

## ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

# Moral Virtues, Fairness Heuristics, Social Entities, and Other Denizens of Organizational Justice

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Recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in the study of organizational justice. Employee perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice have been related to a variety of important work outcomes, such as performance, citizenship behaviors, and job attitudes. Despite the health and vigor of justice research, the rapid growth of this literature has made salient a variety of new issues. In the present paper, we discuss these concerns as three questions: How do workers formulate appraisals of justice?; Why do individuals do so?; and What precisely is being appraised? Each of these three questions provides a framework for reviewing the current state of our knowledge, proposing new research paradigms, and providing directions for future inquiry. © 2001 Academic Press

There are many academic disciplines devoted to the study of organizations. Each field presents the workplace through the prism of its own values. Economists, among others, remind us that work organizations are built from the accumulation of wealth. Capital is necessary to hire personnel, purchase raw materials, invest in new technologies, and so forth. Industrial sociologists, on the other hand, often emphasize the role of social power in organizational life. For instance, Pfeffer (1981) saw the utilization and flow of power as a systematic attribute of organizational life, and Robbins (1990, Chapter 9) went so far as to diagram whole organizations in terms of a “power cone.” At the bottom of the cone are the low power

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individuals, and the apex peaks with the CEO. The economic and social science perspectives give us important pieces of the story—capital and social power are defining qualities of the work place.

Over the past several decades, organizations have learned an elegant dance, pirouetting one way and promenading the other, between a concern for business and a concern for people (Barley & Kunda, 1992). At any time there is much of both, though each appears in disconcerting fits and starts. Organizations probably are more ambivalent than duplicitous; they pursue conflicting objectives. Charges of hypocrisy, understandable though perhaps undeserved, may spring from this fitful vacillation. The study of workplace justice is one of organizational psychology's answers to understanding these opposing forces.

The concept of justice appeals to our moral sentiments (e.g., Folger, 1994, 1998). Loosely speaking, we might say that fairness sets things right. We encounter much in our lives that needs elucidation: The incompetent boss, the noxiously wealthy CEO, and the layoff. We want not only causal explanations for these events, but also moral ones. In other words, certain classes of events need to be "justified" in a strict sense of that term—rendered morally acceptable in relation to a particular set of ethical standards (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). This kind of justification tells us how to respond (e.g., should we work for social change?) and serves as a guide to our future behaviors (e.g., should we provide voice, or the opportunity for input, to the people we supervise?).

Later in this paper, we say more about how questions of justification are answered. For now, we note that organizational justice scholars have identified at least three classes of events that are evaluated in terms of justice: outcomes, processes, and interpersonal interactions. Judgments regarding the fairness of outcomes or allocations have been termed "distributive justice." Judgments regarding the fairness of process elements are termed "procedural justice," and judgments regarding the fairness of interpersonal interactions are termed "interactional justice." All three types of justice have been studied extensively, though recent organizational justice researchers have tended to emphasize procedural and interactional justice (for reviews see Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg, 1990a).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual survey of the organizational justice literature. We hope to give the reader a sense of the excitement and dynamism that characterizes contemporary research. We also hope to move beyond current inquiry and challenge the reader with new possibilities. In deference to the scope of this task, we organize our presentation around three questions—the how, why, and what of workplace fairness.

We begin our review with what researchers know best: How do people form perceptions of organizational justice? Recent years have seen considerable advances toward answering this question. To provide an answer, we primarily emphasize work on fairness theory (formerly called referent cognitions theory: Folger, 1986a, 1986b) and fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 2001; van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2001). We then pose another basic query: Why do people care about organizational justice? To address this issue, we review three answers: the instrumental

model, the relational model, and the moral virtues model. We end this section by posing an integrative multiple needs framework. We next address what is probably the most fundamental issue: What is organizational justice? To answer this question, we divide our response into three parts: What is the structure of justice perceptions?; What is being subjected to justice evaluations?; and What are we thinking about when we make justice decisions? Taken together, these questions provide a broad survey of the organizational justice literature, with a special emphasis on conceptual controversies and future research needs.

## HOW WE MAKE FAIRNESS JUDGMENTS: REFERENT COGNITIONS AND FAIRNESS HEURISTICS

In order to explore how justice evaluations are made, we need a framework for thinking about the theories of organizational justice. Viewing justice as a class of motivated behavior can solve this problem. By this we mean only that different individual and environmental characteristics engage our sense of (in)justice, and this engagement engenders cognitive and affective responses that guide our behavior. If justice is seen as a kind of motivational phenomenon, then research on work motivation can provide us with a useful classification scheme.

Organizational psychologists have classified motivation theories into two broad categories. These have either a *process* or a *content* focus (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976). Process theories provide a generalized explication of the cognitive steps used to guide motivated behavior. They identify the variables necessary for motivated action to be carried out, and they attempt to explain how these variables interact to influence motivation and subsequent behaviors. Examples of process theories in the area of motivation are drive theory, reinforcement theory, expectancy theory, and equity theory. Content theories, on the other hand, are more taxonomic in nature. Rather than explaining general processes, they are concerned with specifically identifying the variables that influence motivation (such as rewards, needs, and incentives). That is, content theories identify variables relevant to motivation, but do not necessarily specify how the variables interact with one another. Examples of content theories of motivation are need theory, outcome/reward models, achievement theory, attributional models, and to some extent, equity theory.

To the extent that organizational justice can be conceptualized as a specific class of motivated behaviors, this process/content distinction provided by motivation theorists fits quite well as a framework for classifying theories of fairness. In this section we review some process approaches to organizational justice perceptions. We begin with the classic equity theory (Adams, 1965), proceed to referent cognitions theory (and its successor fairness theory; Folger, 1986a, 1986b; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001), and conclude with the influential fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 1992; Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993). Later we examine a series of content theories of justice, which focus on explaining why people make fairness judgments. These include such frameworks as the instrumental model and the group-value/relational model of justice.

### *Distributive Justice and Social Comparisons*

One of the first theories to explore the psychological processes involved in forming fairness judgments, which primarily focused on the formation of distributive justice judgments, was *equity theory* (Adams, 1965). This classic theory suggests that people determine if they have been treated fairly by first examining the ratio of their inputs (e.g., effort, time, cognitive resources) relevant to their outcomes (e.g., pay, promotions, opportunities for professional development), and then comparing this ratio to the input-to-outcome ratio of a referent other. According to equity theory, employees evaluate the extent to which outcomes are fair based on these types of comparisons. For example, if an employee is putting forth the same amount of effort as another employee (i.e., referent), but the referent is receiving more favorable outcomes (e.g., higher pay, more promotions), the employee may judge the outcomes he or she has received as unfair. Thus, the outcomes of others (relative to the effort put forth) is an important source of evidence used by individuals when forming justice judgments (Kulik & Ambrose, 1992).

Although equity theory has contributed a great deal to organizational justice research (e.g., Greenberg, 1982, 1988), it has since been criticized for being too narrow in its explanation of how justice judgments are formed. First, as pointed out by Folger and Cropanzano (2001), the theory only considers the outcomes people receive, which are typically material or economic in nature, when forming justice judgments. Also, the theory does not consider the effects of procedures on fairness evaluations and does little to outline the determinants of responses to unfair treatment (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). In addition, Lock and Henne (1986) have pointed out that a limitation of equity theory is its lack of usefulness for determining the type of actions that will result from various referent comparisons.

### *Referent Cognitions Theory*

Folger's referent cognitions theory (RCT: Folger, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1993) was an attempt to address concerns regarding equity theory. RCT maintains that an unfair judgment will result from a situation where an individual believes a more favorable outcome *would* have resulted from an alternative procedure that *should* have been used. Thus, the referent in this model refers to the awareness of procedural alternatives that would lead to a more favorable outcome.

Folger and his colleagues determined that a high referent (i.e., an individual aware that alternative procedures lead to better outcomes) is more likely to engender injustice than a low referent (i.e., an individual not aware of alternative procedures that could result in a better outcome). In addition, the effect occurs even when the objective outcomes are identical (Folger & Martin, 1986). Various moderators also have been found. For instance, a high referent outcome will not produce injustice when it is assigned by a fair process (Cropanzano & Folger, 1989), when the favorable outcome is likely to be assigned sometime in the future (Folger, Rosenfield, Rheaume, & Martin, 1983), or when an adequate justification is provided (Folger, Rosenfield, & Robinson, 1983).

Though not explicitly based on RCT, Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble, and Zelerer (1987) reported similar results. They found that if individuals perceive their

intergroup situation to be legitimate or stable, they accept a situation in which they are disadvantaged. Conversely, if intergroup instability or illegitimacy is perceived, individuals are much more likely to develop cognitive alternatives to the situation. Consequently, as in RCT, the presence of these alternatives leads individuals to evaluate their situation as unfair. In this case, responses are also prompted, illustrating the combined effects of procedural and distributive injustice in producing negative feelings and evoking collective action.

Despite its contributions, RCT is incomplete as an integrative process theory of organizational justice. Folger and Cropanzano (2001) pointed out that although the theory defines the conditions necessary to hold others accountable for unfair treatment, it does not explain the process by which these accountability judgments are made. Furthermore, similar to equity theory, RCT primarily explores material and economic aspects of referents rather than socioemotional ones. It also ignores how the amount of adversity faced by an individual, and the extent to which the situation violates a collective moral code of fairness, enters the equation of how justice judgments are formed (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998).

#### *Recent Modifications to RCT: Folger's Fairness Theory*

Since proposing RCT, Folger recognized these limitations and updated the theory considerably. The revised theory, which has been termed *fairness theory*, maintains that social injustice occurs when an individual is able to hold another accountable for a situation in which their well-being (either material or psychological) has been threatened (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). According to fairness theory, there are three necessary processes that must all occur before a situation can be interpreted as being socially unjust.

First, an unfavorable condition must be present. That is, some adversity must be present in the eyes of the "victim." Folger and Cropanzano (2001) termed this aspect of the process the *would* component. That is, this process involves the individual assessing how another situation would have felt; the easier it is for an individual to imagine a positive alternative to the situation, the more likely it is that the unfortunate event will cause distress. The degree of discrepancy between the actual event and perceived alternatives will influence the strength of the response to the situation. In addition, the individual may consider both material/economic and socioemotional factors when assessing the degree of adversity present in the situation. Thus, this aspect of fairness theory combines elements of procedural, distributive, and interactional justice in determining the impact of the negative situation.

Second, one must determine who is accountable for the injustice. In this process, the individual assesses if the target (the person or entity responsible for the situation) *could* have acted differently. This process has been labeled the *could* component of fairness theory. Research has shown that this particular judgment is strongly influenced by the social account provided by the target (Bies, 1987, 2001; Bobocel, McCline, & Folger, 1997; Tyler & Bies, 1990). If the target admits that things could have been better, but the circumstances were unavoidable due to situational constraints, the individual facing the negative situation may not interpret it as unfair. This is because if the target *could* have acted differently, he or she

would have, and this meets only one of the requirements for perceiving a situation as unfair. Fairness theory also allows for the multi-source models of justice, in that the “who” that “could” have acted differently may be either an individual (such as the victim’s supervisor) or an organization (i.e., “a juristic person”).

The third process in the fairness theory model is the *should* component. This is a crucial and previously unaddressed process in forming fairness judgments; it takes into account whether the harmful actions violate some ethical principle of interpersonal treatment. A situation is not perceived as unjust unless it is viewed as violating some moral code. The incorporation of the should component into fairness theory explains why we often collectively react to unjust situations faced by others with whom we have no personal connection. Justice, in this case, is a moral virtue that dictates how people *should* treat and interact with one another (Folger, 1994, 1998).

In summary, fairness theory states that in order to determine if a given situation is fair, three distinct judgments must be made. These judgments contrast the negativity of the situation, the actions of the target, and the moral conduct employed with counterfactual scenarios of what would, could, and should have taken place.

Although fairness theory adequately addresses some of the limitations of RCT, given its recency, little empirical testing has been conducted on the various elements of this model. Fortunately, another model, *fairness heuristic theory*, has been developed and has received empirical support. We will review this framework and then discuss its similarities and differences with fairness theory.

### *Fairness Heuristic Theory*

Fairness heuristic theory provides a critical piece to the puzzle of how exactly justice evaluations are formed. This theory not only provides us with additional sources of evidence used by individuals to form fairness judgments, but it also explains why several previous studies have concluded that evaluations of procedures are more relevant than evaluations of outcomes in making overall fairness judgments (Lind, 2001; Lind et al., 1993; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992; van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997; van den Bos et al., 2001; van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997; van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998).

Fairness heuristic theory argues that individuals are often in situations where they must cede to authority, and ceding authority to another person provides an opportunity to be exploited. This situation puts individuals in what Lind (2001) referred to as the *fundamental social dilemma*. That is, contributing personal resources to a social entity can help facilitate one’s goals and secure one’s social identity, but (due to the cessation to authority that joining a social entity entails) it simultaneously puts one at risk of exploitation, rejection, and a loss of identity.

As a result of the possibility of being exploited and having one’s identity threatened, individuals are often uncertain about their relationships with authority. This uncertainty leads an individual to ask questions such as whether the authority can be trusted, if the authority will treat him or her in a nonbiased manner, and if the authority will view him or her as a legitimate member of

the society, organization, or work group. As Lind (2001) pointed out, decisions involving the fundamental social dilemma are so ubiquitous in our daily lives, there is no way we could stop and thoroughly calculate these factors in every social relationship in which we find ourselves. Furthermore, the information we would require to make accurate evaluations regarding these matters is often unavailable or incomplete (van den Bos et al., 2001). Thus, we rely on heuristics or cognitive shortcuts to guide our subsequent behaviors. For instance, we tend to give more weight to information that we receive first, rather than to the information that comes later (van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997), suggesting that we might sometimes become “stuck” on our initial fairness impression. Additionally, when individuals lack information about the outcomes of others, they tend to rely more heavily on process information to make their fairness judgments (van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997).

Van den Bos and colleagues (2001) described the stages or phases through which individuals progress when forming fairness judgments. In the *pre-formation phase*, individuals collect information regarding the trustworthiness of an authority. Because the information needed to make this decision is often unavailable, fairness information is used as a heuristic substitute in making this evaluation.

The second stage is labeled the *formation phase*. This stage addresses how justice judgments are actually formed. Individuals seek information about their inclusion into or exclusion from their social unit. Since procedures (such as voice, access, value, or respect) carry a great deal of information about the inclusion of an individual, fairness evaluations will, in this stage, communicate to the individual his or her value to the group with whom he or she is associated (i.e., ingroup). It is important to note here that the fairness of an authority's procedures are more relevant to the formation of fairness judgments when the authority is a member of this ingroup, as well.

The third stage has been labeled the *post-formation phase*. This stage explains how the formation of these initial fairness evaluations guides reactions to subsequent events, as well as the formation of subsequent fairness judgments. Not only are the initial justice judgments strongly determined by the information first received, but they provide a heuristic framework for interpreting and making decisions about future events.

In conclusion, the literature and empirical support regarding fairness heuristic theory provide a direct explanation as to how fairness evaluations are formed. The theory explains that fairness judgments are formed via the information we have readily available. Subsequently, these quickly made fairness judgments are used as a guide to regulate our behaviors in various social settings in order to match the level of justice we perceive (Lind, 2001). Using fairness evaluations as heuristic substitutes frees up cognitive resources and gives us confidence in the actions we display. It is important to note, however, that as with all cognitive heuristics, these judgments are based on perceptions that can at times be inaccurate. Therefore, by using fairness as a heuristic we run the risk of being led astray.

### *Toward a Unified Process Theory of Organizational Justice?*

The previous section reviewed three very different process models of justice: equity theory, referent cognitions/fairness theory, and fairness heuristic theory. Although there is support for each of these frameworks, they have yet to be integrated. Fortunately, recent work on fairness heuristic theory offers some favorable prospects on which to build (Lind, 2001; Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, in press).

Although all of the models reviewed view justice as an important element of human behavior, the mechanisms in these theories are somewhat different. If we look to the social cognition theories involving information processing (Lord & Foti, 1986) and the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), then we encounter the possibility that these "opposing" models of justice might apply in different situations.

Bobocel, McCline, and Folger (1997) suggested that a continuum of approaches to making social justice judgments exists. With the noteworthy exception of fairness heuristic theory research (e.g., Lind et al., in press), however, justice researchers have not adequately considered the implications of this continuum. Generally speaking, both social and cognitive psychologists have argued that human judgements range from those that carefully and consciously evaluate all available information in order to make a deliberate and effortful judgment (a *controlled* or *systematic* process), to those that rely on information that is readily available for making quick and efficient judgments (an *automatic* process). (For general reviews of this topic, the reader is referred to Bargh, 1996, Logan, 1988; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977; Wegner & Bargh, 1998.) The three major process theories presented here fall at different points on this continuum. Equity theory and the early work on referent cognitions theory propose that conscious and careful evaluation of one's self and referent information (in a somewhat controlled or systematic process) determines fairness judgments. This is consistent with the idea of central route processing suggested by the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b). This kind of processing may be quite appropriate when we have the time and cognitive resources to commit to such a process.

Yet, there are other situations in which these cognitive resources are not available and individuals make judgments automatically through the use of more automatic or heuristic processing (Lind et al., in press). Fairness heuristic theory describes this automatic process (Lind, 1992, 2001; van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2001). For example, fairness heuristic theory may be accurate in situations where information that normally would be used for central route processing is unavailable or when there are competing demands on our cognitive resources. In these settings, individuals may be much more likely in making a fairness judgment to follow a process similar to the one described by fairness heuristic theory. For example, Lind, Kray, and Thompson (1998) found that information pertaining to justice had a particularly powerful impact when participants were interacting with a new supervisor (Study 1) or were in a conflict with a person they did not know well (Study 2). At this time, Lind and his colleagues maintained, it is especially



important to attend carefully and effortfully to relevant information. Once the judgment is made, however, it can be stored and accessed automatically in the future. The work of Lind and his associates is intriguing for another reason. It strongly implies that fairness judgments, once formed, are resistant to change. In this regard, these appraisals may take on a trait-like quality, a point to which we will return later.

We propose that fairness theory falls somewhere between equity theory and fairness heuristic theory on this controlled–automatic continuum. As Folger and Cropanzano (1998) explained, the *would*, *could*, and *should*, judgments made by individuals assessing the fairness of their situations can occur either systematically or automatically. They do point out, however, that if the counterfactual scenarios used to assess the situation are derived automatically, with no conscious effort by the individual, it is likely that the discrepancy between the actual and the counterfactual situation will be greater than when one has to put forth a great deal of mental effort to derive alternatives. This implies that when the fairness evaluation process (as proposed by fairness theory) is carried out implicitly, a greater degree of injustice may be perceived by considering the different process theories in light of the automatic/controlled processing continuum, it becomes apparent that the different theories may have something to say in their different domains. Yet, the question of why justice is important to people still remains unanswered. To explore this question, we turn to the content theories of justice.

## WHY ARE WORKERS CONCERNED WITH ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE?: A MULTIPLE NEEDS FRAMEWORK

The process theories of justice, such as RCT/fairness theory and fairness heuristic theory, provide key insights into *how* individuals formulate justice judgments. Such models have a somewhat cognitive flavor, as they deal with the processing of fairness related information. However, as Prichard and Campbell (1976) have observed with respect to motivation theories, process models provide an incomplete view of human behavior. This is because they tend not to emphasize a fundamental question—*Why* do people engage in goal-oriented behavior in the first place? It is one thing to understand the ebb and flow of information, but quite another to ascertain why information processing should occur. To state the matter differently: Why should someone spend time thinking about justice when they could be thinking about something else? Answering this sort of question falls under the purview of content theories.

Historically, organizational justice researchers have provided two answers to the “why” question. Individuals concern themselves with justice because (a) it is in their economic best interest (the instrumental model), and (b) it affirms their identity within valued groups (the relational model). We review two major content theories below. Then, we briefly discuss a recent critique by Folger (1998). Based on this critique, we propose an integrated content model of organizational justice.

### *Current Models*

*The instrumental model.* The “instrumental model” (Tyler, 1987, p. 333) of justice proposes that individuals are motivated to seek control. Among other things, controlling procedures can serve to maximize the favorability of outcomes. To understand the origin of this view, one must consider the dispute resolution research of Thibaut and Walker (1975). Their basic research paradigm had three parties: two disputants and a third-party decision-maker (e.g., a judge). In addition, the conflict resolution intervention progressed through two stages, the first of which was called the “process stage.” In this stage, information pertaining to the conflict was presented. Control over the delivery of information could be exerted by either of the two disputants (high process control) or by the third-party (low process control). The “decision” stage followed, in which a judgment was rendered. Either the two disputants (high decision control) or the third party (low decision control) made the final decision. Within this paradigm, Thibaut and Walker (1975) found that high process control, or “voice,” increased fairness even in the absence of decision control. Later research generally has been consistent with these notions (Folger, Cropanzano, Timmerman, Howes, & Mitchell, 1996; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985), though there have been a few exceptions (e.g., Sheppard, 1985). The high process control or voice finding was (and remains) seemingly paradoxical when one views human beings as economically “rational” persons.

Thibaut and Walker (1975) resolved this quandary by recognizing that individuals take a long-term perspective. That is, they are willing to forgo temporarily unfavorable outcomes because fair procedures guarantee more beneficial outcomes in the long run (Greenberg, 1990; Shapiro, 1993). In other words, people are self-interested, albeit an enlightened self-interest. During the 1970s, a series of classic experiments supported Thibaut and Walker’s (1975) position (for a review see Rubin, 1980). These studies suggested that people want decision control when it is beneficial to resolving the conflict, and they do not want decision control when it impairs resolution. For instance, individual process control is preferred when the conflict is of low intensity (Bigoness, 1976; Johnson & Pruitt, 1972), when individuals are not working under a time limit (LaTour, Houlden, Walker, & Thibaut, 1976), and when there is an established cooperative motivation (LaTour et al., 1976). On the other hand, third-party process control is desirable when the conflict is of high intensity (Wheeler, 1975) and involves face-saving (Bartunek, Benton, & Keys, 1975). Taken together, these studies are consistent with the instrumental model in that disputants wish to retain process control when doing so allows them to conclude effectively a conflict, but are willing to relinquish control when the conflict is relatively intractable.

More recent evidence is consistent with this early work. Generally speaking, favorable outcomes are more likely to engender fairness, whereas unfavorable outcomes are more likely to engender perceived unfairness (e.g., Ambrose, Harland, & Kulik, 1991; Conlon, 1993; Conlon & Fasolo, 1990; Conlon & Ross, 1993). These effects are stronger when the unfavorable outcome is large rather than small

(Lind & Lissak, 1985), and when it is framed as a loss rather than as the absence of a gain (Byrne & Rupp, 2000). Despite this support for the instrumental model, effect sizes tend to be meager (Giacobbe-Miller, 1995; Tyler, 1989, 1991, 1994). People may be concerned with injustice for economic reasons, but they clearly have other issues as well.

*The group-value/relational model.* Lind and Tyler (1988; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Lind, 1992) offered a somewhat different explanation for why people care about justice. The group-value model, later renamed the relational model, emphasizes that inclusion within a group can provide a sense of self-worth and identity. Fair treatment is important because it conveys information about the quality of one's relationships with authorities and group members. In general, the relational model proposes that a procedure is seen as fair if it indicates a positive, full-status relationship with the authority figure (e.g., supervisor), and if it promotes within-group relationships. To the extent that a procedure indicates the relationship is negative or that the individual is a low-status member of the group, the procedure is perceived as unfair (Tyler & Lind, 1992).

A good deal of empirical evidence supports the relational model (e.g., Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996). For example, Tyler and colleagues (1996), in a four-study examination, showed that relational judgments about authorities (neutrality, trustworthiness, status recognition) strongly related to feelings of group membership (e.g., pride in group membership). These feelings of group membership, in turn, partially mediated the relationship between the relational judgments and group-oriented behaviors (e.g., compliance with group rules and extra-role behaviors directed at groups). In other words, authorities who used unbiased and honest decision-making procedures, who demonstrated high levels of trustworthiness by showing concern for others, and who were polite and treated group members with dignity and respect increased feelings of pride in group membership, which resulted in behaviors beneficial to the group. Tyler and colleagues (1996) concluded that their results support the argument that fairness communicates status and value within the group, and for this reason people care about fair treatment by authorities.

Probably the most compelling evidence for the relational model comes in a series of studies involving the interaction between procedural justice and group identification (Tyler, 1999). According to the model, individuals are concerned with justice because of their desire for full membership within valued groups. If this is so, those who identify strongly with a particular group will prefer the relational model to explain their justice perceptions, and those who identify weakly with a particular group will prefer the instrumental model. This interaction has been obtained in a series of studies on such diverse topics as layoffs (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992, Study 1), interactions with legal authorities (Brockner et al., Study 2), customer service (Holbrook & Kulik, 1996), water conservation (Tyler & Degoey, 1995), and ethnic identification (Huo et al., 1996). Taken together,

this evidence strongly supports the notion that issues of group membership are important in understanding justice perceptions.

*A third perspective.* At the present juncture, organizational justice researchers tend to conduct their work using two content theories: the instrumental model and the relational model. The former emphasizes economic concerns, and the latter emphasizes social concerns. Despite this difference, similarities do exist between these two approaches. In an important critique, Folger (1998) argued that both perspectives are driven by self-interest, but each with an emphasis on different types of outcomes. The principal difference between the instrumental and relational models is that the target of self-interest is different in each case.

Folger (1994, 1998) offered a complementary perspective that we have termed the *moral virtues model*. According to Folger, we care about justice because we (or at least many of us) have a basic respect for human dignity and worth. Moreover, we want to act in accordance with this respect. Consistent with this idea, Folger (1998) reviewed evidence suggesting that people care about justice even when doing so offers no apparent economic benefit and involves strangers. Folger noted that there are times when “virtue [serves] as its own reward” (Folger, 1998, p. 32). This is an important idea and one that we discuss in more detail below.

### *A Multiple Needs Model of Justice*

We have reviewed three models (instrumental, relational, moral virtues) to answer our central question of why justice matters. It is intriguing that all three explanations share a common form; justice matters to the extent that it serves some important psychological need. The models are distinct in their unique emphasis on one need over another. Fairness is germane to long-term economic benefits (the instrumental model), achieving status/esteem from others (the relational model), and living a virtuous life (moral virtues models). Although there may be debate over the relative importance of these needs, scholars generally acknowledge that justice is driven by multiple motives. For this reason, it should be possible to subsume these three mini-frameworks into a general integrative model.

One model relevant to such a general framework is the *multiple needs model* of Williams (1997). Williams suggested that human beings have at least four interrelated psychological needs. He termed these control, belonging, self-esteem, and meaningful existence (shown in Fig. 1). Williams proposed that mistreatment by other people (he was especially concerned with social ostracism) potentially conflicts with each of these needs. Consequently, mistreatment is psychologically ominous. By extension, it seems likely that injustice triggers defensive cognitions, negative affect, and coping behaviors. As illustrated in Fig. 1, Williams’ four needs map onto our three models of justice: control (instrumental), belonging (relational), self-esteem (relational), and meaningful existence (moral virtues). In the pages that follow, we integrate the three models of justice with Williams’ four needs. In each case, we try to emphasize new insights that can be derived from a multiple needs perspective.

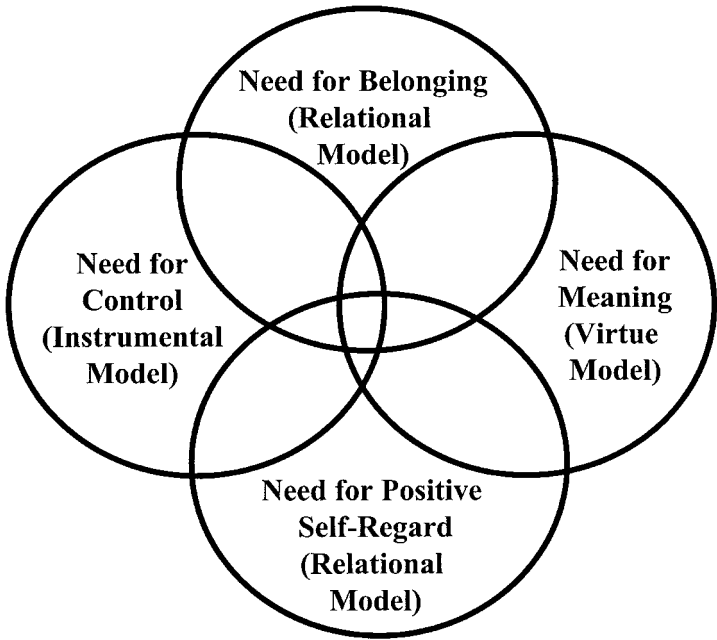


FIG. 1. The multiple needs model of organizational justice.

*Control.* Various learning (e.g., Skinner, 1996), motivational (e.g., Bandura, 1995), and well-being theorists (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1998) have maintained that individuals have a need to control their environment. This need manifests itself as a desire to predict and manage important interactions, including (perhaps especially) those that involve the exchange and/or receipt of desired outcomes. The relationship between justice and the need for control is well described by the instrumental model. Fair processes allow people to foretell more accurately the allocation of rewards and punishments. In the long run, this augurs well for economic benefits. In fact, the instrumental model is sometimes referred to as the “control model” (e.g., by Giacobbe-Miller, 1995).

Viewing the instrumental model as a manifestation of the need for control is much closer to Thibaut and Walker’s (1975) original thinking. In addition, it implies an interesting change in emphasis. Typically, the instrumental model suggests that people care about justice largely because of the tangible outcomes they receive. The desire for control, however, adds a new wrinkle. That is, people also are interested in *predicting* the course of events. In effect, justice establishes an order to their interpersonal worlds (Lerner, 1977). As a consequence, fair dealings may be instrumentally important so long as they establish a foreseeable pattern of events, and this effect could exist even when desired outcomes are not received. To our knowledge, this possibility has never been investigated.

*Belonging.* Human beings are social animals (Wilson, 1993; Wright, 1994) who manifest a desire for meaningful attachments to others of their kind (Baumeister

& Leary, 1995). In fact, it is partially through these attachments that we form a sense of our self-identity (Cropanzano, James, & Citera, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As one might expect given these observations, individuals deprived of such attachments tend to become lonely, depressed, and anxious. Over time, they may even display antisocial or psychotic behavior. The need for belonging could serve as one mechanism for the relational model (we shall discuss another mechanism in a moment). Injustice implies that individuals lack standing or inclusion among a given group (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Smith, 1998). As a result, injustice tends to separate people from others, and justice brings them closer together.

This analysis suggests that fair treatment brings about closer relationships at work. Indeed, there is now considerable evidence suggesting that justice builds strong interpersonal bonds (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2000) and promotes cooperation (Tyler, 1999). For example, Masterson and colleagues (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000) found that interactional justice promoted high quality exchanges between leaders and subordinates (i.e., high LMX). Cropanzano and Prehar (1999) replicated these findings. Similarly, Konovsky and Pugh (1994) found that procedural justice increased workers' trust in upper management. Of course, a large body of data demonstrates that both procedural justice and interactional justice are related to organizational commitment (Greenberg, 1990).

*Self-regard.* It has long been recognized that we seek to have a positive view of ourselves (e.g., Brockner, 1988; Steele, 1988). Indeed, this impulse is so important that people tend to exaggerate their virtues and minimize their failings (Brown, 1993). Relational theorists have observed that injustice can harm our self-regard. For instance, Lind and Tyler (Lind, 1995; Tyler & Lind, 1992) noted that injustice hurts our standing within a group. More generally, injustice often involves withholding dignity and respect (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993). This type of treatment can deliver a blow to one's self-worth (Koper, Van Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1993). Injustice also has deleterious consequences for self-relevant emotions, and these can occur even when outcomes are favorable. For example, experiments by Weiss, Suckow, and Cropanzano (1999) and Krehbiel and Cropanzano (2000) found that when individuals benefit from an unfair process they tend to experience guilt.

Nevertheless, the effects of justice on self-relevant cognitions are complex. In one experiment, Gilliland (1994) had student workers apply for a desirable job. Some workers were denied employment due to an unfair process, others were denied due to a fair process. Interestingly, those who faced declining job prospects in the face of procedural injustice reported *higher* self-efficacy relative to those who lost the opportunity through a fair process. In an analysis of these findings, van den Bos, Bruins, Wilke, and Dronkert (1999) suggested that injustice can have "nice aspects" to the extent that it allows one to externalize blame for failure. For instance, in the case of the Gilliland paradigm, the unfair procedure may have supplied less negative information about one's ability and skill than did the fair process. Van den Bos and his colleagues tested this reasoning in three laboratory experiments. In each case, they found support for their attribution-seeking model.

At first glance, the work of van den Bos et al. (1999) and Gilliland (1994) would seem to contradict the relational model. One set of authors have found that injustice harms self-worth, another found that injustice increases it. Yet, when examined through the lens of the multiple needs model, the work of van den Bos et al. and Gilliland may be the exceptions that prove the rule. Usually, justice promotes self-worth (Koper et al., 1993; Tyler et al., 1996; Tyler & Smith, 1998), though exceptions to this rule exist. One particular exception occurs when fairness forces an individual to take responsibility for regretful events (as found by van den Bos and his colleagues). In this case, justice can harm self-regard because it forces one to make an internal attribution. Nonetheless, both of these situations have an important commonality. In each case, the ultimate goal is to maintain positive self-regard and justice (or injustice) as a means to that end. When injustice serves that end, then it has the “nice” aspects observed by van den Bos and colleagues (1999).

*Meaningful existence.* Folger (1998) maintained that justice is partly about morality. In part, individuals worry about fairness because they want to be virtuous actors in a just world. In other words, justice touches some basic quality of being human, and—if Folger is to be believed—this basic quality is in addition to, though not exclusive of, the qualities of economic benefit and group affiliation. Other researchers have made similar statements. For example, Rokeach (1973) argued that people seek to be both virtuous and competent, and Kohlberg (1984) went so far as to maintain that morality is a driving force in human development. Similarly, evolutionary psychologists assert that *Homo sapiens* are predisposed to create social order by generating moral standards (Fukuyama, 1999; Wilson, 1993).

For all of this, no one has proposed an explicit need for morality, though evolutionary psychologists have come close. Rather, personality and social psychologists have treated the matter more generally, asserting that people have a need to find meaning in their lives (Williams, 1997). Moral purpose is one manifestation of the search for meaning (Becker, 1973). This follows from the nature of morality. To understand what is “right”—rather than what is simply practical, feasible, or profitable—implies the existence of transcendent principles to govern behavior and, even more important here, to understand our own existence. These standards rise above any particular individual, often providing a sense of purpose and personal significance. In short, transcendent ideals provide us with a reason for being here.

In a recent paper, van den Bos and Miedema (1999) emphasized mortality within the justice paradigm, by applying terror management theory to organizational justice. The terror management approach argues that the need for meaning is impelled by a uniquely human problem—fear of death (Arndt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Schimel, 1999; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Like all living things, each of us will eventually cease to exist. However, unlike other living things, we *know* that our departure is certain. This realization, fueled by our instinct for survival, creates

an existential horror in each of us. One way to cope with this terror is make sense out of it; to find meaning in something that has an unavoidable ending. The transcendent values in organized religion and some social norms are one source of comfort. That is, moral purpose becomes a reservoir of meaning for finite lives. There is, therefore, an almost defensive quality about our values. They serve as a sort of rampart between people and existential angst (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). For this reason, when mortality is made salient we react more strongly to those who violate our values (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeder, Kirkland, & Lyon, 1990; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989). Van den Bos and Miedema (1999) seem to have been the first to recognize the application of terror management to organizational justice. In two experimental studies, these scholars manipulated the salience of one's mortality among undergraduate participants. They found that when mortality salience was high, procedural justice had a more profound impact on participant responses.

*Summary.* We have described four basic psychological needs—control, belonging, self-esteem, and meaning. Evidence suggests that injustice can threaten directly any and all of these four needs. Seen in this light, it should not surprise us that justice is such an important part of interpersonal relations. Yet, there is more to the matter than this. As shown in Fig. 1, the four needs are interrelated. For instance, reminding one of his or her mortality can produce exaggerated estimates of social consensus (Pyszczynski, Wicklund, Floresky, Gauch, Koch, Solomon, & Greenberg, 1996). High self-esteem, on the other hand, can shelter someone from mortality threats (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997). In a parallel fashion, disrupted attachments with other people can lower self-esteem (Leary, 1990) and perhaps lead one to think of death (Williams, 1997).

The interconnections among the four needs suggest that justice can have both direct effects (e.g., it can guarantee long terms economic success and/or build one's self-esteem) and indirect effects (e.g., being economically successful can boost one's self-esteem). In other words, it seems likely that any need can be affected by a threat to any other. Consequently, an unfair event has the potential to create a series of ripples that reverberate from need to need, thereby compounding ill effects.

## WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE?: STRUCTURE, SOURCES, EVENTS, AND SOCIAL ENTITIES

Perhaps the most basic question in any domain of inquiry is descriptive: What are we studying? In recent years, this "what" question has received attention from justice researchers, though it has not been—and probably never will be—completely answered. Indeed, the very breadth of the question renders it intractable. Justice is many things. The answer to the question "What is justice?" varies based on the particular "what" that happens to interest the researcher. With this problem in mind, we have organized this review around three different "what" questions: (1) What is the structure of justice?; (2) What is the target of our justice judgments?; and (3) With what are we concerned when we evaluate fairness?



There are probably more “whats” than there are researchers to ask the question! Our selection of these three is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, our goal is to explore current conceptual debates and highlight potential areas for new research.

### *What Is the Structure of Justice?*

Justice research in the 1990s was dominated by research into the role of decision-maker conduct. As reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), numerous studies conducted in both the laboratory and field contexts, and within a variety of allocation contexts, demonstrated the beneficial effects of social aspects of decision-maker conduct. For example, the provision of explanations and the display of interpersonal sensitivity on people’s perceptions of fairness and reactions toward organizations and their leaders have all been demonstrated in the justice research (e.g., Bies & Shapiro, 1987, 1988; Bobocel & Farrell, 1996; Greenberg, 1991, 1994; Shapiro, 1991, 1994; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). At this time in the history of the justice literature, there is virtual consensus regarding the idea that people do indeed care deeply about the social side of fairness (also see Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985; Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer, 1990).

Nevertheless, for all the research demonstrating that interpersonal interaction matters to people in terms of their evaluations of fairness and related reactions, there is ongoing controversy over how best to conceptualize the various justice concepts (Bies, 2001; Bobocel & Holmval, 1999b). The basic question is this: Should the elements of interpersonal interaction be conceptualized merely as facets of existing concepts of justice—namely, procedural justice or distributive justice—or do interpersonal considerations represent a fundamentally different justice concept? In the short history of interactional justice, we can distinguish three views of this question.

*Interactional justice as separate from procedural justice.* Bies’ original proposal of interactional justice, as described in two seminal papers (Bies & Moag, 1986; Bies, 1987), was that the interpersonal, or social, aspects of fairness are separate from existing concepts of justice. More specifically, Bies argued that previous models of procedural justice had either neglected (e.g., Thibaut & Walker, 1975) or confounded (e.g., Leventhal, 1980) people’s concerns about the fairness of the formal structure of decision procedures, with their concerns about the fairness of the interpersonal enactment of decision procedures. In contrast, Bies argued that people can distinguish three aspects of the allocation sequence—namely, procedures, interaction, and outcomes—and that each aspect is subject to fairness evaluations. Accordingly, he suggested that it was theoretically and empirically meaningful to distinguish the concept of interactional justice from those of procedural justice and distributive justice. On the basis of Bies and Moag’s initial research, interactional justice typically has been operationalized as comprising two broad classes of criteria: (a) clear and adequate explanations, or justifications, and (b) treatment of recipients with dignity and respect (for a recent conceptual elaboration on the content domain of interactional justice, see Bies, 2001).

In a somewhat different approach, Greenberg (1993) expanded on this line of thinking and argued that people have concerns about interpersonal treatment or social aspects of fairness not only during the enactment of procedures, but also during the distribution phase of the allocation sequence. In other words, Greenberg suggested a  $2 \times 2$  framework in which the category of justice—procedural and distributive—is crossed with the focal determinant of justice—social and structural—to yield four classes of justice. Until recently, there was very little research directly comparing the viability of Greenberg's four-part model to Bies' tripartite model. Of the research available, some is supportive of Greenberg's approach (e.g., Colquitt, in press; Thurston, 2000), and some is less so (McGonigle & Hauenstein, 2000). Regardless, both conceptualizations played a key role in highlighting the distinction, broadly speaking, between the social and nonsocial (or structural) aspects of fairness judgments.

*Interactional justice as a component of procedural justice.* Soon after the introduction of interactional justice, a second school of thought began to downplay possible distinctions between procedural and interactional justice. For example, according to their relational model of procedural justice, Lind and Tyler (1988) argued that procedural justice judgments inherently involve considerations of both the structure of procedures and the quality of treatment, hence it was best to broaden the concept of procedural justice to include both structural and interpersonal facets. Similarly, in an article published in 1990, Tyler and Bies echoed this point. More specifically, they argued that the dominant view of procedural justice, stemming from Thibaut and Walker's (1975) conceptualization, was too narrow in scope because it emphasized the formal, structural properties of decision-making procedures but neglected the role of decision-maker conduct. Tyler and Bies concluded that the content domain of the concept of interactional justice could be subsumed under the rubric of a broader conceptualization of procedural justice. Similarly, in an article that outlined managers' responsibilities in implementing fair decision-making procedures, Folger and Bies (1989) made scant distinction between the structural and social aspects of process. Various conceptual reviews published in the 1990s also treated procedural and interactional justice as structural and social manifestations of the same underlying construct (e.g., Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg, 1990).

The idea that procedural and interactional justice were part of a single dimension had an effect on the research operationalizations of the day. For example, in correlational studies, justice researchers used measures of procedural justice that included items to assess both the formal structure of procedures and the interpersonal enactment (e.g., Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998). In addition, researchers often confounded manipulations of formal structure with those of interpersonal treatment in experimental examinations of justice effects (for some examples, see Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

*Coming full circle.* In spite of the call by some to downplay the distinction between interactional justice and procedural justice, most recently there have been calls to once again highlight the distinction. Indeed, in a recent chapter, Bies (2001)

made the compelling argument that, although people's perceptions of the fairness of decision procedures and the fairness of interpersonal treatment are interrelated, people can and do make distinctions. Three types of evidence are especially pertinent here: evidence of separate factors, evidence of interactions, and evidence of differential main effects.

For procedural and interactional justice to be treated as different constructs, it must be viable to measure them separately. Though procedural and interactional justice tend to be correlated (Hauenstein, McGonigle, & Flinder, 1997) several researchers have found that interactional and procedural justice load on different factors (e.g., Bobocel & Holmvall, 1999a; Byrne, 1999; Byrne & Cropanzano 2000; Colquitt, in press; Cropanzano & Prehar, 1999; Malatesta & Byrne, 1997; Masterson et al., 2000; Moorman, 1991; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Thurston, 2000). Although all of this work is quite recent, the available evidence suggests that procedural and interactional justice can be treated separately.

There may be value in separating formal processes from interpersonal behaviors for another reason—the two seem to work together to affect responses to the work environment. In other words, the effect of one may moderate the effect of the other. For example, following from the predictions of referent cognitions theory (Folger, 1986a, 1986b, 1993), Skarlicki and Folger (1997) conducted a field study to examine the links between employees' interactional, procedural, and distributive justice perceptions on the one hand, and organizational retaliatory behaviors on the other hand. Retaliatory behavior (as rated by participants' coworkers) was highest when employees perceived all three types of justice to be low, but this effect was reduced when either procedures or interactions were perceived as fair. In other words, these researchers found a three-way interaction among the justice measures, such that procedural and interactional justice had "substitutable" effects, with either being sufficient to mitigate the negative effect of perceived distributive injustice.

Bobocel and Holmvall (1999a) also examined the joint effect of employees' perceptions of procedural, interactional, and distributive justice on employee reactions; however, their focus was on predicting attitudinal responses (e.g., affective commitment to the organization). Like Skarlicki and Folger (1997), these researchers found a three-way interaction, but of a different form. In particular, the "usual" adverse effect of perceived distributive injustice on employees' affective commitment to their organization (as reported in Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996) was mitigated only when both procedural justice (defined as the structural aspects of process) and interactional justice (defined as the social aspects of process) were perceived to be high. When either procedural justice or interactional justice were perceived to be low, perceptions of distributive justice significantly predicted attitudes. Consequently, Bobocel and Holmvall's data are consistent with the idea that *both* procedural and interactional justice perceptions are necessary to offset certain adverse effects of perceived distributive injustice.

Although on the surface Skarlicki and Folger's (1997) and Bobocel and Holmvall's (1999a) findings appear to be contradictory with respect to the roles of procedural and interactional justice, the differences may be due to the particular

criterion variables that were the focus of investigation. That is, as Bobocel and Holmvall pointed out, let us presume that people are in general motivated to avoid engaging in more extreme, negative behaviors toward the system (such as, organizational retaliatory behavior). If so, then it should not surprise us to discover it takes less, *either* perceived procedural justice or interactional justice, to reduce such negative behavioral responses to perceived distributive injustice. On the other hand, it takes more of *both* perceived procedural and interactional justice to mitigate negative affective or cognitive responses (such as those tapped in the measurement of affective commitment).

Another practical way to distinguish between procedural and interactional justice is to consider their unique contributions to predicting various criterion variables. To the extent that each form of justice accounts for unique variance, then there is conceptual utility in considering them separately. Generally speaking, individual studies have tended to find evidence of differential validity (e.g., Barling & Phillips, 1993; Moorman, 1991; Moya, Masterson, & Bartol, 1997). Yet, individual studies could lead to a deceptive impression. Effects can be found for methodological reasons or on the basis of chance alone (for a general discussion of these issues, see Schmidt, 1992, 1996; Schmidt & Hunter, 1996). What is needed is a way to characterize the literature as a whole.

To address this concern, there have been three recent meta-analyses of the organizational justice literature (Bartle & Hayes, 1999; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2000; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, in press). Though the specific techniques vary across these studies, all are unanimous in arguing for the separation of procedural from interactional justice. For instance, Bartle and Hayes (1999, p. 2) stated "it is important to distinguish between the justice constructs, including interactional justice." Cohen-Charash and Spector (2000, p. 2) concluded, "We found the distinction between the three justices to be merited." Colquitt et al. differed slightly from the other two meta-analyses, in that they identified four forms of justice: distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal. Regardless, Colquitt and his colleagues divided the social aspects of justice from the formal aspects. This is strong evidence for maintaining procedural and interactional justice as separate constructs.

#### *What (or Who) Is Being Appraised? Source Effects in Judgments of Fairness*

As we have seen, perceived injustice is, at least in part, the consequence of a moral transgression (Folger, 1998). A good deal of justice research has documented how people respond to these transgressions. Very simply put, when others treat us fairly we are more likely to cooperate, support their decisions, and offer assistance when they need it (Tyler & Smith, 1998). However, when others treat us unfairly we are more likely to seek revenge (Bies & Tripp, 2001), take legal action (Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, in press), steal (Greenberg, 1997), and become aggressive (Folger & Skarlicki, in press). Justice pulls us together, and injustice pushes us apart. The link between injustice and various worker responses seems to be a sort of reciprocation, such as that described by social exchange

theory (Blau, 1964; Organ, 1988). In short, we repay the actions of others with corresponding actions of our own.

This observation raises an interesting question with regard to workplace fairness. If we tailor our behavior to the behavior of others, then it becomes valuable to consider the source of the (in)justice. In a typical job setting, we interact with myriad people and groups. Presumably, employees have at least some ability to distinguish those who treat them fairly from those who do not. If so, then there is no reason to presume that we react to all of our coworkers in the same fashion. A person may seek to build bridges with some, while seeking vengeance on others. In large measure, this depends on the source of fairness (and unfairness).

In recent years, several researchers have begun to incorporate source effects into their theoretical thinking (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 1999; Cropanzano & Byrne, 2000; Gonzalez, 1999). Very loosely, a prototypical multi-source model might look something like that presented in Fig. 2. The upper part of the figure shows perceptions of justice that are based on the actions of the organization. As shown, this may include (at least) procedural and interactional justice. These organizational level perceptions of justice are related to worker reactions toward the organization, such as organizational commitment. The bottom of the figure shows perceptions of justice that are based on the actions of one's supervisor. Once again, these may include both procedural and interactional justice. Regardless, they are posited to affect responses toward the supervisor, such as supervisory commitment.

There are a couple of noteworthy features about Fig. 2. First, notice that Fig. 2 limits itself to two sets of perceptions—those about the organization and those about the supervisor. In principle, such a limitation is not required. For instance, people may form perceptions about coworkers such as when one experiences bigotry (James, Lovato, & Khoo, 1994). Nevertheless, the organization and the supervisor are a good place to start, as they are central in most work environments.

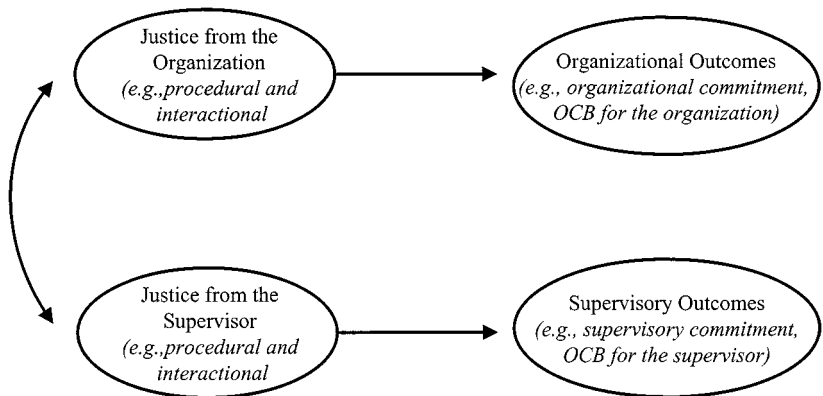


FIG. 2. A multi-source model of organizational justice.

Second, notice the curved arrow connecting organizational and supervisory justice. These two sets of perceptions will invariably be correlated. This makes sense, insofar as the supervisor is often viewed as a representative of the organization. Moreover, the organization sets policies that partially influence the behavior of the supervisor (e.g., by selecting certain people, training them in a certain way, and rewarding some behaviors but not others). Though the model presented in Fig. 2 is admittedly sketchy, the evidence so far has been quite supportive.

In a recent study, Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000) argued that procedural justice tends to focus on the policies of organizations as a whole, and interactional justice tends to focus on the behavior of individual supervisors. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), they suggested that individuals reciprocate to the source of justice. Stated in the terms used here, procedural justice has the organization as its source, and interactional justice has the supervisor as its source. Consequently, procedural justice should predict both organizational citizenship behaviors beneficial to the organization and organizational commitment. Interactional justice should predict organizational citizenship behaviors beneficial to the supervisor. Their predictions were supported.

Another notable aspect of the Masterson et al. (2000) study is that the authors employed a more sophisticated theoretical model than the one displayed in Fig. 2. Masterson and her colleagues added two mediator variables. Organizational support mediated the relationship between procedural justice and responses to the organization, and leader-member exchange (LMX) mediated the relationship between interactional justice and responses to the supervisor.

Malatesta and Byrne (1997) also examined the differential effects of procedural and interactional justice. Similar to Masterson et al. (2000), Malatesta and Byrne equated procedural justice with the actions of the organization and interactional justice with the actions of one's supervisor. Consistent with parts of the model shown in Fig. 2, they found that procedural justice was the best predictor of organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors beneficial to the organization. Conversely, interactional justice was the best predictor of supervisory commitment and citizenship behaviors beneficial to the supervisor.

Cropanzano and Prehar (1999) tested similar hypotheses and also controlled for any potentially confounding effect of distributive justice perceptions. As expected, and consistent with the Masterson et al. (2000) findings, employees who perceived the procedures of their performance appraisal system to be fair also reported higher levels of trust in management and satisfaction with the system. In contrast, employees' ratings of interactional justice were more strongly related to satisfactions with their supervisor and job performance, as rated by their supervisor. Moreover, as expected, the relationship between interactional justice and supervisor-directed variables was fully mediated by LMX, whereas the relationship between procedural justice and organization-directed variables was not so mediated.

In two recent papers, Byrne (1999) and Byrne and Cropanzano (2000) questioned whether it was appropriate to equate procedural justice with the organization and interactional justice with the supervisor. These authors argued that both sources

of justice (organizations and supervisors) could provide both types of justice (procedural and interactional). For instance, one's boss could set up formal policies for, say, regular staff meetings. Likewise, people form global perceptions of the organization's culture, which includes the way firms treat workers (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). To test these ideas, these authors examined procedural and interactional justice emanating from both the organization and the supervisor.

Generally speaking, their results were quite supportive. Consistent across both studies, the authors found that perceptions of fairness originating with the organization predicted organizational level outcome variables, such as organizational commitment and supervisory rated organizational citizenship behaviors beneficial to the organization. Fairness emanating from the supervisor predicted supervisory level outcomes such as supervisory commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors targeted at the supervisor, as rated by the supervisor. These authors found that when both sources of justice were taken into account, organizational level justice was the better predictor of organizational level outcomes, and supervisory level justice was the better predictor of supervisory level outcomes.

To date, the research on sources of fairness seems very encouraging. The notion of multiple sources has been incorporated into recent theoretical thinking (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 1999), and this has enabled researchers to predict consistently important work outcomes, such as citizenship behaviors (Masterson et al., 2000) and job performance (Byrne & Cropanzano, 2000).

Although no one questions the idea that workers appraise the actions of supervisors, the notion of organizational level justice may be more dubious. How can individuals appraise the actions of an organization, when only a person can behave? To address this concern, it is important to recognize that evaluations of organizations have a long and storied history within the organizational sciences. Levinson (1965) observed that workers often anthropomorphize the organizations that employ them, thinking of them as social actors in their own right. Considerable evidence supports this view. For example, workers enter into formal and tacit contracts with their employers (Rousseau, 1995), experience feelings of commitment toward the collective organization (Meyer, 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1997), and evaluate the extent to which their firms behave in a fashion that is supportive (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995) and political (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Moreover, employees can distinguish between organizational and supervisory commitment (Byrne, 1999; Byrne & Cropanzano, 2000; Malatesta, 1995; Malatesta & Byrne, 1997), as well as organizational and supervisory support (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). In all, evidence suggests that employees often think of organizations as if they were people.

Lest someone imagine that these organizational-level assessments are an artifact of an over-active social scientific imagination, it is also important to note that our legal system operates under similar assumptions. Beginning in the late Middle Ages, common law began to recognize social institutions as "juristic persons" that could own stock, make purchases, commit crimes, enter into contracts, exploit

workers, pay taxes, and do many of the wise and not-so-wise things we usually associate with individual behavior (Coleman, 1990). In other words, modern societies recognize large corporations as social actors, capable of behavior in their own right (Coleman, 1993). Seen in this light, it is not surprising to discover that organizational level actions are subject to appraisals of justice.

In our discussion so far we have emphasized the actions of others. Regardless of the source, the worker is evaluating the fairness of a particular behavior or a narrow action. In the next section we shall see that the matter is more complicated than this. In addition to evaluating events, workers also make global evaluations regarding the long-term behavior of their coworkers, work groups, and employers. The distinction rests on what someone *does* (e.g., an organization that behaved unfairly during downsizing) and what someone *is* (e.g., a fundamentally unfair organization). Consideration of this issue casts a novel light on the organizational justice literature.

### WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT WHEN WE MAKE JUSTICE JUDGMENTS?: EVENTS VS SOCIAL ENTITIES

Some years ago, Lee Cronbach (1957) authored an influential paper on research disciplines within scientific psychology. In this paper he argued that there were at least two approaches to behavioral science inquiry: An *experimental* paradigm and a *correlational* paradigm. In this section, we will discuss the fairness literature through the lens of Cronbach's two disciplines. Experimental and correlational research employ different methods, have different philosophical orientations, and examine behavior in different settings. As a consequence, these two paradigms often work with different psychological constructs. This is not necessarily bad. Cronbach emphasized that integrative work is especially rewarding, as it supplies a rich description of human behavior.

Cronbach's (1957) two disciplines are named after their divergent methodological inclinations, with one group preferring (mostly laboratory) experiments and another more at home with correlational field studies. This evident distinction points to substantive differences in orientation. Experimental researchers tend to emphasize the manner in which changes in the situation alter psychological states and processes. They often examine their ideas by carefully manipulating independent variables and assessing their effects (i.e., examining dependent variables). Philosophical orientations often accompany methodological inclinations, and the way we ask questions influences the answers we receive. In the case of the experimental paradigm, the orientation is to match environments to people. Correlational researchers, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the manner in which stable individual differences produce changes in the situation. Their orientation is to match people to situations. That is, they examine their ideas by administering questionnaires or psychological tests to a number of people and then correlate these predictors with various criteria.

Cronbach's (1957) model may not provide a guiding framework for the entire justice literature. Nevertheless, Cronbach's two paradigms provide a useful



heuristic lens through which we can review the organizational justice literature. Generally speaking, it seems that the construct of justice has changed over the years. The earliest research on organizational justice seems to have been similar to Cronbach's situationalist/experimental paradigm. We term this the "event paradigm" as its major concern is with environmental events that impact fairness judgments. Although this research has continued to flourish, a new paradigm has appeared along side. This second approach is more similar to Cronbach's individual difference/field discipline. It has emphasized general justice appraisals made in "real world" settings. We call this the "social entity" paradigm because it takes as its topic of inquiry the appraisal of sundry social entities, such as supervisors and employers.

### *The Event Paradigm*

The simplest way to describe the first paradigm is to say that its abiding concern is with how people react to specific occurrences that take place within the work environment. Prototypical research in this paradigm usually manipulates elements of the situation, such as the value of the outcomes or the process by which an outcome is assigned. Participants then cognitively weigh their situation in order to decide whether or not they were treated fairly. Reactions to people and other social entities (e.g., organizations) are presumed to result from how people respond to the event in question. Some of the most influential and classic organizational justice research is grounded within this approach. This includes the seminal work on process control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), referent cognitions theory (Folger & Martin, 1986; Folger, Rosenfield, Grove, & Corkran, 1979; Folger, Rosenfield, & Robinson, 1983), interactional justice (Bies & Shapiro, 1987, 1988; Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988), and conflict management (Lind, Kurtz, Musante, Walker, & Thibaut, 1980; Lind & Lissak, 1985).

Cronbach (1959) observed that this tradition emphasized the use of laboratory experiments in data collection. In a departure from Cronbach's sentiments, organizational justice research has utilized a wide range of methodologies. For example, field experiments have been used to explore the imposition of smoking bans (Greenberg, 1994), workplace staffing systems (Gilliland, 1994), and performance evaluation policies (Taylor, Tracy, Renard, Harrison, & Carroll, 1995). Likewise, correlational field studies have scrutinized reactions to layoffs (Brockner, Konovsky, Cooper-Schneider, Folger, Martin, & Bies, 1994; Konovsky & Folger, 1991), selection decisions (Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998; Ployhart & Ryan, 1997), government policies (Tyler & Degoey, 1995), and courtroom decisions (Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993; Tyler, 1984). Notice also that these examples include actions made by persons (e.g., a selection decision) and actions made by organizations (e.g., a particular performance appraisal session). Consistent with what we saw earlier, fairness events can come from multiple sources.

For justice researchers, the *sine qua non* of this paradigm is not the use of laboratory methodologies. Rather, this work is defined by the fact that research

participants are responding to a single event or, at least, a closely related cluster of events. Since time and place circumscribe the object of evaluation, justice is (very) roughly analogous to a state-like concept. The event paradigm clearly separates the environmental attributes from the justice evaluation. This level of conceptual and methodological precision has allowed decision theory research to provide a detailed account of how we decide we are treated (un)fairly.

### *The Social Entity Paradigm*

The defining feature of the social entity paradigm is that research participants are instructed to appraise some person (e.g., one's supervisor), group, or the organization as a whole. Measurement of justice emphasizes general evaluative questions about behavior or intentions. These appraisals cross specific events and situations. Of course, this stands in contrast to the event paradigm, in which participants evaluate some elements of the environment. It is one thing to say "my supervisor treated me fairly during my last feedback session," and quite another to say "my supervisor is a fair person." The latter is more trait-like in the loose sense that the target is evaluated globally.

An equally important distinction is more subtle. What does it mean to say that a person, group, or organization is unfair? Many times, we are making an inference about someone's intention. That is, we imply that the social entity intended to behave inappropriately or commit a moral transgression (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Unfair *events* could be due to extenuating circumstances, honest mistakes, or other mishaps. But unfair *people* are those who either want to behave shabbily or, at the very least, are too apathetic to concern themselves with the needs of others. As a result, when we say that a person, group, or organization is unfair, this inference has broad implications for how we manage our behavior toward that person or group. Put differently, the principal concern of this second paradigm is with how people navigate interpersonal relationships with fair and unfair social entities (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2000).

An influential example of the social entity paradigm comes from the work of Moorman and his colleagues (e.g., Moorman, 1991; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998). These studies use global survey items to measure fairness, such as "All job decisions are applied consistently across all affected employees" (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993, p. 541). Notice that the respondent is explicitly asked to generalize across situations ("all job decisions") and people ("all affected employees"). Consequently, Niehoff and Moorman seem to be seeking an overall evaluation of the organization, or at least of the organization's key decision-makers. This approach is not unique. For example, Pillai, Schriesheim, and Williams (1999) used Moorman's measure in a study of justice, trust, and transformational leadership. Likewise, Farh, Podsakoff, and Organ (1990) used three indicators of leader fairness (measures of leader reward behavior, supportive leader behavior, and participative leadership), all of which refer to the supervisor's behavior in general. In another instance, Deluga (1994, p. 319) measured fairness with such items as "always gives me a fair deal." This was a global measure, as was the instrument

used by Schminke, Ambrose, and Cropanzano (2000) in their investigation of the relationship between justice and organizational structure. In two studies, Byrne (1999) and Byrne and Cropanzano (2000) used general indicators of fairness of both organizations and people. Schminke, Ambrose, and Noel (1997) also assessed both types of fairness, though they did not utilize the terminology employed here. To examine event justice they used a scenario design and to examine global ratings they used a survey. As a result, their study was unable to explore the interrelationships between these two types of justice perceptions. Konovsky and Pugh (1994) were perhaps the most thorough. They measured procedural and distributive justice both globally (i.e., from the social entity perspective) and with regard to the supervisors' most recent decision (i.e., from the event perspective). Notably, the two were highly correlated, .89 and .73 for procedural and distributive justice, respectively.

The key issue regarding the relationship paradigm is that respondents are judging the fairness of people or groups over time and/or across situations. In the case of individuals, such as supervisors, this is analogous to trait or individual difference measures (e.g., Is one's supervisor a fair person?). In the case of larger social entities, such as organizations, this is something like a measure of corporate culture or climate (e.g., Is this a fair organization?). In neither case are the targets identical to those for a particular event.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

### *Conceptual Fit of the Two Paradigms*

Since these two paradigms have yet to be fully articulated (or recognized), their implications continue to elude us. Justice researchers may have conceptual problems to resolve, or they may not. Regardless, an analysis of these paradigms will almost certainly suggest new research areas. We explore the possibilities that follow from the two-paradigm view.

An interesting conceptual issue is how (or whether) the two paradigms fit together. Let us begin with a statement of the problem. Typically, justice perceptions are presumed to result from an appraisal of environmental events (e.g., Folger, 1986; Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). This model seems to fit well within the event paradigm, but is somewhat limited in regards to the social entity paradigm. Phrased in terms of a question: How do we get from unfair events to unfair people, groups, or organizations?

One simple answer is diagramed in Fig. 3, shown by the solid lines. This model contains two critical steps. In the first step, three things happen: (1) Objective outcome elements are presumed to cause event perceptions of distributive justice; (2) objective process elements are presumed to cause event perceptions of procedural justice; and (3) objective interpersonal elements are presumed to cause event perceptions of interactional justice. This first step is a weak statement of the event paradigm. These event appraisals of justice are no doubt directly related to certain workplace responses. That said, let us forgo this path for the moment in order to underscore the connection between event justice and social entity justice.

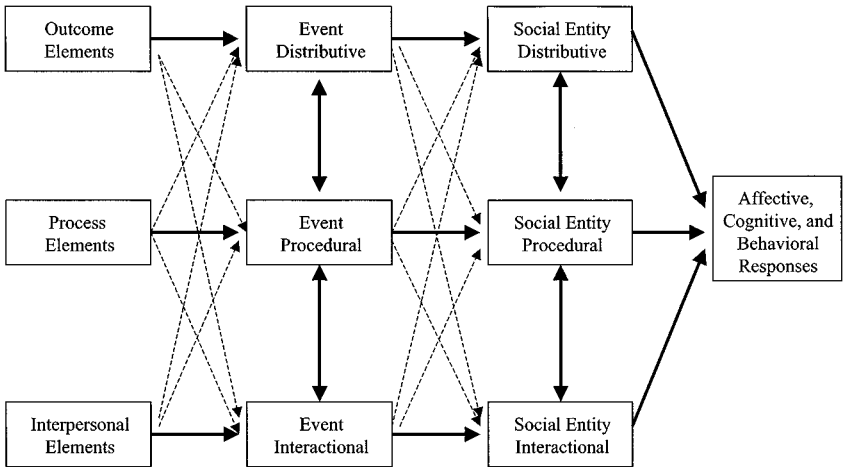


FIG. 3. An integrative model of organizational justice.

This second step is the critical one because it is seldom made explicit by fairness researchers.

In Step 2, the event perceptions of justice are somehow aggregated to form a summary judgment of a social entity. To illustrate, consider three related event perceptions: A supervisor assigns a fair merit increase (high distributive justice), by using consistent procedures (high procedural justice), and in a respectful fashion (high interactional justice). In the absence of evidence to the contrary, an employee will likely decide that his or her supervisor is a fair person (a judgment of a social entity) and perhaps that he or she works for a fair organization (a judgement of a different social entity). To arrive at this happy state-of-affairs, the three event perceptions are somehow weighted and combined. The key point here is that Fig. 3 suggests a link between two different types of justice appraisals—events and entities; this point, heretofore, has not been emphasized.

Usually, we assume that elements are the proximal cause of perceptions and this seems to hold for the event paradigm. Yet, within the entity framework, *events must first be evaluated before they can affect entity judgments of social actors*. Put differently, event justice is a mediating variable that lies between environmental elements and social entity justice. If one accepts this reasoning, then studies of justice events, in isolation from entity level justice, will provide an incomplete picture of the causal dynamics. We suggest that future research study both types of justice together. In this way we can test empirically their relationship to each other, as well as to worker responses.

In summary, the event paradigm informs us that events can be seen as unjust. The social entity paradigm, on the other hand, informs us that people and groups can be seen as unjust. It is possible, therefore, that event perceptions mediate the relation between the situational elements and global justice evaluations. In other words, elements should cause events to be appraised as unfair, while these event

perceptions could impact more global evaluations of social entities. The event paradigm concerns itself with things that happen early in the process, and the social entity paradigm concerns itself with things that happen later.

### *Relations among Elements and Event Perceptions*

There is another interesting point to consider about Fig. 3. If we limit our consideration to only the solid lines, there would seem to be a one-to-one correspondence between environmental elements and event appraisals. In other words, current justice conceptualization could be taken to imply that *only* outcome elements cause distributive justice, *only* process elements cause procedural justice, and *only* interpersonal elements cause interactional justice. This perspective is somewhat simple, and any assumption of a one-to-one correspondence is almost definitely incorrect. For this reason, by the inclusion of the dashed lines, we present the comprehensive model shown in Fig. 3.

Figure 3 shows that outcome, process, and interpersonal elements have the potential to cause distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Admittedly, these mixed paths are highly speculative. Nevertheless, there is some tantalizing evidence. For example, outcome elements can influence perceptions of procedural justice, and process elements can influence perceptions of distributive justice. In one experiment, Lind and Lissak (1985) found that individuals evaluated the process as less fair when the outcome was unfavorable, than when it was favorable. This effect, however, is usually small and sometimes inconsistent (e.g., Greenberg, 1987; LaTour, 1978; Lind, Kurtz, Musante, Walker, & Thibaut, 1980; Tyler & Cain, 1981). Likewise, van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, and Vermunt (1998) found that even unfavorable outcomes are sometimes viewed as fair, if the process that assigns them is just. This effect is strongest when the outcome element is ambiguous (van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997). These effects have interesting applied implications. They suggest that if one wants to raise *perceptions* of distributive and procedural justice, one could potentially change either outcome or process *elements*. If this were practically possible, it would greatly increase the flexibility with which firms could develop and display fairness.

### *Relations among Event Perceptions and Social Entity Perceptions*

As shown in Fig. 3, similar theoretical confusion exists in Step 2 of the model. Just as there may be no one-to-one correspondence between elements and event perceptions, there may not be a one-to-one correspondence between event perceptions and social entity perceptions. This observation leads us to ask how event appraisals are aggregated into a global judgment. Various theoretical models exist, but they do not always distinguish between theories by which elements are combined into event perceptions, on the one hand, and theories by which event perceptions are combined into social entity judgments, on the other. The two sets of processes may not be the same. To illustrate, we discuss the often-observed interaction between processes and outcomes. Is this an interaction between process and outcome *elements*, between distributive and procedural *perceptions*, or between an

outcome *element* and a procedural *perception*? As Lowe and Vodonovich (1995) observed, discussions of the interaction to this point have been ambiguous.

The model displayed in Fig. 3 poses justice researchers with what is, in effect, an issue of person perception. To illustrate, consider a question that has been asked in the impression formation literature: How do supervisors weigh task performance in order to form a summary judgment of a worker (e.g., DeNisi & Williams, 1988; Gilliland & Day, 1999)? What are the cognitive biases in these sorts of perceptions? The same conceptual problem appears in the justice literature when we consider the connections between event and global appraisals.

Another way to attack this problem may be through an extension of fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 1994, 2001). According to fairness heuristic theory, workers form schemas that contain the basic elements of “fair” and “unfair” situations. When an event is encountered that contradicts this event schema, a sense of injustice results (Lind, 2001). Yet, there may be more to the matter than this. In addition to event schemas, social psychologists have found that we also have schemas about persons (Carlston & Smith, 1996; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kunda, 1999). Person schemas contain information about individual dispositions, stereotypes, and so on. Additionally, it is well known that people have person schemas for various coworkers, such as leaders (Gilliland & Day, 1999). Given the importance of fairness for human interaction, we posit that these person schemas also contain information about fair and unfair individuals. Workers can gauge social entity justice by using these fairness-oriented person schemas. This possibility has not been directly tested, but fairness heuristic theory is an important step in the right direction.

### *Interrelations among Justice Perceptions*

An awareness of the two paradigms suggests still another theoretical ambiguity. Thus far, we have suggested that outcome, process, and interpersonal elements can also cause perceptions of multiple kinds of justice. Although the available evidence seems consistent with this, there is an additional possibility. It may be that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice may affect one another. In other words, appraisals of social entities are likely to be causally related. This is represented in Fig. 3 by the double-headed arrows connecting the different sorts of justice perceptions. In the absence of other evidence, it seems reasonable to suppose that these paths are reciprocal; causality flows in both directions. Consider a supervisor who is believed to use fair procedures. It seems likely that his or her subordinates will tend to view the outcomes she provides as fair. Likewise, a person characterized by interactional unfairness might be more likely to be seen as distributively unfair as well. This is consistent with meta-analytic evidence suggesting that the three types of justice tend to be correlated (Colquitt et al., in press; Hauenstein, McGonigle, & Flinder, 1997). Consequently, our two-paradigm view suggests a complex array of possible causal paths—multiple types of events can impact multiple types of perceptions, and these perceptions can impact one another.

### *The Case of Reverse Causality*

For all of the ancillary paths, our model is strikingly simple: environment elements are appraised, thereby constituting judgments of event justice. These event judgments subsequently are aggregated into entity appraisals. In the decision-making literature, this is referred to as a “bottom-up” process (cf. Dawes, 1998), since specific judgments are aggregated into global judgments. Although there can be little doubt that much of this is going on, research on human decision-making suggests that causality also can flow in the opposite direction. In other words, the global evaluation could precede the specific one, called a “top-down” process.

In the case of the model proposed in Fig. 3, top-down appraisals have intriguing theoretical ramifications. In our framework, a top-down appraisal would run “backward,” from right to left. The causal order we have been discussing would be reversed. Basically, this suggests that once a decision-maker has a reputation for fair play, this judgment can be extended into new situations. For example, two supervisors could behave in exactly the same manner. Nevertheless, the actions of the “fair” social entity could be appraised more favorably than those of the “unfair” social entity. This idea has received little attention in the organizational justice literature, but it is hardly controversial and available evidence is supportive.

In a cross-sectional field study, Fulk, Brief, and Barr (1985) examined the determinants of perceived fairness in the context of performance evaluations. Using path analysis, Fulk and her colleagues tested various models. They found that a parsimonious, trimmed model provided a good fit. In this model the trust of a worker for his or her supervisor (actually all but two of Fulk et al.’s respondents were male) was a reasonable determinant of performance appraisal fairness. In other words, the assessment of a person (i.e., trust in supervisor) affected the assessment of an event (i.e., fairness in performance evaluation). Fulk et al. cautioned that their conclusions are limited by the cross-sectional nature of their design. Yet, in a laboratory experiment, van den Bos, Wilke, and Lind (1998) observed similar effects. These researchers found that when a participant was cued to expect a decision-maker to be fair, then the participant was more likely to evaluate the decision-maker’s actions in a favorable manner. These findings were replicated in an applied setting (van den Bos & van Schie, 1998). Given this evidence, it seems very likely individuals do make top-down justice decisions.

### *Measurement Specificity*

The distinction between events and social entities suggests that scholars should be more specific as to what they are measuring. At the very least, it would be helpful to distinguish events from entity appraisals. Of course, either topic could make a worthwhile contribution, depending on the researcher’s interest. More notably, it is not yet a forgone conclusion that the structure of justice is the same within both paradigms. Historically, the three notions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were based upon appraisals of events. These included such things as simulated trials (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), pay raise decisions (Folger & Konovsky, 1989), and employment interviews (Bies & Moag, 1986). *A priori*,

there is no necessary reason to assume that global appraisals of social entities are structured in the same tripartite fashion. This is an empirical question.

To illustrate this issue, let us consider how one might evaluate his or her supervisor. It seems intuitively compelling to imagine someone believing that his or her manager tends to assign unfair outcomes via unfair processes (low distributive justice and low procedure) or fair outcomes via fair processes (high distributive and high procedural). It is less clear what an employee is telling us when he or she indicates that his or her supervisor has a global tendency to allocate unfair outcomes via fair procedures or fair outcomes via unfair procedures. The mixed appraisals are the interesting ones. They make sense in the context of a single event (e.g., even a fair process can generate a mistake), but they are more ambiguous in the context of an entity evaluation (e.g., a supervisor who tends to assign unfair things but in a fair fashion).

Despite these concerns, the data so far are encouraging. Various works have found that perceptions exhibit the same tripartite structure as events, though the three dimensions sometimes exhibit moderate to high intercorrelations (Colquitt et al., in press; Hauenstein et al., 1997). It is conceivable that relationships may be still higher when one considers entity ratings (e.g., Byrne & Cropanzano, 2000; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998).

A somewhat different finding is reported in the recent work of McGonigle and Hauenstein (2000). This study found evidence that global justice ratings have a hierarchical structure. In particular, McGonigle and Hauenstein found evidence of a global justice factor these authors termed *J*. Under *J* three subfactors were recovered. These latter three dimensions corresponded to procedural, distributive, and interactional justice. McGonigle and Hauenstein's findings are important because they challenge the conventional wisdom in favor of the tripartite model (at least for global ratings). For this reason, future research is necessary to ascertain whether a different framework would provide a better structure for global evaluations.

### *Moderator Variables in Justice Judgments*

Identifying moderator variables has become something of a growth industry in the organizational justice literature (for a review see Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Several researchers have explored the conditions under which the typical justice effects are augmented or allayed. Figure 4 suggests a means of organizing this research. In this figure we simplify our earlier diagram by collapsing across outcomes, processes, and interactions. We do so for the environmental elements, event judgments, and social entity judgments. The model depicted in Fig. 4 differs from that in Fig. 3 in another way. Figure 4 contains a direct path from event justice to worker responses. We omitted this path in the earlier figure for simplicity, but it is important for our discussion of moderation.

From this more prosaic vantage point, we can see that there are at least four different relationships that potentially could be moderated: the relationship between elements and events, the relationship between event justice and entity justice, the relationship between event justice and worker responses, and the relationship



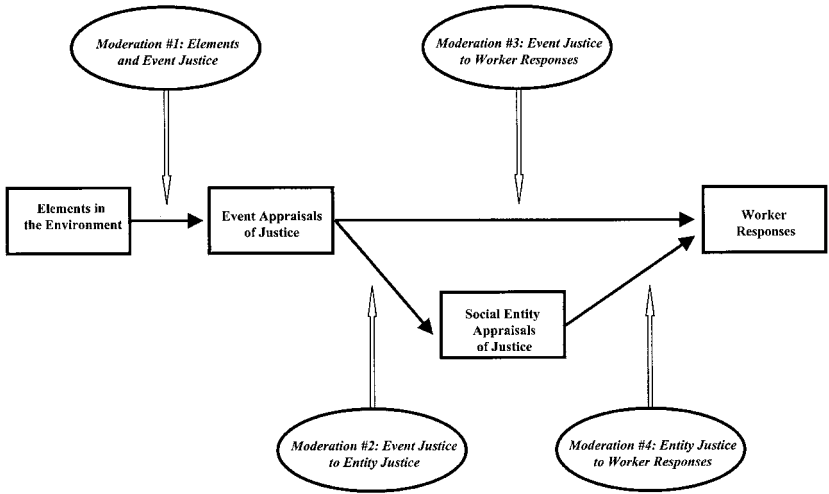


FIG. 4. Four families of moderators.

between entity justice and worker responses. A detailed review of all of these effects is beyond the scope of this paper, but we will provide some examples of research in each area.

*Moderation #1: Environmental elements and event justice.* Evidence for this first type of moderation can be found in work that examines the sometimes-tenuous relationship between environmental elements and event justice. In other words, a given element engenders unfairness on some occasions but not on others.

With respect to moderation, this relation probably has received the most attention. For instance, standards of comparison can serve as moderator variables. Grienberger, Rutte, and van Knippenberg (1997) found that when laboratory participants were denied task choice they did not perceive high levels of injustice unless they were aware of other participants who had received the beneficial treatment. Research on certain kinds of social accounts also exhibits this pattern of moderation. For instance, Brockner et al. (1994) investigated worker reactions to downsizing. In this study, they found that layoffs were seen as less unfair when the organization offered an adequate social account, than when it did not (for a similar view, see Konovsky & Folger, 1991).

*Moderation #2: Event justice to entity justice.* It is somewhat difficult to find direct evidence for this second type of moderation. At the very least, a study needs to measure both event justice and global entity perceptions. Additionally, an adequate test of this family of moderators includes a situation where the same level of event justice can produce different levels of entity justice. Few studies have met these conditions. In part, this dearth of evidence might be due to the fact that event and entity justice have not heretofore been distinguished. Consequently, little work has gone into examining the causal path between event and entity justice. Nevertheless, there are some suggestive findings.

One approach to global justice perceptions can be seen in work on impression management. Greenberg (1990) provided the most thorough review of this literature as it pertains to organizational justice. According to Greenberg, it is not enough to be fair. Organizational actors should also strive to *appear* fair. One way to accomplish this is to provide explanations when something goes wrong. In many circumstances, these explanations would allow a decision-maker to deflect responsibility for an injustice away from him or herself. Notice that these explanations need not make an event any more fair. The key point is that blame can be parried from one entity and to another, thereby changing the relationship between event justice and entity justice. It is interesting to note that Greenberg (1990) emphasized the actions of individuals. Yet, there is a large body of evidence to suggest that organizations also use social accounts to alleviate responsibility for questionable actions (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach, 1994; Elsbach & Sutton, 1992; Ginzler, Kramer, & Sutton, 1993).

A related class of evidence comes from research on causal accounts (for reviews see Bies, 1987; Bobocel et al., 1997; Sitkin & Bies, 1993; Tyler & Bies, 1990). Causal accounts do not attempt to justify the wrongdoing. Instead, a person using a causal account acknowledges that harm was done, but claims that responsibility is due to the actions of another person or social entity. This presumes that the content of excuses has little, if any, effect on event justice, but that successful excuses retarget blame away from one party and toward another (Bobocel, Agar, Meyer, & Irving, 1998). Consequently, event justice remains roughly constant, but the reputation of one social entity is preserved—although often to the detriment of another!

*Moderation #3: Event justice to worker responses.* As illustrated in Figure 4, the justice of events is expected to be related to various worker responses. For instance, an unfair performance appraisal (Folger, Konovsky, & Cropanzano, 1992; Folger & Lewis, 1993; Taylor, Masterson, Renard, & Tracy, 1998) or staffing decision (Cropanzano & Wright, in press; Gilliland, 1993, 1995; Gilliland & Steiner, 2001) may engender ill will. We need to look beyond these main effects, however, to whether the same level of event (in)justice produces different responses in different circumstances. The level of justice does not change; the change is between justice and something else.

In a recent paper, Lee and Farh (1999) provided one intriguing example of moderation #3. The authors investigated a particular event—the fairness of one's pay raise. They found that gender moderated the relation between pay raise fairness and trust. In particular, relative to their male counterparts, women were more likely to trust their supervisor when they received a fair pay raise. In another study, Gilliland and Beckstein (1996) examined authors' reactions to the editorial review process. Gilliland and Beckstein found that authors were more likely to submit future papers to a journal when they viewed the process as distributively fair. This relation, however, only existed among inexperienced authors. For experienced authors, distributive justice did not affect the likelihood of future submissions.

Research on justice and emotion is also suggestive here. In one laboratory study, Weiss, Suckow, and Cropanzano (1999) examined participant reactions following

an unfair procedure that was favorable to the participant, and an unfair procedure that was unfavorable to the participant. When the subjects earned a reward following an unfair and unfavorable procedure, they tended to report pride. When the reward was earned following an unfair but favorable procedure, they tended to report guilt. In other words, the quality of the emotion expressed depended on whether the unfair process was favorable or unfavorable. Krehbiel and Cropanzano (2000) obtained similar results.

*Moderation #4: Entity perceptions to worker responses.* In a parallel vein, other research has shown that all of us do not respond the same way to global justice perceptions. Interesting illustrations of this type of moderation come from the aforementioned studies by Skarlicki and Folger (1997) and Bobocel and Holmvall (1999a). Skarlicki and Folger employed global measures of distributive justice (though focused on pay: "I believe I am being rewarded fairly here at work"), procedural justice ("Does your company have procedures that ensure information used for making decisions is accurate?"), and interactional justice ("Does your supervisor give you an explanation for decisions?"). The authors obtained a three-way interaction; employees were most likely to retaliate against their employer when all three types of justice were low. In short, one's response to entity justice may depend on the profile or pattern among all three types. There are no doubt other moderators, as well, and this should be seen as an especially fertile area for new inquiry.

## SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

As the justice literature has matured, it has moved into new conceptual areas. As a consequence, justice researchers are posed with a series of interesting challenges. In various places throughout this manuscript we tried to highlight the directions in which organizational justice research seems to be moving, as well as the principal conceptual needs that this movement raises. In these closing paragraphs, we shall briefly summarize some key points.

First, justice researchers have made considerable progress in unraveling the manner in which individuals formulate fairness judgments. Although we reviewed various frameworks, fairness heuristic theory deserves special attention (Lind, 2001; van den Bos et al., 2001). The evidence derived from this line of research challenges any assumption that justice judgments necessarily derive from deliberative, effortful cognitive processing. Instead, people often make quick judgments, relying on information readily at hand. It is important to recognize, however, that fairness heuristic theory explicitly incorporates a role for deliberate, systematic processing (e.g., Lind et al., in press). Consequently, future research may want to explicate further the implications of automatic and controlled decision-making for organizational justice judgments. Some interesting future questions might include the following: What is the difference between the nature of justice judgments formed through more automatic processing versus controlled processing? Under what conditions are these strategies more or less likely to occur? Are there differential affective, cognitive, and behavioral effects of justice judgments depending on processing mode?

Second, we recommend that researchers include Folger's (1994, 1998) moral virtues model as a means of deepening our understanding of why people care about justice. To date, the justice literature has been heavily influenced by the instrumental and relational (or group-value) models of justice. Although we reviewed the considerable evidence in support of these frameworks, we also have one concern. Sometimes what we *do not* say about human behavior is as important as what we *do* say. If organizational justice theorists include only economic and social considerations, and exclude morality and ethics, then it is a short step to inferring that the former are important and the latter are not. Or, perhaps more cynically, one might begin to suspect that all moral principles reduce to economics and status. It is important to recognize that human beings are sometimes motivated by moral principles and beliefs (Folger's perspective), as well as by economic and social concerns (the instrumental and relational frameworks). If all are important, then the exclusion of any one could give a misleading picture of human motivation.

Third, there is continuing ambiguity concerning the structure of justice. Models possess as few as two dimensions to as many as four. The meta-analytic work is not entirely clear in this regard. Bartle and Hayes (1999) and Cohen-Charash and Spector (2000) organized their results in terms of three dimensions (distributive, procedural, and interactional), while Colquitt et al. (in press) suggested that as many as four dimensions may be useful (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and maybe informational). The structure of justice has implications for how the construct is measured. For instance, in the widely used scales of Moorman and his colleagues, procedural justice has sometimes been scored with a single procedural dimension (e.g., Moorman et al., 1998) and sometimes with separate procedural and interactional justice components (e.g., Moorman, 1991). More recently, Colquitt (in press) has proposed measuring four dimensions of justice. Given these considerations, resolving the issue of structure has practical importance. Generally speaking, however, recent work has provided a strong argument for separating justice into at least three components: distributive, procedural, and interactional (e.g., Bies, 2001; Bobocel & Holmvall, 1999a; Masterson et al., 2000). The remaining issue is whether to further divide interactional justice into informational and interpersonal components, as suggested by Greenberg (1993). This issue requires resolution, though as we have seen in this paper we have already learned a good deal about this issue (e.g., McGonigle & Hauenstein, 2000; Thurston, 2000).

Fourth, and perhaps most relevant here, it is important for us to recognize that we may have devised two different paradigms for studying organizational justice. There seems to be both a traditional approach that emphasizes reactions to events and a newer perspective that emphasizes appraisals to social entities. This realization provides vast opportunities for scholars to pose new questions and seek new answers. For example, we do not know if entity and event perceptions of justice have the same structure. Additionally, the separation of entities and events provides many different ways to look at the outcome by process interaction. We encourage researchers to explore these issues and others. Doing so should keep scholars busy for some time to come.

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