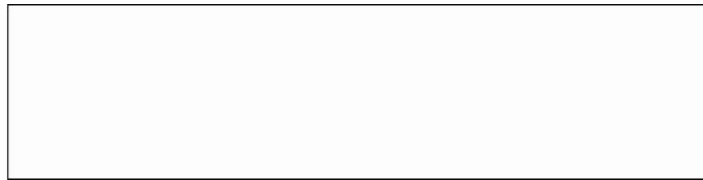




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**Opportunity, fair process and relationship value: career development as a driver
of proactive work behaviour**

Jonathan R. Crawshaw,
Aston Business School, Aston University

Rolf van Dick,
Institute of Psychology, Goethe University

Felix C. Brodbeck,
Institute of Psychology, Ludwig-Maximilians University

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Authors Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr Jonathan R. Crawshaw, Work and Organisational Psychology Group (SW8011), Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham B4 7ET, UK. Email: j.r.crawshaw2@aston.ac.uk hrm or Felix C. Brodbeck, Department Psychologie, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Leopoldstr. 13, 80802 München, Germany.
E-mail: brodbeck@lmu.de

Abstract

In line with recent findings from organisational justice theory, we hypothesised that employee proactive behaviour and careerist orientation is predicted by the interplay of perceived favourability of career development opportunities, the perceived fairness of the procedures used to decide them, and employee organisational commitment.

Employees (N = 325) of a large financial services organisation responded to a self-completion questionnaire. As predicted, when career development opportunities were viewed unfavourably, perceived procedural justice was significantly and positively related to individual proactive behaviour and significantly and negatively related to careerist orientation but only when organisational commitment was high. It appears that high procedural justice may only 'offset' the negative effects of unfavourable career development opportunities when employees identify with, and are committed to, their organisation. Further support is presented for a relational, rather than instrumental, model of procedural justice when reflecting on employee reactions to their employers' policies and decision-making. Implications for theory and practice are discussed

OPPORTUNITY, FAIR PROCESS AND RELATIONSHIP VALUE: CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS A DRIVER OF PROACTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR

Employers face a dilemma. On the one hand, there is growing opinion that if organisations are to survive and prosper it will be through the development and retention of a highly skilled and high performing workforce (e.g., Barney, 1991; Huselid, 1995; Ichniowski *et al.*, 1997). Indeed, within the context of an increasingly competitive, dynamic and unpredictable work environment, particular attention has been paid to the importance of developing employees who are willing and able to work proactively (e.g., Crant, 2000; Frese and Fay, 2001; Griffin *et al.*, 2007). Proactive employees are said to exhibit the necessary innovativeness, future-orientation and self-motivation required to add real value to organisations facing these difficult challenges (Parker *et al.*, 2006).

On the other hand, however, these very same external forces have led many organisations to initiate strategies to improve their flexibility and efficiency in order to remain competitive. Such strategies commonly involve a significant re-organisation of work; very often involving regular rounds of redundancy, the introduction of short term 'flexible' contracting and/or the outsourcing of non-core functions (see Atkinson, 1987). Rather than promoting a proactive workforce, such strategies have been shown to undermine trust in the employment relationship and support the emergence of a more careerist orientated employee (Feldman and Weitz, 1991; Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007).

Careerist orientated employees acknowledge disconnect between their own long-term career development goals and the goals of their employer. A lack of trust in the employer's ability, or willingness, to provide long term job security leads to a focus on protecting one's own career interests (Feldman, 1985; 1989; Feldman and

Weitz, 1991). Importantly, such career commitment has been shown to have significant negative implications for a variety of important work attitudes and behaviours, including job involvement and commitment (e.g., Aryee and Chen, 2004).

Kanter (1990), and more recently Herriot and Pemberton (1996; 1997), present a solution to this dilemma. Employers need to provide employees with a range of career development opportunities that promote their employability security. In other words, an economic exchange model is proposed where employee loyalty and high performance (albeit perhaps over the short term) is generated through the provision of valued and marketable career development opportunities (Herriot and Pemberton, 1997; 1996; Sturges *et al.*, 2005). Organisations may therefore be able to reduce the emergence of damaging careerist orientations to work and garner the required levels of work performance, in particular proactive behaviours, by providing employees with valued and satisfying career development opportunities.

To date, however, empirical support for these propositions is limited. Despite the obvious salience of proactive behaviour and careerist orientation, they have been largely overlooked by career researchers investigating employee perceptions of, and reactions to, their career development opportunities. The authors could find no previous empirical studies exploring the relationship between employee perceptions of their career development opportunities and their proactive behaviour. Moreover, only one published study, carried out within the Chinese manufacturing context, could be found that has investigated the relationship between employee perceptions of their career development opportunities and careerist orientation (see Aryee and Chen, 2004).

Theoretically, the extant careers literature has also been dominated by simple exchange models such as the one posited above (e.g. Aryee and Chen, 2004).

Although useful, researchers have yet to explore the conditions under which employees' perceptions of career development opportunities may matter more (or less) in predicting important outcomes such as proactive behaviour and careerist orientation. In other words, research is needed that investigates the existence of moderators of the relationship between career development opportunities and important outcomes. If we are to more effectively inform current and future policy-making and practice in organisational career management it is essential therefore that research begins to explore important contextual variables that may impact upon employees' reactions to career development opportunities.

In order to meet these gaps in the current careers literature we turned to organisational justice theory and, in particular, recent findings that suggest employee reactions to organisational decisions (e.g., the allocation of career development opportunities) may be moderated by a three-way interaction between the perceived favourability of reward/resource allocations, their perceptions of procedural justice, or the fairness of the organisations' decision making processes (Leventhal, 1980) regarding these decisions, and their affective organisational commitment (e.g., Kwong and Leung, 2002). Kwong and Leung found support for such an interaction effect when predicting employee work effort and stay intentions. When employees viewed the allocation of valued rewards and resources as unfavourable, the moderating effect of high procedural justice on work effort and stay intentions was found to be more pronounced in employees who reported high organisational commitment.

In light of these findings, we propose and test a similar model, where careerist orientation and proactive behaviour are predicted by an interaction between employee perceptions of their career development opportunities (a resource allocation), the perceived fairness of the procedures used to decide them and their affective

organisational commitment. More specifically, we hypothesise that when employees perceive their career development opportunities unfavourably, the negative implications for proactive behaviour and careerist orientation will be lessened if the decision-making procedures are perceived as fair and their commitment is high.

We aim at making contributions to both the careers and organisational justice literatures. The careers literature is provided with much needed empirical research exploring the importance of employee perceptions of career development opportunities for two new dependent variables, proactive behaviour and careerist orientation. Moreover, a new organisational justice-based theoretical lens through which to understand employee reactions to their career development opportunities is also presented. Although recent research has begun to recognise the potential importance of organisational justice in a career management context, this literature is still limited in its empirical scope and theoretical development (e.g., Wooten and Cobb, 1999; Aryee and Chen, 2004; Crawshaw, 2006; Crawshaw and Brodbeck, 2011).

The organisational justice literature is provided with a much needed replication of the interaction between outcome favourability, procedural justice and affective organisational commitment within a new UK career management context. To our knowledge, no subsequent study has presented additional empirical evidence of this three-way interaction effect and, as such, this study aims to increase confidence in the generalisability and utility of Kwong and Leung's findings.

Career Development Opportunities, Careerism and Proactive Behaviour

The positive gains for organisations of providing employees with satisfying and rewarding career development opportunities are fairly well established. For

example, a number of prior studies have highlighted the significant relationships between perceived career development opportunities and positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction (Chen *et al.*, 2003; Birdi *et al.*, 1997) and organisational commitment (Blau *et al.*, 2001). To date, however, this research has been fairly limited in its range of dependent variables studied.

As highlighted above, the emergence of more careerist orientated employees may provide many problems for employers, not least the potential for lower job performance and increased turnover (Feldman and Weitz, 1991). Given the assumptions that a lack of long term career development opportunities may be a key antecedent of careerist orientation, it is perhaps surprising that very few studies have actually explored this relationship. Aryee and Chen (2004) provides some support for a significant negative relationship between career growth opportunities and careerist orientation but the very specific Chinese context of their research means that more evidence is needed, and in different employment contexts.

Another significant absentee has been research exploring the impact of perceived career development opportunities on employee job performance. Kraimer *et al.* (2010) present some empirical support for the positive relationship between career opportunities and role-based performance. However, again, more evidence is required that focuses on other important aspects of work performance such as employee proactive or extra-role behaviour. It is essential that more research is carried out that explores the links between career variables, such as perceived career development opportunities, and outcomes that are valued by senior management in organisations (Kraimer *et al.*, 2010). By focussing our study on employee careerist orientation and proactive behaviour we aimed to begin to fill this gap in the literature.

Career motivation theory (London, 1983) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) have both emerged as frameworks for understanding these relationships. Career motivation theory, posits that an individual's work attitudes and behaviours are, to some extent, motivated by their personal career goals. Thus, employees increase their effort and commitment to the attainment of organisational goals because they wish to gain access to valuable career development opportunities that are on offer (Kraimer *et al.*, 2010). Alternatively, social exchange theory is based on the principles of reciprocity, where employees' increase their commitment and work effort in response to positive treatment by the organisation – like the receipt of valuable career development opportunities (e.g. Aryee and Chen, 2004). Either way, both theories posit a significant positive relationship between the perceived favourability of career development opportunities and individual proactive behaviour and a significant negative relationship between the perceived favourability of career development opportunities and careerist orientation.

The current study, however, extends these theoretical models, and prior empirical research, by exploring the existence of important moderators of these relationships. To this end, we draw upon research from the field of organisational justice and, in particular, a study by Kwong and Leung (2002) that finds support for a three-way interaction effect between the perceived favourability of outcomes, procedural justice and affective organisational commitment..

The Interaction of Perceived Career Development Opportunities, Procedural Justice and Affective Commitment

Considerable empirical support has emerged within the organisational justice literature for an interaction effect between an individual's perceptions of procedural

justice and outcome favourability when predicting his/her reactions to a decision-making system (for a meta-analysis, see Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996). Studies have repeatedly shown that an employee's concerns for procedural justice are greater when they feel that they have been treated unfavourably in the distribution of valued rewards or resources (e.g., Folger, 1987). When outcomes are viewed unfavourably, the potential negative implications for important organization-directed attitudes and behaviours appear to be 'offset' or 'buffered' by the presence of high levels of procedural fairness (for reviews see Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996; Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001).

Two explanations for the interaction of procedural justice and outcome favourability have been put forward. From an instrumental perspective, procedural justice is viewed as evidence of one's potential future economic gain from that decision-making system. If the procedures followed to make the unfavourable decision are viewed as fair and just it is proposed that the individual is, at least in part, reassured that this system and relationship should ultimately benefit them, economically speaking, over the longer term (Lind and Tyler, 1988). The potential negative attitudinal or behavioural implications associated with unfavourable reward allocation are thus offset as current decisions are viewed by the individual as less important than the potential economic gains from the longer term relationship.

Alternatively the 'group value', or relational, perspective draws on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and interprets this interaction effect as reflecting an individual's desire to be accepted by their peer or working group (Tyler, 1989). Being subjected to fair and just procedures suggests one is valued and respected within the group, irrespective of the relative unfavourability of the current rewards and resources provided by the group. Although a desire for in-group

acceptance may also be deemed as instrumental, the motivation here is not mainly for economic gain or benefit, but mostly for meeting relationship and social needs. The potential negative implications for individual attitudes or behaviours associated with the receipt of unfavourable rewards or resources are thus offset, not because procedural justice guarantees future economic gain, but because one's desires for social group acceptance and respect are upheld (Tyler and Bies, 1990; Tyler and Lind, 1992; Blader and Tyler, 2009).

A recent study by Kwong and Leung (2002) has, however, presented some evidence that this interaction is itself contingent on the degree of importance an individual places on their relationship with the decision-making system. Drawing on earlier research (e.g., Brockner *et al.*, 1992; Tyler and Degoey, 1995; Brockner *et al.* 2000), Kwong and Leung suggest that procedural justice may only matter to individuals when the relationship with the decision-maker itself matters and is valued. In other words, one has to care about one's relationship with their employer, to ultimately care about how you are treated by them. The compensatory or 'buffering' effect of procedural justice on outcome unfavourability would therefore only be observed when an individual identifies with and is affectively committed to their organisation.

In their study of 151 Chinese members of the Hong Kong Retail Union, and their reactions to a pay freeze decision, Kwong and Leung found support for this proposed three-way interaction. Perceptions of procedural justice, in relation to the pay freeze decision, were found to be more strongly and positively related to employee work effort and stay intentions when the outcome was perceived unfavourably *and* employee organisational commitment was high (Kwong and Leung, 2002). Put differently, the negative implications of a pay freeze decision for work

effort and stay intentions was offset by the perceived fairness of the procedures used to decide this pay freeze, but only when employees were committed to their organisation. As procedural justice only moderates the negative implications of unfavourable rewards under conditions of high organisational commitment, Kwong and Leung conclude that these findings present support for the relational or ‘group value’, rather than instrumental and economic, perspective on procedural justice. One has to care about one’s organisation (high organisational commitment) before any evaluation on the fairness of its decision-making procedures matters.

Drawing on these findings, therefore, we propose that an employee’s careerist orientation and proactive behaviour will be predicted by a three-way interaction between the perceived favourability of career development opportunities, perceptions of procedural justice and organisational commitment. More specifically, when an individual views the procedures for allocating career development opportunities as fair, this will ‘offset’ or ‘buffer’ the potential negative implications for their proactive behaviour and careerist orientation caused by unfavourable career development opportunities, but only when the individual is committed to, or identifies with, their organisation. The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

Hypothesis 1: When employees view their career development opportunities unfavourably (rather than favourably), perceptions of procedural justice will be strongly and *positively* related to proactive behaviour, but only when organisational commitment is high.

Hypothesis 2: When employees view their career development opportunities unfavourably (rather than favourably), perceptions of

procedural justice will be strongly and *negatively* related to careerist orientation, but only when organisational commitment is high.

In sum, the present study aims to replicate the findings of Kwong and Leung within a new career context, thus increasing confidence in their generalisability and utility. Moreover, the salience of the 'group value' model, rather than the instrumental/economic model, of procedural justice is also further tested within our study. Finally, by exploring the moderating effects of two key contextual variables (affective organisational commitment and procedural justice) on the relationship between career development opportunities and proactive behaviour and careerist orientation, managers and HR practitioners are provided with a new insight into the dynamics of managing the career development of their employees.

METHODS

Organisational Context

The study focused on the careers of employees working in a large UK high street financial services provider. At the time of the study, this organisation employed over 15,000 employees across around 700 retail branches, three regional call centres and a central head office site. Employees could be found in a wide range of professions and careers including administrative/general management, marketing, HR, accountancy, finance, retailing and IT.

The company was selected because analysis of its documents and other related literatures suggested that management placed a considerable emphasis on the development and implementation of sophisticated and effective career development interventions. Indeed, a large range of career development opportunities were made

available to employees, including mentoring schemes, support for qualification attainment, careers counselling services, development centres, secondments, job rotation, career development planning, internal promotion and skills/knowledge development via regular in-house/external training and development courses. Within the organisation the notion of self-directed careers was strong, with career planning and management very much devolved to the line manager-employee relationship. The line manager was commonly reported by employees to be the key agent in their organizational career management.

Sample and Procedures

Data was collected using standardised questionnaires distributed through the organisation's own internal postal system. All participants were provided with a prepaid return envelope addressed to the first author's university, with only the author given access to the completed questionnaires. With the support of the organisation, a random stratified sample (based on gender, ethnicity, age, tenure and department/function employed) of 1100 employees was identified. A final usable sample of 325 questionnaires returned, giving a response rate of 30%. Of these respondents, 96.9% were in non-management/supervisory positions, 68.3% were female, 92.6% were of white UK ethnic origin and their average age and length of service were 34.5 years and 8.8 years respectively. These figures reflected closely the demographic profile of the wider employee population (N=1100) and thus promoted confidence in the representative nature of this sample.

Measures

Proactive behaviour. Individual proactive behaviour was measured using a three-item scale for task proactivity developed by Griffin *et al.* (2007). Respondents were asked to rate along a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (a very little extent) to 5 (a very great extent) the extent to which they had, “... *come up with ideas to improve the way in which your core tasks are done?*”; “... *initiated better ways of doing core tasks?*”; and finally, “... *made changes to the way your core tasks are done?*” Internal consistency was good with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91.

Careerist orientation. Careerist orientation was measured using a five-item scale developed by Chay and Aryee (1999), which itself is a shortened version of an earlier scale developed by Feldman and Weitz (1991). Example items include, “*In terms of managing careers in organizations, it’s each man/woman for him/herself?*”; “*Loyalty to one’s employer is unlikely to be rewarded?*”; and “*My goals and my employer’s goals probably will not be compatible?*”. Respondents were asked how much they agreed/disagreed with each statement and asked to respond along five-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was acceptable with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.68 closely reflecting those commonly reported in other studies using this scale (e.g. Aryee and Chen 2004).

Favourability of career development opportunities. Outcome favourability was measured using two items that focused on respondents attitudes towards the career development opportunities provided by their employer. Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements, “*I am satisfied with my current career development opportunities in this company?*” and “*The career development opportunities I am currently receiving in this company are*

acceptable". They were directed to respond to each statement along a five-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was good with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95.

Procedural justice. Procedural justice was measured using a five-item scale developed by Colquitt (2001). Example items include, "*Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures used to decide your career development opportunities?*", "*Do you have influence over the decisions arrived at by those procedures used to decide your career development opportunities?*", and "*Are you able to appeal the decision regarding your career development opportunities?*". Participants were asked to respond to each item along a five-point Likert scale from a very little extent [1] to a very great extent [5]. Internal consistency was good with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

Affective organisational commitment. Organisational commitment was measured using an eight-item scale for affective organisational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1984). Example items include, "*I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization*" (reverse); "*This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me*"; and "*I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization*" (reverse). Participants were asked to respond along a five-point Likert scale how much they agreed/disagreed with each statement. Internal consistency was good with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

Controls. A number of *control variables* were also identified and measured. Previous research has highlighted the potential significant relationships that may exist between different demographic variables, such as gender, age, seniority, and tenure, and a number of career-related outcomes including, career satisfaction, career success and promotional attainment (e.g., Cascio, 1995; Sutherland and Davidson, 1996;

Wentling, 1996). As a result, data on gender, age, job level (seniority), and length of service (tenure) was collected and controlled for in all analyses.

RESULTS

Prior to testing the main hypotheses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS version 16 structural equation modelling software (Arbuckle, 2007) was carried out on the five variables in the model to ensure discriminant validity. To assess the overall fit of each model we compared the models on Bentler's (1990) comparative fit index (CFI) and Steiger's (1990) root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). According to Bentler (1990), values larger than .90 for CFI are deemed an acceptable fit. For RMSEA values of 0.05 and below are considered indicative of close fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). To compare between model fit of the nested models we calculated the difference in model chi-square (χ^2) and degrees of freedom (df), and compared the values with the χ^2 -distribution (Hu and Bentler, 1995).

In all we compared five models. First, all items from the five scales were loaded onto one factor ($\chi^2 (df = 275) = 2550.87$, CFI = 0.51, RMSEA = 0.16). Second, the close conceptual overlap between organisational commitment and careerist orientation, and procedural justice and outcome favourability led to our exploring a three factor model. Therefore, items for careerist orientation and organisational commitment were loaded onto one factor, items for procedural justice and outcome favourability onto a second factor, and proactive behaviour onto a third factor ($\chi^2 (273) = 1011.72$, CFI = 0.84, RMSEA = 0.09). Third, two four factor models were tested. One where careerist orientation and organisational commitment were loaded onto one factor ($\chi^2 (270) = 738.53$, CFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.07), and one where

procedural justice and outcome favourability were loaded onto one factor ($\chi^2(270) = 937.49$, CFI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.09). In both these models all other items were loaded onto their respective factors. Finally, a five factor model was tested where items from the five scales were loaded onto separate factors ($\chi^2(265) = 519.93$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.05).

Fit indicators showed that the five factor model was the only one to provide a good fit on both CFI and RMSEA indices. The next best fitting model was the four-factor model where items from the careerist orientation and organizational commitment scales were loaded onto the same factor. A comparison of this model with the five factor model showed that the five factor model was a significantly better fit ($\Delta\chi^2(5) = 218.60$, $p < 0.0001$). The results of the CFA therefore gave us confidence in the discriminant validity of our five scales and we proceeded with the testing of our main hypotheses.

Main Hypotheses Testing

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations between the study variables are presented in Table 1. All subsequent tests for moderation followed the principles of Aiken and West (1991) and Dawson and Richter (2006). In this regard, all independent variables within the hypothesised model were standardised prior to testing. These standardised variables were also used to compute the two-way and three-way interaction terms entered in the regression analysis. On confirmation of a significant 3-way interaction effect, slopes were plotted and slope differences tests were carried out to explore the significance of the differences between relevant slopes following Dawson and Richter (2006). All analyses were carried out using SPSS version 16.

TABLE 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	34.54	9.93								
2. Gender	1.68	0.47	.08							
3. Tenure	8.83	6.73	.55***	-.00						
4. Seniority	1.03	0.17	.13*	-.19***	.09					
5. Outcome favourability	3.27	1.19	.17*	.15**	.05	-.01				
6. Procedural justice	3.03	1.07	.14*	.10	.10	.03	.64***			
7. Organisational commitment	3.51	0.75	.23***	.08	.15**	.03	.44***	.35***		
8. Careerist orientation	2.90	0.63	-.09	-.09	.01	-.07	-.35***	-.30***	-.50***	
9. Proactive behaviour	3.53	0.91	-.19***	.04	-.11*	.11	-.06	.04	.14*	-.09

Notes. N= 325

 $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001$

In step one, the control variables were entered. In step two, the main effects of the tested variables, organisational commitment, outcome favourability and procedural justice were entered. In step three, the three computed two-way interaction terms were entered. Finally, in step four, the three-way interaction term was entered.

Confirming Hypothesis 1, individual proactive behaviour was predicted by a three-way interaction between the perceived favourability of career development opportunities procedural justice and organisational commitment (see Table 2 and Figure 1). When career development opportunities were viewed unfavourably (rather than favourably), employee perceptions of procedural justice were strongly, and positively, associated with proactive behaviour, but only when their organisational commitment was high ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$). In line with Dawson and Richter (2006), further inspection of these interaction effects was carried out by testing for the significance of slope differences. When outcome favourability is low, the relationship between procedural justice and individual proactive behaviour is significantly different under conditions of high versus low organisational commitment ($t = 3.06, p < .01$). Under conditions of high outcome favourability no significant interaction between procedural justice and organisational commitment was observed ($t = 0.27, ns$). Full support is therefore provided for Hypothesis 1.

TABLE 2

Summary Regression Analysis for Outcome Favourability, Procedural Justice and Organisational Commitment predicting Proactive Behaviour

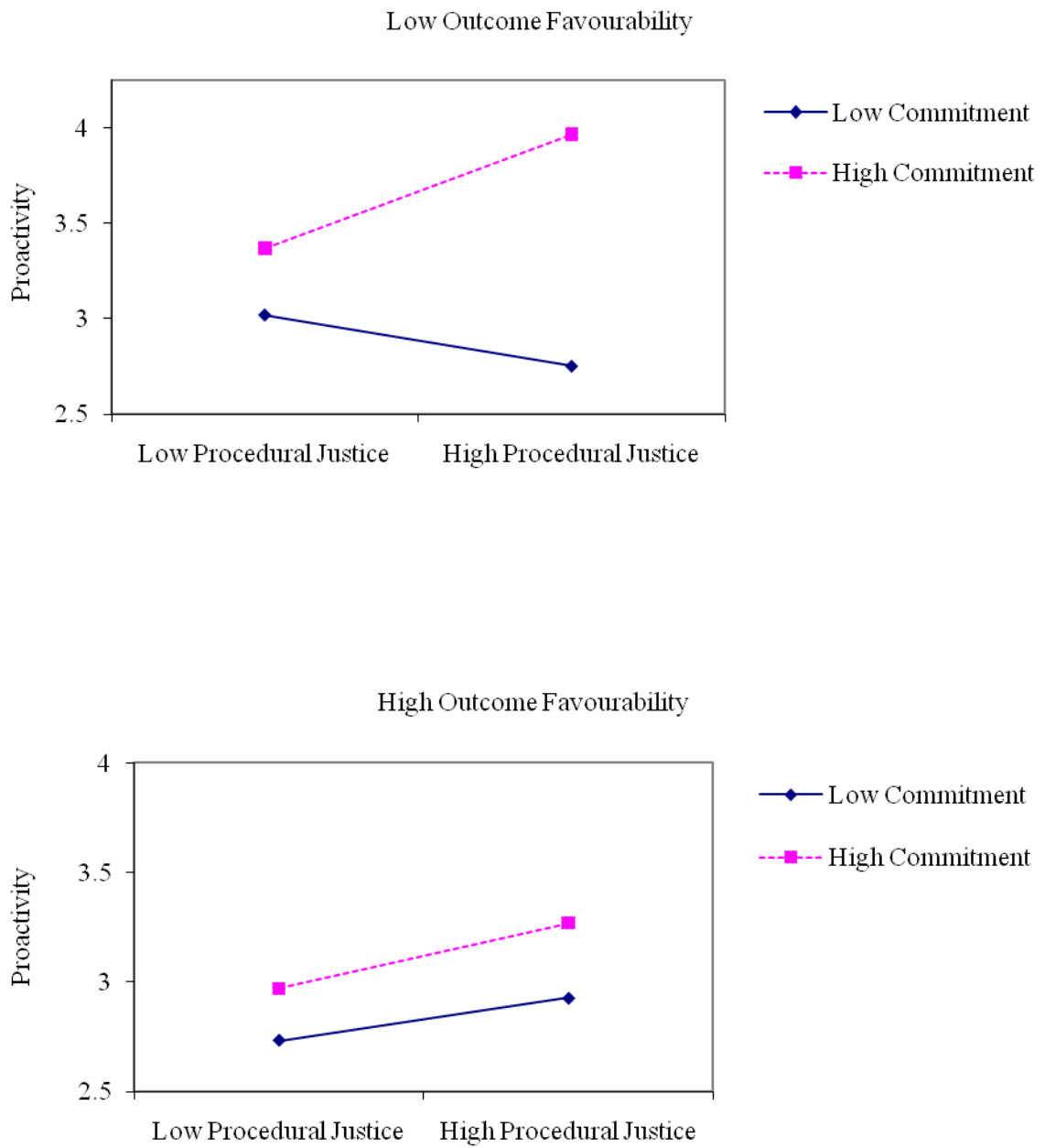
Step	Variable	Std. Error	β	Model F	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Change in Adjusted R ²
1	Gender	.11	.09	5.23***	.06	.05	.05***
	Age	.01	-.22***				
	Tenure	.01	.00				
	Seniority	.29	.15**				
2	Procedural justice (PJ)	.06	.10	5.98***	.12	.10	.05***
	Outcome favourability (OF)	.07	-.20**				
	Commitment (OC)	.05	.24***				
3	PJ x OF	.05	.00	4.72***	.13	.10	.00
	PJ x OC	.07	.17*				
	OF x OC	.06	-.13				
4	PJ x OF x OC	.05	-.16*	4.73***	.14	.11	.01*

Notes. N=325

$p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$

FIGURE 1

Simple Slope Analysis with Proactive Behaviour as Dependent Variable



Confirming Hypothesis 2, an individual's careerist orientation was also predicted by a three-way interaction between the perceived favourability of career development opportunities procedural justice and organisational commitment (see Table 3 and Figure 2). When career development opportunities were assessed unfavourably (rather than favourably) by employees, their perceptions of procedural justice were strongly, and negatively, associated with careerist orientation, but only when their organisational commitment was high ($\beta = .16, p < .05$). Again, Dawson and Richter's (2006) slope difference test was applied to further inspect the interaction. As predicted, when outcome favourability is low, the relationship between procedural justice and individual careerist orientation is significantly different under conditions of high versus low organisational commitment ($t = -2.03, p < .05$). Under conditions of high outcome favourability no significant interaction between procedural justice and organisational commitment was observed ($t = 0.38, ns$). Full support is therefore provided for Hypothesis 2.

TABLE 3

Summary Regression Analysis for Outcome Favourability, Procedural Justice and Organisational Commitment predicting Careerist Orientation

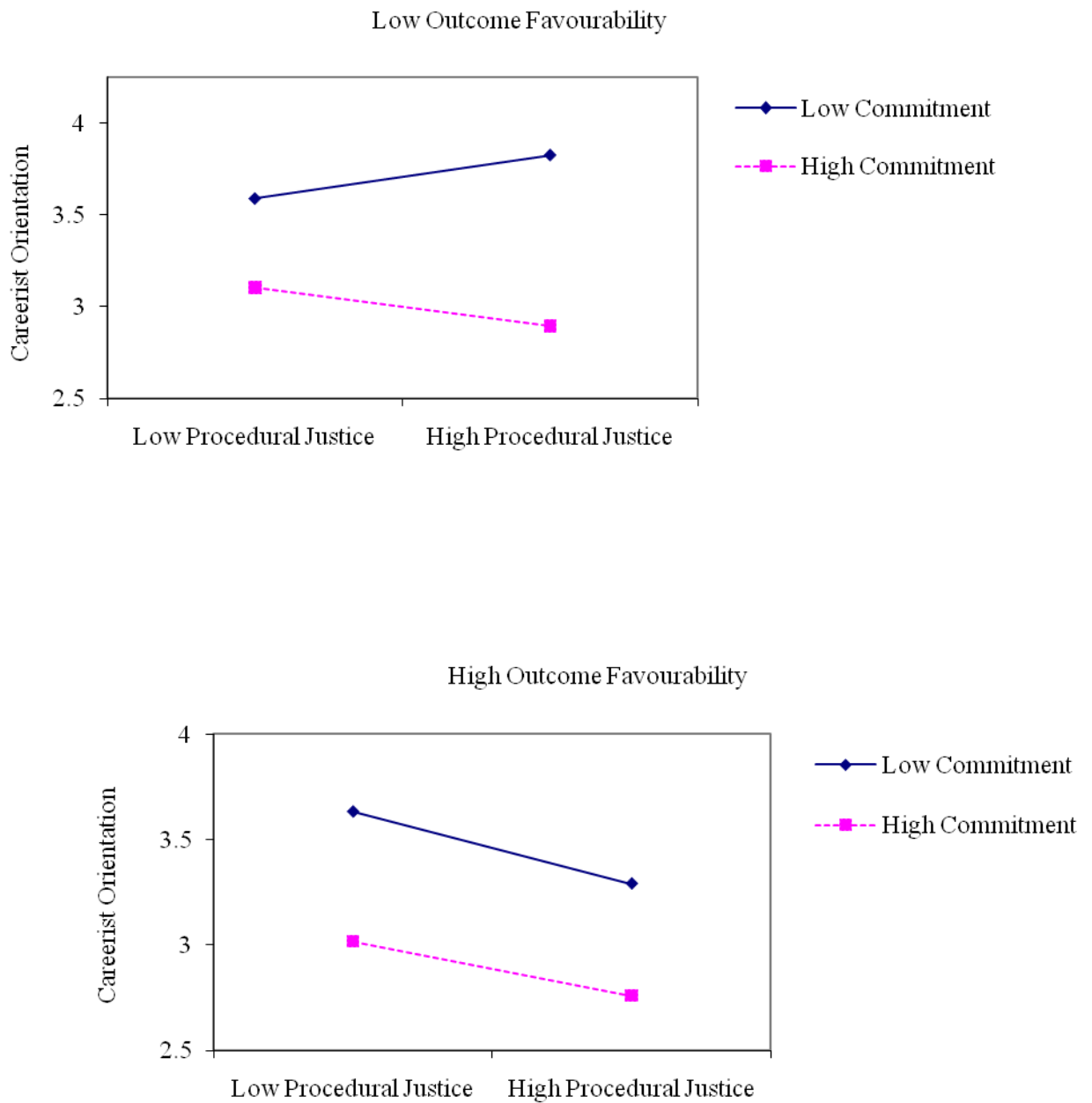
Step	Variable	Std. Error	β	Model F	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Change in Adjusted R ²
1	Gender	.08	-.09	1.90	.02	.01	.01
	Age	.00	-.11				
	Tenure	.01	.08				
	Seniority	.21	-.08				
2	Procedural justice (PJ)	.04	-.09	17.94***	.28	.27	.26***
	Outcome favourability (OF)	.04	.10				
	Commitment (OC)	.03	.43***				
3	PJ x OF	.03	-.11*	14.05***	.31	.29	.02**
	PJ x OC	.04	-.10				
	OF x OC	.04	.03				
4	PJ x OF x OC	.03	.16*	13.45***	.32	.30	.01*

Notes. N=325

$p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$

FIGURE 2

Simple Slope Analysis with Careerist Orientation as Dependent Variable



One might argue that the incremental variance explained by the interaction terms, which was just over 1% for each of the two outcome variables, though statistically significant, seems rather small. However, Evans (1985) concluded that moderator effects are so difficult to detect that even those explaining as little as 1% of variance deserves attention. Champoux and Peters (1987) and Chaplin (1991)

conducted a review of the social science literature and also reported that field study interactions typically account for about 1%-3% of the variance. We believe, therefore, that the additional amount of variance explained by the three-way interactions in this study is not only statistically reliable but comparable with those commonly reported in similar studies.

DISCUSSION

Our key hypotheses were supported. When individuals view their career development opportunities unfavourably, their perceptions of procedural justice are strongly and positively related to proactive behaviour, and strongly and negatively related to careerist orientation - but only when their levels of organisational commitment are high. It appears that the ability of procedural justice perceptions to suppress or 'buffer' the negative implications of unfavourable career development opportunities for proactive behaviour and careerist orientation is only apparent when an individual values the relationship with their employer.

Implications for Theory

These findings render essential theoretical developments in the careers literature regarding the role of *injustice* perceptions in employee evaluations of, and reactions to, organisational career management policies and practices. Past research applying organisational justice theory to a career context has been dominated by simple exchange models that assume the fair distribution of career development opportunities and the use of fair decision making procedures will be reciprocated by positive employee attitudes and behaviours (see Wooten and Cobb, 1999; Aryee and Chen, 2004; Crawshaw, 2006). The current study presents empirical support for a

more complex set of cognitions when it comes to employee reactions to the career development opportunities offered, highlighting the interaction effects of outcome favourability, procedural justice and organisational commitment when predicting an individual's careerist orientation and proactive behaviour.

This study also provides important empirical testing of the relationships between employee perceptions of their career development opportunities and individual proactive behaviour. Effective organisational career management policies and practices are those that promote employee attitudes and behaviours that are essential for organisational survival and prosperity, and increasingly individual innovation and proactivity are viewed as such (Crant, 2000; Parker *et al.*, 2006). To the authors' best knowledge, no study exists that has explored the role of career management and career development in promoting such behaviours. Initial, tentative, support is provided here for the important roles that the provision of career development opportunities and fair career management procedures may play in promoting individual proactivity.

The organisational justice literature is presented with further testing of the three-way interaction effect between outcome favourability, procedural justice and organisational commitment first proposed by Kwong and Leung (2002). By confirming this within a new national (UK) and work (career management) context, and on new previously untested dependent variables (proactive behaviour and careerist orientation), this paper provides important evidence of the generalisability of these effects. Not only are these effects apparently important within the contexts of pay negotiations and pay freeze decisions in China (Kwong and Leung, 2002), there is now evidence that they may also be central to the effective management, by employers, of the careers and career development opportunities of UK employees.

These findings also further enhance Kwong and Leung's theoretical proposition that a relational rather than instrumental (economic) perspective on procedural justice may be more relevant when trying to understand employee reactions to their employers' policies and decision-making. The fact that procedural justice only appears to matter when an individual values the relationship with their employer strongly counters an instrumental, economic, perspective on procedural justice. This is particularly interesting within the context of managing careers, where recent thinking has tended towards the emergence of a transactional psychological momentum in the employment relationship (see Herriot and Pemberton, 1996; 1997; Robinson, 1996). Within this context, careers and career management are viewed as an economic, short term and instrumental transaction, where high performance and flexibility is exchanged for access to transferable and marketable skills (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996; 1997). Within the organisation investigated in the present study, however, relational concerns in the employment contract still appear to be an important and central factor in governing employee reactions to organisational or managerial decisions regarding their career development.

Limitations and Future Research

The contributions of this research should be viewed in light of a number of potential methodological limitations, which are presented here as possible opportunities for future research and methodological development. First, all data collected within this study was self-reported and, as such, raises the potential problems of common method bias in the findings. That said it is commonly felt that concerns of common method bias may not necessarily apply to tests of moderation, with several authors suggesting that common method bias may actually work against

the detection of interaction effects, suppressing their emergence in the data analysis (e.g. McClelland and Judd, 1993). In line with a recent demonstration by Siemsen *et al.* (in press), the existence of reliable three-way interaction effects within the present study suggests that common method bias may not be a major problem. Despite this, it would be useful for future research to investigate these issues using more ‘objective’ data to avoid potential same source bias. For example, supervisor/line manager evaluations of proactive behaviour could be sought, whereas for careerist orientation self-report seems to be more appropriate.

Second, data was collected at a single point in time. The cross sectional design of this research thus limits our ability to confirm the causal direction of hypotheses. For example, it may be conceivable that those employees who are more careerist orientated are more likely to rate their career development opportunities as unfavourable and organisational procedures as unfair. Our model, however, is very much in line with the theoretical developments within the organisational justice literature and our findings confirm those of previous research (e.g. Kwong and Leung, 2002). That said, future studies may look to build upon this research by using more longitudinal designs to explore these interaction effects.

Third, the single organisation focus of this study reduces the generalisability of these findings to individuals not employed by this company. Despite confirming the findings of previous studies, it is essential that future research is carried out in different national and organisational contexts to further generate greater confidence in their generalisability.

Finally, within this study participants were asked for their overall or general opinions regarding the favourability of their career development opportunities, and the fairness of the procedures used to decide this. This ‘averaging’ of experiences might

be problematic as, for example, procedures used to decide promotional opportunities and those used to decide access to a secondment may include very different agents and processes. Despite this, the current study is in line with previous research investigating such issues (e.g., Brockner *et al.*, 1997; Aryee and Chen, 2004) and, as such, confidence should be taken in the appropriateness and accuracy of this data. However, future research may begin to focus on more specific career management interventions like reactions to promotional decisions or outcomes of mentoring relationships, thereby potentially alleviating these problems of ‘averaging’.

Implications for Practice

Despite the limitations discussed above, our results suggest a number of important practical implications. There are times when employers may be unable to provide the kinds of career development opportunities desired by their employees, perhaps in periods of economic hardship and recession. At such times employees are liable to become frustrated with their career development opportunities and are more likely to view them unfavourably. It is under these conditions that individual proactivity may be threatened, ironically when it may be needed most for organisational survival, and more careerist orientations to work may begin to emerge. The results of this study show careerism may be averted and proactive behaviours maintained, even if career development opportunities are viewed unfavourably, if employers ensure that their procedures for allocating career development opportunities are viewed as fair *and* their employees’ organisational commitment has been upheld.

One, of course, could view this scenario differently. That in times of economic hardship and recession, a lack of alternative work opportunities may lead

employees to exhibit more proactive behaviours in order to signal their value to the organisation. In this case it is high levels of continuance commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1984) that is proposed as a driver for proactive behaviour. Although our study does not explicitly test the moderating role of continuance commitment, we do present good evidence that the affective ‘want to’ aspect of organisational commitment is essential for securing proactive behaviour when desirable career development opportunities are unavailable.

It is important, therefore, that employers attract and maintain a committed workforce. Much work has already been done on the roles of high commitment or high performance work practices and HRM strategies in promoting employee engagement and organisational commitment (e.g., Huselid, 1995). This literature presents strong support for the various roles played by effective recruitment, job design, employee involvement mechanisms, reward strategies and performance management systems in promoting the high levels of affective commitment required from one’s employees (see Ichniowski *et al.*, 1997; Ricketta *et al.*, 2006).

At the same time it is equally important that managers and supervisors are made aware of the importance of fair processes and procedures in the allocation of career development opportunities, and that they gain the necessary experience of facilitating and supporting the careers of their employees. Such decision-making processes (and therefore any relevant training) should uphold the principles of procedural justice by being transparent, consistent, allowing employee input and influence, suppressing bias and being based on accurate and relevant information (Leventhal, 1980). Employees should also be provided with regular communications regarding their career development and be given quality and timely feedback on any career-related decisions affecting them (Bies and Moag, 1986).

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