

Retaliation in the Workplace: The Roles of Distributive, Procedural, and Interactional Justice

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The authors investigated the relationship between organizational justice and *organizational retaliation behavior*—adverse reactions to perceived unfairness by disgruntled employees toward their employer—in a sample of 240 manufacturing employees. Distributive, procedural, and interactional justice interacted to predict organizational retaliation behavior. A relation between distributive justice and retaliation was found only when there was low interactional and procedural justice. The 2-way interaction of distributive and procedural justice was observed only at a low level of interactional justice, and the 2-way interaction of distributive and interactional justice was observed only at a low level of procedural justice.

A number of scholars (e.g., Folger, 1987, 1993; Greenberg, 1990b; Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992) have argued that if organizational decisions and managerial actions are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected employees experience feelings of anger, outrage, and resentment. Moreover, unjust treatment can elicit a desire for retribution, and the harmed party experiences a need to punish those blamed for the problem (Sheppard et al., 1992).

Although there is a paucity of research in this area, empirical evidence appears to support this argument (for a review, see Folger, Davison, Dietz, & Robinson, 1996). For example, in a survey of just under 5,000 people employed in three business sectors (retail, manufacturing, and hospitals), Hollinger and Clark (1983) reported that when employees felt exploited by the company, they were more likely to engage in acts against the organization, such as theft, as a mechanism to correct perceptions of injustice. Similarly, Greenberg and Scott (1996) concluded that employee theft was a reaction to under-

payment inequity. DeMore, Fisher, and Baron (1988) reported that vandalism was a form of inequity reduction that began with feelings of unfair treatment by authorities.

The evidence that people want to “get even” for perceived injustices and punish their employer raises questions that are relevant to both researchers and practitioners. Little is known regarding what type of unfairness perceptions predict whether an employee will “punish” the organization. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between organizational justice and retaliation.

Homans (1961), however, proposed that when the individual is less powerful than the source of the perceived injustice (e.g., the boss or the corporation), attempts to restore justice will be largely indirect. Before resorting to direct retaliation (e.g., theft or sabotage), disgruntled employees may engage in more covert retaliation, such as the withdrawal of citizenship behaviors, psychological withdrawal, and resistance behaviors (e.g., Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994). Therefore, rather than focusing attention on violent events that might represent only the “tip of the iceberg” (cf. Folger & Baron, 1996), we examined the numerous subtle and covert forms of retaliation that are not as dramatic but still might have adverse consequences for an organization’s effective functioning.

Theoretical Tools for Understanding Retaliation

In presenting his theory of inequity as a model of reactions to violated norms of distributive justice (the perceived fairness of outcomes received, such as pay), Adams (1965) posed the following questions about the literature extant at that time: “What are the consequences of outcomes being perceived as meeting or not meeting the [distributive] norms of justice? Does a man treated un-

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fairly simply express dissatisfaction? . . . Are there not other consequences of unfair exchanges?" (p. 268). He proposed that people do not simply become dissatisfied with injustice; they tend to react in some way. Thus, violations of distributive justice might increase the desire to punish and impose harmful consequences on a putative wrongdoer.

Adams's research focused on performance as a type of response that was not simply dissatisfaction. Similarly, Organ (1988) looked beyond the satisfaction–performance relationship in reconceptualizing the former (causal) variable as fairness and the latter (effect) variable as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; behavior considered above and beyond the call of duty). Recently, a focus on negative employee behaviors has emerged as a counterpart to the OCB research. Anticitnesship (Youngblood, Trevino, & Favia, 1992) and other negative workplace behaviors have become prevalent in organizational research (e.g., Folger & Baron, 1996; Folger & Skarlicki, in press; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The present study focused on a subset of such negative behaviors, those used to punish the organization and its representatives in response to perceived unfairness, as organizational retaliatory behaviors (ORB). We expected that their frequency would increase in response to perceived injustice. Moreover, we viewed ORB as somewhat analogous to OCB: Just as OCBs are the little things that can be crucial to an organization's survival (Katz & Kahn, 1966), some ORBs may not appear to be as dangerous as more overtly aggressive acts but, in the aggregate, may detract from effective organizational functioning.

Advances in organizational justice research beyond equity theory suggest that individuals define fairness not only in terms of the outcomes received but also in terms of the procedures used to determine one's outcomes, labeled *procedural* justice (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). One form of procedural justice refers to the fairness of a company's formal procedures. Leventhal et al. (1980) suggested that a company's procedures are fair to the degree that the decision-making process demonstrates consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness, and ethicality. In the presence of fair procedures, individuals are more likely to accept the responsibility for their problems than if the procedures are unfair. If the procedures leading to the unwanted outcomes are considered unfair, however, individuals are more likely to respond destructively (Cropanzano & Folger, 1989). The anger and resentment associated with perceptions of unfair procedures may energize individuals to engage in retaliation. A second form of procedural justice focuses on employees' perceptions of the quality of the interpersonal treatment received during the enactment of organizational procedures, commonly

labeled *interactional* justice (Bies, 1986). It includes various actions displaying social sensitivity, such as when supervisors treat employees with respect and dignity (e.g., listening to a subordinate's concerns, providing adequate explanations for decisions, demonstrating empathy for the other person's plight). Mikula, Petrik, and Tanzer (1990) reported that a considerable proportion of perceived injustices did not concern distributional or procedural issues in the narrow sense but instead referred to the manner in which people were treated interpersonally during interactions and encounters.

Both theory and research suggest, however, that rather than identifying what form of injustice leads to retaliation, it is relevant to examine how these forms of justice interact with one another to predict such behaviors. Referent cognitions theory (Folger, 1987, 1993) proposes that people refer to cognitive standards for evaluating certain levels of treatment or rewards based on past events, referent others, and implicit and explicit promises. These standards determine a person's degree of dissatisfaction with a given outcome. Unfavorable outcomes (low distributive justice) that trigger aversive arousal are one element in this two-component theory (cf. Cropanzano & Folger, 1989). The second component of referent cognitions theory is process related, with a focus on the illegitimacy of another person's conduct. Folger (1993) proposed that when considering reactions to perceived mistreatment at work, two factors predict when people will respond most negatively to unfavorable outcomes: (a) the severity of the loss, and (b) the inappropriateness of the conduct by a supervisor or agent of authority. Moreover, Folger (1993) suggested that inappropriate conduct may involve either procedural or interactional injustice.

The predictions of referent cognitions theory have been confirmed in over 40 sets of data from both laboratory and field research (for a review, see Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). The consistent finding is that two factors combine to produce a statistical interaction: (a) ratings of outcomes such as pay (e.g., pay satisfaction or pay fairness) and (b) ratings of managerial practices in terms of procedural or interactional justice.

A question arises from these findings: Do both procedures and interpersonal interactions act in the same fashion—to transform dissatisfaction about unfair outcomes into resentment and retaliation against the organization? Alternatively stated, this question asks whether distributive justice interacts statistically with procedural justice and also, in the same manner, with interactional justice to predict retaliation. Specifically, the nature of these two possible interactions is as follows: Dissatisfaction about unfair outcomes contributes to retaliation only when (a) the procedures are deemed unfair or (b) the interpersonal conduct is insensitive. That is, retaliation against the organization would be predictable from the two-way interac-

tion of distributive and procedural justice, as well as from the two-way interaction of distributive and interactional justice. Both predictions would be consistent with referent cognitions theory.

Guidelines for the statistical analysis of interactions, however, raise yet another issue. Specifically, lower order effects cannot be interpreted accurately in the presence of higher order effects (Aiken & West, 1991). A main effect, for example, is said to be qualified by a statistically significant interaction. Similarly, higher order interactions (e.g., three-way interactions) constrain the interpretations that can be made of lower order interactions (e.g., the subsidiary two-way interactions). To our knowledge, a three-way interaction among the three forms of justice treated as predictors has never been made the explicit focus of effects reported in the research literature on organizational justice.

We argue that grounds for a three-way interaction among the three forms of justice and retaliation can come from considering procedural and interactional justice as substitutes for each other (cf. Bromiley & Cummings, 1993). Imagine a supervisor who is known to be considerate of employees' needs and respectful of their dignity and, in general, is "interpersonally fair" in a variety of ways. As long as this person has such characteristics to at least a moderate degree (i.e., sufficient to ensure fair treatment), then the need for formal procedural safeguards is diminished. Once indications of interactional justice drop below a certain level, however, procedural safeguards become crucial to whether retaliation will be directed against the organization because of unfair outcomes. Similarly, when procedures are deemed unfair, an employee's assessment of a supervisor's interpersonal treatment is likely to predict whether retaliation follows from perceived outcome injustice. That is, the association between outcome fairness and retaliation (as perceptions of unfair outcomes grow stronger, instances that appear retaliatory become more frequent) makes the most sense primarily under specific circumstances involving the combined impact of both nonoutcome factors. In particular, the relationship between outcome unfairness and retaliation is strongest when low interactional justice is not offset by high procedural justice or when low procedural justice is not offset by high interactional justice—that is, when both interactional justice and procedural justice are low.

The logic of arguing that procedural and interactional justice function as substitutes for each other with respect to employee retaliation suggests several hypotheses. First, distributive and procedural justice should interact to predict retaliatory behavior. Second, distributive and interactional justice should also interact to predict retaliation.

Finally, the three-way interaction should also be significant. The shape of the three-way interaction follows from our argument regarding the interchangeability of

procedural and interactional justice as predictors of retaliation. This pattern can also be described in terms of two additional hypotheses. The third hypothesis is that only at a low level of interactional justice does procedural justice moderate the extent to which variations in distributive justice predict whether retaliation against the organization occurs. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis is that only at a low level of procedural justice does interactional justice moderate the relationship between distributive justice and retaliatory behavior.

Methodological Tools for Measuring Retaliation

As a low-base-rate phenomenon, the rarity of individual forms of retaliation such as theft or sabotage makes a meaningful test of antecedents difficult to conduct. Moreover, these types of isolated behaviors typically have low correlations with general attitude measures and thus limit the ability to predict and manage such behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As a useful step toward understanding a person's response to unfairness, in the present study a composite measure was developed to operationalize our ORB construct. Specifically, subject matter experts (i.e., workers from the plant floor) identified retaliatory behaviors using the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). A composite approach was taken because studying clusters of behaviors provides more reliable and valid measures of the underlying theoretical constructs than do individual behaviors (Fisher & Locke, 1992). In addition, individuals may be reluctant to self-report deviant behavior due to the potential for reprimand (Murphy, 1993). Peer reports have been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of a person's behavior (McEvoy & Buller, 1987). Thus, the present study used peer assessments of ORB.

Method

Participants

The participants were 240 first-line employees of a nonunion, privately owned manufacturing plant in the south central United States. The organization did not have a history of worker unrest. Participants worked on one of three 8-hr shifts: day, afternoon, or night. Usable responses were received from 167 (70%) of the participants, who were evenly spread across the three shifts. Women constituted 48.7% of the group. The average respondent was 30.7 years old ($SD = 7.3$), had a high school diploma, and had worked for the company for 3.8 years ($SD = 3.5$).

Measures

Distributive justice. We measured distributive justice with a four-item scale that asked participants about their perceptions of the pay received (e.g., "I believe that I am being rewarded fairly here at work" or "I believe that the pay I receive is

fair"). Pay fairness was the target of our measure because (a) scholars (e.g., Greenberg, 1996) advocate the use of specific fairness measures to reduce the unsystematic variance in justice measures, (b) pay was a relevant outcome to all employees in this study, and (c) pay as a target of distributive justice perceptions is common in the organizational justice literature. The response scale for this and other justice measures was a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Procedural justice. We measured procedural justice with an eight-item scale developed by Folger and Konovsky (1989). The scale focuses on six rules of procedural justice developed by Leventhal (1980), namely, the degree to which a company's formal procedures demonstrate consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness, and ethicality (e.g., "Does your company have procedures that ensure information used for making decisions is accurate?" or "Does your company have procedures that allow employees the chance to have their say and express concerns regarding company business?").

Interactional justice. We measured interactional justice with a nine-item, 5-point Likert-type scale used in previous research (e.g., Moorman, 1991). The items tapped whether procedures were enacted properly (e.g., "Does your supervisor consider your viewpoint when making decisions?" or "Does your supervisor listen to your personal concerns?") and the respondents' observations of interpersonal treatment received from their supervisors (Tyler & Bies, 1989; e.g., "Does your supervisor give you an explanation for decisions?" or "Does your supervisor treat you with dignity and respect?").

Organizational retaliatory behavior. We measured ORB by having peers rate their coworkers by means of a behavioral observation scale (Latham & Wexley, 1994) developed for this study. We developed the behavioral observation scale by first asking two independent groups of subject matter experts, consisting of seven members each, to identify behaviors that defined retaliatory behavior observed in their organization. Subject matter experts were employees who worked on the shop floor.

The critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) was used to define ORB because it facilitates the development of a content-valid measure of a person's behavior (Levine, Ash, Hall, & Sistrunk, 1983). Before being asked for critical incidents, subject matter experts were given the following description of ORB:

Research suggests that when people perceive that they have been treated unfairly at work, they tend to find ways to "strike back" and somehow even the score. This retaliation may be direct or indirect and may be focused toward the organization or someone within the organization.

Subject matter experts were asked to provide examples of ORB that they had observed over the past 6–12 months. Specifically they were asked (a) what it was that the person did that was retaliatory and (b) why they considered this behavior to be an example of retaliation. Each subject matter expert contributed a maximum of 5 incidents. A total of 27 separate incidents was generated by the two groups. The number of incidents was then reduced by consensus based on the criterion that each incident must be readily observable by one's coworker. Seventeen incidents were common to the two groups of subject matter experts. These 17 incidents were then rewritten by the

researchers into the form of a behavioral observation scale. The behavioral observation scale used a 5-point Likert-type scale that asked the raters to indicate the frequency that they observed the appraisee engage in the behavior over the past month. The scale ranged from 1 (*never over the past month*) to 5 (*6 or more times over the past month*). Participants who served as subject matter experts did not take part further in the study.

Procedures

Questionnaires were administered during company time and were returned to the researchers in sealed envelopes. Peers were randomly assigned within their work shift to assess one another's ORB using the behavioral observation scale. Care was taken to increase the likelihood that the peers were in a position to observe and have knowledge of their coworker's behavior. Peers were instructed to report the occurrence of these behaviors and to leave blank any items in which they had no opportunity to observe the coworker. All evaluators were assured confidentiality regarding their responses and were informed that their ratings would be used for research purposes only.

Results

We conducted exploratory factor analysis, with varimax rotation, on the responses to the 17-item peer ratings to identify the latent variables underlying ORB. An examination of the scree plot and eigenvalues revealed that one factor was the most succinct way to describe the covariance structure. Factor loadings for a single-factor solution, means, and standard deviations of the items are given in Table 1. The single-item factor accounted for 55.7% of the variance in the ORB measure. Measures of justice and ORB were calculated as the average of the multi-item scales. Table 2 contains the variables' means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities.

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. The main effects and second-order and third-order interaction terms were entered as predictors in three steps into the regression equation. Table 3 shows a significant three-way interaction among distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, $F(1, 117) = 7.78, p < .01$, predicting ORB. The nature of the interaction was probed following procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991). The results are plotted in Figures 1 and 2. As shown in Table 4, the simple slope was significant, $t(118) = -2.48, p < .01$, only when both procedural justice and interactional justice were low. No relationship between distributive justice and ORB existed when either procedural justice, $F(1, 118) = 1.2, p > .05$, or interactional justice, $F(1, 118) = 0.23, p > .05$, was high.

As Table 3 shows, the two-way interaction terms were also significant for both the distributive–procedural justice combination, $F(1, 118) = 5.29, p < .05$, and the distributive–interactional justice combination, $F(1, 118) = 10.82, p < .001$. Although this was consistent with our

Table 1
Factor Loadings, Means, and Standard Deviations of Organizational Retaliatory Behavior

Item	Factor loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
On purpose, damaged equipment or work process	.71	1.58	1.05
Took supplies home without permission	.68	1.38	0.89
Wasted company materials	.72	1.23	0.74
Called in sick when not ill	.71	1.60	0.99
Spoke poorly about the company to others	.54	1.54	1.07
Refused to work weekends or overtime when asked	.56	1.41	0.92
Left a mess unnecessarily (did not clean up)	.55	1.21	0.76
Disobeyed a supervisor's instructions	.60	1.79	1.19
"Talked back" to his or her boss	.53	1.19	0.96
Gossiped about his or her boss	.44	1.82	1.21
Spread rumors about coworkers	.47	1.65	1.13
Gave a coworker a "silent treatment"	.42	1.56	1.02
Failed to give coworker required information	.45	1.63	0.96
Tried to look busy while wasting time	.48	1.46	0.94
Took an extended coffee or lunch break	.48	1.40	0.82
Intentionally worked slower	.47	1.63	1.00
Spent time on personal matters while at work	.58	1.40	0.83

predictions, the significance of the two-way interactions was rendered moot by the presence of the three-way interaction. Our predicting the two-way interaction made sense in the light of prior findings, particularly in case the three-way interaction had not been significant. We report them here for completeness.

Discussion

Previous studies have investigated the relationships among fairness and isolated behaviors such as theft (Greenberg, 1990a) and vandalism (e.g., DeMore et al., 1988) that typically have low correlations with attitude measures and thus limit our ability to predict such behaviors. These low correlations are frequently caused by large amounts of unique variance associated with highly specific and narrowly targeted forms of workplace behaviors that have adverse organizational effects. This is the first study to investigate the workplace fairness-behavior link using a composite of behaviors designed specifically with a focus on getting even (cf. Bies & Tripp, 1995).

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. DJ	2.59	0.93	(.86)			
2. PJ	3.27	0.71	.60	(.88)		
3. IJ	3.50	0.83	.43	.69	(.94)	
4. ORB	1.53	0.73	-.44	-.53	-.54	(.97)

Note. *N* = 167. Internal consistency reliabilities are given along the diagonal in parentheses. All correlations are significant at $p < .01$. DJ = distributive justice; PJ = procedural justice; IJ = interactional justice; ORB = organizational retaliation behavior.

An encouraging aspect of the present study that extends beyond previous research is that the relationship between interactional justice and retaliatory behavior was examined separately from the perceived fairness of both outcomes received and the perceptions of procedural justice. The present study found that ORB was predicted by the three-way interaction among distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. The relation between distributive justice and ORB was significant only when there was low procedural and interactional justice. Specifically, the results show that at high levels of procedural justice, the two-way interaction of distributive and interactional justice was not significant. This result suggests that reasonably fair procedures moderate an individual's retaliatory tendencies that would otherwise be maximized by the combination of having low levels of both distributive and interactional justice.

Similarly, at high levels of interactional justice, the two-way interaction of distributive and procedural justice was not significant. This result implies that when supervisors show adequate sensitivity and concern toward employees, treating them with dignity and respect, those employees seem somewhat willing to tolerate the combination of an unfair pay distribution and unfair procedures that would otherwise maximally contribute to retaliatory tendencies. This finding is consistent with Levinson (1965), who argued that a supervisor personifies the organization for an employee; being able to count on the goodwill and well-meaning intentions of a supervisor (perceived interactional justice) makes up for unfavorable procedures combined with the unfairness of a particular outcome.

In summary, these results suggest that procedural and interactional justice are capable of functioning as substi-

Table 3
 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Procedural and Interactional Justice
 Predicting Organizational Retaliation Behavior

Variable	B	SE B	β	ΔR^2
Step 1: Main effects				
Distributive justice (DJ)	-3.31	1.05	-3.73***	.03*
Procedural justice (PJ)	-2.58	0.71	-2.38**	.01
Interactional justice (IJ)	-2.98	0.56	-5.23***	.04*
Step 2: Two-way interactions				
Interaction of PJ \times IJ	0.72	0.16	4.32***	.03**
Interaction of DJ \times PJ	0.76	0.33	4.05*	.00
Step 3: Three-way interactions				
Interaction of DJ \times PJ \times IJ	-0.21	0.07	-5.55**	.03**
Total ΔR^2				.68**

Note. $N = 167$. ΔR^2 is the incremental variance explained by each predictor after the other predictors have been entered into the equation within each step. $R^2 = .39$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .26$ for Step 2; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 3 ($ps < .01$).

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

tutes for each other. Distributive and interactional justice interacted only at low levels of procedural justice, which suggests that unfair procedures can set the stage for an increase in the retaliation for unfair outcomes, particularly in the presence of low interpersonal justice. The two-way interaction between outcome and process was significant only at a low level of interactional justice, which suggests that cues about interpersonal insensitivity provide unique information to individuals when deciding whether to get even for low outcomes, thereby punishing an organization perceived blameworthy because of injustice. These results also suggest that a statistical model allowing only for the test of main effects and two-way interactions (Distributive Justice \times Procedural Justice or Distributive Justice \times Interactional Justice) might run the risk of being misspecified.

Although we know of no outstanding characteristic of this organization that might make these findings idiosyncratic, results from a single organization should always be interpreted with caution regarding their generalizability. In addition, this study did not attempt to develop or use a universally applicable scale that could serve to measure retaliatory behavior in all organizations. The exact form that retaliation takes may vary according to the nature of, among other things, the specific opportunities for retaliation available in a given context. We took steps to ensure precisely this degree of specificity by deriving our items from discussions with employees at the research site. We feel that content validity as well as construct validity was enhanced by this approach, although retaliatory intentions involve an unobservable mental state that is in principle difficult to verify conclusively. Because we did not impose on our respondents a preconceived notion of what specific actions "getting even with the organization" might mean, we were able to uncover a variety of subtle responses to

perceived injustice that constitute the behavioral repertoire of employees at this company.

A problematic aspect of referring to this behavior as *retaliation* is that it involves intent, which can never be observed. Moreover, many of these behaviors can occur for reasons other than perceived unfairness. Nonetheless, our measure of retaliation showed associations with perceptions of unfairness in predictable ways (cf. Folger & Skarlicki, in press).

Although *retaliation* thus remains our preferred label, these behaviors remain open for alternative interpretation. For example, our measures show similarities with deviant workplace behaviors discussed by Robinson and Bennett (1995). We prefer to use the term *retaliation*, however, for two reasons. First, we think *deviant behavior* has more of a pejorative connotation than does *retaliation*. *Deviant behavior* presumes wrongful and inherently negative conduct on the part of the employee. Some managers and companies, however, might act unfairly toward employees, which might make the retaliation more legitimate than deviant. Just as conflict can sometimes be used constructively for change, legitimate retaliation under some circumstances might provoke needed organizational changes and, therefore, would qualify as more constructive than some instances of similar behavior exhibiting mere deviance. Second, labeling behavior as *deviant* may also tend to imply an attribution to the respondent's disposition, whereas labeling it as *retaliatory* can invite consideration of situational factors.

Others might argue, on the other hand, that *retaliation* has more of a tendency than does *deviance* to imply behaviors with greater potential for severe consequences and that many of our scale items do not seem severely negative. Actions are not less retaliatory because they are subtle and nuanced, however, and we deliberately used our

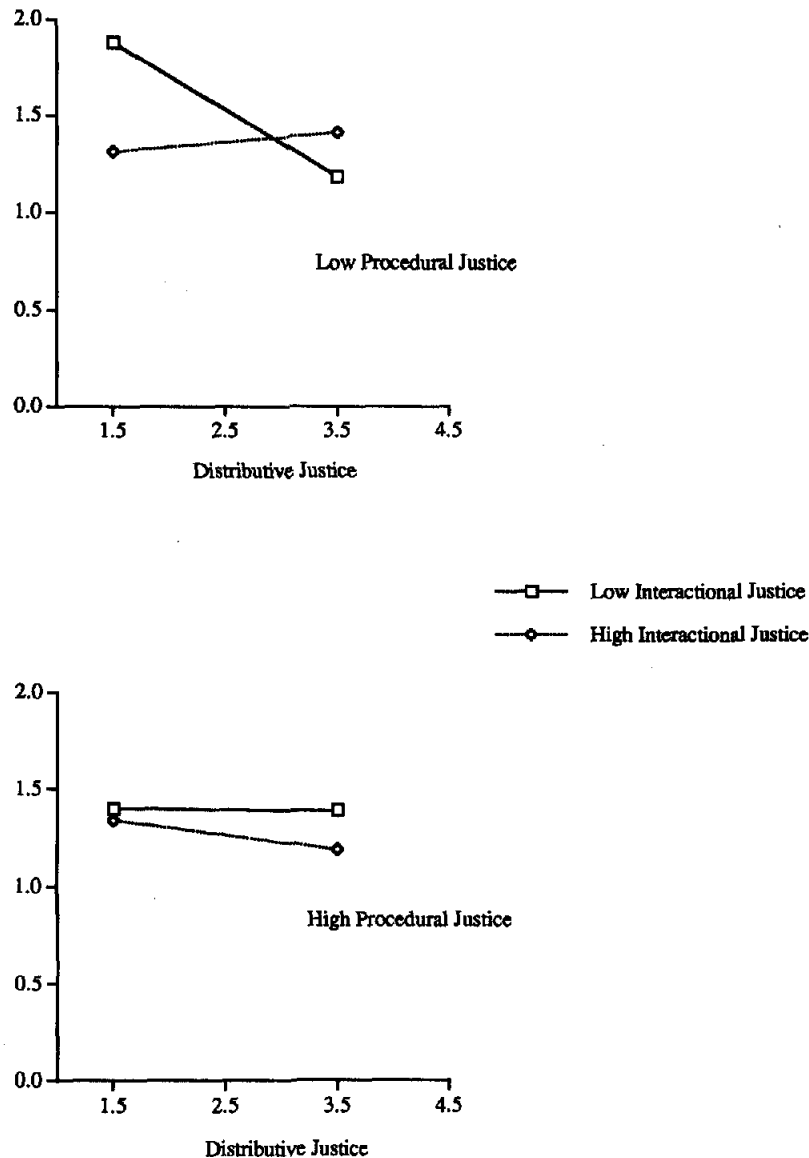


Figure 1. Organizational retaliatory behavior predicted by the two-way interactions between distributive and interactional justice at low and high levels of procedural justice.

subject-expert methodology to uncover everyday “little things” used retributively. Including relatively innocuous occurrences in our measure not only makes sense in the light of reduced opportunities for more dramatic acts of revenge in a monitored workplace with job security at stake but also fits with a nuanced approach to describing subtle instances of workplace aggression. For example, Folger and Baron (1996) and Neuman and Baron (1997) categorized types of workplace aggression according to Buss’s (1961) typology, which includes indirect actions and also distinguishes between active and passive (among both physical and verbal responses). The following exam-

ples of actions classified as indirect, physical, and passive show similarities with those we labeled *retaliatory*: showing up late for meetings, delaying work and making target person look bad, failing to protect target person’s welfare, and causing others to delay actions. Others, listed as verbal and active (e.g., talking behind the target person’s back or spreading rumors) or verbal and passive (failing to transmit information or failing to defend the target person), also illustrate how relatively nondramatic actions can still justifiably be conceptualized as displaying aggressive intent and therefore could also qualify (especially when shown to vary with perceived injustice) as retali-

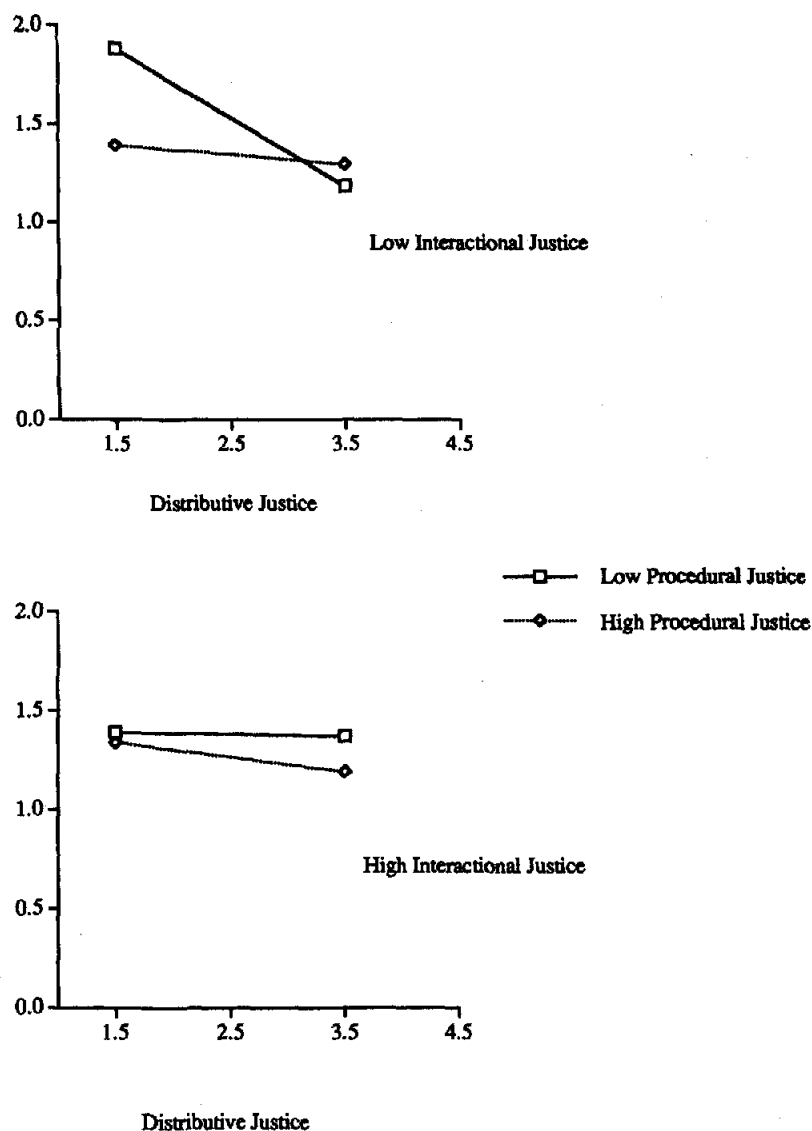


Figure 2. Organizational retaliatory behavior predicted by the two-way interactions between distributive and procedural justice at low and high levels of interactional justice.

tory in nature. Of course, such intent must always be inferred and can never be proven, because direct access to others' mental states is impossible.

A further limitation of this study is that distributive justice was measured with respect to pay, whereas procedural and interactional justice were assessed by means of global measures. The difference between the specificity of meaningful outcomes (e.g., the amount of money in a paycheck) and the more global nature of policies or procedures or continuously "transmitted" interpersonal conduct is problematic to the justice literature. A given procedure, for example, often has long-term implications and consequences for many people, making it difficult to be conceptualized and measured in a fashion with compa-

Table 4
Standard Errors and *t* Tests for Simple Slopes of Regression of ORB on Distributive Justice

Level of PJ	Level of IJ	Simple slope	SE	<i>t</i> (118)
High	High	-.01	.09	-0.16
Low	High	-.11	.24	-0.48
High	Low	.21	.19	1.10
Low	Low	-.38	.15	-2.48**

Note. ORB = organizational retaliation behaviors; PJ = procedural justice; IJ = interactional justice.

** $p < .01$.

rable scope to distributive outcomes (cf. Folger & Martin, 1986). A potential avenue for future research is whether similar results would be obtained if a global assessment of distributive justice had been used.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that organizations wishing to reduce employee retaliatory behavior can do so by focusing on each of the three forms of justice. Managers, however, often have relatively greater control over their interpersonal interactions with employees than they do over employees' outcomes or organizational procedures. Future research needs to investigate whether training managers to increase interactional justice reduces employee retaliation.

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