

CHAPTER 5

AN ACCESSIBLE IDENTITY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING

Fairness in Organizational Settings

Linda J. Skitka and Jesus Bravo

An accessible identity model (AIM) of justice reasoning is introduced and applied to the controversy of whether family-friendly policies in the workplace are fair. The AIM has two core propositions: (a) people are most likely to think about justice and fairness when self-relevant values and goals are highly accessible or activated, (b) how people define fairness depends on which aspect of the self (i.e., the material, social, or moral) dominates the working self-concept. Using this model, one can derive hypotheses about who spontaneously thinks about the fairness of family-friendly policies and why. Moreover, one can account for why proponents and opponents of these policies have such different claims about whether family-friendly policies are fair or unfair. Finally, the AIM makes novel predictions about how to resolve organizational conflicts about fairness about family-friendly policies as well as other issues where claims of possible injustice arise.

*“It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind...”*

—John Godfrey Saxe (1963)

Justice in organizational settings is both important as an end in and of itself and because of the negative consequences that result from its absence. For example, the perception that an organization or its representatives are unjust is associated with lower levels of organizational commitment (e.g., Martin & Bennett, 1996), organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Aquino, 1995; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001), as well as higher levels of retaliation (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997) and intent to protest (e.g., Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

What is less clear, however, are the conditions when fairness is likely to matter in organizational settings, and when it will not. Sometimes people think about and express their concerns in terms of what is just or fair in a given situation. Other times, they ignore justice concerns. To date, we have not developed very sophisticated ways of understanding under what circumstances people think carefully about whether their own or others' behavior is fair and when they are unlikely to think about fairness.

In addition, current organizational theories of justice posit very different motivational accounts for why people care about justice and fairness. For example, several theories suggest that people care about fairness because it serves their material self-interests (e.g., Adams, 1965; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Other theories hold that the need to belong and to be valued surpasses material interests, and that people care about justice—and particularly procedural justice—because it conveys important information about status and standing (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Recent research has also suggested a third possibility for why people care about justice: It confirms their need to express, defend, and live up to personal moral standards (Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

We argue that current conceptualizations of the motivational foundations for why people care about justice are somewhat like John Godfrey Saxe's blind men of Indostan, who each examined a different part of an elephant and therefore came to different conclusions about what it was (“it is very like a tree,” “a wall,” or “a snake”). Similarly, we as justice researchers have the challenge of studying something that we cannot see; an abstraction in people's minds. As a result, we not surprisingly have

developed very different views of what drives people's justice reasoning, without perhaps realizing that what we have discerned may be only one part of a greater whole.

To get a better view of the *whole elephant* it might be useful to take a more integrative approach to justice theorizing. Specifically, it may be the case that when and how people think about justice varies as a function of which personal or interpersonal goals or motives the perceiver is currently striving to achieve. In line with this idea, Skitka (2003) recently argued that different conceptions of justice are stored in memory in close association with specific self-relevant values and goals. Because people's lives are fundamentally organized and grounded around the pursuit of a range of values and goals, it seems reasonable to propose that people's conception of self and self-regulation should also play an important role in justice reasoning.

The predictions of the AIM (Skitka, 2003) are built on a number of insights from research on the self. Specifically, research on the self reveals that (a) people have multiple levels of self or identity; (b) not all aspects of identity can be equally accessible at any given time; (c) the relative accessibility of a given identity in the working self-concept is influenced by the perceiver's past experience, present expectations, current motives, and goals, 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). If one assumes that people's conceptions of justice are stored in memory in close association with different identity-relevant values and goals, one can account for variations in the likelihood of engaging in justice reasoning and for how people think about justice once it becomes accessible as a concern. The goals of this chapter are to (1) provide a summary overview of the AIM, and then (2) explore how the AIM might provide insight into a current justice-based controversy in the workplace, specifically, whether family-friendly work policies are fair.

THE AIM

At the core of the AIM are two fundamental propositions. First, to know whether people will approach a situation in terms of justice, one needs to know if the situation engages some aspect of the self. Second, to understand how a person reasons about fairness, one first has to know which aspect of the self is currently most cognitively accessible to them.

In broad strokes, the AIM proposes that (a) people are more concerned about justice in contexts that activate identity-relevant concerns than in those that do not (the *identity-relevance hypothesis*), (b) people devote more thought and analysis to whether an interaction is fair or unfair if the encounter threatens rather than affirms the perceiver's currently activated identity and associated goals and values (the *identity-threat hypothesis*), (c) how people define what is fair or unfair depends on whether their material, social, or moral identity concerns currently dominate the working self-concept (the *accessible identity hypothesis*), and (d) because identity concerns are hierarchically ordered, so too are people's conceptions of justice (the *hierarchy hypothesis*).

The AIM predicts that in most contexts people will not think deeply about whether their behavior or that of others is fair or unfair, but instead will use well-rehearsed associations between identity-relevant goals and values and fairness norms as heuristic guides for appropriate conduct. Although general self-awareness and identity-relevance increase the likelihood that people actively think about justice (see Skitka, 2003, for a review), the accessible identity hypothesis of the AIM adds that how people define what is fair or unfair varies as a function of which aspect of identity dominates the working self-concept.

Although the specific content of the self varies, there tends to be a great deal of similarity in major categories of the self across persons (Bugental & Zelen, 1950; Rentsch & Heffner, 1994). Three layers of identity, the material, social, and moral seem to be essential in how people organize their self-views (James, 1890). Interestingly, theories of organizational justice have similarly focused on each of these motivational categories—material or instrumental motives, social identity needs, and personal moral values—as having important connections to how people reason about justice (see Cropanzano & Rupp, 2003 for a review). These particular categories of self thus serve as a useful heuristic to organize predictions for how identity accessibility relates to different conceptions of fairness (see also Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999, for a related categorization of schemas associated with moral reasoning).

When material identity is salient. Material identity refers how people's possessions and relative wealth form one aspect of their sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; James, 1890). People's material identity is shaped and expressed by the clothes they adorn themselves with, the car they drive, and their property, goods, and financial holdings. People's accumulated material goods—those things people refer to as *my* or *mine*—become extensions of the self, and therefore the subjective value attached to these goods exceed rational expectations of market value (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990). For example, people attach more value to a coffee mug

they have owned than to an otherwise equivalent mug they have never owned (Kahneman et al., 1990).

Material identity goals and concerns are the most normatively *self-interested* or *selfish* aspects of the overall self-concept, and are most likely to be activated when there is (a) a possible or real material loss or gain, (b) the relational context is defined in market terms, and (c) other identity concerns are not particularly salient. Contexts that prime the material self and values therefore include negotiations of price, wages, interest, rents, tithes, property, or even marriage contracts (to the extent that they are implicitly understood as about the costs and benefits to the parties involved). Proportionality of entitlements to contributions, or equity rules, most frequently defines fairness in market contexts (Fiske, 1991) and therefore presumably when people's material identity is especially salient and accessible in memory as well.

There are also reasons to believe that the relative salience of material identity will shape which conceptions of procedural justice are likely to be emphasized at any given time. 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 their material interests in the long run. Although other theorists (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) argue that people care about procedural justice because it serves their social identity needs and not because it provides a sense of process control, it may be the case that why people care about and how they define procedural fairness is contingent on which aspect of identity is currently most highly activated in working memory. Therefore, people may focus more on process control when material identity concerns are more salient than social or moral identity concerns. It also seems likely that formal aspects of procedures, like procedural accuracy and consistency in assigning value to labor or goods, would be especially important when material identity concerns and values dominate the perceiver's working self-concept whereas interactional treatment (e.g., communicating dignity, respect) may be comparatively less important in relatively routine and impersonal market exchanges.

When social identity is salient. Social identity refers to that aspect of the person's self-concept that is based on group-memberships, and the degree that people are invested in either being a member of or belonging to a specific group. People therefore have as many social identities as important groups they identify with (James, 1890). People's social identity needs, values, and goals are related to maintaining their group memberships, maintaining or enhancing their standing and status in these groups, and fulfilling the obligations associated with social roles. People's social identities should be more likely to dominate their working self-con-

cepts when (a) there is a high potential of or a real social gain or loss, (b) the context is normatively defined in relational, role, or group-oriented terms, and (c) other identity concerns are not particularly relevant.

The notion that social identity and justice reasoning are closely connected is not a new one. As mentioned earlier, the group value and relational models of justice (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) posit that people care about justice—and more particularly, they care more about procedural than distributive justice—because fair treatment conveys information relevant to their social identity needs (e.g., inclusion and status). For similar reasons, we argue that people are indeed likely to care a lot about procedural treatment, and especially interactional aspects of procedural treatment, when social identity concerns are more accessible in memory than either material or moral identity concerns. However, we think that the relative salience of different social identities is likely to have effects on how people think about distributive justice as well.

Almost all research that has demonstrated the importance of the connection between social identity and procedural justice has been conducted in relational systems characterized by asymmetric positions of power (what Fiske, 1991, calls authority-ranking relational systems), and has exclusively focused on subordinate reactions to the decisions made by authorities. However, people seek to define, sustain, and improve their social identities in other relational contexts as well. Although less frequently studied in recent years, justice emerges as a concern in interdependent relationships with equal peers, in communal contexts like the family, and when one is in the role of an authority rather than subordinate (rather than only the converse).

Available research indicates that variables related to social identity influence people's judgments of distributive justice in some of these other contexts. For example, people primed with solidarity and group harmony goals (Deutsch, 1985), who are chronically higher in communal or interpersonal orientation (Major & Adams, 1983; Watts, Messé, & Vallacher, 1982), or who take a group rather than individual level perspective (Hegtvedt, 1987), are more likely to allocate material rewards equally than equitably and to rate equal allocations as more fair than equitable ones. Other research indicates conceptions of fairness vary as a function of the social role of the perceiver. For example, when people's social role as a parent is more highly activated, they are more likely to perceive allocations based on need as more fair than those based on equity or equality (Drake & Lawrence, 2000; Prentice & Crosby, 1987).

When moral identity is salient. Material and social identity both are defined by people's wants. People want to accumulate material goods and wealth, and the accumulation of both contributes to people's definition of self. Similarly, people want to belong, to have status and standing in

important groups, and to live up to role expectations. In contrast to material and social identity, moral identity refers less to what people want and more to people's sense of *ought* and *should*, and their desire to both express and defend their sense of themselves as authentically moral (Reed & Aquino, 2003; Steele, 1988, 1999). Moral identity is shaped by people's commitment to specific moral values and beliefs, the proactive expression of those commitments, as well as their defense of their core moral values whenever they perceive them to be violated.

People's moral identity concerns are most likely to dominate the working self-concept when (a) the context is normatively defined in moral terms, (b) their moral intuition is aroused (e.g., Haidt, 2001), (c) when something triggers moral emotions (moral outrage, disgust, shame, or guilt, e.g., Haidt, 2003), (d) there is a perceived or real threat to core moral values or people's conception of the moral order (Tetlock, 2002), or (e) when other identity concerns are not particularly salient. When one's moral identity dominates the working self-concept, postconventional justice concerns will become more accessible in memory. When moral identity dominates the working self-concept, people are more likely to define justice in absolute terms as right or wrong, just or unjust, rather than in relative terms. When activated moral values are upheld, all will be just; when activated moral values are violated, all will be unjust.

Although people might have abstract values that they hold with moral regard (e.g., due process before the law), the visceral and emotional component of moral judgment generally will be aroused in more situationally specific ways. For example, many people adhere to the abstract value of the sanctity of life. However, studies find but weak correlations between opposition to abortion and a more generalized pro-life stance on issues such as capital punishment or voluntary euthanasia (e.g., Darwin, 1982; Lester, 2000). Therefore, specific features of these different issues, rather than attachment to abstract values, would appear to differentially activate people's moral sentiments in these contexts.

We have found considerable support for what we have called the *moral mandate hypothesis*. Specifically, when people have a strong moral conviction that something is right or wrong, just or unjust, the match between what happens in the world and their moral mandate will drive people's reasoning about both procedural and distributive justice. For example, when people have a moral mandate about defendant guilt, any procedure—vigilantism or due process—is seen as fair so long as it punishes the defendant (Skitka & Houston, 2001). Similarly, preoutcome judgments of procedural fairness do not predict people's postoutcome judgments of procedural or distributive fairness when outcomes

fail to match people's moral mandates (Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002).

Although they did not measure the degree of moral conviction this issue aroused, Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, and Zanna (1998) found results that are consistent with the notion that people also may have moral mandates about procedures. Specifically, they found that one could explain people's justice reasoning about affirmative action by finding out the relative value people attached to either merit versus equality of opportunity in this context. One value was based more on distributive concerns, whereas the other value was based on procedural concerns—what appears to have been important was that people saw these values as absolute. In short, one would get an incomplete understanding of people's justice reasoning about affirmative action if one were to view it only from the lens of theories of distributive or procedural justice. To understand people's reasoning in this context, one needs to know the situationally specific importance people attached to competing values.

The Hierarchy Hypothesis

People's overall sense of self-regard is not equally determined by material, social, and moral identity relevant concerns. How positively or negatively people see their moral identity contributes the most to overall self-regard, followed by social and then material identity (Deci & Ryan, 1985; James, 1890; Sedikides & Gaertner, 2001; see also Finje-man, Willemsen, & Poortinga, 1996, and Freeberg & Stein, 1996, for supporting cross-cultural research). Few people should therefore be willing to sacrifice the relationships they hold dear to enlarge their material holdings; likewise, people should be unwilling to forfeit their achievements or moral authenticity to enhance their social status. Consistent with the notion that the self and related values are hierarchically organized, threats to more primary foundations of self-definition elicit stronger needs for identity protection than threats to less primary self-definitions (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Sedikides & Gaertner, 2001).

Similarly, the AIM predicts that conceptions of justice that are associated in memory with more primary goals or identities should be seen as more psychologically compelling and have a stronger connection to overall assessments of justice done than those that are less central to people's overall sense of self. Therefore, people should implicitly or explicitly agree that fairness requires that lower-level justice criteria (e.g., the equity rule) cede to higher-level justice criteria (e.g., need) whenever these criteria come into conflict, or whenever people enter

into transactions with others who are pursuing goals or values that are at odds with their own (see Skitka, 2003, for review).

In sum, the hierarchy hypothesis makes a number of contingent predictions about how well externalization or self-affirmation is likely to compensate for identity threat as a joint function of the threatened identity and the domain that people attempt to find compensatory justice or injustice. The hierarchy hypothesis also makes predictions for how people cope with mixed motives on the part of themselves and others.

THE UTILITY OF THE AIM IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

Of what value is the AIM to organizational justice research? According to the AIM, nearly all claims of injustice can be traced to activation in memory of identity-relevant concerns. Given that there are different layers of identity, not everyone in organizational settings will view a given situation from the same perspective; therefore, conflicts about what is fair or unfair are likely to arise. The AIM can generate hypotheses about the source of conflict, and provide guidance for its resolution. We now turn to a concrete example—one of many we could have selected—to illustrate how the AIM can be used to generate testable hypotheses about justice reasoning in organizationally relevant contexts.

We chose to apply the AIM to the controversy about the fairness of “family-friendly” work policies, an issue that has received considerable attention in the media and popular press in recent years, and one that is beginning to receive increased attention from organizational justice researchers as well (e.g., Grover & Crooker, 1995; Hegtvedt, Clay-Warner, & Ferrigno, 2002; Parker & Allen, 2001). The AIM provides a theoretical approach that generates novel predictions for why the presence or absence of accommodations for parents can arouse perceptions of injustice on the part of different constituencies. The next section of the paper presents (a) background on family friendly work policy implementation in the United States, (b) the justice-based arguments used by proponents and opponents in support of their position on family friendly work policies, (c) how other theories of justice might account for the controversy about whether family friendly work policies are fair, (d) application of how the AIM accounts for why some people have different justice-based points of view about the controversy, and finally, (e) predictions that the AIM generates for how these kinds of organizational controversies might be resolved.

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES IN THE WORKPLACE

The Family Medical Leave Act, passed in 1993, formalized an apparent shift in U.S. beliefs about work and family (Grover & Crooker, 1995). The Family Medical Leave Act protects employees' jobs for up to 12 weeks of leave from work for either parent following the birth, adoption, or severe illness of a child. In addition to protective legislation, an increasing number of corporations are implementing family-friendly policies, or FFPs, in the workplace. These policies are designed to help employees manage their work and family roles (Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). FFPs generally include benefits such as flexible work scheduling, flexible work processes, and supportive supervision. Specific examples include providing employees options to work part-time, job share, or have flexible starting and quitting times (Clark, 2001). Although some of these organizational changes may benefit parents and nonparents alike, other benefits specifically address family needs, such as parental leaves, sick-child care, or childcare services, and therefore benefit parents but not nonparents.

Both proponents and opponents of FFPs arguments are based in claims about fairness or unfairness. Specifically, some argue that FFPs are needed to address women's increased participation in the labor force and the possible barriers that prevent them being as successful as their male peers (e.g., Burstein & Bircher, 1997; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997). Opponents of FFPs point out that nonparents not only do not benefit from many of tangible benefits of FFPs, but also may end up having to work more than nonparents because of them (Burkett, 2000). After outlining the justice-based arguments in support of and against FFPs, we will analyze the controversy from the perspective of different theories of justice.

Addressing Unfair Biases against Parents in General and Mothers in Particular

Proponents of FFPs argue that these policies are needed to address workplace biases against parents and others in care-taking roles in general, and mothers in particular. A dramatic transformation of both the American workforce and the American family has occurred in the last 40 years. Both parents work outside of the home in 75% of families overall, and in 50% of the families with children less than 1-year old (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1989), creating difficulties for both parents in juggling the demands of work and family (Bailey, 1991; Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Pleck, 1993). At the same time, cultural norms of "intensive moth-

ering” have escalated parents’ expectations for direct parental care. Working women are spending more time per child than they were 20-years-ago, despite working more hours (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1997).

Moreover, what was once a profound gender gap in income has become more constrained to mothers. Although single women at the beginning of their careers make 95% of what their male peers make, working mothers make only 57% of what single men earn. Working fathers do not have nearly as severe of a “parenting penalty” to their incomes (Schor, 2003). Although the conflict between work and family is gender-neutral (both men and women can suffer from it), it nonetheless still plays out in a way that presents a barrier to women’s advancement in the workplace (see Strober & Chan, 1999; Waldfogel, 1997, 1998). The argument in support of FFPs is based in large part on the need to address these potential inequities and to facilitate the retention of skilled women workers (Schor, 2003).

In addition to addressing concerns about both leveling the playing field for male and female workers and the legitimate needs of parents and others in care-taking roles, FFPs nonetheless have benefits for organizations that are more tangible. For example, employees are more attached to organizations that offer FFPs and are less likely to leave the organizations, regardless of whether they individually benefit from the FFPs offered (e.g., Grover & Crooker, 1995). However, as we discuss below, not everyone perceives FFPs as an organizational good.

Cheating the Childless

Elinor Burkett (2000) has emerged as one of the leading opponents to FFPs, as detailed in her book, *The Baby Boon: How Family-friendly America Cheats the Childless*. Burkett (2000) argues that FFPs are unfair because some employees are getting more benefits for the same work than others. Non-parents are paid less, in effect, even though they may be asked to work more to pick up the work left behind by parents absent to care for a child or to attend a school play. Moreover, FFPs may violate the 1964 Equal Pay Act that mandates equal pay for equal work with no consideration for number of dependents or head of household status—a law also passed to respond to increased numbers of women in the work force (Raphael, 2003).

The arguments of those opposed to FFPs have some merit. Employees with children get thousands of dollars a year in extra insurance, unpaid leave, scholarship aid, and tax credits that are denied to workers without children (Allerton, 2000). Moreover, the proportion of the workforce that is benefited by FFPs is clearly a small minority of workers, and a potentially decreasing one. Burkett cites evidence that one in four

American women born between 1956 and 1973 will never give birth, and 19% of American married couples indicate that they have chosen not to have children.

Finally, opponents suggest that FFPs are actually regressive and anti-woman. Because working husbands are less likely to share domestic chores equally with their wives, working women who do the lion's share of the childcare and household work because of family-friendly job flexibility are only enabling a fundamentally biased and unfair social structure (Bergmann, 1998).

Applying Equity and Procedural Justice Theories to the Controversy

Current theories of justice provide different explanations for why people may disagree about whether FFPs are fair. For example, equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978) suggests that the childless are likely to feel the situation is unfair because they are receiving an inequitable distribution of material resources for similar amounts of work relative to their child-rearing peers. Equity theory, however, does not provide a clear account for why parents might feel under-benefited if they do not have FFPs in the workplace—their inputs are the same as their coworkers, but they nonetheless apparently feel entitled to additional benefits. Although one might be able to argue that having children could count as an input, it seems to be stretching the plausibility of equity theory—at least in market economies—to expect nonparents to consider coworkers' children as relevant and fair inputs into a workplace equity formula.

In contrast to equity theory, the group value and relational models of procedural fairness (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) predict that people's judgments of fairness in this context are based on their concerns about group standing and status. In short, people's fairness reasoning will be based on which social identity concerns people feel are at stake, and whether the procedures designed to address compensation and benefits adequately respect and dignify the perceiver's currently dominant social identity. Nonparents may feel like they are considered less valuable workers because they are not treated with the same degree of concern as are parents in organizations with FFPs. Women or parents, however, may be operating less from a social identity as an employee or member of the work organization and more from their identity as mothers or parents when they evaluate whether FFPs are fair. From this identity perspective, they may feel that their status and standing is disregarded, if not discriminated against, if there are not FFPs.

Although social identity and self-categorization theories (e.g., Turner, 1985, 1999) can account for the different lens through which opponents and proponents might view FFPs, social identity theories are not in and of themselves theories of how people form justice judgments. Group value and relational theories of procedural justice built on the foundation of social identity theory to make specific predictions about the factors that shape people's perceptions of fairness. According to the procedural justice perspective, there should be little argument about whether FFPs are fair or unfair. The only point of concern should be whether the procedures used to decide whether an organization has FFPs are fair or unfair. Because procedures provide people with relevant information about their group standing and status (presumably more than outcomes do), this theoretical perspective predicts that people's justice reasoning is shaped almost exclusively by whether procedures and authorities treat people like valued members of the group by providing opportunities for voice, a full search of information, using trusted authorities who are unbiased, and so forth.

However, if people are primarily concerned about group inclusion, status, and standing, and are therefore predominantly concerned with whether procedures are fair, it seems unlikely that the debate about FFPs would be couched so exclusively in outcome terms. Although procedures and how they validate social identity concerns are certainly important, the nearly exclusive focus on procedural fairness in organizational justice research in recent years seems to fail to address a fundamental social reality: People care about outcome fairness as well, and current theories of procedural justice provide no real account for why outcome fairness also matters. For example, a recent meta-analysis of the literature found that the effect sizes for outcome fairness on relevant organizational variables like turn-over, organizational commitment, and so on, were at least as large, and often larger, than the effects of procedural fairness on these variables (Skitka, Winkvist, & Hutchinson, 2003¹). Moreover, whether outcomes were fair had stronger effects on judgments of procedural fairness than did the converse (Skitka et al., 2003).

Not only are the arguments about whether FFPs are fair couched primarily in outcome terms, much of the debate seems focused as much or more on material (relative pay) and higher order moral goals (e.g., serving the greater good of society, saving the American family) as it does on social identity relevant goals (e.g., the relative status of the childless and those with children in a work organization). The self-categorization theory prediction that perspective matters appears to certainly hold. However, current theories of justice emphasize that social identity and procedural fairness concerns go hand-in-hand, leaving little room for how people's material or moral identity concerns might play a role in how people rea-

son about justice as well, and that different justice considerations (e.g., outcome fairness) may become more salient as a function of which aspect of identity currently dominates perceivers' working self-concept.

In sum, one can generate some predictions about how fairness enters into how people reason about FFPs based on equity and procedural justice theories. That said, if one works only from the purview of either equity or procedural justice theory, one has an incomplete account of the nature and scope of the debate about whether FFPs are fair.

Because the AIM takes a broader approach by considering more than one motivational perspective, it would seem to be better suited to understanding the psychological dynamics of people's justice reasoning in this and probably many other organizational contexts (e.g., affirmative action). People can bring very different claims of justice or injustice to bear on a given problem, each of which is legitimate from its respective point of view. Moreover, the AIM leads to some novel conclusions about how these kinds of controversies might be resolved and perceived as fair by all involved.

Applying the AIM to the Controversy of Family Friendly Policies

The core premise of the AIM leads to the prediction that how people reason about the fairness of FFPs—if they think about whether they are fair at all—depends on *which* identity perspective currently dominates the perceivers' working self-concept. Although this is a prediction that could also be derived from a number of theories of the self, the AIM extends these theories to explicitly suggest that different conceptions of justice become more accessible in memory as a function of which aspect of identity currently dominates the working self-concept. Specifically, the AIM posits that many people will not spontaneously think about the fairness of FFPs because these policies are not particularly relevant to them (the *identity relevance hypothesis*). Whether people spontaneously think about the fairness of FFPs will depend on how salient different identity-relevant values and goals are in a given context, as well as on whether they perceive these identities, values, or goals as threatened by the presence or absence of FFPs (the *identity-threat hypothesis*). Rather than a splintered faction of all parents on one side, and all nonparents on the other, this analysis suggests that the *controversy* over FFPs may be waged by a select few who have particularly developed identities as either parents or as childless, and who have some reason to believe that their identities are threatened by the presence or absence of FFPs.

The *accessible identity hypothesis* of the AIM also predicts that the standards or criteria that people use to judge the fairness of FFPs will vary as a function of whether they view them from the perspective of their material, social, or moral identity. For example, arguments in support of FFPs rarely focus on material identity concerns. Instead, proponents of FFPs focus on social identity concerns (e.g., parental role demands; allowing parents who work the freedom to nonetheless be good parents), moral identity concerns (e.g., upholding the value of the family as an abstract ideal; providing working parents, and in particular mothers, equal opportunities in the work place), or both. The AIM predicts that people who view FFPs from these perspectives are more likely to evaluate the fairness of FFPs as a function of whether they serve communal distributive norms such as need and whether they protect the standing and status of parents in general, and perhaps women in particular, rather than by whether they are materially equitable.

In contrast, the arguments launched against FFPs by those highly identified with their choice to remain childless focus almost exclusively on fair pay. When people view a situation from their material identity-relevant values and goals, they tend to focus on the proportionality of inputs and outcomes—in this case, even when discussing how differential material benefits impact their perceived social status and standing in the organization.

The AIM can account for why people on one side of the issue take a position that is closer to that predicted by equity theory, and why people on the other side of the issue take a position that is closer to the predictions of the group value or relational models of justice. However, neither model of justice alone can account well for both sides of the debate about whether FFPs are fair.

The *hierarchy hypothesis* posits that when justice considerations that protect material interests come into conflict with those that protect social or personal identity, the latter arguments will generally be more persuasive. Consistent with this prediction, many more nonparents readily support FFPs than oppose them (Hegtvéd et al., 2002). More research is needed to explore whether the reasons why most of the childless generally support FFPs are the ones we would predict. Specifically, the AIM would argue that most of the childless do not see their primary identity as *childless* and therefore are unlikely to be threatened by FFPs. Without identity threat, there is little reason to scrutinize whether something is fair or unfair. Given that being childless is less likely to be a primary identity for people than other personal or social identities, the childless are likely to therefore view the situation from some other lens, such as whether FFPs are on the whole better for people than not having FFPs, when directly asked whether they see the situation as fair. Moreover, even for those

whose identities as childless are activated, the AIM predicts that justice considerations that tend to be based on social or moral identity concerns will nonetheless generally be more persuasive than those based on material identity concerns. Few will sacrifice interpersonal relationships over money; perhaps even fewer will sacrifice their sense of themselves as authentically moral over money. Once these trade-offs become apparent, the hierarchy hypothesis predicts that few will persist on pushing economic parity at the expense of either social relationships or the greater moral good.

The AIM also suggests a number of ways that managers can attempt to resolve conflicting claims about unfairness in organizational settings. One strategy is to identify the identity concerns people feel threatened about, and to find ways to validate rather than threaten those identities. For example, although the parental role is the one that is traditionally emphasized in discussions of FFPs, what strikes us as an interesting possibility is that parents who work are as likely (if not more likely) to think about FFPs when their work identities are threatened by parenthood, as when their parental identities are threatened by workplace demands.

For example, pregnancy poses a threat to women's sense of themselves as being able to continue to work in jobs or careers that may heretofore have been a primary source of identity (e.g., "I am a teacher," or "I am a CEO"); fathers may face similar concerns when they transition to fatherhood. Validating parents' conflicted identities as both workers and parents by developing FFPs that facilitate their ability to juggle these dual identities may ameliorate the sense of threat, and lead to increased organizational commitment. Consistent with this idea, a large scale study of pregnant working women found that those in the most accommodating jobs in terms of health insurance, sick days, protected maternity leave, and so forth, were the most satisfied with their jobs, worked later into their pregnancies, and were more likely to return to work after having their child (National Council of Jewish Women, 1987).

The childless may feel particularly threatened by whether they will be able to achieve their material goals for a number of reasons, including that they are more likely to be single and therefore trying to achieve their financial goals (e.g., buying a home) on a single income. Although appealing to childless workers' sense of social or personal identity may ameliorate the immediate conflict over FFPs, organizations can also take this form of worker vulnerability into account when designing their benefit plans. For example, flexible benefit programs or cafeteria plans where workers can choose from a number of different possible benefits, especially if some of those options help validate or support childless workers' concerns about protecting or building their incomes (e.g., tax deferred savings), could facilitate conflict resolution. Implementation of programs

designed to address childless workers' identity needs may not only address possible perceptions of unfairness, but could increase organizational commitment, productivity, and so on. Consistent with this idea, parents and nonparents alike report less resentment and greater support of FFPs in workplaces that are perceived to be supportive of their employees in general (Hegtvedt et al., 2002).

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND SELF-CATEGORIZATION THEORY

Much of the above discussion could have been derived from current versions of social identity (SIT) and self-categorization theory (SCT, e.g., Turner, 1985, 1999). The fundamental premise of these theories is that people view the world through the perspective of whichever identity is currently most salient to them. Although these theories acknowledge that people also have personal identities (that is, people's conception of the self independent of their membership in different social groups or categories), the primary emphasis of SIT and SCT is on people's social or group-level identities as women, minorities, workers, and so forth. Like self-categorization theory, the AIM posits that to understand people's current thoughts, feelings, and behavior, one first has to know how the person currently construes who they are. However, in addition to the SIT and SCT emphasis on social identity, the AIM posits that people's personal identities independent of specific group-level identities are likely to play an important role in how they think about and define justice.

Although the emphasis of the AIM has been on individual rather than group-level identities, there are some reasons to believe that people's justice reasoning is also sometimes shaped by the latter. For example, like Skitka (2003), Clayton and Opatow (2003) argue that perspective is key to understanding how people reason about justice. The AIM predicts that how people define what is fair and unfair varies as a function of individual-level identity salience, whereas Clayton and Opatow (2003) posit that what matters is whether one takes an individual or group-level perspective. They argue that to understand how people reason about fairness, one needs to know whether they are taking the perspective of themselves as individuals or as a more morally inclusive entity (e.g., women, all of humanity, or all living things). Although the AIM is likely to view many of these latter viewpoints as either various social identities (e.g., women) or expressions of core moral values and therefore related to people's moral identity (e.g., the moral value an individual might attach to the sanctity of life, irrespective of species), group-level concerns about fairness remain a very important area of inquiry.

As Clayton and Opatow's (2003) review reveals, people's individual perspective is only one layer of justice concern. Although there are important differences as a function of whether one takes a group or individual perspective, there may also be important similarities in the psychological processes that underlie justice reasoning in both contexts. Groups also have material, social, and moral values and concerns. Therefore, even when one takes on a more inclusive rather than individualized view, how one reasons about justice may be shaped by the relative salience of the group or constituency's material, social, or moral needs, goals, or values. In short, although the AIM is focused on the individual level of analysis, an interesting avenue for future research will be to explore whether similar identity issues play out at a more macro level of analysis as well.

It should be noted that current theorizing in organizational justice, and particularly theories of procedural justice, were built on the shoulders of SIT. However, it would seem that a little was lost in the application and extension of these theories to understand how people think about fairness. Procedural justice theorists construe social identity very broadly, and focus on the motivational foundations of social identity as a need to belong in specific groups that the individual deems important. What was lost in the application of these ideas to justice theorizing is that people have many layers of identity (social and personal), and that which layer of identity currently dominates the working self-concept could have important implications for how they reason about fairness. One likely implication (from our perspective) is that how people define what is fair or unfair is likely to also shift as people move from a focus on themselves as members of different social categories, as well as whether they are thinking of themselves less in social and more in individual terms. Therefore, in addition to building on the insights of self-identity and self-categorization theories, the AIM is also an extension and integration of several other theoretical perspectives of the self that focus more on personal identity concerns (e.g., self-schema and self-regulation theory, Carver & Scheier, 1998; Markus, 1977) with current theoretical conceptions of distributive and procedural justice. Like SIT and SCT theorists, self-schema 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). To understand how people think about fairness, we think it is important not only to know if a specific social identity has been primed, but also whether different personal identities may have been primed.

What is value added, we believe, about our theoretical perspective is that it integrates the insight that perspective matters with what we know about when, why, and how people think about fairness. Considerable

research demonstrates that fairness reasoning can be shaped by considerations such as equity, procedural fairness, and moral values or impulses (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2003). However, the justice literature has generally treated these as competing, rather than contingent, theories of fairness. We think we may gain increased insight by taking into account the remarkable overlap of the (competing) motives presumed to underlie why people care about justice with major theoretical categories of self-relevant values and goals (material, social, and moral identity, e.g., James, 1890) to develop a contingency model that specifies when each of these different motivational factors are likely to account for why and how people think about fairness.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The AIM takes a multiple-motive perspective to how people reason about justice. We think the benefits of this theoretical approach are demonstrated well by the level of prediction we are accorded when we apply the AIM to current justice concerns in the workplace. Earlier theories of organizational justice appear to be valid in some contexts, but less so in others. Integrating the motivational foundations of previous theories of justice into a greater whole allows us to acknowledge the complexity of the justice judgment process. Justice is not generally a one size fits all phenomena. Justice reasoning is sometimes motivated by concerns about material gain, other times by concerns about social status or standing, and then other times by post-conventional moral values.

By spelling out some of the contingencies when people are likely to use different justice standards, we also spell out the contingency when people are not likely to be particularly concerned about justice. Some people have an identity investment in a given set of circumstances, whereas others do not. Moreover, the same procedure or outcome can be construed differently as a function of which aspect of identity, or which identity-relevant values and goals, are currently dominating the person's working self-concept. Finally, the incorporation of the fluidity of identity accessibility as a core component of the AIM leads to the prediction that justice reasoning about the same event can vary not only between, but also within persons. We should be able to observe movement in people's justice criteria, and therefore their justice judgments, as a function of making different aspects of identity more or less salient to them.

In conclusion, the goals of this chapter were to introduce a new theory of justice reasoning to researchers in organizational justice, and to illustrate how this theory can generate novel predictions about justice concerns in this context. Although the claims of the AIM are consistent with a

great deal of what we know from the empirical literature (see Skitka, 2003, for a review), it still needs to be put to empirical test. Our hope is that this chapter inspires some of its readers to test the implications of the AIM, and that together this work will increase our understanding of the role that justice plays in human affairs.

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NOTE

1. Other meta-analyses of the justice literature (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, & Ng, 2001) have not found similar evidence for the power of outcome fairness because outcome fairness (whether outcomes matched a relevant standard) was either confounded or conflated with outcome favorability (whether outcomes were positive or negative).

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