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Developmental Climate: A Cross-level Analysis of Voluntary Turnover and Job Performance

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of shared perceptions of developmental climate on individual-level perceptions of organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence, and whether these attitudes mediate the relationship between developmental climate and both individual voluntary turnover and supervisor-rated job performance. Survey data were collected from 361 intact employee-supervisory mentoring dyads and matched with employee turnover data collected one year later to test the proposed framework using multilevel modeling techniques. As expected, shared perceptions of developmental climate were significantly and positively related to all three individual work attitudes. In addition, both organizational commitment and perceived competence were significant mediators of the positive relationship between shared perceptions of developmental climate and voluntary turnover, as well as shared perceptions of developmental climate and supervisor-rated job performance. By contrast, no significant mediating effects were found for engagement. Theoretical implications, limitations, and future research are discussed.

Keywords

Relationships; mentoring; coworker support; employee development

In recent years there has been increasing focus on how relationships at work influence employee attitudes and behaviors (Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Eby & Allen, 2012). Notwithstanding the importance of relationships at work and the synergy that may result when employees experience support from more than one type of work colleague, most research has focused on a particular source of support at work such as coworkers (Chiaburu

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& Harrison, 2008), supervisors (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007), or mentors (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby et al., 2013). In addition to focusing on a single source of support, existing research has conceptualized developmental support as an individual-level phenomenon. This includes research on mentoring (Kram, 1985), supervisor support (Ilies et al, 2007), coworker support (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), and organizational support for development (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011).

The current study extends research on individual perceptions of developmental support by introducing a new construct to the literature which captures shared, group-level perceptions of developmental support from coworkers and supervisory mentors. This construct, referred to as *shared perceptions of developmental climate*, is grounded in the literature on organizational climate and reflects the extent to which employees share the belief that their work group provides developmental support to its members. Drawing from Social Information Processing Theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) and theorizing about collective constructs (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999), we argue that the support-related interactions that occur within a given work group influence members' collective beliefs about the work group's climate for development. Moreover, we propose that shared perceptions of developmental climate exert an influence on the individual-level outcomes of voluntary turnover and job performance, over and above individual-level perceptions of climate for development. We also examine several individual-level mediating mechanisms to explain the process by which shared perceptions of developmental climate relate to individual turnover and performance.

The current study adds to the existing literature in several ways. First, researchers focusing on developmental relationships at work have called for an examination of the level of analysis at which these phenomena occur, particularly at the group level, to further examine the influences these types of relationships have on individuals (Cameron, Dutton, Quinn, & Wrzesniewski, 2003; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Second, the combined influence of different sources of developmental support at work has not been examined to date, despite the recognition that individuals often receive developmental support at work from different sources (e.g., coworkers, mentors, supervisors). Third, no research has examined shared perceptions of developmental climate as a group-level predictor of individual outcomes, despite longstanding discussions of how group-level climate perceptions influence individuals (e.g., James & Jones, 1984; Schneider & Reichers, 1983) and evidence of cross-level effects of justice climate and service climate on individual outcomes (Mossholder, Bennett, & Martin, 1998). Finally, the specific mechanisms by which positive work relationships affect employee work behavior are not well understood empirically (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Eby et al., 2013), yet are essential for theory building because they explicate how and why organizational phenomena are related. Our findings will offer refinements to theory on relationships at work and provide practical recommendations for enhancing the developmental climate within organizations.

Shared Perceptions of Developmental Climate

Foundational research on organizational climate recognizes the importance of the social context on individuals. In some of the earliest research on climate, Lewin, Lippitt, and

White (1939) reported on the creation of social climates (authoritarian, democratic, laissez-faire) among groups of boys participating in a summer camp, and the powerful effect that these social climates had on individual and within-group behavior. Applying this research to an organizational context, Argyris (1958) studied the organizational and social structure of banks. He concluded that the social-interactional characteristics of the work environment create norms and expectations for social interactions and behavior which define the climate of a particular organization and have downstream effects on individual attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, early leadership research by Fleishman (1953) discussed the importance of examining leadership climates and the effect that these climates have on the social behavior of individual employees.

Subsequent research by James and Jones (1974) and Schneider (Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Schneider, 1990) introduced the idea that work groups within organizations are characterized by different “climates,” which reflect shared beliefs among work group members about a particular aspect of the organization. The idea of specific climates has taken hold in the organizational sciences with the introduction of constructs such as ethical climate (Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2008), empowerment climate (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004), and justice climate (Naumann & Bennett, 2000). Drawing from this tradition, we introduce the construct of developmental climate, defined as shared perceptions regarding the amount of support-giving and receiving that occurs among coworkers and supervisory mentors in a work group.

Why focus on shared perceptions?

Our rationale for examining shared perceptions of climate rather than individual-level perceptions (i.e., psychological climate according to James & Jones, 1974) is based on the growing recognition that shared group-level perceptions exert a unique and powerful influence on individuals (Morgeson & Hofmann 1999). Multilevel theorists argue that action occurs in a social context and as a result, behavioral choices are influenced by the context in which individuals are embedded. Moreover, as interactions occur among individuals in close contact with one another, collective phenomena emerge that represent the group as a whole and transcend individual members’ perceptions (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). This is often referred to as a work group climate, defined as “summated, averaged meanings that people attach to a particular feature of the setting” (Schneider & Reichers, 1983, p. 21) and maintained by the actions of individuals in the work group.

Social Information Processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) serves as an explanatory framework for understanding the construct of shared perceptions of developmental climate. This theory asserts that people’s realities are shaped by the information received from their social environment. This is because reality is socially constructed; individuals learn the values and behavioral norms associated with their work environment by interacting with others. Individuals also play an active role in the social reality construction process through the “enactment process” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, p. 228), where one’s own behavior shapes the unique social context that emerges in a work group. This suggests that individuals are both influenced by, and exert an influence on, their work group.

Sources of developmental support

Developmental support is typically discussed as the outcome of a developmental relationship. Developmental relationships are those that provide one or both members with resources, support, or knowledge that contribute to personal or professional development (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). We propose that two sources of developmental support contribute to a work group's developmental climate: supervisory mentoring support and coworker support. The amount of supervisory mentoring that occurs in a work group is expected to contribute to shared perceptions of developmental climate. Supervisors are the referents that employees use to develop beliefs about the organization as a whole and supervisory mentors are gatekeepers for developmental opportunities (Baranik, Eby, & Roling, 2010). Likewise, the amount of coworker support that occurs within the work group may also contribute to a work group's developmental climate. Like supervisory mentors, coworkers influence employees' attitudes and behaviors (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Kahn, 2007). Importantly, coworkers exert a unique influence on employees even when controlling for the effects of leader influence (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), perhaps because individuals typically spend more time with coworkers than any others (c.f., Bono & Yoon, 2013).

These two sources of support are likely to interact synergistically due to the complex network of support-giving and support-receiving that occurs within a work group. It is likely that resources from one relationship may be transferred to other relationships in that work group (Eby et al., 2013; Kahn, 2007; Ragins & Verbos, 2007). In other words, the more relational experience one has, the better able he or she is to leverage other relationships to gain resources and assistance (Eby et al., 2013). For example, a supervisor or coworker may provide one individual with task-related knowledge that he or she could then relay to a coworker. Conceptualizing shared perceptions of developmental climate as consisting of both supervisory mentoring and coworker support captures the breadth of support that can exist for members of a work group and is consistent with individual-level research which demonstrates that both types of support predict individual work attitudes and behaviors (Eby et al., 2013; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

Specific support behaviors that contribute to development

Consistent with research on social support (Cutrona & Russell, 1987), the types of support-giving and receiving that characterize shared perceptions of developmental climate include both instrumental and emotional support behaviors. Instrumental support includes provision of task or career-related guidance aimed at developing career skills and knowledge (Kram, 1985). Emotional support includes provision of affective support for personal and emotional development such as counseling, personal support, and even work-related friendship (Kram, 1985). The specific support behaviors that comprise supervisory mentoring support are both instrumental (e.g., providing a challenging assignment to help someone develop new skills, offering job-related feedback and coaching) and emotional (e.g., personal encouragement, providing affirmation; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Coworkers can also provide instrumental and emotional support. Instrumental support from a coworker might include covering for someone when they are absent or offering to help complete a task. Emotional support from coworkers includes behaviors that engender a sense of trust, closeness, and belongingness, behaviors that we commonly associate with friendship (Cutrona & Russell, 1987).

Collectively, these behaviors support the personal and professional development of employees (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Kram, 1985).

A Multilevel Model of Shared Perceptions of Developmental Climate

By adopting a multilevel perspective, researchers can obtain a more complete understanding of organizational phenomena (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). The importance of taking a multilevel perspective has been discussed in the context of work group relationships (Cameron et al., 2003; Higgins & Kram, 2001), mentoring relationships (Cameron et al., 2003; Eby, 2012; Higgins & Kram, 2001), and coworker relationships (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). By taking a multilevel perspective and examining two types of developmental relationships (i.e., supervisory mentoring and coworker support), we explicate how different types of relational experiences may work together to shape shared perceptions of a developmental climate. Further, by integrating theory on developmental relationships, social information processing, and group-level climate perceptions, we provide a novel framework to investigate associations between shared perceptions of developmental climate, individual attitudes, and individual behaviors.

Recent theoretical work on the characteristics and potential outcomes of developmental relationships notes that when relationships at work are of high-quality, they can provide an exchange of valued resources and an environment where one feels safe to express ideas and learn new skills and knowledge (Dutton & Heaphy; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Moreover, relationships do not occur in isolation; they exist within a broader social context and can provide resources that are useful in other relationships (Higgins & Kram; Kahn, 2007; Ragins & Verbos, 2007). As such, relationships may create a social context in which individual development is underscored by the cyclical sharing of task-related knowledge and emotional support. A multilevel examination provides a unique perspective by which to examine multiple relationships as a set of experiences within a workgroup (Lance & Vandenberg, 2012). These work group experiences and shared developmental support may generate affective reactions in group members, such as increased organizational commitment and engagement through the provision of emotional support (Kahn, 2007), as well as increased perceptions of competence through the provision of instrumental support (Dutton & Ragins; Higgins & Kram).

As shown in Figure 1, we propose a multilevel model depicting the association between shared perceptions of developmental climate and individual-level voluntary turnover and supervisor-rated performance. The rationale for expecting downstream effects of shared perceptions of developmental climate on individual voluntary turnover and performance comes from individual-level research on mentoring and coworker relationships. This literature documents that individual perceptions of both mentoring (Allen et al., 2004; Eby, et al., 2013) and coworker support (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008) relate to these individual outcomes. We argue that similar effects likely hold at the group level of analysis given the characteristic features of shared perceptions developmental climate.

The expected mediating effects of individual work attitudes on the group developmental climate-individual outcomes association is supported by existing climate research. Several

studies have found that individual work attitudes are important explanatory mechanisms linking other types of climate perceptions to individual turnover and performance. For example, Mulki, Jaramillo, and Locander (2008) found that the influence of an ethical climate on individual turnover intentions functioned through several individual attitudes such as trust in supervisor and job satisfaction, to name a few. Moreover, Seibert, Silver, & Rudolph (2004) found that empowerment climate influenced individual performance through individual level perceptions of personal empowerment.

The mediating role of organizational commitment

Researchers assert that the network of positive relationships one has at work serves to attach him or her to the organization (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982; Kahn, 2007). When people experience “being supported, mentored, helped, developed, and invested in by others,” they are enabled to feel attachment (e.g., organizational commitment) (Kahn, p. 199). Consistent with these suggestions, Eby and colleagues (2013) found that mentoring support was related to feelings of affiliation and commitment. Extending this logic to the work group level, in an environment where there is the shared experience of positive developmental relationships with both supervisors and coworkers (i.e., shared perceptions of developmental climate) attachment to the organization may be strengthened (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

There is also a well-established relationship between individual-level perceptions of affective commitment and voluntary turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) demonstrated that coworker support was positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to turnover. Although mentoring research finds a relationship between mentoring and turnover (Lankau & Scandura, 2002), researchers acknowledge that there are likely mediating factors that explain how or why this relationship exists. As shown in Figure 1, we extend existing research to propose that group-level perceptions of developmental climate positively relate to individual-level affective commitment, which in turn predicts less voluntary turnover. Although such a cross-level mediating effect has not been examined to date, our expectation that affective commitment serves to partially transmit the influence of shared perceptions of developmental climate on individual voluntary turnover is generally consistent with Payne and Huffman’s (2005) finding that affective commitment mediated the relationship between the presence of a mentor and subsequent turnover.

- H1** Shared perceptions of developmental climate are positively related to individual-level organizational commitment.
- H2** Individual-level organizational commitment mediates the negative relationship between developmental climate and individual-level voluntary turnover.

The mediating role of engagement

A second mediating mechanism depicted in Figure 1 is engagement. Kahn (2007) theorizes that one of the main outcomes of relational experiences at work is engagement, defined as an affective or “positive, fulfilling state of mind, most commonly characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p.74). Consistent with this assertion, engagement is associated with perceptions of social support

and leadership behavior (Christen, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011), as well as performance feedback and supervisory coaching (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Teris, 2008; Halbesleben, 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These antecedents to engagement are captured in the provision of supervisory mentoring and coworker support found in our conceptualization of shared perceptions of developmental climate.

This is consistent with Social Information Processing Theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which argues that the social environment creates a milieu that affects how people feel about their jobs and organizations. Individual perceptions of engagement are also negatively related to intentions to leave (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Moreover, engagement is positively related to individual job performance because engaged employees “work hard (vigor), are involved (dedication), and feel happily engrossed (absorbed)” (Bakker, et al., 2008, p. 190; Christian et al., 2011). Building on this individual-level research, we propose that shared perceptions of developmental climate will be associated with increased individual engagement and engagement will mediate the relationship between developmental climate and individual turnover and performance.

- H3** Shared perceptions of developmental climate are positively related to individual-level engagement.
- H4** Individual-level engagement mediates the negative relationship between developmental climate and individual voluntary turnover.
- H5** Individual-level engagement mediates the positive relationship between developmental climate and individual job performance.

Perceived competence

A final mediating mechanism shown in Figure 1 is perceived competence. This refers to the belief that one has the skills and abilities necessary to perform his or her job (Spreitzer, 1995). Perceived competence is shaped by work experiences, including provision of knowledge and resources as well as perceptions of support (Robins, Crino, & Fredendall, 2002; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). As such, it follows that in a work group marked by shared perceptions of developmental climate, individuals may hold stronger perceptions of their own competence due to the group emphasis on instrumental and emotional support-giving, as well as opportunities to learn from supervisors and coworkers. This is consistent with the suggestion that confidence in one's abilities develops in work environments marked by learning opportunities, support, and information sharing (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Robins et al., 2002).

As individuals are learning and building competence in their job roles, individual job performance should be enhanced. Research supports this notion, demonstrating that perceived competence is positively related to higher job performance (Locke, Frederick, Lee, Bobko, 1984). This is also consistent with Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) theoretical model of empowerment which suggests that individual cognitions and interpretations of the work context drive perceptions of efficacy, which in turn improves behavior. Additionally, Kraimer and colleagues (2011) argue developmental support builds skills and competencies that in turn lead to increased job performance. In the present study, this might mean that

being in a work group with a stronger developmental climate (i.e., members consistently reporting the receipt of mentoring support from their supervisor and coworker support from their peers) enhances individual perceptions of competence, which in turn facilitates job performance.

- H6** Shared perceptions of developmental climate are positively related to individual-level perceived competence.
- H7** Individual-level perceived competence mediates the positive relationship between developmental climate and individual job performance.

Methods

Sample

Data for this research come from a larger study of healthcare workers and their supervisory mentors employed in facilities across the United States. This study used paper-and-pencil surveys, augmented with archival turnover data and supervisor-rated performance measures. The response rates for the larger project were 74% for employees and 86% for supervisory mentors. Only matched employee-supervisory mentor data were used because of our interest in supervisor-rated job performance as an individual-level outcome. In addition, employees working in locations with less than three coworkers were excluded because of the multilevel analysis plan, which requires a minimum number of individuals to aggregate group-level constructs. There was an average of 6.08 employees in each location and a range from three to 14 employees per location. Finally, due to our interest in voluntary turnover, individuals who exited the organization involuntarily were excluded. The final sample consists of 361 employee-supervisor mentor dyads. Employees are nested with 111 supervisors, who are nested within 61 locations. On average employees were 43.6 years old and supervisors were 47.2 years old. Around one-third (61.9%) of employees were female and most (66.5%) were Caucasian. Approximately one-third (66.5%) of supervisory mentors were female and most (75.2%) were Caucasian.

Measures

Group-level constructs—The aggregated constructs used as indicators of group developmental climate construct are mentoring (instrumental and psychosocial dimensions) and coworker support (instrumental support and attachment dimensions). All scales were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree).

Mentoring support: Mentoring support was measured using Ragins and McFarlin's (1990) 27-item measure, which includes 15 items assessing instrumental support and 12 items assessing psychosocial support. An example item for instrumental support is, "My clinical supervisor assigns me tasks that push me into developing new skills." An example item for psychosocial support is, "My clinical supervisor provides support and encouragement."

Coworker support: Coworker support was measured with Cutrona and Russell's (1987) six-item measure. Three items focus on instrumental coworker support and three items assess coworker attachment. Items on both measures are rated on a five-point Likert-type

scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). An example item for instrumental support (reliable alliance) is, “I can depend on my coworkers to help me if I really need it.” An example item for psychosocial support (coworker attachment) is “I have a feeling of closeness with my coworkers.”

Individual-level mediators and outcomes—Individual-level mediators include affective organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence. All scales were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Affective organizational commitment: Affective organizational commitment was measured using Meyer, Allen, and Smith’s (1993) six-item measure (e.g., “This treatment center has a great deal of personal meaning to me”).

Engagement: Engagement was measured with Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova’s (2006) 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement scale (e.g., “I feel like I am bursting with energy when I am at work”).

Perceived competence: Perceived competence was measured with Spreitzer’s (1995) three-item measure (e.g., “I am confident about my ability to do my job”).

Voluntary turnover: Voluntary turnover was reported by the organization one year after initial data collection. Organizations reported whether the employee was still employed or not, and if no longer employed, whether the employee left the organization voluntarily or involuntarily. Only those who were still employed or turned over voluntarily were included in data analysis.

Individual job performance: Individual job performance was rated by the supervisor using Laschober and Eby’s (2013) 20-item Likert-type scale (1=very ineffective to 4=very effective). These ratings were collected at the same time point that the employee attitudinal data were collected.

Aggregation—According to Chan (1998) there are five basic types of composition models that can be used to specify relationships among data at different levels. For this research, the direct consensus model is most appropriate because it takes into account within-group consensus of the lower-level units to justify aggregation to a higher-level variable. Individual-level perceptions of overall mentoring support and overall coworker support were aggregated within each work group by averaging the group mean centered employee ratings of each construct within the group. Rwg(j) (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) was conducted on each work groups’ aggregated measures to assess the level of within-group agreement in ratings of the two aggregated constructs. Results demonstrate support for aggregating both the mentoring measure and the coworker support measure to the work group level. For the mentoring measure, 93% had Rwg(j) values above the cut-score of .70. For the coworker support measure, 85% met or exceeded the cut-score value. In addition, both of the measures demonstrated good internal consistency with coefficient alpha values of .97 and .93 for mentoring and coworker support, respectively. These two constructs were aggregated to the

work group level and were used as latent indicators of the developmental climate variable in the structural equation model.

Unconflated multilevel model—One approach to test a multilevel model is using an unconflated multilevel model (UMM). This methodology takes a traditional approach to multilevel model testing, by using group means, but also addresses some of the disadvantages present in a traditional conflated multilevel model (CMM). In a UMM, the within effects of the between-level constructs are controlled by group mean centering the level 1 predictor scores. These centered scores are used to create the group means that are used as the level 2 predictors (Preacher, Zhang, & Zyphur, 2011). Here, employees' ratings of mentoring and coworker support were group mean centered. Next, group-level mentoring support and coworker support were calculated by taking the average of the group mean centered ratings. These group-level constructs were used as latent indicators of an overall developmental climate in the model. This group mean centering procedure accounts for the within effects of developmental climate as a predictor of the level 1 variables in the model. In other words, this method tests for group-level effects over and above the influence of individual-level effects by controlling for the individual influences in the predictor variable (in this case, individual perceptions of developmental climate).

To test the model, Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach was used. First, the measurement model was specified using an SEM framework in Mplus. Next, the structural components of the model were specified as depicted in Figure 1. A cluster statement was used to control for the between-level effects in the within variables in the model. Voluntary turnover was specified as the categorical variable for the analysis and probit regression was used for the analyses involving this variable. Using the model indirect command, the indirect paths from developmental climate to turnover and performance were specified. Specifically, the mediation paths are from developmental climate to turnover via organizational commitment and engagement as well as from developmental climate to performance via perceived competence. The model indirect command in Mplus calculates a product term for the indirect effect of the level 2 predictor on the level 1 outcome and provides a statistical test of the estimate of the indirect effect. See Figure 1 for a diagram of all paths specified.

Results

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliability (alpha) coefficients, and correlations among individual level constructs are reported in Table 1. Hu and Bentler's (1999) cut-off criteria were used to determine model fit. The measurement model was first specified. Due to both the large number of individual items and the established psychometric properties of the measures used in the current study, a measurement model was estimated using 2-item parcels. Randomly assigned parcels were used because they yield comparable fit to more complex methods (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000). When an odd number of items were present, the unpaired item was left unparceled. This model provided good fit to the data, ($\chi^2_{55} = 166.56, p = .00$; CFI = .96; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .08). In addition, the full model (parceled measurement model, plus the structural paths) demonstrated good fit to the data ($\chi^2_{70} = 138.51, p = .00$; CFI = .92; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .05).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 2 presents the path estimates and standard errors associated with the test of Hypotheses 1–7. Support was found for all three of the hypothesized direct effects from group-level developmental climate to individual attitudes including: organizational commitment (Hypothesis 1; $\beta = .85, p < .05$), engagement (Hypothesis 3; $\beta = .73, p < .05$), and perceived competence (Hypothesis 6; $\beta = .25, p < .05$). Two of the mediation paths were significant. The indirect effect of group developmental climate on voluntary turnover via organizational commitment was significant (Hypothesis 2; $\beta = -.22, p < .05$) with a 95% confidence interval (CI) $[-.39, -.09]$. In addition, perceived competence mediated the relationship between group developmental climate and job performance (Hypothesis 7; $\beta = .04, p < .05$) with a 95% CI $[.00, .07]$, although the effect size was small. No support was found for the mediating effect of engagement on group developmental climate-voluntary turnover (Hypothesis 4) or group developmental climate-job performance (Hypothesis 5).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to introduce the group-level construct of shared perceptions of developmental climate and test a cross-level model linking shared perceptions of developmental climate to voluntary turnover and supervisor-rated job performance through three individual-level attitudes. The results provide general support for the proposed framework and three main conclusions can be reached from the findings. First, shared perceptions of developmental climate explain meaningful variance in individual-level perceptions of organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence, over and above individual-level perceptions of developmental climate. This is important because it illustrates the powerful influence of the social context over and above one's individual experiences. Second, shared perceptions of developmental climate have downstream predictive effects on both individual voluntary turnover and job performance. Third, individual perceptions of organizational commitment and competence are two important mechanisms by which shared perceptions of developmental climate relates to individual outcomes.

The Importance of Shared Perceptions of Developmental Climate

We found that shared perceptions of developmental climate demonstrate positive direct effects on individual-level perceptions of organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence, even when controlling for the individual-level perceptions of developmental climate. This provides the first empirical evidence that it is not just individual work relationships that matter in predicting work attitudes and outcomes, but also climate perceptions regarding both coworker and supervisory mentoring support that are formed by group interactions. By demonstrating that positive work relationships at the group level have an additional, unique influence on an individual's commitment, engagement, and perceived competence, over and above one's individual relational experiences, we extend existing research on work relationships and highlight the importance of considering the social context in which giving and receiving relationship support occurs.

The findings that shared perceptions of developmental climate had effects on individual turnover and performance lend new insights into the importance of group dynamics when examining the influences of these two important outcomes. Meta-analyses of factors associated with employee turnover have largely examined turnover antecedents at the individual level (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). This study suggests that group-level factors should be considered as well given that our results provide support for the influence of group-level factors even when controlling for individual experiences. Similarly, research on developmental support has focused largely on how one-on-one relationships between support givers and receivers may positively impact performance (Allen et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2013). By taking multiple relationships within a work group into account simultaneously, researchers can understand how work group dynamics provide group-level developmental support that may in turn bolster employee performance.

While the connection between organizational support and turnover is well supported in the literature (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), our findings underscore the importance of this pathway between the social context and affective reactions to one's environment which in turn influence behaviors. Moreover, this pathway follows other climate research that has supported individual-level affective reactions as the conduit between the environmental context and individual behaviors (Mulki et al., 2008; Siebert et al., 2004).

Both social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) and theories of psychological empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) can be used to explain our finding that individual-level perceptions of competence are another pathway by which shared perceptions of developmental climate relate to performance. Social learning theory discusses how competency perceptions develop through both direct and vicarious experience. In a work group marked by stronger shared perceptions of developmental climate, supervisors are providing mentoring support to work group members and coworkers are offering both tangible support and encouragement to one another. This is likely to create a social context where individuals are challenged, provided with feedback, offered assistance to meet work-related objectives, and feel psychologically safe (Kram, 1985; LePine, Methot, Crawford, & Buckman, 2012). These work group conditions likely increase individuals' sense of competence at work, which in turn facilitates higher individual performance. Consistent with this idea, White's (1959) classic work on the motivation-competency link suggests that as individuals learn to master their environment, competency perceptions develop. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) also argue that interpretations of events in one's environment (e.g., among work group members) can trigger perceptions of competence, which in turn enhances sustained and effortful behavior. Along these same lines, we argue that in environments characterized by higher levels of shared perceptions of developmental support there will be greater opportunity for such mastery experiences.

Interestingly, although shared perceptions of developmental climate were strongly related to individual perceptions of engagement as expected, engagement did not mediate the relationship between shared perceptions of developmental climate and individual outcomes. Moreover, engagement was unrelated to both voluntary turnover and job performance. This is surprising given the theoretical and empirical support for the relationship between

individual perceptions of engagement and both individual turnover and job performance (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002; Rich et al., 2010). One explanation for this finding may be that engagement is associated with other attitudes or behaviors that are precursors to voluntary turnover and job performance, such as intentions to leave, commitment, or effort expenditure. Our findings may also be idiosyncratic to this sample of healthcare workers, whose decisions to turnover and perform may be influenced by other factors not included in the proposed framework.

Practical Implications

The present study offers several implications for practitioners. Not only are supervisor-subordinate relationships important, but the relationships among coworkers and relationships within the work group as a whole may influence employee attitudes and outcomes. Organizations might consider providing opportunities and resources that support both informal social activities and formal teambuilding activities. Encouraging and rewarding mentoring not only between supervisors and subordinates, but also among peers may be another way to create a positive developmental climate (Eby, Lockwood, & Butts, 2006). Efforts such as these that emphasize the importance of developing collaborative, cohesive, and supportive work groups may payoff in less subsequent turnover and higher employee performance.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with all research, the findings should be tempered by several study limitations. The use of cross-sectional data to test predictions regarding shared perceptions of developmental climate and attitudinal mediators, as well as linkages to supervisor-rated job performance precludes strong causal inferences. With this caveat in mind, our predictions follow from climate theory (Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Schneider, 1990), which argues that group-level climate perceptions are likely precursors of individual attitudes and behaviors. It is also worth noting that positioning job performance as an outcome of work attitudes is consistent with prior research. Nonetheless, future research might examine the possibility of additional mediators or paths to the outcomes, as well as a reciprocal relationship between perceived competence and job performance. Specifically, perceptions of competence may enhance performance (as supported in the current study), which in turn further strengthens employee perceptions of competence.

Another limitation is the focus on the healthcare industry. While this confers advantages in terms of removing industry-specific nuisance variables, it may reduce the generalizability of our findings. Finally, our measure of developmental climate did not consider support that individuals may receive from other organizational members (e.g., high level managers, colleagues outside one's immediate work group) or formal types of developmental support such as training or career development assistance. We limited our focus to coworkers and supervisory mentors because these two groups arguably represent those with which members are likely to have the most contact. Future research might extend our conceptualization of shared perceptions of developmental climate to include other referent and sources of developmental support.

In closing, the present study adopted a multilevel perspective on relationships to illustrate how and why shared perceptions of developmental climate relate to individual attitudes and outcomes. By building on and extending existing research on mentoring and coworker support we hope that future research explores the meaning and importance of shared perceptions of developmental climate, offering new theoretical insights into the importance of relationships at work and the many ways that one's social environment influences behavior.

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Highlights

- Shared perceptions of developmental support form a developmental climate.
- Climate influenced organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence.
- Organizational commitment mediated developmental climate to individual turnover.
- Perceived competence mediated developmental climate to individual performance.
- We utilized multi-level structural equation modeling to test these relationships.

Figure 1.

Multilevel Conceptual Model Linking Shared Perceptions of Developmental Climate to Voluntary Turnover and Job Performance via Attitudinal Mediators

Note. Dashed lines indicate the indirect effects of shared perceptions of developmental climate on individual voluntary turnover and individual job performance as mediated by organizational commitment, engagement, and perceived competence.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Individual-Level Constructs

Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Mentoring Support	3.46	.80	.97						
2. Coworker Support	3.91	.80	.33*	.93					
3. Organizational Commitment	3.32	.80	.41*	.42*	.84				
4. Engagement	3.62	.66	.25*	.26*	.55*	.89			
5. Perceived Competence	4.21	.61	.02	.14*	.09	.22*	.78		
6. Job Performance	3.27	.51	.16*	.09	.06	-.04	.12*	.97	
7. Voluntary Turnover	--	--	-.04	-.11*	-.19*	-.10	-.00	-.14*	--

Note. Reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) are provided on the diagonal. Turnover is a categorical variable (coded 1 = voluntary turnover, 0 = still employed at organization) and therefore mean and standard deviation are not provided.

* $p < .05$.

Table 2

Path Estimates of the Direct and Indirect Effects of Shared Perceptions of Developmental Climate

Mediators and Outcomes		
	β	SE
Organizational Commitment	.85*	.05
Engagement	.73*	.04
Perceived Competence	.25*	.05
Voluntary Turnover via Organizational Commitment	-.22*	.07
Voluntary Turnover via Engagement	.01	.06
Job Performance via Engagement	.00	.04
Job Performance via Perceived Competence	.04*	.02

*Note.**
p < .05