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**Organizational Justice: Facilitating CAF Cultural Change**

**JCSP 47**

**Exercise Solo Flight**

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## ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE: FACILITATING CAF CULTURE CHANGE

### INTRODUCTION

The CAF is trying to resolve growing and wicked problems. What began as addressing sexual misconduct has expanded to include ethnicity and racial issues, abuse of power, employment inequity, and ethical deviance to name a few of the challenges. Together, these wicked problems have been grouped under the umbrella of culture change. To address culture change, the CAF has stood up a new level one called Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC). CPCC has been working with experts internal and external to the CAF, with the responsibility of resolving systemic misconduct throughout the organization.<sup>1</sup>

Often, we consider the organization from the business perspective, taking a systems view. However, given the people-centric nature of many of these issues it is essential to also examine our wicked problems through the psychological lens. Whether we perceive the organization to be fair is subjective rather than always the reality of the situation, and across demographic characteristics we tend to agree on what is fair and what is not.<sup>2</sup> Even when we are not directly impacted, the appropriateness of the organizational actions remains central.<sup>3</sup> Fairness, or justice, are often used interchangeably to describe our perceptions; when considered in the work context, organizational justice, or justice climate, helps to describe the relationship between an organization and its employees.<sup>4</sup> In consideration of culture change efforts it is of particular importance as direct links have been scientifically established between having a just or unjust

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<sup>1</sup> <http://intranet.mil.ca/en/organizations/chief-professional-conduct-culture/about-chief-professional-conduct.page>

<sup>2</sup> Yochi Cohen-Charash, and Paul E. Spector. 2001. "The Role of Justice in Organizations: A Meta-Analysis." *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes* 86 (2): 302; interestingly, employees with higher salary tend to have higher perceptions of procedural fairness, which may contribute to our understanding of the delta between junior and senior leader fairness perceptions.

<sup>3</sup> Deepu Kurian. 2018. "Organizational Justice: Why does it Matter for HRD." *Journal of Organizational Psychology* 18 (2): 17.

<sup>4</sup> Kurian, "Organizational Justice", 11.

climate and many of the wicked problems we face. Indeed, unjust climates foster the issues and just climates prevent them.<sup>5</sup>

As an organization we can take easy or superficial approaches, often referred to as capturing the low-hanging fruit. However, when it comes to wicked problems superficial approaches are a necessary but insufficient solution. Just as we would prepare the operating environment, we can also prepare the CAF environment for culture change. Psychologically speaking, organizational justice can facilitate culture change in the CAF. Through the examination of symptoms indicating the presence of an unjust organizational climate, and the benefits of fostering organizational justice, it is clear that leaders throughout the CAF must strive for the establishment of just climates.

## **HOW ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE WORKS**

Having organizational justice means that a just climate is being created. Using a meta-analytic approach Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng examined 183 studies in the justice literature and determined that organizational justice is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of four independent but related factors: procedural justice, distributive justice, interactional justice, and informational justice.<sup>6</sup>

Procedural justice is more complex than the use of law by justice systems. It includes ideas such as consistency of application, that decisions are informed by accurate information, that any decision is in alignment with our morals and ethics, that decisions are informed by a variety of

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Xiaowan Lin, and Kwok Leung. 2013. "What Signals Does Procedural Justice Climate Convey? The Roles of Group Status, and Organizational Benevolence and Integrity." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 35 (4): 464-488; Maureen L. Ambrose, and Marshall Schminke. "Examining Justice Climate: Issues of Fit, Simplicity, and Content." In *Multi-level issues in organizations and time*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Jason A. Colquitt, Michael J. Wesson, Christopher O.L.H. Porter, Donald E. Conlon, and K. Yee Ng. 2001. "Justice at the Millennium: A Meta-Analytic Review of 25 Years of Organizational Justice Research." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86 (3): 425. Throughout this paper organizational justice, or just climate, is referred to holistically as each of the component factors contribute to the overall measure of organizational justice.

stakeholders, that decisions are bias free, and that there is a way to correct decisions when any of the previous have not been taken into account resulting in an incorrect decision.<sup>7</sup> In sum, it is about ensuring that our decision processes lead to the outcome in fair ways.

Distributive justice is about how fairly the organization allocates outcomes or resources.<sup>8</sup> It is important to understand that due to the subjectivity of this factor, two people may consider the same situation differently relative to their own context or organizational understanding. This speaks to the importance of the third factor, informational justice.

Informational justice is about how and why the organization conveys information to employees about the decisions it makes.<sup>9</sup> This aspect of organizational justice is particularly significant as it directly influences the perceptions of procedural and distributive justice.

Finally, interactional justice is about how we are treated by the organization as demonstrated by the people who represent it, in particular the interactions with a decision maker.<sup>10</sup> This could be the direct supervisor or at the highest levels of the organization. It is about the treatment we receive and includes important culture change ideas such as dignity and respect.

In sum, organizational justice is about fair treatment on a day-to-day basis.<sup>11</sup> For culture change to be effective, it must bring people together. Importantly, a culture of justice is predictive of openness and acceptance of change, support of change efforts, and change outcome satisfaction.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, organizational justice is a culture change enabler, but when there is an inconsistent or unjust culture it does more than hinder change.

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<sup>7</sup> Colquitt, "Justice at the Millennium", 426.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 427.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Schneider, Vicente González-Romá, Cheri Ostroff, and Michael A. West. 2017. "Organizational Climate and Culture: Reflections on the History of the Constructs." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 102(3), 477.

<sup>12</sup> Rex D. Foster, 2010. "Resistance, Justice, and Commitment to Change." *Human Resource Development Quarterly* vol. 21, no. 1.

## THE PRESENCE OF AN UNJUST ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

The CAF justice climate is inconsistent between people and between organizations. Indeed, employees experience the various forms of injustice daily. Simply look to any social media platform or any Your Say Survey to begin to understand how dissatisfied a significant number of CAF employees are with a broad range of issues, and how they perceive the organization acting in unjust ways including, but not limited to, unfair distribution of rewards, unfair standards of accountability, and general feeling of poor treatment.<sup>13</sup> When there is a lack of organizational justice, it manifests in the organization in a number of undesirable ways including organizational withdrawal and having negative reactions.<sup>14</sup> When an organization is unjust, it creates problems for and with its employees. It creates division.

Fundamental to culture change is bringing all CAF personnel to a common understanding of what our culture needs to be. Research has found that organizational injustice separates people by denying them respect and dignity, which are essential to an inclusive environment.<sup>15</sup> In an organization with inconsistent or low justice, both aspects are missing. This means that until we eliminate the unjust aspects of the organization, we will continue to create a divide between employees, and will not be able to achieve cultural change.

In an unjust organizational climate employees try but cannot understand how they fit in the organization. The experience of an unjust outcome can lead them to believe that they are not

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<sup>13</sup> The Your Say Survey is a representative-sample survey administered to selected CAF members bi-annually to gather their opinions and perspectives on a wide variety of CAF issues.

<sup>14</sup> Jerald Greenberg. 2011. "Organizational Justice: The Dynamics of Fairness in the Workplace." In *s. Zedeck (Ed.), APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Vol.3: 271-327). Washington: American Psychological Association.

<sup>15</sup> Bies and Moag, 1986 in Huong Le, Catrina Palmer Johnson, and Yuka Fujimoto. 2021. "Organizational Justice and Climate for Inclusion." *Personnel Review* 50 (1): 1-20.

held in high regard by the organization.<sup>16</sup> They do not feel valued. This impacts the individual who is at the center of a situation such as this, and those around them, some through learning the expectation that the organization would also treat them in a similarly disrespectful way and not consider their dignity. When organizations are unjust, employees understand that mistreatment and deviance is allowed.<sup>17</sup> Not only does this promote the continuance and expansion of the undesirable behaviours, but it can also lead to even worse behaviour according to research conducted with a military sample.<sup>18</sup> This may include increased sexual harassment climate, targeted harassment, exclusionary behaviours, mistreatment based on identity, or behaviours intended to ‘get even’. Moreover, it could lead to counterproductive work behaviour or withdrawal behaviour, where the employee intends to harm the organization based on perceived injustice.<sup>19</sup> “Men who felt unfairly and disrespectfully treated by their supervisor expressed greater likelihood to sexually harass.”<sup>20</sup> Additionally, research suggests the board approach focusing on organizational justice has benefit beyond targeting harassment specifically.<sup>21</sup> We must eliminate the unjust climate so that employees understand the value they provide to the organization, and we reduce the probability of incidences occurring. Sexual misconduct is one of the primary focuses of culture change. The unjust climate of the CAF is one of the contributing

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<sup>16</sup> David De Cremer, Joel Brockner, Ariel Fishman, Marius van Dijke, Woody van Olffen, and David M. Mayer. 2010. “When do Procedural Fairness and Outcome Fairness Interact to Influence Employees’ Work Attitudes and Behaviors? The Moderating Effect of Uncertainty.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95(2), 292.

<sup>17</sup> Franciska Krings, and Stéphanie Facchin. "Organizational justice and men's likelihood to sexually harass: The moderating role of sexism and personality." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 2 (2009): 501. Please note that this study was only male employees. Other research also indicates that there are deltas between men and women, e.g., Suzette Caleo, 2016. “Are Organizational Justice Rules Gendered? Reactions to Men’s and Women’s Justice Violations.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 101(10), 1422-1435.

<sup>18</sup> Cristina Rubino, Derek R. Avery, Patrick F. McKay, Brenda L. Moore, David C. Wilson, Marinus S. Driel, L. Alan Witt, and Daniel P. McDonald. 2018. "And Justice for all: How Organizational Justice Climate Deters Sexual Harassment." *Personnel Psychology* 71 (4): 525.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen-Charash and Spector, “The Role of Justice in Organizations,” 289; Greenberg, “Organizational Justice,” 273-4.

<sup>20</sup> Krings, and Facchin. "Organizational justice and men's likelihood to sexually harass," 507.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 539.

factors to a sexualized culture. When the climate is low on organizational justice there is increased sexual harassment when compared to climates of high organizational justice.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, just cultures can reduce identity-based mistreatment.<sup>23</sup> This means that by allowing unjust climates, we are also creating environments where sexual harassment is tolerated, and the individual impacts of unjust climates are extensive. The perceptions of justice are varied across the organization. Although some feel that perpetrators are not being held to account, others feel that some are facing unjust allegations. Furthermore, there is the perception that junior personnel are being held to higher standards and receive stronger punishment (i.e., release from the CAF) in contrast to senior officers. This highlights the criticality of ensuring that not only is procedural fairness applied, but that the organization clearly communicates the reasons for the decisions that are made, as this impacts group performance. There is also the forgotten third group, who follow and enforce all rules and yet see no progress, wearing them down effort by effort. Until we address the unjust climate, we will never eliminate the sexualized culture.

The unjust climate of the CAF contributes to the broad health issues employees experience. The ways that organizational injustice impact the health domain are observed directly and indirectly, in mental and physical realms. Climates of injustice lead to decreased mental health and increased burnout, negative emotional state, stress, and absences while physically they lead to increased health problems and unhealthy behaviours.<sup>24</sup> The CAF has multiple initiatives aimed at addressing these outcomes, but this is insufficient.<sup>25</sup> Unless the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 531.

<sup>23</sup> Sandy Lim, and Lilia M. Cortina. "Interpersonal Mistreatment in the Workplace: The Interface and Impact of General Incivility and Sexual Harassment." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 3 (2005): 483.

<sup>24</sup> Jordan M. Robbins, Michael T. Ford, and Lois E. Tetrick. 2012. "Perceived Unfairness and Employee Health: A Meta-analytic Integration." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(2), 244-5.

<sup>25</sup> Some examples of initiatives underway include establishment of CPCC, The Defence Team Total Health and Wellness Strategy, improvements to the military justice system, addressing CAF conduct and culture, reviewing the complaints management system, the Inclusive Behaviours Rating, updating the CAF Ethos (Trusted to Serve), selection process improvements, etc.



unjust aspects of the organization are addressed, we will continue to treat symptoms instead of a root cause of the issue.

Although we are becoming increasingly efficient at addressing the indicators of unjust climate, it is important to tackle the source of the issue and transition from an unjust to just organizational climate. Indeed, in perceived unjust organizations employees cannot develop trust or integrity, thereby reducing performance.<sup>26</sup> However, it is insufficient to simply move from an organizationally unjust climate to one that is organizationally neutral. We need to establish a just organizational climate.

## **THE REQUIREMENT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE**

The argument to establish a just organization is compelling. Organizational justice has been positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust.<sup>27</sup> The creation of an organizationally just culture can help to address the core of many of our underlying issues, and the benefits of a culture where there is organizational justice are broad reaching. Organizational justice is a culture change enabler. When you have a culture of organizational justice it can promote diversity and inclusion, allowing all employees to fully participate with and engage the organization.<sup>28</sup>

Organizational justice can help us address our sexualized culture and sexual misconduct. Research using a military sample has found that a culture of organizational justice deters sexual harassment and supports gender-diverse employees through fair treatment.<sup>29</sup> This is foundational to fostering the climate for inclusion, as fairness addresses the root of the differential treatment. Part of why organizational justice is the right context for addressing sexual misconduct is that by

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<sup>26</sup> Kurian, "Organizational Justice," 12.

<sup>27</sup> Greenberg, "Organizational Justice," 279.

<sup>28</sup> Kurian, "Organizational Justice," 20.

<sup>29</sup> Avery Rubino, and Daniel P. McDonald, "And Justice for All," 521.

universally establishing a just organization it can break down the demographic and social divisions, as experiencing organizational justice frames the reciprocal treatment between employees.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, it becomes a mirror to the organization's ethics and morals.<sup>31</sup> This encourages employees to behave in desired ways. As such, organizational justice directly reduces the sexualized climate, provides an environment where between-employee treatment is improved, and gives us a way to ensure that we truly become reflective of the CAF Ethos.<sup>32</sup>

To live the CAF ethos, we need trust between employees and the organization. Longitudinal data demonstrates that trust is also antecedent to organizational justice, and that when trust is low employee perceptions of justice are more flexible.<sup>33</sup> This means that when we don't trust the organization or those around us, we are more likely to make decisions in our own best interest, even when it is not in alignment with the organization. Evolving a workplace to where employees can trust one another is key. When there is a trust relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate, it supports organizational justice.

Having a relationship of trust with the supervisor is beneficial to the employee and the entire organization. When justice comes from the supervisor it is predictive of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs).<sup>34</sup> OCBs are behaviours that are of use to the organization, which the employee exhibits without direction or compensation.<sup>35</sup> This includes behaviours such as

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 521,524. An additional examples can be found in Xiao-Ping Chen, Lam, Simon S. K., Naumann, Stefanie E., & Schaubroeck, John. 2005. "Group Citizenship Behaviour: Conceptualization and Preliminary Test of its Antecedents and Consequences," *Management and Organization Review* 1:2.; and Colquitt, & Ng, "Justice at the Millennium"; Liao, H., and Rupp, D.E. 2005. "The Impact of Justice Climate and Justice Orientation on Work Outcomes: A Cross-Level Multifoci Framework," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(2): 242-256.

<sup>31</sup> Lin and Leung, "What Signals," 481-3.

<sup>32</sup> The *CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve* is a document describing the core CAF principles, values, and expectations of all CAF employees. It is an update to the *Duty with Honour* and acts as a guide to on and off duty conduct for CAF employees.

<sup>33</sup> Brian C. Holtz, and Crystal M. Harold. 2009. "Fair Today, Fair Tomorrow? A Longitudinal Investigation of Overall Justice Perceptions." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94(5), 1195.

<sup>34</sup> Jason A. Colquitt, 2012. "Organizational Justice." In *S.W.J. Kozlowski (Ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Psychology* (Vol.1: 526-547). New York: Oxford University Press, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen-Charash and Spector, "The Role of Justice in Organizations," 287.

better interpersonal relationships between employees (courtesy), increased conscientiousness, and altruistic attitudes. These are particularly salient in the CAF context as it means that employees engage in organizationally beneficial positive behaviours outside of their job description, depicting employees going above and beyond. When employees exhibit OCBs, they are expressing that their employment is more than just a job and a paycheck; it is a meaningful part of their life.

CAF employees spend a significant portion of their lives at and engaged with their work; therefore, a just organizational climate is of particular importance. The use of organizational justice in Human Resource (HR) is essential to the individual, their wellbeing, and ultimately determines what they can contribute to the organization. Organizational justice in HR is viewed as organizational reciprocity, or the relationship of exchange between the employee and the organization. Through HR practices such as the provision of training and development, selection for opportunities, fair performance appraisal, clear work-life balance, and salary, the organization demonstrates the application of justice, and improves both job satisfaction and psychological well-being.<sup>36</sup> When employees perceive the fair distribution of benefits, this can be an incentive to stay with the organization. Indeed, when there is a just organization, employees feel more invested in the organization, and with unjust organizations feel minimal loss when leaving.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, establishing organizational justice does not need to wait for top-down direction to start ameliorating the situation. At a time when the CAF Reconstitution

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<sup>36</sup> Beatriz Sora, Amparo Caballer, M. Esther García-Buades. 2021. "Human Resource Practices and Employee Wellbeing from a Gender Perspective: The Role of Organizational Justice." *Revista Latinoamericana De Psicología* 53: 42.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen-Charash and Spector, "The Role of Justice in Organizations," 306.

Plan is foundational to our ability to function, organizational justice can reduce turnover intentions, supporting this key initiative.<sup>38</sup>

## **ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE CREATION AT ALL LEVELS BY ALL LEADERS**

One of the unique aspects of the organizational justice approach is that it is entirely within the control of CAF, as organizations can control the fairness of their own systems at all levels. Creating a just climate from the unit level to the organizational level has increasing positive outcomes as the perception of organizational justice grows.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, the costs of managers acting in procedurally fair ways are low.<sup>40</sup> One example of a low/no cost solution would be to provide voice to employees in the justice process and decisions.<sup>41</sup> Allowing employees to contribute to and be heard in the process is key. Ulrich and Brockbank describe five steps to culture change, the first step of which includes defining the right culture, which must include justice culture.<sup>42</sup> Our wicked problems are organizational-wide, but the solutions do not need to be exclusively top-down driven.

To create organizational justice there must be trust in our leaders. Interestingly, trust in our top leaders has greater impact on individual level performance than trust in our immediate supervisor.<sup>43</sup> However, trust does not exclusively exist as a top-down process. Trust in leaders

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<sup>38</sup> Juan Diego Vaamonde, Alicia Omar, and Solana Salessi. 2018. "From Organizational Justice Perceptions to Turnover Intentions: The Mediating Effects of Burnout and Job Satisfaction." *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 14(3): 554. Cohen-Charash and Spector, "The Role of Justice in Organizations," 301. CAF Reconstitution Plan is the organization-wide effort prioritize resources, and efforts on people. This effort includes culture change, operations, and CAF modernization.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel S. Whitman, Suzette Caleo, Nichelle C. Carpenter, Margaret T. Horner, and Jeremy B. Bernerth. 2012. "Fairness at the Collective Level: A Meta-analytic Examination of the Consequences and Boundary Conditions of Organizational Justice Climate." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97(4), 782-4.

<sup>40</sup> De Cremer, and Mayer, "When Do Procedural Fairness," 303.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen-Charash and Spector, "The Role of Justice in Organizations," 301; De Cremer, and Mayer, "When Do Procedural Fairness," 30.

<sup>42</sup> Dave Ulrich, and Wayne Brockbank. 2016. "Creating a Winning Culture: Next Step for Leading HR Professionals." *Strategic HR Review* 15 (2): 54.

<sup>43</sup> C. Ashley Fulmer, and Cheri Ostroff. 2017. "Trust in Direct Leaders and Top Leaders: A Trickle-up Model." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 102(4), 653.

can also be a trickle up process where just lower-level leaders inspire trust in just higher-level leaders.<sup>44</sup> The consequence of this is that the trust we develop comes from multiple sources, including those who are representative of the higher authority. Still, establishing trust to support organizational justice is only one approach that leaders should utilize with organizational justice in mind.

Organizational justice is linked to unit-level performance and processes. This suggests that when a leader creates a just organization, they are directly supporting improved effectiveness at their unit.<sup>45</sup> As a result, any leader can and should create a climate where organizational justice is at its centre. Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry are frequently cited for their ideas focusing on the application of procedural justice in organizations; their ideas speak to ensuring ethicality, consistency, accuracy, suppression of biases, representativeness, and correctability.<sup>46</sup> The CAF can easily apply these principles in many settings, including in the selection of personnel for training opportunities at all levels in the organization. Whether at the unit level or at the national level, demonstration of these ideas by leveraging transparent communication before, during, and after the selection process will help demonstrate procedural fairness. In addition to these procedural approaches, leaders must ensure that the allocation of resources and outcomes is fair and transparent within the organization they control. Finally, they can also demonstrate in every interaction that they have respect and dignity for the other person. Organizational justice can help us address not only the inequities faced by underrepresented groups, but also address the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Whitman, and Bernerth, "Fairness at the Collective Level," 782.

<sup>46</sup> For example, De Cremer, and Mayer, "When do Procedural Fairness," 295; Caleo, "Are Organizational Justice Rules Gendered," 1423.

justice concerns of the dominant group.<sup>47</sup> In turn, this will improve the performance for both groups.

## CONCLUSION

Our wicked problems will not solve themselves. Although we have seen many new initiatives, including the establishment of CPCC to address the myriad of issues, some of the tactics utilized are addressing symptoms and not the source of the issue. That is not to say that what has been done thus far is not laudable, but rather that it does not leverage the agency of every CAF employee to make a difference. Psychological approaches are central to addressing issues involving people. Industrial/organizational methods such as identification of the source of problem, and scientific approaches to address them, can be particularly useful as they speak to understanding and changing human behaviours in a work context. Ensuring we act in procedurally fair ways (consistently, without bias, in alignment with our morals and ethics, informed by stakeholders, using accurate information, and that we correct incorrect decisions), that we fairly allocate resources and outcomes, that we communicate information about our decisions in timely and transparent ways, and that all of our interactions are conducted in fair and respectful ways will contribute to the development of organizational justice.

Employees' subjective views of the CAF, and their treatment by the organization through the lens of organizational justice (or lack thereof) provides insight into how we can approach one cause of our issues. Moreover, organizational justice supports employee openness and acceptance of change, change efforts, and ultimately their satisfaction of change outcomes. Psychologically speaking, efforts to improve organizational justice will facilitate culture change in the CAF. It will directly address the existing unjust climate, provide the benefits of a just

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<sup>47</sup> Avery Rubino, and Daniel P. McDonald, "And Justice for All," 540.

climate, and it is within the capacity of leaders at all levels within the organization to begin to address today.

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