Is adhering to justice rules enough? The role of charismatic qualities in perceptions of supervisors’ overall fairness

Jessica B. Rodell, Jason A. Colquitt, Michael D. Baer

University of Georgia, Terry College of Business, 412 Brooks Hall, Athens, GA 30602, United States

W.P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University, 30 E. Lemon Street, Tempe, AZ 85287, United States

ABSTRACT

Our study challenges the consensus that perceptions of overall fairness are driven solely by adherence to justice rules—that "what seems fair" depends solely on "what seems just." Building on emerging theorizing on incidental affect and fairness appraisals, we argue that charismatic qualities of supervisors can predict employee perceptions of overall fairness, even when controlling for supervisors’ justice rule adherence. We develop theory for how and when charismatic qualities could exert such effects by drawing on existing models of affect and by introducing a new construct—event frequency—that captures how frequently supervisors make resource allocation decisions. The results of a field study suggest that supervisor charismatic qualities predict overall fairness by arousing positive affect that colors fairness perceptions. The effects of charismatic qualities become stronger as decision events become more frequent, presumably because the information processing associated with those events provides additional opportunities for fairness to be infused with affect.

1. Introduction

"My boss is a fair boss." For three decades, the consensus in the justice literature has been that a sense of fairness is fostered by justice rule adherence. Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry (1980: 194) argued, "...judgments of fairness involve contrasting an existing situation to an abstract standard or rule...Perceived fairness exists when the actual distribution or procedure is congruent with the ideal standard." Leventhal et al.’s (1980) analysis focused on procedural justice rules (e.g., consistency, accuracy, bias suppression, correctability, representativeness, ethicality) and distributive justice rules (e.g., equity, equality, need). In the years since, the landscape has expanded to include interpersonal justice rules (e.g., respect, propriety) and informational justice rules (e.g., truthfulness, justification) (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993). Thus, supervisors should be viewed as fair if they act consistently, accurately, equitably, respectfully, and truthfully.

That summarizing statement can be seen quite clearly in the burgeoning literature on overall fairness. Overall fairness is a Gestalt sense that supervisors have behaved as they should (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Ambrose, Wo, & Griffith, 2015). It is a global perception of the appropriateness of one’s supervisor that is thought to lay downstream from a supervisor’s adherence to justice rules (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Cropanzano, Fortin, & Kirk, 2015). Scholars have used items such as, "Overall, I’m treated fairly by [my supervisor]" (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009, p. 493) and "All in all, this [supervisor] treats me fairly" (Kim and Leung (2007, p. 94) to capture this overall evaluation. Ambrose et al.’s (2015) review of the overall fairness literature noted that justice rule adherence has tended to serve as the sole predictor of overall fairness (e.g., Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Barclay & Kiefer, 2014; Holtz & Harold, 2009; Jones & Martens, 2009; Kim & Leung, 2007; Konovsky & Folger, 1991; Patel, Budhwar, & Varma, 2012). From this perspective, the assumption is that overall fairness is justice-laden.

Although the consensus that overall fairness is driven solely by justice rule adherence is foundational to the literature—going all the way back to Leventhal et al.’s (1980) theorizing—we believe it is incomplete and problematic. Emerging theorizing hints at the role that incidental affect might play in the formation of fairness perceptions (Barsky, Kaplan, & Beal, 2011). Positive feelings that have nothing to do with justice rules could “bleed into” those assessments. Moreover, inductive work hints at the role that supervisor traits might play in assessments of fairness (Hollensbe, Khazanchi, & Masterson, 2008). When employees were interviewed about what they drew on to gauge the fairness of their
supervisor, one remarked, “Just her overall personality, the way she comes off…” Although not yet empirically tested, such theorizing suggests that assessments of overall fairness might be laden with “something else.”

What “something else’s” might be worthy of investigation? We drew on Barsky et al.’s (2011) and Hollensbe et al.’s (2008) theorizing to focus on supervisor traits that have affective relevance. Although a number of traits could fit those criteria, including extraversion and trait positive affectivity, we focused on charismatic qualities. This focus allowed us to explore one of the most salient traits in the leadership literature—a literature that has been surprisingly disconnected from justice research (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003). Our study develops theory suggesting that assessments of overall fairness are charisma-laden, not merely justice-laden. Following Potts (2009: 2), we define charismatic qualities as “special innate qualities that set individuals apart and draw others to them.”

Our theorizing integrates cognitive-motivational-relational theory (Lazarus, 1991) with the affect infusion model (Forgas, 1995). Cognitive-motivational-relational theory explains how and why a given stimulus can wind up having affective consequences. It is therefore ideally suited to explaining why supervisor charismatic qualities could trigger affect on the part of an employee. Rather than explaining how affect arises, the affect infusion model starts with affect and explains how and why it can color judgments and perceptions—like overall fairness. We therefore apply formulations that live, primarily, “upstream” and “downstream” of affect. Importantly, our theorizing argues that charismatic qualities could help shape overall fairness even when controlling for justice rule adherence (see Fig. 1).

We also build theory by introducing a new construct: event frequency. This construct captures how often supervisors make decisions about pay, rewards, evaluations, promotions, and assignments. As shown in Fig. 1, we theorize that event frequency influences when overall fairness should be more justice-laden or charisma-laden. More frequent decision events mean more justice data; less frequent decision events mean less justice data. Our results will show that event frequency shapes the effects of justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities in a counterintuitive way.

Developing theory about when overall fairness is more justice-laden and when it is more charisma-laden is important, empirically, practically, and theoretically. Empirically, justice scholars have begun including only measures of overall fairness in their studies—eschewing the assessment of justice dimensions altogether (e.g., Bobocel, 2013; Jackson, Rossi, Hoover, & Johnson, 2012; Priesemuth, Arnaud, & Schminke, 2013; Whiteside & Barclay, 2013). Such studies assume that overall fairness represents a parsimonious aggregate of the justice dimensions and their effects. If overall fairness is also charisma-laden, however, those studies may draw conclusions that are conceptually incomplete. Indeed, Ambrose et al. (2015) noted that the justice dimensions often explain less than half the variance in overall fairness, suggesting that there are other drivers of fairness perceptions that scholars must begin to understand.

Practically, supervisors may be evaluated on the overall fairness perceived by their employees, either in 360-degree contexts or in formal appraisals by their bosses. One leading 360-degree tool assesses supervisors on a number of items that possess fairness content (Dalal, Lin, Smith, & Zickar, 2008). Such assessments could trigger decisions about justice training—developmental attempts to improve justice rule adherence (Skarlicki & Latham, 2005). If overall fairness is also charisma-laden, such efforts may wind up focusing more on “unmagnetic” supervisors than “unjust” supervisors.

Theoretically, the assumption that fairness is driven solely by justice rule adherence is held by many theories in the literature—including equity theory (Adams, 1965), the relational model (Tyler & Lind, 1992), fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 2001), and uncertainty management theory (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002)—as well as organizing models in narrative reviews (Colquitt, 2012;
2. Theory development

Holmlenbe et al. (2008) were among the first to wonder whether the formation of global assessments of fairness might be based on more than just the procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice rules at play in the literature. Their qualitative study asked employees about the information they draw upon to gauge their supervisor's fairness. Although the participants voiced a number of responses that captured justice rules, they also pointed to the importance of supervisor traits.

Drawing from Barsky et al.'s (2011) theory piece on the formation of overall fairness assessments, we were particularly interested in supervisor traits that could have an affective relevance. Those authors argued that incidental emotions and moods (i.e., affect that had no causal connection to supervisor decision making) could bleed into assessments of supervisors' fairness. The operative question for us as we developed our theory was then, which supervisor traits could foster that sort of incidental affect? Focusing on charismatic qualities allowed us to incorporate one of the more visible traits in the leadership literature, thereby capitalizing on an opportunity for more justice-leadership integration (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003).

Klein and House (1995: 183) argued that charismatic qualities can act as a “spark” with clear affective relevance:

“Charisma is a fire, a fire that ignites followers' energy and commitment, producing results above and beyond the call of duty. Charisma is the product of three elements: (1) a spark—a leader who has charismatic qualities, (2) flammable material—followers who are open or susceptible to charisma, and (3) oxygen—an environment conducive to charisma. Charisma is not the spark. It is not the flammable material. And it is not the oxygen. Charisma is the product of their union. Charisma resides in the relationship between a leader who has charismatic qualities and those of his or her followers who are open to charisma, within a charisma-conducive environment.”

Klein and House's (1995) quote hints at some nuances in jargon that are important to clarify. The term “charisma” can be used in two different ways. One way references particular gifts and qualities that set individuals apart and draw others to them (i.e., charismatic traits). As described in Potts's (2009) historical review of the term, this is the sense that can be traced back to Greek mythology and Christian writings before being used in Weber’s theorizing on the sociology of authority (Weber, 1947). The gifts and qualities that define charismatic individuals and draw others to them are thought to include magnetism, passion, energy, and enthusiasm, among others (Lindholm, 1990; Potts, 2009; Riggio, 1987; Willner, 1984).

The other way that the term “charisma” is used is in reference to follower perceptions of particular leader styles and actions within a focal organizational context (i.e., charismatic behaviors). This is the sense that is used in taxonomies of transformational and charismatic leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Given our focus on supervisor traits with affective relevance, our focus is on the original use of the term. For clarity, however, we use the “charismatic qualities” label to reinforce our focus on traits rather than styles or behaviors.

2.1. Charismatic qualities, affect, and overall fairness

Drawing on Lazarus's (1991) cognitive-motivational-relational theory, we theorize that charismatic qualities can arouse the sort of incidental positive affect capable of coloring perceptions of overall fairness. According to Lazarus (1991), a given stimulus can trigger positive affect when it is perceived to have three qualities. The first is that the stimulus is relevant to personal goals—that it has some importance to the individual. The second is that the stimulus is congruent with those goals—that it facilitates (rather than thwarts) progress toward fulfilling them. The third is that the stimulus is relevant to aspects of the self—to one's sense of esteem, meaning, morality, and well-being.

Can these theoretical mechanisms support the notion that charismatic qualities should trigger positive affect? Examining that question requires some sense of what “personal goals” might be for working individuals. In a recent test of cognitive-motivational-relational theory, Scott, Colquitt, Paddock, and Judge (2010) conceptualized personal goals using a taxonomy of universal needs. That taxonomy—taken from Cropanzano et al. (2001) and based on earlier work by Williams (1997)—included four goals. Belongingness goals reflect a need to forge strong bonds, self-regard goals reflect a desire to maintain self-worth, meaning goals reflect a need to cultivate purpose, and control goals reflect the desire to predict one's future. Importantly, all of these goals are viewed as important across individuals and relevant to aspects of the self—thereby supplying two of Lazarus's (1991) three qualities. In a sample of information technology employees, Scott et al. (2010) showed that perceptions of progress on these goals were strongly related to positive affect.

For our purposes, the question then becomes whether charismatic qualities are congruent with progress on belongingness goals, self-regard goals, meaning goals, and control goals. Taking each in turn, the magnetism possessed by charismatic supervisors should draw employees more closely to them, enhancing the sense of attachment that underlies belongingness goals. Indirect support for this assertion comes from work linking charismatic styles and behaviors to employee perceptions of feeling “connected” at work (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007). In terms of self-regard, Scott and Judge (2009) argued that interacting with a popular person can elevate the esteem felt by an employee. In this way, having a charismatic supervisor can give employees the chance to “bask in reflected glory” (Cialdini et al., 1976). With respect to meaning, Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) used inductive techniques to identify multiple facets of meaningful work. One of those was inspiration—something that should be supplied by supervisors who are passionate and energetic. Finally, a powerful and optimistic supervisor should make employees feel more in control of their futures. A series of laboratory experiments linked perceptions of power to “illusory control”—the sense that even random events were subject to influence (Fast, Gruenfeld, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009). Charismatic qualities should therefore be congruent with
Hypothesis 1. Charismatic supervisor qualities are positively related to employee state positive affect.

Any affect that is aroused by charismatic qualities would be labeled “incidental” by Barsky et al. (2011) because it is not triggered by justice rules. Why, then, should such affect color perceptions of overall fairness? Forgas’s (1995) affect infusion model can provide one answer. This model describes two different mechanisms through which state affect can color judgments and perceptions. One mechanism is the affect-as-information principle, where feeling states get directly incorporated into judgments, acting as a shortcut for evaluating a target (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). This principle represents an error in inference where the question, “how do I feel about this person’s actions” gets muddled by “how do I feel right now?” In tests of the model, Forgas and Moylan (1987) found that showing participants happy vs. sad films resulted in systematic differences in survey reactions. Within the justice realm, Van den Bos (2003) showed that a previous affective state—such as one aroused through priming—had a stronger impact on procedural and distributive fairness perceptions when information on relevant justice rules was missing. When participants lacked the relevant information to judge fairness, they allowed their mood states to “fill in the gaps.”

The affect-as-information principle could be relevant to overall fairness perceptions because the model argues that the principle is especially influential with global, evaluative judgments (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). The model also argues, however, that affect-as-information is more likely when the judgment is of little personal relevance—such as filling out a research survey after watching a movie (Forgas & Moylan, 1987). Fairness, in contrast, is relevant to a number of fundamental personal needs (Crapanzano et al., 2001). The affect infusion model would therefore argue that a second mechanism is better able to explain how affect could color perceptions of overall fairness. That mechanism is the affect-priming principle, where affect creates selective attention, giving primacy to the encoding and retrieval of information that matches the current feeling state (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). This mechanism looms larger when judgments are more critical to the person.

The affect-priming principle is built on the notion that the activation of an “emotion node” in the brain results in the activation of memory structures connected to that node (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). In this way, a positive feeling state makes positive memories more salient and retrievable. A given employee may possess many positive memories of a given supervisor, with relatively few of those connected to particular justice rules. For example, an employee may have taken an especially interesting business trip with the supervisor, or enjoyed an especially good meal with him or her, or served together on a particularly meaningful work team. Affect-priming would make those memories—irrelevant as they are to justice rules—especially “sticky” as perceptions of overall fairness are constructed. In support of such reasoning, Forgas and Bower (1987) showed that positive feeling states amplified the connection between positive details and impressions formed about a person. We therefore expect that positive affect will shape the construction of overall fairness perceptions in such a way that supervisors wind up being judged as more fair.

Hypothesis 2. Employee state positive affect is positively related to employee perceptions of overall fairness.

Taken together with the above arguments, we expect an indirect effect of charismatic qualities on overall fairness through the mechanism of state positive affect. When an employee considers the fairness of his or her supervisor, that evaluation could be colored by positive feelings triggered by the supervisor’s magnetism, energy, and enthusiasm. Those positive feelings may prime other positive images and narratives about the supervisor, thereby casting fairness in a more favorable light. As shown in Fig. 1, we expect these relationships to emerge even when controlling for justice rule adherence (i.e., procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice rules).

Hypothesis 3. Charismatic supervisor qualities have a positive indirect effect on employee perceptions of overall fairness through employee state positive affect.

2.2. Moderating role of event frequency

Assuming our results show that perceptions of overall fairness are driven, to some extent, by charismatic qualities, a new question becomes critical. When does overall fairness become more “charisma-laden”? When and how does overall fairness make a stronger case for overall fairness perceptions because the model argues that the principle is especially influential with global, evaluative judgments (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001)? The “extensiveness” of the processing reflects the sheer amount of information that is relevant to a judgment. The “constructiveness” of the processing reflects whether the information must be elaborated on and transformed to create a judgment. Although a number of variables could represent situational demands that result in more extensive and constructive processing, we focused on one: event frequency. Descriptions of overall fairness describe it as a judgment about entities that is based on a string of events (Ambrose et al., 2015; Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Crapanzano et al., 2001, 2015). When event frequency is high, supervisors are often making decisions about pay, rewards, evaluations, promotions, or assignments—providing a bevy of justice-relevant data. When event frequency is low, those kinds of decisions are few and far between.

One might be tempted to argue that more frequent decision events will cause charisma-triggered affect to retreat in importance for overall fairness, because more “good hard data” is supplied on justice rules. Interestingly, however, the logic of the affect infusion model makes the opposite prediction. As decision events become more frequent, the information relevant to overall fairness becomes more extensive. Moreover, more frequent events bring more cases where fairness perceptions are constructed from some elaboration of (and transformation of) justice-relevant data. The end result should be more opportunities for overall fairness to be infused with affect through the affect-priming principle (Forgas, 1995, 2002; Forgas & George, 2001). As Forgas and George (2001) summarized, “In fact, affect infusion may be enhanced when more extensive and constructive processing is employed, a counterintuitive prediction that has been confirmed in numerous experiments...This occurs because more extensive and elaborate processing also increases the likelihood that affectively primed information will be inadvertently incorporated into the judgmental and behavior planning process...” (p. 12).

Consider an example where frequent organizational changes have resulted in a faster pace of decision making about pay,
rewards, evaluations, promotions, or assignments. Each of those types of decisions can be judged against no fewer than thirteen justice rules (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993; Leventhal et al., 1980). That situation therefore creates more extensive information processing. Moreover, perceptions of adherence to those rules may be governed by comparisons to past standards, relevant counterfactuals, or comparisons with other salient employees (Adams, 1965; Colquitt, Zapata-Phelan, & Roberson, 2005; Folger & Cropanzano, 2001; Lind, 2001). Those alternatives create the additional demands of elaboration and transformation in an effort to arrive at an overall fairness judgment. The end result should be more extensive opportunities for affect infusion given the more intense information processing. Thus, overall fairness should be more “charisma-laden” when event frequency is high and more “justice-laden” when it is low.

Hypothesis 4. The positive indirect effect of charismatic supervisor qualities on employee perceptions of overall fairness is moderated by event frequency, such that the indirect effect is stronger when event frequency is high than when event frequency is low.

Hypothesis 5. The positive relationship between supervisor justice rule adherence and employee perceptions of overall fairness is moderated by event frequency, such that the relationship is weaker when event frequency is high than when event frequency is low.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedure

Participants were recruited for a two-wave field study through postings on Craigslist, an online classified advertisement system. The research opportunity and requirements were included in the part-time employment listings in 10 major cities on the east coast of the United States. Interested individuals were directed to a website that provided more details about the study and a link to informed consent and registration forms. Eligibility was restricted to individuals who were working full-time (35+ hours per week). Registrants consented to complete two online surveys and to provide the researchers with the contact information of a coworker who was also willing to participate in the study. Coworkers were required to be co-located with the participant and to have the same supervisor. Participants who completed both surveys were paid $10, with coworkers receiving $5 for their participation.

All 388 people who completed the registration form were emailed the first survey. We emailed a separate survey to their coworkers at the same time. Of the registered participants, 278 completed the first survey, for a Time 1 response rate of 72 percent. A second survey, sent four weeks after completion of the first survey, was completed by 248 participants, resulting in an 89 percent response rate at Time 2. We received responses from 215 of the participants' coworkers, for a coworker response rate of 55 percent. After listwise deletion of missing data, complete data was available for 174 participants, representing an overall response rate of 45 percent. We took several steps to verify that the employee and coworkers were indeed different people. We communicated with the coworkers directly, rather than using the employee as an intermediary. Those communications included the sending of the survey links but also reminder emails, discussion of payment issues, and various question answering. We also required the employee and coworkers to have separate physical mailing addresses, as payment was sent via snail mail.

The average age of participants was 32.6 years ($SD = 10.70$). Participants had been employed by their organizations for an average of 4.0 years ($SD = 3.63$) and had worked under their supervisors for an average of 3.0 years ($SD = 2.74$). Sixty-five percent of the participants were female. Participants’ coworkers had an average age of 33.9 years ($SD = 11.25$) and were 57% female. Coworkers’ average tenure with their organizations was 4.2 years ($SD = 3.98$) and 2.8 years ($SD = 2.27$) with their supervisors. On average, coworkers reported having worked with the study’s focal participants for an average of 2.98 years ($SD = 2.28$).

The coworker survey at Time 1 included ratings of justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities. The justice scales asked coworkers to consider the supervisor’s rule adherence with the focal employee (rather than the justice experienced by the coworkers themselves). Likewise, the charismatic qualities scale asked coworkers to rate the focal employee’s supervisor. We utilized coworker ratings for these variables to minimize dispositional and transient sources of common method bias when connecting those variables to employee ratings of positive affect and overall fairness (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, for a discussion of such issues). We also felt it was important to measure justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities using the same source, to avoid “unfair comparisons” when contrasting the relative strengths of their relationships to overall fairness (Cooper & Richardson, 1986).

The employee survey at Time 1 included ratings of event frequency. In addition, given that coworker reports of justice are uncommon in the literature, we assessed employee ratings of justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities as well, in order to gauge robustness for our hypothesis testing. On the one hand, one might presume that concepts like justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities would be “in the eye of the beholder,” with employees and coworkers exhibiting little convergence in their perceptions. On the other hand, justice rule adherence is more descriptive (and less evaluative) than overall fairness, and research on justice climate has revealed strong intraclass correlations (ICC’s) between sources (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Importantly, as detailed below, the coworker- and employee-reports of justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities revealed strong convergence, with our hypothesis tests robust to decisions about sources. One month after completing the Time 1 survey, employees filled out the Time 2 survey, which included the measures of positive affect and overall fairness.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Justice rule adherence

Colquitt’s (2001) procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational scales were used to assess justice rule adherence, with all items using a 5-point scale (1 = a very small extent to 5 = a very large extent). For the coworker-reported version, we modified the items and instructions to ask coworkers to rate the perceived justice rule adherence of the supervisor vis a vis the focal employee—not vis a vis the coworker him or herself. Although the employees and coworkers in our sample reported to the same supervisor, we also edited the survey instructions to ensure that responses were made with the focal employee's supervisor in mind.

The procedural justice instructions read, “The questions below refer to the procedures your coworker’s supervisor uses to make decisions about the pay, rewards, evaluations, promotions, and assignments for your coworker. To what extent”: The seven items included “Is your coworker able to express his/her views during those procedures,” and “Is your coworker able to appeal the decisions arrived at by those procedures?” ($x = 0.92$). The distributive justice instructions read, “The questions below refer to the out-
comes your coworker receives from his/her supervisor, such as pay, rewards, evaluations, promotions, and assignments. To what extent?”. The four items included, “Do those outcomes reflect the effort your coworker has put into his/her work?” (α = 0.96). The interpersonal justice instructions read, “The questions below refer to the interpersonal interactions your coworker has with his/her supervisor as decision-making procedures are implemented. To what extent?”. The four items included, “Does the supervisor treat your coworker in a polite manner?” (α = 0.95). Finally, the informational justice instructions read, “The questions below refer to the explanations your coworker receives from his/her supervisor as decision-making procedures are implemented. To what extent?”. The five items included, “Is the supervisor candid when communicating with your coworker?” (α = 0.93).

As noted above, employees were also asked to assess their supervisor’s justice rule adherence in order to assess inter-rater reliability and robustness of hypothesis tests. These items were worded in the typical fashion (Colquitt, 2001), with strong coefficient alphas for each scale (α = 0.94 for procedural justice; α = 0.96 for distributive justice; α = 0.95 for interpersonal justice; α = 0.93 for informational justice). Importantly, our results revealed strong inter-rater reliability for the coworker and employee ratings of justice rule adherence, with ICC(2)'s of 0.73, 0.76, 0.80, and 0.75 for procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice, respectively. Such levels are exceptionally high given that there were only two raters (Bliese, 2000).

3.2.2. Charismatic qualities

We measured supervisors’ charismatic qualities using a seven-item scale created by Judge (2012), with anchors ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Following the same procedure employed with justice rule adherence, we reminded respondents to respond to survey items with their coworker's supervisor in mind. The items included “The supervisor has a magnetic presence,” “The supervisor draws others toward him/her,” “The supervisor is a ‘ball of fire’: forceful, energetic, lively,” “The supervisor acts in a dynamic and engaging manner,” “The supervisor communicates in a powerful and captivating way,” “The supervisor ‘infects’ others with his/her optimistic enthusiasm,” and “The supervisor shows passion for things in which he/she believes.” (α = 0.95). As with justice rule adherence, we also asked employees to rate their supervisors’ charismatic qualities in order to assess inter-rater reliability and robustness of hypothesis tests. The employee report had a strong alpha (α = 0.96) and had strong inter-rater reliability with the coworker report, with an ICC(2) of 0.76.

Given that this scale had not been previously validated, we first tested its content validity using Hinkin and Tracey’s (1999) quantitative approach. We recruited 149 employees from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014) to assess the degree of correspondence between our scale items and Potts’s (2009: 2) definition of charisma. This involved participants responding to the items not as a substantive study participant would, but instead using this scale: 1 = Item is an extremely bad match to the definition to 7 = Item is an extremely good match to the definition. Thus, the respondents are literally rating the degree to which “My supervisor has a magnetic presence,” “My supervisor is a ‘ball of fire’: forceful, energetic, lively,” and so forth are valid indicators of “special innate qualities that set individuals apart and draw others to them” (Potts, 2009: 2). To provide a frame of reference for our definitional correspondence results, we also included an “is charismatic” item for comparison purposes. Our results revealed a mean definitional correspondence level of 5.43 for our items. Those means compare favorably to other uses of this technique (Colquitt, Long, Rodell, & Halvorsen-Ganeapola, 2015; Gardner, 2005; Hinkin & Tracey, 1999; Long, Baer, Colquitt, Outlaw, & Dhensa-Khalon, 2015; Rodell, 2013). Moreover, the definitional correspondence for our “is charismatic” item was 5.95, meaning that the scale items had a content validity that was 91% as high as that direct item.

We then tested the scale’s convergent, discriminant, and nomological validities. We recruited 209 additional employees from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014) to complete our charismatic qualities scale, alongside measures of potential correlates. Given our focus on the transmission of affect within supervisor-employee dyads, we focused on correlates that have affective or interpersonal content. Those included measures of charismatic leadership in both Bass and Avolio’s (1995) terms (i.e., idealized influence and inspirational motivation) and Conger, Kanungo, Menon, and Mathur’s (1997) terms (i.e., strategic vision and articulation). Those also included DeYoung, Quilty, and Peterson’s (2007) dual facets of three Big Five dimensions: extraversion (enthusiasm and assertiveness), agreeableness (politeness and compassion), and neuroticism (volatility and withdrawal).

We subjected these scales to a confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). The factor loadings for our charismatic qualities items ranged from 0.61 to 0.85 with an average of 0.75. Although the fit of the overall model is less relevant because eight of the nine scales are not the subject of this validation, we compared that fit to models that constrained covariances with charismatic qualities to 1.0 or −1.0, depending on the sign of the relationship. The fit of the model was as follows: χ²(1559) = 3574.15, p < 0.001; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.82; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.074; root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.079. All eight of the constraints harmed model fit, with χ² difference values ranging from 21.73 for Conger et al.’s (1997) charismatic leadership (df = 1, p < 0.001) to 1093.74 for politeness (df = 1, p < 0.001), with an average χ² difference of 178.43. Our scale was therefore shown to be sufficiently distinct from those correlates. We then calculated Weston and Rosenthal’s (2003) index of nomological validity by comparing the expected correlations between our charismatic qualities scale and its correlates with the actual correlations revealed in our data. As shown in Table 1, we drew on Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken’s (2003) benchmarks of 0.30 and 0.50 for moderate and large effect sizes for our expected correlations, with 0.70 being used for an effect size representing convergent validity. Weston and Rosenthal (2003) argue that the correlation between expected and actual correlation values provides one estimate of nomological validity. That correlation value for Table 1 was 0.97, showing that the charismatic qualities scale behaved as expected.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlate scale</th>
<th>Expected correlation</th>
<th>Actual correlation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic Leadership: Bass and Avolio (1995)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charismatic Leadership: Conger et al. (1997)</td>
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<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extraversion: Enthusiasm</td>
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<td>Extraversion: Assertiveness</td>
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<td>Agreeableness: Politeness</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
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<td>Agreeableness: Compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroticism: Volatility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroticism: Withdrawal</td>
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<td>−0.53</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 209. The correlation between the expected correlations and the actual correlations is 0.97, reflecting strong nomological validity (Weston & Rosenthal, 2003). * p < 0.05, two-tailed.
3.2.3. Event frequency
Employees assessed the frequency with which their supervisors made decisions about justice-relevant events using a five-item measure created for this study. Employees were asked, “How frequently does your supervisor make decisions about the following things?” (1 = very infrequently to 5 = very frequently). The five items included “Pay,” “Rewards,” “Evaluations,” “Promotions,” and “Assignments” (α = 0.83). Note that those items match the decision events that are referenced in the instructions for Colquitt’s (2001) measure. Although these five items reflect distinct types of decisions, they should result in internally consistent responses for two reasons. First, environments where human resource decisions are made quarterly or twice a year should have more frequent instances of all of those decisions, relative to environments were such decisions are annual. Second, many human resource events have elements of multiple decisions, as when an evaluation results in a promotion that winds up changing pay, rewards, and assignments. To the degree that this is so, increases in the frequency of any one decision should be associated with increases in the other decisions.

3.2.4. State positive affect
We measured state positive affect with the ten-adjective scale from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form (PANAS-X, Watson & Clark, 1994). Participants were asked to indicate next to each item the extent to which they “typically feel this way when thinking about or interacting with your immediate supervisor” (1 = very slightly or not at all to 5 = extremely). Sample adjectives include enthusiastic, proud, excited, inspired, and interested (α = 0.97).

3.2.5. Overall fairness
Employees assessed the overall fairness of their supervisor using three items from Ambrose and Schminke’s (2009) measure. Their scale includes three items that focus on employees’ own fairness experiences and three items that focus on the experiences of others more generally. We utilized only the former given our focus on employee perceptions of their own treatment. This use of the “personal experience” subscale is something Ambrose and Schminke (2009) explored in their own validation work. The items were, “Overall, I am treated fairly by my supervisor,” “In general, the treatment I receive from my supervisor is fair,” and “In general, I can count on my supervisor to be fair” (α = 0.96; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

3.2.6. Control variables
During our analyses we investigated several control variables, including the employee’s age, race, and gender. We also explored controlling for the employee’s trait affect, which we assessed using measures of extraversion and neuroticism (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006). Adding these controls did not alter the results of our tests. Accordingly, we followed suggested recommendations regarding the use of control variables (Becker, 2005; Carlson & Wu, 2012), and did not include these variables in our final analyses.

3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis
To verify the factor structure of the survey measures we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). Given that distinctions between specific justice dimensions were not relevant to our hypotheses, we modeled justice rule adherence as a second-order latent variable, consistent with recent precedent and recommendations (Colquitt, 2012; Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008; Liao, 2007). Specifically, we modeled the procedural, distributive, informational, and personal, and informational justice facets as latent factors with item-level indicators. We then modeled justice rule adherence as a latent factor indicated by the four latent justice factors. All other latent factors were modeled with item-level indicators. Our hypothesized five-factor model—justice rule adherence, charismatic qualities, state positive affect, overall fairness, and event frequency—provided a good fit to the data. Fit levels for the model with coworker-reported justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities were: \( \chi^2 (931) = 1800.72, p < 0.001; \) CFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.049; SRMR = 0.073. Fit levels for the model with employee-reported justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities were: \( \chi^2 (931) = 1844.69, p < 0.001; \) CFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.054; SRMR = 0.075.

We compared the fit of these models to models where no distinction was drawn between justice rule adherence and overall fairness. Scholars have argued that perceptions of overall fairness are based on an assessment of justice rule adherence, creating an antecedent-consequence relationship between the two conceptualizations (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Ambrose et al., 2015; Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Cropanzano et al., 2015). For that assumption to be tenable, justice rule adherence and overall fairness would need to be distinguishable in a measurement model sense. We tested that “distinguishability” by constraining the path between the latent justice rule adherence and overall fairness variables to be 1.00. A \( \chi^2 \) difference test showed that this parameter constraint harmed model fit with both coworker-rated justice rule adherence (\( \chi^2 (1) = 6.88, p < 0.05 \)) and employee-rated justice rule adherence (\( \chi^2 (1) = 21.59, p < 0.05 \)). Given that justice rule adherence was also strongly related to positive affect in the employee-rated model, we also tested the distinguishability between these variables. A \( \chi^2 \) difference test showed that constraining the path between latent employee-rated justice rule adherence and positive affect to be 1.00 harmed model fit: \( \chi^2 (1) = 6.47, p < 0.05 \).

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics
The descriptive statistics and correlations among our variables are shown in Table 2. Coefficient alphas are shown along the diagonal in parentheses.

4.2. Tests of hypotheses
We tested the model in Fig. 1 with structural equation modeling using Mplus 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). As in the CFA, justice was modeled as a second-order latent variable and all other variables were modeled with item-level indicators. Following recommendations for examining latent interactions within structural equation modeling, we utilized the XWITH command in Mplus (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000; also see Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, in press). This command employs the latent moderated structural equation procedure (LMS) to produce estimates with robust standard errors that are unbiased, reliable, and normally distributed (Kelava et al., 2011; Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, in press). The direct effect of event frequency on overall fairness was modeled so that the product terms could be correctly interpreted (Cohen et al., 2003). We also included a direct

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1 As noted by an anonymous reviewer, interpersonal justice may be less connected to the kinds of specific decisions reflected in our event frequency measure. To the degree that this is so, it may be appropriate to exercise discretion in deciding which justice dimensions to include in our analyses. We therefore explored whether our results differed if justice rule adherence used only procedural, distributive, and informational indicators. Our results were robust to this modeling decision, so we included all four dimensions.
path from charismatic qualities to overall fairness because that path is necessary when testing indirect effects (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Finally, we included a path from justice rule adherence to positive affect, consistent with past research (Colquitt et al., 2013).

When using the LMS approach in Mplus, none of the typically-reported fit indices are calculated because they require the comparison of the specified model to an unstructured model. When a model includes latent variable interactions, the specified model is not nested within the unstructured model, making the typical indices inappropriate (Kelava et al., 2011; Klein & Sermelleh-Engel, 2010). Accordingly, scholars have suggested that researchers first report the fit of a “baseline” model that includes the main effect of the moderator on the dependent variable but does not include the latent interaction terms (Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, in press). Researchers can then compare the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) from the full model to the model that does not include the latent interaction terms. A model with lower AIC numbers indicates a reduction in information loss and, therefore, a better-fitting model.

Using coworker-reported justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities, our baseline model without the latent interaction terms provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (932) = 1804.00, p < 0.001; \text{CFI} = 0.90; \text{SRMR} = 0.051; \text{RMSEA} = 0.073; \text{AIC} = 16662.05$. In the full model, AIC was 16650.20 ($\Delta \text{AIC} = 11.85$), with this lower AIC indicating that including the interaction terms improved model fit. The unstandardized path coefficients from the Mplus output with coworker-reported predictors are shown in Fig. 2. Using employee-reported justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities, our baseline model without the latent interaction terms also provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (932) = 1845.36, p < 0.001; \text{CFI} = 0.90; \text{SRMR} = 0.054; \text{RMSEA} = 0.075; \text{AIC} = 16990.32$. In the full model, AIC was 16977.49 ($\Delta \text{AIC} = 12.83$), with this lower AIC also indicating that including the interaction terms improved model fit. The unstandardized path coefficients from the Mplus output with employee-reported predictors are shown in Fig. 3.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that, when considered simultaneously with justice rule adherence, charismatic qualities would be positively related to employee state positive affect. This prediction was supported given that charismatic qualities were positively related to state positive affect ($b = 0.23, p < 0.05$ in the model with coworker-reported predictors; $b = 0.22, p < 0.05$ in the model with employee-reported predictors).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that, when considered simultaneously with justice rule adherence, employee state positive affect would be positively related to employee perceptions of overall fairness. This prediction was supported, as state positive affect was positively related to overall fairness ($b = 0.55, p < 0.05$ in the model with coworker-reported predictors; $b = 0.36, p < 0.05$ in the model with employee-reported predictors).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that, when considered simultaneously with justice rule adherence, charismatic qualities would have a positive indirect effect on employee perceptions of overall fairness through employee state positive affect. We tested for the indirect effect using the product of coefficients approach (MacKinnon et al., 2002), with a significant indirect effect depending on the statistical significance of the charismatic qualities → state positive affect → overall fairness coefficient (MacKinnon et al., 2002). We tested this indirect effect using bootstrapping to construct a confidence interval around the estimate (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Bootstrapping can be conducted within Mplus using the MODEL CONSTRAINT function to specify the equation for the indirect effect. Using 1000 bootstrap samples, the charismatic qualities → state positive affect → overall fairness indirect effect was indeed statistically significant (0.13 with a 95% confidence interval of 0.01–0.26 in the model with coworker-reported predictors; 0.08 with a 95% confidence interval of 0.02–0.19 in the model with employee-reported predictors), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the positive indirect effect of charismatic qualities on employee perceptions of overall fairness would be stronger when event frequency was high than when event frequency was low. We tested those predictions using Edwards and Lambert’s (2007) procedure for computing conditional second-stage indirect effects. This procedure is functionally identical to the procedure proposed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007; see also Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, in press). In particular, we estimated the moderated indirect effects and their significance using bootstrapped parameter estimates from reduced forms of Eqs. (3) and (10) (pp. 3–8). As with our testing of Hypothesis 3, we performed this test within Mplus using the MODEL CONSTRAINT function, 1000 bootstrap samples (using the BOOTSTRAP = 1000 command), and a request for bias-corrected confidence intervals (using the CINTERVAL (BCBOOTSTRAP) command—for a detailed description of this procedure, see Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, in press). As predicted, the indirect effect of charismatic qualities on overall fairness was stronger at high event frequency (0.17 with worker-reported charismatic qualities; 0.15 with employee-reported charismatic qualities) than at low event frequency (0.09 with worker-reported charismatic qualities; 0.01 with employee-reported charismatic qualities). The differences between these two coefficients were statistically significant (95% CI of difference = 0.002–0.231 for coworker-reported charismatic qualities; 95% CI of difference = 0.041–0.334 for employee-reported charismatic qualities). The interaction plots

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Procedural Justice (coworker)</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
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<td>2. Distributive Justice (coworker)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.78 (0.96)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Interpersonal Justice (coworker)</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.83 (0.95)</td>
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<td>4. Informational Justice (coworker)</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.77 (0.93)</td>
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<td>5. Procedural Justice (employee)</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.59 (0.84)</td>
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<td>6. Distributive Justice (employee)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.61 (0.94)</td>
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<td>7. Interpersonal Justice (employee)</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.58 (0.84)</td>
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<td>8. Informational Justice (employee)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.60 (0.84)</td>
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<td>9. Charismatic Qualities (coworker)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.87 (0.95)</td>
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<td>10. Charismatic Qualities (employee)</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.69 (0.84)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Event Frequency</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.61 (0.84)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Overall Fairness</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.37 (0.83)</td>
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Note. n = 174. Coefficient alphas are listed on the diagonal. * p < 0.05, two-tailed.
Hypothesis 4, as shown in Figs. 4 and 5. The relationship between state positive affect and overall fairness was more positive when event frequency was high. By extension, the indirect effect of charismatic qualities on overall fairness was more positive when event frequency was high.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the positive relationship between supervisor justice rule adherence and employee perceptions of overall fairness would be weaker when event frequency was high than when it was low. The justice rule adherence X event frequency latent interactions ($b = -0.34, p < 0.05$ in the model with coworker-reported predictors; $b = -0.45, p < 0.05$ in the model with employee-reported predictors) were significant, with the pattern of the interactions shown in Figs. 6 and 7. As predicted, the relationship between justice rule adherence and overall fairness was weaker when event frequency was high.

5. Discussion

One of the primary goals held by many supervisors is engendering a sense that “my boss is a fair boss.” That sense of fairness is believed to be a “pivotal cognition” (Lind, 2001)—something that moves employees from a self-interested mindset to a more group-oriented and engaged mindset (Tyler & Blader, 2003). When a supervisor is viewed as fair, the presumption is that he or she adheres to procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice rules when making decisions. Our results join a long list of studies that have supported that presumption (Ambrose et al., 2015). However, our results also lend a completely different interpretation to the sentiment that “my boss is a fair boss.” It may instead be that the supervisor has qualities that are charismatic—a certain magnetism, energy, and enthusiasm. To use Barsky et al.’s (2011) terminology, those charismatic qualities could create incidental affect which influences perceptions of overall fairness in a way that goes beyond rules like consistency, accuracy, equity, respect, and truthfulness.

Our results challenge the consensus in the literature that perceptions of overall fairness are driven solely by adherence to justice rules (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Barclay & Kiefer, 2014; Holtz & Harold, 2009; Jones & Martens, 2009; Kim & Leung, 2007; Konovsky & Folger, 1991; Patel et al., 2012). Our results showed that charismatic qualities predicted overall fairness even when considered alongside justice rule adherence. Such results affirm Hollensbe et al.’s (2008) inductive theorizing that hinted that supervisor traits might be considered when gauging overall fairness. It should be noted, however, that Hollensbe et al.’s (2008) interviews mentioned traits like religiosity, flexibility, friendliness, and ambition. Many of those traits could trigger adherence to justice rules, such as ethicality, correctability, respect, and equity, respectively. In contrast, charismatic qualities—a sense of magnetism, passion, energy, and excitement—do not seem to have direct relevance to any justice rules, making relationships with overall fairness more striking.

We believe these findings provide an understanding of overall fairness that could not be anticipated from extrapolations of existing work. Aside from the emerging theorizing by Barsky et al. (2011) and Hollensbe et al. (2008), most justice scholars view affect as downstream from overall fairness; not upstream from it. Our theorizing was based in a combination of Lazarus’s (1991) cognitively-motivational-relational theory and Forgas’s affect infusion model (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001)—a marriage which could prove fruitful for research on incidental affect and overall fairness.
fairness. Drawing on the former, we reasoned that charismatic qualities would be relevant to employee goals regarding belonging, self-regard, meaning, and control (Scott et al., 2010), and that interacting with a magnetic, passionate, and energetic supervisor could fulfill those goals. Our results support such logic, insofar as employees who had supervisors with charismatic qualities reported more frequent feelings of enthusiasm, pride, and excitement. Drawing on the latter, we reasoned that the incidental affect triggered by charismatic qualities could prime other positive images and narratives about the supervisor, infusing overall fairness with the feeling states (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). Our results supported those predictions, given that positive affect had a strong direct effect on overall fairness, even controlling for justice. Such findings complement the more typical focus of research integrating justice and affect, which is to view justice as a driver of affect (Colquitt et al., 2013).

From a normative perspective, it may seem distressing that incidental affect—especially affect created by charismatic qualities—could color overall fairness to a significant degree. Although certainly an understandable reaction, we would offer two responses. First, the justice literature has long maintained that fairness perceptions are subjective—that decision-making entities seem fair, rather than are fair (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Our results supported those predictions, given that positive affect had a strong direct effect on overall fairness, even controlling for justice. Such findings complement the more typical focus of research integrating justice and affect, which is to view justice as a driver of affect (Colquitt et al., 2013).

If scholars or practitioners are concerned about the influence of incidental affect on judgments of overall fairness, one natural reaction might be to provide more data on justice levels. Our results for event frequency suggest that that reaction could have the opposite effect, however. Drawing on the affect infusion model's discussion of processing requirements (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001), we reasoned that frequent decision events would elicit more extensive and constructive processing, providing more opportunities for affect-priming mechanisms to have an impact. Consistent with that logic, event frequency amplified the relationship between positive affect and overall fairness while neutralizing the relationship between justice and overall fairness.

Such results identify at least one boundary condition that can serve as a pivot between justice and incidental affect as predictors of overall fairness. They also point to the potential role that the affect infusion model can play in the justice literature. To date, most justice studies have relied on Lazarus's (1991) appraisal dynamics to understand how justice constructs trigger state affect (Colquitt et al., 2013). As scholars broaden the role of affect in the way that Barsky et al. (2011) suggest, more attention will need to be paid to how affect precedes certain constructs of interest. The affect infusion model is uniquely suited to that role given its ability to explain both the main effects of affect and moderators of those effects. We would therefore call for more applications of a model that has been scarcely mentioned by justice scholars. In that regard, we believe that event frequency represents one reasonable way of capturing the processing requirements described in the theory, especially in field studies.

The more comprehensive understanding of overall fairness afforded by our results is important in a number of respects. When the overall fairness of supervisors is evaluated, either in 360-degree contexts or in formal performance appraisals, some caution...
is warranted. Are supervisors being deemed unfair because they are inconsistent, inaccurate, inequitable, disrespectful, or dishonest? Or do they instead merely lack the charismatic qualities that can color perceptions of overall fairness? Understanding the signal-to-noise ratio of overall fairness is therefore important, so that the “unmagnetic” are not mistaken for the “unjust.” That understanding becomes more vital as studies of overall fairness more commonly omit measures of justice rule adherence (Bobocel, 2013; Jackson et al., 2012; Priesemuth et al., 2013; Whiteside & Barclay, 2013).

5.1. Suggestions for future research

As overall fairness becomes a bigger and bigger part of the justice literature (Ambrose et al., 2015; Colquitt & Rodell, 2015), it becomes important to continue to examine it’s “signal-to-noise ratio.” Our focus in the present study was on state positive affect that could emanate from charismatic qualities. However, theory and research point to the potential importance of state negative affect as well (Barsky & Kaplan, 2007; Barsky et al., 2011; Colquitt et al., 2013). State negative affect could color overall fairness perceptions through the same affect infusion mechanisms, with negative feelings priming other negative images (Forgas, 1995; Forgas & George, 2001). If so, the operative question turns to the traits or qualities that could trigger such negative incidental affect. A number of possibilities seem promising here, including counternormative habits (e.g., tobacco use, excessively casual dress), issues from one’s personal life, or unusual wealth.

Our focus was also on supervisors as the decision-making entity, given that research suggests that supervisor targets tend to yield stronger effects in justice research (Colquitt et al., 2013). However, justice is often focused on formalized organizational policies and systems as well (Blader & Tyler, 2003; Cropanzano et al., 2001; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). It may be that there are organizational characteristics that could impact perceptions of overall organizational fairness. Hollensbe et al.’s (2008) inductive
results pointed to organizational support, flexibility, and diversity—though some of those characteristics could be relevant to justice rules. Future research might explore the effects of subjective perceptions of organizational performance (Richard, Devinney, Yip, & Johnson, 2009) or reputation (Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005) on incidental employee affect and overall fairness.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that perceptions of justice rule adherence could themselves be “biased” by something other than the actions of decision-making entities. For example, Bianchi and Brockner (2012) showed that the trust propensities of employees predicted their perceptions of adherence to procedural and interpersonal justice rules. As another example, Blader (2007) showed that social identification predicted perceptions of procedural justice when information on rules was lacking. Our own results showed that perceptions of justice rules were correlated with perceptions of charismatic qualities. Thus, it is possible that justice itself is not perfectly “justice-laden.” To the extent that sources of noise live in perceptions of rule adherence, such influences would impact overall fairness indirectly, rather than directly.

5.2. Strengths and limitations

This study has a number of strengths. We employed temporal separation in many of our hypothesis tests, given that it is a procedural remedy for combating common method bias (Doty & Glick, 1998; Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also took the unusual step of assessing justice rule adherence (and charismatic qualities) from two sources—employees and their coworkers. That allowed us to verify that employees and coworkers viewed justice rule adherence and charismatic qualities similarly—judging from the acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability and the robustness of our hypothesis tests. We would argue that coworker reports of justice rule adherence are underutilized in the literature and could be a valuable tool for combating common method bias.
Of course, our study also has some limitations which must be noted. For example, the absence of panel, quasi-experimental, or experimental data raises concerns about ambiguity of causal direction, which are important issues in models that contain mediation (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2004). There are times, for example, when overall fairness can be viewed as leading to perceptions of justice, once the former has become more crystallized (Lind, 2001; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009). Applying our results to that sort of structure, it may be that supervisor charismatic qualities wind up having a positive indirect effect on subsequent justice through overall fairness. As another example, state positive affect was the only mediating variable we employed in understanding the relationship between charismatic qualities and overall fairness. Although that mediator was consistent with one of our theoretical jumping off points—Barsky et al.’s (2011) discussion of incidental affect—there may be other mediators at play in the relationship. Finally, attrition in our sample across times and sources left us with a sample size below the typical level of 200 suggested by Kline (2011). Thus, the stability and replicability of our model parameters would have been stronger with a bigger sample. We should note, however, that our model’s degrees of freedom supplied 0.80 statistical power for assessing model fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996) and our sample size supplied 0.80 statistical power for testing the indirect effect of charismatic qualities on overall fairness (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

5.3. Conclusion

In a review of what had become a mature literature, Greenberg (2006) posed the question of whether the justice literature has
enough new “conceptual parking spaces” available. Have justice scholars run out of concepts to study as they have gained consensus on the rules that give rise to overall fairness? Colquitt’s (2012) recent review painted a similar picture, as he argued that many of the trends that have shaped the literature (e.g., differentiating justice, a focus on cognition) would need to be reversed to open up pathbreaking directions. We believe our focus on charismatic qualities is indicative of a new road for the justice literature. Specifically, charismatic qualities could be indicative of “adjustice” constructs—constructs that have no relevance to rules whose adherence or violation signals “justice” or “injustice” but that still predict overall fairness. It may be that the next stage of understanding overall fairness will require more focus on “adjustice”—in focus on the “something else’s” that orbit decision-making and adherence or violation signals “justice” or “injustice” but that still predict overall fairness. It may be that the next stage of understanding overall fairness will require more focus on “justice”—in focus on the “something else’s” that orbit decision-making events and entities. If so, we hope this study provides one useful framework for doing so, given how vital overall fairness is to the group-oriented mindset needed in contemporary organizations.

References


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