

The Justice Motive: Where Social Psychologists Found It, How they Lost It, and Why They May Not Find It Again

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Beginning shortly after the 2nd World War, 3 lines of research associated with relative deprivation, equity theory, and just world contributed to the description of the influence of the justice motive in people's lives. By the late 1960s, these converging lines of research had documented the importance of people's desire for justice; nevertheless, contemporary social psychologists typically portray this justice-driven motivation as simply a manifestation of self-interest. The explanation for this failure to recognize a distinct and important justice motive points to the widespread reliance on research methods that elicit the participant's thoughtfully constructed narratives or role-playing responses. According to recent theoretical advances, these methods generate responses that reflect normative expectations of rational self-interest, and fail to capture the important effects of the emotionally generated imperatives of the justice motive.

It seems to be stating the obvious to assert that people prefer more rather than less pay for their work, and their satisfaction would be the direct result of the size of their rewards: The more pay the greater their satisfaction. Moreover, of course, sane, decent people would not condemn suffering innocent victims. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, however, three lines of research began reporting evidence that seemed to contradict these mundane truths. Research associated with the concept of "relative deprivation" revealed that people's satisfaction depended on their receiving no less than they thought they deserved, rather than the objective value of their outcomes (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Starr, & Williams, 1949; see also Crosby, 1976). "Equity theory" experiments (Adams, 1963) demonstrated that employees, at times, would voluntarily avoid getting more pay than they deserved, and the "just world" research (Lerner, 1965, 1971; Lerner & Simmons, 1966) indicated that the desire to believe that people get what they deserve influences both restorative actions and social judg-

ments, including the possible derogation of innocent victims by sane, decent, observers.

By the 1970s, considerable evidence pointed to a "justice motive" as a distinct source of motivation and influence in people's lives. Approximately 30 years later, however, in spite of the rather auspicious beginning, and after a considerable amount of published research, the general consensus is that people's desire for justice is neither distinct from self-interest nor of great motivational importance. Most contemporary social psychologists assume that people employ justice as a personal and social device to promote their acquisition of commonly desired resources. The authors of "equity theory," Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978), anticipated that conclusion when they proposed: "So long as individuals perceive that they can maximize their outcomes by behaving equitably, they will do so. Should they perceive that they can maximize their outcomes by behaving inequitably, they will do so" (p. 5). More recently, Tyler (1994) concluded:

The traditional explanation for why people care about justice can perhaps best be described as an effort tempered with realism to pursue self interest . . . This tempering is an effort to maximize their long term self-interest in acquiring desired resources, which benefits from ongoing social relationships. (p. 858)

Given the early research identifying the importance and unique aspects of justice motivation, it is reasonable to ask how most contemporary social psychologists could portray justice as simply a tool of people's self-interest. The most obvious answer is surprisingly simple: The vast majority of the research published over the past 25 years reported that their participants

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employed justice principles to gain other commonly desired resources—money, power, status—and the participants ignored or distorted those principles when it was to their profit to do so (e.g., Greenberg & Cohen, 1982; Steensma & Vermunt, 1991; Vermunt & Steensma, 1991). What remains to be explained, then, is this dramatic discrepancy between the promising findings of the early research and those reported by the majority of subsequent investigators. The remainder of this article will be devoted to examining the sources and implications of those contradictory findings.

Two Forms of Justice in High and Low Impact Situations

The Appearance of Justice in Heuristic and Systematic Judgments

To begin with, it is important to recognize two rather distinct ways in which people react to justice related events. In one of these reactions, the awareness of an obvious injustice happens automatically in response to familiar cues in the situation. That rather immediate response includes the appraisal of who or what is to blame and the imperative to reestablish justice with virtually no consideration of the circumstances. In effect, the cognitive, evaluative, and the justice-based emotional imperatives appear as a scripted package typically involving anger and punishment (Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998). On other occasions, however, all of the elements in the justice scenario follow from thoughtful consideration of the relevant circumstances. These include the assessments of what someone deserves, the extent to which the person's outcomes fail to meet what he or she deserves, the attributions of responsibility and culpability to possible agents of the injustice, and various courses of action (e.g., Weiner, 1993). Borrowing from the several dual process theories in social psychology (e.g., Chaiken & Trope, 1999), the term *heuristics* will be used to stand for the more automatic, intuitive, scripted reactions, and *systematic* for the more thoughtful processes based on purposive assessments of available information.

These two forms of justice reactions differ in ways that are particularly relevant here. First, as suggested by the dual process theorists, the heuristic-based justice appraisals often take the rather primitive form of simple univalent associations of outcomes, personal characteristics, emotions, and restorative acts—for example, bad things happen to bad people, bad outcomes are caused by bad people, similar people deserve similar outcomes—whereas, the systematic appraisals and subsequent responses reflect conventional rules of thought, including the normatively appropriate rule for determining deserving, blame, and the reestablishment

of justice, for example, merit, equality, and norm-based entitlements (M. J. Lerner, 1975, 1991). Second, although the heuristic responses occur automatically, the person must have an incentive with sufficient time and cognitive resources to engage in systematic thought processes.

The Appearance of Justice Reactions in High and Low Impact Situations

In addition to identifying the distinction between justice heuristics and thoughtfully generated judgments of (in)justice, it is important to consider the different dynamics involved in people's reactions in high versus low impact situations. The investigators whose research led to the initial evidence for the justice motive constructed emotionally compelling and personally engaging situations for their participants. These included the highly arousing and rather upsetting experience of witnessing the agonies of a suffering victim, and confronting participants who had been hired as employees with the disturbing realization that they were to be paid much more, or less, than they deserved for their work. Over time, social psychologists increasingly relied less on confronting their participants with highly arousing and personally engaging events to study justice. Instead, investigators had their participants role-play reactions in experimental simulations with minimal incentives, or respond to hypothetical vignettes, questionnaires, and interviews, that is, "low impact" situations.

Extrapolating from the available theories, it is possible to suggest theoretically relevant consequences of this shift from high to low impact situations to study the justice motive. Consider, first, what can occur in low impact situations. When people are asked to play a role, recall a past event, or give their opinions and beliefs about a hypothetical or real event, they may provide a direct response based on the heuristics elicited by the salient cues. However, with minimal motivation and emotional involvement, rather than responding directly with the first thoughts that automatically come to mind, they will often have the time and cognitive resources to reflect on and thoughtfully frame their reaction within conventional norms. With little at stake to be gained or lost, the participants' main incentives are not to reestablish justice, or maximize their outcomes, for that matter, but rather to manage their impressions. For the most part, they try to be cooperative participants, and, of course, not do anything that would threaten their self or public esteem by appearing foolish or embarrassing.

As a cooperative participant, impression management might mean expressing or following the normatively appropriate rules of deserving and fairness in a particular context. However, after time to thoughtfully consider their responses, they would probably not be

willing to represent the often counternormative automatically elicited justice heuristics in their reactions. Alternatively, there is also good reason to believe that the societal norms and lay theories that are most likely to appear in participants' thoughtful responses portray justice considerations as an enlightened form of self-interest. As described by Walster et al. (1978), it is commonly assumed that people comply with rules of fairness and deserving if and when they believe that is the most profitable way to act, given the immediate or ultimately available costs and benefits.

In essence, it is possible to elicit reactions based on the heuristic forms of justice in low impact contexts if the participants are asked to give a direct response and there is no inducement or time to engage in a more thoughtful response. Otherwise, if justice considerations appear after thoughtful considerations, they will be framed within appropriate norms, including the promotion of self-interested goals (Miller, 1999). Alternatively, when confronted with a compelling and emotion arousing appraisal of an actual or threatened injustice, whether elicited by a heuristic or systematic appraisal, the subsequent response is more likely to be guided by the emotion directed efforts to reestablish or protect justice and less influenced by impression management concerns. While acting on the imperative to reestablish justice, the fully engaged participant will be less likely to have the cognitive resources, time, or incentive to engage in thoughtful pursuit of the normatively appropriate response, including enlightened self-interest (Meindl & Lerner, 1983; Miller, 1975, 1977). In addition, to the extent that the strong emotions follow from an initial heuristic appraisal, the subsequent reactions, less influenced by normative constraints, may appear as rather primitive anger-punishment scripted reactions (Goldberg et al., 1999; J. S. Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998; Mikula et al., 1998).

Integrating Propositions

According to this analysis, by employing low impact procedures, investigators inadvertently created the conditions that would produce evidence generally consistent with lay theories of how justice appears in people's lives, that is, people follow conventional rules for determining blame and deserving, if and when that appears to be the normatively appropriate and the most profitable response. To be sure, on those occasions when participants have little time or incentive to generate a thoughtful response, more immediate appraisals of rather simple forms of justice may appear in their reactions. However, low impact situations will consistently fail to elicit sufficient justice-based emotion-directed judgments and efforts to protect or reestablish justice, especially those that involve counternormative reactions. The next task, of course, is to consider some of the evidence underlying this analysis. The research describing

how people react to innocent victims highlights several of these theoretically significant methodological issues.

The Justice Motive and Societal Norms: Reactions to Victims and Harm-Doers

Emotionally Detached Versus Fully Engaged Observers' Reactions to Innocent Victims

M. J. Lerner (1971) and M. J. Lerner and Simmons (1966) confronted their participants with the vividly moving experience of watching someone who had been essentially trapped into receiving a series of unavoidable electric shocks as part of her participation in a psychological experiment. Of course, when given the opportunity, these observers elected to rescue and compensate the victim, but when unable to do that, many of them tended to derogate the victim's character. However, why would observers attempt to compensate an innocent victim, whereas similar others, unable to do that, denigrate her personal worth?

One possible answer pointed to a motivational component: The observers cared so much about believing that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get, that if they cannot restore justice by their actions, they will try to do so by other means, such as persuading themselves that the victim actually deserved to suffer, or would be compensated later, possibly in the next life. Another possibility is that the cues in the situation, particularly the vivid signs of the victim's suffering, elicited a heuristic-based automatic response, "bad things happen to bad people," that led to the victim derogation.

In either case, additional findings also revealed that if the observers believed that the victim was not actually suffering, but merely playing a part for the purposes of the experiment, they did not portray her in a negative light, and they did not predict that other naïve observers would derogate her (M. J. Lerner, 1971; Simons & Piliavin, 1972). Apparently, the emotional arousal elicited by the victim's suffering was an essential component in the observers' derogation. In addition, thoughtful consideration of the relevant societal norms prevented victim derogation by the observers. If, for example, the experimenter explicitly informed, and then later reminded, the observers that the victim was truly an innocent victim of circumstances, as in a natural disaster, then victim derogation did not occur (Simons & Piliavin, 1972). Apparently, the experimenter had made the observers highly aware that according to societal norms, people are not supposed to condemn innocent victims, only those that are blameworthy and culpable.

These normative rules concerning how one is supposed to react to victims became even more evident

in subsequent low impact contexts. For example, investigators often asked their participants to play a role in which they were to evaluate and allocate resources to various briefly-described victims. In these contexts, the participants' reactions followed their thoughtful assessments using normatively appropriate rules of blame and culpability to discern which victims were responsible for their fates or were truly innocent. And, of course, confirming conventional rules of morality, their evaluations and allocations revealed compassion for the innocent victims and rejection of the culpable ones (see e.g., Skitka & Tetlock, 1992, 1993; Weiner, 1993).

It appears, then, that emotionally aroused observers of suffering victims respond quite differently than those who generate a thoughtful response in relatively dispassionate circumstances. The detached observers typically adhere to conventionally accepted rules of deserving and culpability: Of course, innocent victims are to be treated with compassion. Recent research (Hafer, 2000), however, documented the role of justice motivation in the derogation of innocent victims. In that research, witnessing a vivid and moving injustice elicited clear evidence of the observers' preconscious concerns with issues of justice, and the greater the observers' preoccupation with justice the greater the likelihood of their derogating the innocent victim.

Self-Derogation by Innocent Victims and Harm-Doers

Obviously, the condemnation of innocent victims is counternormative and is thus unlikely to be found in participants' thoughtful responses in low impact situations. However, it does help explain a recognized and tragically familiar phenomenon in people's lives. One can even find evidence of victims blaming and derogating themselves in spite of ample objective evidence attesting to their innocence. Although some investigators have attributed this self-derogation to the need for control among victims of criminal assaults, Rubin and Peplau (1973), as described in more detail later, found lowered self-esteem among innocent victims of an explicitly random event.

Of course, many factors can intervene or preclude such irrational condemnation. However, the tendency to automatically blame and derogate does not only appear in reactions to victims. Investigators have repeatedly demonstrated that people who accidentally cause harm to others often blame themselves in ways that are both painful and completely unjustified by conventional rule for assigning blame (Freedman, Wallington, & Bless, 1967; Meindl & Lerner, 1984). It is as if they automatically apply the heuristic "bad outcomes are caused by bad people" to themselves although that can have painful and costly consequences.

A rather dramatic example of the failure of conventional norms to prevent the personally painful effects of this heuristic was reported by consultants to corporations that had engaged in downsizing (Levinson, 1994; Smith, 1994). According to these consultants, after employees are discharged, managers often experience serious amounts of guilt in response to compelling signs of the discharged employees' suffering. Although the managers believed their decisions to downsize their work forces were entirely appropriate and justifiable in response to market demands, their automatic self-blaming reactions to subsequent cues of suffering were not prevented or eliminated by reference to conventional norms for assigning culpability. Apparently, for many of them, the heuristic "bad outcomes are caused by bad people" prevailed, although it made no sense, rationally.

This research, describing the way people react to victims and victimization, clearly suggests important differences between the reactions of people who are emotionally aroused by compelling awareness of undeserved suffering and the relatively detached responses of people who have the time and incentive to generate a thoughtful response. Fully engaged people often reveal relatively simple scripted evaluations and judgments, such as "bad outcomes happen to bad people" and "bad outcomes are caused by bad people." In this manner, observers may derogate innocent victims, and the innocent victims, as well as morally innocent accidental harm-doers, may even condemn themselves. This scripted derogation, however, absent compelling cues of suffering, may be prevented or replaced by conventional rules for assigning blame and culpability. When observers are relatively unaroused and have the time to generate a response, then they will often reveal the compassion and caring for innocent victims according to societal norms.

The remaining discussion focuses on further illustrations of how justice, conventional norms, and self-interest appear in low impact situations. The main thrust of these examples is to illustrate how social psychologists may have inadvertently generated evidence that relegated justice to the status of an instrumental form of self-interest.

Preferences for Justice Replaced by Maximizing Self-Interest in Thoughtful Decisions

Bazerman, White, and Lowenstein (1995) described several experiments in which participants reacted more favorably to a hypothetical situation in which they would have fair but lesser outcomes than one in which their outcomes would be larger but unfair. For example, when judged independently and separately, the possibility of having "\$400 for yourself and \$400 for the other party" elicited more favorable rat-

ings among the participants than having “\$500 for yourself and \$700 for the other party.” The respondents’ reactions indicated they valued fairness more than an additional \$100. Similarly, when it came to a hypothetical job offer, the participants had a more positive reaction to an offer where they would be paid the same as similar others than to one where they would be getting \$10,000 more per year, but others would be paid an additional \$10,000 more than they. Simply stated, in these hypothetical situations, fairness–unfairness mattered more than greater amounts of money, and fairness appeared to be defined as “similar people deserve similar outcomes.”

It is important to remember that the preference for fair rather than the most economically profitable outcome appeared in situations constructed to elicit and assess separate evaluative reactions to each of the two possibilities. That is important because, contrary to the preferences for fairness described earlier, Bazerman et al. (1995) also discovered that when asked to make comparative judgments between the two alternatives, the participants typically opted for the alternative that offered them the most money rather than the one that was more fair. That is, they chose the \$500 for themselves and \$700 for the other, rather than \$400 for them both. Clearly, in their several experiments, the comparative judgments led to economically self-interested choices instead of fair ones.

What accounts for the systematic difference, actually preference reversals, between the separate ratings of each alternative and choosing between the two sets of outcomes? The authors’ conclusion fits the hypotheses generated here. When they engage in thoughtful decision making “... it is easier (for people) to justify maximizing one’s own payoff than to justify maximizing fairness” (Bazerman et al., 1995, p. 42). Having to choose between two alternatives required the participants to forego their initial impulses for fairness and engage in systematic thought comparing the two alternatives. Because of the thoughtful comparisons in this low impact context, their choices were shaped by the norm of self-interest. Similarly, Sears and Lau (1983) reported that survey respondents revealed little evidence of self-interested evaluations of political figures and their economic policies, unless prior questions specifically alerted them to their own economic stake in those policies. Once their own economic investment in those policies became salient, they felt constrained to respond in a self-interested manner.

That conjecture was supported by several experiments that provided compelling documentation of both the importance and prevalence of this norm of self-interest. Apparently, the norm of self-interest is sufficiently ubiquitous that people reliably overestimate the extent to which others will adhere to it, for example, smokers voting against legislation to limit smoking

(Miller, 1999). In addition, Ratner and Miller (2001) found that people often adhere to the norm or portray themselves as acting out of self-interested motives because they recognize that to appear to do otherwise puts them at clear risk of being viewed with mistrust, as a deviant, a not “normal” person. Recognizing this reluctance to appear to be a deviant, Holmes, Miller, and Lerner (2002) demonstrated that allowing people to portray their efforts to help innocent victims as a self-interested economic exchange was considerably more effective in eliciting financial help for suffering victims than simply providing the person with the opportunity to altruistically donate money.

In addition to appearing in the form of heuristic responses, in low impact situations the themes of justice and self-interest often appear in the participants’ efforts to respond according to the appropriate societal norms. When the participants’ justice motive is not strongly engaged, then norm-based rules of fairness and justice may appear in their thoughtful responses as good role-playing participants. As a result, investigators may then conclude they are assessing people’s motivation for justice. However, those role-playing based concerns with fairness are easily set aside as other norms, especially as those eliciting self-interest become salient.

Confusing Norm Enactment With the Justice Motive: Do People Care About Fairness?

The research by Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) highlights the importance of recognizing the difference between participants role-playing justice norms and employees actually experiencing a threat to their sense of justice. Adams and his colleagues (see Adams, 1963) found that participants, functioning as part-time employees, altered their efforts, increasing either the quality or the extent of their work, to avoid receiving more pay than they believed they deserved. Those findings, revealed in several experiments, were offered as evidence that, in some circumstances, people prefer fairness to maximizing their outcomes. However, do they really prefer fairness in these settings?

Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) doubted that people genuinely cared about fairness. They designed an experiment to demonstrate that people only give public “lip service” to norms of fairness, but privately they prefer to maximize their outcomes: the greater their pay the more pleased they are. To test their hypotheses, rather than hiring employees as their participants, they had university students play the role of employees in an experimental simulation of an industrial task. To create the various experimental conditions, they had their participants work at a simple task for a few moments. They then told them that a supervisor participant had allocated shares of a \$1 payment between them and an

equally productive coworker. The participant then received fair pay (50 cents), or 75 cents, or 90 cents, representing two levels of overpayment.

Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) demonstrated that if the participants made public ratings of their reactions to their pay, they reported being most pleased with the fair pay and less happy with the greater but unfair overpayments. However, when the participants responded to their payment while connected to a "lie detector," the more money they received the happier they were. Based on those findings, Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) concluded that people only adhere to rules of fairness in public situations because it is a societal norm, whereas privately, everyone is motivated to maximize their outcomes.

Subsequent research (M. J. Lerner, 1982) however, indicated that virtually all the participants in the Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) experiment were actually role playing what they believed were the normatively appropriate responses. When role playing the part of employees, they reported being upset with receiving more pay than they deserved. However, if they had been instructed to play the role of highly competitive workers, their public reactions revealed greater satisfaction with greater pay. In addition, as good cooperative participants, that meant producing a counternormative response when the experimenter hooked them up to a lie detector. It appeared that the lie detector forced these competition-instructed employees to "confess" being more pleased with the lesser but more fair pay. In retrospect, it seems safe to conclude that the participants did not care much about their payments. After all, how much pleasure or guilt could have been elicited among these university students by receiving 75 cents rather than 50 cents? They probably cared very little about whether they received a "fair" payment or were "overpaid." They were simply trying to be cooperative participants and do the right thing by playing the roles they were assigned.

Mainly, what can be learned from these experiments is that, of course, people know and can behave according to normative rules of fairness. However, that can and often does happen in the service of motives other than justice. The participants in these experiments were simply trying to be good participants, and unlike Adams's employees (Adams, 1963), their behavior had virtually nothing to do with how much they actually cared about justice or the desire to maximize their outcomes. Obviously, investigators can study people's understanding of societal norms in low impact situations. However, they should not try to draw inferences about how much people care about justice from the way they play their parts in experimental simulations with minimal outcomes. Studying justice norms in these low impact contexts can lead to misleading inferences about the relative importance of justice and self-interest.

Impression Management in Surveys: Reactions to Procedures or Attitude-Consistent Responses

Experimental simulations with minimal incentives are not the only commonly used form of low impact research. Much of the procedural justice research has employed survey methodologies, including structured interviews. In these situations, the motivation for respondents to present themselves in a favorable, or at least, acceptable, light can influence the findings and confuse their meaning. This is illustrated in the research reported by Tyler (1994) where the participants tried to present a coherent story of their encounters with authorities to someone interviewing them over the telephone. The purpose of this research was to assess the relative importance people attached to various aspects of their treatment, "procedural justice," versus their outcomes, "distributive justice." However, how reliable were the participants' reports of their reactions to being treated fairly or getting what they deserved?

To test their hypotheses, the investigators conducted telephone interviews with people whom they asked to recall a recent encounter with a legal authority (police, judge) in Study 1, or a work supervisor in Study 2. The respondents then answered a series of questions about the recalled event, focusing on their memories of how they felt about the treatment and the outcomes they received in terms of satisfaction and fairness, as well as their present feelings (e.g., how angry, pleased, or frustrated they now felt) about their experiences with the authority figure.

As is common in survey research, the investigators used the respondents' answers to those questions to create several measures that they treated as independent, mediating, and dependent variables. For example, some of the independent variables were based on the respondents' reports of how they felt about their treatment and the outcomes they received. The mediating variables, judgments of how fairly they felt the procedures were and fairness of the outcomes, and the dependent variable, were derived from by their reactions to questions asking how angry or pleased they felt. The investigators employed sophisticated analyses to arrive at their conclusions about probable causes, in terms of prior treatment, of the participants' present feelings about the authorities.

As it happened, however, the interviewers made the respondents acutely aware of their attitudes toward the authorities just prior to asking them to recall and respond to questions about a specific encounter. Additional analyses strongly suggest that the respondents shaped their answers to the subsequent questions to be consistent with their salient attitudes. For example, treating all 26 variables, those designated as independent, mediating, and dependent, as items comprising one attitude scale, yields a Cronbach Alpha of .87 for

Study 1, legal authorities; and .89 for Study 2, supervisors. Similarly, a principal component factor analysis indicates that in both Study 1 and Study 2, all variables load .54 or higher on the first unrotated principal component. These findings suggest that this study may be best understood as an assessment of the respondents' coherent portrayal of an event that was selected and colored by their salient attitudes toward that authority.

In essence, as the additional analyses indicated, knowing the respondents' attitudes toward the police or courts was sufficient to predict virtually all of their responses to the subsequent questions concerning their treatment in a specific encounter. Of course, one cannot completely rule out the possibility that how the respondents were treated by the authorities, and what outcomes occurred to each of them and their subsequent feelings, were actually all consistently more or less positive or negative. That is not very plausible.

Surveys and telephone interviews enable respondents to express their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and describe their memories of past events, as well as future expectations and intentions to act. Typically, however, they are low impact events and, in the absence of other compelling motivation, the participants' responses are amenable to being influenced by their desire to provide normatively appropriate, or at least acceptable, responses to the questions they are asked. In the example presented here, (Tyler, 1994), as in previously published research (see e.g., Hessing, Elffers, & Weigel, 1988), the respondents' reports of what had transpired during their encounter with the authorities were significantly influenced by their desire to provide attitudinally coherent and consistent responses. Investigators must recognize and control for the possible influence of impression management motives to infer to what extent, or in what ways, justice considerations matter to their respondents.

The Justice Motive and Self-Interest in High Impact Situations

Thus far, the discussion has considered justice-related heuristics as automatic reactions that may be elicited in minimal-impact situations, and, the various normative expectations, including those related to justice and rational self-interest that appear in the participants' more thoughtful efforts to be good participants. However, what happens to justice and self-interest motives in high impact contexts: those situations involving serious deprivation, suffering, loss of esteem, humiliation, or significant amounts of desired resources? There is evidence suggesting that the awareness of an injustice can elicit several emotions: anger, guilt, shame, disgust, contempt, and sadness (Goldberg et al., 1999; Mikula et al., 1998; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). People feel impelled to act on those emotions

and are motivated to eliminate or rectify the injustice. Justice heuristics are often involved in this process as the initial intuitive appraisal and response. More thoughtful considerations in the form of moral reasoning may appear, as well, both in the initial appraisal of the injustice and the formation of a response to maintain or reestablish justice.

No consensus has converged on how justice and self-interested motives interact in people's lives. Is one more important than the other? If more than one is elicited, do they blend, somehow? Alternatively, if they are elicited in sequence, will the former, or maybe the latter, prevail? One can easily conjecture that in circumstances where one is weakly elicited whereas the other seems to be more strongly engaged, then either self-interested or justice-based reactions may appear. And, of course, there are variants of the familiar "rational choice" model that assume some form of more or less conscious and more or less rational search for and processing of the available information to arrive at a self-benefiting response. However, before settling for any set of assumptions, it is probably wise to consider some of the available evidence of how people behave in personally meaningful and engaging contexts.

Examples of Justice Motivation Precluding the Appearance of Self-Interested Desires

People's behavior and judgments in three personally engaging, high impact, situations provide instances when justice motivation appears to have precluded or overcome self-interest.

In the first, the participants were either the recipient or the observer of a vicious verbal assault. Meindl and Lerner (1983) enlisted their participants to earn money, ostensibly, to test parlor games for a commercial firm. The experimenter arranged for them to believe they and three other participants were in separate rooms. As a preparation exercise, they were each to describe in turn to the others the strategy they would employ to play the game they were given. The last participant, having listened to the others, instead of describing his strategy, launched into a vicious verbal assault of either the participant, another participant who had been designated his partner, or the perpetrator's own partner. Subsequently, the experimenter, who was unaware of what had transpired, offered the participant the opportunity to either test a game that would earn him considerable additional pay or confront the perpetrator in a game that would be costly to both of them. Overall, the vast majority of participants in three related experiments elected the costly opportunity to punish the perpetrator when their partner was the victim, although their actually fictitious partner would have no way of knowing their choice. This effect appeared in a less strong form when the participant was the target.

In the second set of experiments, Miller (1977) varied the incentives presented in a communication that offered his participants the opportunity to work for up to 20 sessions. In some cases, the participants were offered \$2 per hr and in others, \$3, amounts that pretesting had established as within the limits of fair pay. He also varied whether \$1 per hr would be deducted from their pay to provide support for a compellingly portrayed needy family. The results of the experiments revealed that deducting \$1 from the \$2 reliably reduced their desire to work as revealed in the number of sessions they elected. However, deducting the same amount for the family from \$3 led to considerably greater willingness to work than if they were allowed to keep the entire amount for themselves. The reasoning confirmed by the data was that deducting \$1 from \$2 would lead to unfair payment for them, but deducting \$1 from \$3 would leave them with the fair pay of \$2 and also allow them to reduce the unjust suffering of the family. Apparently, the participants cared not only about their own deserving, but also about justice for the suffering family. The latter was considerably more motivating than the opportunity to maximize their own pay.

Those findings gain added significance when one considers that similar participants, given descriptions of one of the alternatives, predicted that they and their friends would be most motivated by the opportunity to keep the money for themselves and any money given to the families would be a distinct disincentive (Miller, 1975). Apparently, the participants knew and employed the norm of self-interest in their honest predictions of what would motivate them and other people. In fact, although, when placed in the situation where one's behavior could make a real difference, they were more highly motivated by both their own deserving and the injustice to others.

The third experiment provided a dramatic example of the powerful influence of the justice heuristic, "bad things happen to bad people." Rubin and Peplau (1973) studied the reactions of young men who were vulnerable to the outcome of the draft lottery instituted at the height of the Vietnam War. They arranged for groups of these young men to complete a series of scales and measures just prior to and just after learning their fates in the lottery. In this manner, Rubin and Peplau were able to show that a third of their participants who learned they were certain to be drafted and sent to Vietnam reliably lowered their self-esteem, whereas the other more fortunate participants did not. Their results also indicated that the victims did not generally lower their evaluations of everyone as a function of a depressed mood. Why would these most unfortunate young men also inflict additional pain on themselves? That would appear to be completely contrary to their self-interest. It seems that these victims of the draft lottery were secondarily victimized by their own automatic reactions to learning that

"chance" had determined they would be drafted and go to Vietnam.

In two of these high impact experiments, the research participants willingly gave up the opportunity to earn more money for themselves to follow the dictates of justice: in one case to punish a perpetrator, and in the other to help innocent victims. In the third, the participants denigrated their self-worth in response to a "chance" determined assignment to a terrible fate. One can find evidence of both heuristic and systematic processes in these three examples. In at least one example, the initial heuristic reaction and attendant emotions seemed to preclude the participants' attention to and systematic processing of other information to arrive at a more self serving response.

What Happens When People Become Aware of a Serious Injustice?

The previously described findings naturally lead to the question of what occurs, psychologically, in high impact rather than low impact situations. To begin with, if the injustice is vivid and compelling, then the automatic intuitive response, if not altered by subsequent appraisals, will be accompanied by strong emotions, typically, but not exclusively, anger (Mikula et al., 1998). Given, also, the possibility of relatively great potential losses and gains to the person, why would people not be additionally motivated to engage in systematic thought processes guided by direct or enlightened self-interest? Apparently, that did not happen among the participants in the experiments by Meindl and Lerner (1983), Miller (1977), and Rubin and Peplau (1973), although their reactions were obviously quite costly. Why not?

One reason, suggested by recent evidence, is that the awareness of the suffering of an innocent victim may sensitize the person to explicitly justice-related cues and a preconscious occupation with justice-related cognitions rather than those associated with goal acquisition or defensive concerns. For example, Hafer (2000) found that witnesses of a serious injustice required longer recognition times in a subsequent "Stroop" color identification task when the stimulus words, although not consciously recognizable, contained explicit justice-related content. Moreover, the extent of this interference, indicating preoccupation and concern, was predictive of the witnesses derogating the victim, presumably as an attempt to restore justice.

An important and relevant effect of that preoccupation is that there would be correspondingly less cognitive resources available for attending to and engaging in more systematic thought processes or the influence of other motives. Consequently, the initial intuitive appraisal of the injustice and accompanying emotional arousal generate the prevailing modes of response. As

a result, the person would not have the cognitive resources or the incentive needed to consider self-interest, enlightened or otherwise. To be sure, it seems plausible that vivid attention-gaining cues might be sufficient to interrupt this justice-dominated process. How this might occur requires more exploration, especially if the initial emotions were strongly felt or might be easily reinstigated, as in the often seemingly intractable and implacable pursuit of retribution and revenge (Meindl & Lerner, 1983).

Typically, however, in the absence of reinstigation, the strength of the emotions can be expected to weaken over time with increasing opportunity, then, for the person to arrive at reactions that are more thoughtful. As the emotional arousal dissipates, the person becomes more receptive to incentives that elicit thoughtful reactions. This is illustrated in experiments that employed a vivid bullying situation to arouse the emotion of anger in the participants (J. S. Lerner et al., 1998). The film portrayal was sufficiently effective so that even in the next situation the participants exhibited measurable degrees of punitive reactions to someone who was described as having negligently caused harm to others. The amount of punishment the participants assigned to the negligent character in the vignette was a direct function of the extent of their injustice-induced anger elicited in the initial situation. However, the subsequent effects of this justice heuristic, "bad outcomes are caused by bad people," was interrupted if the participants anticipated subsequently meeting a graduate student interested in discussing their reactions to the film clip. In this case, the participants' emotion-elicited punitive responses did not appear in their reactions to the perpetrator in the next situation. Rather than directly related to the extent of their anger, their punitive responses were mediated by conventional rules for assigning blame: their ratings of how avoidable was the harm, and how negligently responsible was the negligent person.

A set of similar, but additionally illuminating, findings appeared in a second study employing the same experimental situation (Goldberg et al., 1999). In this experiment, some of the participants were led to believe the bullies in the initial situation were caught and punished. Those participants manifested somewhat different emotional and punitive reactions than the participants who believed the bullies were not apprehended. When the participants believed the bullies were not apprehended and punished, their anger was the dominant emotion. The extent of that anger was directly related to the amount of punishment they assigned to the negligent perpetrator in the next situation: the greater their anger, the greater their subsequent tendency to be punitive. However, when the participants believed the bullies were punished, they remained as upset as the other participants did but their anger was no greater than other related emotions. More importantly, their punitive reac-

tions to the perpetrator in the second situation were mediated by their more normatively appropriate assessments of the perpetrators' negligence.

Knowing that justice had been done to the bullies, the participants' automatic reaction of anger leading to punishment was replaced by a more complex emotional response and more conventional assignments of blame and punishment to subsequent harm-doers. Apparently, when less preoccupied with past injustices, people can devote more attention and systematic thought to generating conventionally appropriate responses to subsequent events.

In high impact situations, when confronted with serious, emotion-arousing issues of justice-injustice, people focus their attention and actions toward reestablishing justice. If the justice motivation and emotional arousal are sufficiently strong, the imperative to act may narrow the focus of attention and thought. As a result, people will be less responsive to other motivational considerations, including self-interested goal acquisition and impression management. They may then give up considerable economic incentives to punish a harm-doer, work to help an innocent victim rather than increase their own profit, and they may even derogate their own self-worth after "chance" inflicted a terrible fate on them. Obviously, in these contexts, justice appears as an important source of motivation distinct from the self-interested desires to maintain self-esteem and maximize profits.

Summary and Conclusions

The research and theory presented here offered an explanation for why the research literature of the past 30 years does not consistently confirm the distinctive importance of the justice motive in people's lives. The argument, in essence, pointed to the predominant use of research situations that did not arouse or motivationally engage their participants. In those contexts, it was argued, people are primarily concerned with impression management and that means playing their parts as good cooperative participants while maintaining their public image and self-esteem. Justice can appear in the participants' reactions in those situations as automatic intuitive judgments, or as the result of thoughtful efforts to do that which is most appropriate, given what the experimenter seems to expect of them. Participants understand that most people try to do whatever is least costly and most profitable for them unless required to do otherwise. In most cases, being sensible means putting one's own profit ahead of fairness for either oneself or others, as long as it is not expressly forbidden. As Bazerman, et al. (1995) observed, for most people "it is easier to justify maximizing one's own payoff than to justify maximizing fairness."

In contrast to these norm-determined reactions, investigators have shown that when research participants are emotionally aroused and motivated by instances of actual or threatened injustice, they will focus their attention and act in ways to maintain or restore justice, even when that is costly in terms of generally-desired resources. In those instances, as often occurs in people's lives, their desire for justice may become the dominant motive guiding their thoughts and behavior.

Examining the processes involved may highlight the similarities and important differences between how justice appears in high and low impact situations. In both contexts, the initial appraisals of the event will be primarily determined by the relatively immediate and automatic heuristics that are elicited by the salient cues. Of course, those cues may elicit self-interest as well as justice heuristics. However, what distinguishes high versus low impact situations involving the justice motive is the extent of actual or threatened undeserved suffering and deprivation elicited by the initial appraisal. The greater and more vivid is the perceived injustice, the greater will be the emotional arousal and motivation to restore justice.

Over time, more thoughtfully generated systematic appraisals and responses may occur. Those directed by the elicited justice motivation may facilitate the restoring of justice or, in the form of moral reasoning (Shweder & Haidt, 1993), modify the extent of arousal and justice motivation and mode of restoring justice (see e.g., Goldberg et al., 1999; J. S. Lerner et al., 1998; M. J. Lerner, 1971; Simons & Piliavin, 1972). That subsequent systematic processing, however, requires time and cognitive resources (Epstein, Lipson, Holstein, & Huh, 1992; Shweder & Haidt, 1993) and those resources may not be sufficiently available in high impact situations if the initial heuristic-generated moral intuition elicited strong emotions and the imperative to restore justice. The effects of the initial appraisal may persist over time because of social evaluations and judgments formed by the initial appraisal, as well as memory or cue-based restimulation of the initial arousal. Evidence of this persistence can be found in initially highly aroused observers' relatively enduring "irrational" blaming of innocent victims, innocent victim's self-blame, and self-blame by clearly accidental harm-doers.

To be sure, moral systematic reasoning can also eventuate in emotional arousal and motivation to restore justice. The differences between heuristic- and systematic-based justice reactions (moral intuition vs. moral reasoning) are most evident in the extent to which moral reasoning involves the systematic application of conventional rules for assessing deserving, the assignment of blame and culpability, and the restoration of justice.

In low impact situations, for example when participants' role-play in explicit simulations, responding to

vignettes and interviews, they are minimally aroused and motivated by the initial heuristic-based appraisal. In the absence of compelling motives, the participants will be concerned, primarily, with impression management. That is, they will try to play their parts as cooperative participants while ensuring that they do nothing to embarrass themselves. As in high impact situations, issues of justice may appear in both heuristic and systematic appraisals. However, in the absence of strong arousal and justice-based motivation, the participants will have sufficient time and cognitive resources to engage in systematic processing of information when that is appropriate to the task. Recently available evidence (e.g., Bazerman et al., 1995; Miller, 1999; Ratner & Miller, 2001) reveals that impression management concerns may impel participants to publicly adhere to norms of rational self-interest rather than express relatively costly preferences for fairness.

Of course, there are contexts in which it is normatively appropriate to express allegiance to rules of fairness, but the evidence (Miller, 1999; Ratner & Miller, 2001) suggests that participants recognize that if they act fairly or helpfully when that would explicitly contradict their self-interest, they run the risk of being viewed as a deviant. To avoid that stigma, people may portray their relatively costly prosocial acts as arising from self-benefiting motives (Holmes et al., 2002). Essentially, then, the reason investigators have generally confirmed that justice appears in the service of self-interest is that the low impact situations they have employed do not sufficiently elicit the justice motive and in its place they have elicited normatively appropriate rational or enlightened self-interest based on impression management concerns.

To summarize, the evidence presented here suggests the following propositions as the explanation for why the vast majority of research employing minimal situations did not discover a central and important justice motive:

1. The justice motive appears to have two forms: an automatically elicited relatively simple heuristic, that is, a moral intuition; and a set of moral judgments based on the application of conventionally accepted norms concerning fairness and deserving: "who" is entitled to "what" from "whom."
2. Either of these forms of justice, as well as self-interested heuristics and thoughtful efforts to promote self-interest, can be elicited by the salient cues available in situations.
3. In minimal situations, self-presentation is often the primary source of motivation and, consequently, consistency and enlightened self-interest as the dominant societal norms typically guide people's behavior and decisions.
4. In situations where people are confronted with matters of serious consequence, the emotions and re-

lated cognitions elicited by the initial justice heuristic may dominate the person's attention and shape the subsequent reactions to restore justice.

Why may the justice motive not be found again? This analysis suggests that the justice motive will remain "lost" as long as investigators continue to employ low impact situations, and fail to distinguish between norm enactment and justice-motivated behavior. Fortunately, a significant number of investigators have recently recognized the need for a more complete understanding of what happens when the justice motive is fully engaged. For example, as described earlier, Hafer (2000), J. S. Lerner et al. (1998), and Goldberg et al. (1999) employed very moving portrayals of innocent victims in their important research. In addition, several investigators have conducted valuable research describing how justice-related attitudes (Bobocel, Son Hing, & Zanna, 2002), worldviews (Dalbert, 2001; Montada & Lerner, 1998), ideologies (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992, 1993), and strongly held moral convictions (Skitka, 2002) may appear in the dialogues involving political and social issues. I hope that these valuable efforts are just the beginning of a renewed interest in understanding how the theme of justice, including the motivation to maintain and reestablish justice, appears in people's lives.

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