel they deserve certain actions or reactions from their employers in the workplace.

As the research presented here shows, communication is a key aspect to the creation, management and effectiveness of the psychological contract. Communication in the workplace is also very much impacted by the fulfillment or breach of current psychological contracts. This research will take a close look at employer breaches of psychological contracts to uncover specific consequences of perceptions of injustice on communication in the workplace. By better understanding those expectations employers can more proactively circumvent the negative consequences of psychological contract breach.

Rationale

It is vitally important to develop and maintain positive employer/employee relations within the workplace. The global economy is increasing in fluctuation, creating a world of

uncertainty for employers and employees alike in addition to the ever complicating interpersonal dynamics of the workplace (Rousseau, 2011). The changing dynamics of the workplace are making it more difficult to motivate and retain employees in a profitable way (Rousseau, 2011). In order to combat these difficult times, a solid working relationship between superior and subordinate can lower turnover cost, retain exceptional talent, and encourage efficiency and productivity among employees (Rousseau, 2011). If employers are able to better understand, create and manage positive and fulfilled psychological contracts, the workplace is likely to become more fruitful due to more positive, committed, happy and involved employees. However, the unspoken, assumed nature of psychological contract expectations between employer and employee often leads to misunderstandings. In order to circumvent some of those negative reactions, it is important to know what explicitly employees expect from their superiors. It is also imperative to understand how contract breaches impact the way employees communicate within the workplace. If employers better understand what is expected of them and the consequences of not delivering on those expectations, they can begin actively working on fulfilling psychological contract expectations in a positive, fruitful, and proactive way. This will increase worker satisfaction, decrease turnover and lead to better organizations.

The following thesis will explicate and review the research that has been conducted on psychological contracts, organizational injustice, organizational citizenship behaviors, and organizational conflict. The discussion on organizational conflict will focus on conflict styles and communicative conflict tactics. Two research questions will be proposed to discover what is expected of superiors during times of injustice and how psychological contract breach impacts communication in the workplace. Interviews will be used to collect data in order to answer the proposed research questions. Finally, the findings will be reported and analyzed to better

understand organizational injustice and workplace communication. In order to better meet the emotional needs of the workforce, it is important to understand what employees expect and how they react when their expectations go unmet or violated. This research will attempt to identify exactly what employees expect from their employers in response to organizational injustice, and how that response and injustice impacts communication in the workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis will explore the expectations employees have of their employers during times of organizational injustice. In addition, the impact of perceptions of organizational injustice on communication patterns in the workplace will also be explored. In order to better understand the context of organizational injustice, this chapter begins with a discussion of psychological contracts and how employees create expectations of their employers. Following the discussion of psychological contracts is an introduction of organizational injustice, leading to the first research question. The chapter concludes with a discussion of organizational citizenship behaviors and conflict styles leading to the second research question.

Psychological Contracts

Psychological contracts are a foundational piece of superior-subordinate workplace relationships, which have evolved greatly over time with the change in workplace norms. These socially constructed expectations are informal arrangements, often not discussed explicitly, identifying what superiors and subordinates expect from each other in the workplace. They involve personal ideations of what constitutes appropriate give and take among coworkers as well as superiors and subordinates. Research has identified two different types of psychological contracts: transactional and relational (Rosseau, 2011). Transactional contracts are short-term oriented and deal mostly with monetary exchanges based on specific performance terms. Relational contracts are long-term oriented and involve social-emotional exchanges based on emotional currency such as trust, respect and loyalty – in addition to financial rewards (Rousseau, 2011). Transactional contracts play a less expansive role in the discussion of psychological contracts due to their relatively objective and negotiated nature. These types of obligations and interactions between employer and employee are commonly outlined in the

employment contract, which is related to but separate from the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). Employment contracts are legal documents explicitly outlining expectations and responsibilities of subordinates as well as the compensation promised by superiors. These contracts are openly discussed and often negotiated to develop a document that is understood and accepted by both parties. In contrast, because of the subjective and hard-to-identify nature of the socio-emotional minutia involved in the creation and execution of psychological contracts, relational contracts are more often discussed in psychological contract research than transactional contracts. Relational contracts focus on the feelings, emotions and personal relationships of those in the workplace. These aspects are often not included in the employment contract, and yet are a vitally important part of workplace relationships and operations.

Psychological Contract Fulfillment. A psychological contract is considered fulfilled when the expectations of either party are met (Guest & Conway, 2002; Rousseau, 1989). The level to which the involved parties, employee and employer, are able to fulfill their part of the agreement is directly related to employee behavior, job satisfaction, and quality of the superior-subordinate relationship in general (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Irving & Gellatly, 2001; Maguire, 2002; Maguire & Phillips, 2008; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Proter, Pearce, Tripoli & Lewis, 1998; Rousseau, 1998; Rousseau, 2011). Psychological contract fulfillment is of particular interest to employers because, if an employee feels the organization is meeting or exceeding expectations, the employee is likely to reciprocate with positive workplace behavior (Lewis-McClear & Taylor, 1998; Irving & Gellatly, 2001; Tekleab & Taylor, 2000). In order to achieve contract fulfillment, it is important to continuously manage the contract as it is ever-changing.

There are two ways to effectively manage psychological contracts: mutuality and reciprocity (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Mutuality is the extent to which employer and employee

have similar expectations and beliefs regarding the content of the psychological contract. Mutuality is achieved most easily and effectively through open communication and saliency. Alignment of employer and employee values and goals is an important part of mutuality. When the two parties are aligned on priorities, it is easier to agree upon expectations and achieve mutuality within the psychological contract (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Reciprocity is the extent to which employer and employee feel the expectations and obligations of the psychological contract are equivalent on each side (Dabos & Rosseau, 2004). In other words, both parties are giving and receiving resources, rewards, and benefits within the contract equivalently. It is common and natural for employees to seek out balanced and equitable relationships within the workplace, making reciprocity an understandably large and important part of contract fulfillment (Blau, 1964). When mutuality and reciprocity are achieved, contract fulfillment and resulting employee performance increase (Rousseau, 2011).

Psychological Contract Breach. Perceived breaches of the psychological contract on behalf of the employer or employee can, and often do, lead to severe damage to the employer-employee relationship. Contract breach is when one party feels a discrepancy between what has been promised and the reality of the situation. The resulting damaged relationship can lead to disengagement, reduced productivity, and deviant workplace behavior (Robinson, 1996; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Additional negative consequences of perceived psychological contract breach include lower employer trust (Robinson, 1996), decreased job satisfaction (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), lessened organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000), and declined employee performance (Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995) as well as increased levels of employee turnover and intentions to leave (Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Employees realize and understand that they are part of a reciprocal relationship, and behave

within the organization in accordance to the rewards, whether financial or emotional, that they anticipate receiving. When those rewards are not received, or the perceived obligations of the employer are not met, and an employee believes he or she has held up his or her end of the agreement, breach is perceived and the previously mentioned negative outcomes occur (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

Contract breach occurs regularly in workplace life by both employers and employees. While some contract breaches are considered more significant or substantial than others, a study by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) found that 55% of new hires felt their psychological contract had been breached to some extent by their employer within the first two years. Psychological contract breaches can be anything as small as an employee wasting time on Facebook while he or she should be working, to a situation as big as someone being wrongfully terminated or abused in the workplace. Research has shown that the frequency and severity of contract breaches can be reduced through open and frequent communication. When a contract breach occurs, this is often a time when employees begin to perceive organizational injustice. Small contract breaches can lead to disastrous organizational consequences if not handled appropriately, and there are several types of injustice found in the workplace. The type and impacts of injustice in the workplace have been widely discussed and will be explicated further in the following section.

Organizational Injustice

Justice and Valuations. Research shows that there is a large amount of similarity between contract breach and perceptions of injustice in the workplace (Arnold, 1996; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Guest, 1998). Organizational injustice provides a framework with which to see the emotional impact of psychological contract breach within the workplace. Organizational justice is defined as how an employee judges an organization's behavior as well as the

employee's resulting attitude and behavior due to that valuation (Greenberg, 1987). Validity is a characteristic of an organization's social structure and behavior. Organizations are considered valid based on tradition and natural or rational law (Walker, 2014). In other words, an organizational behavior is considered valid in relation to the way things are, and always have been, done. Propriety is an individual valuation of the social acceptability of an organization's social norms, rules, values and behavior. Propriety is based on the status quo of a polite and desirable society (Homans, 1974).

People perceive an action or decision as just if individuals (self or other) receive what is believed to be deserved or entitled to them, typically as determined through individual psychological contracts developed based on a particular organization's validity and propriety. These receipts can be material or nonmaterial and come in the form of rewards, punishments, benefits or burdens (Buchanan & Mathieu, 1986; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Organizational justice is socially constructed, meaning actions in the workplace are perceived as just if most of the relevant individuals agree that the action is so (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg, 1987). However, if employer and employee have not established mutuality of expectations within their psychological contracts, perceptions of organizational injustice will often result from unintentional breaches. There are many internal rules and norms that people follow when determining propriety, and subsequently what they feel is owed to them. If two parties are approaching the same psychological contract with different or competing distribution norms, the psychological contract is often perceived as breached and organizational injustice and conflict appear (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Robinson, 1996; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Leventhal (1976) identified three main distribution norms that people generally follow regarding allocation of resources and rewards: the contribution (equity) rule, the needs rule, and

the equality rule. The equity rule rewards individuals a specific reward that is proportionate to their personal and/or professional effort in the workplace. The needs rule rewards individuals based upon their level of legitimate need. The level of need is often determined by supervisors, and those with fewer resources are identified as those with more legitimate need (Leventhal, 1976). Finally, the equality rule rewards people equally, regardless of their individual input or level of need. When determining whether a supervisor has fulfilled his or her end of the psychological contract, employees will often rely on the equity norm to guide expectations. The equity norm assumes everyone compares the reciprocity norms in their own relationship with their superior to the reciprocity norms in their peers' relationships with superiors (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978; Walster, Walster & Berscheid, 1978). This comparison is often how individuals determine whether the reciprocity norms in their own superior-subordinate relationship are fair and reasonable. However, not all individuals are equally sensitive to the reciprocity norms, which is the balance of obligations within psychological contracts. These three different types of equity sensitivities help create some insight on why people respond differently to similar situations. One person may be more sensitive to equity than his coworker, and therefore perceive a certain behavior as unjust that his coworker would not. It is important to have an understanding of the three types of sensitivities in order to understand why certain situations will trigger perceptions of injustice in some employees and not others.

There are three equity sensitivity constructs that people often rely on when personally determining what type of resource and reward allocation is considered appropriate for their psychological contract. The three equity sensitivity constructs are benevolent, equity sensitive and entitled (Huseman, Hatfield & Miles, 1987). Benevolents prefer to give more than they receive in the contract in relation to comparison others. They show prosocial tendencies by

giving while expecting little to nothing in return (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1983). Equity sensitives subscribe to the norm of equity and prefer their personal contracts be equal to those of comparison others. These individuals subscribe to the traditional view of equity and feel distressed when they are under-rewarded and guilty when they are over-rewarded (Huseman, Hatfield & Miles, 1987). Finally, entitleds prefer to receive more than they give within the psychological contract in relation to comparison others. These individuals do not easily feel indebted to others, alternatively feeling that whatever outcomes they receive are due them with little-to-no input effort (Coles, 1977). When these equity sensitivities are not catered to appropriately, workplace injustice and psychological contract breach is perceived, which leads to the previously discussed negative and deviant workplace behaviors. Injustice in the workplace, however, is more than just the opposite or absence of justice.

Injustice in the Workplace. Justice and injustice have a more complicated relationship than simply being the opposite of each other (Folger & Cropanzo, 1998). They are not entirely symmetrical concepts, which is why it is often hard to define or identify injustice. Injustice is incredibly subjective and is more than just an action the majority does not agree is fair (Harlos & Pinder, 1999). Injustice goes much deeper. Injustice is an action or situation that violates the rights of an individual. When researching violations of human rights in the workplace, there are three commonly discussed types of organizational injustice; interactional, distributive, and procedural (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975; Harlos & Pinder, 1999; Homans, 1961; Leventhal, 1976; Leventhal, 1980; Leventhal, Karuza & Fry, 1980; Thibault & Walker, 1975). The three types of organizational injustice are very distinct from each other and a deeper understanding of the differences will help further explain the differing reactions by coworkers to what can

sometimes seem to be similar situations. Not all organizational injustice is the same, and the three types of injustice come with unique behavioral consequences.

*Interactional injustice***.** Interactional injustice is defined as perceived mistreatment resulting from work relationships that involve one or more authority figures (Bies & Moag, 1986; Tyler & Bies, 1990). This mistreatment by bosses can occur in formal interactions such as meetings, but is also commonly found in informal, everyday interactions including instances in passing, such as the hallway. In their seminal study on types of perceived injustice, Harlos and Pinder (1999) identified eight dimensions of interpersonal interaction that employees perceived as unjust from their boss: intimidation, abandonment, inconsistency, degradation, criticism, inaccessibility, surveillance, and manipulation.

These eight dimensions co-occur at various levels throughout the interactional justice literature, with some being found together more often than others (Harlos & Pinder, 1999). For instance, intimidation often co-occurred with degradation and criticism, and, somewhat surprisingly, surveillance and abandonment co-occurred in a large number of cases as well. The latter, seemingly paradoxical combination, was reported by participants' feelings of being scrutinized but ignored at the same time. No matter the dimension involved in an incident, interactional injustice typically occurs in public and is often exacerbated by organizational inattention. Bosses were found to participate more in mistreatment of employees, and employees were more likely to perceive an injustice if the organization did nothing to stop or reduce the unfair treatment (Harlos & Pinder, 1999). Interactional injustice is a particularly important form of injustice to pay attention to due to its connection to workplace behavior. Folger (1993) suggests that individuals respond most negatively to an unjust situation when the conduct of the supervisor is considered inappropriate. Even if an employee perceives a situation as unjust, as

long as they feel their superior has acted in a just manner towards them, workplace behavior will be relatively unaffected (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). These findings strongly enforce the importance of a positive superior-subordinate relationship in workplace behavior and beneficial communication strategies.

Distributive injustice. Distributive injustice is defined as a perceived misallocation of resources used as rewards or punishments (i.e. pay/work inequity, nonpromotion, unjust dismissal) (Homans, 1961; Adams, 1965). This type of injustice is tied to outcomes and allocation decisions. The modern conception of distributive justice finds its roots in the social exchange theories proposed by Adams (1965), Homans (1961), and Blau (1964). Before these modern theorists, however, the concept of distributive injustice traces all the way back to Aristotle. Aristotle believed that Justice was determined in terms of equality, by giving people resources and rewards based on who earned them (Chroust & Osborn, 1942). The goal is not too much, not too little, but the ideal mean of distributive resources. As such, distributive justice suggests each employee receives rewards and/or punishments in direct proportion to the effort and contribution put in on the employee's end (Cook & Emerson, 1978). Mutually beneficial exchanges between individuals with valued resources to achieve the ideal mean is the primary goal.

As previously discussed with the different equity sensitivities, it is clear that not all individuals prefer or act upon the equity rule when expecting or allocating resources, rewards and/or punishments. This disparity can cause problems when it comes to considering mutuality and reciprocity in psychological contracts. Psychological contract breach, and consequently perceptions of organizational injustice, can often occur when employer and employee are not able to create mutuality concerning which equity sensitivity construct is preferred. Reciprocity is

a direct product of which equity sensitivity construct is in use and when two different constructs are present in one situation, the employer and employee will have inconsistent opinions on what should be expected and what it takes to adequately fulfill the contract. These inconsistencies often lead to contract breach and resulting perceptions of distributive injustice. When an employee perceives distributive injustice, he or she is likely to withdraw from positive workplace behaviors and increase negative behaviors (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

Procedural injustice. Procedural injustice is a perceived unfairness concerning procedures or policies by which distributive decisions are made and/or implemented (i.e. unfair performance reviews and dismissals) (Thibault & Walker, 1975; Greenberg & Folger, 1983). Closely related to distributive justice, procedural justice is unique in its connection to a process rather than an outcome. Procedural justice does not concern itself with *what* allocation decision is made (distributive justice is concerned with these outcomes/allocation decisions), but rather *how* that decision is made and/or implemented. While the distribution of outcomes may be considered just, the process used to reach that decision may be seen by individuals as unjust. At the same time, while the process used to reach an allocation decision may be considered just, the actual outcome may be seen as unjust (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). Clearly, distributive and procedural justice are very closely intertwined in many organizational situations.

There are several different principles of procedural justice that have been found through theory development and research. For instance, Thibaut and Walker (1975) found that process control and outcome control have some impact on perceptions of procedural justice. For instance, procedural justice is said to have been achieved when those impacted by the decision have had an opportunity to influence the decisions being made (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Tyler (1989) found that neutrality, trust, and standing (also known as status recognition) are three

determinants of procedural fairness. When employees are treated with neutrality, trustworthiness and respect, they are more likely to perceive procedural justice (Tyler, 1989). Leventhal (1980) found six principles that impact procedural justice: consistency, nonpartiality, accuracy of information, correctability of decisions, representation during the decision-making process, and maintenance of ethical and moral standards. When organizational representatives act disrespectfully during allocation processes and individuals are denied voice and decision control, procedural injustice is perceived (Tepper, Duffy, Henle & Lambert, 2006). Additionally, expression of hostility, hindrance of participation and breaking off are important parts to decision making processes that discourage procedural justice (Schreier, Groeben & Blickle, 1995). A procedurally just situation ensures all participants have the opportunity to feel heard and involved in the decision-making process. Procedural justice strives to ensure all relevant parties understand and agree with how and why the decision was reached, even if they do not agree with the decision itself.

Rationale. The research on psychological contracts discusses mutuality and reciprocation of obligations and expectations of employers and employees within the workplace. However, besides identifying broad concepts such as trust, loyalty, mutual obligation, support, encouragement, and commitment, research has not yet determined what specific tactics and actions employers can take to fulfill the emotional expectations of employees. Research has suggested the importance of a positive relationship between superior and subordinate, especially in regards to situations perceived as unjust. Appropriate behavior from a superior can encourage positive employee behavior more effectively than most other workplace factors (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Therefore, identification of specific tactics such as unique supportive

behaviors, communication strategies, or other discernible responses from the superior that will fulfill psychological contract expectations of the subordinate may help avoid organizational conflict and circumvent negative and deviant workplace behavior. While each psychological contract is unique, the research has shown an overwhelming consensus on what concepts are expected of superiors (trust, loyalty, support, etc.), which leads one to anticipate there may be a similar consensus of specific behaviors that are expected of a superior in those same situations. This rationale leads to the first research question:

RQ1: How do employees expect their superior to respond to situations of perceived organizational injustice?

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Professional, relational, and personal feelings and behavior in the workplace are undeniably socio-emotional outcomes of psychological contracts and times of organizational injustice (Rosseau, 2011). One crucial component to workplace life found continuously throughout the literature on organizational injustice and psychological contracts is termed organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB is conceptualized as voluntary, non-contractual behavior within the organization (Organ, 1988). This behavior is not enforced through formal role obligations. Instead, it is part of the relational psychological contract, made of informal contributions to the work group or organization at the employee's discretion (Organ, 1988). Often these behavioral contributions or withholdings are determined based on fulfillment and breach of the psychological contract and the extent to which an employee considers his or her workplace just. Components of OCB include traits such as "sportsmanship, civic virtue, altruism, conscientiousness, and courtesy (Cohen-Charash & Spector, p. 286)." Podsakoff, MacKaenzie, Paine & Bachrach (2000) regarded OCB as similar to Katz's (1964) dimensions of innovative

and spontaneous behavior. These dimensions translate into workplace behavior such as "cooperating with others, protecting the organization, volunteering constructive ideas, self-training and maintaining a favorable attitude toward the organization" (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002).

Empirical research has found many connections between psychological contracts and OCB. Fulfillment of psychological contracts leads to positive OCB whereas contracts left unfulfilled as well as organizational injustice often result in the appearance of more negative or deviant OCB (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). Psychological contracts have been linked to several positive OCBs such as loyalty (Tekleab & Taylor, 2000; Turnley & Feldman, 1999), civic virtue (Lewis-McClear & Taylor, 1998; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Robinson, 1996), courtesy and conscientiousness (Lewis-McClear & Taylor, 1998), and helping (Irving & Gellatly, 2001). Research has discovered a wide array of OCB as outcomes of justice and injustice perceptions (Harlos & Pinder, 1999). Just as there is a wealth of research on the link between psychological contract fulfillment/breach and OCB, there is even more research done on the connection between perceptions of injustice in the workplace and OCB, as explicated in Cohen-Charash & Spector's (2001) meta-analysis of almost 200 studies on organizational justice. One's perception of justice or injustice will impact OCB. Procedural and interactional justice perceptions hold the most weight when it comes to predicting OCB, with distributive justice coming in third (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Moorman, 1991).

Counterproductive and withdrawal behaviors are reported as OCB reactions to perceived injustice. This is an employee's way of attempting to regain some semblance of equity by altering his or her behavioral input to match the lower-than-expected managerial or organizational output (Greenberg & Scott, 1996). In other words, when an employee perceives the organization or superior is not fulfilling his or her side of the psychological contract, an

employee will demonstrate counterproductive or withdrawal behaviors in order to even the reciprocity of the contract. Perceptions of organizational injustice are linked to counterproductive OCB such as turnover (Bies & Shapiro, 1987; Hendrix, Robbins, Miller, & Summers, 1999). Perceptions of interactional injustice have been found more highly correlated with counterproductive OCB at the local level than the other types of injustice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Counterproductive OCB at the local level includes actions such as conflict with one's boss. Research has found that distributive injustice perceptions are highly correlated to particularly personal behaviors, such as withdrawal (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Procedural justice has also been found to be related to socially-oriented counterproductive OCB (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987).

OCB is talked about in many ways throughout the literature with a plethora of examples given of specific positive and negative behaviors. In specific times of organizational conflict, it is particularly important to look at those OCB that are specifically communicative in order to see the way communication is being used to manage that encounter. Communication is likely to be altered in definite ways during times of perceived organizational injustice and/or contract breach due to its discretionary nature. It has been proven time and again that perceptions of injustice lead to negative behavior within the workplace, but situational and contractual constraints may limit how an employee can behave within their in-role performance. This results in employees using voluntary OCBs, especially communicative ones, to relieve their frustration and anger due to the limited chance of retribution or negative consequences (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). However, in order to understand how communication is being used in times of organizational conflict when employer treatment has been deemed unjust, one must first understand what organizational conflict is and the different ways it is handled by individuals.

Organizational Conflict

Perceived injustice in the workplace is one potential form of organizational conflict. As previously discussed, psychological contract breach is one common and permeating source of perceptions of organizational injustice. Communication within the workplace is vital when it comes to negotiating and managing psychological contract content. Achieving high mutuality and reciprocity within psychological contracts is vital to contract fulfillment, and that achievement is accomplished through open and honest communication between employer and employee regarding expectations (Rousseau, 2011). When expectations are not fulfilled and contracts are breached, conflict arises. How this conflict is managed communicatively, however, depends greatly on the conflict style adopted by the individuals involved in the dispute (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). There are five main conflict styles, each with a unique communicative approach to addressing interpersonal conflict.

Conflict Styles and Communicative Conflict Management Strategies. Conflict styles are "people's proclivity for using similar conflict tactics or strategies in different contexts, with different people, or across different times" (Cupach, Canary & Spitzberg, 2010, p. 56). Essentially, a conflict style is how a person, independent of the details or context, will naturally want to respond to a conflict. Blake and Mouton (1964) identified five unique conflict styles through utilization of a two-dimensional model they developed. Though the five styles are often called by different names, they are most commonly identified as: collaborating, compromising, avoiding, accommodating, and competing (Nicotera & Dorsey, 2006). Each conflict style is characterized by a unique approach to the situation based on the two independent dimensions of Blake and Mouton's (1964) model. These dimensions are concern for self-interest and concern for the other party's interest, often called assertiveness and cooperativeness respectively (Rahim

& Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1976). Each of the conflict styles utilizes specific conflict tactics, also referred to as conflict management strategies. Conflict management strategies are the types of behaviors associated with particular conflict styles (Bevan et al., 2007). Because interpersonal conflict is often highly communicative (Sillars, 1980), this research will pay particular attention to the communicative conflict management strategies associated with each of the conflict styles: integrative communication, avoidance, and distributive communication.

Collaborating. Collaborating involves a high level of concern for self as well as the other party and is concerned with collaboration towards a resolution that is acceptable to both parties (Rahim & Magner, 1995). This approach is characterized by a willingness by all parties to openly exchange information with each other, constructively address differences and to pursue a mutually beneficial and acceptable resolution (Gray, 1989; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rahim, 1992). Collaborating often takes more time, as it requires all parties to sit down and work together to find the best possible solution by integrating the best parts of each party's ideas (Garant & Carlson, 2012). This method of conflict resolution is found frequently within organizational cultures that place a high emphasis on collectivism (Garant & Carlson, 2012).

Communicative conflict management strategies associated with collaborating often take the most effort in terms of communication competency (Hargie, 2011). Collaborating employs the communicative conflict management style of integrative communication, which has been shown to be the communicative conflict management tactic most positively associated with conflict resolution (Lakey & Canary, 2001). Just like the collaborating conflict style, this communication strategy is characterized as having a high level of concern for both the other party and self when negotiating (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997). This leads to communicative actions such as asking the other person's opinion or point of view, keeping the conversation

about the problem and not becoming personal, identifying areas of common ground and asking many questions to fully and better understand. This communication strategy also places a high emphasis on the importance of listening and communicating openly with one another (Hargie, 2011).

Compromising. Compromising is characterized by a moderate level of concern for self and others and often involves finding a middle-ground, or "win-win" situation for both parties involved (Rahim & Magner, 1995). Compromising often takes less time to achieve than integrating because instead of attempting to mesh the best parts of all ideas, this approach simply finds the solution that is least "painful" for each of the involved parties (Garant & Carlson, 2012). Compromising is often used when pressures such as time or cost exist and a quick resolution is thought more beneficial than the best possible resolution (Rubin et al, 1994; Yukl, Malone, Hayslip & Pamin, 1976).

Compromising employs the communicative conflict management strategy of integrative communication as well, but to a much lesser degree. Because the interest for both self and other is moderate, the effort placed into understanding the other person's point of view is less when an individual is using the communicative conflict management strategies associated with compromising (Macintosh & Stevens, 2008). While it is often viewed as the best way to resolve a conflict, a compromise is not a true win/win but instead includes an amount of loss for each party. Each party involved must give up part of their ideal solution to come to a conclusion. This approach generally does not result in true conflict resolution as one or both parties may have lingering feelings of resentment or anger as to what they had to give up to reach an agreement (Macintosh & Stevens, 2008).

Avoiding. Avoiding involves low concern for self as well as the other party involved and is associated with withdrawal, passing-the-buck and sidestepping (Rahim & Magner, 1995). This style is also referred to as inaction or withdrawing and is a non-confrontational approach to conflict resolution (Cai & Fink, 2002). This style is used when the benefit of engaging in conflict is small or the other party is unlikely to concede. The person who uses avoidance often hopes that if they ignore the conflict it will somehow simply go away (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). This approach can be used effectively if one or both parties are too emotionally heated to engage in the conflict at the moment. In order to successfully resolve the conflict, however, a different conflict resolution style must be adopted at some point (Garant & Carlson, 2012).

As one may expect, avoiding uses the communicative conflict management strategy of avoidance, which includes deliberately shifting, ignoring, or denying information about the disagreement (Bevan et al., 2007). Topic-shifting, semantic focus and denial are additional communicative avoidance strategies used (Bevan et al., 2007). Malis and Roloff (2006) found that an individual tends to use avoidance as their primary conflict tactic when the other party's goal is to change the individual's mind. Due to the avoidance of most types of communication in this tactic and subsequent lack of information exchange, this is historically one of the least effective resolution strategies (Sillars, 1980). Indirect strategies such as hinting and joking are also considered avoidance. They allow the individual to address the conflict minimally, though they often do not produce results and lead to a buildup of frustration and anger (Sillars, Coletti, Parry & Rogers, 2006). Passive-aggressive behavior is also a hallmark of avoidance and is very unproductive towards conflict resolution. Passive-aggressive behavior occurs when a person indirectly communicates his or her negative thoughts or feelings through nonverbal behavior,

such as leaving vital tasks undone. This tactic does not address the real issue and typically creates even more conflicts in the meantime (Sillars, 1980).

Accommodating. Accommodating is characterized by a low level of concern for self and a high level of concern for the other party and attempts to downplay differences and emphasize commonalities between self and other to satisfy the needs of the other party (Rahim & Magner, 1995). This style can also be referred to as yielding or obliging and is a non-confrontational approach to conflict resolution (Cai & Fink, 2002). Factors such as time constraints may encourage someone to use an accommodating approach to a specific situation, but there are reputational risks included, such as appearing weak (Rubin et al, 1994). People who consistently use this approach oftentimes find themselves feeling victimized (Garant & Carlson, 2012).

Lionel Bobot (2010) suggests there are three times when someone will use the accommodating conflict style: when being generous, when obeying or when yielding. If one is being generous, they will accommodate because they genuinely want to, and it often will not lead to much conflict. If one is obeying, they do not have a choice and must accommodate to the other person, and this occasion can often lead to conflict or feelings of anger and resentment if it happens too often. This is when the individual may begin to feel victimized. Finally, an individual may yield when he or she has individual goals or ideas, but the presence of fatigue, time constraints or a better solution result in the decision to accommodate (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000). Occasionally accommodating may be very useful for maintaining relationships as it is also tied to the communicative conflict management strategy of avoidance and is therefore a non-confrontational approach to conflict resolution. This strategy is often most productive when the individual is not very emotionally involved in the situation or the problem will not last long or the other person is only temporarily around (Sillars, Coletti, Parry & Rogers, 2006).

Competing. Competing involves a high concern for self and a low concern for the other party, and is characterized by a win-lose orientation, often forcing behavior to one's preference (Rahim & Magner, 1995). This approach is highly confrontational and often utilizes tactics such as put-downs, stubbornness and a focus on beating or defeating the other party (Cai & Fink, 2002). This style is also impacted by context. When the other party seems weak or willing to yield this conflict is more likely to be invoked (Cai & Fink, 2002). However, this approach also holds the potential for reputational risks such as alienation of self or the other party due to the aggressive style. People who use this style consistently are seen as tyrants, are not perceived to care about others and are seen as only self-interested (Garant & Carlson, 2012). This conflict style presents the highest threat to the relationship between superior and subordinate and is historically unlikely to lead to a satisfactory resolution. It can, however, be used effectively if a decision must be made quickly, and no consensus is easily reached. But the decision-maker must ensure that the final decision is in line with the company's goals and strategies (Garant & Carlson, 2012).

Competing uses the third and final communicative conflict management strategy, distributive communication. The distributive communication conflict strategy prioritizes self-needs and goals without high concern for the other party. This conflict tactic is generally used to achieve negative primary goals such as: change target; dominance/control; and hurt partner/benefit self (Bevan et al., 2007). Distributive communication, along with avoidance, is found to be particularly destructive for both the individual and the relationship (Bevan et al, 2007). Lakey and Canary (2001) found that the more individualistic an employee was, the more likely he or she was to use distributive communication. This was due to the low importance of the other party's needs or wants and the high importance of the self's needs or wants. This type

of communication led to increased aggressive and competitive communication, personal attacks and assertive communication (Lakey & Canary, 2001; Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997). Not all competitive techniques are necessarily negative or automatically hurtful to the relationship. These non-coercive competing techniques include requesting and persuading (Sillars, 1980). The competitive communication that is considered dangerous and aggressive includes demands, complaints, angry statements, threats, harassment, and verbal abuse (Johnson & Roloff, 1998).

An individual can employ any of these five conflict styles, and the two determining factors of which conflict style is used are often the employee goals and the context of the situation. Research suggests that the conflict style used during a time of interpersonal conflict is related to the quality of agreement reached (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Van de Vliert, Euwama & Huismans, 1995). Furthermore, Friedman, Tidd, Currall & Tsai (2000) found a relationship between the conflict style used and the degree to which a conflict, such as perceived organizational injustice, is ongoing. This suggests that learning more about the reality of how communicative conflict management strategies are used to respond to perceptions of organizational injustice may be the first step to determining the best strategies to use, and consequently reducing negative impacts of perceptions of organizational injustice. Each of the five conflict styles and resulting communicative conflict strategies is characterized by specific approaches to interpersonal conflict, and this study will attempt to understand people's communicative responses to perceived organizational injustice using the framework of these conflict styles.

Rationale. The discussion of psychological contracts focuses mainly on the beginning and development of relationships. Expectations that employees have of their superiors are based on preconceived notions and personal values that individuals bring into situations. The present

study aims to focus on what happens when those contracts are violated. At this point, employees must determine how to manage conflict styles and communicative tactics in order to resolve the situation. Employees may exhibit unique communication strategies while in conflict depending upon their conflict style and preferred tactic. In order to better understand exactly how perceptions of injustice in the workplace are impacting employees and workplace relationships it is vital to study and understand the communication patterns being used. It is reasonable to expect that communication will be one of the first things altered when a psychological contract breach leads to perceptions of injustice in the workplace due to its subjective and discretionary nature. If employers and employees are able to better understand how communication is impacted when contract breach occurs and perceptions of injustice arise, it is more likely that high reciprocity and mutuality can be achieved and/or regained within the psychological contract and therefore the conflict can be resolved with minimal relational and organizational damage. This reasoning leads to a second research question.

RQ2: How do employees respond communicatively to perceptions of injustice?

METHODOLOGY

Interpersonal relationships are the bedrock of any organization, and hold the potential to greatly impact employee behavior and performance. These relationships are built on expectations, mutual give and take, and communication. The goal of this study was to examine stories of injustice in the workplace to better understand what expectations are present in the modern workplace, and how the relational give and take impacts the way superiors, subordinates, and coworkers communicate with each other. In order to obtain an in-depth and detailed account of participant experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 full-time organizational employees. This chapter discusses the details of the semi-structured interviews, illustrates the participant sample, and describes the data analysis process.

Participants

Twenty-one individuals were recruited via email, word of mouth and social media for interviews. The emails and Facebook posts included language explaining the study, including the purpose of the research and necessary qualifications to participate. Although participants were asked to discuss a situation that happened within the last five years, four participants discussed work situations that occurred more than five years ago. It was also requested that participants talk about a full-time position they held, however two participants discussed a part-time position.

Interviews were conducted in a public location, with the exception of three virtual interviews conducted via Skype and an in-home interview with an individual who suffers from brain damage resulting from a work-related incident and is therefore unable to focus adequately in stimulating environments. Due to the sensitive nature of the discussions, a great amount of care was taken to ensure confidentiality, and all participants and organizations were assigned

pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Before starting the interview, participants completed a demographic survey.

Research Design

Interviewing was used to collect data about the expectations of a supervisor in response to an employee's perception of organizational injustice and the resulting adjustments made to interpersonal communication styles and tactics, referred to as communicative impacts, of said injustice and employer response. Interviews were chosen as the method for data collection due to their focus on understanding the world from the subject's point of view (Kavle, 1996). In this instance, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A) provided the best options for exploring the experiences of subjects while allowing freedom for in-the-moment changes in focus and direction (Kvale, 1996). A semi-structured interview follows a previously developed interview protocol with several main questions. It also includes lists of potential follow-up questions, but leaves flexibility for the researcher to add questions in response to the direction of the conversation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews provide many benefits beginning with the ability to prepare questions ahead of time. The interviewer can then practice beforehand, which provides an opportunity to increase confidence as well as troubleshoot any problematic or confusing questions prior to data collection (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews also provide a lot of flexibility during the conversation, which benefits both the interviewer and the participant. The list of potential follow-up questions provides the interviewer freedom to explore different parts of the narrative as they appear during the conversation. The lack of rigid questioning also allows the participant to have some control over the direction of the conversation, illuminating parts they feel are more important to the storyline than others (Cohen

& Crabtree, 2006). While there are several other qualitative research methods available (e.g., focus groups), personal interviews provide a certain level of anonymity and privacy that is important when discussing such sensitive information as times of organizational injustice or disappointment in supervisor behavior.

Data Collection

Each participant was given the choice of meeting somewhere of their choosing or in a private room within the Communication Department at a large Midwestern University. Participants were also given the option of using Skype for participants that are not located within an hour's drive of the researcher. Due to the sensitive nature of the information shared and the possibility of an emotional reaction while recalling unjust situations, security was of concern to the author. Therefore, participants were encouraged to choose a somewhat private location, such as a quiet coffee shop, personal office or their home if they so desire. Participants that were interviewed at the University were brought directly to the interview room to wait instead of the general Communication Department waiting area to preserve anonymity as well as decrease the potential of feeling uncomfortable while waiting for the interview to start. All interviews were conducted by the researcher, and the resulting data and transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer with any printouts or hardcopies stored in a locked filing cabinet. Transcripts were entirely scrubbed of personal or identifying information before saved or printed out.

As previously mentioned, interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol, allowing for probing questions when appropriate. The interview length varied from 26 minutes to 3 hours and 18 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded for ease of transcription. For the semi-structured interview protocol see Appendix A. Each question was developed with at least one of the two research questions in mind. Participants were first asked to talk a bit about what

they do for a living to make them a bit more comfortable with the interviewer and the conversation. After a brief discussion on employment history, they were asked to talk specifically about a time they felt they were treated unfairly in the workplace. Several follow-up questions were asked to discover what the participant expected of his or her superior during the situation, and the reality of the superior's role and reaction. Once expectations and reality of the situation was discussed, the next set of questions aimed to learn how the participant's communication was impacted by the injustice situation and the superior's response. Once all the interviews were completed, each participant was randomly assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. The interviews were each transcribed by the interviewer and resulted in 634 double-spaced pages of data. Once all 21 interviews were transcribed, open coding was used to discover emerging themes and axial coding was used to make connections between the findings in order to answer the two previously presented research questions.

Coding and Analysis

An inductive approach was used for both research questions, beginning with precoding, moving to initial coding, and finally utilizing axial coding (Saldaña, 2009). While coding, it is important to keep in mind any potential biases from the participants so as not to overgeneralize findings and claims based on what could be a partially skewed sample. In the instance, participants chose to come forward and reach out to the researcher. Thus it is possible that the data sample will be skewed toward those who had unresolved issues. Individuals who received a positive response from superiors regarding workplace issues would likely not have stepped forward to be interviewed, as they may not feel the need to verbally process a situation that was resolved appropriately the way someone who is still emotionally affected by the situation may.

The first pass through the data consisted of reading the material and becoming comfortable and familiar with the data while pre-coding. Saldaña (2009) explains pre-coding as a process of identifying significant words, phrases, or sentences that deserve further examination before the true coding process begins. During pre-coding, phrases and words that stuck out were highlighted, circled, and underlined, and analytical memos of initial thoughts and impressions of the data were recorded. Once the transcription and pre-coding were complete the first true round of coding began with the intent to discover what natural themes emerged from the individuals' experiences without attempting to force them into any preconceived notions.

Initial coding, also referred to as open coding (Strauss, 1987), "involves breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (p. 81). In order to more fully retain the voice of the participants and capture the true essence of what is expected of employers and how communication is impacted in times of injustice, a particular emphasis was placed on using direct phrases from the data as codes instead of creating my own as often as possible (Strauss, 1987). While coding, a detailed codebook was kept with descriptions of each code. This code book was consistently referenced during the coding process to avoid repetition and the potential for researcher error (Saldaña, 2009). Once open coding was completed, the resulting codes were compared and condensed into a list of themes. Saldaña (2009) defines a theme as "an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (p. 13). A theme is a phrase or sentence that meaningfully describes and organizes data into discrete units. Subthemes were used to create differentiation between characteristics (Saldaña, 2009; Strauss, 1987). The open coding process was repeated until all initial themes were discovered, and then axial coding began.

Axial coding is an in-depth analysis of the categories that are developed during the initial coding process (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009; Strauss, 1987). The initial coding process breaks the data apart into separate and distinct pieces. In order to find connections and relationships between the data, however, it is important to bring the data back together through the process of axial coding, pulling the fractured data pieces into a coherent whole (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009; Strauss, 1987). To begin the axial coding process, the list of themes and codes from the open coding process was evaluated to determine which codes made the most sense to keep, and which were analytically irrelevant for the current research questions (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987). To determine the codes and themes worth exploring, definitions of the established codes and themes were compared to the research questions for relevance. Two specific sets of insight were sought out: first, how participants expected the superior to respond to reported perceptions of injustice; and second, how those situations and responses impact communication in the workplace. Once the final list of themes and codes was established axial coding began with the focus to develop knowledge of the relationships between established categories and subcategories (Strauss, 1987). The dataset was axial coded with three goals in mind; uncovering insight into RQ1, uncovering insight into RQ2, and finding any possible connections between the two resulting sets of insight. Axial coding allows researchers to "sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). Repetition of ideas within categories are synthesized and grouped into a singular theme, reducing the number of initial codes previously created (Saldaña, 2009). The dataset was axial coded continuously, further refining and connecting the themes and concepts, until no new concepts or connections were found.

Conclusion

The privacy and anonymity afforded by personal interviews made them an obvious choice for data collection in this research study. Participants who have recently (within the last 5 years) experienced organizational injustice were interviewed one-on-one in order to gain a more thorough understanding of how they expected superiors to react to reports of a perceived injustice and how those injustices and superior responses impact communication in the workplace. An inductive analysis of the data, including open coding and axial coding, was utilized to unearth insights into expectations of employer responses to reported perceptions of injustice and how communication in the workplace was consequently impacted. A particular emphasis was placed on using the participants' own words to ensure the voice of the participants was as preserved as possible. All data was coded repeatedly until no new concepts, themes or connections were discovered.

RESULTS

Twenty-one individuals participated in the study; 15 were female and 6 were male. Ages ranged from 22 years old to 67 years old. Many different industries were represented including: child-care, healthcare, consulting, academia, computer/technology, bar/restaurant, and insurance. See the following tables for a breakdown of participant demographics.

Table 1

Age of Participants

Age	Number of Participants
18-25 years old	2
26-40 years old	6
41-55 years old	10
56+ years old	3

Table 2

Gender of Participants

Gender	Number of Participants
Male	2
Female	6

Table 3

Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Participants
Single	6
Married	13
Divorced	2

Table 4

Level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Participants
High School Only	1
Vocational/Technical School	2
Some College	5
Bachelor's Degree	4
Master's Degree	7
Doctoral Degree	1
Professional Degree	1

Table 5

Employment Industry (during time of situation discussed)

Employment Industry	Number of Participants
Healthcare	5
IT/Computers	3
Education	5
Customer Service	2
Marketing	1
Insurance	1
Administrative	1
Banking	2
Consulting	2

Six of the participants were still employed in the organization discussed at the time of the interview, and fifteen had left almost exclusively as a result of the situation discussed. To obtain information about organizational injustice, participants were asked to talk about a time they felt they were treated unfairly. Once the context was fully developed and employees were mentally

embedded in a time they experienced injustice, they were asked how they expected their superior to respond to the situation. Follow up questions probed deeper into behavioral and communicative responses employees desired and expectations that were violated. Afterwards, participants were asked to reflect on how those violated expectations impacted the way they communicated in the workplace, whether with coworkers or superiors. While many of the following results can apply to good leadership in general, they were discussed by participants explicitly in the context of perceived organizational injustice.

Research Question #1: Expectations of Superiors

The first research question aimed to uncover what employees expected of their superiors in response to an employee's perceptions of organizational injustice. The data revealed three main expectations. First, employees expect that their superior will communicate openly with them, to be transparent and forthcoming with information. Second, employees expect their superior will provide performance assistance and ample opportunity to succeed in their role. Third, employees expect their superior to exude a professional behavior at all times, especially when facing a situation of injustice.

Expectation One: Open Communication. Employees expected their superior to be transparent and forthcoming with information in either verbal or written form whenever possible. Open communication was explicitly identified by 16 participants, and discussed indirectly by the other five at one point or another during the interview. In many of the interviews, participants expressed that lack of open communication between them and their superior is what exacerbated the original situation to damaging levels. Many participants felt that if open communication had been prioritized, the original situation could have been resolved quickly, and fewer negative

consequences would have occurred. There were seven themes of open communication identified that reoccurred throughout all 21 interviews to some extent.

Address Issues. One of the most frequently quoted expectations showed employees desire a direct, face-to-face conversation with their supervisor if there is an issue or a perceived injustice. “Let’s talk about it. Let’s sit down and talk about it” (Nancy: 364). People expressed the significance of simply sitting down and talking the issue or injustice out, especially if the supervisor had to deliver a negative message of some sort. “Use your words. Like a parent to a toddler” (Jake: 144).

Participants desire the ability to talk openly with their superior about a situation they feel is unjust and know the superior will listen objectively. Participants desired a professional conversation with minimal emotion involved if possible. When approaching a supervisor with sensitive issues, participants expect they will be able to have a rational conversation. “Let’s have a discussion. It shouldn’t be raised voices, it should just be a normal conversation” (Susan: 419). Molly described a supervisor who she was unable to approach with any time of concerns about perceived favoritism or unfair treatm ent. “If you asked her about it, she would go ballistic. She was a very hot-headed, mean-tempered, angry person” (Molly: 578). The ideal response was dictated best by Charlie, “he was just, he was very calm. Very relaxing. Like, if I had an issue I could go to him. And he wouldn’t do it for me, he would help me figure it out” (553).

Employees want these conversations about injustice to be held face-to-face. They want to be able to approach their superior without the superior talking behind the employee’s back or dismissing them all together. It was mentioned on a number of occasions that one of the most offensive acts the interviewee could remember was discovering a superior was talking about him/her and the unjust situation to other people. Jean illustrated these feelings well.

If they have a problem with me, I think they need to come and talk to me. Because you find that in, in a group, that eventually someone is going to come back to you and tell. You know, they are. It just, for whatever reason, it's going to get back to you. And I think it's, it's a lot worse to hear it from somebody else than to hear it from your own superior. And, and I think it undermines how they're doing their job. (295)

Employees expect a superior to develop and consistently foster a culture, or workplace environment that will allow for open lines of communication and continued conversations about issues in a respectful manner.

They don't have to, but it sure helps if they have a sense of humor. That's just me. But, I like a boss that I don't have to be fearful of. That I don't have to fear going in to ask a questions, or if they're going to yell at me. (Erica: 324)

To have the most effective conversation about the unjust situation, employees expected the supervisor would not come to the meeting with any preconceived notions of guilt, blame or having already taken sides on the situation.

I guess I expected him to not be biased immediately towards the other party. Uhm, because it didn't feel like he took into account at all my, what I was saying and, and doing. And, it felt like he immediately sided with Luke. (Meghan: 177)

When gathering information on the unjust situation in question, participants expected supervisors to interview as many people as possible to develop an objective and unbiased understanding of what was happening. This especially included anyone directly involved in the employee's perceived unjust situation. Participants expect the supervisor to "see the situation for

what it is. Sometimes you just have to keep your personal opinions out of it. You have to be a professional about it. Professional and fair" (Laura: 302).

Feedback. Participants expect to receive feedback on their work performance, including observed strengths and weaknesses. If a participant is doing something incongruent with the way of the organization, they feel it unfair and unjust for a superior to sit idly by and watch and employee fail or perform poorly without attempting to assist or intervene in any way. However, beyond just addressing an issue, participants desire and expect feedback and advice on how to improve. If an employee addresses an unjust situation with a superior, they desire the superior to provide honest and helpful feedback and advice that may help the employee move forward with the most effective next steps in dealing with the injustice. This advice can be provided during regular evaluations, which an additional expectation of a majority of employees. Laura mentioned the impact lack of evaluations had on her workplace.

> Well see and at some point with it, well you know back a few years, they just quit doing performance evaluations on people. This guy from South Africa who got hooked up with the hospital came and he knew a lot about processes. And he was the one who said "you don't have to do these! Blah blah blah." And so they just quit doing them. And I was, it was so screwed up there for a while. It was just chaos! (247)

Transparency. Transparency during times of perceived injustice was a big issue discussed by many participants. Participants expect their superior to be honest and transparent with them, especially when they are confronted with an employee's perceptions of injustice in the workplace. A few participants acknowledged the fact that a superior can not always pass along 100% of the information they are privy to, but expressed the expectation that a superior would

pass along any information they could, particularly information that pertained to the situation of injustice and could impact the employee. “Unless something was said in that directors meeting that, you know, ‘this is not for general knowledge,’ other than that she just took notes while she was at the meeting and she posted them in her department” (Laura: 231).

Even if the honesty brings with it bad news, people would prefer that their superior be transparent with that information and tell them the truth as soon as possible. “We had no idea what was happening. Because those monthly meetings? Ceased. Like, everything just kind of stopped. It’s like, okay so nobody’s talking anymore, what’s happening?” (Jake: 135). Lack of transparency, like lack of open communication, can very quickly exacerbate a minor perception of injustice into a situation that is extremely damaging. People have a lot on the line when it comes to their jobs. Jake also talked about how transparency can make a world of difference for people with big personal responsibilities outside of work. “Instead of ‘whisper, whisper, whisper, bottom line,’ have a meeting, choose your words wisely, but at least convey to your staff, who have to, you know, provide for children or a mortgage, just, is their job sound” (144).

This expected transparency includes explanations for behavior and decisions, such as rewards, days off, bonuses, hirings, firings, etc. Employees expect that a superior is able to defend their decisions with rational, logical explanations. This was especially the case for Diane, who was up for a promotion. Diane was being considered as an internal candidate, and was told she was very equally qualified with the external candidate that was being considered for the position. In the end, the external candidate got the position and Diane was told she was not offered the job because she had a lot on her plate as a mother of two young children. However, when she confronted the head of the search committee about what she had been told, that person was unable to provide her with an explanation of any sort as to why the external candidate was

chosen, and informed her if she was curious, she could request the open records of the hiring process including the interviews and decision-making discussions. In both Jake and Diane's situations it is clear to see how lack of transparency from the supervisors turned a small injustice perception into a much larger situation with possibly career-ending implications.

Clarity. "I didn't know what she wanted from me." More than half the participant shared this sentiment regarding their superior. Muddy, unspoken, and seemingly ever-changing expectations in the workplace made employees feel like they were waging an ever-losing battle. Akin to open communication and transparency, lack of clarity during times of injustice perceptions created larger issues. Many participants, such as Shawn, expressed the desire for clarity, stating they wish their boss would sit them down and say:

> Here's the work that we expect, here's what the values are on how we do what we do […] Just trying to get better expectations so that we have good, coherent job expectations so that you can be showing people. (94)

Participants also expect to have a reasonable amount of expectations placed upon them. They want to be utilized to their full potential, but they also desire support and help when their expectations become too much for them to handle alone. Feeling unsupported and underutilized fostered perceptions of injustice and unfair treatment and often led employees to feel stuck or without options. Laura was feeling overwhelmed by the amount of responsibility she had on her plate so she made an appointment to talk to her superior about more secretarial support.

> Here we were, now, more reports, and I already had this huge job. Because I was responsible for the hospital, consulted at the nursing home, and then they added the clinic that I was responsible for. And also the walk-in clinic, the eye clinic in a local small town, and two other local small-town clinic outreach locations. (222)

Timeliness. When participants are facing a situation they perceive to be unjust, they expect the superior to do something about it as soon as they become aware of it. If an employee talks to a superior, or brings an unjust situation to his or her attention, that employee expects that the supervisor will acknowledge the situation, especially because their position of power often allows them to do something to remedy the situation.

> If I had to say the one thing that bothered me about the bank the most, it wasn't even Paula. It's the fact that my, the president of the back didn't do anything about it. You know? Threw the people to the wolves, and that's what I feel like sometimes. (Susan: 411)

Employees expect people in the workplace to step up when they see injustice if they are able and stop the unjust behavior. Jean mentioned that a supervisor not responding to an unjust situation was comparable to that superior condoning the behavior. "And I think it's just so sad that it's allowed, and uh, that there are people that could stop it, or could help it, and they don't do it" (Jean: 304).

More than just responding to an unjust situation, employees expect their supervisor to respond immediately. They do not desire to be dismissed or blown off. One interviewee, Meghan, was in a very unsafe situation in which a coworker was threatening her and engaging in severe mental and emotional manipulation and abuse both in and out of the workplace. When Meghan brought this situation to the attention of her supervisor, he failed to even acknowledge the issue until three months later, after she had brought it up numerous more times (Meghan: 158-199). By this point, the situation had gotten so out of hand there was nothing Meghan or her supervisor could do, and she ended up relocating to a different team and has endured months of

crippling anxiety and depression. “If he had handled the situation differently I think everything could have changed” (Meghan, 194).

Privacy. Most participants identified negative feelings about the setting in which their superior chose to have sensitive conversations, or address a confidential topic related to situations of injustice. A private setting for conversations and confrontations, especially those of such a sensitive nature when dealing with perceptions of injustice, was unanimously preferred over a public setting. Diane was incredibly confused and uncomfortable with her supervisor’s decision to tell her she had not gotten a promotion because she was a busy mother of two at the local coffee shop. Charlie expressed embarrassment being yelled at in front of customers. “I had a lot of people who were very aware. Because she did it in front of customers. Uhm, so then, you know, you feel awkward. Because you’re getting ridiculed by your boss” (Charlie: 556).

With no exception, participants expected their supervisor to have a professional conversation with them behind closed doors when an issue or sensitive topic, specifically about a perceived injustice, arose. This private conversation was expected as the first step in resolution of any unjust situation brought to their attention. Public address of issues or sensitive topics exacerbated the negative feelings. Participants expected their superior to keep any sensitive topics of conversation regarding perceived injustices confidential between the two of them, to not discuss details with other people. One of the most poignant examples of a supervisor violating this expectation happened to Meghan. When her supervisor finally addressed the issues, after several months, the first conversation he had with Meghan about it he invited the perpetrator to sit in on. This meeting was followed directly by a meeting with her entire work group in which her supervisor announced it was a chance for everyone to “air their grievances” about the situation at hand. Meghan reported that the meeting quickly dissolved into the entire

group ganging up against her and everyone was discussing her personal issue with her coworker while her supervisor did nothing to stop the attack. After this situation, Meghan had no trust left for her supervisor or any of her coworkers.

Appreciation. People want to be appreciated, and desire affirmation that their effort is noticed. This becomes incredibly salient to individuals who are experience situations they feel are unjust. Participants desired to feel appreciated, and wanted their supervisor to reaffirm that they were valuable, and that the situation was unjust and uncalled for. The very basis of appreciation is giving credit where credit is due. Diane mentioned that she was not getting credit for large amounts of extra work she was doing. And while it did not necessarily bother her that she was not getting thanked or affirmed of her work, it did bother her that her boss was taking the credit for the things that she did. People want to receive affirmation for the work they do. This affirmation is often something simple, as in Nancy's case, when she noticed a coworker was getting several hand-written thank you notes, while Nancy herself never received one. Verbal affirmation, such as a simple 'thank you,' also goes a long way when showing appreciation for employee's work. Several people commented on their expectation of having their hard work noticed and commented on.

> If you hear from your boss "thank you for getting this done, or thank you for working on this, or thank you for taking extra time." That, those little two words go such a long way, and people are willing to work harder. And get more things done quicker, which helps everyone. (Charlie: 539)

In contrast to the unanimous expectation that sensitive conversations have strictly in private, a few, more outgoing participants expressed joy in being recognized and shown appreciation in front of others. Audience or not, however, it seems verbal recognition and

affirmation seem to do a world of good on employee morale. “You don’t even need to pay me that much money. Just tell me I’m doing a good job!” (Erica: 322). While several participants shared similar sentiments about being more moved by verbal appreciation than money, people did expect to be compensated appropriately for the work they did and not taken advantage of. Appropriate compensation was defined almost identically by several different participants. To them, appropriate compensation is competitive salary and benefits, and a pay raise when appropriate to reflect growth in responsibility and quality of work. While lack of open communication, transparency, and clarity exacerbated perceptions of injustice, expressions of appreciation were reported to alleviate perceptions of injustice.

The most frequently mentioned employee expectation was open and honest communication from superiors. Employees expect that their superior will be transparent and forthcoming with all information possible, especially when that information impacts the employee directly. Employees desire open communication both ways, however, not just from the superior. Employees wish to work in an environment where not only their superior provides information, but employees are encouraged to speak their minds. When open communication is missing in an organization or workplace relationship minor injustices are exacerbated and employees become deeply dissatisfied with their working environment.

Expectation Two: Performance Assistance. The next expectation discussed by employees was the expectation that they would be provided assistance of various types to perform their job and be successful in the midst of and despite an unjust situation. Employees expected a number of things of their superiors when it came to performing their job as well as possible, seven of which showed up repeatedly throughout the interviews. Employees looked for

these seven performance assistance tactics while attempting to negotiate the unjust situation they were experiencing, desiring to perform as well as possible and continue to be successful despite any outside influences from the unjust situation.

Appropriate interview and recruitment methods. Several participants discussed the inability to acquire positions they would perform well in due to irrelevant requirements, stating they felt this lack of ability to advance or break into relevant fields a severe professional injustice. Those that are vetted for positions are not always interviewed in a way that properly assesses their ability to do the job. This was most prevalent for participants in highly technical fields, but was mentioned by almost half, regardless of industry or position. A college degree is a requirement for most computer-related jobs, but many self-proclaimed "computer geeks" are self-learners that are able to perform exceedingly well at the job but are not considered because of their lack of degree.

> Education is not a one size fits all. There are a lot of different ways to learn. There's a lot of smart people out there that don't get the chance because they don't fit that mold. They're going to lose a lot. And we have lost a lot. (Trina: 524)

Instead of relying on "a few checkboxes" and generic interview questions, it was explicitly suggested by both Steven and Trina that employers use skills tests and obscure, out-of-the-box questions to test learning styles and work ethic. Both Trina and Steven felt the traditional ways of recruiting and hiring people excluded a large number of untraditional people that would fill the positions exceptionally well and that this was an injustice they expected superiors to correct.

> Well, what I guess I would expect is, if you have a degree, fine, if that's a legitimate qualification. If you have experience, fine. But there should be some sort of way to mesh that of, you know, they don't have the degree but they have so much experience. Let's at least talk to them. And not throw them out. Because that's very weird. (Steven: 465)

Job description/employment contract. One of the most obvious expectations employees have of their supervisor is a written job description and/or employment contract. Employees expect to be presented with a detailed list of duties, responsibilities and expectations, and they expect the job they actually end up doing to fall very closely in-line with that job description. Participants felt that clearly defined job descriptions were a vital and powerful piece of documentation when it came to confronting perceptions of injustice in the workplace. An employment contract outlined expectations in a way that employees were able to guide their performance and behavior during times of injustice and felt supported and justified in their actions when they could understand and show others as well as themselves what exactly their position entailed. "Just first of all, tell me what my job is" (Meghan, 155). Part of the job description is knowing exactly where in the organizational hierarchy you fall as an employee. This also provides guidance and justification during times of perceived in justice. Participants expressed the importance of this especially when in conflict with coworkers. Job descriptions can help sort out who is responsible for what, which helps mitigate competition and fighting. The importance of a concrete job description was explained best by Nancy.

> And when I interviewed for the job, one of the biggest mistakes that I made, was accepting that job before I had a job description. Because they hadn't formalized it yet. When I accepted the job, sat in that chair. I was given a flat of paper this

> big. And I looked down at it, and they said 'fill the building.' And I looked at them and I said, 'this thing opens in a couple months.' 'Yep. Order furniture.' 'For like, what?' 'The entire building.' None of the furniture had been ordered yet. So here's me, coming into this position thinking patient flow, finance, revenue, productivity, efficiency, quality, and I'm given, the very first project I'm given is to buy furniture for this place that's opening in two months. So right off the bat was, I was set up to fail. Not me [personally], but whoever was hired into that position was set up for failure. (334 – 335)

Orientation and training. Once employees are provided with a job description, they expect to be trained into the position appropriately. If an employee feels they have received an inadequate amount of training, which is considered an injustice by some, they expect their supervisor to respond with opportunities to fulfill the employee's desired amount and type of training. More often than not, employees are evaluated on their performance, and their ability to do their job well. If an employee is expected to perform in a certain way, they expect their superior will provide them with adequate training to be successful. In order for a fair performance evaluation, employees expect to be trained in and given a proper orientation to the organization and the position. Even the simplest trainings are often overlooked. "To this day I still don't understand how the phones worked" (Jake: 147). Not only is orientation training expected, though. Employees expect to be offered time and resources to continue training annually to keep up with advances in software, technology, and industries. Molly expressed distress when she talked about how she was evaluated based on her ability to run a program she did not know how to use.

> Every new employee has been sent to training, for a particular project. They're not sending me to training. I'm the only one they're not sending to training, but yet they are uhm, basing my performance on the ability to run the program. They told me that I've been there long enough that I should know it. I think it's ageism but I don't know about that. (567)

Fair evaluation of skills. After receiving adequate training for the position one has, employees expect to be evaluated fairly on their skills. Employees expect an objective and fair evaluation of their skills in response to an issue, as opposed to a subjective evaluation based on personal considerations such as personality or grudges. For example, when superiors are approached with a situation of injustice, employees expect to not be punished and put on performance improvement plans if the issue is not the employee's behavior, such as in the case of Spencer. He made a personal decision to approach his superior with information about a coworker who had knowingly installed faulty software in a cancer clinic. Because his superior was personally offended by Spencer's choice to speak up on the issue, Spencer was placed on a performance improvement plan, regardless of the fact that the issue had nothing to do with Spencer's ability to perform his job well. Kiley was frustrated with the fact that her boss was unable to promote her to staff lead, even though the person currently holding the position was underperforming. In situations like this, employees expect that their performance and ability to achieve results should be the deciding factor in questions of promotions and demotions.

In response to a report of a perceived organizational injustice, employees expect to be evaluated on their performance and objective measurables, not how much the boss likes or dislikes them as a person. Almost unanimously participants mentioned that performance evaluations should have little to do with personality or favor, other than the employees ability to

get along with people to fulfill job duties. Participants also expressed their expectation that superiors would appraise their personal skills and employ them appropriately. This means that people did not want to be underutilized and often expected their superior to notice when they were able to handle more responsibility or a more involved position.

> Right when I got there they had put me in, like a receptionist role, because they really didn't know what they were going to do with me. And they, I, I think part of it was they didn't know my skill set. (Susan: 394)

Resources. Employees expect to be provided with adequate resources to do their job successfully. Lack of resources necessary to do ones job is considered by many as an injustice. While these resources could include orientation and training, they go way beyond to include things as rudimentary as pencil and paper, to things as complex as adequate software and support staff. When employees approach superiors with perceptions of injustice, they expect their superior will provide them the tools to resolve the situation appropriately. Molly and Shelly, former coworkers in a hospital billing department talked about how they were provided no material resources to do their job.

> I mean that would be our birthday gifts to each other, is "hey! Here's like 17 notebooks and some really cool pens." But we bought all of our own office supplies. To do our own job. To do our job. (Molly: 610)
>
> I went to my new job that I currently still have and there was supplies on my desk. Like, "Welcome Shelly, here's a stapler, a ruler, pens, and if you need anything else go to the secretary, she'll order whatever you want." And I went "what? This is real?" (Shelly: 611)

Laura discussed the fact that her employer was getting rid of a vital piece of software for her infection control report in the hospital because it was too expensive.

> So I had, you know, talked with Joan about it, whatever, and then I was working with CIS, one of the programmers in CIS to start, you know, having him write programs to get some of these reports out. Because it was so laborious to go in, and then to not have, you know, something to punch this data into to generate these reports and graphs and everything. I finally just gave up and realized I'd probably just have to get my pencil and paper out and do it by hand. (Laura: 221)

Opportunity to improve. While one of the components of open communication was "address issues," in response to a report of organizational injustice, employees expect superiors to go one step beyond open communication and give employees an opportunity to fix the problem once it has been discussed. Participants mentioned that in conversations regarding issues, employees expect the superior to work with them to come to a consensus on how the situation will move forward and what needs to be accomplished in order to achieve adequate improvement. Employees want their superior's assistance to fix unjust situations. This also ties into the sub-expectation of feedback. Nancy talks about how she was never given a chance to fix the issue with her performance, because she was not provided adequate feedback.

> I think the worst thing is, I was never given an evaluation that was poor. I was never told "fix this." I was never told "you're poor at this." I was never told I did something wrong. So why am I gone? (364)

Employees expect the chance to tell their side of the story and attempt to explain themselves and provide their rationale to defend themselves. If it is decided that a change must

be made, the employee expects to work with the superior to develop a clear-cut way to make that happen.

Meetings with supervisor. In order to remain consistent on all these performance assistance tactics, employees expect to meet regularly with their superior. Particularly after they report a perception of organizational injustice, they desire to keep those lines of communication open and expect that their superior will provide them consistent opportunities to meet. One of the best illustrations of the importance of regular meetings on morale came from Nancy.

> I had expectations. I had, I had a way of thinking that made me believe I would be successful if I followed this plan. And one of those pieces to that plan is meeting on a monthly basis, minimum, with the person that I'm report to. (343)
>
> I requested meetings with her. And she, I can remember at one point telling this medical director, she's cancelled or not shown up for five out of six meetings. She would often times blow me off. Often times call me two minutes before and say "ahh, I can't meet! I've got something else that came up." But she wouldn't, she wouldn't agree with rescheduling. It was a "we'll meet next month." I'd say, "I'll send you a reschedule for that." And she said, "no, let's just keep it, uhm, on the monthly basis, next month again. Unless there's something extreme that you need to tell me about." I felt lonely. Left alone. I felt, uhm, disregarded, unimportant, uhm, like a burden. (Nancy: 345-346)

Employees share a common mindset on what types of professional support and performance assistance are expected in the workplace. Employees expect that their superior will provide them opportunities to succeed, and give them access to the tools and resources necessary to do that. Often, the lack of tools, support or resources to

successfully fulfill job duties leads to employee perceptions of injustice. They want to be trusted that they are capable to fulfill the expectations of the job they were hired to do, and they expect their superior will help them do so.

Expectation Three: A Professional Character. The third and final expectation identified by participants was that, when a perception of injustice is reported, the superior responds in a way that displays good leadership, perpetuates a supportive environment, and models appropriate behavior for the workplace. The list of professional traits employees desire to see in their superior after a report of a perception of injustice is not as well differentiated as the lists in the previous two expectations, however each of the following character traits was mentioned on more than one occasion as an expectation on how a superior should respond to an unjust situation. These traits were mentioned by participants as ways a superior should have responded to the situation of injustice to help placate the employee or not exacerbate the situation.

Flexibility. Participants expect their superior to be flexible. This includes being open to adjust work hours when necessary and appropriate, allowing for employees to work four ten hour days, come in one Saturday a month, or start at 7am, for example. Flexibility also entails being open to new ideas, and being willing to hear an employee out when they have an idea. Because the workplace is filled with many different types of people, those employees expect their superior to be flexible to a certain degree to personal preferences and work-styles, or at least open to entertaining new ideas.

Follow-through. People expect their superior to simply do what she says she will. When making promises, or taking responsibility for a task, employees expect the superior to follow-

through until that task or responsibility is completed. For example, Nancy had a superior who rarely followed-through on what he said he would do.

> The CFO and I were working on something that would pull in more, would capture more revenue. He told me he would do one thing, but he did a different thing. And I got really frustrated with that, so I took it to my lead at the time. (Nancy: 356)

Take responsibility. Employees expect their superior to own up when they make a mistake, as evidenced very well by Susan and Molly. "I expected an apology. You know what, I think that would have gone a long way" (Susan: 412).

> That day, the boss caught me in the hallway, and goes, and she had tears in her eyes, and she goes, "I wish there was something I could say." And I go "how about 'I'm sorry'?" And I walked away. (Molly: 606)

It was noted on by two separate participants that taking responsibility does not automatically equal taking the blame. "What I would have expected from any leader who is in a position with responsibility on their shoulders is to accept that very responsibility" (Spencer: 59). A leader can, and should, accept responsibility and attempt to do something about the situation, but that does not mean they automatically receive the blame.

Hold others accountable. Similar to accepting their own personal responsibility in situations, employees expect superiors to hold others accountable to their responsibilities. This expectation was mentioned by more than half the participants, and often discussed at length. A professional superior is expected to hold subordinates accountable to fulfilling their job duties, and provide appropriate consequences if those responsibilities are left unfulfilled. People expect their coworkers to fulfill their job duties. "I still think professional behavior comes down to

fulfilling the needs of your, fulfilling the job duties. And doing so in a way that does not either offend, doesn't disgruntle, or enrage someone you're working with" (Charlie: 554). And when coworkers do not hold up their duties, employees expect the superior to hold them accountable and apply the appropriate consequences, whether that be losing their job, putting them on a performance improvement plan, or simply apologizing and making the situation right.

> I remember telling him, "who is holding people accountable? Who holds the CFO accountable? Who holds the other directors accountable? And what happens if they don't live up to the expectations of the vision and the mission and the values of the organization? Or, even the job description and the expectations of them. Who's holding them accountable?" (Nancy: 357)
>
> And at some point you have to stop making excuses for him. Like, he made a bad decision. And I feel like he was never held responsible for that decision. So. I, I, that, that was the nail in the coffin for me. That was when I was done and I, I lost all respect for my boss at that point. (Meghan: 193)

Teamwork, collaboration. Part of a professional workplace includes teamwork and collaboration, and employees expect that mindset will be enforced. Employees expect to be celebrated when they accomplish goals. They expect credit to be shared among all who help. Employees expect a superior to not pit one against the other, but rather fix issues as a team so collaboration can thrive.

> It because, uhm, a very stressful environment. Uhm, hard to work with others, and stay positive, when you know that they're sabotaging you. And then also knowing that your coworkers that are doing a good job don't feel that they can stand up for

other people, because they're afraid they're going to get sabotaged as well. (Joan: 532)

A very big part of teamwork and collaboration is a lack of favoritism. Favoritism was discussed by many participants and was linked closely to discussions of outside friendships. It was almost unanimously proclaimed that it was okay, and understandable even, for a superior to have friends within the workplace with whom they shared an outside friendship with. However, issues arose when those relationships resulted in favoritism within the workplace, or impacted the way superiors treated individuals.

I would expect her to treat one the same as the other. There would be no favoritism when we're in work hours. If you want to be friends with them outside of work that's your business, I don't care. But when we're working it should all be the same. (Shelly: 593)

Molly and Shelly experienced favoritism resulting from outside friendships at its finest when their boss would reward her close friends in the work group with movie tickets and gift cards, and even hosted a secret pizza party for those select few and funded it with the office budge.

Trust. Employees expected that their superior would trust their ability and give them autonomy to do their job. They felt that they were hired for a reason, and wanted their superior to recognize that and let them do their jobs with no micromanagement. Employees expect their superior to give them the benefit of the doubt, especially when confronted with feelings of injustice. Many participants reported feeling dismissed, and expected their superior to trust they were telling the truth and do a little research on the situation. Employees expect their boss will believe the best in them, and trust they are telling the truth.

> He made me change my dentist! We were new in town, so I started going to a dentist out at the mall. He accused me of going shopping every time I went out there. "I know you're going shopping when you go to the dentist because it's at the mall!" I said "no, it's the only dentist I could get into." So I changed dentists to one downtown. Because he didn't believe me, and he chewed me out. (Erica: 315)

Be nice, show personal concern. Employees expect their superior to show interest and concern in them as a person. Several people reported wanting a personal relationship, akin to friendship with their superior. Happy hours were happily received networking and relationship building opportunities. Employees wanted easy conversation and someone to joke around with, while still respecting the boundaries of a superior/subordinate relationship.

> I look at my principal. And he's a really nice guy. And I get along with him really well. And he's still my boss. And I've seen that a couple times where he has to be my boss first, friend second. Your boss is not your friend. (Charlie: 561)

This desire for a personal connection becomes especially apparent when employees are going through a situation in which they feel they are being treated unfairly. If their superior cares about them as a person, they will inquire as to the person's wellbeing and are more likely to help the employee rectify the situation. Personal concern includes: asking how an employee is doing; asking about an employee's family and children; and showing compassion, civility, and kindness. People expect to not be belittled, criticized or ridiculed by their superior. Laura was in a car accident while on a business trip, which resulted in career-ending, life-altering brain damage. When it was decided that she could no longer fulfill her position at the organization, and

she was settling the lawsuits to cover her expenses, her superiors made her sign a form stating she would never again apply for a position within the organization.

> Then my job is gone. And I had to sign it, you know that's when we settled with work comp. And the form I had to sign said I would never again even apply. See, I mean this is this disrespectful crap. It was not only enough to say that this is a settlement with the hospital. I will not sue the hospital again over this matter. But then they have to put this part in that says that I will never even again apply for a position there. [long pause] See, that is passive aggressive, that is disrespectful, that is just an extra dig. 'You're a piece of shit and we never want you around here again. Because you sued us.' When they should have done the right thing in the first place. [begins to cry] I have never been treated so horribly by an employer in my life. (258)

Vulnerability. Employees expect that the relationship they develop with their boss is a place where they can be vulnerable. In order to achieve maximum success, people feel they need to be able to fail. However, if employees are constantly concerned about losing their job or facing other repercussions, they are unable to be vulnerable and creativity is hampered. People need to feel safe to be open and want to enjoy coming to work, and even have fun while there. Nancy told her superior directly about her need for vulnerability.

> I told him that, 'you know, this office has to be a safe place for me. This office, I have to be able to come in here and have a really good day, and I have to be able to come in here and have a really bad day, and know that I'm going to be supported.' (344)

Molly talked about the personal toll her inability to be vulnerable around her superiors and coworkers took on her body.

> I actually went to work living in fear every single day of when they'd come around, like, you know, I honestly think that's the cause of all my weight gain, because that's when it all happened. Because the, you know, the stress kills you. (588)

Shelly chimed in "we were pretty much in a prison" (588). Joan echoed those sentiments. "It was almost like you'd go sit in your chair and you'd put your head down. That's kind of how I felt. You try not to be around, to be aware of what's going on around you" (584).

Support. Employees expect that their superior will support them, specifically in times when they cannot support themselves or fight their own battles. This includes passing along information to higher-ups of inappropriate or unfair behavior and holding discussions with those executives until a satisfactory conclusion is reached. Participants specifically mentioned expecting support from Human Resources when confronted with the issues the employee was facing. Nancy talked about how her current boss provides great support for her. "She'll give you a second chance. And she'll give you back up, and that support. And she actually says to me, 'I've got your back on this. I've got your back'" (374). Employees see mentoring, advising and advocating for employees as forms of support as well. Support is also shown when superiors speak positive of their employees, and brag them up to other people.

Knowledgeable. Employees expect their boss to be knowledgeable about the organization, the industry and the employee's position. Participants expect their boss to know more than they do, to have more vision and to be more future-oriented. They want the boss to be knowledgeable enough to help them create goals and to assist in achieving them. Jake talked

about losing respect for his boss who did not know as much about the financial industry as Jake did. He had to teach him the jargon and kept up much better in conversations a work, and it was hard for Jake to take his boss seriously when he was so undereducated on the relevant issues. Laura expressed similar frustrations.

> So then I reported to him for a while. And of course I mean, he was totally clueless. He was totally clueless as to what I was doing out there. If I was getting my work done or if I was effective. (219).

Present. It was commonly reported that sub-par superiors were not often present in the workplace. By not being present, it removes the possibility for many of these expectations to be met. Participants had a simple, yet strong expectation that their superior would be around the office. They wanted their boss to be the first one there and the last one to leave. They expected their boss to be available to talk to when issues arose. Superiors that were not around were unable to become knowledgeable on the context and issues surrounding the workforce they were managing, and therefore they were less able to advocate for their workers.

Effort. A little effort seems to go a long way. Employees wanted their superior to show an effort getting to know them. And beyond that, employees interviewed expressed the expectation that their superior would "just do something, anything" about the situation that was plaguing the employee (Susan, 432). Instead of sitting by passively, employees expected the superior to make an effort to get to the root of the issue, and then actually put for effort to fix the issue. This showed the employee that the boss was on his or her side, and that went a long way in easing the negative emotional impact of the situation.

> There are some natural born people who are just, more, it's easier for them to be social or to interact with their people. And for some you can tell it's just kind of

more of a chore. Because they're really introverted and they're very smart, but just don't make a good supervisor. But sometimes you can tell that they are making the effort. And I do appreciate them making the effort! Because I know it's not natural for them to do that. (Erica: 327)

Respect. Employees expected to be treated with respect within the workplace. Professional respect or courtesy expected was identified as speaking kindly and professionally, no yelling, screaming or overreacting. Employees, as discussed earlier expect a calm, rational conversation if something is wrong, and they view this as a sign of respect in addition to assistance in fixing the issue. Participants expect to be shown respect by not being called names or being degraded, especially in front of other people. A few female participants also expressed that a respectful work environment was one in which there were no sexual comments including jokes, passes at employees, comments on physical appearance or clothing choices, and no inappropriate physical contact. Erica and Shelly both commented on the importance of respect in the workplace very poignantly.

I think, if a boss, supervisor can show respect to their employees, no matter what. I mean, even if you were going to sit down and have a talk with the person about some tough subject, to respect them in the process is huge. (Erica: 322)

"If you're in a manager role you should treat everyone fairly. And with respect. And doesn't' it kind of go back to the Golden Rule? Treat others ho you want to be treated" (Shelly: 593).

Personal investment. One expectation that was discussed almost exclusively by employees that worked with remote superiors or had a new superior come in from an outside organization to take over management duties was personal investment. Employees expect that

the new superior will become personally invested in the company and the people employed there. This includes taking time to sit down and get to know the expectations, challenges and joys of employees and positions that will be working together. For superiors that are remote or far removed, it is expected that the send time 'on the front lines' doing the job, so they gain a first-hand knowledge of the employees' experience and perspective. John mentioned this expectation within the first few minutes of his interview. "[The new boss] gets background information from us. And asks our opinion. Doesn't always take it, which is fine" (387).

Personal values. At its most basic, people expect their superior to act in an ethical manner. This includes acting in alignment with personal values such as integrity, authenticity and loyalty in a genuine manner. Jean expected her boss to model this ethical behavior for others in the workplace.

> I do think that if leaders, uhm, set the bar, or set the example, that it's going to trickle down to the people that are under them, and they are going to say, 'you know, this is how he is treating people, that's how I want to treat people. That's how he wants me to treat people.' And, uhm, I think that's, I think that's major. I think that's where it needs to start. (355)

Employees expect that people will be prioritized over money. That stakeholders will be more important to their superior and hold more weight in decision-making processes than the bottom line will. People want to work for and with people that share their personal values. Several participants worked in the healthcare industry and repeated over and over how the patient had to be the center of attention at all times. Employees expected that their bosses would keep organizational politics and personal agendas out of the picture when it came to what is best for the people involved in the situation. "If you barrel it down to its nuts and bolts, every job is

about the people on the receiving end" (Charlie: 554). For example, Joan expressed her disgust at her employer's decision to terminate an employee who had been with the organization for more than 25 years.

> It's uh, somebody that I considered, when Id' see her in meetings she knew her shit, sorry about that, but she worked hard. And uh, you know she'd volunteer to do extra projects. And uh, it just, you know, I think they saw it as she did a good job, but they could replace her with somebody cheaper, and so they made up stuff [to justify firing her]. (332)

Clean resolution. People expect closure and a clean resolution to negative situations in the workplace. Once an issue is address, steps for resolution identified and achieved, people expect that their superior and coworkers will accept the resolution as concrete and move forward without looking back and dwelling on the negativity.

> And then, after it's all said and done, then it needs to be done. And I don't think you need to walk on tip-toes all the time because one incident happened. It should be done and over with and then you move on. (Jean: 295)

People expect to be able to move forward without being pulled back to the resolved situation over and over. Many participants reported feeling bothered by lack of closure.

> And there are so many levels of it that doesn't make sense, and probably never will. Uhm, and that's hard to, there's no closure. And there never will be closure. And it's these people that I was really close with. And, you know, considered almost family, that all of a sudden that just ended abruptly. Like it was really sour and then it just ended. And now they won't even acknowledge me in the elevator or at the bathroom. (Meghan: 199).

Employees want to work for morally sound people. They want to build genuine connections with their superiors and they want to feel that their values line up with the values of those around them. Employees easily identified what they expected their superior should have done, or how their superior should have acted in response to an unjust situation in the workplace. The 21 interviews were filled with hundreds of vivid examples of violated and unfulfilled expectations. These expectations fell neatly into three categories, showing that employees expect open communication, performance assistance and a professional character from their superiors. These findings lead to many interesting implications and practical suggestions for employers, which are discussed at length in the next chapter.

Research Question #2: Communicative Response of Employee

Research question two attempted to uncover insight into how employees react communicatively to perceptions of injustice in the workplace. Analysis of the interviews uncovered three categories of communicative response to an unjust situation and two types of communication that are present in all three categories of communicative response. Additionally, analysis discovered that no matter the category, participants are very selective of who they talk to.

The three categories are immediate, midst of situation, and long term. It is difficult to determine definite boundaries to the three categories of communicative response due to the fact that each person experienced drastically different circumstances and situations. However, there seemed to be a few generally followed timeframes. Immediate is considered as any response directly following the situation of injustice. This can be anywhere from mere seconds after the perceived injustice, up to a day or two following the development of the injustice perception.

The midst of the situation is considered as any time frame following the immediate reaction. The midst of the situation can last anywhere from a few days all the way to several years. Long term is considered as any communicative or behavioral impact that follows the attempted resolution. This can either occur once an employee leaves the situation or organization, or once the employee comes to terms with "the way things are" and feels that this situation is a new reality and will not change. The two types of communication reported are passive and direct. This section will discuss the two types of communication in relation to in the three categories of communicative response.

Passive Communication. Passive communication is any communication that that does not directly attempt to alter or impact the situation in question. Most passive communication was directed to coworkers who could not or would not do anything about the situation, spouses, family, and a counselor.

Immediate. There are two characteristics of immediate, passive communication reported by participants: talk to people other than those involved, and shut down or stop communication. When a situation was deemed unjust, or violated expectations of the employee, participants reported they reached out to significant others and coworkers who were unable or unwilling to do anything about the situation as recipients of passive communication. Participants would vent negative feelings, search for advice or solutions, attempt to get an outside perspective to make sense of the often confusion violation of expectations, or rationalize the behavior.

Sometimes in conjunction with, and sometimes instead of venting to uninvolved coworkers or spouses, employees would shut down or stop communication all together in the workplace. Employees reported feeling they needed time to process the situation personally, or they naturally had a non-confrontational personality and felt it was out of their character to

approach anyone about the situation, as in the case of John. “I would have needed a Xanax to go talk to him directly about it” (389). Participants also expressed caution at their initial reaction and often chose passive communication over direct because they we afraid of the potential repercussions of speaking up, such as losing one’s job, retribution from coworkers or supervisors, being ostracized, or developing a negative reputation like tattle-tale. Diane, Molly, and Joan all expressed these fears. “You have to be very careful in how you respond. Because you still have to work there” (Diane: 376). “What could I do? I didn’t do anything because I was afraid she would fire me” (Molly: 578).

> I guess I kind of felt like if I’ve already opened my mouth once and caused this much problem, maybe if I say anything more it will become even more of a problem. And this particular boss would make your life, whenever somebody complained to HR he would find out about it and then he would make that person’s life difficult. (Joan: 533)

Midst of Situation. Passive communication in the midst of an unfair situation was a bit different than immediate passive communication. When participants shut down and stopped communicating it was for different reasons. This communication sounded like “what else are you going to do about it?” After enough attempts to communicate directly and changed the situation, some participants adopted this passive communication tactic in the midst of the situation because they were seeing no results with direct communication. Participants used this communication tactic as an attempt to get through the situation, as mentioned by Jake and Meghan. “It’s like, no you just make it work. So at the first sign of adversity you don’t just quit the job. No, either make it work, address it, or I guess turn a blind eye” (Jake: 142). “I grew up with all boys, and I grew up, you know, with the tough mentality of ‘grin and bear it’” (Meghan: 171). Participants

also discussed hitting a metaphorical wall and not being able to talk about the injustice any longer.

> You know I got to the point where, once it was settled and everything, it was like all [talking] did was continue to make me feel crappy. I talked about it to a certain point, and uhm, talking about it, and then feeling all those negative emotions all the time, was really draining. And so yeah, I got to a point where I had to, basically I had to forgive. (Laura: 270)

When participants did talk passively in the midst of the situation, it was often passive-aggressively directed towards the antagonistic person in the situation. This communication is not intended to change the situation at all, but is rather an attempt to "get back at" or bother the other person, such as in the case of Susan who was having issues with a competitive and aggressive coworker.

> Well this is what I do. When she throws stuff on my desk, I simply pick it up and put it back on her desk and say 'oops, you missed your desk!' And if she says 'no I meant to do that.' I say 'well, you know what. I don't have time to do this, so you'll need to take care of this.' You know? And if she pointed out a mistake to me, I thanked her. Because it really bugs her! Yeah, I think it really bothers her. I get a little enjoyment from that. (417)

Participants also spoke with people who were not directly involved in the situation. This includes the earlier mentioned audiences of coworkers who could not or would not do anything about the situation, spouses, family, and/or a counselor. These conversations consisted often of ranting and venting, where participants felt they had to get the feelings out to someone. "I needed

to get it out. Because that stuff rots in you" (Erica: 320). Take Charlie and his coworker, for instance.

> Oh we just had venting sessions. Like, that was during the days when I smoked, because I worked at a bar. And, so we would go outside, leave her behind the bar, you know, because every now and then we go, my coworker and I, one of us would go in when the other one was working and then we would take a smoke break and we would go outside and we would just vent. And there were a few customers that we would vent to as well. (548)

Long Term. In the long term, participants often learn to not bring up issues with superiors. Many of the participants had received too much emotional trauma and personal and professional retribution that they felt it was not worth it in the future, in the same organization or in others.

> You become one of those people that are, become quiet. Yeah. You're just very careful of what you, what you say and how, you know, even if you're just joking around, are they going to take it in the wrong way, you know? So you feel like you're on guard all the time. (Jean: 296)

As Joan said about her new job, "I keep my mouth shut" (534). Participants reported feeling incredibly paranoid of what would happen if they spoke up and were very preoccupied with stress about saying the wrong thing or causing more issues. "I don't talk to people about that stuff. There's definite boundaries that I draw with my now boss" (Meghan: 195). Some employees eventually could not stay in that particular workplace any longer and quit, ceasing all communication with people involved.

The conversations with uninvolved others often turned away from ranting and venting and more to sense-making, rationalization and perspective-gaining. People would attempt to find answers or closure to the situation through conversations with loved ones, people from the workplace who had insight into the situation, or professional counselors who could provide higher-level help with long-term processing of the situations.

Direct Communication. Direct communication is defined by the researcher as any communication that explicitly attempts to create change in the situation one feels is unfair. A majority of the direct communication is aimed at potential problems solvers. These are individuals, typically involved in the situation or the organization who have the ability to do something about the injustice. Direct communication seemed less varied and common than passive communication with the exception of times when the participant felt they were speaking up on behalf of someone else. For instance, Spencer, when he realized that his superior's mistake would result in cancer patients having to wait to receive treatment spoke up aggressively and immediately. However, when he felt he was receiving retribution from those same superiors he was much more hesitant to speak up on behalf of himself to stop the unjust behavior.

Immediate. Immediately upon perception of an unjust situation, an employee who chooses to communicate directly about it attempts either to problem solve right away, or talks back to the antagonistic other. If attempting to problem solve, the participant approaches a potential problem solver with the situation. This could include the antagonistic other him or herself, human resources, a legal team or the superior. These conversations were often less emotionally charged, and more results-oriented with a focus on creating a solution for the issue. Nancy addressed the issue of lack of support immediately with her superior.

> I brought it to his attention, and I told him, "I feel like," I didn't come to him in a way that wanted him, wanted him to think of me as a burden. So I said something to the effect of, "you are a very busy person. This position is extremely busy. Uhm, I get that, however I don't feel like I am getting the support that I need from you. And here's what I need." And I laid out two or three different things. (340)

Employees with immediate, direct communication reported talking back and providing verbal resistance in the moment to the person treating them unfairly. Few people had this initial reaction, most of them being so taken aback or confused by the behavior that they chose to process the situation internally before saying anything directly to the other. However, those that did talk back to challenge offensive or unfair behavior or treatment would often find themselves in fairly heated conversations about the appropriateness of a particular comment or action, such as Erica who experience sexist treatment from her male boss.

> And I sat in his office and argued with him until I was blue in the face. And he would not see it any other way than that [… Eventually I said] "Hank, people sometimes don't care for you because you treat people terribly. You say things to people that I wouldn't dream to say to people. You make people feel angry and put-down." (312-314)

Midst of situation. Participants were most likely to employ direct communication in the midst of a situation, after having time to process personally and with friends and family. Often times, those that initially employed passive communication hoping the situation would blow over or solve itself would attempt direct communication because they finally reached a point where they deeply desired a resolution to the situation. This direct communication was often problem-solving attempts with the person responsible for the unjust behavior. Employees would attempt to problem solve with the antagonistic other, using points and perspectives gained from

communication with others up to this point. Participants also reported directly asking for feedback from the antagonistic other on how they could improve their own personal behavior in order to resolve the situation. “I was always looking to become better. [long pause, begins to cry] I wouldn't say, ‘look how terrible that person is! Or look how awful this person is!’ It was ‘how can I get better?’" (Nancy, 369)

Some people would be so frustrated with the situation they would simply give up attempting to respond correctly or nicely, as was the case with Shawn. “In that situation I probably escalated [my communication style]. I probably go, you know, I probably antagonized more by what I was doing. Driven out of ego probably” (95). Others would simply bypass conversations with the antagonistic other and go above their heads to a higher level boss, including human resources and legal teams. Some employees will use industry networks at this point to gather advice on how to proceed, but more often to gather information on related job openings in preparation to leave the organization. Several participants also attempted mediated conversations between themselves and the antagonistic other. They often hoped these conversations would allow an environment where the two people could get to the bottom of the issue and reach a resolution.

Long term. Long term direct communication had less to do with changing the situation the participant went through and had more to do with coming to terms with the situation, but more importantly teaching others the lessons learned in order to help others avoid similar situations. Long term impacts on personal communication included increased question asking and intentionality with communication. Participants reported, in new positions they asked a lot of questions in order to understand expectations as soon as possible. “If you are not clear to me, I’m going to ask. And I won’t only ask once, I’m going to ask at least three times to see if your

answer changes. Because if it changes, then you don't know" (Jake: 156). They also reported being more intentional with communication, including more strategic with sharing personal expectations right off the bat. Participants reported becoming much more explanatory with their communication, leaving less open for interpretation or assumption from others. They make sure they say exactly what they want, need and expect, and they do so much earlier in the employment than previously. They also put more effort into devising a script, almost, when approaching future employers with sensitive issues in order to minimize the potential consequences or retribution.

In order to share personal lessons learned, participants often told their story to other people after the fact. While it was uncomfortable for a lot of the participants to talk about the situation in which they were treated unfairly by others, many of them explicitly stated they tell the story in order for others to learn from it, and hopefully avoid similar pain and situations, such as Meghan.

> But I think it's really important because it unburdens me, as well as, if somebody else can learn from my situation, and I can prevent this from happening to somebody else, I will tell it a million times. From the fricken mountains if that's what gets it heard. (180)

The analysis of the data collected from personal interviews uncovered a large amount of specific information regarding the expectations of employees during times of organizational injustice. The three main responses employees expect from superiors when presented with a perception of injustice and the resulting communicative impacts of those responses and injustice perceptions provide a lot of interesting insight on the previously reviewed literature on organizational injustice and psychological contracts during times

of organizational conflict. These connections and insights will be further developed and explored in the following chapter.

DISCUSSION

This study into workplace expectations and the resulting impact on communication presents several new and interesting insights into the role and impact of psychological contracts in the workplace. The findings of this study presented many communicative impacts that came as a direct result of the way superiors responded to reports of employee issues, further bolstering the validity of previous research into psychological contracts and organizational injustice. Regardless of the fact that today's modern workplace is considerably different than it was in the 1990's and early 2000's when a majority of the original research was conducted, the outcomes are similar. This suggests that although it may seem that the world of work is changing drastically, employees still expect basic, identifiable behavior from their superiors, and they still experience similar negative feelings when their psychological contracts are breached.

This chapter will explore the impact of psychological contracts on expectations employees have of their superiors, as well as the consequences of contract breaches and fulfillment. In addition, the implications of organizational injustice and what that means for the future of healthy organizations will be discussed at length. This chapter also includes an in-depth examination of the communicative impacts of organizational injustice and superior response, and practical implications of the study in the form of guidelines for good leadership. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research as well as limitations of the study.

Employee Expectations

Psychological Contracts. The data collected and analyzed in this study provided compelling insight into the role of psychological contracts in the workplace. Open communication, performance assistance and a professional character were identified as the three universal expectations of employees in response to reports of perceived organizational injustice.

The research presented by Rousseau on the two types of psychological contracts was supported by the results of this study (1989; 2007). Transactional psychological contracts are discussed very little in the psychological contract research and that finding was reinforced through this study. Transactional psychological contracts were addressed only through discussion of job descriptions and negotiation of what responsibilities would fall on the employee and how he or she would be compensated for fulfillment of those responsibilities. The socio-emotional exchanges present in relational psychological contracts were addressed by every other finding in the data. This suggests that management of psychological contracts is a highly emotional process, and not necessarily a process that is often explicitly discussed in the workplace.

When these relational psychological contracts are not adequately managed, it is easy to see in the data the tremendously damaging effects on individuals, relationships, and organizations. Disengagement, reduced productivity, and deviant workplace behavior are just a few examples of negative workplace consequences of psychological contract breach (Robinson, 1996; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). The literature review also identified lower employer trust (Robinson, 1996), decreased job satisfaction (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), lessened organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000), and declined employee performance (Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Marrison, 1995) as well as increased levels of turnover (Turnley & Feldman, 1999) as results of psychological contract breach. Each of these consequences has been thoroughly supported and illustrated throughout the examples used to present the results of immediate, midst of situation and long term passive and direct communication by participants. The research on psychological contracts, and the explanations participants provided in this study, suggest that these negative consequences are specific tactics employees use to control the reciprocity of psychological contracts in the workplace. When they

are not receiving the rewards or recognition they feel their work deserves, they withdraw and increase negative OCB in order to regain equilibrium in the psychological contract between them and their superior. These negative communicative and behavioral impacts are a direct result of superiors not responding in a way the employee sees fit or appropriate.

Injustice in the Workplace. Interactional, distributive and procedural injustice were each represented in the findings of this study; however, interactional and procedural injustice were more commonly reported than distributive injustice. Most commonly reported was interactional injustice. Often, perceptions of interpersonal injustice surfaced in participant stories as a response to a superior's inappropriate or lack of response. Coyle-Shapiro (2002) found that as long as an employee's superior responds in a way that is deemed just, workplace behavior will be relatively unaffected even when injustice is initially perceived. Folger (1993) found that inappropriate supervisor conduct exacerbates unjust situations and leads to dramatically increased negative OCB consequences. These findings are heavily supported by this study, particularly when considering Harlos and Pinder's (1999) eight dimensions of unjust interpersonal interaction. Intimidation, abandonment, inconsistency, degradation, criticism, inaccessibility, surveillance, and manipulation were all mentioned by participants in this study, simply under differing terms. When superiors acted in this way towards employees, the situation in question was exacerbated and that is when negative OCB and communicative impacts began. These findings show the importance of intentional responses to employee perceptions of injustice in the workplace. Many negative OCBs can be avoided if a superior responds quickly and in an appropriate way, outlined by the previously discussed employee expectations.

Procedural injustice was the second most commonly discussed type of organizational injustice by participants. Many participants expressed concern regarding the way resources

allocation decisions were made. Many also reported negative reactions to feeling left out of the decision-making process. This was best evidenced by John who stated his new supervisor was undoubtedly better than his previous supervisor because he asked the team's opinion and gathered the team's point of view and wisdom before making decisions. John reported that he did not care if the superior took his idea, but it was simply enough to be asked. This fully supports Thibaut and Walker's (1975) claims that process control and outcome control have an impact of perceptions of procedural injustice. Tepper et al. (2006) found that when superiors act disrespectfully, and employees do not feel heard during times of organizational decision making, issues arise. These results show the importance of employee involvement in decision making processes within the organization. Just as quick and appropriate responses reduce negative OCB in times of interpersonal injustice, negative OCB can be reduced in times of procedural injustice if the organization seeks out employee points of view and opinions in a way that makes employees feel heard, valued and respected.

A few participants, particularly Molly and Shelly, discussed the unfairness of distribution of rewards and resources in the workplace. Several participants reported not minding if superiors had outside friendships with coworkers, but that any allocation of resources or rewards should be transparent and objectively equivalent. Just as Aristotle conceptualized justice as equivalent distribution of resources based on personal contribution and effort, participants in this study demanded superiors provide resources and rewards only to those employees who have earned them (Chroust & Osborn, 1942; Cook & Emerson, 1978). Distribution of rewards and punishments based on personal favor was seen as severely unjust and was discussed at length in the professional behavior section of the results. These results express the importance of superiors remaining honest and transparent with decision making processes. The communicative impact of

perceptions of distributive injustice resulted in employees withdrawing, shutting down and talking negatively about the organization and his or her superior. The communicative impacts of these psychological contract breaches and perceptions of organizational injustice are illuminated even further in the following section.

Communicative Impacts

Communication is impacted by perceptions of injustice in the workplace and employer response to reported injustice perceptions. Participants often face situational or contractual limits on how they can respond behaviorally to the injustice as an employee, such as not showing up for work or sabotaging projects (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). In contrast, however, communication is nearly impossible to control contractually within the workplace, allowing the employee to alter interpersonal conversations and communication tactics at his or her discretion in response to perceived injustices in the workplace much more easily than he or she alters behavior. This research found that employees often rely on adjustments to their communication, both within the workplace and outside of it, to deal with the injustice they experience. The three communicative conflict management strategies of integrative communication, avoidance and distributive communication were evidenced in all three categories of employee response to injustice.

Integrative communication was presented in the literature review as the communicative conflict management strategy utilized in conjunction with both collaborating and compromising conflict styles (Hargie, 2011; Macintosh & Stevens, 2008). Integrative communication was shown time and again in the data collected during this study. Integrative communication tactics include asking questions, inquiring about one's opinion and point of view, keeping the conversation professional and not personal, identifying areas of common ground, listening with an open mind, and communicating freely. These behaviors appeared in the direct communication

found in all three categories of an employee's communicative response. Integrative communication was illustrated by attempts to problem solve both immediately and in the midst of the situation, asking the antagonistic other directly for feedback in the midst of the situation, and increasing question asking and intentionality in future situations long term.

Interestingly enough, while Lakey and Canary (2001) report integrative communication as the communicative conflict management strategy most positively associated with conflict resolution, not a single participant interviewed felt that it adequately resolved the injustice they experienced. However, none of the employees who attempted integrative communication with their superior during a situation of organizational injustice reported receiving integrative communication in response. In fact, integrative communication was discussed much more at length when participants were asked what they expected from their superiors. This suggests that in order for integrative communication to be truly successful, both parties involved in a conflict must be approaching the conversations using integrative communication tactics. It is important to note, however, that this finding may be impacted by the previously mentioned self-selection bias. Each of the stories told by participants was an 'unsuccess' story. In order to fully examine the role and effectiveness of integrative communication, or any type of communication, from participants in times of organizational injustice, it would be imperative to also interview individuals with success stories.

The most frequently reported communicative conflict management strategy was that of avoidance. Avoidance as a communicative conflict management strategy was discussed by almost every participant at one point or another when utilizing the conflict styles of both avoiding and accommodating. Avoidance was reported at length in all three categories of employee communicative response, in the form of shutting down, not talking to superiors or

antagonistic others, and speaking to those not directly involved in the situation, all of which is represented in previous research (Bevan et al., 2007; Rahim & Magner, 1995). As Pruitt and Rubin (1986) found, people tend to avoid conflict or confrontation hoping that the situation will simply fix itself. This was found in all three categories of communicative response, with statements like 'I just kept my head down,' 'I came in, did my work, and tried not to say much,' 'I sat down, shut up, and hoped it would go away.' In support of previous research, none of the participants reported in avoidance leading to a resolution of the perceived injustice (Garant & Carlson, 2012; Sillars, 1980). Instead of leading towards conflict resolution, avoidance on the part of the employee or the supervisor led to a reported increase of frustration and anger (Sillars et al., 2006).

Many participants also used avoidance when they felt they were unable to do anything about a perceived injustice due to the lack of power in their position, as was previously suggested by research (Cai & Fink, 2002; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). While Bobot (2010) suggested there are three reasons people report using an accommodating conflict style - when being generous, when obeying or when yielding – none of the participants reported accommodating due to generosity. Because of the superior-subordinate relationships present in each of the situations reported, nearly each participant remarked feeling stuck, as if they could not do anything to rectify the situation. This complaint stemmed from the participant's lack of power over their boss or coworker and his or her resulting actions, therefore the reported accommodation was an effort to either obey a superior or yield.

The third and final communicative conflict management strategy is distributive communication, which is utilized in the competing conflict style. This aggressive and direct communication style places importance on self over others and attempts to change the other's

mind on a particular issue (Bevan et al., 2007). Negative distributive communication tactics include put-downs, stubbornness, personal attacks, assertive communication and focus on winning, and have a low success rate (Cai & Fink, 2002; Lakey & Canary, 2001; Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997). Distributive communication can be used effectively, however, when individuals use tactics such as requesting and persuading (Sillars, 1980). Few participants used this technique because of the inherent professional, personal and reputational risks associated with it (Garant & Carlson, 2012). However, of the few participants that did report using the distributive communication strategy, no participants reported it being an effective conflict resolution tactic. Distributive communication was talked about most frequently in the context of unjust and unexpected communication employees received from superiors. Demands, complaints, angry statements, threats, harassment, and verbal abuse were all previously established distributive communication tactics that were reportedly used by superiors in this study as well (Johnson & Roloff, 2000). This distributive communication from superiors had a very negative impact on employees.

One particularly interesting discovery from this research was that these communicative impacts rarely seemed to be a result of the originally perceived unjust situation, but rather they were a result of the superior's response when approached with said situation. This finding further enforces the idea that good leadership results in the increase of positive OCB (Asgari et al., 2008; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Praine, 1999; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 1990). The discussion of expectations with participants was unique in that it presented itself quite similarly to a list of guidelines to good leadership. By following the guidelines mentioned in the next section, it is reasonable to expect an increase in positive OCB among employees in most organizations.

Practical Application - Guidelines to Good Leadership

Results suggest participants talked about employee expectations in a prescriptive manner. The expectations employees have of their superiors reads very similarly to a list of good leadership traits. Research has shown that leadership styles can have a positive impact on OCB (MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Praine, 1999; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990). Good leadership results in just treatment of employees (Asgari, Silong, Ahmad & Samah, 2008). When employees are treated well and justly by superiors, it is shown that positive OCB increases (Williams, Pitre & Zainuba, 2002). This link to OCB makes leadership an important factor of any discussion on the results of organizational injustice, as it can directly impact the way participants behave in the workplace. This becomes especially relevant during times of conflict or injustice when OCB is most likely to be impacted or altered.

As previously articulated, employees expect their boss to provide open communication, performance assistance and professional behavior. The level to which employees and supervisors are able to fulfill the expectations of their sides of a psychological contract is directly related to employee behavior, job satisfaction and quality of superior-subordinate relationship (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Irving & Gellatly, 2001; Maguire, 2002; Maguire & Phillips, 2008; Rhoades & Eisenberger, in press; Porter et al., 1998; Rousseau, 1998, 2007). Psychological contract fulfillment is positively associated with a whole host of positive OCB, and in order to achieve psychological contract fulfillment, both the employee and the supervisor must monitor and manage the psychological contract. While the detailed list of expectations can be found earlier in this study, the first step for superiors to monitor and manage psychological contracts within their workplace should be to sit down with employees and have an honest, transparent conversation about expectations.

This conversation should be held separately from any negotiation of the employment contract and should focus on aspects of the relational psychological contract. Mutuality is most effectively achieved through open communication and saliency, which were discussed as expectations of supervisors and begin with healthy communication between individuals in the workplace. As can be seen in the discussion on communicative impacts of superior responses to organizational injustice, it is vitally important for superiors to keep the lines of communication between themselves and employees open, and the more open communication that takes place, the easier it will be for individuals within the workplace to achieve mutuality while monitoring and managing their psychological contracts. This should happen in a number of ways. To be most effective, first and foremost superiors must provide public and private opportunities to come forward with suggestions, opinions, ideas and complaints, both on a regularly scheduled basis as well as spontaneously. This could take the form of an anonymous suggestion box in the break room, monthly email check-ins, and quarterly team meetings with the focus of sharing ideas and complaints in a respectful and authentic way.

In addition to providing opportunities to come forward, superiors must respond to reported perceptions of injustice, and they must do so quickly. As previously discussed, lack of appropriate response on the part of the superior exacerbates even relatively small issues. When superiors fail to respond quickly and in a way that the employee sees fit when presented with an issue, it has been shown by past research as well as this study that employees increase negative workplace behavior and communication as a response. This finding has powerful implications on employer behavior, suggesting that employers have the ability to circumvent a majority of negative workplace behavior by responding in a professional and appropriate manner to reported issues. It is vitally important, therefore, for superiors to place concentrated and intentional focus

on the interpersonal relationships they have with employees. These relationships can be fostered and negative workplace behavior and communication can be eradicated on a large scale if employers make a point to respond quickly and in a kind and helpful way when perceptions of injustice are reported (Folger, 1993).

In response to the research on, as well as participant reports of, procedural injustice, superiors should make a point to gather opinions and perspectives from employees, especially on issues that pertain to them (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Greenberg & Folger, 1983). Employees expect their superior to be transparent and trust their input. When superiors make decisions and big announcements without employee guidance or input, employees begin to feel left out, marginalized, unimportant and forgotten (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). It is important for superiors to make decisions that: involve the opinion and input of those impacted; are congruent to stakeholder and employee values and goals; are consistent, nonpartial and accurate; treat employees with neutrality, trustworthiness and respect (Leventhal, 1980; Tyler, 1989). Participants expressed the importance of employee involvement with phrases like 'he asked my opinion. I did not care if he took it or not, but it was nice he asked.'

While many more prescriptive statements could be pulled from the data collected, when considering the data in terms of conflict styles, communicative conflict management tactics and psychological contract fulfillment, these suggestions emerged as the most basic starting point for any superior desiring to decrease psychological contract breach in the workplace and increase OCB as a result. Some individuals may downplay the validity of employee responses to injustice such as the ones mentioned in this study, claiming participants are just whining or complaining. Due to the nature of the study, and considering the potential self-selection bias, those interviewed may be seen as taking the victim's role. In response to this criticism though, the data suggests

that regardless of outsider opinion on the situation and employee response, employee perception of injustice or inappropriate superior response is employee reality. Employees react based off this reality developed in their mind, and their reality informs their OCB, and the damaging impact of negative OCB has been fully articulated. For this reason, it is vital that superiors attempt to understand their employees in a one-on-one capacity. These findings can create incredible positive impact in organizations if practitioners and superiors use them as a guide to open the lines of communication in the work place and get to know employees. If a superior provides opportunities to sit down with each employee and discuss the minutia of their psychological contract, responds to reports of perceived injustice quickly and in a humane and empathetic way, and allows employees to be part of the decision-making processes in the organization, perceptions of organizational injustice will decrease and positive workplace behavior and relationships will increase.

Future Research and Limitations

The study provides many opportunities for future research. One question that arose with no discernable resolution found in the presented data challenges the way we look at leadership. The questions asked in the interviews specifically focused on organizational injustice, and yet each participant discussed their expectations in terms of leadership. ‘A leader should do this, a leader should act in that way, etc.’ It was easy for participants to identify good leadership traits during times of issue or injustice. However, when asked what made their good supervisor good, participants had a harder time identifying positive leadership. This leads to an interesting consideration: do people in the workplace define leadership in terms of how an individual responds to dysfunctional or unjust situations? This question suggests a direction for future

research with the intent to uncover how leadership is made sense of and defined, particularly in the workplace.

Another interesting consideration that arises from the data involves the relationship between employees expecting their superior to allow them to be vulnerable in the workplace and make mistakes, but to hold others accountable to any mistakes made. These expectations seem very contradictory, and future research should aim to discover any potential links in this relationship. Do employees have two sets of expectations for superior behavior, one regarding themselves and another regarding others in the workplace? How do these sets of expectations compare and contrast, and how are they balanced and negotiated by employees and employers? This consideration of employee balance of expectations could lead one to ask how employees weight these expectations in regards of importance. Are some mistakes made by superiors are okay, while others are more unforgiveable? For instance, do employees put less weight on their expectation of a superior being present than they put on a superior providing adequate resources? If a boss is rarely physically present, is that considered a non-issue as long as the more heavily-weighted expectations are met? This provides a fascinating avenue for future research.

Another question that was raised by the research presented here relates to how the communicative conflict tactics work together. As suggested by this study, integrative communication is only truly successful if both parties are approaching the conversation with the same strategy. If one party is using avoidance or distributive communication this study suggests that attempts at conflict resolution will be unsuccessful. It would be valuable to better understand the way the three conflict management strategies react to each other, especially communicatively to increase the opportunity for successful conflict resolution. The data presented here also suggests there may be a connection between equity sensitivity constructs and preferred conflict

styles. The three equity sensitivities are presented as a way to better understand why people respond differently, and the conflict styles illustrate the different reactions people have to organizational injustice. This connection is worth studying more to see if there are any predictive links between the two concepts. Discovering a predictive link between equity sensitivities and conflict styles may lead to the ability to predict one's reaction to a conflict, and superiors armed with that knowledge are more likely to be proactive about conflict resolution to avoid the negative organizational consequences discussed at length in this study.

Three participants suggested that they were unable to achieve mutuality with an individual in the workplace due to a generation gap and the different values typically associated with those generations. It may be beneficial to compare these findings across different generations to get a more holistic view of any possible deviations in generational values and resulting expectation shifts. Similarly, this research could be revisited with the lens of gender differences, looking for variations in response between men and women. Also, further research should be done into the impact and effect of supervisors utilizing the above-mentioned guidelines for good leadership on situations of organizational injustice. A similar study of employees who have been in a situation where their supervisor handled a reported perception of injustice in a positive and fulfilling way would provide even more insight into how supervisors can lead most effectively and possibly provide more evidence to support the claims found in this study.

One limitation of the present research is the fact that only the employees were interviewed. This study did not attempt to gather the point of view of the superior or antagonistic coworker. Studies which rely on self-reporting always include the risk of a biased representation of the situation. This also provides an opportunity for future research into the superior's

perspective when they are approached by employees claiming to perceive and organizational injustice. Another limitation is that most employees were speaking retrospectively, regarding a situation they were removed from. As time passes it is harder to remember factual representations or the minutia of situations. While this limitation was anticipated and the researcher attempted to limit participants to those currently involved in the situation or those who have been involved in the situation within the last five years, there were a few participants who were removed from the situation they discussed by several years.

Conclusion

Organizational injustice is a pervasive and ever increasing threat to workplace positivity and productivity. Previous research has indicated that perceptions of injustice in the workplace lead to devastatingly negative consequences both personally and professionally. This study examines what exactly employees expect of their superior in response to a report of perceived injustice in the workplace, and how that resulting response as well as the injustice impacts the way people communicate within the organization. Today the workplace is becoming more and more diverse and disconnected each year. Technological advances, increased economic pressures and booming competition for positions makes the, world of work an ever-changing battlefield. To keep up with the demands of the workplace, one must first understand what they are and the impact they have on individuals, and this study laid the groundwork to do just that.

Employees develop psychological contracts that contain values and expectations about behavior in the workplace. This includes the socio-emotional reciprocation of many things, including trust, respect, open communication, honesty, hard work, accountability and appreciation to name a few. When that psychological contract is breached, organizational injustice is perceived. That negative perception was exacerbated by negative or inadequate

superior responses to reports of the injustice. When employees brought an issue to the attention of their superior, they expected a certain set of reactions: open communication, performance assistance, and professional behavior. When employees did not get the desired response from their superior, OCB was impacted in a negative way. This study focused on the communicative impacts.

Participants reported attempting to problem solve, address the issue or the antagonistic other, or ask questions. When this did not work, however, employees pulled away, shut down, and withdrew communicatively within the workplace. None of these responses were reported to help resolve the issue and almost every participant interviewed had quit their job directly as a result of the issue discussed. Due to these findings, it was suggested that superiors make a point to sit down with each employee to verbally negotiate and affirm the psychological contracts and related expectations. Superiors should also be intentional with their response to reports of perceived injustice and respond quickly and kindly. Finally, superiors should aim to keep the lines of communication open and honest at all times. This will help to monitor and manage the psychological contract and can be achieved by asking employees about their opinion on issues pertaining to them.

While this study does present a few limitations, there is a wealth of opportunity for future research into communication in the workplace and appropriate superior response to organizational injustice. This study has many practical implications, and can be used not only by those in academia to further research, but also by those in the business world who desire to be better leaders. It was discovered that employee expectations read like a list of guidelines for good leadership. If superiors study these guidelines and attempt to integrate them into their daily lives in the workplace, it is reasonable to expect OCB to increase dramatically. Perceptions of

injustice do not need to be viewed with such fear and avoidance. This research shows that if employees and superiors make an intentional effort to open the lines of communication in the workplace to monitor and manage psychological contracts, expectations can be openly discussed and negotiated and organizational effectiveness will have few bounds.

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APPENDIX: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

"I would like to start off by thanking you for responding to my request for interviews and taking the time to meet with me today. I am Amanda Breen and I am a Masters student at NDSU in Fargo. I am studying Organizational Communication and I am currently conducting research for my thesis, focusing specifically on communication in the workplace. I have a few questions for you about your work history and I encourage you to speak freely about anything that comes to mind. If at any point you don't want to answer a question, you are absolutely allowed to skip it. You may also terminate the interview at any time for any reason if you feel it necessary. These interviews will be kept entirely confidential and all resulting notes or identifying information – names, organizations, time frames, etc. – will be changed to ensure complete anonymity. I anticipate the interview should last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. Do you have any immediate questions for me? Okay, let's begin."

Interview Questions:

- Why don't we start with you telling me a bit about yourself and the work you do/ your work history?
    - What is the best part of your job?
    - What do you get the most joy out of?
- What other jobs or positions have you held over the years?
    - Did you enjoy these positions?
    - Why did you decide to change jobs?
- So, when you think back over your work history, have you ever felt that you've been treated unfairly? Do you mind telling me about that situation?

- How did you feel?
- Did you attempt to do something to change the situation?

- Tell me a little about your superior's role in this situation.
  - Was your superior involved in the situation?
  - Was your supervisor aware of your feelings about this situation?
    - How did s/he become aware of the situation/your feelings?
    - How did s/he respond when s/he became aware of the situation/your feelings?
    - Did you talk to your superior about the situation/your feelings at any point?
      - If yes: How did that conversation go? What did you say?
      - If no: Why not? Did you talk to anyone about it? Family, friends, coworkers?
  - Was s/he supportive of you?
- What did you expect from your superior during this situation?
  - What did you want him/her to do or say exactly?
- Did you talk about this situation to other people? Coworkers, friends, family?
  - If so: Who specifically did you talk to? Why did you choose to talk to this person? Why did you choose to talk about this situation?
    - What were you hoping to accomplish while talking to others about this situation? Venting or advice-seeking?
    - What kinds of things did you tell him/her?
    - Did you talk to different people differently about the situation?

        - Did communicating with this person help you at all?
    - If not: Why not?
        - Why did you choose to keep the situation or your feelings to yourself? What made you decide to keep it to yourself?
    - How did this situation impact the way you communicated with others in your workplace?
- That wraps up all the questions I have for you today. What else would you like to add about the situation, your supervisor or the way this all affected your worklife?

"I'd like to thank you again for taking the time to meet with me today. And I very greatly appreciate your honesty and willingness to open up to me and be candid about this situation. I know it can often be difficult to talk about these situations and I appreciate it. The goal for my thesis is to identify what exactly people want and expect from their supervisor during these difficult and unfair times. Organizational injustice is an epidemic in the workplace and my goal is to help supervisors become more knowledgeable about how they can help their employees during these times. Your answers today and insight on situations like this will be invaluable to me as I proceed with my research and I look forward to combining your interview with the other 20 or so that I am doing to find ways to help people in the future be less negatively impacted by unfairness and injustice in the workplace. My thesis will be completed and submitted to the NDSU graduate school by the end of August, and if you are interested in seeing a copy of the final product please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I encourage you to keep in contact with me if you have any questions or concerns that come up over the next few weeks or months. Again I appreciate your help today and I am really excited to discover how your insight is going to help

me create knowledge and guidance for supervisors and employees to use in the future. Do you have any final questions, comments or concerns for me? Thank you."