Knitting Together an Elephant:

An Integrative Approach to Understanding the Psychology of Justice Reasoning

Linda J. Skitka

Nicholas P. Aramovich

Brad L. Lytle

&

Edward G. Sargis

University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract

Why do people care about justice? How do people reason about what is fair or unfair? To answer these questions, justice researchers have developed theories of justice reasoning based on their assumptions about people's needs, desires, and motivations. For example, theories of social exchange assume people are rationally self-interested and will evaluate fairness through the lens of maximizing rewards. Alternatively, theories of procedural fairness assume people fundamentally need to belong to groups and will focus on the fairness of procedures as an indication of their worth to the group. Moral theories of justice reasoning assume people have fundamental beliefs about right and wrong and that people evaluate fairness in accordance with these beliefs. This chapter reviews these three theoretical perspectives and integrates them into a contingency theory of justice. The contingency theory of justice posits that how people define fairness depends on the current perspective of the perceiver (material, social, or moral perspective). Specifically, we propose that the perspective and motivations of the perceiver impact the factors people use to decide whether something is fair or unfair. The contingency theory of justice can account for the complexity and flexibility of people's justice reasoning, and how justice judgments vary both between and within persons over time. Additionally, the theory suggests that an important area of future research inquiry is exploring how people cope with differences in their fairness judgments, and how they resolve conflicts and arrive at consensus that everyone can agree is fair.

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Theories that have attempted to explain why people care about fairness and the factors that people use to decide whether fairness has been achieved have a rich and vibrant history dating back to the earliest philosophers. Moreover, over time, modern social psychological inquiry into questions of how people decide whether something is fair or unfair, and the consequences of these judgments, has already cycled through a number of different major shifts in theoretical focus. One goal of the current chapter is to provide a brief historical overview of psychological justice theory and research focusing on three major metaphors that have guided various shifts in research focus and attention: (1) *homo economicus*, that is, a metaphor of human motivation focused on what people "get" out of social relationships, (2) *homo socialis*, that is, a metaphor of human motivation focused less on material goals and outcomes, and instead on people's need for status, standing, and to belong, and (3) a relatively new metaphor for thinking about fairness, *homo moralis*, that is, that people are sometimes motivated to enforce or live up to their core conceptions of moral right and wrong (cf. Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2008). To a considerable degree, justice theorists present these different metaphors for human motivation as competing, rather than complementary, accounts for what people most care about, and therefore as competing conceptions of the factors people weight most heavily when deciding whether something is fair or unfair.

A second and more ambitious goal of this paper is to generate a more general model of justice reasoning that integrates these different perspectives into a greater theoretical whole. The working premise of our contingency model of justice is that people are both flexible and complex, and that human psychology is not driven by single motives or frames of reference.

Sometimes people will be concerned about maximizing material gain; other times they will be more concerned about their social status and standing in the group; yet other times, they will be concerned about neither of these things, and will be motivated by living up to or defending personal conceptions of the moral good. How they define what is fair or unfair, and the factors that will weigh most heavily in their fairness judgments, will vary as a function of which perceptual frame of reference they currently see as most relevant to the situation at hand. Before going into further details about the contingency theory of justice we propose here, we first provide some historical context and background for it.

Metaphors Guiding Justice Research:

A Brief Historical Overview

Research in the psychological and social sciences is often guided by initial assumptions, or guiding metaphors, about human nature (Lakatos, 1978). Guiding metaphors strongly influence what is to be observed and scrutinized, what questions are considered interesting and important, how these questions are to be structured, as well as how the results of scientific investigations are interpreted (Kuhn, 1962). As briefly mentioned earlier, one can argue that various programs of justice research have tended to be guided by different assumptions about the key motives that drive human behavior, and therefore that shape how people think about and why they care about fairness. We briefly review three of these programs of theory and research below.

Homo Economicus: Justice as Social Exchange

The metaphor of *homo economicus,* that is, the idea that people are rationally self-interested utility maximizers, represented a hardcore assumption of classic social exchange theories, as well as early theories of distributive justice (e.g., Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Walster, Walster, Berscheid, & Austin, 1978). These theories assume that people approach life as a series

of negotiated exchanges, and that human relationships and interactions are best understood by applying subjective cost-benefit analyses and comparisons of alternatives. These theories posit that issues of equity and justice arise whenever two or more persons exchange valued resources, whether these resources consist of goods, services, money, or even love and affection. Although based on an assumption that people are rationally self-interested, these theories also propose that properly socialized persons learn that to maximize rewards in the long run, they need to understand and adhere to norms of fairness in their relationships with others (e.g., Walster et al., 1978). Groups maximize their collective gain by evolving accepted systems for fairly apportioning the costs and benefits of social cooperation among members. Therefore, these theories propose that (a) groups evolve norms about fair exchange, (b) groups generally reward members who treat others according to these norms, and punish those (i.e., incur greater costs to) who do not, and (c) participating in unfair exchange causes psychological distress, that in turns motivates attempts to restore fairness (Walster et al., 1978). Not surprisingly, justice theories that use economic exchange as a guiding theoretical metaphor have primarily inspired studies that examine people's reactions to what they "get" out of a given encounter or relationship, and how perceptions of either under- or over-benefit leads people to change either their costs or benefits to restore a psychological sense of balance or fairness.

Considerable research is consistent with the notion that people do tend to track relative costs and benefits, and these cost-benefit calculations influence perceptions of fairness and a host of fairness-related behavior and reactions. For example, people (a) attend to and care about how much they contribute to and get out of their social relationships (Walster et al., 1978; Konow, 1996), including what they contribute to and get out of their closest and most intimate relationships, such as dating and marriage (Rusbult, 1983; Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994), (b) take

into account deservingness criteria (e.g., relative contributions) when deciding how to fairly

allocate resources to others (see Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Cook, 1975 for reviews), (c) incur

costs to punish someone who violates standards of fair allocation behavior (e.g., Fehr &

Fischbacher, 2004; Fehr & Schmidt, 1999), and (d) perceive both getting more and less than

others do for similar effort to be unfair, and will change their levels of contribution to a

relationship if they feel either under- or over-benefited (see Walster et al., 1978, for a review).

In summary, a vast amount of research is consistent with the notion that people care about the

fairness of distributions of costs and benefits, and people use notions of economic exchange to

understand the fairness of their social relationships.

Homo Socialis: Needs for Status, Standing, and Belonging

A shift in the metaphor that guided justice theorizing and research in social psychology

occurred during the early 1980s with the introduction of the group value model of procedural

fairness. The guiding metaphor of this program of research was the notion that people more often

seek to satisfy relational motives, such as needs to feel valued, respected, and included in

important social groups, than pursue material self-interest; that is, *homo economicus* yielded to

homo socialis. Therefore, research began to focus more on leaders' or authorities' behaviors and

decision making and how these affected recipients' reasoning about fairness, and focused less on

outcome distributions and the factors that determined them (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler &

Lind, 1992). By using "need to belong" as a lens for examining what mattered in the psychology

of justice, researchers broadened their understanding of how and why people make fairness

judgments. For example, researchers identified the pervasive influence of procedural treatment

(such as variations in opportunities for voice, being treated with dignity and respect, and freedom

from bias) on perceptions of fairness, working from the assumption that procedural treatment

provides more relevant information for judging one's relative standing than do material outcomes.

Considerable research is consistent with the *homo socialis* prediction that procedural treatment and people's concern with needs to feel valued and respected as group members influences perceptions of fairness and a host of fairness-related behavior and reactions. For example, people (a) spontaneously mention issues about treatment and lack of respect more than they do specific outcomes when asked to recall specific instances of injustice or unfairness (Lupfer, Weeks, Doan, & Houston, 2000; Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer, 1990), (b) use procedural treatment and not just decision outcomes when evaluating the fairness of authorities and institutions (Lind & Tyler, 1988; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992), (c) become more committed to organizations when they believe they are treated well, even if they receive non-preferred outcomes (Greenberg 1990; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Tyler, 1989), and (d) identify more strongly with procedurally fair groups and authorities, which in turn relates to a host of other consequences, such as cooperation with the rules and going the extra mile to serve the groups' interests (see Tyler & Bader, 2003, for a review). In summary, a large amount of research is consistent with the notion that people's fairness reasoning is shaped by more than the material or concrete outcomes they receive from a social exchange. People also care about how decisions are made and the degree to which decision makers signal that people are valued and respected members of the group. Researchers may not have discovered the importance of procedures and treatment to justice judgments had they remained solely committed to understanding justice only from the perspective of economic exchange.

Homo Moralis: Moral Authenticity and Conceptions of the Good

Now another shift seems to be underway. A number of theorists and researchers have turned their attention to the role that moral concerns play in people's justice reasoning and behavior (e.g., Brosnan & de Wall, 2003; Cropanzano, Bryne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; de Waal, 1996; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004; Folger, 2001; Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005; Skitka & Houston, 2001; Skitka et al., in press). Theorists across a host of different disciplinary traditions seem to be converging on the insight that managing the particular challenges of group living (e.g., aggression, competition, cooperation, deception, and the undermining role of self-interest) led to adaptation through natural selection of the human capacities to care about morality independent of their self-interest and belongingness needs. People who learned to manage the balance between competition and cooperation, develop conceptions of moral right and wrong, and punish those who broke contracts or other justice arrangements, had a clear adaptive advantage over those who failed to develop traits that allowed them to manage these challenges (see Robinson, Kurzban, & Jones, 2007 for a detailed review).

The connections between morality and justice are also clear in other theories and schools of thought as well. A working definition of justice and what it means to people could reasonably start with morality, righteousness, virtues, and ethics rather than with self-interest, belongingness, or other non-moral motivations (Skitka & Bauman, in press). For example, Plato's conception of individual justice was distinctively moral. Plato considered actions to be just if they sustained or were consonant with ethics and morality, rather than baser motives, such as appetites (e.g., lust, greed; Jowett, 1999). In addition to having strong roots in classical philosophy, the connection between conceptions of justice and morality has been a consistent theme in moral development theory and research. For example, Kohlberg's theory of moral

development (e.g., Kohlberg, 1973) posits that justice is an essential feature of moral reasoning, and that "justice operations" are the processes people use to resolve disputes between conflicting moral claims. From this developmental perspective, people progress toward moral maturity as they become more competent and sophisticated in their approach to justice operations. In short, an alternative guiding metaphor in justice research and closely related areas is *homo moralis,* that is, the notion that people have an intrinsic propensity for caring about and acting on conceptions of morality.

Although a newer area of empirical inquiry than research inspired by the *homo economicus* or *socialis* metaphors, the notion that people's sense of morality or immorality affects how they reason about fairness has received some empirical support. For example, when people's outcome preferences are experienced as strong moral convictions, rather than as equally strong but non-moral preferences, people's perceptions of outcome fairness and decision acceptance are shaped more by whether outcomes are consistent with perceivers' moral priorities than by whether authorities are perceived as acting in procedurally proper or improper ways (e.g., Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002), or whether authorities' behavior has been experimentally manipulated to be high or low in decision and treatment quality (e.g., Bauman & Skitka, under review). People also use whether decision outcomes are consistent with their personal moral standards to judge the legitimacy and fairness of authorities (see Skitka et al., in press, for a review). For example, Skitka (2006) found that people's pre-decision moral convictions about the appropriateness of physician-assisted suicide were stronger predictors of their subsequent perceptions of the outcome fairness and decision acceptance of a U.S. Supreme Court decision than was pre-decision perceptions of the legitimacy, procedural fairness, or their trust of the Supreme Court. Moreover, the degree to which the Court ruled consistently or inconsistently

with people's moral convictions also predicted how legitimate, procedurally fair, and trustworthy the Court was perceived as being after the decision.

The guiding metaphors of *homo economicus, socialis*, and *moralis* have each been useful for theory and hypothesis generation, and each has provided a frame for thinking about how and why people might care about justice. In turn, each has led to testable hypotheses. Moreover, each perspective has received considerable support. That said, each metaphor in itself is limited in scope and range. Justice researchers guided by one or another metaphor may therefore be like the poet John Godfrey Saxe's blind men of Indostan, who each examined a different part of an elephant and therefore came to different conclusions about the fundamental character of "elephantness" ("it is very like a tree," "a wall," or "a snake"). The tree, wall, and snake descriptions are each accurate but limited descriptions of an elephant (its leg, body, and trunk). Similarly, justice researchers guided by the *homo economicus, socialis*, and *moralis* metaphors have found considerable evidence consistent with their predictions and claims, but may provide a limited view of the total "justice elephant." We turn next to (a) an attempt to "knit together" these different conceptions of the justice elephant into a conceptual whole, (b) provide some background for why this integration makes particular sense in terms of what we know more broadly about social psychology and social cognition, and (c) explore some of the implications of taking a more integrative, contingency-based approach to understanding the psychology of justice.

Knitting Together the Justice Elephant:

Introducing a Contingency Theory of Justice

We accept the validity of the empirical research conducted within each of these different programs of research. People do approach justice from the perspective of economic exchange

and worry about what they get. People also approach justice from the perspective of a need to belong, to feel valued, and care about treatment and procedures, in addition to the fairness of material outcomes. However, people sometimes think they know the right or wrong outcome, and this certainty can lead them to focus on whether the right outcome is achieved, to the relative neglect of the how that outcome is achieved. What is missing is a clear overarching theoretical framework that is consistent with each of these seemingly inconsistent conclusions about the critical foundations of the psychology of justice. A theoretical perspective that could account for these discrepancies and knit together a coherent theoretical "whole elephant" is a contingent one: How people define what is fair or unfair and the factors that weigh most strongly in predicting fairness judgments and behavior depends on the current perspective of the perceiver. Which set of motivational concerns, and therefore what factors they weight most heavily in a given fairness judgment, will importantly depend on *which* set of motivational concerns currently is most important or cognitively accessible to them in a given situation (cf. Deutsch, 1985; Lerner, 1977).

Shifting From Competing Metaphors to Contingencies

We argue that people's justice reasoning is likely to be contingently shaped by at least three major categories of motivational concerns; that is, the *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* motivational concerns already described. According to our contingency theory of justice (which is an updated version of the accessible identity model, or AIM, proposed by Skitka, 2003[1])

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[1] One major difference between the AIM and contingency model proposed here is the relative emphasis on identity as a foundation for how justice contingencies are stored in memory, and therefore the degree to which identity activation is a necessary, rather than a sufficient, cause of activation of different contingencies of needs or goals. The AIM proposed that these conceptions were stored in close connections with the material, social, and moral senses of identity. The contingency model acknowledges that the self may be one of any number of possible ways these needs and goals may be organized in memory, but considers the necessary versus sufficient role of identity as a more open and testable question, rather than a core foundation of the theory. We discuss these differences in some detail later in the chapter.

various justice prototypes, schemas, or norms are likely to be stored in memory in close

association with people's *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* goals and needs. Therefore, we posit

that conceptions of justice are partially dependent upon other goals simultaneously pursued and

currently activated in people's working memory. How people think about fairness will therefore

contingently depend on whether perceivers are currently working from an *economicus, socialis,*

or *moralis* perspective. Moreover, people's normative expectations about what constitutes justice

in any given situation will depend—that is, be contingent on—whether they see the situation as

relevant to their own and others' *economicus, socialis,* or *moralis* needs and goals.

The Economicus Contingency

Material goals and concerns refer to people's desire to satisfy their basic needs, such as for

food, shelter, clothing, and so on, as well as their desire to accumulate possessions, property, and

wealth as valuable ends in themselves rather than in the service of needs for social status (e.g.,

Belk, 1988; James, 1890). Materialistic goals and concerns are among the most normatively

"self-interested" or "selfish" of human motivations. That said, considerable research indicates

that pure self-interest and a Hobbesian war of all against all is avoided by people's acceptance of

the need for fairness in economic and material exchange (e.g., Lane, 1986; Walster et al., 1978).

An *economicus* perspective is most likely to be activated in situations when (a) people's

basic material needs are perceived as not being met or are under threat (Maslow, 1993), (b) when

the social situation presents a real or perceived potential for material loss or gain, (c) the

relational context is defined in market pricing terms, for example, people are involved in

negotiating prices, wages, or the exchange of fungible resources (Fiske, 1991), (d) the goal of the

social system is to maximize productivity (Deutsch, 1985; Lerner, 1977), and (e) other goals or

concerns are not particularly salient. Proportionality of entitlements to contributions, or equity

rules, most frequently defines fairness in market contexts (e.g., Fiske, 1991; Lane, 1986; Rainwater, 1974; Walster et al., 1978) and therefore presumably when people's material concerns are especially salient and accessible in memory as well.

Consistent with some of the ideas just outlined, some research suggests that distributive justice concerns (i.e., whether outcomes are allocated in fair ways) emerge as stronger predictors of overall perceptions of organizational justice in cultures higher in materialism, whereas perceptions of interactional justice (i.e., interpersonal treatment, usually operationalized in terms of how authorities treat subordinates) are stronger predictors of overall perceptions of organizational justice in cultures lower in materialism (Kim & Leung, 2007). Also consistent with the notion that a *homo economicus* perspective is more likely to be dominant when basic material needs are not being met is the finding that higher levels of materialism are associated with lower levels of per capita gross national income (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995).

The relative salience of *economicus* goals and concerns will also shape which conceptions of procedural justice are likely to be salient or emphasized in a given situation. For example, Thibaut and Walker (1975) argued that one reason why people might care about procedural fairness is that it provides them with a real or perceived sense of process control over outcomes, something that serves people's material interests in the long run. Therefore, when material needs and goals are especially salient, people may define fairness more in terms of variables related with process control (e.g., voice, consistency, lack of bias) than variables that reflect relational concerns, such as whether people are treated with dignity and respect.

In summary, the contingency theory of justice makes a number of predictions about when material goals and concerns are especially likely to dominate people's justice reasoning, as well as some specific predictions about the kinds of justice considerations that are likely to be most

salient when people are focused on their own or others' material needs and goals. It is important

to point out that the contingency model does not predict that people will be solely concerned

about outcomes when material concerns loom larger in people's minds than either social or

moral concerns. Rather, the model predicts that when material motives are more highly

accessible to people than either their social or moral motivations, people will be more likely to

define fairness in terms of equitable outcomes, *and* in terms of procedures that maximize rather

than minimize process control.

The Socialis Contingency

In addition to having materialistic needs and goals, people also have strong needs for

connection and to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995)

that are typically expressed through their desire to find and maintain relationships with others

(Maslow, 1993). People's relational motives prompt concerns about being valued, respected, and

included in important social groups (de Cremer & Blader, 2006).

A *socialis* perspective is most likely to be activated in situations when (a) people's basic

material needs are already satisfied (Maslow, 1993), (b) needs to belong and for inclusion are not

being met and therefore are especially strong (de Cremer & Blader, 2006), (c) the social situation

poses a real or perceived potential for loss or gain in inclusion, social status, or respect, and/or

(d) the situation primes the need for, or goal of, maintaining group harmony and minimizing

conflict (e.g., Deutsch, 1985; Lerner, 1977).

Existing research suggests that when perceivers view a situation from a more *socialis* than

economicus perspective, they are more likely to define distributive justice according to norms

focused on need or equality than norms focused on contributions or inputs (Deutsch, 1975;

1985). For example, people primed with solidarity and group harmony goals (Deutsch, 1985), or

who are chronically higher in communal or interpersonal orientation (Major & Adams, 1983; Watts, Messé, & Vallacher, 1982) are more likely to allocate material rewards equally than equitably, and to rate equal allocations as more fair than equitable ones. Other research indicates that conceptions of distributive justice also vary as a function of the social role of the perceiver, and the degree to which roles prime relational concerns. For example, when one's social role as a parent is more highly activated than other roles or concerns, one is more likely to perceive allocations based on need as more fair than those based on equity or equality (Drake & Lawrence, 2000; Prentice & Crosby, 1987).

There is also evidence that indicates that the relative salience of *socialis* needs and concerns affects how people define procedural fairness. There is now vast amounts of research that supports the notion that people's justice reasoning is more strongly influenced by interactional treatment (e.g., the degree to which involved parties are treated with dignity and respect) when their relational needs are especially salient or high rather than low. For example, people's fairness reasoning is influenced more strongly by variations in interactional treatment when (a) social identity needs are particularly strong (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992, Study 1; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Platow & von Knippenberg, 2000; Wenzel, 2000), (b) perceivers are of low rather than high status (Chen, Brockner, & Greenberg, 2003), (c) status concerns are primed (van Prooijen, van den Bos, & Wilke, 2002), and (d) people are high rather than low in interdependent self-construal and interdependent self-construal is primed (Brockner, Chen, Mannix, Leung, & Skarlicki, 2000; Holmvall & Bobocel, 2008).

It should be noted that groups—like individuals—can also have material, social, and moral goals and needs. For example, one group might be concerned about building a stronger financial endowment; another group might be concerned about building its status or brand recognition; a

third might be concerned about protecting the environment. Therefore, taking a group

perspective does not mean that people will necessarily be more motivated by *socialis* than

economicus or *moralis* considerations. Taking a group rather than individual perspective has the

potential to prime any one of these needs and goals, depending on the primary concerns or goals

of the group (cf. Clayton & Opotow, 2003; Skitka, 2003). Which justice norms or values are

most likely to be activated when people take a more group perspective will depend on the

dominant goal-orientation of the group, and whether the group is focused on *economicus,*

socialis, or *moralis* needs and goals.

The Moralis Contingency

   Economicus and *socialis* motivations are primarily defined in terms of people's wants or

desires. People want to accumulate material goods and wealth; similarly, people want to belong,

and to have status and standing in important groups. In contrast to a motivational focus on wants

and desires, moral motivations are instead based more on feelings of "ought" and "should" and

desires to express and defend conceptions of basic right and wrong (Reed & Aquino, 2003;

Steele, 1988, 1999).

   There is some evidence that people are most likely to be motivated by moral concerns when

(a) their basic material and social needs are at least minimally satisfied (Maslow, 1993), (b)

moral intuitions or emotions are aroused (e.g., disgust, moral outrage, guilt, shame; Haidt, 2003),

(c) people see examples of undeserved harm, especially when the harm is intentionally inflicted

(Pittman & Darley, 2003), (d) there is a real or perceived threat to people's conception of the

moral order (e.g., Tetlock, 2002), (e) people's conception of themselves as morally authentic or

virtuous is questioned or undermined (Steele, 1988; 1999; Zhong & Lilijenquist, 2006), (f) the

social context primes concerns about the greater good or people's conceptions of virtue (e.g.,

Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freedman, 2007), or (g) when people are reminded of their mortality (e.g., Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002).

When people take a moral perspective to defining whether justice has been done, they are more likely to reason from a belief that duties and rights follow from the greater moral purpose behind rules, procedures, and authority dictates, rather than from the rules, procedures and authorities themselves (Kolhberg, 1973; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Morally based justice reasoning is not by definition anti-establishment or authority, it just is not *de facto* dependent on establishment, convention, rules, or authorities. Instead, a *moralis* perspective focuses people on the way they believe things "ought" or "should" be done. Therefore, when people take a *moralis* perspective, their fairness reasoning is less likely to be based on clearly defined normative rules or norms, but instead on people's gut intuitions of right or wrong (Haidt, 2001; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993) and aroused moral emotions (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006). Morality is also often defined in terms of "post-conventional" reasoning (Kohlberg, 1973; Rest et al., 1999), meaning that people's moral judgments are more likely to be somewhat idiosyncratic rather than rooted in strong and shared normative conventions. For example, not everyone will have their moral sensibilities aroused in the same context or in response to the same issues (see Lester, 2000; Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005, for more detail).

Research that has tested the implications of the *homo moralis* guiding metaphor for why people might care about fairness has revealed that when people's outcome preferences are held with strong rather than weak moral conviction, their judgments of the fairness of both outcomes and procedures tend to be shaped more by whether preferred outcomes are achieved than whether they are achieved by proper or improper procedures. For example, when people had a moral mandate about defendant guilt, punishment doled out by either due process or vigilantism

were seen as equally fair so long as they achieved the "correct" outcome (the guilty were punished, the innocent were not; Skitka & Houston, 2001). Similarly, whether authorities made the "morally correct" decision in a controversial custody case was a stronger predictor of post-resolutions perceptions of outcome fairness, decision acceptance, and procedural fairness than was pre-decision perceptions of procedural fairness (Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

The empirical discovery that the "objective" fairness of procedures does little to offset perceptions of unfairness when outcomes fail to match perceivers' *a priori* conceptions of basic right and wrong provides valuable insight into the intractability of any number of public policy debates (e.g., abortion, capital punishment, gay marriage). Maximally fair procedures and the imprimatur of legitimate authorities do little to offset people's sense of injustice when these procedures and authorities yield outcomes that people perceive as fundamentally "immoral" and "wrong" (see Skitka et al., in press, for a review).

In addition to being related to judgments of distributive and procedural fairness, there are also reasons to believe that moral considerations may play an especially important role in judgments of retributive justice. Specifically, Pittman and Darley (2003) argue that the magnitude of punishment assigned to transgressions depends on the magnitude of harm and the degree to which it is intended. Accidental harm arouses little moral emotion, and leads people to primarily focus on compensatory justice (perhaps because accidental harms are associated more with *economicus* concerns about restitution), whereas intentional harms are associated with increased levels of moral outrage, especially as they increase in severity and therefore represent more severe violations of people's conceptions of moral order. Increased moral outrage, in turn, predicts mores punitive reactions and sentencing goals. Consistent with the notion that emotion may be driving people's justice reasoning when morally engaged, Mullen and Skitka (2006)

found people's anger about "immoral" outcomes was a better predictor of people's justice reasoning than a host of alternative explanations, such as the degree to which people engaged in post hoc reappraisals of whether procedures were fair (e.g., motivated reasoning), or the degree to which they identified with the parties involved. Although the *moralis* program of justice research is still relatively new, existing research is consistent with the notion that fairness reasoning is influenced by the relative degree to which people have a moral stake in a given decision.

<div align="center">*Complementary Perspectives*</div>

In addition to integrating several different theoretical traditions, the contingency model of justice is also consistent with other major theories that propose that people's reasoning is likely to vary as a function of their motivational perspective. We turn to a brief review of these complementary theoretical perspectives in an attempt to further establish the reasonableness of taking a more contingent rather than competing motivational approach to understanding how people think about justice. These other theories do not focus their predictions on people's justice reasoning per se, but provide some independent validation that the *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* contingencies account for important differences in how people approach social judgments and interactions.

At least three other programs of theory and research are consistent with the contingency model's emphasis on the idea that people are fluid and flexible in how they approach and perceive their social worlds, and more specifically, that the *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* perspectives provide useful heuristics for organizing hypotheses about how people's goals and needs can influence how they make sense of their social worlds. We turn next to briefly review each of these perspectives: (a) self-schema and identity theories, (b) domain theory, and (c)

moral schema theory.

Self-schema and Identity Theories

Self-schema, categorization, and regulation theorists assume that self-definition is a dynamic and basic categorization process that has important implications for virtually all human thoughts, feelings, and behavior through its activation of personal strivings or goals (Emmons, 1986). Research on the self reveals that (a) people have multiple levels of self or identity, and therefore multiple layers of identity-relevant goals, (b) not all aspects of identity (and related goals) can be equally accessible at any given time, (c) the relative accessibility of a given identity (and therefore various goals) in the working self-concept or working memory is influenced by the perceiver's past experience, present expectations, in combination with cues from the social context, and (d) a shift in identity focus similarly shifts the accessibility of associated expectations, motives, values, knowledge, and goals (see Baumeister, 1999; Brewer, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Markus & Kunda, 1986; McGuire, McGuire, & Cheever, 1986; Showers, 2002; Turner, 1999, for relevant reviews and research).

Moreover, there tends to be a great deal of similarity in the structure or major categories of the self-concept across individuals (Bugental & Zelen, 1950; Rentsch & Heffner, 1994). For example, James (1890) proposed that the self was best classified into three overlapping but distinguishable categories: The material, social, and "spiritual[2]" aspects of self. James posited that people's sense of material self consists of the body and its adornment, their home and hearth, acquisitions, and accumulated wealth. People define and sustain their material self by endeavoring to acquire and maintain things like property, goods, and wealth (James, 1890). In

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[2] It should be noted that James (1890) was explicit that the spiritual self was not to be confused with religiosity. The term "spiritual" was meant to represent a more inner-directed and autonomous senses of self than either the extrinsically focused material self, or the socially constructed and focused social self, and therefore has sometimes been referred to by others as people's sense of "personal" or "moral" self (e.g., Skitka, 2003).

contrast, the social self is defined in terms of the groups people belong to, their social role in those groups, and the reflected appraisal or standing that they have vis-à-vis other group members. People have as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion they care. The goals and strivings of the social self are met by the roles that people have, seek out, and see as important, and through their ability to live up to the demands associated with those roles (e.g., Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Turner, 1985). James' spiritual identity refers to "the most enduring and intimate part of the self, that which we most verily seem to be…it is what we think of our ability to argue and discriminate, of our moral sensibility and conscience, of our indomitable will…" (p. 315). People's sense of personal or spiritual identity is shaped to a considerable degree by people's need to live up to internalized notions of moral "ought" and "should," and a desire to live up to both public and private conceptions of moral authenticity (Bandura, 1986; Higgins, 1987; Steele, 1988, 1999).

The overlap between James' (1890) categories of the self and the different motivational frameworks and guiding metaphors that have driven justice research are quite clear. There are relatively transparent similarities between the descriptions of *homo economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* and James' conception of material, social, and personal/spiritual aspects of self or identity. Given that one self-system or schema and its attendant goals and strivings tend to dominate people's "working self-concept" at any given point in time (see Markus & Wurf, 1987, for a review), it seems reasonable to propose that how people think about and define fairness may therefore be importantly shaped or dependent on which self-schema currently dominates a perceiver's working self-concept (Skitka, 2003).

In summary, one way to generate contingent predictions that integrate theory and research from the *homo economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* perspectives is to posit a fundamental

organizing role of the self in justice reasoning (Skitka, 2003). How people define and think about

fairness is may be stored in close connections to different aspects of the self and self-related goal

systems in memory, and therefore are differentially likely to be activated or accessible as a

function of which aspect of the self currently dominates the perceivers' working self-concept.

Although there is considerable research showing close connections between self-awareness and

the activation of various identity-relevant concerns about justice, it is not yet clear whether the

self or activation of identity-relevant concerns is necessary, rather than simply sufficient, to

activate justice reasoning, or different kinds of justice reasoning. Specifically, activating

material, social, or moral identities may shift people's conceptions or definitions of justice (a

sufficient cause); however, so too might priming material, social, and moral constructs unrelated

to anything about the perceivers' identity (in which case, identity priming is not a necessary

cause of shifting the contingencies people use to judge fairness).

Domain and schema theories of moral development have independently posited the

importance of three very similar contingencies to the ones we have been discussing here, without

positing a key role for the self or identity. We turn to a review of these theories below.

Domain and Moral Schema Theories

Domain theory. Theory and research in moral development arrives at very similar and

contingent categories to describe how people make moral judgments, of which they would

consider justice to be one part. Domain theorists argue that there are three core systems or

domains of social judgment: (1) personal prerogative or matters of taste or preference, (2) social

convention, and (3) morality (see Nucci, 1996; Turiel, 2002, for reviews). Preferences are by

definition subjective and in the eye of the beholder. Preferences represent instances when people

favor one outcome more than another, but there is no expectation that others would or should

feel the same way. Others' preferences about the same object are not seen as either right or wrong; they are simply different. For example, it is acceptable for you to prefer apples even though I prefer oranges because people are entitled to have different tastes about fruit. Similarly, some people's positions about abortion may also be based in a sense of preference or self-interest, rather than a sense of normative convention or morality. For example, someone may support legalized abortion because she prefers to have a backstop birth control option to not having one. Another person's view on abortion may be based more on a sense of normative convention than on either preference or morality. For example, this person may oppose legalized abortion, because it is illegal in their state, or because church authorities oppose the practice, but this person may feel no personal preference or moral connection to the issue. If abortion was legalized tomorrow, or the church was to reverse its position, someone whose position is based on normative convention and authority would likely reverse their position on the issue as well. Someone who sees abortion as a moral issue, however, is likely to see abortion as universally right or wrong, and will persist in believing it is right or wrong even if this position is inconsistent with normative conventions, local custom, and rule of law. The relative authority independence of a position is what best distinguishes whether a position is viewed as moral or conventional[3].

Young children and adults' abilities to make distinctions across these domains replicates across a wide array of nationalities and religious groups (for reviews, see Smetana, 1993; Tisak, 1995; Nucci, 2001). Also intriguing is the finding that adult psychopaths and children who

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[3] There is considerable research that uses the "moral-conventional" test of authority independence to differentiate conventional and moral-based thinking. However, preferences and matters of personal taste are also likely to be authority independent as well. However, people are unlikely to justify preferences in terms of "it's wrong" (which could be a rule-based or conventional definition of wrong, or a moral one). The authority independence test allows for a distinction between conventional and moral kinds of "right" and "wrong".

exhibit psychopathic tendencies do not make distinctions between the conventional and moral

domains (Blair, 1995, 1997)[4].

The distinctions that domain theorists make between social judgments that involve

preferences, normative conventions, and morality map reasonably well unto some of the findings

and distinctions made by theory and research that takes a *homo economicus, socialis,* and

moralis perspectives. Preferences are not always the fodder of economic exchange, but tend to be

more self-oriented and materialistic in orientation than judgments related to normative

convention or morality. Matters of normative convention, by definition, reflect a primary focus

on community standards, authorities, rules, and so on, and map well unto the concerns of *homo*

socialis. Finally, one of the key distinctions between morality and normative convention in

domain theory is the extent to which the latter tend to be independent of concerns about authority

or conformity to group norms, something very consistent with current justice research and

theorizing about how morality affects justice reasoning.

Moral schema theory. Another neo-Kohlbergian approach to understanding moral

development suggests that judgmental "domains" might be better understood as cognitive

schemas (Rest et al., 1999). Rest et al.'s (1999) moral schema theory posits that people use three

kinds of schemas to make socio-moral judgments, specifically, a personal interests, norm

maintenance, or post-conventional schema. The personal interest schema develops in early

childhood, the norm maintenance schema develops during adolescence, and the post-

conventional schema develops in late adolescence and adulthood. Once formed, people can use

each of the schemas to guide their judgment and behavior, and theoretically can move fluidly

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[4]To our knowledge, researchers have not tested whether psychopaths make distinctions between preferences and other domains.

between them as a function of how well features of situations and social relationships map onto, and therefore prime the activation of, one or another core schema.

When people apply the personal interest schema, they tend to focus on either their own self-interests or personal stake in a situation, or justify the behavior of others in terms of their perceptions of others' personal interests. The norm maintenance schema focuses on the need for norms that address more than the personal preferences of those involved in a given situation, and place a heavy focus on (a) the needs of cooperative social systems and the group, (b) a belief that living up to these norms and standards will pay-off in the long-run, and (c) a strong duty orientation, whereby one should obey and respect authorities and authority hierarchies.

Finally, the post-conventional schema primes a sense of moral obligation based on the notions that laws, roles, codes, and contracts are all relatively arbitrary social arrangements that facilitate cooperation, but that there are a variety of ways these coordination rules could be constructed to achieve the same ends. Just because the existing rules exist, does not mean that people think these arrangements are right when a situation primes a more post-conventional schema. When activated, a post-conventional schema leads people more toward an orientation that duties and rights follow from the greater moral purpose behind conventions, not from the conventions themselves. In summary, post-conventional thinking focuses people on ideals, conceptions of the ultimate moral good or imperative, something people presume (not always correctly so) that reasonable others will also share and understand, or could easily be persuaded to share or understand (Rest et al. 1999).

In summary, there are clear similarities between the *homo economicus*, *socialis*, and *moralis* metaphors that have separately guided different periods and programs of research on adult conceptions of justice. The metaphors that have been used in justice research show a

remarkable degree of overlap with the categories of social judgment that guide contemporary theories of moral development, despite both programs developing quite independently of the other. Taken together with theory and research on the self, contemporary theories of moral development provide further support for the notion that it is theoretically useful to focus on contingent predictions rather than competing conceptions of how people think about justice. Rather than remaining wedded to competing single-motive accounts for why people care about fairness and therefore the factors most likely to influence perceptions of whether social encounters are fair or unfair, there are a host of reasons to believe that people's perceptions of fairness depend to some degree on the goals or concerns that are currently most important to them.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

Hastorf and Cantril (1954) conducted a study that is often cited as providing the case for the value of social psychology. Specifically, they studied Dartmouth and Princeton students' perceptions of an actual football game played in 1951 between the Dartmouth Indians and the Princeton Tigers. It was a particularly rough game with many penalties. The Princeton quarterback had to leave the game with a broken nose and a concussion in the second quarter of the game; the Dartmouth quarterback's leg was broken in a backfield tackle in the third quarter. One week after the game, Hastorf and Cantril surveyed Princeton and Dartmouth students who saw the game, as well as a sample of students who viewed a film of it.

Despite seeing the same game, participants viewed it very differently. The Princeton students "saw" the Dartmouth team make over twice as many rule infractions as the Dartmouth students, whereas the Dartmouth students "saw" a reverse pattern of infractions. Sixty-nine percent of Princeton students described the game as "rough and dirty," whereas a majority of Dartmouth

students felt that even though the Dartmouth team played rough, the play was generally "clean" and "fair." These results indicated that people actively constructed different realities as a function of their perspective; as Hastorf and Cantril (1954) put it: "there is no such 'thing' as a 'game' existing 'out there' in its own right which people merely 'observe.' The game 'exists' for a person and is experienced by him only insofar as certain happenings have significances in terms of his purpose" (p. 133).

Hastorf and Cantril's (1954) findings, and other similar findings, led psychologists and other scholars to the realization that people do not react to each other's actions in a stimulus-response pattern without the mediating influence of interpretation. People interpret their social worlds, and therefore human interaction is mediated through people's *understanding* and interpretation of what social interactions mean (Blumer, 1969). Similarly, a guiding premise of the contingency theory of justice is that there is not an objective reality or set of circumstances that are fair or unfair. People do not always interpret social interactions like football games, performance evaluations, negotiating the price of a car or home, or their intimate relationships from similar perspectives. Instead, people actively construct their perceptions of fairness and unfairness, and these active constructions are influenced by different fairness norms and the various goals, needs, expectations, and histories people carry with them into their social interactions.

In addition to regrounding justice theory in classic conceptions of symbolic interactionism, the contingency theory of justice can account for the mundane reality that people often disagree about whether a given situation was handled fairly or unfairly. Until people arrive at some consensus about the nature of the judgment to be made and what goals they wish to achieve in a given a context, it is not surprising that people approach the same situation with very different conceptions of fairness. The notion that people are likely to approach the same situation from

different perspectives, that in turn shape the fairness norms or considerations they apply to it, suggests that future research should extend beyond the study of how individuals in isolation make fairness judgments. Further research should begin to explore how people socially negotiate and arrive at consensus about how to make decisions fairly, or whether fairness has been achieved in specific circumstances. A truism of early theories of distributive justice is that people do not make justice judgments in social vacuums. Instead, justice judgments are inherently *social* judgments and require social comparison information (e.g., Walster et al., 1978). The social aspect of deciding whether something is fair or unfair may go beyond relying on passive comparisons to see if others received outcomes proportional to inputs, or similar treatment or opportunities for voice. Instead, people's natural fairness reasoning may rely more on active gathering of social comparison information. That is, people will attempt to seek information about how others interpret a given situation, and whether they too see it as fair or unfair. Moreover, it will be interesting to explore whether influence attempts that frame issues more in *economicus, socialis,* or *moralis* terms are differentially likely to influence people to concede to others' views that a given situation is fair or unfair.

Few if any contemporary studies of fairness focus on the importance of social comparison and consensus in how people think about fairness. Because the contingency model of justice predicts a certain amount of fluidity and flexibility in how people are likely to think about fairness, and focuses more explicitly on socially constructed fairness judgments that depend on perspective, the model suggests that social comparisons and consensus seeking may be especially important areas for future research in the psychology of justice.

Lastly, we should note that the contingency model of justice reasoning we are positing here has considerable overlap with the accessible identity model (AIM) proposed by Skitka (2003).

Skitka, however, emphasized a primary role for material, social, and personal/moral identities as a way to organize predictions about when *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* concerns were likely to be activated and particularly relevant as guides to perceptions of fairness (see also the section on identity reviewed in the current chapter). The contingency model proposed here is more parsimonious and to some degree more flexible because it leaves the role of identity involvement open for empirical test, rather than using identity as a central organizing theme for when people's *economicus, socialis,* and *moralis* perspectives are most likely to be salient, and therefore applied to specific contexts. The contingency model suggests that situational priming a specific identity or identity-relevant concerns –or individual differences in the chronic accessibility of different identities or schemas--may be sufficient to activate different fairness norms or rules, but identity involvement per se may or may not be a necessary condition for leading people to be concerned about fairness.

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