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The egocentric nature of procedural justice: Social value orientation as moderator of reactions to decision-making procedures

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ABSTRACT

In four studies, the authors investigated the individual-oriented versus social-oriented nature of procedural justice effects by comparing fairness-based responses to decision-making procedures among proself versus prosocial oriented individuals. In Studies 1 through 3, we measured participants' social value orientation and manipulated whether or not they were granted or denied voice in a decision-making process. Results consistently revealed that the effects of voice versus no-voice on fairness-based perceptions, emotions, and behavioral intentions were significantly more pronounced for individuals with proself orientations than for individuals with prosocial orientations. These findings were extended in Study 4, a field study in which perceived procedural justice was a stronger predictor of satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors among proselfs than among prosocials. These findings suggest that procedural justice effects can be accounted for by self-oriented motives or needs, rather than prosocial motives that are often conceptualized as being associated with justice.

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People care deeply about justice. This is evidenced by people's strong reactions to social situations that they perceive to be fair or unfair: People tend to display great appreciation when they have the feeling that "justice was done", but when people believe that injustice has prevailed they display aversive reactions such as anger, fear, and disgust (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). One justice concern that people have pertains to outcome distributions: People want to receive fair outcomes (e.g., in proportion to the work they have conducted and/or in comparison to other people). This justice conceptualization is commonly referred to as distributive justice (Adams, 1965; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). A related but different justice concern that people have pertains to the procedures that are used for reaching decisions: People want authorities to use fair decision-making procedures. This justice conceptualization is commonly referred to as procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; for overviews, see Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). The distinction between distributive and procedural justice is important, because classic work of Thibaut and Walker (1975) suggests that people's justice concerns indeed involve questions

about both outcomes and procedures (see also Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

Both distributive and procedural justice have been studied extensively by social psychologists who examined social influences on people's justice evaluations (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). However, relatively little research attention has been devoted to personality variables that predict people's justice judgments (Colquitt, Scott, Judge, & Shaw, 2006). In the case of distributive justice, an exception to this observation can be made for social value orientation, defined as preferences for particular distributions of outcomes for self and others (Messick & McClintock, 1968; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997). Generally, a three-category typology of social value orientation is advanced, distinguishing among prosocial, individualistic, and competitive orientations. Prosocials are defined in terms of enhancing collective outcomes and equality in outcomes between themselves and others; individualists are defined in terms of enhancing outcomes for self with no or very little regard for other's outcomes; and competitors are defined in terms of enhancing relative advantage over others. Thus, the distinction between social value orientations is multidimensional, and research indeed revealed that a prosocial orientation is associated with greater tendencies to enhance both collective outcomes and equality in outcomes than individualistic and competitive orientations (Van Lange, 1999). Furthermore, indi-

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vidualistic and competitive orientations are often combined into a single category of proself orientation, because both seek to enhance own outcomes, either in an absolute sense (individualists) or in a relative or comparative sense (competitors) (e.g., De Cremer & Van Lange, 2001; Parks, 1994; Smeesters, Warlop, Van Avermaet, Corneille, & Yzerbyt, 2003).

Past research has revealed that relative to proselves, prosocials exhibit greater cooperation toward others, expect greater cooperation from others, and tend to interpret others' behavior more strongly in terms of morality and fairness (e.g., Beggan, Messick, & Allison, 1988; De Dreu & Boles, 1998; Liebrand, Jansen, Rijken, & Suhre, 1986; McClintock & Liebrand, 1988; Smeesters et al., 2003; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994). Also, prosocials are more likely to exhibit reciprocity and concern with fairness in outcome distributions, whereas proselves to a larger extent try to benefit from the cooperation actually displayed by others or expected from others (Kuhlman & Marshello, 1975; Van Lange, 1999). Complementary research on response latencies, priming, emotion, and judgment underscores these findings in dyads and larger groups (e.g., Dehue, McClintock, & Liebrand, 1993; Stouten, De Cremer, & Van Dijk, 2005; Van Dijk, De Cremer, & Handgraaf, 2004).

While past research on social value orientation has yielded a wealth of findings, it is important to note that virtually all research has focused on the manner in which prosocials and proselves approach others, judge others, and respond to others when faced with situations that involve questions about distributive justice, that is, situations in which behavior directly shapes the—often tangible—outcomes for themselves and others. As a strong case in point, the relation between social value orientation and procedural justice has been unexplored. Given that empirical research indicated that distributive and procedural justice are distinct types of justice judgments (for overviews, see Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Colquitt, 2001; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), scientific knowledge on the relation between social value orientation and justice may be extended substantially by examining how proselves and prosocials differ in their responses to experiences of procedural justice. By investigating how social value orientation predicts people's responses when they are subjected to procedurally fair versus unfair decision-making procedures (i.e., procedural justice effects), the present research has the major purpose to increase scientists' understanding of people's reactions to decision-making procedures in at least two important ways.

First, examining the relation between social value orientation and experiences of procedural justice illuminates the egocentric versus prosocial nature of procedural justice phenomena. Specifically, using variations of a paradigm that is commonly used in the procedural justice literature, we study whether procedural justice effects are stronger—or less strong—for individuals with proself orientations (who primarily value outcomes for self) than for individuals with prosocial orientation (who value outcomes for self and others as well as equality in outcomes). If fairness-based responses to decision-making procedures are primarily inspired by self-oriented motives, then these responses should be especially pronounced for individuals with a proself orientation. Conversely, if fairness-based responses to decision-making procedures are primarily inspired by moral principles that dictate a concern for both self and others, then these responses should be especially pronounced for individuals with a prosocial orientation. As such, the present research seeks to contribute to existing theories of justice and social decision making by illuminating the motivational basis for procedural justice effects.

Second, the present research may help bridge the gap between procedural justice and personality differences in understanding why some people may be more sensitive and responsive to variations in procedural justice than others (cf. Colquitt et al., 2006). As noted earlier, social value orientation is predictive of cognitions,

affect, behavior and interactions in social dilemma tasks and related outcome-relevant situations. As such, investigating how social value orientation predicts people's reactions to decision-making procedures would provide insights into how individuals can be predisposed to respond to procedural justice or injustice in certain ways. These considerations led us to conduct a series of studies in which we explored how prosocials and proselves differ in their reactions to decision-making procedures. In the following, we introduce the specifics of the current research and present our hypotheses.

Procedural justice and social value orientation

One of the most typical procedural justice phenomena is the finding that people are influenced substantially by the extent to which they regard the decision-making procedures that they are subjected to as fair or unfair: Decision-making procedures that are regarded as fair exert a positive influence on numerous perceptions, emotions, and behaviors when compared with decision-making procedures that are regarded as unfair (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992). An illustration of these procedural justice effects can be found in the effects of voice procedures: People evaluate decision-making procedures that allow them an opportunity to voice an opinion as more fair than procedures that deny them such an opportunity (Folger, 1977; Folger, Rosenfield, Grove, & Corkran, 1979). As a consequence, voice procedures (as opposed to no-voice procedures) increase people's satisfaction ratings, decrease negative affect, lead people to evaluate their relation with decision-makers more positively, increase people's willingness to accept decisions, decrease people's intentions to take revenge, and increase their effort on behalf of the decision-making authority (e.g., Brockner et al., 1998; Greenberg & Folger, 1983; Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos, 2001, 2003; Van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998; Van Prooijen, Karremans, & Van Beest, 2006; Van Prooijen, Van den Bos, & Wilke, 2004, 2005). In the current research, we refer to perceptions, emotions, and behaviors that are commonly assessed in procedural justice research and that tend to be related to perceived procedural justice as people's *fairness-based responses*. The positive effects of voice as opposed to no-voice procedures on people's fairness-based responses are very robust findings that replicate across a variety of methodologies and samples (Brockner et al., 1998; Lind et al., 1990; Tyler, 1987; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001).

Decision-making procedures (such as voice or no-voice procedures) constitute actions on part of decision-making authorities that have direct implications for the well-being of recipients (Tyler & Lind, 1992; see also Koper, Van Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1993). As such, explanations of procedural justice effects have largely focused on the beneficial versus detrimental consequences of decision-making procedures for the self (Van Prooijen et al., 2006). Explanations of procedural justice effects can broadly be categorized into two classes: instrumental and non-instrumental explanations. Early instrumental explanations emphasized that people value procedures that allow them a certain amount of process control, that is, control over the manner in which decisions are taken (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). According to these instrumental explanations, people desire process control because it enables them to influence decisions, increasing the likelihood for positive outcomes and decreasing the likelihood for negative outcomes. Thus, instrumental explanations proposed that fair procedures are functional to serve people's instrumental desire for decisions that are beneficial to themselves.

In the mid-1980s researchers suggested that people care about fairness in a decision-making process for both instrumental and non-instrumental reasons (Lind et al., 1990; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985). These non-instrumental concerns are illuminated in

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