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When people are trying to make sense of their world, one important type of sense-making processes revolves around circumstances in which innocent people are victim to terrible crimes such as rape or violence. The insightful work by Melvin Lerner and colleagues suggests that people often make sense of these kinds of awful events by trying to compensate the victim or punish the perpetrator and, if this person is not likely to be caught, to start blaming the victim for his or her behavior. People may also evaluate the victim's personality in negative terms. In this way, people restore their belief in a just world where good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people only. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, a justice motive may underlie people's derogatory reactions to innocent victims (see, e.g., Lerner, 1977, 1980, 1998, 2003; Lerner & Agar, 1972; Lerner & Clayton, 2011; Lerner & Goldberg, 1999; Lerner & Lerner, 1981; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Lerner, Miller, & Holmes, 1976; Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Lerner & Whitehead, 1980).

In the current chapter, we examine some important psychological processes that may explain why the justice motive is so important to people and how this motive causes people to show derogatory reactions to innocent victims. To this end, we focus on social-cognitive processes that may affect the psychological functioning of the justice motive. The current chapter not only examines how people react to innocent victims of terrible crimes, but we also review social-cognitive processes that explain more generally how people calibrate the motive of genuine justice with more self-centered reactions. These processes also involve experiential and rationalistic processes that may differentially affect people's justice concerns. We also will study motivational processes that complement the justice motive. These motivational processes include people's desire to avoid or reduce uncertainty and other processes of motivated self-regulation. The motivational processes we review also pertain to how people deal with justice concerns in their culture, in particular the cultural context of our society that tends to emphasize obtaining outcomes that only will be available to us after some time. We close by discussing the possible relationships between the theories and findings reviewed in this chapter and other relevant theories. We also will point out unexplored conceptual issues as well as some important methodological issues pertaining to the scientific study of the justice motive.

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## 10.1 Social-Cognitive Processes

There is plenty of evidence showing that the justice motive is impacting people's reactions to victims of rape or other terrible crimes. For example, when a victim is more similar to the observer of the unjust event, the victim is more likely to be blamed and derogated for what happened to him or her (e.g., Aguiar, Vala, Correia, & Pereira, 2008; Correia, Vala, & Aguiar, 2007; Lodewijkx, De Kwaadsteniet, & Nijstad, 2005; Novak & Lerner, 1968). Related to this, when a perpetrator is more similar to the observer and is not caught, the victim is more likely to meet with derogatory reactions (Bal & Van den Bos, 2010). When perpetrators are not caught, derogatory reactions to innocent victims are especially more likely (e.g., Hafer, 2000a; Lerner & Miller, 1978). These effects presumably are out there because victims or perpetrators that are more similar to you pose a stronger threat to your personal world (Bal & Van den Bos, 2010; Lerner & Miller, 1978). When a perpetrator is not caught this makes justice concerns more accessible (Hafer, 2000a), as a result of which you tend to use more abstract language to describe the victim's behavior (Helder, Sutton, & Van den Bos, 2014) and you are more likely to label the behavior and personality of the victim in more negative terms.

This is not the time and the place to provide a thorough and complete review of the impressive research findings that have been obtained following Lerner's pioneering and groundbreaking work on the justice motive. Here we simply state that the justice motive is very important and that many components of Lerner's just-world theory have been supported in careful and important research studies (see, e.g., Baumert, Otto, Thomas, Bobocel, & Schmitt, 2012; Callan, Ellard, Shead, & Hodgins, 2008; Callan, Kay, Davidenko, & Ellard, 2009; Callan, Shead, & Olson, 2009; Callan, Sutton, & Dovale, 2010; Correia & Vala, 2003; Dalbert, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002; Dalbert & Katona-Sallay, 1996; Gollwitzer, 2004; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012; Gollwitzer, Meder, & Schmitt, 2011; Gollwitzer, Rothmund, Alt, & Jekel, 2012; Gollwitzer, Rothmund, Pfeiffer, & Ensenbach, 2009; Gollwitzer, Schmitt,

Schalke, Maes, & Baer, 2005; Hafer, 2000a, 2000b; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Hafer, Bègue, Choma, & Dempsey, 2005; Hafer & Olson, 1993; Maes & Kals, 2002; Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1986; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, & Arbach, 2005; Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada, 1995; Schmitt, Oswald, Kim, Gillespie, & Ramsay, 2004; Sutton & Douglas, 2005; Sutton, Douglas, Wilkin, Elder, & Cole, 2008).

We further note that we work from the assumption that justice is frequently a very real concern to people and is of great motivational importance to many. So, in our examination of the psychological processes that may underlie the justice motive, we are certainly *not* suggesting that justice concerns are a myth. Quite the contrary (see, e.g., Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998), we assume that justice is a fundamental motive and that it quite often takes priority over self-interest. That said, we do note that researchers should thoroughly study the conditions under which justice is more of a concern to people and those under which it is less important to them (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002, 2009, 2013; Van den Bos, Peters, Bobocel, & Ybema, 2006). It is to a discussion of this work that we now turn.

### 10.1.1 Two-Phase Model of Self-Interest and Justice Concerns

It is our explicit assumption that people are social beings who tend to care in genuine ways about fairness and justice and in essence are benign creatures who want to do the right thing (Van den Bos & Lind, 2013; Van den Bos et al., 2011). Research has supported this assumption in important ways. For example, many research studies have shown that the majority of people tend to adhere to a prosocial orientation such that they value that their own outcomes are distributed equally compared to outcomes of other people (Van den Bos et al., 2011; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997; see also Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012; Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994; Van Lange & Liebrand, 1991a, 1991b).

Van Lange, Otten et al. (1997) developed a nine-item decomposed game measure of social value orientation by means they could classify research participants as prosocial, individualistic, or competitive depending on whether the majority of their choices were consistent with one of these three social value orientations. Using this measure, several studies have found that the largest group of participants tends to be prosocial, as opposed to individualistic or competitive. For example, Van Lange, Otten et al. (1997, Study 4) observed that in a representative sample of the Dutch adult population ( $N=1728$ ), 71 % of the respondents could be identified as prosocials. Van Lange (1999) concluded that it is common to find in student samples that more than 50 % of the participants can be identified as prosocial. Furthermore, the prevalence of prosocials tends to be even more pronounced in the adult population in the Netherlands than in student samples in the psychology laboratory (Van Lange, Otten et al., 1997). Moreover, similar findings are obtained in the U.S. and other countries (Van Lange, Agnew et al., 1997; Van Lange & Kuhlman, 1994; Van Lange & Liebrand, 1991a, 1991b; see also Balliet, Parks, & Joireman, 2009).

Along these lines, we note that it seems reasonable to assume that many people in organizations want to do what is right (Lind & Van den Bos, 2013). In fact, people with these positive social values may constitute as much as 90 % of the general population in labor organizations (IJfs, 2012). This said, there are undoubtedly other people who are purposively looking for opportunities to cheat and to engage in fraudulent acts. This group may constitute only 2 % of a given labor organization, but it may be a very salient group, once detected, and may have detrimental effects on the organization's profits and other outcomes, in part because this 2 % can influence an additional 8 % in the organization who are inclined to follow fraudulent norms when given the opportunity (IJfs, 2012).

Of course, notwithstanding the prosocial orientation of the majority in many research samples, we are aware that some people clearly engage in selfish, exploitative, or even fraudulent

behavior. Certainly, there are those with a competitive orientation who would like to outperform others, sometimes even at the expense of some of their own personal gains (Van Lange, Otten et al., 1997), and these people might be tempted to engage in anti-social and blatantly unfair and unjust behavior (Van den Bos & Lind, 2013). Furthermore, even those who are oriented toward cooperation may sometimes be oriented toward their own hedonic responses and the fulfillment of their self-interest concerns. For example, people generally do not like getting outcomes that are advantageous but inequitable in comparison to the outcomes of comparable other persons, but when responding under conditions of high cognitive load, people tend to be satisfied with getting unfair but better outcomes (Van den Bos et al., 2006).

Thus, we are definitely not denying that cheaters, frauds, and serious criminals are out there (see also Ariely, 2012). But we also note that many people, and probably even the largest group of people in several countries, are genuinely oriented toward cooperative or prosocial behavior (Rand et al., 2012). The two-phase model we put forward here, in which self-interested responses may dominate first reactions and correction for genuine fairness and justice takes place somewhat later, may explain the reactions of the majority of people (Van den Bos et al., 2011).

Research on the two-phase model thus far has focused on how people respond to outcomes that are advantageous but inequitable in comparison to the outcomes of other persons (Van den Bos et al., 2006). The model argues that one way to understand the intriguing interplay between egoism- and fairness-based considerations is to note that, when responding to advantageous inequity, judging the advantage is quick and easy as preferences are primary (Messick, 1993), whereas assessments of fairness are more complicated. Adjusting this initial, egoistic appraisal requires the investment of additional cognitive resources, as it entails integrating fairness concerns with the initial preference appraisal. This interpretation of reactions to advantageous inequity suggests a two-phase model of people's reactions, in which people's very first reaction when confronted

with advantageous inequity is one of pleasure (“Wow, I get more than someone else, that’s great!”). This egoism-based, gut reaction perhaps occurs in a rather spontaneous manner that is difficult to control. We suggest that it is only after this first spontaneous reaction of pleasure that people consider the fairness of the situation (“Hey, but that’s not fair!”). This latter, fairness-based reaction is not as automatic and fast as the first egoism-based reaction. People need a little time (e.g., some seconds) and a little more cognitive effort to discover, understand, and respond to the unfairness of a situation in which they are better off than others for no good reason, and this correction process can only take place when people have sufficient cognitive resources available (Van den Bos et al., 2006) and are motivated to do so (Van den Bos et al., 2011).

On the basis of these findings we propose a two-tier message: First, people’s gut reaction to distributions of advantageous inequity and other issues may be driven by egocentrism such that people’s reptile brain or primitive core lead them to be self-focused and to be pleased with things that are best for them (and not for others). Second, most people are benign beings who intend to do what is good and what is right (Van den Bos & Lind, 2013) and hence try to free cognitive resources that lead them to do the right thing and be oriented toward what others are getting. Thus, quite often, or perhaps even typically, most people tend to correct their self-centered inclinations to include a genuine other-oriented response with appropriate attention to what is fair and just.

Importantly, our line of reasoning certainly does not imply that preferences and pleasure are always selfish, as people sometimes may prefer or be pleased to see that persons other than themselves (such as persons in need) receive more of a valued resource than they themselves receive (e.g., Deutsch, 1975, 1985). We further note that, building on Strack and Deutsch (2004), it can be argued that both egoism-based preferences and fairness perceptions can work in parallel such that, once activated, both processes simultaneously influence people’s reactions and the occurrence of social behavior. However, there might be an asymmetry such that it is more likely

that the fairness route is more easily impaired compared to the egoism route (the latter being more automatic than the former; Van den Bos et al., 2006).

It is noteworthy that our suggestion that preferences are more immediate than fairness considerations corresponds with Zajonc’s (1980) position that feelings and preferences may be more primary than are thoughts and inferences (see also De Houwer, Thomas, & Bayens, 2001). We hasten to say that the exact processes underlying Zajonc’s position have been disputed (for an overview of this discussion, see, e.g., Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001) and similarly that the implications that follow from our research should be validated in future research. It is our hope that the experimental findings we reviewed here provide a new perspective on the empirical study of preferences and fairness concerns and that this may stimulate researchers to investigate the implications of this perspective.

A candidate for another process explaining people’s reactions to advantageous inequity may be suggested by a study by Rivera and Tedeschi (1976). Participants in the bogus pipeline condition of this study were led to believe that a bogus apparatus could detect their true feelings by implicit muscle responses, whereas participants in a paper-and-pencil condition were not given this impression. Furthermore, in the bogus pipeline condition, dependent variables were measured by asking participants to indicate their ratings by turning a dial moving a pointer along a meter. In the paper-and-pencil condition, dependent variables were assessed using the normal paper-and-pencil procedures. Findings indicated that participants reported more happiness with advantageous inequity in the bogus pipeline condition than in the paper-and-pencil condition. Rivera and Tedeschi’s account for their findings is that when paper-and-pencil procedures are used people’s reactions are public, whereas when bogus pipeline procedures are used reactions are private. The authors further argue that, because people want to create positive impressions of themselves to others, they will report less happiness with advantageous inequity in public circumstances.

It should be emphasized, however, that the Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) results have been criticized (e.g., Ellard, Meindl, & Lerner, 2004), and that more recent research findings suggest that fairness is important to people even in completely private circumstances (see, e.g., Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002). Furthermore, there are several issues that limit the validity of Rivera and Tedeschi's (1976) interpretation of their findings, such as the confound between the bogus pipeline procedure (present vs. absent) and the way in which dependent variables were assessed (dial equipment vs. paper and pencil). Moreover, it is not clear whether participants indeed perceived the paper-and-pencil conditions to be more public.

In addition, Roese and Jamieson (1993) noted in their thorough review of bogus pipeline research that when researchers wish to import the bogus pipeline procedure to their research domain in an effort to reduce impression management and social desirability effects, they should first demonstrate that some form of impression management bias indeed influences reactions in the domain of interest. Roese and Jamieson (1993) suggest that an obvious way to accomplish this would be to associate reactions in the domain of interest with responses on impression management or social desirability scales. To the best of our knowledge, there have been no equity studies that have incorporated one of these scales. If future research findings would indeed support Rivera and Tedeschi's (1976) account of the difference between public and private reactions to advantageous inequity (but see Ellard et al., 2004; Turillo et al., 2002), we would suggest that this account is congruent with the line of reasoning we have put forward here: In private circumstances, preferences may influence people's outcome evaluations more strongly than in public situations. In public (as opposed to private) circumstances, people may be more strongly motivated to incorporate fairness-based considerations to convey a positive impression of themselves to others, especially when they have enough cognitive capacity for doing so. We explicitly want to note here that both the social desirability effects suggested by the Rivera and

Tedeschi (1976) study and the preferences vs. fairness considerations line of thinking presented earlier in this paper need further research, as does the relationship between these two lines of thought and the processes they suggest.

### 10.1.2 Rationalistic and Experiential Routes to Victim Blaming

Thus far we focused on social-cognitive processes that may impact how people calibrate their self-interest and fairness concerns, for example when responding to outcome arrangements of advantageous inequity. Some other basic cognitive processes also underlie the justice motive and how people react to innocent victims that pose a threat to their belief in a just world. These processes can be derived from cognitive-experiential self-theory (Epstein, 1985, 1994; Epstein & Pacini, 1999). Based on this theory, Van den Bos and Maas (2009) argued that people react to their environment by means of two information processing systems: an experiential system that operates according to heuristic principles and a more rationalistic system that operates through a person's understanding of logical rules of inference (cf. Epstein, 1985, 1994; Epstein & Pacini, 1999). The experiential system processes information automatically, rapidly, effortlessly, and efficiently, and it is built upon learned experiences, like the rules of deservingness that children learn during socialization. The rationalistic system, in contrast, is a deliberative, effortful, and abstract system, in which people weigh information carefully.

The distinction between experiential and rationalistic mindsets can be used to get more direct insight into the psychology of people's blaming of victims for their misfortunes (see also Van den Bos & Maas, 2012). To this end, Van den Bos and Maas (2009) asked participants to take part in several studies that ostensibly were unrelated to each other. In one of these studies either experiential or rationalistic mindsets were induced among the participants: In the experiential mindset condition, participants were asked to respond to a story on the basis of their intuitions

and gut feelings. Participants in the rationalistic mindset condition were asked to respond to the same story on the basis of careful and analytic consideration of the information given in the text. When participants thus had been put into one of the two mindsets, they participated in another study that was ostensibly unrelated to the study in which we induced their mindsets. In this new study, participants were confronted with a victim of robbery or sexual assault and we assessed the extent to which our participants blamed the victims for their misfortunes.

Based on modern dual-process models that distinguish between associative and propositional processes (e.g., Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Sloman, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Strack & Deutsch, 2004), experiential and rationalistic mindsets can be linked to the theoretical distinction that has been made between associative and propositional processes. That is, the principles of spatio-temporal contiguity that have been argued to underlie associative processes and experiential mindsets promote the creation of associative links between the victim and the affective quality of the negative event. As the creation of such links via associative processes is largely independent of people's explicit beliefs, the contiguity between the victim and the negative event can produce negative reactions to the victim independent of people's just-world beliefs. Thus, this line of reasoning predicted that in experiential mindset conditions, the strength with which people believe in a just world or the extent to which these beliefs have been threatened would not strongly impact blaming of innocent victims.

This situation is different for rationalistic mindsets and processes of rule-based or propositional reasoning, which are characterized by principles of consistency and logical inference (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Sloman, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Specifically, learning about an innocent victim ("person X") creates a logically inconsistent system of beliefs that includes three propositions: (1) "The world is a just place;" (2) "A negative event happened to person X;" and (3) "Person X did not deserve that." This system of

beliefs is inconsistent, in that the three propositions cannot be endorsed at the same time without violating the notion of logical consistency. Thus, in order to avoid cognitive dissonance, people either have to reject one of the three propositions or find a new proposition that resolves the inconsistency (Gawronski & Strack, 2004). People who strongly endorse the first proposition (which would be the case when people have high just-world beliefs or when their just-world beliefs have been threatened strongly) can change the cognition underlying the third proposition and hence blame the victim. Moreover, if the first proposition is rejected from the outset (which would be the case when people have low just-world beliefs or when just-world beliefs are been threatened only weakly), there is no inconsistency in the first place and therefore no need to blame the victim by rejecting the third proposition. Thus, this line of reasoning argues that in rationalistic mindset conditions, people would blame innocent victims more when they believe strongly in a just world or when their beliefs in a just world had been threatened strongly.

The inconsistency-based blaming of an innocent victim resulting from propositional processes is quite different from the blaming that results from the mere linking of the victim with the negative event via associative processes. Most importantly, from this line of reasoning follows that just-world beliefs should play a significant role only for victim blaming resulting from propositional reasoning, but not for victim blaming resulting from associative processes. Thus, based on this theoretical line of reasoning, interaction effects were predicted between the mindset manipulation and measurements or manipulations of just-world concerns. That is, Van den Bos and Maas (2009) predicted that participants in the rationalistic mindset conditions would blame victims more when they believed strongly in a just world or when their beliefs in a just world had been threatened, whereas there was no expectation of strong effects of the measure or manipulation of just-world endorsement in the experiential conditions.

The two experiments that were presented in the Van den Bos and Maas (2009) article indeed

showed that especially when people have adopted rationalistic mindsets that individual differences and situational fluctuations pertaining to the endorsement of the just-world belief yield strong effects on blaming of innocent victims. That is, people in rationalistic mindsets blamed victims more strongly when they were strongly predisposed to endorse the belief in a just world. In contrast, in experiential mindsets victim blaming did not vary as a function of the strength of this endorsement. The findings also showed that people in rationalistic mindsets blamed victims more when their just-world beliefs had been strongly as opposed to weakly threatened. In experiential mindsets, victim blaming did not vary as a function of the strength of just-world threats.

These findings are in accordance with the hypothesized linkage between experiential and rationalistic mindsets and associative and propositional processes and support a longstanding (but thus far untested) suspicion that there may be two paths to victim blaming, an intuitive-experiential one and rational-cognitive one. To the degree that experiential mindsets increase the reliance on associative knowledge structures and rationalistic mindsets increase the reliance on consistency principles and logical inference (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Sloman, 1996; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Strack & Deutsch, 2004), the distinction between associative and propositional processes provides a strong a priori explanation why experiential and rationalistic mindsets produce different outcomes. That is, victim blaming under experiential and rationalistic mindsets are the result of very different evaluation processes, such that victim blaming in experiential mindsets is due to the associative process of linking the victim to the negative event, whereas victim blaming under rationalistic mindsets is due to propositional processes of logical inference and reduction of cognitive inconsistency.

One of the reasons why we think that these findings may be important is because they can be contrasted with an alternative prediction. That is, given the strong emphasis on intuitive processes in theories of moral reasoning (e.g., Haidt, 2001), one could also expect the opposite finding, namely that just-world beliefs and just-world

threats moderate victim blaming under experiential mindsets but not under rationalistic mindsets. This alternative prediction would be in line with Lerner and Goldberg's (1999) emphasis on belief in a just-world effects being especially strong when people are in experiential mindsets (see also Lerner, 1998). That is, these authors emphasize the important role that intuitive-experiential mindsets play in people's blaming reactions. As stated by Lerner and Goldberg (1999): "It should be no surprise to find that people who care deeply about justice experience strong emotions when confronted with a victim. The important dynamics underlying those emotions should take place in the experiential system and involve implicit cognitions, such as the moral intuitions concerning what is just and good" (p. 631).

Thus, we think that the Van den Bos and Maas (2009) results are also important because based on the notion that experiential processes may be driving just-world effects (Lerner, 1998; Lerner & Goldberg, 1999), one could also argue that endorsement of just-world beliefs should moderate victim blaming under experiential mindsets, but not under rationalistic mindsets. However, this was not the interaction effect that was obtained in the 2009 studies by Van den Bos and Maas. This noted, Van den Bos and Maas (2009) did find a main effect of the mindset manipulation in their first experiment such that experiential mindsets led to more victim blaming than rationalistic mindsets. This effect was observed in only one of the studies though and thus should be treated with caution. However, in the same experiment Van den Bos and Maas did observe that when participants believed in a just world relatively weakly, they blamed the victims more for their misfortunes when in experiential as opposed to rationalistic mindsets. Related to this, in their second experiment it was found that when just-world beliefs had only been threatened weakly, participants in experiential mindsets blamed victims more than participants in rationalistic mindsets did. Thus, these findings show some evidence for experiential effects on victim blaming, especially when endorsement of just-world belief was relatively low (as a result of individual predisposition or experimental manipulation).

In our opinion, experiential processes may be an important determinant of justice-related reactions (see also Maas & Van den Bos, 2009; Van den Bos & Lind, 2009; Van den Bos & Maas, 2012), but our assumption is that this is more likely to be the case for justice-related reactions that are easier to process (such as reactions to voice vs. no-voice procedures or other fair vs. unfair procedures) than reactions that involve much more information (such as responses to events where innocent people fell victim to terrible crimes caused by a perpetrator who has not been caught). In correspondence with this assumption, the findings of the Van den Bos and Maas (2009) paper suggest that one type of reactions that are affected by experiential processes is victim blaming among people who are only weakly concerned with justice concerns (and who hence probably process justice-related information in more superficial ways than those concerned strongly with justice concerns). Furthermore, other recently obtained findings suggest that experiential mindsets may also influence self-oriented affective responses to fair and unfair procedures that people have experienced themselves (Maas & Van den Bos, 2009), and it has been suggested that these responses may have a more heuristic quality than more cold-cognitive justice judgments (Van den Bos, 2007; Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997). Reactions to innocent victims normally may involve more consistency-based reasoning (and hence more systematic information processing) than people engage in when they experientially blame innocent victims. More research is needed to test this assumption as well as to examine in detail all the implications this line of reasoning may have for intuitive and rationalistic perspectives on moral reasoning (see, e.g., Beauchamp, 2001; Haidt, 2001, 2003; Pizarro & Bloom, 2003), earlier studies on rationalistic and experiential processes pertaining to blame and cultural worldview defense (see, e.g., Alicke, 2000; Hirschberger, 2006; Simon et al., 1997), and possible differences and similarities between procedural justice and belief in a just-world effects (see, e.g., Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Whitehead, 1980; Maas & Van den Bos, 2009; Van den Bos & Maas, 2009).

## 10.2 Motivational Processes

Besides social-cognitive processes, motivational factors also impact people's desire for justice, how they form justice judgments, and how they respond to fair and unfair events. Earlier reviews described this line of reasoning in detail (see, e.g., Van den Bos, 2009a, 2009b, *in press*; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002, 2009, 2013; Van den Bos & Maas, 2012). These reviews focused on the relationship between the uncertain self and how people respond to fair and unfair events. The general message that can be derived from this work is that perceived fairness has special qualities for people who are trying to cope with experiences of uncertainty or other alarming events that instigate motivated self-regulatory responses. That is, when people are confronted with events such as economic problems, reorganization processes, potential lay-offs (Brockner, 2010), and also more general personal uncertainty-provoking experiences (Van den Bos, 2001), this signals to them that something potentially alarming may be going on that warrants their attention (Van den Bos et al., 2008). As a result, the individuals involved are likely to engage in sense-making and social appraisal processes in order to make sense of what is going on and what they should expect will be happening (Van den Bos & Lind, 2013). Processes related to uncertainty management and self-regulation thus seem to be involved in the formation of justice judgments, how people use these judgments, and what function these judgments play in people's desire for justice. It is to a brief review of current work on the issues of uncertainty management and self-regulation that we now turn.

### 10.2.1 Future Orientation and Managing Personal Uncertainty

When trying to understand why uncertainty frequently has strong effects on people's reactions, it is interesting to note that most humans nowadays live in delayed-return cultures in which future rewards often are delayed (Martin, 1999). In these cultures, an important issue is how

people deal with these and other uncertainties (Bal & Van den Bos, 2012).

According to Woodburn (1982a, 1982b, 1988; see also Feit, 1994; Testart, 1982), the large majority of people nowadays live in cultures that are composed of various sorts of societal agreements and social arrangements that ask individuals to put in effort that may or may not pay off in the long run. A good example is the raising and educating of children in modern societies. Lerner (e.g., 1977) has argued convincingly that a lot of socialization processes can be characterized by parents, teachers, and other adults informing children how to behave such that they are “a good boy” or “a good girl.” These behaviors range from toilet training (with very young children), to social skills (“play nice with the other kids”), writing and math skills (“getting a good education will get you somewhere in this world and thus it is somehow important to learn how to solve logarithm problems”), and listening carefully to your coach during soccer practice. The idea is that grown-ups inform children what is the appropriate way of how to behave, with the implicit or not so implicit message that when the child conforms to these rules, the adult or role model (parent, teacher, sport coach, etc.) will value the child, and as a result, the child will be rewarded in the long run. These rewards can be both material and social, and they come in different sorts, such as getting ice cream for desert, praise from the teacher, or being awarded a place in the starting lineup of the soccer team. In other words, children are assured that if they perform certain behaviors or adopt certain values, they will receive a positive outcome later in life—an outcome that may or may not be realized. In the delayed-return cultures in which we are living (Woodburn, 1982a, 1982b, 1988), we engage in immediate effort for payoffs that are delayed and whose occurrence depends on the maintenance of specific social arrangements (e.g., your society will still value individuals who can solve logarithm problems).

Thus, in delayed-return societies there is often a delay between the efforts individuals exert and the feedback they receive regarding the outcome of their efforts. As a result, individuals may frequently experience periods of uncertainty

between their efforts and their payoff, and they may find at the end of these periods that their efforts did not pay off. By that time, it may be too late for them to switch to an alternate strategy. This leads individuals in delayed-return societies to focus more on the past (“did I invest enough?”) and the future (“will I obtain the results I desire?”) than people in immediate-return cultures (Meillassoux, 1973; Turnbull, 1962; Woodburn, 1988). Similarly, in contexts in which delayed returns are more emphasized or more salient, past and future orientation will be more important (relative to contexts in which people are better able to live in the “here and now”).

From the analysis we have presented here follows that an important aspect of how people live their lives in delayed-return cultures has to do with the issue of how they deal with the uncertainties they encounter in their lives and in their cultures (Van den Bos, 2009a). How do individuals in delayed-return societies cope with the uncertainties and delays presented to them by their culture? We argue that people have developed mechanisms designed to give them confidence that their efforts will pay off. These include such things as formal long-term binding commitments (such as marriage) and adherence to cultural worldviews and ideologies that justify their efforts. These worldviews comprise of (but are not restricted to) the protestant or puritan work ethic (Weber, 1958) and the belief that the world is a just place where bad things only happen to bad people (Lerner, 1977, 1980).

The work ethic idea by Weber (1958) is a social mechanism that demands the cooperation of specific others. Unless both individuals in a social commitment hold up their end of the deal, there is likely to be no payoff to the efforts of one or both parties. Moreover, the motivation to uphold one’s end of a deal is strengthened in delayed-return societies by the societal sanctioning of a power hierarchy. Individuals in delayed-return societies have explicit laws and give certain members of the society (e.g., the police) the power to enforce those laws.

With regard to the belief in a just world, theorizing and research suggest that the need to believe in a just world develops when children

begin to understand the benefits of foregoing their immediate gratifications for more desirable, long-term outcomes. Evidence for delayed-return aspects of the just-world hypothesis comes from research by Hafer (2000b) who revealed that the more one focuses on long-term goals, the more essential is the belief in a just world and the more one will work at maintaining this belief when it is threatened. As predicted, strong long-term focus participants reacted more negatively toward an innocent victim (as opposed to a victim who was not innocent), presumably to maintain the belief that the world is a just place where good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people. Hafer also showed that the more one focuses on long-term investments, the stronger one's belief in the just world (see also Hafer et al., 2005). Related to this, Callan, Shead, and Olson (2009) revealed that an extant just-world threat may induce a desire for smaller, immediate rewards at the expense of larger, delayed rewards.

Building on this line of reasoning, Bal and Van den Bos (2012) argued that motivational processes underlying responses to just-world threats typically take place in contexts where people are dealing with issues of personal uncertainty in delayed-return contexts. More specifically, we proposed that a focus on the future enhances intolerance of personal uncertainty. People often have to invest time, money, and energy now in order to obtain a reward later. And while several influential social psychological theories focus on the importance and benefits of delaying gratification and striving for long-term goals (e.g., Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998), delayed rewards are often uncertain, which could lead to feelings of personal uncertainty or self-doubt (Van den Bos, 2009a). Therefore, we expect that a strong future orientation can make people more intolerant of these feelings of personal uncertainty.

According to the uncertainty management model (Van den Bos, 2001, 2009a, 2009b; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002, 2009), personal uncertainty is defined as a subjective sense of doubt or instability in self-views, worldviews, or the interrelation between the two (Van den Bos, 2009a).

The model proposes that people develop and adhere to cultural worldviews to be able to tolerate this uncertainty. Building and extending on these insights, Bal and Van den Bos (2012) argued that in order to tolerate the personal uncertainty associated with adopting a future orientation, people may adhere to the belief in a just world more strongly. In other words, we suggested that one way of dealing with intolerance of personal uncertainty associated with focusing on the future is adhering to the belief in a just world more strongly and thus react more negatively toward innocent victims. Combining these ideas we proposed and showed that intolerance of personal uncertainty associated with a future orientation underlies negative reactions toward innocent victims.

### 10.2.2 Self-Regulation and the Justice Motive

Partly based on the above-mentioned reviews, we would like to suggest that dealing with threats to people's just-world beliefs constitutes a motivated self-regulation process. Loseman and Van den Bos (2012) argued that an implication of this assumption is that when self-regulation is impaired, the aversive threat experience will continue, making it more likely that people are inclined to regulate the threat by blaming and derogating an innocent victim. In contrast, when self-regulation is facilitated, chances are higher that the threat will be regulated more easily, which removes the urge to blame and derogate the victim. Loseman and Van den Bos tested these predictions in studies that examined the influence of impairment and facilitation of self-regulation on how people deal with just-world threats.

In their 2012 article, Loseman and Van den Bos noted that processes of self-regulation need self-regulation resources (Baumeister, Bratlavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). This implies that shortcomings in the availability of these resources lead to the insufficient functioning of motivated self-regulation processes. The state in which self-regulation resources are depleted is known as

ego-depletion (Baumeister et al., 1998). Research on ego-depletion typically tests the effect of performing one self-regulation task on performance of any subsequent task that involves self-regulation (e.g., Vohs, Baumeister, & Ciarocco, 2005). This effect entails that ego-depletion (by means of an earlier self-regulation task) impairs following processes of self-regulation.

Loseman and Van den Bos (2012) further argued that the effect of ego-depletion can be counteracted by intervention strategies (Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009). One such psychological intervention is self-affirmation, basically the enhancement of the perceived integrity of the self (Koole, Smeets, Van Knippenberg, & Dijksterhuis, 1999; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009; Steele, 1988). Self-affirmation has been shown to facilitate self-regulation in a whole range of different settings, like in cases of rumination (Koole et al., 1999), the challenge of one's beliefs (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000), threatening health messages (Sherman, Nelson, & Steele, 2000), and mortality threat (Schmeichel & Martens, 2005). Therefore, both self-affirmation and ego-depletion seem to be appropriate factors when examining self-regulation processes of dealing with just-world threats.

Annemarie Loseman and Kees van den Bos tested the above-mentioned predictions in two studies. In accordance with research on ego-depletion (e.g., Gailliot, Schmeichel, & Baumeister, 2006) and self-affirmation (e.g., Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009), the two studies focused on different parts of the self-regulation process. In Study 1, ego-depletion was induced before participants received threatening information that posed a strong (vs. weak) threat to their belief that the world is a just place. In Study 2, self-affirmation was induced after participants received the information that strongly (vs. weakly) threatened their just-world beliefs. Study 2 was conducted using a student sample and Study 1 was run in a non-student population. In both studies participants were confronted with a reported event of an innocent young woman who fell victim of a rape crime, which generally entails a threat to the idea that in this world everybody gets what he or she deserves.

Findings of the two studies supported the self-regulatory function of the justice motive. That is, as predicted, Study 1 showed that when self-regulation resources were depleted, participants blamed the innocent victim more for her ill fate when the situation constituted a stronger just-world threat (i.e., the perpetrator had not been caught) compared to when this threat was weaker (i.e., the perpetrator had been caught). Study 2 revealed that self-affirmation—known for facilitating self-regulation—caused the blaming of innocent victims to attenuate, leading participants not to blame the victim more when the just-world threat was higher.

Taken together, these findings suggest that coping with just-world threats involves self-regulatory processes leading to more or less defensive reactions (like blaming innocent victims). When people's self-regulatory resources are depleted, they react more negatively to innocent victims when they constitute a stronger threat to the belief that the world is a just place. Facilitating self-regulation, by means of self-affirmation, enables people to cope with just-world threats, thereby inhibiting the urge to blame innocent victims. Thus, these results support the idea of a self-regulation basis of coping with just-world threats as evidenced in both the impairment of self-regulation caused by ego-depletion and the facilitating role of self-affirmation (Loseman & Van den Bos, 2012).

Future research is needed to examine all the ins and outs of our hypothesis that self-regulatory processes underlie important effects that are reported in the extensive literature on people's belief in a just world. In addition, research findings may yield more nuanced insights into the functioning of the justice motive and the justice judgment process than depicted thus far in this chapter. For example, Van Prooijen and Van den Bos (2009) found some evidence that it is especially social (not individual) aspects of people's self-construal that can make innocent victims particularly threatening to just-world beliefs. This would be the case because social self-construal emphasizes the fact that similar others are vulnerable to uncontrollable harm, which reminds observers of the unpredictability of their own

fates. Instead of speculating about these issues in more depth than seems warranted, we now turn to our conclusions and a discussion of some issues pertaining to research methodology when studying the justice motive.

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### 10.3 Discussion

In the current chapter, we examined psychological processes that may underlie people's justice concerns. The psychological processes we focused on included both social-cognitive and motivational processes. In particular, we discussed a two-phase model of self-interest and justice concerns, rationalistic and experiential paths to blaming of innocent victims and their relationship with explicit just-world beliefs, future orientation and coping with personal uncertainty, and self-regulatory processes pertaining to the just-world motive.

Future research is needed to examine all the ins and outs of all the findings we discussed, including the robustness of the findings and how to operationalize dependent and independent variables (see, e.g., Van den Bos & Lind, 2013). For example, although we often find blaming and derogation of innocent victims, it frequently turns out to be quite difficult to obtain these effects in our lab or when testing our hypotheses in a non-student population (Bartelds, 2013), also when we include vivid and involving stimulus materials (Killaars, 2013). In fact, it is our impression that just-world effects are primarily found in reliable ways when participants respond to deeply involving stimulus materials in which they witness terrible crimes such as innocent victims being raped or sexually abused and not when participants witness somewhat "less awful" events such as someone being beaten up or being robbed.

This impression fits with a plea by Lerner (2003) to study the just-world hypothesis only by using emotionally involving stimuli. In contrast to Lerner (2003), however, it is our working hypothesis that our observation of sometimes non-robust just-world effects may suggest important boundary conditions before people's just-

world beliefs are threatened strongly enough to lead people to want to restore their belief that the world is just by blaming and derogating innocent victims for what happened to them. We are also putting forward this hypothesis (which can be tested systematically in future research) because rationalistic and experiential processes seem to affect the functioning of the justice motive in different ways than Lerner (2003) envisioned (Van den Bos & Maas, 2009, 2012). This does not imply that the justice motive would be a weak motive only, not at all. But it does suggest that it may not be that easy to get people to blame and derogate innocent victims. Partly in response to these issues, our work in progress currently also focuses on the more positive and empathic reactions to innocent victims that people may also show in robust and reliable ways (see, e.g., Bal & Van den Bos, 2014a, 2014b; Stel, Van den Bos, & Bal, 2012; Stel, Van den Bos, Sim, & Rispens, 2013). We are also studying these more positive reactions to victims because these reactions tend to be somewhat understudied in just-world research.

We are raising the issue of the robustness of effects studied because we think that more attention to appropriate specific details of research studies would make the justice literature even stronger than it already is. This is also an important reason why we included relevant details of the studies we reviewed here. We did this in the hope that this would increase insight into the psychology of the justice motive (and related processes) and that this, in turn, would yield a more robust and even more exciting psychological science of justice concerns.

For instance, we noted explicitly that the two-phase model of people's self-interested and justice responses has been tested thus far mainly in the context of reactions to advantageous inequity (Van den Bos et al., 2006). We think it is important to be aware that certain fine-grained psychological processes can best be studied by examining well-defined stimuli. Therefore, we stated that outcome arrangements of advantageous inequity may be better suited to study the conflict between self-interest and justice concerns than many other stimuli often studied in the

justice literature (Peters, Van den Bos, & Karremans, 2008). Researchers would do well to pay appropriate attention to these kinds of methodological specifics when developing their research designs.

Related to this, we examined different conceptual models in this chapter. These models may be related to some extent to each other, but also differ in important ways and have different explanatory value for different types of human reactions. For instance, the two-phase model of how people respond to advantageous inequity (Van den Bos et al., 2006) and the dual-path model to victim derogation (Van den Bos & Maas, 2009) focus on human responses that are clearly different from each other. In our view, it would be best to adopt an integrative view on different theoretical perspectives and to try to integrate these perspectives when one can, but at the same time, one should not equate theories or studies that focus on outcome satisfaction as a main dependent variable (e.g., Van den Bos et al., 2006) with those that concentrate on victim blaming and victim derogation (e.g., Van den Bos & Maas, 2009). Similarly, conceptual frameworks of reflective and impulsive determinants of social behavior (e.g., Strack & Deutsch, 2004) are related, yet are clearly not the same as models that focus on experiential and rationalistic processes (e.g., Epstein, 1985). In other words, not only “the devil is in the detail” (as the proverb goes), but appropriate attention to conceptual and methodological details is also needed for advanced theoretical and empirical progress in the area of the psychology of justice judgments.

The process-oriented study of justice concerns can also profit from other cognitive processes and motives underlying justice which we did not examine in full detail in this chapter. For example, with regards to motives, important work has been done on how belongingness and social identity motives relate to procedural justice (e.g., Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Lind, 1992) as well as distributive justice (e.g., Wenzel, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004). With respect to cognitive influences, recent work reveals how different disposi-

tions in victim sensitivity may affect the processing of unjust and just information (e.g., Baumert et al., 2012). This and other additional work clearly is relevant and important for a better understanding of the cognitive and motivational processes relevant to justice judgments and justice concerns.

The current chapter not only examined people’s reactions to innocent victims (an issue on which most just-world research focuses), but also reviewed theories and findings that examine more generally how people calibrate genuine concerns for justice with self-interested responses. In this way, the chapter aimed to integrate just-world research with the broader literature on the social psychology of justice judgments and justice concerns. In studying these issues, a central proposition formulated in this chapter is that social-cognitive and motivational processes underlying people’s reactions to innocent victims make up pivotal parts of what makes us human and play a crucial role in how we use justice judgments in our daily lives. In some way, one might say that the psychological processes that we study here move beyond the more traditional view of just-world theory. We are not entirely sure whether this interpretation of our findings would be warranted. In contrast, how we see it is that the research that we reviewed here is inspired by the groundbreaking work on the justice motive by Lerner and others. And by examining the psychological processes we focus on in this chapter, we hope to contribute a bit to what we see as the process-oriented grounding of the psychology of the justice motive.

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