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0521802156 - The Justice Motive in Everyday Life
Edited by Michael Ross and Dale T. Miller
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INTRODUCTION

1. Overview of the Volume

MICHAEL ROSS AND DALE T. MILLER

This volume begins with an intellectual history written by Mel Lerner, to whom the book is dedicated. Mel is a major founder of the study of justice in psychology. In addition to his many theoretical and empirical contributions, Mel has done more than anyone to promote the psychological study of justice. He founded the International Society for Justice Research and has organized countless international conferences on justice. He also was founding editor of both *Social Justice Research* and Plenum Press's series on Critical Issues in Justice. It is sometimes claimed that the research interests of psychologists reflect their personalities and values. This is certainly true of Mel. His work is fueled by his own abhorrence of injustice and compassion for the unfortunate.

As a social psychologist, Mel has much in common with Kurt Lewin. Like Lewin, Mel believes that psychologists can and should conduct research on issues of critical social significance. Like Lewin, Mel also believes that capturing socially and personally meaningful phenomena in the laboratory requires high-impact experiments. Mel's conviction that experiments can illuminate important psychological processes, while strong, is no stronger than his conviction that this goal can be realized only if the experimental setting engages participants. The fact that he has the sensibilities of an experimentalist and is a consummate experimental craftsman has not kept Mel from leaving the laboratory when he has found himself interested in the role of justice processes in real-world contexts. His research on people's reactions to unemployment and corporate downsizing and on people's reactions to the competing demands of family caregiving are cases in point.

His work on the antecedents and consequences of the justice motive has powerfully influenced the contributors to this volume. The geographical distribution, scholarly backgrounds, and seniority of the

contributors evince the scope of Mel's impact. The contributors hail from Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Their research disciplines include psychology, business, and law. Some of the contributors are leading senior scholars in their fields; others are quite early in their careers. To a person, they share Mel's passionate interest in justice and his belief that psychology can contribute to the understanding and solution of major social problems.

The chapters in the volume are organized into five sections. The chapters in the first section concern theoretical perspectives on the justice motive. Although their approaches and emphases vary, collectively the authors address four fundamental questions. Does the justice motive reflect a genuine concern for justice or a concern with protecting one's own interests? How does the justice motive emerge during the development of societies or of individuals? What is the relation between justice motivation and other important motivations (e.g., moral motivation)? When does the justice motive promote prosocial or harmful behaviors? These are big questions, but Mel has always inspired others to tackle big issues, as he has consistently done so himself. In addressing these questions, the authors expand on themes that Lerner originally expounded in his theoretical analyses of the justice motive.

Leo Montada asks why people apply standards of justice. Although Montada acknowledges that individuals sometimes refer to justice only for tactical reasons, he notes that justice concerns are paramount in many situations. Justice has a prescriptive function, and people are often obliged to observe the norms of justice, regardless of their self-interest. He finds evidence for this prescriptive function of justice in his studies of the responses of privileged individuals to less fortunate others, such as poor people in the Third World. He also describes some of the important psychological phenomena that result from trade-offs between justice concerns and self-interest, including victim blame and "free riding."

Riël Vermunt adopts a historical approach to show how justice concerns emerge from struggles among groups in a society over the allocation of resources. He argues that although the emergence of Protestantism had a major impact on the development of the justice motive, this motive can be traced to even earlier social movements and historical occurrences.

José-Miguel Fernández-Dols focuses on a paradox that renders the study of the justice motive fascinating to many researchers and theo-

rists. As Lerner has observed, the justice motive is a double-edged sword. It can promote heinous as well as virtuous actions. Fernandez-Dols examines the dark side of good moral intentions. He details how a concern for the welfare of native North Americans led the Spanish crown to draft laws that had horrendous consequences for the intended beneficiaries. Fernández-Dols concludes his discussion of the unfortunate consequences of good moral intentions with an analysis of the behavioral and psychological consequences of “perverse norms.” Perverse norms are formal standards that are widely perceived to be legitimate but that are transgressed, for various reasons, by many members of a social group (e.g., speeding laws).

In the final chapter in this section, Daniel Batson argues that justice and moral motivation should be kept theoretically distinct. After carefully defining the different forms of each motivation, Batson examines their developmental origins and psychological implications. He presents an analysis of moral hypocrisy, a motivational state in which people strive to appear moral while circumventing the costs to self of actually being moral. Batson also clarifies the difference between moral motivation and the motivation *not* to be immoral.

The chapters in the second section relate the justice motive to approach and avoidance reactions to victims. Approach responses include apology and restitution; avoidance responses include derogation and mistreatment of victims. Hafer describes experiments that extend previous research by Lerner and test fundamental aspects of his theory. Lerner demonstrated that observers who could not or would not help innocent victims disparaged the victims. He suggested that the injustice of undeserved victimization threatened observers’ belief in a just world; they maintained their belief by inferring that the sufferers deserved their fate. Lerner did not provide *direct* evidence, however, that injustice per se is threatening or motivates the derogation of innocent victims. In a series of experiments, Carolyn Hafer offers evidence of these missing links. Her findings provide strong confirmation for Lerner’s analysis. She also empirically examines the function of the need to believe in a just world. Hafer links this belief to people’s desire to invest in long-term goals and to achieve these objectives through just means. Hafer’s functional analysis supports Lerner’s linkage of belief in a just world to a “personal contract.”

In their chapter, Barbara Reichle and Manfred Schmitt examine how observers attempt to restore justice when confronted with long-standing social inequalities that challenge their belief in a just world.

Reichle and Schmitt report the results of two large-scale longitudinal surveys conducted on representative samples of German respondents. Respondents are asked to react to injustices suffered by members of their own social group and by members of more distant groups. Although the findings are complex, Reichle and Schmitt identify some intriguing and theoretically important patterns.

The authors of the final two chapters in this section examine reactions to victimization in the workplace. As Hermann Steensma documents in his chapter, violence in the workplace is all too common. Even relatively mild forms of workplace aggression, such as bullying, can have detrimental effects on the psychological and physical health of the victims, as well as serious financial costs for organizations. Steensma presents studies that examine the causes and effects of physical violence and bullying in the workplace. He relates his findings to a variety of justice-related issues, including the differing reactions of victims of, and onlookers to, transgressions.

Robert Folger and S. Douglas Pugh study harmdoers' reactions to their victims. Their harmdoers are managers who lay off capable employees for financial reasons. Folger and Pugh discuss how justice-related motivations lead many managers to avoid, disparage, and psychologically abuse employees whom they have unfairly dismissed. Folger and Pugh describe the costs of such unmerited treatment to the individuals and organizations involved.

The authors of chapters in the third section examine variables that influence whether or not observers will offer help to people in need. Hans-Werner Bierhoff studies individual differences in belief in a just world and feelings of social responsibility. He identifies two components of social responsibility – moral fulfillment (e.g., being a dependable friend) and adherence to social rules (e.g., obeying the law). He proposes that adherence to social rules predicts prosocial behavior and that high believers in a just world tend to follow social prescriptions.

Ramona Bobocel and her coauthors examine people's reactions to policies designed to remedy social injustice in the workplace. They probe why such policies inevitably encounter strong backing from some observers and strong antagonism from others. Their research demonstrates the importance of people's justice judgments. Both opposition to, and support for, social policies aimed at ameliorating injustice may reflect people's concern for justice.

Steve Blader and Tom Tyler focus on empathic emotion and justice judgments. They note that empathy and justice concerns can indepen-

dently affect prosocial behavior. They also describe the reciprocal influence of empathy and justice concerns. Empathic emotion can affect justice judgments, and justice judgments sometimes influence the experience of empathic emotion.

Janusz Reykowski uses interview data to assess the motives of rescuers of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. He asks the question: What makes some people voluntarily carry out risky altruistic actions on behalf of members of an out-group? Among other factors, he identifies the importance of empathy and judgments of deserving. He notes that the perception of injustice, by itself, is not a sufficient condition for remedial action. To engage in risky altruistic action, people must conclude that the injustice occurs in their own world and to people who are similar to themselves.

In the final chapter in this section, Joseph de Rivera and his colleagues also examine the factors that lead some people to act when they perceive injustice, although in this instance the personal costs of helping are low. Students who favor a nuclear test ban are given an opportunity to argue for their beliefs by writing a letter to their congressperson. De Rivera and his colleagues conclude that moral outrage motivates such protest actions.

The authors of the chapters in the fourth section study people's reactions to transgressors. The chapters by Neil Vidmar and John Darley concern retributive justice. When a transgression occurs, how do people decide whether and how much to punish the harmdoer? Vidmar addresses this question by exploring the functions of retribution. On the basis of field studies of criminal cases, he offers the counterintuitive proposal that individuals punish transgressions committed by members of their own group more severely than they would penalize offenses by people belonging to an out-group. Vidmar suggests that transgressions by in-group members are particularly likely to threaten community values; punitive reactions serve to reaffirm those values.

Darley explores such fundamental questions as what constitutes a crime and why people feel a need to punish transgressors. He proposes various answers derived from philosophical and legal sources. He then uses field and laboratory experiments to examine the merits of these answers. Darley concludes, for example, that we punish in order to inflict a penalty proportional to the magnitude of the crime, rather than to rehabilitate the offender or to deter others.

Norman Feather contrasts the concepts of entitlement and deservingness. He uses deservingness to refer to judgments about the

appropriateness of outcomes. He relates entitlement to a framework of formal (e.g., legal requirements) or informal rules. He presents a model that outlines consistencies and conflicts between deservingness and entitlement. The model can help explain people's judgments about how much to punish a harmdoer.

John Ellard and his colleagues experimentally examine situations and personal dispositions that lead onlookers to characterize harmdoers as evil. They note that judgments of evilness depend, in part, on the motivations and cognitions of the beholder. The authors suggest that by demonizing harmdoers, perceivers may fail to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that lead people to inflict terrible injury on others.

The authors of the chapters in the final section discuss people's justice-based reactions to their own fates. Claudia Dalbert and Jürgen Maes correlate individual differences in belief in a just world with students' reactions to school. Dalbert and Maes predict and find an interesting set of associations. For example, students with a high belief in a just world feel more fairly treated by their teachers and are more likely to attribute their achievements internally. Internal attributions may serve the function of causing students to view themselves as deserving their outcomes.

Faye Crosby and Stacy Ropp begin by describing a well-replicated finding first reported some years ago by Crosby: Employed women who are objectively the victims of sex discrimination with respect to salary tend to report no awareness that they are personally disadvantaged. By contrast, these same women readily acknowledge that employed women, in general, do suffer from sex discrimination. Crosby and Ropp discuss the motivational and cognitive factors that lead individuals to deny that they are victimized (including belief in a just world). They also describe recent interviews with female faculty members at Stanford University who brought complaints against the university for sex discrimination. On the basis of information gleaned from the interviews, Crosby and Ropp speculate about the conditions that lead women to recognize and fight injustice in the workplace.

Jason Sunshine and Larry Heuer report a field test of the justice theory prediction that feelings of deservingness strongly affect people's satisfaction with their outcomes. A survey of individuals who had experienced a recent encounter with a New York City police officer revealed support for justice theory. Not surprisingly, most people prefer to be treated respectfully by the police. As predicted, however,

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the impact of favorable treatment on judgments of procedural fairness is greater when respondents' notions of entitlement are high rather than low.

In the final chapter, Allan Lind argues that theorists have devoted insufficient attention to the functions and cognitive bases of fairness judgments. He suggests that people use their assessment of the overall fairness of their treatment to decide how much of their time and resources to invest in a relationship. Lind proposes that people construct such overall fairness judgments rapidly; they then use these judgments without much reevaluation to guide their decisions and behavior. He describes research that supports his theory, as well as the practical implications of thinking about fairness judgments in this manner.

2. Pursuing the Justice Motive

MELVIN J. LERNER

I have spent the greater part of my life as a psychologist trying to understand why people care about justice. Where does the justice motive come from, and how does it appear in people's lives during the normal course of events as well as during critical periods? From the outset I thought these were the most fascinating, important questions one could imagine. And I was convinced that the commonly available answers, based on the internalization and implementation of the "social contract," were, at best, only partially true, and if taken as the complete gospel terribly misleading.

It seemed obvious to me that people learn many social rules and that societies have numerous norms and regulations, but that the ones associated with justice have a special status at both the individual and societal levels. It is easy enough to demonstrate, as ethno-methodologists have, that people walk around with an acute, but often tacit, sensitivity to their own and other's entitlements – what they deserve, what they are entitled to from x or y. The relative deprivation literature suggests that no amount of "desired resources" can bring satisfaction to people who believe they deserve more, and that no amount of deprivation can lead to outrage and resentment if people believe they are entitled to no more than they have. At the macro-level of analysis, at least in Western societies, justice has a special status superseding all other norms and values. The requirements of justice have the power to legitimize and, at times, to demand the sacrifice of liberty, lives, and happiness. No other secular norm or value has comparable power.

Obviously, then, there is something fundamentally important about the theme of justice in personal lives and interpersonal relations. Assuming this to be so, any satisfactory psychosocial theory of the origins and manifestations of justice, must, at a minimum, provide a

compelling explanation for this pervasive and unique power. Such a theory would need to contemplate psychological processes to explain why most people become committed to deserving what they want and why they become upset if other people's outcomes do not correspond to what they perceive them to deserve.

I have had two hunches about this, and both remain sufficiently compelling to me that I will try here, once again, to persuade you of their plausibility, if not of their validity.

The Personal Contract: Giving Up the Pleasure Principle for the Reality Principle

The first I have termed the "personal contract," not only to contrast it with the more familiar "social contract," but also because this term implies the operative psychological structure and dynamics.

My best guess was based on the work of Freud and others who had observed that children typically learn to delay indulging the immediate gratification of their desires and instead engage in time and tension binding so that they can ultimately obtain more desirable outcomes. In order to do that, I thought, the child would have to participate in the more or less conscious self-dialogue of making a promise to him- or herself that the anticipated delayed outcomes would, in fact, occur, and that they would be worth the costs of both the sacrifice of immediate pleasures and the necessary additional efforts. In order to adopt this "reality principle," the rational part of the child controls the impulses to seek immediate gratification by adopting what I termed the "personal contract." Most children will eventually utilize this personal contract as the organizing principle for much of their lives. However, even as adults, while most people are strongly invested in maintaining and living by their personal contracts, the desire for immediate gratification does not disappear. It remains in the background, ready to reassert itself, especially when the person is confronted with evidence that foregoing the immediate gratification and engaging in additional efforts may not lead to the desired outcome. If the "contract" is not viable, then why not just do what feels good at the time?

As a consequence, as long as the rational self is committed to long-term gains, the person must avoid any events that reduce the ability to control and channel such impulses toward the more beneficial courses of action. Clearly, evidence that an individual or another person is deprived, or will be deprived, of what he or she deserves threatens the