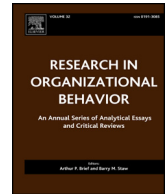




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## Riding the Fifth Wave: Organizational Justice as Dependent Variable



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## ABSTRACT

This chapter calls attention to a paradigmatic shift in the organizational justice literature, in which fairness serves as the dependent rather than independent variable. Drawing on two taxonomic dimensions, we structure approaches to studying fairness as a consequence rather than as a cause. One dimension refers to the focal party whose reactions are being examined (the actor, the recipient, and the observer) whereas the other consists of the nature of the reaction itself (behavior, desire, and perception). We sample selectively from the nine cells emanating from the 3 × 3 classification scheme, emphasizing conceptual and empirical works that advance our understanding of fairness or connect fairness with other literatures in organizational and social psychology, such as ethics, social hierarchy, trust, self-handicapping, and construal level theory. Thus, we illustrate how the study of fairness as a dependent variable enriches not only theory and research in organizational justice, but also how it may contribute to other literatures. Additionally, we consider some of the practical implications and future research possibilities related to studying fairness as a dependent variable.

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Organizational justice concerns itself with the relationships between fairness and people's work attitudes and behaviors. In their now decade-old review of important contributions to the organizational justice literature, Colquitt, Greenberg, and Zapata-Phelan (2005) identified four distinct waves: the distributive justice wave, the procedural justice wave, the interactional justice wave, and the integrative wave. The distributive justice wave focused on outcome fairness (e.g., Adams, 1965), the procedural justice wave dealt with the fairness of the methods used by organizational authorities to arrive at decisions (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975),

and the interactional wave centered on the authorities' interpersonal behavior in planning and implementing decisions (e.g., Bies, 1987). The integrative wave examined multiple elements of fairness simultaneously, for example, their joint and interactive effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

Whereas the focal elements of justice differ in the four waves, all of them primarily examined the consequences of fairness. Moreover, these lines of inquiry have borne considerable fruit. In many contexts (experimental, legal, as well as a wide array of organizational settings), and across numerous dependent variables, such as how people feel, their self-evaluations, and their willingness to support decisions, decision-makers, and organizations, many elements of fairness have proven to be quite

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influential. When people believe they have been treated more fairly, they tend to respond more positively (e.g., Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

Having shown the pervasive effects of the various elements of fairness, organizational justice scholars have embarked on a paradigmatic shift in recent years. Increasingly, the field has turned to examining the antecedents of fairness. Moreover, not only have organizational scholars examined the causes rather than the consequences of fairness, but also they have focused on a variety of questions in doing so, such as:

- (1) Why and when do decision-making authorities *behave* fairly (e.g., Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Scott, Colquitt, & Paddock, 2009)?
- (2) Why and when do those on the receiving end *want* to be treated fairly (e.g., Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Diekmann, 2009)?
- (3) What factors influence observers' *perceptions* of fairness (e.g., Skarlicki & Kulik, 2005)?

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold. First, we explicitly call attention to the fact that the organizational justice literature is in the midst of its fifth wave. Hence, in updating Colquitt et al.'s (2005) historical review we note the shift in emphasis to studying the causes rather than the consequences of fairness. This is not to say that organizational justice scholars have completely abandoned the study of the consequences of fairness (e.g., Gilliland & Anderson, 2014), nor does it suggest that examining the antecedents of fairness is entirely new. For example, fairness was the dependent variable in what Greenberg (1987) called the "proactive" approach to justice theorizing. Proactive theories primarily focused on how fairness was influenced by attributes of the decision outcome or decision process. For example, an important outcome attribute is the decision rule used to allocate resources, such as equity, equality, and need (Deutsch, 1985). Relevant attributes of the process include voice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) as well as accuracy, correctability and bias suppression, to name a few (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980).

Whereas prior theory and research have examined the antecedents of fairness, there has been a decided shift away from delineating how attributes of outcomes and processes affect fairness, and towards identifying how people's *psychological states and motivations* affect their fairness behaviors, desires, and perceptions (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001). For example, more recent studies evaluate how fairness judgments vary even when the behavior being judged is held constant, illustrating how fairness also is in the eye of the beholder (e.g., Bianchi & Brockner, 2012; Blader, 2007; Blader, Wiesenfeld, Fortin, & Wheeler-Smith, 2013; Ganegoda & Folger, 2015).

Our second goal is to discuss a host of conceptual and empirical advances that have emanated from recent theory and research on fairness as a dependent variable. For one thing, such efforts have refined and extended our understanding of fairness. Furthermore, in several ways they have fostered constructive cross-fertilization with other theory and research in organizational and social

**Table 1**

A Taxonomy for Studying Organizational Justice as a Dependent Variable.

		Nature of the Reaction		
		Behavior	Desire	Perception
Focal Party	Actor	#1	#2	#3
	Recipient	#4	#5	#6
	Observer	#7	#8	#9

Note: Theory and research in Cells #1, #5, and #9 receive considerable coverage in the chapter. Exemplars of the remaining six cells are discussed in the [Appendix](#).

psychology. Not only have scholars drawn on other bodies of knowledge to shed light on fairness, but also the study of fairness as a dependent variable has enriched our understanding of other bodies of knowledge.

A third important purpose of the chapter is to bring order to the fifth wave by providing an organizing framework for the ways that fairness has been or could be examined as a dependent variable. We focus on two particularly central dimensions for taxonomic purposes: (1) the role of the focal party whose fairness is being examined, and (2) the nature of the dependent variable.

### Focal Party

Fairness transpires in a social context involving multiple parties. For example, in the workplace employees have encounters and relationships with one another and with their employers, often with others looking on. In a typical study, for instance, managers (actors) behave with varying levels of fairness towards their direct reports (recipients). Moreover, observers may be witness to the exchange.<sup>1</sup> The varying psychological vantage points of actors, recipients, and observers may cause them to have different fairness-related reactions.

### Nature of the Dependent Variable

In accordance with three of the main categories of human activity, organizational justice scholars have examined different types of fairness-related reactions: (1) behaviors, i.e., how much people exhibit fairness-related actions, (2) desires, i.e., how much people want fairness, and (3) perceptions, i.e., the extent to which people judge fairness to be relatively high or low. As can be seen in [Table 1](#), crossing the three roles the focal party may play (actor, recipient, and observer) with the three types of reactions (behavior, desire, and perception) gives rise to nine cells, enabling us to conceptualize and bring order to the multitude of ways to study fairness as a dependent variable. As an extension of our

<sup>1</sup> Our analysis is not limited to managerial behavior towards direct reports. It allows for the possibility that actors and recipients may have equal status in the organization's hierarchy, and even for instances of upward influence in which actors have lower status than recipients.

An important distinction among observers, to be discussed later, is their psychological distance from the parties they are observing. Sometimes observers are close to the action: for example, survivors of an organizational downsizing who may be waiting for the other shoe to drop. On other occasions observers may be more distal: for example, people who are not members of the downsizing organization but who may read about it in the media.

third goal, by organizing the ways in which fairness already has been examined as a dependent variable we also identify fruitful opportunities for future research.

While fairness has been examined as a dependent variable in all of the cells in our taxonomy it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an exhaustive review. Instead, we will sample selectively, emphasizing three cells that particularly illustrate how studying fairness as a consequence has advanced theory and research in the justice literature and beyond: the diagonal in [Table 1](#) going from the upper left to the lower right (Actor/Behavior, Cell #1, Recipient/Desire, Cell #5, and Observer/Perception, Cell #9). In the [Appendix](#), we also devote attention to the other six cells in [Table 1](#) to illustrate that all nine conditions meaningfully lend themselves to theoretical and empirical scrutiny.

### Some Determinants of Actors' Fairness Behavior (Cell #1)

In addition to studying primarily the consequences of fairness, the first four waves of organizational justice research were consistent with a more general tendency of organizational scholars to examine how the attitudes and behaviors of managers influence those of their direct reports. Typically left unanswered in such studies, however, is the question of what factors influenced the managers. In particular, valuable insights into the determinants of managerial fairness come from two sources: (1) the burgeoning literature on behavioral ethics, and (2) several conceptual pieces in the justice literature.

#### *Insights from the Behavioral Ethics Literature*

Regardless of their role, people care about fairness for numerous reasons. In some instances they may prefer fairness as a means to an end. For instance, recipients may prefer to be treated more fairly in order to: (1) receive more desirable outcomes ([Thibaut & Walker, 1975](#)), (2) feel respected, valued, and included by decision-making authorities ([Lind & Tyler, 1988](#)), and (3) reduce or manage the undesirable experience of uncertainty ([Van den Bos & Lind, 2002](#)). People also prefer fairness as an end in its own right. Deontance theorists such as [Folger \(2001\)](#) posit that people value fairness because it signals that basic principles of morality have been upheld. As [Skitka and Wisniewski \(2012\)](#) put it, “a working definition of justice and what it means to people could reasonably start with the adaptive functions of morality, righteousness, virtues, and ethics rather than with self-interest, status, or other non-moral motivations” (p. 417).

The fact that people care about fairness as an end suggests that theory and research in behavioral ethics speak to the questions of when and why managers behave fairly. For example, [Ambrose and Schminke \(2009\)](#) drew upon and extended [Rest's \(1986\)](#) model of the determinants of actors' ethical behavior to identify parallel factors that influence people's tendencies to behave fairly (e.g., awareness, motivation). Moreover, recent research provides different types of evidence showing a relationship between actors' ethical motivation and their tendencies to behave fairly. For example, if the desire to be ethical motivates managerial fairness, then managers who are

more motivated to be ethical should behave more fairly. [Brebels, De Cremer, Van Dijke, and Van Hiel \(2011\)](#) found a positive relationship between managers' moral identity, that is, the importance of morality to managers' self-concepts ([Aquino & Reed, 2002](#)), and their tendency to behave procedurally fairly towards their subordinates. Indeed, one of [Brebels et al.'s](#) reasons for conducting the study was their desire to “respond to recent calls in the justice literature to integrate concepts from the field of behavioural ethics in justice theorizing” (p. S48).

Furthermore, if ethics motivates fairness behavior, then factors that affect people's tendencies to behave ethically should have a similar influence on their fairness behavior. Like moral identity, other dispositional characteristics have been found to motivate ethical behavior. For example, [Cohen, Panter, and Turan \(2012\)](#) found that individual differences in people's guilt-proneness were positively associated with their tendencies to behave ethically. Though not tested to our knowledge, it stands to reason that managers more prone to guilt also are more likely to behave fairly.

Situational factors that influence ethicality also should have a parallel effect on actors' tendencies to behave fairly. For example, [Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, and Ariely \(2011\)](#) found evidence of an “ego depletion” explanation of why people behave unethically. Some participants took part in activities that required them to exert self-control whereas others did not. Then, all participants completed a task in which they could earn more money by lying about how well they had performed. The results showed that those who previously had to exert self-control lied about their performance to a greater extent than their counterparts who did not have to exert self-control beforehand. [Gino et al.](#) suggested that exerting self-control left people with fewer resources needed on the second activity to withstand the temptation to lie.

[Whiteside and Barclay \(2014\)](#) examined the effect on managerial fairness of ego depletion manipulations similar to those used by [Gino et al. \(2011\)](#). After the ego depletion manipulation, participants played the role of a manager telling an employee that he was going to be laid off. Relative to those who did not have to exert self-control, those who did communicated the layoff message with less interpersonal fairness.

Taken together, the [Ambrose and Schminke \(2009\)](#) conceptual analysis and the findings presented above suggest that any complete account of managers' tendencies to behave fairly needs to include their desire to be ethical. Fairness behavior emanating from actors' desire to be ethical, moreover, lends itself to other intriguing empirical questions. For example, the moral self-licensing literature (e.g., [Monin & Miller, 2001](#)) suggests that people who have engaged in moral behavior in the past (e.g., donating to charity, protecting the environment) may subsequently behave unethically because they are less motivated to avoid feeling or appearing unethical. Moral self-licensing effects have been shown within ethical domains (for example, people are more likely to make racist statements after they have had an opportunity to voice support for President Obama; [Efron, Cameron & Monin, 2009](#)) as well as across ethical domains (for example, people are more likely to lie in order to obtain a

higher payout if they have had an opportunity to make environmentally-friendly decisions; Mazar & Zhong, 2010). Given that unfairness is a particular form of unethical behavior, it is worth evaluating whether managers are less likely to behave fairly if they already behaved fairly or if they already demonstrated their morality in a domain unrelated to fairness.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Insights from Theorizing in the Justice Literature*

Two conceptual articles are notable for their theorizing about managers' tendencies to act more or less fairly towards their subordinates (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Scott et al., 2009). The analysis by Scott et al. is quite comprehensive; it considers determinants of various forms of fairness (distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal) that managers may exhibit across different types of decision-making contexts. The theorizing of Molinsky and Margolis (2005) is more targeted: it focuses on the implementation of necessary evils, which is defined as, "work-related tasks in which an individual must as part of his or her job perform an act that causes emotional or physical harm to another human being in the service of achieving some perceived greater good or purpose" (p. 245). Examples of necessary evils include layoffs and delivering negative performance appraisals that have implications for recipients' financial well-being or career prospects. Among the matters that Molinsky and Margolis consider is when and why are managers more likely to deliver necessary evils with interpersonal sensitivity. Interpersonal sensitivity is more closely related to informational and especially interpersonal fairness than it is to distributive and procedural fairness.

Scott, Colquitt, and Paddock (2009). The authors identify a number of motives and affective experiences that account for managers' tendencies to adhere to the principles of justice. Some of the motives underlying managers' fairness reflect means to an end. For instance, managerial fairness may be in the service of (1) "effecting compliance," that is, eliciting desired levels of motivation and performance from subordinates, or (2) creating or maintaining a desired social identity. Consistent with the ethics literature, other motives refer to fairness as an end in its own right, in which fairness is the morally correct way to behave.

Another important aspect of the Scott et al. (2009) piece speaks to the question of when managers are more or less likely to behave fairly. Managers' motives and emotional experiences are more likely to manifest themselves in their fairness behavior when they have greater discretion. This assertion is derived from Mischel's (1977) notion of situational strength, which refers to the extent to which

environmental cues influence people to think, feel, and act in a given way. Strong situations are those in which people receive clear environmental signals; weak situations, in contrast, provide few or ambiguous cues. Person variables (such as motives and emotionality) are more influential in weak than in strong situations. Given that managerial discretion maps on to situational strength (the greater the discretion, the weaker the situation), managers' motives and emotions are more likely to influence their fairness behaviors when they have high discretion.

Finally, Scott et al. (2009) raise the interesting notion that the various motives could lead managers to behave in ways that are more consistent with or more in violation of the principles of justice. For example, suppose that some managers wanted to create the impression of being high in status whereas others wanted to portray themselves as high in power. Recent research has shown that when decision-making authorities exhibit higher procedural fairness they are judged as higher in status but lower in power, relative to their counterparts who exhibit lower procedural fairness (Rothman, Wheeler-Smith, Wiesenfeld, & Galinsky, 2014). Hence, managers may be more likely to show greater fairness behavior when they are trying to foster the impression of being high in status whereas they may show less fairness behavior when they are trying to put forth the image of being high in power.

Molinsky and Margolis (2005). Managers often have to make tough decisions in which those on the receiving end bear the brunt of unfavorable outcomes ("evils") that have to be done ("necessary") for some greater good. It is precisely when managers have to dole out unfavorable outcomes that they need to do so with high procedural, informational, or interpersonal fairness (the amalgam of which we will refer to as "process fairness"). The process fairness with which employees are treated has much more of an effect on their support for decisions, decision-makers, and organizations when they are on the receiving end of outcomes that are relatively unfavorable (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). And yet, in spite of the fact that high process fairness has much more of a positive effect on employees' support when outcomes are relatively unfavorable, managers often shy away from high process fairness when making the tough decisions (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001).

Accordingly, Molinsky and Margolis (2005) consider why and when managers conduct necessary evils with high interpersonal sensitivity. Their reasoning consists of four main points. First, as with all behavior, the delivery of necessary evils with high interpersonal sensitivity is a function of the actor's motivation and ability to do so. Motivation and ability, in turn, are affected by how well actors regulate four emotionally-laden psychological experiences that necessary evils engender, in particular, guilt, sympathy, performance anxiety, and cognitive load.

Their second point concerns managers' *motivations*, in which the authors posit that managers' experience of guilt and sympathy have a curvilinear (inverted-U) relationship with their tendencies to deliver necessary evils with high interpersonal sensitivity. For instance, at high levels of guilt and sympathy managers are more likely to retreat into a self-protective mode, which reduces the likelihood of them delivering necessary evils with interpersonal sensitivity.

<sup>2</sup> The ego depletion literature offers a different explanation of how behaving ethically may reduce managers' subsequent ethicality. According to this viewpoint, behaving ethically (or withstanding the temptation to behave unethically) uses up self-regulatory resources, which, in turn has been shown to make people behave less ethically (Gino et al., 2011). As additional evidence of the convergence between fairness and ethics, Johnson, Lanaj, and Barnes (2014) recently found that managers' tendencies to behave procedurally fairly also depleted their self-regulatory resources.



The authors' third point relates to managers' *ability* to deliver necessary evils with high interpersonal sensitivity. All four of the emotionally-laden psychological experiences demand managers' attention. With their attention turned towards these experiences, managers have less psychological capacity to do the mentally challenging work of delivering necessary evils with interpersonal sensitivity.

Fourth, [Molinsky and Margolis \(2005\)](#) delineate the factors affecting the intensity with which the various emotionally-laden psychological states are experienced. For example, the more managers see themselves as responsible for the conception or implementation of the necessary evil, the more likely they are to feel responsible and hence guilty.

Molinsky and Margolis' (2005) analysis provides insight into the paradox of why managers often fail to behave with high process fairness precisely when doing so will elicit more constructive reactions from their employees. The two emotionally-laden psychological experiences that motivate interpersonal sensitivity (guilt, sympathy) have to be present, but only to a moderate degree. Moreover, all four of the emotionally-laden psychological experiences are negatively related to managers' ability to deliver necessary evils with interpersonal sensitivity. Given these states of affairs, we should not be surprised that managers often fail to conduct necessary evils with high interpersonal sensitivity.

The conceptual works of [Scott et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Molinsky and Margolis \(2005\)](#) were not based on much empirical research examining the questions of why and when managers behave with varying degrees of fairness. Rather, they were intended to stimulate further theory and research, which indeed has taken place. For instance, a recent edited volume ([Gilliland, Steiner, & Skarlicki, 2014](#)) consists of nine chapters focusing largely on the antecedents of managerial fairness. Furthermore, a recent study by [Scott, Garza, Conlon, and Kim \(2014\)](#) provides empirical support for much of the theoretical framework offered by [Scott et al. \(2009\)](#).

Next, we turn to two recent lines of research that illustrate conceptual advances emanating from studies examining managerial fairness as a dependent variable. One contributes to the social hierarchy literature by helping to differentiate the closely related constructs of status and power, whereas the other contributes to the trust literature by showing how it is possible to distinguish between several closely related facets of trustworthiness, namely, benevolence and integrity.

*Differentiating Between Status and Power.* [Blader and Chen \(2012\)](#) took as their point of departure the notion that two main underpinnings of rank and title are status and power. Status reflects "the prestige, respect, and esteem that a party has in the eyes of others," whereas power "is best conceptualized as control over critical resources" (p. 995). While conceptually distinct, status and power co-vary in everyday life and consequently usually produce similar effects. Blader and Chen found, however, that actors' tendencies to behave more or less fairly were differentially affected by whether they experienced power or status. In one study participants played the dictator game in which they had to decide how to allocate \$10 between themselves and

another person. Relative to their counterparts in the control condition, those led to believe they were higher in status were more distributively fair whereas those led to believe they were higher in power were less distributively fair.

Four additional studies conducted in other types of social settings generalized these patterns to the dependent variable of procedural fairness. For instance, in two studies participants negotiated with another party who had been induced to experience high status or high power. Relative to a control condition, when the other party experienced high status they were rated as more procedurally fair by participants, whereas when the other party experienced high power they were rated as less procedurally fair. In two other studies participants played the role of manager who had to make resource allocation decisions affecting their direct reports. Once again, felt status and power had differential effects on fairness behavior, such that status was positively related and power was negatively related to participants' tendencies to be fair.

[Blader and Chen \(2012\)](#) also provided evidence on the mechanism accounting for the differential effects of felt status and power on actors' fairness. They reasoned that since status is socially conferred, those in high status positions have to rely on others if they wish to have their high status maintained. Consequently, high status individuals tend to be other-oriented, in which they are motivated "to be concerned about the impressions they cultivate with social targets, to consider these parties' perspectives, and to act in ways that will be regarded as respectable and commendable" (p. 995). One way to achieve these goals is to treat their interaction partners with high process fairness.

Just as those high in status prefer to maintain their status, those high in power prefer to maintain their power. Relative to status, however, power (i.e., control over valued resources) is less likely to be socially conferred. As a result, those experiencing high power are likely to be less other-oriented, and, as a consequence, less likely to behave with high process fairness. To measure other-orientation, [Blader and Chen \(2012\)](#) asked participants to indicate the extent to which they were attentive to the other's feelings and concerned with how they were coming across in the eyes of the other. Relative to the control condition, the experience of high status (power) made participants more (less) other-oriented. Furthermore, the effect of felt status and power on participants' fairness was mediated by how other-oriented they were.

In studying actors' fairness behavior, [Blader and Chen \(2012\)](#) helped to disentangle the related constructs of power and status. While power and status overlap in many ways, one noteworthy way in which they differ is that felt status heightens people's orientation towards others whereas felt power reduces it, which in turn influences people's tendency to behave more versus less fairly. Other recent findings, in which fairness was an independent rather than dependent variable, showed conceptually analogous results. [Rothman et al. \(2014\)](#) found that leaders' tendencies to behave fairly affected the status and power that was attributed to them, such that behaving fairly led to attributions of more status and less power.

*Differentiating Between Benevolence and Integrity.* Research on parties of differing hierarchical levels has

tended to overlook the reality that the influence process is often bi-directional. For instance, in the organizational arena much more attention has been paid to how managers influence, rather than are influenced by, their subordinates. Whereas the actor/behavior cell need not refer exclusively to upward influence, research has begun to examine how managers' fairness tendencies are influenced by attributes of their direct reports, such as the direct reports' assertiveness (Korsgaard, Roberson, & Rymph, 1998) and charisma (Scott, Colquitt, & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Subordinates' assertiveness and charisma were found to be positively related to their managers' interpersonal fairness.

More recently, Zhao, Chen, and Brockner (2015) studied the effect of subordinates' trustworthiness on managers' procedural fairness. Intuitively, it may be expected that employees' trustworthiness will be positively related to how fairly their managers behave towards them. After all, if subordinates have shown themselves to be trustworthy it would seem reasonable for managers to reciprocate the favor by showing high fairness towards subordinates. However, Zhao et al. found that the effect of subordinates' trustworthiness on managers' procedural fairness depended on the basis of managers' judgments of their subordinates' trustworthiness.

In particular, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) suggested that trustworthiness is multi-faceted, consisting of benevolence, integrity, and ability. Ability refers to beliefs about the trustees' capability of behaving in a trustworthy fashion. Benevolence is "the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor," (p. 718), in which the trustor believes that the trustee is positively oriented to him/her. Integrity "involves the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable" (p. 719). Zhao et al. (2015) predicted that managers would show greater procedural fairness towards subordinates deemed to be more benevolent, for two reasons. First, looking back at how their subordinates have behaved in the past, managers may want to show reciprocity towards subordinates who were more positively oriented towards them, in accordance with social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964). Second, looking towards the future, managers may want to deepen their relationship with subordinates deemed to be positively oriented towards them. For instance, managers may believe that they can be more effective when they have forged closer relationships with subordinates who have their best interests at heart.

Zhao et al. (2015) offered competing predictions for how managers' fairness may be influenced by their perceptions of their subordinates' integrity. On the one hand, integrity is conceptually and empirically related to benevolence. Hence, any prediction made for benevolence could plausibly be made for integrity. On the other hand, benevolence and integrity are conceptually distinct, which could lead them to have differing effects on managers' procedural fairness. Benevolence refers to a belief about the relationship between the trustor and the trustee, i.e., the extent to which the trustor believes that the trustee is positively oriented towards the trustor. Integrity, in contrast, refers to a judgment about the trustee as a separate entity, such as how much the trustee is honest and

reliable. Being less in reference to the relationship between trustor and trustee, integrity may not elicit managers' motivation to reciprocate as much as benevolence. If so, subordinates' integrity is less likely to be positively related to managers' procedural fairness than is benevolence.

Furthermore, it could even be argued that subordinates' integrity will be negatively related to their managers' procedural fairness. Lower integrity employees are more likely to break rules and engage in counterproductive behaviors such as theft and fraud (Fine, Horowitz, Weigler, & Basis, 2010) that threaten managers' need for control. Perceiving that lower integrity employees have more of a tendency to behave at cross-purposes with their own interests, managers may not want to give them any excuse to do so. As a result, managers may carefully and consistently apply organizational policies and procedures and ensure that decisions are made on the basis of accurate information, in other words, exhibit high procedural fairness.

In a multi-method series of studies conducted in the United States and China, Zhao et al. (2015) found that managers' beliefs about their subordinates' benevolence and integrity had different effects on managers' tendencies to be procedurally fair. As expected, subordinates' benevolence was positively related to managers' procedural fairness. More interestingly, subordinates' integrity was negatively related to managers' procedural fairness. Zhao et al. also provided mediational evidence for both of these effects. Actors rated the importance of various motivations underlying their procedural fairness tendencies. Some were relationship-oriented (e.g., "my desire to maintain a good working relationship with my subordinate") whereas others were control-oriented (e.g., "my desire to ensure that my subordinate would not do anything that would threaten the company's well-being"). The positive effect of benevolence was mediated by actors' relationship-oriented motivation, whereas the negative effect of integrity was mediated by actors' control-oriented motivation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> There was no main effect of subordinates' ability trustworthiness on managers' procedural fairness. Instead, ability trustworthiness influenced the magnitude of the positive benevolence effect and the negative integrity effect, such that both effects were stronger when subordinates were seen as higher in ability trustworthiness. The moderating effects produced by ability are consistent with the two different mechanisms posited to account for benevolence and integrity. The positive benevolence effect is believed to be due to relationship-oriented reasons, in which managers seek to reciprocate for past acts of support from their subordinates or, going forward, to deepen the connection with supportive subordinates. The negative integrity effect is believed to be due to control-oriented reasons, in which managers try to ensure that they do not disinherit those with a tendency to behave disruptively or counterproductively by treating them with low procedural fairness.

Greater ability may have amplified both the positive relationship between subordinates' benevolence and managers' fairness and the negative relationship between subordinates' integrity and managers' fairness by heightening the sense of reciprocity (in the case of benevolence) and the sense of threat (in the case of integrity) that drive these effects. Specifically, higher ability may enhance managers' sense of obligation to their more benevolent subordinates because the ones with higher ability may have done more to help their managers, making managers more motivated to reciprocate in kind. Furthermore, high ability may enhance how much managers feel threatened by their subordinates with lower integrity, making managers more motivated to exhibit high procedural fairness.

The Zhao et al. (2015) findings contribute to the literatures on trustworthiness and fairness. Given that benevolence and integrity are strongly related conceptually and empirically, it is particularly intriguing that perceptions of direct reports' benevolence and integrity had very different effects on managers' procedural fairness. Relative to integrity, benevolence refers to the relationship between the trustor and the trustee. Relative to benevolence, integrity refers to a judgment about the honesty and reliability of the trustee as a separate entity, independent of the trustee's relationship with the trustor. These differences between subordinates' benevolence and integrity may explain why the two yielded such different effects on their managers' tendencies to be procedurally fair.

Moreover, our understanding of fairness is enhanced by the findings that managers' procedural fairness was positively related to their subordinates' benevolence and negatively related to their subordinates' integrity. Relative to the relationship-oriented social exchange mechanism accounting for the positive benevolence effect, the control-oriented dynamic accounting for the negative integrity effect has received far less attention (if any) in the organizational justice literature, perhaps in part because the concerns of managers (i.e., control) have received far less attention from justice scholars than have the concerns of recipients. By focusing on managers' tendencies to behave more or less fairly as a dependent variable, Zhao et al. (2015) discovered that, like recipients, actors (managers) also have multiple reasons to care about fairness. One of those reasons (the relationship-oriented mechanism) is common to recipients and to actors (managers). However, the control-based mechanism offers a relatively new way of thinking about why actors may be motivated to exhibit fairness.

Finally, the juxtaposition of the Zhao et al. (2015) findings with the results of a related study by Zapata, Olsen, & Martins (2013) offers some potentially new ways of thinking about differences between the dimensions of process fairness. In particular, whereas procedural fairness focuses on how things should be done, increasing constraint and thus managerial control, informational and interpersonal fairness are more conducive to strengthening relationships through reciprocity. Zapata et al. also examined the association between subordinates' trustworthiness and managers' tendencies to be more or less fair, but with respect to informational and interpersonal fairness rather than procedural fairness. Consistent with the results of Zhao et al., Zapata et al. found that subordinates' benevolence was positively related to managers' informational and interpersonal fairness. In contrast with the Zhao et al. findings, however, Zapata et al. discovered that subordinates' integrity also was positively related to managers' informational and interpersonal fairness.

One speculation is that managers use the various elements of process fairness for somewhat different reasons. They may use higher procedural fairness to control their low integrity subordinates but use higher informational and interpersonal fairness to deepen their relationships with high integrity subordinates. This

speculation provides a ripe opportunity for future research. In particular, given that managerial work has both task- and relationship-oriented aspects, and that control may be especially important with respect to the former while reciprocity may be crucial to the latter, the salience of task-oriented or relationship-oriented aspects of managerial work may determine the extent to which managers rely on procedural versus informational and interpersonal forms of fairness. Such results would provide further evidence of how studying fairness as a dependent variable (in this case, actors' fairness behaviors) may extend our understanding of important matters in the justice literature. We now turn to recipients and their desire for fairness.

### **Some Determinants of Recipients' Desire for Fairness (Cell #5)**

At first blush, it may seem counterintuitive to examine the antecedents of recipients' desire for fairness (Cell #5 in Table 1). After all, a basic tenet of the justice literature is that people prefer to be treated with higher levels of fairness, which may explain the ubiquitous finding that people react more positively when they have experienced higher levels of fairness. More recent evidence suggests, however, that under certain conditions recipients' typical tendency to prefer high process fairness may be reduced (e.g., Bobocel & Gosse, *in press*; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Diekmann, 2009; Platow, Huo, Grace, Kim, & Tyler, 2015; Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner, & Bartel, 2007).

Indeed, given the pervasive tendency for recipients to prefer high process fairness, it is theoretically and practically important to delineate when their desire for high process fairness may be less pronounced. We recently conducted one such series of studies which will be described in some detail because the findings have not been reported in their entirety elsewhere, and because they illustrate how studying fairness as a consequence illuminates both the justice literature and other bodies of knowledge. Prior research has shown that people use process fairness information to make attributions of personal responsibility for their outcomes. The higher the process fairness, the more people make self-attributions for their outcomes (Holmvall & Bobocel, 2008; Leung, Su, & Morris, 2001; Van den Bos, Bruins, Wilke, & Dronkert, 1999). The positive relationship between process fairness and attributions of personal responsibility provides insight into when recipients may have less of a desire for high process fairness. Specifically, recipients may not want high process fairness as much when their outcomes are unfavorable because the high fairness may cause them to see themselves as personally responsible for the unfavorable outcomes, which may be experienced as self-threatening.

Prior research has shown that the positive relationship between process fairness and self-evaluations is less pronounced when outcomes are relatively unfavorable (see Brockner, 2010, for a review), which implies that recipients may have less desire for high process fairness when their outcomes are relatively unfavorable. However, such an inference is indirect because recipients' desire for process fairness was not assessed in these studies.

Furthermore, the notion that recipients want process fairness less when outcomes are unfavorable rather than favorable may be overly restrictive. There may be certain conditions under which recipients have a reduced desire for high process fairness even when they have experienced success or favorable outcomes. Our recent research examined one such type of favorable outcome that is particularly relevant to organizational life: the experience of non-contingent success. Non-contingent success entails people receiving positive feedback or favorable outcomes (“success”) accompanied by the perception that the favorable outcomes were not due to anything about themselves (“non-contingent”). For example, salespeople may have had a particularly good year not because of anything that they did but rather because they just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

The focal hypothesis in our series of studies is that recipients have less of a desire for high process fairness in the face of non-contingent success rather than contingent success. Success that is non-contingent raises the possibility that favorable performance (and the positive outcomes associated with it) will not continue. The possibility of receiving unfavorable outcomes in the future may be self-threatening, particularly if recipients were to see themselves as personally responsible for such outcomes. Given that recipients see themselves as more personally responsible for their outcomes when process fairness is high, it stands to reason that they will have less of a desire for high process fairness in response to non-contingent success (and the anticipatory self-threat it engenders), relative to those who experience contingent success.

Whereas numerous factors may reduce recipients’ desire for high process fairness, we examined non-contingent success because of its considerable relevance to organizational settings. Organization members experience outcomes on an ongoing basis. Unlike in laboratory experiments in which participants usually receive outcomes on a one-shot basis, organization members think about their outcomes in the present as well as in the future. Whereas success may be appreciated in the short term, the contingency of success may give rise to different experiences as organization members look towards the future. Relative to contingent success, non-contingent success is more likely to elicit anticipatory self-threat as employees consider the possibility that their future levels of performance may be less favorable.

Moreover, many aspects of the workplace induce employees to perceive non-contingency between their performance and outcomes. For example, employees may experience non-contingency when: (1) there is a long time interval between how well they perform and the outcomes of their performance, (2) when they work as part of a team rather than on an individual basis, and (3) when employees believe that they are not being compensated in proportion to their contributions, perhaps due to misalignments in the organization’s reward system. Whereas non-contingency may influence a variety of work attitudes and behaviors (and often negatively so), non-contingent success is particularly relevant to the purpose of delineating when recipients may have a reduced desire for high process fairness. In particular, non-contingency attenuates the link

between current experiences and expectations of the future; when people experience non-contingent success they anticipate the possibility that their upcoming performance and associated outcomes may be unfavorable or at least less favorable than their current performance. The discomfiting experience of non-contingent success may be more self-threatening if recipients see themselves as personally responsible for their unfavorable future outcomes. Since process fairness is positively related to recipients’ attributions of personal responsibility, they should have less of a desire for high process fairness in response to non-contingent success than contingent success.

In making this assertion we also connect with the social psychological literature on self-handicapping, which explicitly focuses on how people who have experienced non-contingent success deal with the self-threat associated with anticipating the possibility of not being able to maintain their success (e.g., Jones & Berglas, 1978; Higgins, Snyder, & Berglas, 1990). According to self-handicapping theory, when people experience non-contingent success they subsequently may put obstacles in their own way. Examples of self-handicapping include getting inebriated on the night before an important test or failing to put forth the level of preparatory effort necessary for success. On the one hand, imposing obstacles is paradoxical in that doing so increases the likelihood that people will fail to perform well. On the other hand, by putting obstacles in their way people may be able to influence the attributions made for their performance. Of particular concern to the present analysis, the self-handicap may provide people with a handy excuse if they were not to perform well, which, *ex ante*, they perceive as a very real possibility. If they were to perform poorly they can attribute their poor performance to the handicap rather than to more personal and therefore self-threatening causes, such as a lack of ability.

Prior research has shown that non-contingent success makes people more likely to self-handicap (e.g., Jones & Berglas, 1978). A fundamental premise of our studies is that reductions in people’s desire for high process fairness may serve a similar psychological function to engaging in self-handicapping. Just as the experience of non-contingent success may cause people to self-handicap to counteract the possible self-threat that they anticipate (if their future performance and associated outcomes turn out to be unfavorable), so too might non-contingent success reduce recipients’ preference to be treated with high process fairness, to ward off having to accept personal responsibility if their future outcomes prove to be unfavorable.

#### *Empirical Evidence*

We recently conducted six studies that evaluated whether the experience of non-contingent rather than contingent success induces recipients to have less of a desire for high process fairness.<sup>4</sup> Participants in all six studies experienced success. However, some of them

<sup>4</sup> We thank Shu Zhang for her assistance in conducting several studies.



believed that their success was more non-contingent while others believed that their success was more contingent. The dependent variable consisted of people's desire for high process fairness, which was assessed in two different ways. First, people may *perceive* the process as less fair when they experience non-contingent success rather than contingent success. By perceiving the process as less fair, those who experienced non-contingent success may feel less responsible for their non-contingent success, and by extension, feel less responsible for future performance that may possibly be unfavorable. In Studies 1 and 2 the dependent variable consisted of recipients' perceptions of process fairness, which were posited to be *motivated* judgments in which people saw what they *wanted* to see (Blader & Bobocel, 2005). We predicted that those treated with non-contingent success would perceive process fairness to be lower, relative to those who perceived their prior success as contingent.

In Studies 3–6 we measured recipients' desire to be treated with higher process fairness more directly. After experiencing either non-contingent or contingent success, participants were asked how much they wanted processes varying in fairness to be used as a basis for an upcoming decision, or for a decision that was already made. Relative to their counterparts who experienced contingent success, we expected those who experienced non-contingent success to express less of a desire for high process fairness.

Moreover, by including moderator variables in the research design in most of the studies we could better evaluate the mechanism hypothesized to account for the findings (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). We reasoned that recipients' motivation to protect themselves accounts for their tendency to have less of a desire for high process fairness in response to non-contingent success. If this reasoning is correct, then the tendency for non-contingent success to lessen people's desire for high process fairness should vary as a function of how motivated they are to self-protect. In some studies (#1, #2, and #4) the moderator variable was expected to be positively related to people's desire to engage in self-protection, in which case high levels of the moderator should strengthen the tendency for non-contingent success to reduce recipients' desire for high process fairness. In other studies (#5 and #6) the moderator variable was expected to be inversely related to people's desire to engage in self-protection, in which case high levels of the moderator should attenuate the tendency for non-contingent success to reduce recipients' desire for high process fairness.

Study 1 consisted of a laboratory experiment in which participants completed a test in which they were led to believe that they had performed well, half contingently and half non-contingently. Given the difficulty of the task and the amount of time they were allowed to complete it, the deck was stacked for participants to perform well in the contingent success condition and not well in the non-contingent success condition. However, all participants were given feedback that they had performed well, which led to stronger perceptions of "being lucky" in the non-contingent success condition than in the contingent success. Afterwards, all participants completed an additional version of the test and were then asked to judge the

fairness of the procedures used to determine their performance on the initial test. The moderator variable consisted of individual differences in people's locus of control (Spector, 1988). We hypothesized that recipients' tendency to want (and hence perceive) lower process fairness in the non-contingent success condition should be stronger among those with more internal locus of control beliefs.

Beliefs in internal control predispose people to see themselves as personally responsible for their outcomes. Therefore, when they experience non-contingent success they may be particularly motivated to perceive the process as less fair, so as to reduce the self-threat engendered by seeing themselves as responsible for possibly unfavorable future outcomes. In contrast, external locus of control persons who experienced non-contingent success have less of a need to perceive the process as unfair; their external locus of control beliefs already buffer them from the experience of self-threat. The results supported our reasoning: the tendency for participants to perceive the process as less fair in response to non-contingent than contingent success was shown more strongly by those with more internal locus of control beliefs.

In Study 2 we attempted to conceptually replicate the results of Study 1 in a naturalistic setting. A sample of working adults indicated the extent to which their successful job performance was contingent versus non-contingent. Perceived voice, which is one of the main determinants of procedural fairness, was assessed as the dependent variable. As in Study 1, we examined the moderating influence of a factor reflecting participants' motivation to engage in self-protection: how much participants believed their organizations were intolerant of failure. The more that the organization is seen as intolerant of failure, the more salient are the negative implications of failure, and therefore the more likely it is for unfavorable outcomes to be self-threatening. If people are more motivated to self-protect when they believe their organizations are more intolerant of failure, then the tendency for non-contingent success to lead to lower perceptions of voice should be stronger when participants believe their organizations to be more intolerant of failure. In fact, the results supported this reasoning.

In Studies 3 and 4 participants read a detailed vignette in which they were asked to imagine that they were employees applying for a more desirable position in their organization. They also were told that the organization was considering the use of two methods to make the selection decision. One of the methods consisted of a more fair process than the other. All participants were informed that they had a record of being successful in the organization. Half of the participants were led to believe that their prior success was contingent on their ability and effort (contingent success condition) while the other half was told that their prior success was not contingent on their ability and effort (non-contingent success condition).

The dependent variable consisted of the extent to which participants wanted decision-making authorities in the organization to use each of the two methods when making the decision about whether to offer them the job. In Study 3, process fairness was based on accuracy (Leventhal et al.,

1980). One of the methods was more accurate and hence was perceived as fairer than the other. As predicted, relative to their counterparts in the contingent success condition, those in the non-contingent success condition showed less of a tendency to rate the more accurate method as preferable to the less accurate method.

Study 4 extended Study 3 in two important respects. First, the two methods that the organization was considering using to make the selection decision varied not on the basis of accuracy, but rather on the basis of another determinant of perceived fairness: voice. This was done to evaluate the generality of the notion that non-contingent success would reduce people's desire for high procedural fairness. It would be more difficult for people to see themselves as responsible for their outcomes when they did not have voice, relative to when they did. Hence, we predicted and found participants' tendencies to prefer the voice-giving method over the voice-denying method to be lower in the non-contingent success condition than in the contingent success condition.

Second, we examined the moderating influence of regulatory focus on the relationship between success contingency and people's desire for high process fairness (or voice). According to Higgins (1998), people engage in self-regulation in either promotion focused or prevention focused ways. Relative to their promotion focused counterparts, those with a prevention focus are more motivated by safety and security, which makes them more vigilant to protect against meaningful losses, such as guarding against threats to the self. Regulatory focus may therefore influence people's desire for high process fairness when they are *anticipating* the possible failure to maintain favorable outcomes, such as after being treated with non-contingent success. In particular, those with more of a prevention focus may be particularly likely to engage in self-protection in anticipation of the possibility of receiving unfavorable outcomes. Whereas promotion focused individuals assign importance to winning, prevention focused individuals are motivated to not lose, i.e., to *maintain* their success. Success that is non-contingent is less likely to be maintained, which is a potential threat more likely to activate the self-protective strivings of prevention rather than promotion focused persons. As predicted, the results showed that the tendency for non-contingent success to reduce people's preference for the voice-giving over the voice-denying method was stronger among those who had been induced to be prevention focused rather than promotion focused.

Unlike in Studies 3 and 4, participants in Study 5 actually experienced the experimental situation rather than imagined how they would react to a hypothetical scenario. After receiving contingent or non-contingent success feedback, they were told that they would be working on an activity later in the study in which they would be assigned to one of two roles. One of the roles was described as highly desirable whereas the other was described as highly undesirable. The procedural variable consisted of informational fairness (Colquitt, 2001). Participants were told that after being assigned to either the highly desirable role or to the highly undesirable role they would have the opportunity to receive an informative

explanation of why they were assigned to one role rather than the other. The dependent variable thus consisted of participants' desire for informational fairness (Bies, 1987).

Unlike accuracy and voice, informational fairness refers to an aspect of the process that generally has no effect on decisions and their associated outcomes. Informational fairness provides recipients with a description of how decisions and their associated outcomes were reached, typically (and certainly in Study 5) *after* the decision is made, but it does not influence the decision-making process. Whereas accuracy and voice have the potential to *causally affect* decisions, informational fairness merely *accompanies* the receipt of decisions and their associated outcomes.

The fact that informational fairness could not affect the decision in Study 5 also has implications for an alternative explanation of the previous results found when process fairness was based on accuracy and voice. That is, those who experienced non-contingent success may have believed that they had a better chance of receiving a favorable outcome if the process for making the decision was less fair, that is, less accurate or denying them of voice. However, if non-contingent success lowers people's desire for an aspect of process fairness that cannot affect decisions, it seems far less likely that such a result was due to those experiencing non-contingent success trying to bring about a more favorable outcome. As expected, the results showed that those who experienced non-contingent success had less of a desire for informational fairness than their counterparts in the contingent success condition.

The moderator variable examined in Study 5 consisted of whether people were allowed to engage in self-affirmation after they had experienced the success contingency manipulation. Self-affirmation has been shown to reduce the tendency of people to self-protect in response to self-threat (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Siegel, Scillitoe, & Parks-Yancy, 2005; Steele, 1988). Hence, we predicted and found that self-affirmation weakened the tendency of non-contingent success (and associated feelings of self-threat) to reduce people's desire for informational fairness.

Study 6 also looked at the moderating influence of a different factor that was expected to weaken the tendency for non-contingent success to reduce people's desire for high process fairness. The assumption governing the logic of the moderator variables examined in the previous studies is that people want to feel good about or protect themselves. However, it also has been established that people are motivated to have an accurate understanding about themselves (e.g., Trope, 1982). Hence, particularly when process fairness is based on the accuracy of information used to make decisions, those with a stronger need for accurate self-assessment may have a strong preference for more accurate methods rather than less accurate methods, regardless of success contingency.

To evaluate this possibility we drew upon the method used in Study 3 in which participants rated their preference for two methods varying in accuracy for making a selection decision. Individual differences in people's desire for accurate self-assessment also were assessed. As in Study 3, recipients who experienced

non-contingent success showed less of a tendency to prefer the more accurate method over the less accurate method, relative to those who experienced contingent success. Furthermore, we also found that the tendency for non-contingent success to lower people's desire for high process fairness was moderated by their need for accurate self-assessment, in which the effect was weaker among those with more of a need for accurate self-assessment. Whereas a less accurate decision-making process may satisfy people's needs for self-protection in response to non-contingent success, those with a strong need to self-assess have a different motive: to evaluate themselves accurately, not necessarily favorably.

Taken together, the results of six studies show that recipients' typical tendency to prefer high process fairness is reduced when they experience non-contingent success rather than contingent success. Importantly, the results attributable to the moderator variables shed light on the underlying mechanism. When people were more motivated to engage in self-protection, such as when they were more internal in locus of control, when they viewed their employers as more intolerant of failure, or when they were prevention rather than promotion focused, the tendency for non-contingent success to lower people's desire for high process fairness was stronger. And, when they were less motivated to engage in self-protection, such as if they had engaged in self-affirmation or if they were dispositionally more motivated to assess themselves accurately, the tendency for non-contingent success to lower people's desire for high process fairness was weaker.

In summary, these six studies provide one answer to the questions of why and when recipients' typical desire for high process fairness may be less pronounced. When recipients experience non-contingent success they feel uncertain about being able to maintain the success. To counteract feeling self-threatened if their future performance proves to be relatively unsuccessful, recipients have less of a desire for high process fairness relative to their counterparts who experienced contingent success.

Future research needs to evaluate whether the aforementioned results may be qualified by the nature of the non-contingency. Whereas we found that non-contingent success made people less certain than contingent success about the favorability of their future outcomes, some forms of non-contingent success may not give rise to uncertainty about future outcomes. That is, when non-contingent success is based on conditions likely to persist (e.g., being politically well-connected, or being a member of an advantaged subgroup), people are less apt to be uncertain about the favorability of their future outcomes, in which case the present findings may be less likely to occur. More generally, the studies also illustrate how examining fairness as a dependent variable helps to integrate previously disparate literatures; to our knowledge they are the first to connect organizational justice theory and research to the self-handicapping literature in social psychology. Having discussed some determinants of actors' fairness behaviors and recipients' fairness desires, we now consider some antecedents of observers' fairness perceptions.

### Some Determinants of Observers' Fairness Perceptions (Cell #9)

Skarlicki and Kulik (2005) provided a comprehensive summary of theory and research on the determinants of observers' fairness perceptions. Given that observers typically have less at stake than recipients, prior theorizing suggested that observers' fairness perceptions would be similar to recipients' in nature but lower in intensity (e.g., Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998; Walster, Walster & Berscheid, 1978). Skarlicki and Kulik posited, however, that observers' fairness reactions may be qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from those of recipients. For instance, whereas both parties may perceive certain treatment as unfair the underlying reasons for such tendencies may differ. Recipients may perceive treatment as unfair due to instrumental or self-identity concerns. Unfair treatment may be seen as a threat to maximizing the tangible benefits of the exchange (instrumental) and it may be taken to mean that recipients are not held in high regard by the other party, thereby threatening their sense of esteem and inclusion (self-identity). In contrast, observers may perceive the same treatment as unfair for deontic reasons (Folger, 2001). According to the deontic viewpoint, people have a fundamental need for principles of morality to be upheld. Once again, and in accordance with the ethics literature, the deontic approach posits that fairness is not a means towards an end but rather is an end in its own right. As a result, people may react badly to unfairness meted out to others even when they are not especially close to them, because the unfairness indicates that morality has been violated.

Skarlicki and Kulik (2005) also suggested that observers and recipients often differ in the directness with which they are exposed to fairness information. Relative to recipients who tend to learn about events first-hand, observers may be more psychologically distant from the information that shapes their fairness perceptions, the implications of which will be discussed a bit later.

According to Skarlicki and Kulik (2005), a major influence on observers' perceptions of (un)fairness is their attributions of accountability, which is also the case for recipients. As set forth in fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), whenever actors behave badly the extent to which observers perceive them to be unfair depends upon how much observers see actors as accountable for their actions. Observers' judgments of accountability, in turn, result from a series of would/could/should counterfactuals. As Skarlicki and Kulik suggest, if the recipient's outcome "is deemed to have a negative impact (it *would* have been better if events had unfolded differently), if the organization or its agent is deemed responsible for the wrongdoing (i.e., they *could* have done things differently), or if the treatment violates certain moral and social norms (i.e., they *should* have done things differently), then [the actor is held accountable and] perceptions of unfairness are likely to occur" (p. 192).

Skarlicki and Kulik (2005) also identify many factors that affect the extent to which observers perceive actors as accountable for their mistreatment and thereby perceive unfairness. Whereas it is beyond our scope to mention all

of them, one noteworthy dimension reflects the degree of psychological distance between observers and recipients. The more that observers identify with the recipients (that is, the lower the distance), the more likely are observers to hold actors accountable. Relatedly, the lower the distance between observers and recipients, the more observers may see the recipients' fairness treatment as relevant to themselves, in which case observers' fairness judgments are likely to be similar to those of the recipients. For instance, in one study (Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & O'Malley, 1987) psychological distance was operationalized by leading participants to believe that their attitudes were either similar to or different from those of a confederate, who they believed was a fellow study participant. Mid-way through the study, a layoff was staged in which the confederate was dismissed from the study more or less fairly. In the fair condition, the confederate received partial compensation for taking part and announced as he was leaving that he felt he had been treated fairly, whereas in the unfair condition the confederate received no compensation for taking part and complained as he was leaving that he was being treated unfairly. Participants were then asked to rate how fairly the confederate had been treated.

Not surprisingly, fairness was perceived to be higher in the fair condition than in the unfair condition. More interestingly, however, the effect of manipulated fairness on perceived fairness was greater when participants were attitudinally similar to rather than different from the confederate. The similarity effect was especially pronounced in the unfair condition, in which participants judged fairness to be significantly lower when they were similar to rather than different from the confederate. In contrast to research suggesting that people give little weight to justice experiences that they merely observe (instead relying primarily on their own personal justice experiences to shape justice judgments; Lind et al., 1998), these findings indicate that similarity may lessen the psychological distance between observers and recipients, leading observers to perceive fairness much like recipients would have.

More recent research considers the impact of a different factor likely to reflect psychological distance, namely, the emotions observers feel toward recipients. Blader et al. (2013) examined the role of social emotions, which are those that involve mentally representing the psychological states of others (Frith, 2007). Social emotions are hypothesized to range along a continuum from highly congruent to highly incongruent (Blader et al., 2013). In particular, more congruent social emotions (e.g., empathy) are thought to elicit a high degree of alignment between the psychology of the self and that of the other party. More incongruent social emotions (e.g., envy) foster an oppositional relational dynamic between the self and the other party. In other words, the psychological distance between observers and recipients is lower in the case of congruent than incongruent social emotions.

Blader et al. (2013) explored how congruent and incongruent social emotions affected observers' fairness judgments. In one study conducted at the height of the recent housing foreclosure crisis, participants read a

version of a bogus newspaper article describing the plight of a specific homeowner threatened with foreclosure. The articles that participants read varied with respect to whether the information provided about the homeowner was likely to elicit incongruent, neutral, or congruent emotions on the part of participants. The articles also contained a manipulation of the fairness with which the homeowner was treated. In particular, a new government policy was described with respect to its likely impact on the homeowner. The policy was described variably as (a) fair, (b) likely to unfairly disadvantage the homeowner relative to similar others, or (c) likely to unfairly advantage the homeowner relative to similar others. After reading the article, participants judged the fairness of the policy.

Observers' fairness perceptions were an interactive function of the decision outcome (fair/unfair disadvantage/unfair advantage) and their social emotion congruence. In particular, observers induced to experience congruent social emotions (and thus feel less psychologically distant from the recipient) perceived fairness in ways similar to how the recipient might have. Specifically, people are much more tolerant when they are on the receiving end of positive inequity (which unfairly benefits them) than negative inequity (which unfairly disadvantages them; e.g., Greenberg & Orstein, 1983). Blader et al. (2013) found that observers who experienced congruent social emotions toward the recipient perceived the unfair advantage condition as quite fair (and not significantly different from those in the fair policy condition), and that both of these conditions led to perceptions of greater fairness than that shown in the unfair disadvantage condition. A very different pattern emerged in the incongruent social emotions condition, in which participants were more psychologically distant from the recipient: fairness was perceived to be higher in the unfair disadvantage condition than in the unfair advantage condition (which is contrary to the pattern that people were likely to have shown if they were recipients).

Taken together, we propose that the effects attributable to attitudinal similarity and social emotion congruence are consistent with the possibility that observers' fairness perceptions are influenced by their psychological distance from recipients. In particular, lower psychological distance from recipients induces observers to react more similarly to how the recipients would react themselves.

The construct of psychological distance has received a great deal of attention in recent years. In their provocative construal level theory, Trope and Liberman (2010) suggested that psychological distance may take multiple forms; it does not merely refer to how much people see themselves as distant from other people. Moreover, construal level theory (CLT) posits that there are alternative ways to account for the effects of psychological distance besides how much people see others' treatment as self-relevant. In particular, construal level theory suggests that people's mental representation of a target (such as an object or event) will vary from more concrete and specific (lower level construals) to more abstract and general (higher level construals) as a function of their psychological distance from the target (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Psychological distance emerges along four dimensions:



temporal (events may happen anywhere along a continuum ranging from the present to the distant past or future), spatial (events may happen anywhere along a continuum ranging from right before our very eyes to some faraway place), social (events may happen to people ranging anywhere along a continuum from ourselves to those very different from us), and hypotheticality (events may range along a continuum from being very likely to very unlikely to occur). As Trope and Liberman (2010) put it, “Psychological distance refers to the perception of *when* an event occurs, *where* it occurs, to *whom* it occurs, and *whether* it occurs” (p. 442).

Higher level (or abstract) construals are more likely when psychological distance is high while lower level (or concrete) construals are more likely when psychological distance is low (see Soderberg, Callahan, Kochersberger, Amit, & Ledgerwood, 2015, for a meta-analytic review). In particular, higher construals are associated with greater attention to the big picture (rather than being oriented towards detail), greater focus on strategic goals (rather than on practical execution), and more emphasis on “why?” than on “how?” Consistent with our emphasis on how the study of fairness as a dependent variable may foster cross-fertilization with other literatures, we contend that CLT adds insight into understanding observers’ fairness perceptions. Our ideas are in line with and expand on those presented in a recent chapter by Rizvi and Bobocel (2014), which offers numerous propositions regarding how CLT and psychological distance can broaden the organizational justice literature from the perspective of not only observers, but also actors and recipients.

More specifically, CLT may account for at least some of the variability in observers’ fairness judgments as a function of their degree of psychological distance from those on the receiving end of events, decisions, and treatment. Moreover, CLT suggests that psychological distance can take numerous forms. For some observers, distance may vary along the dimension of space. Research on bystander intervention has shown that observers are more likely to provide help when they are more physically proximal to those in need (e.g., Walster & Piliavin, 1972). For other observers, distance may vary along the dimension of time. For example, observers may be more empathic towards someone on the receiving end of mistreatment if they had recently experienced a similar type of mistreatment, relative to the same type of mistreatment experienced in the more distal past. For other observers, distance may be experienced socially (e.g., perceived similarity to those being observed).

We are not suggesting that the effects of the various forms of psychological distance noted above are entirely mediated by the resulting effects on level of construal. Rather, we propose that psychological distance is positively related to the abstractness of people’s construals, and that distance-based effects on construal level may affect observers’ perceptions of fairness. The guiding principle underlying the latter assertion is that certain aspects of fairness may be more relevant or meaningful (not only to observers but also to recipients) as a function of people’s level of construal. For example, in a recipient-focused study, Cojuharenco, Patient, and Bashshur (2011)

hypothesized that concerns about distributive fairness would be more meaningful to employees when they were operating at a higher level of construal because outcome information is a prototypical feature of the employment relationship and tends to be viewed more abstractly. In contrast, concerns about interpersonal fairness would be more salient when employees were construing at a lower level because interpersonal treatment is a non-definitional aspect of employment and more of a specific feature of the work environment.

To test these ideas, Cojuharenco et al. (2011) measured or manipulated participants’ temporal orientation. Participants were then asked to indicate the type of unfair event in the workplace that was of concern to them. The results showed that those with more temporal distance were likely to identify distributive forms of injustice whereas those with less temporal distance were likely to identify interpersonal forms of injustice.

In addition to showing that construal level affects justice perceptions, Cojuharenco and Patient (2013) demonstrated that the causal arrow may go in the other direction: the fairness that people experience may affect their level of construal. When employees recalled fair events, their descriptions were less multifaceted and focused more on outcomes, which is a more prototypical feature of the work relationship reflecting a more abstract level of construal. In contrast, participants’ descriptions of less fair events contained more details regarding non-definitional aspects of work, namely, communication and interpersonal treatment, reflecting a more concrete form of construal.

*Congruence between Fairness and Construal.* Extending the findings that construal level and fairness judgments causally affect one another, we propose that conditions of congruence between construal and the type of fairness that is salient (e.g., abstract construal/distributive justice or concrete construal/interpersonal justice) will be more impactful than conditions of incongruence (e.g., abstract construal/interpersonal justice or concrete construal/distributive justice). For example, we speculate that perceptions of distributive justice may be more likely to affect observers’ overall perceptions of fairness when their mindset entails greater psychological distance (and higher levels of construal), whereas perceptions of interpersonal justice may be more likely to affect observers’ overall perceptions of fairness when their mindset entails less psychological distance (and lower levels of construal).

Another important aspect of fairness is whether people are given sincere and adequate explanations of the reasons why certain decisions were made; that is, informational fairness (Bies, 1987; Colquitt, 2001). We speculate that providing a good explanation of the reasons why certain decisions were made is more likely to have a positive effect on observers’ perceptions of fairness when observers are more psychologically distant. An important tenet of CLT is that more abstract forms of construal focus more on *why* things happen (whereas more concrete forms of construal focus more on *how* things happen). Hence, informational fairness that answers the “why” question may be especially influential when people have higher levels of

psychological distance, which is precisely when they are more likely to be asking the “why” question.

Rizvi and Bobocel (2014) suggest that it is not only aspects of fairness such as distributive, interpersonal, and informational factors that vary in their relationship to concrete versus abstract forms of construal. Another important factor is the object whose fairness is being evaluated. As Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, and Rupp (2001) have suggested, sometimes perceivers (observers or recipients) are judging the fairness of a specific *event*, such as an organization’s decision to downsize or to introduce other significant forms of organizational change. On other occasions, perceivers are evaluating the general fairness of the *entity* making the decision, which could range from a single manager to the organization as a whole. Rizvi and Bobocel suggest that relative to event fairness judgments, entity fairness judgments reflect a more holistic and therefore abstract form of construal. Moreover, they posit that relative to entity fairness judgments, “event justice perceptions are lower-level constructs as they focus on concrete information related to outcome distributions, elements of the decision-making process, interpersonal treatment, and communication style” (p. 16).

Therefore, and in line with Rizvi and Bobocel’s (2014) reasoning and the congruence principle set forth above, we propose that psychological distance will moderate the influence of event fairness and entity fairness on observers’ fairness judgments. When psychological distance is high, entity-based fairness information is more salient and therefore should have more of an effect on observers’ perceptions of fairness than event-based fairness information. However, when psychological distance is low, event-based fairness information is more salient and therefore should have more of an effect on observers’ perceptions of fairness than entity-based fairness information.

For example, suppose that employees learn of a layoff in their organization, in which they expect to survive, that is, to keep their jobs. In a sense, survivors play the role of observers of layoffs in that they are watching others lose their jobs. In less psychologically distant conditions, the survivors have close personal or professional relationships with the people who are about to lose their jobs, whereas in more psychologically distant conditions the survivors do not have close relationships with the job losers. Moreover, in less psychologically distant conditions the layoffs are expected to happen next week, whereas in more psychologically distant conditions the layoffs are expected to happen next year. Assuming that all survivors have information about event fairness and entity fairness, we predict that relative to one another, *event* fairness will have more of an effect on their fairness judgments when psychological distance is low and that *entity* fairness will have more of an effect on their fairness judgments when psychological distance is high.

### Studying Fairness as a Dependent Variable: Towards Broadening the Scope

The taxonomy illustrated in Table 1 drew on two dimensions to organize ways to examine fairness as a

dependent variable. Thus far, we have described noteworthy conceptual and empirical works within cells #1, #5, and #9, which vary simultaneously on both of the organizing dimensions. However, the 3 × 3 classification scheme shown in Table 1 is intended to reflect a fully-crossed factorial design. By way of illustrating the legitimacy and utility of studying fairness as a dependent variable in all conditions in Table 1, we discuss noteworthy conceptual or empirical exemplars within each of the remaining six cells in the Appendix.

Whereas we justice researchers assign great significance to the construct of fairness, the reality is that for actors, recipients, and observers the expression, receipt or witnessing of fairness is not their only interest. Sometimes, people’s tendencies to behave fairly, to want fairness, or to perceive fairness compete with other concerns such as: (1) their desire to obtain favorable outcomes for themselves or those important to them, (2) their need to maintain certain self-conceptions, (3) their need to appear competent and legitimate in the eyes of others, and (4) their preference to follow the path of least resistance. Being aware of these and other motives that people bring to their social worlds, we can better understand the variability in their fairness behaviors, desires, and perceptions as described in the works cited in the Appendix.

### Practical Implications

Whereas practical implications emanate from theory and research in each of the nine cells in Table 1, for purposes of simplicity and efficiency we will focus on the three cells which were emphasized in the body of the paper: (1) actors’ fairness behaviors, (2) recipients’ desire for fairness, and (3) observers’ perceptions of fairness.

#### *Implications from Studying Actors’ Fairness Behaviors*

As described in the Actor/Behavior cell, Blader and Chen (2012) found that individuals exhibited greater fairness when they experienced high status and they showed lower fairness when they experienced high power. These findings suggest that individuals who are respected and admired, such as those occupying senior positions in the organization hierarchy may be induced to behave more fairly when their (privileged) status is made salient to them. Furthermore, the effect of felt status versus felt power on actors’ fairness behaviors was mediated by how other-oriented individuals were, with high status (power) making participants more (less) other-oriented. The notion that managers are likely to behave more fairly when they are other- rather than self-oriented is not new. Greenleaf’s (1996) notion of servant leadership implies this to be the case, in which he suggests that managers will behave ethically towards and elicit high commitment in their followers when they assign priority to their followers’ needs. The Blader and Chen findings provide an important extension to previous theorizing by delineating an important antecedent of other-directedness: the experience of high status rather than high power. Hence, in socializing new managers organizations may do well to emphasize the status that goes along with the position rather than the

power. Among the many benefits of doing so is that the managers are more likely to behave fairly.

Other findings in the Actor/Behavior cell suggest that it may be useful for managers to recognize that they can be procedurally fair for different reasons. That is, it may be perfectly legitimate for them to exhibit the same behavior in different circumstances. Zhao et al. (2015) found managers' beliefs about employees' trustworthiness affect managers' procedural fairness, but for different reasons depending upon the basis of trustworthiness. The benevolence of subordinates was positively related to managers' procedural fairness whereas the integrity of subordinates was negatively related to managers' procedural fairness. Moreover, Zhao et al. found that the positive effect of benevolence reflected a relationship-oriented mechanism whereas the negative effect of integrity reflected a control-oriented mechanism. These results suggest that, in addition to providing fair treatment to promote positive relationships with their direct reports such as those high in benevolence, managers also may need to be procedurally fair to prevent disruptiveness from their direct reports, such as those low in integrity. In short, managers need to be cognizant of the different purposes served by being procedurally fair (e.g., relationship-enhancement and control) and to draw on them in ways appropriate to the situation.

#### *Implications from Studying Recipients' Desire for Fairness*

The studies we described in the Recipient/Desire cell showed that the experience of non-contingent success led individuals to have less of a desire to be treated with high process fairness relative to their counterparts who experienced contingent success. At first blush, it may be tempting to infer that in the face of non-contingent success managers should give employees what they want: less process fairness. However, in light of the many desirable consequences of treating people with high process fairness, we are not advocating such an approach. Rather, it is important for managers to recognize that one potential downside of high process fairness is that individuals may experience self-threat in anticipation of the possibility that they may not be able to maintain their high level of performance. Since process fairness is related to recipients' attributions of personal responsibility, they may have less of a preference for high process fairness for self-protective reasons, that is, to not feel as personally responsible if their future performance turns out to be less successful. However, rather than reducing process fairness when employees experience non-contingent success, we propose that managers should not only treat people with high process fairness, but also focus on ways to help employees reduce or manage their need to engage in self-protection. This is particularly so, given that the experience of non-contingency (and by extension, non-contingent success) may be rather common in organizations.

In fact, several of our findings suggest strategies to reduce employees' motivation to engage in self-protection in response to non-contingent success. In one study we found that the tendency for non-contingent success to lower people's desire for process fairness was stronger

when participants believed their organizations to be more intolerant of failure. In another study we found that the tendency for non-contingent success to reduce people's desire for high process fairness was stronger among those who were induced to be prevention-focused rather than promotion-focused. Hence, if and when employees experience non-contingent success it may be to managers' advantage to behave fairly and to: (1) create psychologically safe cultures (i.e., organizations that are more tolerant of failure; Edmondson, 1999), and (2) encourage their employees to adopt a promotion (as opposed to a prevention) mindset.

Yet another way to help employees deal with their self-protective tendencies is to provide them with opportunities to engage in self-affirmation (e.g., Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Siegel et al., 2005; Steele, 1988). Recent research has identified a variety of ways in which organizations can foster self-affirmation. For example, Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) examined different ways of socializing employees into a company plagued with high turnover and poor customer satisfaction. In one condition new employees were asked to identify their best selves and how they may enact them in the workplace. Interestingly, even though this activity did not cost the organization much (it only took an extra hour), it had positive effects on turnover and customer satisfaction as much as six months later. Brockner, Senior, and Welch (2014) showed that providing opportunities for employees to engage in corporate volunteer activities also may lead to the experience of self-affirmation. In sum, we recommend that even in the presence of non-contingent success managers should: (1) continue to ensure high process fairness, (2) be aware of the possibility that high process fairness may elicit self-threat, and (3) be ready to assist employees in coping constructively with self-threat should it materialize.

#### *Implications from Studying Observers' Fairness Perceptions*

It may be possible to leverage the construct of psychological distance to shape observers' fairness judgments. The fact that third party observers, unlike actors and recipients, are not directly involved in the justice interaction may be taken to mean that observers view these events dispassionately (Lind et al., 1998). Deonance theory certainly suggests otherwise (Folger, 2001), as does the research described in the Observer/Perception cell. There, the results of several studies suggested that reducing the psychological distance between recipients and observers makes observers see recipients' experience as more relevant to themselves, which among other things, will make observers' fairness judgments more similar to those of recipients (e.g., Blader et al., 2013). When managers prefer observers' fairness perceptions to be similar to those of recipients, managers should reduce the psychological distance between observers and recipients. For example, when recipients believe that they have been treated fairly, it may be to managers' advantage for observers to believe similarly. If so, managers may wish to emphasize points of commonality between the two parties or elicit congruent social emotions (e.g., empathy) in

observers. However, when recipients perceive low fairness managers may be better off if observers perceived things differently, in which case managers may wish to increase the psychological distance between recipients and observers. Construal level theory (e.g., Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010) suggests that psychological distance varies not only along the social dimension, but also along the temporal, spatial, and hypotheticality dimensions (Bar-Anan, Liberman, Trope, & Algom, 2007). Therefore, managers have a variety of ways to influence psychological distance.

Finally, CLT asserts that the relationship between psychological distance and level of construal is bi-directional. Thus, when seeking to increase psychological distance, managers may be more successful if they communicate in more abstract terms and focus on the big picture. However, when seeking to decrease psychological distance, managers may be more effective if their communications were more concrete and detail-oriented. Recent research also has shown that the abstractness with which managers communicate induces observers to confer status on them (Reyt & Wiesenfeld, 2014). If managers experience the status observers confer on them, they are likely to behave fairly (Blader & Chen, 2012). In sum, managers would be wise to leverage the power of psychological distance in its various forms and dimensions to help shape fairness preferences, desires, and behaviors of key stakeholders of the organization.

## Conclusion

The study of organizational justice continues to proliferate, albeit in different ways than those reflected in the four waves described by Colquitt et al. (2005). Whereas prior work emphasized the consequences of fairness, much of the recent theory and research examines its antecedents. Indeed, the abundance of work on fairness as a dependent variable suggests the need for an organizing framework. We provide one such framework here, drawing on two taxonomic dimensions: the focal party (actor, recipient, and observer) and the nature of the reaction (behavior, desire, and perception). Undoubtedly, other dimensions may prove useful as well.

To the extent that the present framework is useful, it may seem tempting for future researchers to focus on the cells in Table 1 that have received relatively less attention. While not an irrelevant consideration, we caution against this being the primary basis for choosing a topic. Instead, future work on fairness as a dependent variable is likely to be more worthwhile if it were guided by the principles used here to describe our current state of knowledge. Going forward, the main question should not be which cell hasn't been looked at as much, but rather, how might the proposed study lead to new ways of thinking about fairness? To what extent does the research question pertain to frequently-occurring fairness events in the real world? Does the envisioned work provide a novel way for the justice literature to connect with and shed light on other bodies of knowledge? Furthermore, what are the noteworthy practical implications, either for those who make the decisions (actors) or for those who experience them either directly (recipients) or indirectly (observers)?

Future research motivated by these questions is likely to contribute much to our understanding of organizational justice in particular and to our understanding of behavior in the workplace in general.

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## Appendix

For each of the three Focal Parties we describe theory or research pertaining to the two types of reactions that were not considered previously. Hence, for the Actor we will discuss Desires and Perceptions (Cells #2 and #3 in Table 1, respectively). For the Recipient we will consider Behaviors and Perceptions (Cells #4 and #6, respectively). Finally, for the Observer we will describe Behaviors and Desires (Cells #7 and #8, respectively).

### Actor Desires and Perceptions

*Desires.* Several conceptual articles have addressed the questions of why and when actors may not want to behave fairly, such as the aforementioned works of Molinsky and Margolis (2005) and Scott, Colquitt, and Paddock (2009). Another conceptual piece suggested that actors may not want to behave fairly because doing so threatens their sense of control (Brockner et al., 2009). For example, actors may believe that giving voice to recipients will reduce their own sense of power. They also may believe that providing explanations for decisions (informational fairness) may undermine their authority. Behaving with high process fairness also requires time, effort, and mental energy, all of which may be in short supply when actors have to make tough decisions. In sum, behaving fairly often comes with a price. When it does, actors' desire to behave fairly may be expected to decline.

*Perceptions.* Blader and Rothman (2014) recently asked managers to rate the fairness of their having shown preferential treatment. Preferential treatment took the form of giving more benefits to or imposing fewer burdens on a subordinate who had been performing poorly due to difficult personal circumstances for which they were not fully responsible. Managers' perceptions of the fairness of their preferential treatment were an interactive function of how empathic they felt towards the subordinate and the degree to which managers felt accountable for their actions. Empathic managers rated their preferential treatment towards their subordinate as more fair than their less empathic counterparts, but only when managers were not accountable for their actions. One interpretation of these findings is that when accountability was low, empathic managers followed the Golden Rule of treating others as they would have liked to have been treated themselves. Once accountability was introduced, however, managers became more concerned with their public image, which eliminated the effect of empathy on the perceived fairness of their preferential treatment towards their subordinate.

### Recipient Behaviors and Perceptions



*Behaviors.* In considering the Recipient/Behavior cell, we focus on actions recipients take that reflect fairness, which may take a number of forms. One such form is behavior motivated by recipients' desire to restore fairness. For example, theory and research on retaliation and revenge fall squarely in this category. Assuming that recipients have experienced the same level of negative or unfair treatment, it is interesting to consider when and why they will be more versus less likely to retaliate. Brebels, De Cremer, and Sedikides (2008) found that people's regulatory focus influenced their level of retaliation against an authority that treated them unfairly, such that promotion focus led to greater retaliation than prevention focus. In explaining their findings, Brebels et al. found that those with a promotion focus had greater accessibility to their individual self, which made the aversiveness of their unfair treatment more powerful, thereby leading them to retaliate more strongly than their prevention focused counterparts.

Recipients' fairness behavior also may reflect processes other than retaliation. The nature of organizational life makes many if not most employees at once actors and recipients. For example, mid-level managers are recipients in that they may be treated by their bosses with varying degrees of fairness. At the same time, they also are actors who behave more or less fairly towards their direct reports. Rather than instantiating retaliatory behavior in recipients, the fairness behavior shown by senior level executives may set norms, which are then learned and enacted by managers at lower levels in the organization. Consistent with this possibility, Ambrose, Schminke, and Mayer (2013) recently studied trickle-down fairness effects in the workplace. They found that the interactional treatment that managers received from their bosses likely had an influence on their own interactional fairness behavior, in that the subordinates of managers who were treated more fairly perceived the interactional fairness climate to be more positive. Given that higher level managers affect the fairness climate, it is possible that recipient-managers' fairness will not simply *trickle down* to their direct reports, but also *carry over* to affect how they behave towards their peers and others.

*Perceptions.* Whereas perceptions of outcome and procedural fairness typically are enhanced when people are treated with high process fairness (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988), there are certain instances in which outcomes are so important that they minimize the effect of process fairness on perceptions of outcome and procedural fairness. For example, Skitka and her colleagues found that objective levels of procedural fairness had less of an effect on recipients' fairness perceptions when the outcomes violated their moral mandates, which refer to attitudes held with a deep (identity-defining) sense of moral conviction (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006). More recently, Mayer, Greenbaum, Kuenzi and Shteynberg (2009) hypothesized and found that when people were on the receiving end of other outcomes that go against how they define themselves (besides those violating their *moral identity*), perceptions of fairness were relatively unaffected by the level of fairness with which they were actually treated.

#### Observer Behaviors and Desires

*Behaviors.* Observers may find themselves in a position in which they can take action to create more or less fairness. In the legal system, for example, judges serve as third parties

that issue a sentence intended to restore fairness by punishing offenders. While judges are presumed to act on behalf of the broader society, observers may also behave as "vigilantes," engaging in retribution on behalf of victims of injustice who may not be able to restore justice themselves. Observers may even make personal sacrifices to correct an injustice or punish a perpetrator of injustice. For instance, Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress and Gee (2002) conducted a series of studies based on the Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler (1986) research paradigm in which a disinterested third party observer was given information about resource allocations that a target made previously affecting people the observer did not know. Turillo et al. gave observers an opportunity to restore justice that required sacrificing their personal outcomes (de facto, paying for fairness). In fact, observers were willing to make a personal sacrifice to punish a target for past instances of unfairness as long as they were able to do so without behaving unfairly in the present (that is, as long as they were able to divide the resources they were permitted to allocate evenly with someone other than the unfair target).

*Desires.* Rothman et al. (2014) recently examined whether observers prefer a decision-making authority that is unfair in challenging contexts in which the possibility of unfavorable outcomes looms large and tough bosses may be presumed to fight aggressively for good outcomes. In a series of studies participants witnessed, read a scenario about, or recalled managers who were either procedurally fair or procedurally unfair to people other than themselves (making the participants third parties who were not directly impacted by the managers' fairness). They were then asked to indicate the extent to which they would want that manager to lead their own group either under challenging or more benign circumstances. The challenging circumstances varied across the studies, including negotiating with a tough competitor on the group's behalf and implementing an organizational change in which resistance was expected. Regardless of the basis of the managers' fairness (e.g., allowing participation or behaving consistently), observers had less of a desire for fairness (in the form of fair leadership) when times were tough than in less challenging contexts.

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