

A Functional Perspective on the Justice Judgment Process and Its Consequences



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A Functional Perspective on the Justice Judgment Process and Its Consequences

Een Functioneel Perspectief op het Rechtvaardigheidsbeoordelingsproces
en Haar Consequenties

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

No reference to ancient philosophers is necessary to understand the importance of justice to people. If you have ever wondered precisely how pervasive justice is in our day-to-day life and communications, here is a figure to give you an idea. The prevalence of justice-related words such as “justice”, “fair” and “rights” take (in order of frequencies) respectively the 1,393rd, 1,110th, and 760th places in a total of 86,800 different English words. To offer a frame of reference: “soccer” ranks 5,839th, “psychology” 3,533rd, and “sex” 1,236th (www.wordcount.org). Obviously, justice is a subject that is on our minds and on our tongues. But why exactly do we use justice-talk? And when do we use it? And why should we study the subject of justice at all?

Maybe the most pertinent reason to study the subject of social justice is the fact that the darkest moments in history are characterized by its absence. The absence of justice can have devastating consequences for societies and individuals. Failing justice systems in times of war, suppression by dictators, and people taking justice in their own hands in times of social turmoil can disrupt societies at large for a long time even after returning to a normal situation. But on a more personal scale, too, the experience of injustice can have strong effects. A fair treatment gives us an opportunity to rebut and defend ourselves, and, often considered more important, it tells us whether we are valued and respected group members and are not excluded from important groups or exploited by relevant authorities (Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998) Also, fair outcome distributions ascertain that rewards and resources are in proportion to contributions and inputs (Adams, 1965).

The experience of (un)fairness can motivate people to cooperate or retaliate, to comply or revolt, to commit or leave, and so forth. Research has shown a broad array of negative effects on attitudes, feelings, and behaviors after the experience of unfair events. For example, people who feel that they have been treated unfairly are less likely to cooperate, show lower levels of morale and higher levels of work stress and overt and covert disobedience, are more likely to initiate lawsuits, may behave in antisocial ways and show more protest behavior (Huo et al., 1996; Lind, 2001; Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, 2000; Vermunt, Wit, Van den Bos, & Lind, 1996). On the other hand, the belief that one has been treated fairly generally leads to positive effects, such as acceptance of court rulings, obedience to the law, higher work satisfaction, more willingness to prevent and resolve conflicts, and more positive and less negative affect (Bobocel, Agar, Meyer, & Irving, 1998; Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & De Vera Park 1993; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Tyler, 1990; Van den Bos, 2001).

Justice exists between individuals and groups of individuals and is thus a social phenomenon. People treat others fairly or unfairly, are treated by others fairly or unfairly, and observe fair or unfair treatments with others. At the same time, people talk about their fair or unfair treatments of others, the fair or unfair treatment they received from others, and the fair or unfair treatments they have observed with others. For example, parents tell their children what is and what is not fair and just, and people talk to each other about events that they have experienced and hence create shared visions of fair and unfair treatments and distributions (e.g., Lerner, 1980). Communication thus constitutes a very important part of the social construction of what is considered fair or unfair. It is for this reason that an examination of how and when people talk about justice, and what the consequences of such communications are, is so important.

The first part of the present thesis aims to investigate why people use justice assertions, when they use them, and how this affects people's attitudes and behaviors. The second part of this thesis focuses on processes leading to justice judgments and justice reactions. That is, I will investigate how our attention system directs us toward unjust information. Also, I will go into the sensitivity that people display to justice issues and investigate what causes this so called justice sensitivity. Knowledge of these basic matters may further our understanding of the role fairness plays in communications. Before turning to these matters, I will briefly review the relevant social psychological literature on justice. This review of the literature is by no means exhaustive, but is meant to give the reader an introduction to the existing knowledge.

Theoretical Background

In the present thesis I use a broad conceptualization of fairness and justice. I assume that justice refers not only to fair treatment but also to respect for the needs and rights inherent to human nature (Adler, 1981; Furby, 1986). Also, the focus is not on the legal perspective of justice, but rather, on anything in subjective judgments that may count as unfair or unjust to people because we know from research how strongly these subjective experiences shape behavior and well-being. In general, the aim of social psychology is to describe how people think, feel, and behave. Thus, in social psychological research on experiences of fairness, the interest is on how feelings, thoughts, and behaviors influence perceptions of fairness or unfairness, and how these perceptions of fairness influence how people think, feel and behave. In the present thesis, the terms justice and fairness are used interchangeably to refer to people's subjective feelings of fairness.

Early interests from social psychology for social justice focused on the division of resources. This interest was in part instigated by an expectation that the world would face an increasingly intense competition for scarce resources (e.g., Lerner, 1981). Fairness theories tried to answer how to divide these scarce resources. Of the most prominent of these distributive justice theories is the equity theory (Adams, 1965). Equity theory posits that justice judgments reflect the proportion of outcomes relative to contributions of group members. For example, when two colleagues work equally hard on their job, an equal pay is often considered fair. In contrast, both receiving more than the other (advantageous inequity) or receiving less than the other (disadvantageous inequity) results in “inequity distress” and will be judged unfair (Adams, 1965; Van den Bos, 1999; Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997). A further proposition of equity theory is that people try to maximize their outcomes (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). This often results in a self-serving bias in justice judgments (e.g., Messick & Sentis, 1985; Ross & Sicoly, 1979; Thompson & Loewenstein, 1992), ironically often hindering resolution of conflicts, as was the initial aim of distributive justice rules. Two other principles that are recognized to influence justice judgments are equality (i.e., treat all people alike) and need (i.e., everyone’s needs should be met). Equality and need seem to be endorsed to advance some social goal (Folger, Sheppard and Buttram, 1995) but ignore differences in effort, talent and individual productivity.

A shortcoming of equity theory, as well as of the need and equality principles, is that attention is focused exclusively on the outcome of a distribution. Thus, desirable end-states are formulated by equity, equality and need principles, but not the appropriate and legitimate means for achieving that end. How outcomes are obtained, the procedural fairness of a distribution, also influences justice judgments to a great extent. According to Thibaut and Walker (1975), central to the fairness of a procedure is whether people are allowed to exercise control over the decision making process by voicing their opinion (the “voice effect”; Folger, 1977). When people are offered an opportunity to voice their opinion they judge a procedure and the outcome of that procedure fairer and more positive, even if the outcome itself is negative (e.g., Tyler, 1987; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985; but see, Van den Bos, Bruins, Wilke & Dronkert, 1999). A diversity of subsequent studies has shown that procedural fairness influences people’s reactions stronger than distributive justice (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985; Tyler & Caine, 1981; Van den Bos, Lind, et al., 1997).

Initially, it was assumed that people judged these fair procedures more positively solely because the ability to voice their opinion gave people control over their outcome, thus increasing the probability of a favorable (Leventhal, 1980) or equitable (Thibaut & Walker, 1978) outcome. However, later findings contested this instrumental account of procedural fairness. Most notably, Lind, Kanfer, and Earley (1990) found that people judge procedures to be more fair even when the opportunity to voice an opinion was given after the resources were distributed. This research was inspired on previous correlational studies that indicated that noninstrumental concerns mediate the voice-effect (Tyler et al., 1985). Thus, although participants were unable to influence the outcome, they still judged the possibility to voice their opinion more fairly.

These non-instrumental accounts of voice procedures led Tyler and his colleagues to conclude that fair procedures have an important value-expressive function. According to the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988), the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992), and the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003), an important reason why people value a fair treatment is because it conveys relational information, such as respect, standing and trustworthiness. When one's opinion is asked (i.e., a fair procedure), this communicates that the person is a valuable and respected group member and that the group is a worthy group to belong to. Also, it communicates inclusion in the group. All three models stress that people display great appreciation when fairness is done, but when people believe that injustice has prevailed they experience aversive reactions, such as anger, fear, and disgust. Thus, justice cues provide important information for people and can have strong effects. Also, instrumental concerns can explain some, but not all of the reactions to fair and unfair outcomes and procedures.

Nevertheless, instrumental concerns may play an important role in the justice judgment process that has been overlooked in previous research. I suggest there may be a functionality in justice judgments that is distinct from self-serving motives as put forth by earlier researchers (e.g., Adams, 1965; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Specifically, given that voice procedures constitute such a central aspect of justice research and lead to a broad array of effects because they convey valuable information, and given that justice is central to people's evaluations of social situations (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002), I suggest that justice can be employed by people (e.g., adopted in their speech) to influence others or to attract others' attention. A related instrumental view has been expressed by Tyler (2001) who discussed the use of fair procedures as a strategy for exercising authority. In his view,

authorities can adopt procedures that appear to be fair to achieve the positive effects associated with these procedures. Others have argued that people adopt justice in their rhetoric to strengthen their argumentation (Lerner, 1981, p.15; Reis, 1984, p. 37; Messick & Sentis, 1983, p. 90; Miller, 2001, p. 534; Finkel, 2000). However, only a small amount of research studies has studied the content of what people voice, when they voice their opinion in a fair procedure. This research has described *what* aspects of fairness people focus on when they talk about personal experiences of injustice, but not *why* they use it (Finkel, 2000; Messick et al., 1985; Mikula, Petri & Tanzer, 1990).

It remains unclear, therefore, when and why people spontaneously refer to justice and how people react when they encounter justice-related arguments in the communications of others. Research that may be particularly interesting in this respect has focused on more basic cognitive processes underlying justice judgments. Previous research has shown that people spontaneously activate justice knowledge after having read statements implying fair and unfair events (Ham & Van den Bos, 2008), become more preoccupied with fairness after a just world threat, such that these justice-related words capture attention (Hafer, 2000), and react more vigilantly to justice judgments after being alarmed, even outside of their immediate awareness (Van den Bos et al., 2008; Van den Bos & Rijpkema, 2009). These lines of research reveal some interesting signaling characteristics of justice information. This is important because early-stage cognition provides the building blocks that shape higher order cognition and action (e.g., Haselton & Nettle, 2006).

Justice cues provide important information for people and can have strong effects. However, for the functionality of justice in argumentation, as is previously suggested (e.g., Lerner, 1981; Reis, 1984; Messick & Sentis, 1983; Miller, 2001; Finkel, 2000), other factors may play a role. Particularly, early justice researchers have tried to specify what constitutes fair treatment and fair distributions. Impartiality, or the absence of bias, is incessantly mentioned as one of the prime characteristics of fairness (e.g., Folger 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980). Justice assertions refer to a moral standard that transcends the level of personal interest (Cohen, 1986, p. 1). This moral standard strongly conflicts with the presence of self-interest (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; see also Chapter 2). Impartiality (i.e., an absence of self-interest) on the other hand seems to be a prerequisite for judging treatments and distributions as fair (Rawls, 1992). Accordingly, it has been argued that people are not open to justice arguments when they believe that these arguments are made for tactical or self-interested purposes (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000). Thus, although justice information has important

relational and signaling characteristics and it is argued that justice can be used as a moral force, its functionality may depend on other factors as well, at least in argumentation.

Taken together, given that voice procedures take a prominent place in justice research, and given that justice cues convey valuable information and are central to people's evaluations of social situations (Tyler et al., 1997; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002), it is surprising that only a small amount of research has focuses on the content of people's voiced opinions in fair procedures. I argue that people both strategically employ justice in communications, and will be influenced by justice information in communication. Although these suggestions have made before, they are never tested empirically and have always been viewed as motivated by self-interested goal attainment. I suggest here that justice assertions can be strategically employed, and that they can be used to serve a specific function that not necessarily needs to be one's own interest. On the contrary, due to its specific characteristics (i.e., impartiality as a prerequisite for fairness), I argue that justice assertions will be mainly employed to further other' interests. Furthermore, in exploring more fundamental processes that may lie at the basis of justice-related cognitions, I try to find more elaborate evidence for the sensitizing and attentional function of justice information, in particular unjust information.

The Current Thesis

Part 1: Antecedents and consequences of justice talk

Chapter 2: On the social-communicative function of justice

In Chapter 2, I argue that the importance of justice manifests itself in communications regarding justice and morality-related issues. Based on the reasoning that justice is a moral force I argue that people assume that justice assertions add to the persuasive power of what they say. Therefore, I expect that communicators will strategically use justice-related words when they have a goal to persuade others. However, in general people are often suspicious that others' attitudes and behaviors are mainly guided by self-interested motives. This suspicion of self-interest hinders persuasion. The role of self-interest may be especially important for communications that involve justice-related issues because self-interest and justice are two strongly related concepts. After all, when referring to justice one refers to an objective, higher-order norm that conflicts with self-interest. I propose that when communicating, people are generally aware of how self-interest and personal involvement can impose

constraints on their communications. Moreover, I expect that some people (high self-monitors) adjust their speech more to their audience than others (low self-monitors). Three studies corroborate these predictions. In these studies participants communicated about a negative situation they or someone else had experienced, and did so in either a persuasive manner (Studies 2.1-2.3), an accurate manner (Study 2.1), by asking for an opinion (Study 2.2), or without a communication goal (Studies 2.1 and 2.3). Communicators with a persuasion goal used more justice-related words than communicators with a goal to be accurate, who asked for an opinion, or who had no goal. This was particularly the case when communications were about someone else rather than the participants themselves, and for those high in self-monitoring who's identities were known (vs. anonymous). I conclude that people use justice-related words in attempts to persuade others, but only when they know there is no doubt about their personal involvement.

Chapter 3: When justice persuades people to do the right thing

Chapter 3 builds on the findings from Chapter 2. I assume that justice assertions carry a moral force and therefore are persuasive when a communicator is not perceived as self-interested. I propose that justice assertions are strongly intertwined with the self-interest concept and self-interested actions are often antithetical to the concept of justice. Justice assertions refer to a moral standard that transcends the level of personal interest (Cohen, 1986, p. 1; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000). However, there is also research showing that in some occasions self-interest seems to be expected and valued as a norm, and it can therefore be more persuasive (cf. Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998). Taken together, these findings leave unclear how justice arguments and self-interest interact. I reason that especially for justice assertions, and less so for other assertions, it matters how self-interested a communicator is. Indeed, in two studies (Studies 3.1 and 3.2) I show that the use of justice assertions in communications persuade people to act in accordance with the message, but only when the communicator is not pursuing self-interested goals. In the first study participants invested more time contributing to a good cause after learning about this cause by a disinterested (vs. self-interested) spokesman who used (vs. not used) justice assertions in his message. In a second study, this effect is replicated in a supermarket where it was observed that people bought more socially responsible products that were promoted by a consumer organization when this organization was perceived as not self-interested (vs. self-interested) and when justice-related (vs. evaluative) words were used to describe the organization's purposes. It is

concluded that justice assertions have a persuasive power and that self-interest is so detrimental because it stands in sharp contrast to the impartiality that justice characterizes.

Part 2: Studying the processes leading to justice judgments and justice reactions

Chapter 4: When things are unfair you direct and keep your attention there

In Chapter 4, I combine research from the justice, cognitive, and social-cognitive literatures and suggest that unjust information draws and holds attention. An impressive amount of research points to the importance of fairness for people and the potential threat that experiences of injustice pose to one's social homeostasis. An equally impressive amount of research has shown attention biases for very negative or threatening information, especially for high state or trait anxious individuals. I suggest that because of the potential threat that experiences of injustice impose, unjust information will draw and hold attention. One study, using a visual shift paradigm, corroborates with this hypothesis and shows that unjust words, relative to just, positive, negative and neutral words, draw and hold attention. This research adds to our understanding of the impact of justice-related information and of how people process such information, in particular information that is related to unjust events.

Chapter 5: The influence of fair and unfair events on state justice sensitivity

People differ in the way they regard and react to fair and unfair events. Whereas some people may react strongly to events that concern justice, others may be affected less strongly. Prior research suggests that this sensitivity to justice is a stable personality trait. In Chapter 5, I argue that situational factors can temporarily influence justice sensitivity or even may contribute to the development of the justice sensitivity trait. Gaining insight into the plasticity of justice sensitivity is important because of the strong influence justice sensitivity has on various reactions, such as personal well-being, emotions, and behavior. Specifically, in attempting to learning more about these processes, I measured justice sensitivity after participants experienced equal and unequal outcome distributions. In three studies, I show that experiencing just and unjust events (compared to neutral events) directed towards the self or others can elevate state levels of justice sensitivity. The findings suggest that justice sensitivity may consist of both stable and more state-like components, the latter being influenceable by previous justice-related experiences. This research sheds light on temporary

sensitization effects and potentially on the process of how people acquire sensitivity to justice.

Part 1

Antecedents and Consequences of Justice Talk

Chapter 2

On the Social-Communicative Function of Justice: The Influence of Communication Goals and Personal Involvement on the use of Justice Assertions

This chapter reveals how people strategically use justice assertions when attempting to persuade others. In three studies participants communicated about a negative situation they or someone else had experienced, and did so in either a persuasive manner (Studies 2.1-2.3), an accurate manner (Study 2.1), by asking for an opinion (Study 2.2), or without a communication goal (Studies 2.1 and 2.3). Communicators with a persuasion goal used more justice-related words than communicators with a goal to be accurate, who asked for an opinion, or who had no goal. This was particularly the case when communications were about someone else rather than the participants themselves, and for those high in self-monitoring whose identities were known (vs. anonymous). We conclude that people use justice-related words in attempts to persuade others, but only when they know there is no doubt about their personal involvement. Implications are discussed.

This chapter is based on Wijn, R. & Van den Bos, K. (in press-a). On the social-communicative function of justice: The influence of communication goals and personal involvement on the use of justice assertions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

"Yes we can to justice and equality." US President Barack Obama in New Hampshire
primary speech, 8 January 2008

Most of humans' lives take place in groups where language is a central aspect of communication. Not surprisingly, as it is one of the most central aspects of human societies (Folger, 1984; Rawls, 1992), justice is one of the things people talk about (Finkel, 2000; 2001). Large parts of the literatures on both justice and communication demonstrate the centrality of these issues to human life. What is surprising, therefore, is the apparent lack of research combining the two research traditions. In the current chapter we try to combine the justice and communication literatures by showing the influence of communication goals and personal involvement on the use of justice-related words in communication.

Fair and unfair events are important issues in people's lives. Research has shown a broad array of negative effects on attitudes, feelings, and behavior after the experience of unfair events. For example, people who feel that they have been treated unfairly are less likely to cooperate, show lower levels of morale and higher levels of work stress and overt and covert disobedience, are more likely to initiate lawsuits, may behave in antisocial ways and show more protest behavior (Huo et al., 1996; Lind, 2001; Lind et al., 2000; Vermunt et al., 1996). On the other hand, the belief that one has been treated fairly generally leads to positive outcomes, such as acceptance of court rulings, obedience to the law, higher work satisfaction, more willingness to prevent and resolve conflicts, and more positive and less negative affect (Bobocel et al., 1998; Lind et al., 1993; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Tyler, 1990; Van den Bos, 2001). On the basis of the extensive literature on justice and fairness, Folger (1984) noted that the importance of justice cannot be overstated (p. ix).

In the present chapter we argue that the importance of justice manifests itself in communications regarding justice and morality-related issues (e.g., Finkel, 2000; 2001; Miller, 2001; Schreier, Groeben, & Blickle, 1995; Tyler, 2001). We will study this by asking our participants to read and communicate about justice-related events and by analyzing the number of justice-related words participants use in their communications. One of the accounts that tries to explain why people use justice assertions in their communications (e.g., "It's not fair!"; Finkel, 2001) posits that stating one deserves a particular outcome imbues a claim with a greater degree of worthiness and legitimacy than merely wanting it (Reis, 1984, p. 37). Other accounts have theorized that people refer to fairness because it is defensible (Messick & Sentis, 1983, p. 90), because it

legitimizes action to restore the harm done (Miller, 2001, p. 534), or because justice carries a moral force (Finkel, 2000). These accounts have in common that they assume that one can exert influence by using justice assertions. A related view has been expressed by Tyler (2001) who discussed the use of fair procedures as a strategy for exercising authority. In the current research we aim to show that an important reason why people make use of justice assertions in their communications is that people assume that justice assertions add to the persuasive power of what is being said.

What is considered persuasive is not only determined by the content of what is said. For example, the persuasion knowledge model posits that people have their thoughts and theories about communicators' goals and tactics and about how to cope with these (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This point has been made more generally by research on theory of mind and metacognition (Flavell, 1979; 1992; Frith & Frith, 1999; Jost, Kruglanski, & Nelson, 1998; Premack & Woodruff, 1978). It has been noted that recipients of a message do not only consider the literal meaning of the information conveyed but also try to assess the communicators' motives and intentions (Higgins, 1981). Moreover, because language production usually has a social function and occurs with the purpose of communicating an intention to someone in order to achieve a goal (Higgins, 1981; Semin, 2000), language is often biased to match the communicator's goals. Especially in persuasive communication a recipient may be wary of biased messages and may resist these messages (for an overview on resistance to persuasion, see Knowles & Linn, 2004).

A source of bias that people are suspicious of is that others' attitudes and behaviors are mainly guided by self-interested motives. People have a firm preconception of self-interested motives in others' attitudes and behavior, whereas they tend to downplay the importance of self-interest as a prime motivator for their own attitudes and behaviors (Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998). Even more relevant for the current purposes, studies on persuasive communication have found that self-interest hinders persuasion (Friestad & Wright, 1994; for an overview, see, Pornpitakpan, 2004). This suggests that a persuasive message that conveys a self-interested point of view of the communicator may not be judged to be very persuasive by the recipient of the message. The role of self-interest may be especially important for communications that involve justice-related issues because self-interest and justice are two strongly related concepts (e.g., Folger 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980). After all, when referring to justice one refers to an objective, higher-order norm that conflicts with self-interest. Thus, it has been argued that people are not open to justice arguments when

they believe that these arguments are made for tactical or self-interested purposes (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000).

Related to this, research on discrimination (a subject that obviously is related to fairness and justice) suggests that there are social costs involved when claiming to have been discriminated against. For example, people who claim their bad test results to be the consequence of discrimination are likely to be seen as complainers and are evaluated negatively (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Related to this, Alves and Correia (2008) found that people who claim that the world treats them unjustly are valued more negatively by others. Notably, claiming that the world treats others unjustly is not necessarily valued more negatively. This suggests that the use of justice assertions may have negative effects when they are used to communicate about events that happened to oneself, whereas the reverse may be true when justice assertions are used to communicate about what happened to others.

When communicating, people are probably well aware of the self-interest expectations, and of how claims of fair and unfair treatment might be interpreted by receivers of the message (Flavell, 1979; 1992; Friestad & Wright, 1994; Frith & Frith, 1999; Jost et al., 1998; Petty & Briñol, 2008; Premack & Woodruff, 1978). Communicators are also generally presumed to be capable of anticipating these expectations, and to adjust their message to the audience to which they are communicating (Clark & Murphy, 1982; Fussell & Krauss, 1989; Fussell & Krauss, 1992). However, research shows that some people (i.e., high self-monitors) are more sensitive to social cues and are better able to adjust their behavior to a situation than others (i.e., low self-monitors; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986; for a review, see Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Low self-monitors seem relatively unwilling and unable to strategically utilize appearances. On the other hand, behavior of high self-monitors tends to be influenced by the expectations of others. Hence, we expect that high self-monitors adjust their speech more to their audience than low self-monitors (Klein, Snyder, & Livingston, 2004).

The Current Research

Based on the reasoning that justice is a moral force we argue that people assume that justice assertions add to the persuasive power of what is said. Therefore, we expect that communicators will strategically use justice-related words when they have a goal to persuade others. We also propose that people are generally aware of how self-interest and personal involvement can impose constraints on communications and that this relation is mediated by the ability for self-monitoring. To our knowledge,

there is no research that has examined the use of justice-related words in communication with regard to specific communication goals one may have and the role of self-interest, personal involvement, or self-monitoring for this process.

In Study 2.1, we examine the hypothesis that justice-related words are used more when people have the goal to persuade others with their communications (vs. when they do not have this persuasion goal). In Study 2.2 we examine the hypothesis that to prevent resistance to a message, communicators will refrain from using justice-related words in their message when they are personally involved and thus may be perceived as self-interested. Finally, in Study 2.3 we examine the hypothesis that strategic use of justice assertions requires the ability to monitor and adjust one's own behavior (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). In Study 2.3 we examine also how pervasive the role of self-interest is within communications about justice by examining anonymous communications. Under anonymity (e.g., with anonymous complaints or some forms of internet communication) the communicator's personal involvement cannot be determined. Because people suspect self-interested motives in others (Miller & Ratner, 1998), a recipient will likely assume that the anonymous communicator is merely standing up for his or her personal interests. We predict that because anonymous communicators cannot refute this preconception of self-interest, they will anticipate by refraining from using strong justice assertions.

In all studies reported here, we asked our participants to read scenarios describing justice-related events that happened to them or to other people. Participants were asked to communicate to other people about what happened in these scenarios and we measured the use of justice-related words in the actual communications of our participants. Specifically, we counted the words that were closest related to the justice construct, that is, *justice* and *fairness*, and their derivatives (i.e., *just*, *unjust*, *justified*, *fair*, *unfair*, *unfairness* and *rights*).^{2.1} Earlier research has shown that these words are spontaneously associated with justice and justice-related descriptions (Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008; see also Chapter 4).

Study 2.1

Method

Participants and design. Ninety-five native Dutch-speaking students (36 men and 59 women; age: $M = 20.91$, $SD = 2.72$) at Utrecht University participated in our

^{2.1} The current studies were run in Dutch. Therefore derivatives were used of the words *rechtvaardig* (just) and *eerlijk* (fair). Rights translates to *rechten* and is a derivative of *rechtvaardig*.

study in exchange for 2 Euros or partial course credit and were randomly assigned to either the persuasion, accuracy, or no communication goal conditions of our experimental design.^{2.2}

Experimental procedure. After the participants sat down behind a personal computer in individual cubicles we told them that the experiment would consist of a computer part where they would have to answer some questions followed by a role-play session with three other participants. In reality there was only a computer part and no role-play session. However, we told participants that for the role-play session two participants were assigned the role of UNICEF representative, and two participants were assigned the role of representative of an African nation. The UNICEF representatives would have to persuade the representatives of the African nation of their country's need for aid. All participants were told that they were assigned the role of UNICEF-representative and read a newspaper article containing information about the poor opportunities that African children have in life. We told participants that the other UNICEF representative had not read this information. Therefore, they were asked to write a message (with a maximum of 200 digits) to the other UNICEF representative to inform him or her on the situation in Africa as they had learned from the newspaper article. We instructed one-third of our participants that they should be as persuasive as possible, and one-third to be as accurate as possible in this text message, ostensibly because that would ultimately be the best communication strategy in the role-play session with the African nation's representatives as well. One-third did not get any communication goal instruction. After the participants had sent the message to the other UNICEF representative and answered several questions we told them the experiment was finished and there would be no role-play.

Results

Communication goal. To check if participants correctly remembered the communication goal, in the persuasion condition we asked them whether their main goal was either to persuade their partner or to reason with their partner. In the accuracy condition we asked them whether their main goal was either to be accurate to their partner or to reason with their partner. All participants gave correct answers.

Written texts. In the text message participants could freely inform the other UNICEF representative about the situation in Africa. On average, participants used

^{2.2} There was no difference in the responses of participants who were paid versus participants who got course credit in Study 2.1. Nor were there any interaction effects of sex in the studies reported in Chapter 2, all F 's < 1.

27.58 words in their writings ($SD = 4.65$). We calculated the percentage of justice-related words (i.e., *just*, *unjust*, *justice*, *justified*, *fair*, *unfair*, *fairness*, *unfairness* and *rights*) relative to the total number of words participants used in their text message. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant effect of our communication goal manipulation, $F(2, 92) = 3.32, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$. Contrast analyses revealed that in the persuasion condition participants made more use of justice-related words in their text message ($M = 1.97\%$, $SD = 2.54$) than participants in the accuracy condition ($M = 0.92\%$, $SD = 1.63$), $F(1, 93) = 4.29, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. In the persuasion condition participants made also more use of justice-related words than in the no communication goal condition ($M = 0.81\%$, $SD = 1.61$), $F(1, 93) = 4.29, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. The accuracy and no-goal conditions did not differ significantly from each other, $F < 1$.

Persuasiveness of communications. A key component in our line of reasoning constitutes that participants who make use of justice assertions in their communications are more persuasive. To test this hypothesis, independent raters judged the persuasiveness of the texts that participants in Study 2.1 had written down. Nineteen native Dutch-speaking students at Utrecht University, who had no knowledge of Study 2.1 and were blind to conditions, judged the 95 short messages on how persuasive these messages were on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). We informed the participants that all texts were written by fellow students and were meant to persuade representatives of an African nation of the need for aid in a role-play session. After these instructions they rated all 95 messages. The intraclass correlation for rater agreement (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979) was moderately high ($\alpha = .71$). As predicted, a regression analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relation between the use of justice-related words in participants' messages and the persuasiveness of the messages as rated by the independent raters, $\beta = .22, p < .04$. This means that, as we hypothesized, the use of justice-related words contributes to the persuasive power of a message.

Discussion

In line with our predictions, results of Study 2.1 show that people with a persuasion goal make more use of justice-related words when they communicate to a co-representative of UNICEF about a justice related issue than when we instructed participants to communicate accurately, or when we did not instruct participants to adopt a specific communication goal. Furthermore, the positive relation between the number of justice-related words and the persuasiveness of the texts produced by

participants further substantiates our claim that justice-related words add to the persuasiveness of a text and that people use justice-related words in order to persuade a recipient of a message.

Study 2.2

Study 2.2 was designed to replicate and extend our findings from Study 2.1 by showing that people make more use of justice related words when they communicate persuasively about others but not when they communicate persuasively about themselves. We further assessed the breadth of our persuasion goal effect by contrasting it with another communication goal condition. In Study 2.2 we instructed participants to gain agreement from (vs. seek opinion of) a message recipient. In this way we aimed to subtly activate a persuasion goal while no specific goal was activated in the opinion seeking condition. Also, we wanted to assess whether the effect would hold over different types of audiences. Therefore, in Study 2.2, participants imagined to communicate to a friend.

Method

Participants and design. Ninety-three native Dutch-speaking students (35 men and 58 women, age: $M = 21.10$, $SD = 3.05$) at Utrecht University participated voluntarily and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions of our 2 (goal: persuade vs. seek opinion) x 2 (focus of unfairness: self vs. other) between-subjects design.

Experimental procedure. We presented participants with a description of an unfair event modeled after Finkel's (2000) typology of issues that people spontaneously denote as unfair: We instructed participants to imagine they were employed in a small company. In this company employees could, besides their regular salary, obtain a bonus at the end of the year when they had performed very well. However, for disputable reasons this reward was not granted to them (in the self-focus condition) or one of their colleagues (in the other-focus condition). Specifically, we told participants (manipulated information in italics) that although *they / a colleague* had performed exceptionally well in the past year the manager had decided not to reward any bonus to *them / their colleague* because *they / their colleague* had indicated to resign from their current job and accepted another job at a different company. The manager stated that a bonus was not a means of reward for previous performance but a motivation for good performance in the future. Because the *participant / their colleague* had indicated that he or she would be parting shortly there was no need to motivate anymore and thus no bonus was given.

After this, participants were instructed to imagine telling a friend about the incident. Specifically, we stated the following to our participants (manipulated information in italics): “You find this procedure an outrage. Take a moment to think about how you would describe the incident to a friend. Imagine that you want *your friend to reach the same opinion as you / to hear your friend’s opinion.*” Next, there were five lines that participants could use to write down what they would say to their friend. At the end of the study we asked participants to respond on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) to what extent they had tried to persuade their friend in their writing to check if our manipulation had been successful.

Results

Communication goal. In the persuasion condition, participants indicated a stronger goal to persuade their friend ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.10$) than in the opinion seeking condition ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.53$), $F(1, 92) = 5.73$, $p < .02$. We conclude that our communication goal manipulation was successful.

Written texts. On average participants used 41.04 words in their writings ($SD = 17.19$). We calculated the percentage of justice-related words (i.e., *just*, *unjust*, *justice*, *justified*, *fair*, *unfair*, *fairness*, *unfairness* and *rights*) relative to the total number of words participants used in their text message. Means and standard deviations of the percentage of justice-related words are displayed in Table 2.1. A 2 x 2 ANOVA showed a main effect of goal, $F(1, 89) = 8.95$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$, such that participants with a persuasion goal made more use of justice-related words than participants who seek their friend’s opinion. This main effect was qualified by a statistically significant interaction effect, $F(1, 89) = 4.07$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. An examination of the interaction effect showed a statistically significant simple main effect for communication goal in the other-focus condition, $F(1, 89) = 12.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$. When participants wrote about their colleague who did not receive the bonus more justice-related words were used by participants with a persuasion goal than by participants who seek their friend’s opinion. When participants wrote about a bonus that they themselves did not receive there was no difference between the persuasion and opinion seeking conditions, $F < 1$. Finally, participants with a persuasion goal used more justice-related words when they wrote about their colleague than about themselves, $F(1, 89) = 5.31$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .06$, but participants who seek their friend’s opinion did not, $F < 1$.

Persuasiveness of communications. As in Study 2.1, independent raters judged the persuasiveness of the texts that participants had produced. In congruence with the use of justice-related words by the communicators, we expected justice-related words

Goal	Focus of unfairness			
	Self		Other	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Persuade	0.92	1.82	2.10	0.97
Ask opinion	0.58	1.25	0.38	2.39

Table 2.1: Means and standard deviations of the percentage justice-related words relative to the total number of words participants used in their message as a function of communication goal (persuade vs. ask opinion) and focus of unfairness (directed at self vs. other) (Study 2.2).

to be rated most persuasively when asserted by a source that was not personally involved. We asked 20 native Dutch-speaking students at Utrecht University, who had no knowledge of the prior experiments, to judge the 93 short messages on their persuasiveness on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). We informed the judges of the purposes of Study 2.2. We told them that all texts were meant to persuade the communicator's friend of what had happened to them or their colleague, in accordance with Study 2.2. After these instructions participants read and rated all 93 messages. The intraclass correlation was high ($\alpha = .81$).

Estimated means and standard deviations of the persuasiveness ratings by the judges are presented in Table 2.2. We used a Generalized Linear Model (GLM) that allows tests of continuous and categorical factors (e.g., Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003) and examined estimates at 1 SD above and below the mean of our continuous variable (i.e., justice words; Aiken & West, 1991). This analysis revealed an interaction between the focus of communication (self vs. other) and the use of justice-related words on the persuasiveness of the texts as judged by the raters, $F(1, 89) = 4.69, p < .04$. Specifically, when a message was about others, the use of justice-related words led to higher persuasiveness ratings, $F(1, 46) = 4.26, p < .05$. When a message was about the communicator him- or her-self, we did not find an effect, $F < 1$. This indicates that, as hypothesized, the use of justice-related words contributes significantly to the persuasive power of a message but only when communicating about someone else.

Focus of unfairness	Justice words in text			
	Low (-1 SD)		High (+1 SD)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Self	4.60	0.14	4.42	0.14
Other	4.33	0.14	4.77	0.14

Table 2.2: Estimated means and standard deviations of persuasiveness of the written texts as a function of justice-related words (one SD above and below the mean), and focus of unfairness (directed at self vs. other) (Study 2.2).

Discussion

The results of Study 2.2 show that when people try to persuade a friend of a negative event that has taken place they refer to justice when someone else was the victim of the negative event. Findings also show that people tend to be much more reluctant to refer to justice when they themselves were the victim of the negative event. Furthermore, when communicators do not have the goal to persuade but rather to seek an opinion, communicators use fewer justice-related words in general, regardless of the focus of the injustice (self vs. others). These findings replicate the results from Study 2.1 that showed more use of justice assertions when people have a goal to communicate persuasively about a negative situation others are in. Moreover, the results of Study 2.2 extend our previous findings by showing that people refer more to justice in argumentation only when they speak about others and not when they speak about themselves. Apparently, the focus of communication, whether one communicates about one's own or someone else's unfairness, is important for why people use the concept of justice in communication. Furthermore, analyses of the persuasiveness of the texts again showed that the use of justice-related words contributes significantly to the persuasive power of a message but only when communicating about someone else. These findings provide supportive evidence for our hypothesis that people use justice-related words because they try to communicate persuasively but only when they are not personally involved. Also, communicators seem to have an accurate understanding of what constitutes persuasive communication and are able to differentiate between persuasive use of justice-related words for themselves and others.

Study 2.3

Study 2.3 builds and extends on the insights obtained in Studies 2.1 and 2.2 by taking into account directly important individual difference measures (i.e., self-monitoring) and social conditions (i.e., anonymity) under which people communicate about justice done to others or themselves. That is, Study 2.3 notes that people differ in their sensitivity to social cues and in their ability to adjust behavior to a situation. According to the theory of self-monitoring (for a review, see Gangestad & Snyder, 2000) some people (i.e., high self-monitors) better appreciate the situational opportunities and constraints than others (i.e., low self-monitors; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986) and consequently adjust their speech more to their audience (Klein et al., 2004). In Study 2.3 we examine the hypothesis that high self-monitors are better able to strategically use justice assertions than low self-monitors.

In Study 2.3 we examine also the hypothesis that people only use more justice-related words when they are known and not when they are anonymous (e.g., with anonymous complaints, and increasingly with communications over the internet). Anonymity poses a problem for the recipient because it makes personal involvement and self-interest of the communicator difficult or impossible to determine. Because of the purposiveness of communication (Clark, 1996) and the norm of self-interest (Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998) it is likely that the recipient of a persuasive message will reason that the message stems from a communicator pursuing self-interested goals, even though in reality this may not be the case. Also, people associate abstract language use with biased attitudes and motives (Douglas & Sutton, 2006). Assuming that justice-related words are judged to be abstract (Semin & Fiedler, 1991), they may consequently be seen as biased. Messages from anonymous communicators are especially prone to this suspicion because these communicators are unable to refute the preconception of self-interest. We propose that anonymous communicators will be more concerned than non-anonymous communicators that they appear self-interestedly, and therefore anonymous communicators will be reluctant to use justice-related words in their persuasive argumentation.^{2.3}

^{2.3} In a direct test of the assumption that anonymity makes people worried that their persuasive attempts seem self-interested, 39 students at Utrecht University (19 men and 20 women; age $M = 21.77$, $SD = 2.77$) read the same scenario as described in Study 2.3. All participants imagined having to communicate persuasively about their colleague who did not receive a bonus and we manipulated whether participants communicated about this in an anonymous way or not. We averaged participants' answers to five questions measuring how worried they were that their message might appear self-interested to a reader (e.g., "To what extent do you think a reader might think that you are pursuing your self-interest"; 1 = *not likely*, 7 =

We measured the ability for expressive control with the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). We expect that communicators use most justice related words when, according to our line of reasoning, all conditions are present that warrant successful employment of justice assertions. That is, high self-monitors who are known as the communication source, and who communicate persuasively about others. In all other conditions, we expect that participants will make less use of justice-related words in their argumentation, either because (1) participants have no goal to persuade others, (2) to prevent that use of these words will lead to resistance because participants are not able to refute the preconception of self-interest (i.e., when communicating about themselves, or when communicating anonymously), or (3) because participants fail to acknowledge the situational opportunities and restrictions (i.e., low self-monitors).

Finally, in Study 2.1 participants were instructed to communicate to a formal partner (a UNICEF co-representative) and in Study 2.2 participants were instructed to communicate to a friend. To again assess whether the effects would hold over different types of audiences participants were instructed to imagine communicating to an outgroup (viz., a works council) in Study 2.3.

Method

Participants and design. Two hundred-sixty Dutch-speaking train passengers (104 men, 153 women, and 3 gender unknown) in age ranging from 13 to 79 years old ($M = 34.13$, $SD = 17.22$) took part in Study 2.3. We approached people riding on trains between two Dutch cities (approximately 140,000 and 750,000 residents) to participate in our study to test our hypothesis in a more heterogeneous setting than in our lab using undergraduate students (Sears, 1986). Participants were randomly assigned to our goal (persuade vs. no goal), focus of unfairness (self vs. other), and anonymity (anonymous vs. known) independent variables, and at the end of the study we measured participants' level of self-monitoring. Examination of the data for outliers (see Cook, 1977; see also Cohen et al., 2003, pp. 202–204) revealed that one participant could be identified as outlier. This participant was not included in our analyses.

very likely; $\alpha = .80$). As expected, participants who imagined writing an anonymous complaint indicated to be worried more that their persuasive attempts seem self-interested ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.94$) than participants in the non-anonymous condition (who were identifiable by their name and department; $M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.26$), $F(1, 37) = 4.96$, $p < .04$. We conclude that, as assumed, people are indeed worried that anonymity makes their persuasive attempts seem self-interested. These findings back up our assumption regarding Study 2.3 that our anonymity manipulation would make people worried that their persuasive attempts seem self-interested, and hence ground the predictions pertaining to Study 2.3.

Experimental procedure. In Study 2.3 we used stimulus materials that were comparable to the materials used in Study 2.2. Participants read about a situation in which they (in the self-focus manipulation) or their colleague (in the other-focus manipulation) would not receive a bonus that they deserved. Participants were subsequently asked to communicate their dissatisfaction to the works council (i.e., an organization representing workers) by filling out a complaints form. Our manipulations read as follows (manipulated information in italics): “take a minute to imagine *writing down your name and department on a complaint form and writing / writing anonymously on a complaint form* about the bonus that is not granted to *you / your colleague* and write this down briefly in a few sentences *as persuasively as you can*”. Under this text we printed five empty lines with at the beginning and end double quotes. Between the double quotes participants could write down their complaint. The double quotes were printed to make clear that participants had to be literal and not descriptive in their writing.

After participants had written down their complaint they filled out the 18-item Self-Monitoring Scale ($\alpha = .71$). Then, to check for our communication goal manipulation, participants were asked to indicate to what extent four questions pertaining to their efforts to persuade the works council applied to them (i.e., I tried to persuade the works council with my complaint; I think that the works council will agree with me on the basis of my complaint; I think I have been well able to get through with my complaint; I have been very persuasive). Scores on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *to a great extent*; $\alpha = .79$) were averaged to form a reliable measure of persuasion goal. At the end of our study, we thanked our participants for their participation and gave them a flyer in which we debriefed them thoroughly.

Results

Self-monitoring scale. To check whether our manipulations had not influenced the Self-Monitoring Scale we conducted a 2 (goal: persuade vs. no goal) x 2 (focus of unfairness: self vs. other) x 2 (anonymity: anonymous vs. known) ANOVA with scores on the Self-Monitoring Scales as dependent variable. We did not find a three-way interaction, $F < 1$, nor did we find any other statistically significant interactions or main effects. Thus, as intended, our manipulations did not influence the stable levels of participants' self-monitoring styles.

Communication goal. We used a GLM to analyze the influence of our categorical independent variables (communication goal, focus of unfairness, and anonymity), and our continuous independent variable (self-monitoring) on the items that measured

participants' persuasion goal (Cohen et al., 2003). This analysis showed only a significant main effect of persuasion goal, $F(1, 243) = 5.84, p < .02$. Participants in the persuasion condition indicated a stronger goal to persuade the works council ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.08$) than participants who did not receive an explicit goal instruction ($M = 4.37, SD = 1.05$).

Written texts. On average participants used 37.21 words in their writings ($SD = 14.51$). We calculated the percentage of justice-related words (i.e., *just, unjust, justice, justified, fair, unfair, fairness, unfairness* and *rights*) relative to the total number of words participants used in their text message. Table 2.3 shows the estimated means and standard deviations of the percentage of justice-related words in the written complaints (see also Figure 2.1). We used a GLM to analyze the influence of our categorical independent variables (communication goal, focus of unfairness, and anonymity), and our continuous independent variable (self-monitoring) on the percentage of justice-related words (Cohen et al., 2003). This analysis yielded the predicted four-way interaction effect, $F(1, 243) = 4.16, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$. Other main effects and interaction effects in this analysis were not significant.

Our hypotheses led us to expect that one condition would stand out relative to the other conditions with regard to the use of justice words. That is, high self-monitoring communicators who were known and persuasively communicated about their colleague were expected to use the most justice-related words. Analyses of the simple main effects showed this to be precisely the case. High self-monitors (+1 SD) in the known (i.e., non-anonymous) condition used more justice-related words in their argumentation when they had a persuasion goal than when they had no specific communication goal when they wrote about *their colleague*, $F(1, 243) = 6.20, p < .02, \eta^2 = .03$, but not when they wrote about *themselves*, $F < 1$. Furthermore, known high self-monitors with a persuasion goal used more justice-related words when they communicated about their colleague than when they communicated about themselves, $F(1, 243) = 7.49, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$. These effects replicate those of Study 2.2.

We further predicted that because anonymity raises the concern to come across self-interestedly communicators would refrain from using justice-related words when anonymous. Indeed, in contrast to known communicators, anonymous high self-monitors did not use more justice-related words when they had a persuasion goal than when they had no specific communication goal, regardless of whether participants communicated about themselves, $F(1, 243) = 1.42, p = .23, \eta^2 = .01$, or their colleague, $F < 1, \eta^2 = .00$. Also contrary to known communicators, anonymous high self-monitors

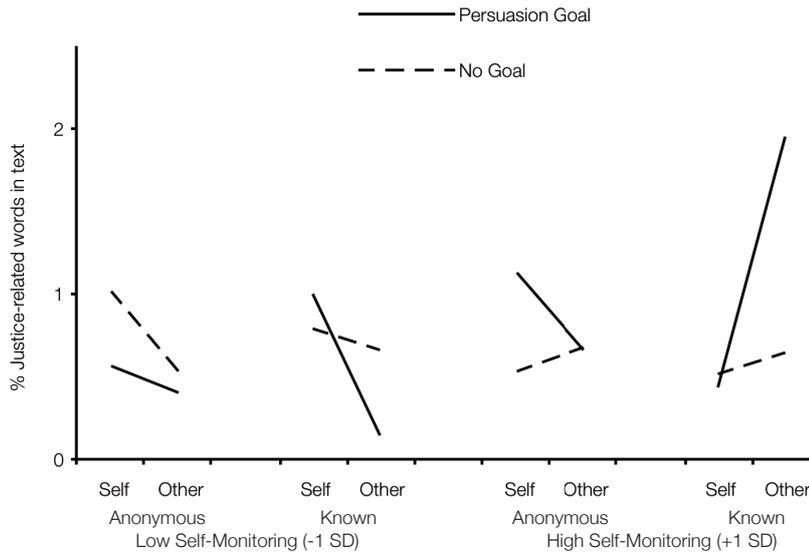


Figure 2.1. Percentage of justice-related words as a function of self-monitoring (one SD above and below the mean), communication goal, focus of unfairness, and anonymity (Study 2.3).

with a persuasion goal did not use more justice-related words when they communicated about their colleague than when they communicated about themselves, $F < 1$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Importantly, *known* high self-monitors who persuasively communicated about a colleague used more justice-related words than *anonymous* high self-monitors who persuasively communicated about a colleague, $F(1, 243) = 5.18$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Finally, we predicted that effects of justice-related word use are more pronounced for high self-monitors because low self-monitors are less well able to anticipate message receivers' thoughts and expectations. Indeed, all simple main effects for low self-monitors (-1 SD) were not significant.

Discussion

Study 2.3 showed that people use justice-related words in argumentation especially when they have a goal to be persuasive, it is clear that they are not personally involved, and possess the ability to monitor and adjust their behavior to the situation. These findings replicate and extend the results we previously found in Studies 2.1 and 2.2. We argue that the ability for expressive control and the absence of perceived self-

Goal	Self-monitoring low (-1 SD)								Self-monitoring high (+1 SD)							
	Anonymous				Known				Anonymous				Known			
	Focus Self		Focus Other		Focus Self		Focus Other		Focus Self		Focus Other		Focus Self		Focus Other	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Persuade	0.57	0.46	0.41	0.35	1.00	0.34	0.15	0.36	1.14	0.31	0.66	0.41	0.44	0.39	1.95	0.39
No goal	1.02	0.39	0.53	0.35	0.78	0.36	0.66	0.38	0.53	0.40	0.68	0.39	0.52	0.36	0.65	0.34

Table 2.3: Estimated means and standard deviations of percentage justice-related words relative the total number of words used in an individual's text as a function of self-monitoring (one SD above and below the mean), communication goal, focus of unfairness, and anonymity (Study 2.3).

interest are pivotal for successfully referring to justice in persuasive communication. Therefore, in Study 2.3 we find the pattern as in Study 2.2 only for high self-monitors and only when people are identifiable. The expectation that recipients will resist influential assertions such as justice assertions when it is or may be used to support one's own interests withholds high self-monitors from using these arguments. Low self-monitors refrain from using justice assertions because they fail to acknowledge the situational opportunities and restrictions.

Notably, in Study 2.3 we found no main effect of our goal manipulation. Also, we found no interaction effect of our goal and communication source manipulations. However, in Study 2.1, where participants communicated about someone else, we found a main effect for communication goal and in Study 2.2 we found a main effect of goal that was qualified by a goal x communication source interaction effect. The reason that Study 2.3 yielded neither a main effect of goal, nor an interaction effect of goal and communication source, we think, is because these effects are diluted by the influence of the other factors on the use of justice assertions. As we predicted, when all conditions were present that warranted successful employment of justice assertions communicators used most justice-related words. Thus, high self-monitors who were known as the communication source, and who communicated persuasively about

others used most justice-related words in their communication. In all other conditions participants refrained from using justice-related words.

General Discussion

The present studies focused on the use of justice-related arguments in communication. To our knowledge these are the first empirical studies that show the relation between communication goals on the use of justice-related words in argumentation. Study 2.1 showed that people with a goal to persuade use more justice-related words than people who have a goal to be accurate or people who were not given an explicit communication goal. In Study 2.2 we replicated this finding and in addition showed that especially when participants had to write about unfairness that was directed at someone else (vs. themselves) they made more use of justice-related words in their communication. Finally, in Study 2.3 we extended the findings of Studies 2.1 and 2.2 by focusing on the role of expressive control and anonymity. Specifically, the ability for expressive control (high vs. low self-monitors) allows people to anticipate their argumentation to a situation (e.g., persuasively communicating about others while being anonymous) and anonymity led to less use of justice assertions for anonymous communicators because it raised the communicators' concerns to appear self-interested. This finding is in line with the literature on perceived self-interest of others (Miller & Ratner, 1998) and with our findings that communicators use fewer justice assertions when communicating about themselves.

A careful reader may note the low cell means regarding the use of justice words in all our three studies. We like to note that we think this is a result of our experimental set-ups. We instructed participants to write freely and concisely about the subject. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that this is reflected in the percentage of justice words participants used in their communications (often, depending on conditions, ranging from 0 to 2). Notwithstanding, what remains are the reliable and predictable differences between our conditions. Thus, although people may naturally talk about a lot more than only justice issues, the present chapter has proposed a testable set of predictions about when people start using justice assertions more often in their communications to others. The findings of the three studies presented here have provided reliable evidence for our predictions. Also, the anonymity condition in Study 2.3 might seem to limit the scope of our findings. We like to point out, however, that most communications that people have are not anonymous. Moreover, the anonymity

condition in our experimental design was primarily intended to show how pervasive the role of self-interest is within communications about justice.

Another important issue relates to the role of self-monitoring. In Studies 2.1 and 2.2 we did not measure self-monitoring. Hence, these studies include both relatively high and relatively low self-monitors. Nevertheless, these studies did show effects of communication goal and communication source on the use of justice assertions, suggesting that self-monitoring did not play an important role there. Another possibility is that self-monitoring did play a role and the effects we found in Studies 2.1 and 2.2 are actually not significant across the entire sample. If this is indeed true, and we would have measured self-monitoring in Studies 2.1 and 2.2, we should have found the reported effects for high, but not for low, self-monitors. Alternatively, participants in the different samples (i.e., college students in Studies 2.1 and 2.2, or the more heterogeneous sample of the population in Study 2.3) may have differed on the level of self-monitoring. Although to our knowledge there is little known about differences in self-monitoring for college students and other samples of the population (but see Snyder, 1974), our data would support such a view. In Study 2.3, 71 of our participants were students. These students scored significantly higher on the self-monitoring scale ($M = 0.52$, $SD = 0.17$) than the 188 other participants in our sample ($M = 0.43$, $SD = 0.19$), $F(1, 257) = 14.68$, $p < .001$. Possibly then, the college students in Studies 2.1 and 2.2 would resemble the high self-monitoring portion of the sample of Study 2.3. Our data is not conclusive on this matter and it yields merit to be further investigated in new research studies.

Across the three studies, participants imagined very different individuals to whom they had to communicate as well as about whom they had to communicate. In Study 2.1, participants imagined communicating to a formal partner (i.e., a UN co-representative). In Study 2.2 participants imagined communicating to a friend. In Study 2.3 participants imagined communicating to an outgroup (i.e., works council). In addition, in our studies we asked participants to imagine very diverse others (i.e., third world country children, a friend, or a colleague) to whom unfairness was directed. These different audiences and different subjects of speech did not seem to influence the use of justice-related words in persuasive communication. This underlines the reach of the use of justice assertions as persuasive attempts.

Furthermore, in Studies 2.1 and 2.2 we have shown that the use of justice-related words actually leads to higher persuasiveness ratings when these words were used to describe the unfairness done to others. This provides supportive evidence for

our assumption that participants used justice-related words in their communication to describe the unfairness done to others because it persuades recipients of the message of what is said. Although these results are correlational in nature, they strongly corroborate our hypotheses and the results of the other studies reported here. Nevertheless, we cannot draw too strict conclusions about the causal relationship between the use of justice-related words and persuasiveness. Both the use of justice assertions and overall persuasiveness of the text could have been enhanced by the eloquence of the speaker. Future research should rule out this possibility.

Taken together, we think that the results of the three studies reported here provide ground for the conclusion that people make use of justice-related words in their communication in order to influence their audience. More precisely, people make use of justice-related words in their argumentation when they have to persuade their audience of negative situations others, rather than they themselves, are in. We think this is the case because often it is more accepting to stand up for someone else than for oneself. Strongly standing up for oneself heightens the risk of coming across as a self-interested person, especially in The Netherlands (Van den Bos et al., 2009), which may result in resistance to the message, and can even lead to social costs (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Moreover, because self-interest and fairness are strongly related (e.g., Folger 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980) and the presence of the two seems to conflict with one and other (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000), it may be better not to use justice assertions as a persuasive strategy when one may appear self-interested. We think it is exactly this process that is shown in Studies 2.2 and 2.3. Study 2.3 further reveals that when communicators are anonymous, as is sometimes the case in real-life (e.g., in anonymous complaints or court testimonies, or internet communication), communicators stop using justice-related words for others even when they have a goal to be persuasive. We think this finding is in line with the reasoning proposed here, namely that to use justice assertions it must be unambiguously clear that a communicator is not personally involved and thus not pursuing self-interest.

The justice literature suggests that people may sometimes interpret instances of injustice egoistically (e.g., Epley & Caruso, 2004; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008). On the other hand, much research points to the absence of egoistic interpretations but focuses on people's concerns for others (Finkel, 2001; Huo et al., 1996; Ross & Miller, 2001). Our research seems to be more in line with the latter set of findings. However, we like to point to an important difference. In the present studies, participants were instructed to communicate as persuasively as they could. We show that to that end communicators

used more justice words when speaking about others than when speaking about themselves. It shows that participants made strategic use of justice assertions. It does not necessarily reflect people's feelings of fairness or intuitive reactions to them.

With regard to our communication goal manipulations, a critic could argue that the accuracy goal in Study 2.1 prompted more concrete descriptions and wordings than the persuasion goal. The justice words we counted are abstract words (Semin & Fiedler, 1991) and would thus be confounded with level of abstractness. In a pilot study ($N = 108$) we ruled out this possibility. Participants read a scenario on police violence and were told that later on they either had to engage in a discussion with the experiment leader (prompting a persuasion goal) or merely answer some questions about the issue (no communication goal). Subsequently, participants could choose seven single words from seven word pairs as reminders for this later task. Three word pairs consisted of a justice-related word and a justice-unrelated word and the words in each pair were matched on abstractness.^{2.4} Results show that when participants thought the later task would be to engage in a discussion with the experiment leader they chose more justice-related words ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.58$) than when participants anticipated to merely answer questions ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.92$), $F(1, 106) = 5.18$, $p < .03$. Thus, also when the abstractedness of the words is kept constant we find a preference for justice-related words among participants with a persuasion goal.

In the current studies, participants reacted to situational descriptions in which distributive fairness played an important role. Our results show that when people have a goal to persuade others, they use more justice-related words. It is not likely that people will use more justice words completely regardless the subject of communication. We do think, however, that our results extend to other types of fairness and even beyond the fairness domain in the narrowest sense of the word. We think that pulling a conversation into the justice-domain may sometimes be a very effective way of persuasion. We think that Study 2.1 shows this point. The issue at hand in Study 2.1 can be explained in a variety of ways. But when people discuss the issue and need to persuade others, it is useful to mark it as a justice-issue. Therefore, justice words may especially be used in persuasive communication when communication concerns justice-related issues, but also -more broadly- morality-related and normative issues.

Finally, a point that may go beyond the scope of the present chapter but that we nonetheless find important to address is that a communicator may have multiple goals.

^{2.4} The three critical word pairs that were used were *aggravating* versus *injustice*; *unfair* versus *mean*; and *unjustified* versus *unsatisfied*.

People may be concerned with making a good impression on others and this could lead to the use of justice-related words, presumably because people know that the positive effects of the use of such arguments reflect back on them. Going one step further, people may reason that when they are anonymous they cannot profit from this favorable presentation and may just as well not use these strong arguments at all. Although arguably people are concerned with how they are perceived by others and this may have been a concern to our participants, self-presentation concerns cannot explain the main components of our results. If effects were attributable solely to self-presentation concerns it would be unlikely that a communication goal affects the use of justice-related words. Self-presentational concerns may play a role in use of justice-related words but do not explain the dynamics of the use of justice-related words as a function of communication goals and personal involvement as investigated in the present chapter.

Conclusions. In conclusion, this research may tell us why, in some cases, people talk about fairness and justice. As such, our results may have implications for how to interpret the presence or absence of justice assertions. For example, the absence of justice-related words and justice assertions in anonymous complaints should not be taken to mean that people agree on the fairness of a certain instance. Recipients of a message should be aware of the communicative intent of a communicator in order to accurately interpret what is said. We think that the presented research gives important insights into how people communicate their sense of unfairness that has taken place. Previous research studies have shown under what circumstances people find instances of, for example, inequality or inequity fair or unfair and under what circumstances unfair events are evaluated more or less negatively (for overviews, see, e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Other research has described the use of justice assertions in communication (e.g., Finkel, 2000). To our knowledge, however, the current findings are the first to investigate and show the influence of situational variables (such as communication goals, personal involvement, and anonymity) and personality dispositions (such as self-monitoring) on the use of justice-related words in communication. More generally, this attests to the important social-communicative function of justice assertions as well as the influence of communication goals and personal involvement on the use of these assertions.

Chapter 3

When Justice Persuades People to Do the Right Thing: The Role of Justice Assertions and Self-Interest on Global Citizenship Behavior

In two studies we show that justice assertions (portraying a situation as unfair and advocating behavior to ameliorate that unfairness) persuade people to act in accordance with the message, but only when the communicator is not pursuing self-interested goals. In our first study, participants invested more time in a good cause after learning about this cause from a spokesman who used justice-related words in his message, but this fairness-based enhancement of charitable behavior disappeared when the spokesman gained personally from that behavior. In our second study, customers in a supermarket bought more products promoted by a consumer organization that used justice-related (vs. evaluative) words in describing their goals but only when the organization was perceived as not pursuing self-interested ends. We argue that justice assertions can persuade people to do the right thing, and that suspicions about exploitation of fairness norms for communicator gain will undermine this effect.

This chapter is based on Wijn, R., Van den Bos, K., Müller, P. A., & Lind E. A. (2009). When justice persuades people to do the right thing: The role of justice assertions and self-interest on global citizenship behavior. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

In the flurry of messages soliciting contributions to good causes, can adding a few justice-related words influence the persuasiveness of the message? Imagine, for example, walking into a supermarket and reading a sign that says “All products in this aisle help to create a fairer world.” If the word “fairer” was replaced by “better”, would you buy fewer of the products? The present paper focuses on this issue, examining the effects of fairness-linked messages on global citizenship behavior, by which we mean behaviors such as acting to help people in disadvantaged parts of the world and purchasing fair trade consumer products.

The strategic use of justice assertions in communication has received little empirical attention, even though it has been argued that the use of fair procedures is sometimes employed as a strategy for exercising authority (Tyler, 2001). Scholars have theorized that people refer to fairness because it is socially defensible (Messick & Sentis, 1983, p. 90), because it legitimizes action to rebalance harms (Miller, 2001, p. 534), or because justice carries moral force (Finkel, 2000). Also, stating that one deserves a particular outcome supposedly imbues a claim with a greater degree of legitimacy than merely stating that one wants something (Reis, 1984, p. 37). All of these propositions point to the persuasive potential of justice-linked arguments.

Recent research supports this conclusion but also points to the importance of considering the self-interest of the communicator (see Chapter 2). These studies show that when people communicate about the unfairness of a situation they refer more to justice when they are trying to persuade than when they have a goal to be accurate in their communication or when they have not been instructed to communicate in either persuasive or accurate ways. Moreover, participants referred more to justice only when they communicated persuasive messages about what happened to someone else rather than themselves.

This suggests that when persuasively communicating about potentially self-interested goals (such as what happened to oneself and how this should be corrected) people do not use justice arguments. Several authors (e.g., Folger, 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980; see also Chapter 2) suggest that self-interested actions are often antithetical to the concept of justice. Justice assertions often refer to moral standards that transcend individual interests (Cohen, 1986, p. 1; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000). Indeed, some philosophical analyses see an absence of self-interest as a prerequisite for judging fairness (Rawls, 1992).

These findings and analyses attest to a more general assumption that communicator self-interest may affect the perceived validity of a message (Petty &

Wegener, 1998), with people being seen as insincere when they argue in their own advantage, making the message less persuasive. However, there are research findings that suggest that persuasion is not always negatively affected by a communicator's self-interest, or that self-interest may sometimes even enhance the persuasiveness of a message. For example, because self-interest is valued as a social norm, having a personal stake in a cause that one is advancing can increase credibility and persuasiveness of a message (cf. Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998). Other research studies investigating moderators of the self-interest-persuasion relation show that persuasion is not negatively affected by self-interest when a message receiver's goal is congruent with the communicator's goal (Hamilton, 2003), when self-interest is deemed irrelevant for the point being advocated (and is thus not taken as a cue to the validity of a message; Petty, 1997), or when a message receiver feels that the communicator is not trying to be deceptive (Forehand & Grier, 2003).

Hence, the pursuit of self-interested goals by a communicator does not always negatively affect the persuasiveness of a message (for an overview, see also Pompitakpan, 2004). In some situations self-interest seems to conflict more with the perceived validity of a message than in other situations. We think that the specific content of what is said may be critical: some content may give rise to more conflict with self-interest than does other content. This would lead content to moderate the relation between self-interest and persuasion. Specifically, because justice is supposed to be objective and transcend personal interests (e.g., Cohen, 1986; Leventhal, 1980), we think that the use of justice-related arguments in a persuasive message will clash with self-interest and will therefore not persuade people to act in accordance with the message. On the other hand, given people's concerns with justice matters (see Cohen, 1986, for an overview; see also Chapter 2), we think that in the absence of self-interest, justice-related arguments will strongly persuade people to act in accordance with the message.

The persuasiveness of justice assertions and the role of self-interest have never been examined experimentally. In the present paper we investigate whether justice assertions are indeed persuasive by presenting participants with messages that either contain or do not contain justice arguments. We also investigate whether the impact of justice arguments varies depending on whether they are expressed by a disinterested or self-interested source. We do this by presenting participants with a communicator who either profits or does not profit personally from the help he is asking for (Study 3.1) or by measuring perceived self-interest of the communication source (Study 3.2). In this

way, the two studies reported here examined the effects of justice arguments and self-interest on real behavior. Study 3.1 investigated how justice assertions and self-interest influence people to invest more time in helping others. Study 3.2 investigated how justice assertions and perceived self-interest influence buying socially responsible products.

Study 3.1

In Study 3.1 we examined in the laboratory our hypothesis that justice assertions increase the persuasiveness of a message only when the communicator lacks clear self-interest in the outcome. Participants watched a video clip of an African truck driver arguing in favor of humanitarian help. His argument either did or did not contain justice-related words. In addition, the truck driver's self-interest was manipulated by conveying that he would benefit personally from the help given. After watching the video clip participants could spend time on a game that actually donated rice to third-world countries. Participation in the game was voluntary and not part of the experiment, and the participants could play as long as they wanted. We reasoned that the more the video clip persuaded participants that help was needed the longer they would spend playing the game. We hypothesized that participants who listened to justice assertions from a disinterested communicator would spend more time playing the game than those who heard justice assertions from a self-interested communicator. We expected no effect of self-interest when justice assertions were absent.

Method

Participants and design. Eighty students (31 men, 49 women^{3.1}) at Utrecht University were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of our 2 (justice assertions: present vs. absent) x 2 (self-interest: communicator extra pay vs. no pay) between-subjects design.

Experimental procedure. Upon arrival at the laboratory, participants were led to individual cubicles equipped with a personal computer. All instructions were presented on the computer screen. Participants were told that they would participate in a series of experiments for which they would receive a total of 6 euros. Participants watched a video of 6 minutes and 14 seconds that highlighted financial and hunger problems in Africa. After a general introduction to these issues, the video clip introduced an African

^{3.1} In both studies in Chapter 3 participants' gender did not interact with the hypothesized effects.

truck driver who explained that in addition to his normal job, on his days off he distributed rice for the United Nations World Food Program. This person spoke in SiSwati (a Bantu language spoken in Swaziland), a language incomprehensible to all of the participants. Dutch subtitles gave a supposed translation of the person's speech. All participants saw the same video, with small changes in the wording of the subtitles to manipulate the experimental factors. The truck driver explained that he wanted to help end the hunger problem in his country. The presence of justice words was manipulated either by including or not including three justice assertions in his speech, three statements about the global distribution of food: "the distribution is unfair," "it is just that poor people receive additional food," and "I like to contribute to a fairer world." Self-interest was manipulated by having the truck driver explain that he received considerable extra payment for distributing rice for the United Nations or that he was not paid at all by them.

After watching the video clip, participants were referred to a United Nations webpage, where they could play the Free Rice game (www.freerice.com), which lets players to choose one of four alternative synonyms of a given word. The page donates rice to hungry people in the world for each correctly chosen alternative. Our main dependent variable was the time (seconds) participants spent playing the Rice Game. After playing the game, participants answered some questions, including one that pertained to the self-interest manipulation, rating on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) the extent to which they thought the truck driver pursued self-interested goals.

Results

Self-interest. As expected, a 2 x 2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) on ratings of perceived self-interest yielded only a main effect for the self-interest manipulation, $F(1, 76) = 32.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$. In the extra payment condition, participants attributed more self-interest intentions to the truck driver ($M = 4.68, SD = 1.36$) than in the no extra payment condition ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.11$).

Rice game. A 2 x 2 ANOVA on time spent on the rice game yielded a statistically significant interaction effect only, $F(1, 76) = 4.26, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$. Figure 3.1 illustrates this effect. As predicted, participants who had watched the video with justice assertions invested more time playing the rice game when the truck driver did not receive extra pay and did not have self-interest goals ($M = 292, SD = 255$) than when he was paid and had self-interest goals ($M = 155, SD = 114$), $F(1, 76) = 4.13, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. Participants who watched the video without justice assertions did not differ in time

When Justice Persuades to Do the Right Thing

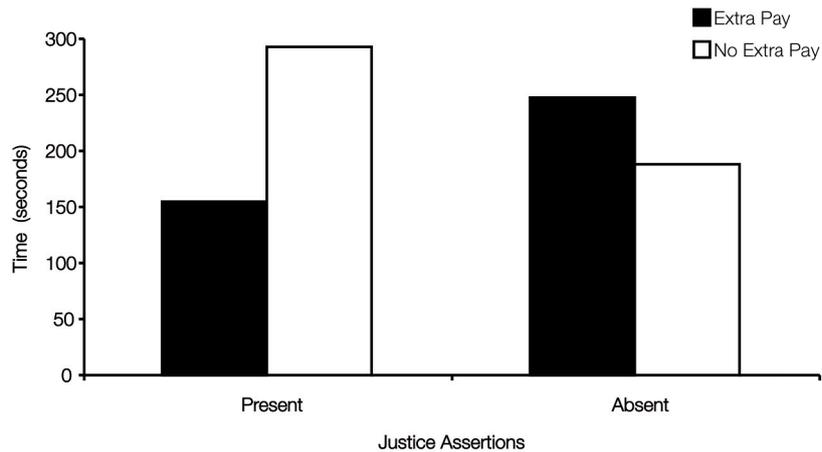


Figure 3.1. Time (seconds) spent playing the Rice Game as a function of presence of justice assertions in communication.

spent playing regardless of whether the truck driver received extra pay ($M = 187$, $SD = 192$) or not ($M = 247$, $SD = 262$), $F < 1$. Other simple main effects were not significant.

Discussion

Study 3.1 shows that when people encounter justice assertions from a communicator who has no self-interest in a subject, the argument is persuasive and leads to more time spent playing a charitable game, thereby contributing to a good cause. Study 3.2 tested our hypotheses in an experiment conducted in a naturalistic setting. Customers in a Dutch supermarket were asked to read some text and fill out a short questionnaire, after which they continued their shopping. In the text we inserted either justice words or evaluative words to describe products promoted by a fair trade organization, and in the questionnaire we measured the participants' perceptions of the organization's self-interest. Subsequently, we unobtrusively observed the participants' buying behavior.

Study 3.2

Method

Participants and design. One hundred customers (88 women, 12 men) ranging in age from 15 to 71 years old ($M = 41.12$, $SD = 13.70$) participated in Study 3.2.

Participants, who received a 2 Euros discount coupon exchangeable for any product in the supermarket, were randomly assigned to one of two assertion conditions (justice vs. evaluative). Perceived self-interest of the consumer organization was measured, not manipulated.

Experimental procedure. At the entrance of a supermarket in a typical neighborhood of a major city in the Netherlands, we asked customers to participate in a study that supposedly measured their familiarity with Fairfood, a real organization that promotes socially responsible products from third world countries (www.fairfood.org). Before completing the questionnaire the participants read a short description of the organization, which contained either justice assertions or evaluative assertions. The critical elements of the text read (manipulations in italics): “Fairfood is a lobbying organization that promotes the sale of certain products. Specifically, these are products for which production and trade help to reduce hunger and poverty in Third World countries. Thus, Fairfood endeavors to create a situation in Third World countries that is less *bad / unfair*.” The text further stated that Fairfood evaluates how “*good / fair* the production and trade is for people, environment and economy” and ended with an encouragement to buy the products that Fairfood promotes in order to “help create a *better / fairer* world.”

After reading the text, the participants answered several questions about the organization’s self-interest. We asked participants to rate on 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) how selfless (reversed), selfish, and trustworthy (reversed) they found Fairfood and to what extent Fairfood profited from the sales of the promoted products. Reliability was judged to be acceptable for the current purposes ($\alpha = .62$; see Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and the scores were averaged to form a measure of perceived self-interest. After filling out the questionnaire, all participants received the 2 Euros discount coupon and a list with products available in the supermarket that were promoted by Fairfood. We then told the participants that the study was finished and thanked them. The participants then continued with their shopping. Unbeknownst to the participants, the discount coupons carried numbers linked to the questionnaires. At the cash register coupons were stapled to a copy of the receipt, a procedure to which none of the participants objected, allowing us to unobtrusively analyze buying behavior.

Results

Perceived self-interest. As expected, an ANOVA showed no effect of justice versus evaluative assertions on perceived self-interest (respectively, $M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.20$ and $M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.20$), $F < 1$.

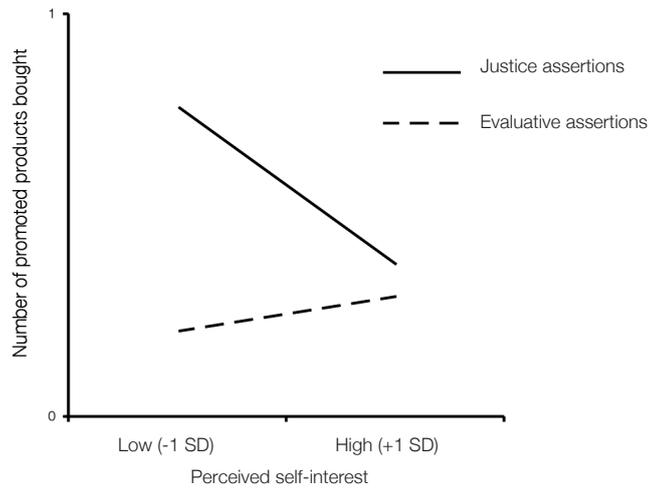


Figure 3.2. Number of promoted products bought by participants as a function of assertions in communication and perceived self-interest of Fairfood (Study 3.2).

Buying behavior. We tested our hypotheses using a Generalized Linear Model (GLM), simultaneously testing the effects of our continuous and categorical independent variables on the amount spent on products promoted by Fairfood (Cohen et al., 2003). This analysis revealed a main effect of type of assertion, $F(1, 96) = 6.38, p < .02, \eta^2 = .06$, qualified by an interaction between type of assertion and perceived self-interest, $F(1, 96) = 4.37, p < .04, \eta^2 = .05$. Figure 3.2 illustrates this effect. In the justice assertions condition, participants bought more products promoted by Fairfood when the self-interest of Fairfood was perceived to be low than when self-interest was perceived to be high, $\beta = .31, p < .04, \eta^2 = .11$. In contrast, when evaluative assertions were used, buying behavior was not influenced by perceived self-interest, $\beta = -.09, p < .53, \eta^2 = .00$. Examining participants' buying behavior at 1 SD above and below the mean of the self-interest variable (Cohen et al., 2003) revealed that participants who thought that Fairfood did not pursue self-interest goals (-1 SD) bought more Fairfood products after reading the text containing justice assertions than after reading the text containing evaluative assertions, $F(1, 96) = 10.25, p < .002, \eta^2 = .11$. In contrast, when perceived self-interest was high (+1 SD), buying behavior was not affected by the

assertions manipulation, $F < 1$. The results of Study 3.2 show that buying behavior is affected by whether justice assertions are used and whether these assertions are made by a communication source that is perceived to be acting out of self-interest. For evaluative assertions self-interest did not play a role for the persuasiveness of communications.

General Discussion

Both our studies show that justice assertions increase global citizenship behaviors, but only when the communicator making the assertion is not seen as pursuing self-interested goals. The inclusion of just three justice-related words in spoken or written communications led to more time investment in a good cause (Study 3.1) and the purchase of more socially responsible “Fairfood” products (Study 3.2) as long as the communication source was not perceived to be acting out of self-interest. When justice assertions were absent, or replaced by evaluative words, self-interest did not influence persuasion. These studies examined real behavior, adding to the robustness and ecological validity of the findings.

We had reasoned that because the essence of justice is the moderation of self-interest, communications about justice may lead people to expect an abandonment of self-interest on the part of the communicator (e.g., Cohen, 1986). To be sure, on some occasions, the norm of self-interest may well lead people to expect and accept self-interested behaviors (Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998), but justice-based arguments operate from a quite different set of premises. When people are asked to give time or money because it is “the fair thing to do,” the clear implication is that their own self-interest must be set aside for a greater good. If such arguments are advanced by someone who is profiting from the advocated actions, the communicator seems hypocritical and credibility likely suffers.

The current studies demonstrate that the impact of justice assertions is strongly intertwined with the self-interest concept. We have seen that when a communicator expresses his or her self-interest, or when an organization communicating to consumers is perceived as self-interested, justice assertions lose their persuasiveness. Thus, justice assertions can persuade people to do the right thing, but only in the absence of self-interest motives.

Part 2

Studying the Processes Leading to Justice Judgments
and Justice Reactions

Chapter 4

When Things Are Unfair You Direct and Keep Your Attention There: On Unjust Information Drawing and Holding Visual Attention

In this chapter we propose an attention hypothesis regarding the experience of injustice. We note that experiences of unjust events are particularly aversive, threatening, and elicit strong negative emotions. Furthermore, we suggest that because of these aversive and self-threatening characteristics of injustice, unjust information draws and holds people's attention. An experimental study using a visual attention paradigm corroborates our line of reasoning and shows that unjust words draw attention faster and hold attention longer compared to just, positive, neutral, and negative words. By thus suggesting that unjust information draws and holds people's attention, the current chapter furthers insights into the social psychology of justice judgments. In the discussion we note the relationship of our findings with research on emotional disorders and research examining negative stimuli that has shown that very negative, threatening, or otherwise aversive information receives more attention than neutral information. Other implications are discussed as well.

This chapter is based on Wijn, R. & Van den Bos, K. (2009). When things are unfair you direct and keep your attention there: On unjust information drawing and holding visual attention. *Manuscript submitted for publication.*

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Martin Luther King Jr. Letter
from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Situations involving unjust events convey meaningful information that needs to be attended and responded to. An important reason why people detest unfair and unjust treatment is because this conveys relational information, such as disrespect, low standing, and untrustworthiness (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). This is so important to people because being excluded by valuable social groups is one of the most aversive of human experiences (e.g., Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000; Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997; Williams, 1997; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000; Williams & Sommer, 1997). Fairness and justice communicate that the person is a valuable and respected group member, and they communicate inclusion in the group (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Van Prooijen, Van den Bos, & Wilke, 2004). In contrast, unfair treatment communicates low social standing and exclusion, and the experience of unfairness and experiencing the world as an unjust place is associated with very negative reactions, such as depression, stress, and lower life satisfaction (Koper, Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1993; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996).

Information that pertains to unfair events is particularly meaningful and elicits strong negative affective reactions (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001). Early justice research described that the experience of unfair events leads to distress (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). More recent research has shown that the experience of unfair events leads to aversive emotions, such as anger, disgust, sadness, and fear (Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998) whereas the experience of fair events leads to more positive and less negative affect (Van den Bos, 2001). These emotional consequences following unfair events also become evident in research using physiological measures. For example, Markovsky (1988) found that both unfairly overpaid and unfairly underpaid participants showed higher skin conductance responses, relative to baseline. Also, research studies have suggested an overlap of brain areas that are active during moral judgment tasks and emotional responses (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001).

Moreover, unfair events are personally threatening experiences (Ham & Van den Bos, 2008; Loseman, Miedema, Van den Bos, & Vermunt, 2009), and threaten the belief that the world is a just place where people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980; Hafer, 2000). For example, Hafer (2000) showed that people were slower to name the color of justice-related words in an emotional Stroop task after reading about an unfair

event (*viz.*, expected to pose a genuine high threat to participants' belief in a just world) than after an event where the unfair situation was resolved (*viz.*, expected to pose a genuine low threat to participants' belief in a just world). Building on earlier research (e.g., Pratto & John, 1991), these findings indicate that unresolved unfair situations pose a real threat to people's justice beliefs, causing people to attend more to the justice-related words, in turn leading to slower color naming reactions. These research studies reveal some of the deep-rooted social and emotional essence of experiencing unfair events.

In the present chapter we aim to build and extend on these previous insights by integrating the literature on people's reactions to unfair events with the research on visual attention. A central idea of the literature on visual attention is that people tend to focus their attention on the most relevant aspect of a visual scene (Kanwisher & Wojciulik, 2000). The ability to focus attention is functional and adaptive in that it supports behavior that achieves goals (Yantis, 2000). Following this reasoning, we argue here that attending to information that signals injustice is functional. For example, when one attends to unjust events negative effects can be avoided or restored, either in reality (see, e.g., Chapter 3) or through rationalization processes (Hafer & Bègue, 2005, Van den Bos, *in press*).

In order for attention to be functional, relevant information should both be rapidly detected as well as carefully scrutinized (Posner & Peterson, 1990). Accordingly, research findings show that information that is experienced as extremely negative and threatening or objects associated with negative emotions such as anger and disgust draw attention faster and hold it longer, especially for high state or trait anxious individuals (Bradley, Mogg, & Lee, 1997; Fox, Russo, Bowles, & Dutton, 2001; Koster, Crombez, Van Damme, Verschuere, & De Houwer, 2005; MacLeod, Mathews, & Tata, 1986; Mogg, Bradley, & Hallowel, 1994; Stormark, Nordby, & Hughdal, 1995; Pratto & John, 1991). The drawing and holding effects underlying visual attention processes are not limited to innate threatening stimuli, but have been shown for learned information, such as social information or conditioned stimuli (see, e.g., Koster et al., 2005; Papies, Stroebe, & Aarts, 2008; Pratto & John, 1991).

In the present chapter, we assume that injustice is an aversive and threatening experience, which entails meaningful social information and which motivates people to respond to restore justice (e.g., Hafer, 2000; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008; Koper et al., 1993; Lerner, 1980; Loseman et al., 2009; Markovsky, 1988; Mikula et al., 1998; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001; see also Chapter 3). Building on

these insights and integrating them with the visual attention literature, we formulate an attention hypothesis that predicts how people will respond to unjust information. Specifically, for the reasons outlined earlier, we propose that unjust words will draw attention faster and hold it stronger than just words, positive words, and neutral words. Moreover, in the present chapter we do not focus on individual state or trait levels of anxiety. Therefore, we think that in general the attention effects for unjust information will be stronger than information that is equally negative but less socially meaningful (as may be the case when words are negative but are not related to injustice).

Besides the reasons mentioned earlier, there are two other reasons why we think investigating the attention hypothesis regarding unjust information is important. First, with the present study we hope to contribute to the limited but increasing amount of empirical research that has focused on cognitive mechanisms that operate at early, possibly automatic, stages of social perception (e.g., Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008), and to extend on Hafer's (2000) findings by showing a more general attention pattern for unjust cues that does not necessarily require a threat to the belief in a just world. To these ends, in the current study we use a paradigm developed to examine shifts in visual attention. A second reason why we think this research adds to the literature is because research that has focused on biases in visual attention has used relatively simple and concrete information rather than more abstract cognitive constructions that are assumed to require higher order cognitions (e.g., Fox et al., 2001; Koster et al., 2005; Papiés et al., 2008). Deliberations regarding justice are often regarded (at least partly) as higher order mental processes (e.g., Kant, 1959; Kohlberg, 1971; but see Haidt, 2001). Showing evidence for the drawing and holding of attention for unjust words thus broadens our understanding of the types of information that instigate these processes in human visual attention.

Study 4.1

Method

Participants and design. Eighty-nine native Dutch speaking students (15 men and 74 women) participated in our study in exchange for €2 or course credit and were assigned to our 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 5 (cue word type: unjust vs. just vs. positive vs. negative vs. neutral) within-subjects design.^{4.1} On arrival at the laboratory

^{4.1} Gender or participants' outcome (€2 or course credit) did not interact with the hypothesized effects in Chapter 4. Therefore, these variables were dropped from the analyses reported here.

participants were lead to separate cubicles containing a desktop computer with a 17-inch screen, regular QWERTY keyboard, and mouse. Participants received all instructions on the computer screen.

Materials. Our cues were words from five different word categories. We used two unjust words (viz., unfair, unjust), two just words (viz., fair, rights), six negative words (viz., terrible, noxious, choking, enemy, blame, coercing), six positive words (viz., joy, love, summer, friend, spontaneous, charming), and eighteen neutral words (e.g., recent, street, technique, specific). In a pilot study, sixty participants rated the valence of these words on a scale ranging from 1 (*very negative*) to 7 (*very positive*). The negative words ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 0.56$) were perceived as equally negative as the unjust words ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 0.70$), $F < 1$. Positive words ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 0.48$) and just words ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 0.96$) were each rated significantly more positive than both negative and unjust words, but also differed significantly from each other, $ps < .001$. Finally, neutral words ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.38$) were rated more positive than negative and unjust words, and more negative than positive and just words $ps < .001$.

Modified exogenous cueing task. A modified version of the exogenous cueing paradigm (Posner, 1980) was used to examine whether unjust words would lead to more drawing and holding of visual attention than just, positive, neutral, and negative words. This paradigm allowed us to disentangle the drawing and holding components of visual attention from each other (Posner & Peterson, 1990). We instructed participants to respond as quickly and accurately as possible to an asterisk that would appear to the left or to the right of a fixation point on their computer screens. Participants were told to press the “c” button when the asterisk appeared on the left side of the computer screen and the “m” button when the asterisk appeared on the right side. We informed participants that prior to the presentation of the asterisk, a cue word would be flashed on the computer screen that would correctly predict the location of the asterisk in 75% of the cases (i.e., valid cues). In 25% of the cases the cue word would incorrectly predict the location of the asterisk and would appear on the opposite side of the computer screen (i.e., invalid cues).

It is known that the cue induces a covert orienting of attention to the cued location, generally leading to faster responses to the target on valid trials and slower responses on invalid trials (Posner, 1980). Moreover, when unjust cue words would draw attention faster than other words do, as the *drawing component* of our attention hypothesis predicts, then detecting a subsequently presented target asterisk in that location (i.e., valid cue) should be easier and thus should lead to a faster response to

the presentation of the asterisk on participants' computer screens. Furthermore, when unjust cue words hold attention of our participants more than other words do, as the *holding component* of our hypothesis predicts, then detecting a presented target asterisk in the opposite location of the cue words (i.e., invalid cue) should be more difficult and thus should lead to a slower reaction to the presentation of the asterisk on participants' computer screens.

Procedure. All 34 words in our experimental design were presented four times to our participants in a random order. Each trial started with a pause screen in which a fixation cross was presented in the middle of the screen. On the left and right sides of the screen rectangles of 75 mm wide and 45 mm high were depicted. Participants were informed that in these rectangles the cue words and target asterisks would be presented. The cue words and target asterisks that were presented in the rectangles were approximately 6 mm high and were presented with a distance of 75 mm between the center of the cue or target and the fixation cross. The pause screen was presented for either 1200 ms, 1500 ms, or 1800 ms to reduce possible influences of target onset predictability. After the pause screen, a cue word was presented in one of the rectangles for 500 ms (e.g., Amir, Elias, Klumpp, & Przeworski, 2003; Yiend & Mathews, 2001). Immediately following the cue word a target asterisk was presented in the same rectangle (valid cue) or in the other rectangle (invalid cue). After the participants had responded, the asterisk disappeared and a message was presented in the center of the screen for 150 ms to signal to the participants that their response had been entered. Then, the next trial started. When participants did not enter any response within 3000 ms the next trial started automatically. Following Koster and his colleagues (2005), trials with errors, or with response times of less than 100 ms and more than 1000 ms were removed from the data set. This accrued to a percentage of 4.2% of the data, which is in correspondence with earlier findings using visual attention paradigms (see, e.g., Koster et al., 2005).

Results

As expected, a 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 5 (cue word type: unjust vs. just vs. positive vs. negative vs. neutral) General Linear Model (GLM) analysis yielded a main effect of cue validity, $F(1, 88) = 7.17, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$, and an interaction effect, $F(4, 352) = 4.06, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$. We then examined whether unjust words differed from the other word categories on the drawing and holding components of attention. Therefore, we calculated the four two-way cue validity x cue word type interactions that included the unjust words. All four planned interaction contrast analyses yielded

significant results. First, we found a 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 2 (word type: unjust vs. just) interaction, $F(1, 88) = 5.90, p < .02, \eta^2 = .06$. We further found a 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 2 (word type: unjust vs. negative) interaction, $F(1, 88) = 6.25, p < .02, \eta^2 = .07$. Also, we found a 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 2 (word type: unjust vs. positive) interaction, $F(1, 88) = 10.05, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$. Finally, we found a 2 (cue validity: valid vs. invalid) x 2 (word type: unjust vs. neutral) interaction, $F(1, 88) = 8.16, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$. These findings show that targets following unjust words, and not following the other word categories, have differential effects on the drawing and holding components of attention. The other word categories do not show these effects in our experiment. Figure 4.1 illustrates these effects. We then analyzed the predicted simple main effects within the validly cued trials and within the invalidly cued trials.

Faster responses in the validly cued trials on target asterisks following an unjust word cue would indicate that attention was drawn to unjust words faster than to the other word categories. Indeed, analysis showed faster responses to targets following validly cued unjust words ($M = 342, SD = 51$) than to targets following validly cued just words ($M = 351, SD = 51$), $F(1, 88) = 4.00, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$, positive words ($M = 352, SD = 42$), $F(1, 88) = 5.41, p < .03, \eta^2 = .06$, and neutral words ($M = 350, SD = 42$), $F(1, 88) = 4.21, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. We did not find faster responses to targets following validly cued unjust words than to targets following validly cued negative words ($M = 346, SD = 46$), $F < 1, \eta^2 = .01$. These results indicate that attention was drawn faster toward unjust words than toward the just, positive, and neutral words, leading to faster responses on the target asterisks presented in the same location as unjust words. Attention was not drawn faster to unjust words than to negative words. This suggests that both unjust and negative words can draw visual attention. This noted, it also should be pointed out that genuine grabbing of attention is usually assessed relative to neutral stimuli. Interesting in this respect is that the response latencies pertaining to the unjust words differed significantly from the latencies regarding the neutral words, whereas in the current experiment the response latencies regarding the negative words did not differ from the latencies pertaining to the neutral words, $F(1, 88) = 2.47, p > .11, \eta^2 = .03$. This suggests that we found a genuine drawing effect for our unjust words and not for the negative words in the current experiment. Taken together, these findings suggest that in our experiment unjust words significantly drew participants' attention, which is in correspondence with the *drawing component* of our attention hypothesis. Other effects between the different word categories were not statistically significant.

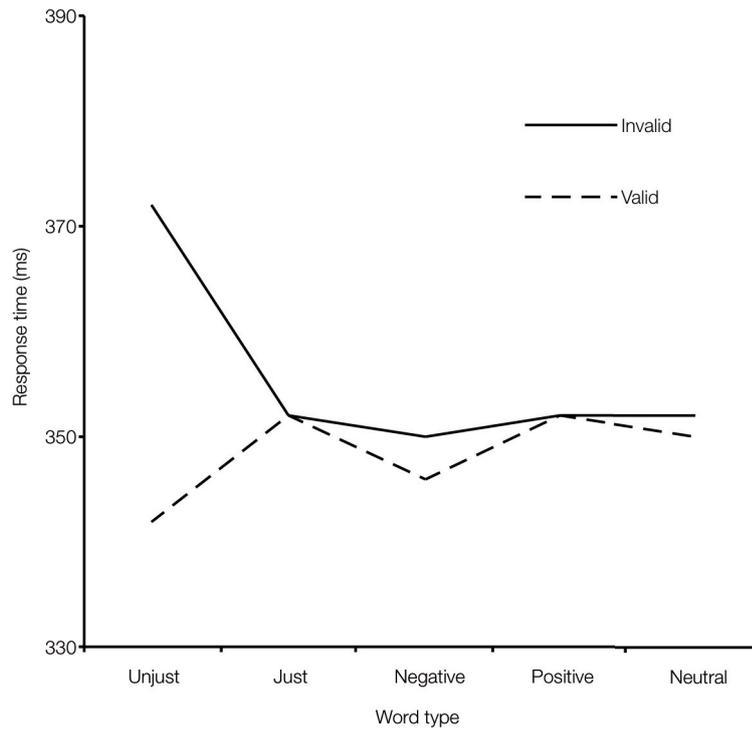


Figure 4.1. Response times (in milliseconds) on target words as a function of the preceding type of cue word and cue validity. Lower scores indicate faster responses (Study 4.1).

Moreover, slower responses in the invalidly cued trials on target asterisks following an unjust word cue would indicate that unjust words hold attention stronger than the other word categories. Indeed, examination of simple main effects of invalidly cued trials showed slower responses to target asterisks following invalidly cued unjust words ($M = 372$, $SD = 84$) than to target asterisks following invalidly cued negative words ($M = 350$, $SD = 53$), $F(1, 88) = 5.60$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .06$, positive words ($M = 352$, $SD = 56$), $F(1, 88) = 5.32$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and neutral words ($M = 354$, $SD = 49$), $F(1, 88) = 5.07$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The difference between invalidly cued unjust words and invalidly cued just words ($M = 352$, $SD = 85$) was marginally significant, $F(1, 88) = 3.20$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = .04$. These results provide evidence for the *holding component* of our hypothesis in that we found that unjust words hold attention stronger than negative,

positive, and neutral, and marginally than just words, leading to slower responses on the target asterisks presented in the opposite location. It also should be noted here that the response latencies pertaining to the unjust words differed significantly from the latencies regarding the neutral words, whereas in the current experiment the response latencies regarding the just words did not differ from the latencies pertaining to the neutral words, $F < 1$. This suggests that we found a genuine holding effect for our unjust words and not for the just words. Other effects between the different word categories were not statistically significant.

Discussion

The present experiment shows evidence for drawing and holding of attention to unjust words. That is, relative to just, positive and neutral, unjust words lead people to respond faster to a subsequently presented target that is presented in the same location as the cue word. This effect was not found relative to negative words. Importantly, the unjust words differed significantly from the neutral words, indicating a genuine *drawing* effect for unjust words, whereas the difference between the negative and neutral words was not statistically significant, suggesting no genuine drawing effect for negative words in our experiment. Furthermore, relative to negative, positive, neutral, and marginally to just words, unjust words lead people to respond slower to a subsequently presented target that appears in the opposite location of the cue word. The unjust words differed significantly from the neutral words, indicating a genuine *holding* effect for the unjust words, whereas the difference between the just and neutral words was not statistically significant, suggesting no genuine holding effect for just words.

These findings provide evidence for an attention effect of unjust words such that attention is drawn faster toward unjust words and held there stronger. These results corroborate and extend earlier research findings showing drawing and holding of attention for information that is very negative, threatening, or otherwise aversive for high state of trait anxious individuals. We also think that these findings are in line with previous justice studies that suggested that the experience of injustice has aversive characteristics. For example, experiencing injustice has been associated with depression, stress, self-threats, and negative emotions such as anger, disgust, sadness, and fear (Koper et al., 1993; Lerner, 1980; Lipkus et al., 1996; Mikula et al., 1998; Van den Bos, 2001). Furthermore, earlier research findings show physiological responses following unfair experiences and an overlap in brain areas that are active

during moral judgment tasks, emotional responses, and alarming situations (Greene et al., 2001; Markovsky, 1988; Van den Bos & Rijkema, 2009). We think these characteristics make unjust information particularly meaningful, self-relevant, and negative, prompting an individual to attend to this information and to react (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Yantis, 2000; see also Chapter 3).

Moreover, the importance of unjust information arises, we think, because unfair events are experiences that occur at the social interface where the individual meets the collective. For example, how unfairly an individual is treated often communicates important information about how groups regard the individual (Lind & Tyler, 1988). This quintessentially social quality of unjust judgments makes these judgments of great relevance to the social being we call the human individual (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002).

Although response times for targets following unjust words in the same location did not differ significantly from targets following negative words in the same location, no genuine drawing effect was observed for negative words relative to the other word categories. Previous research has taken into account individual differences (e.g., sub-clinical anxiety) to show attention effects as a function of these individual measures (e.g., Bradley et al., 1997; Fox et al., 2001; MacLeod et al., 1986; Mogg et al., 1994). In the current experiment we have not taken such variables into account and the negative words we used may not have been experienced as very threatening by our sample of participants. Furthermore, other researchers have reported similarly weak attention effects of samples of negative words in the absence of individual difference measures (e.g., Hafer, 2000) and even when individual measures were used for the drawing component of attention (Fox et al., 2001; White, 1996). We think that an important reason for the strong effects on both the drawing and holding components of attention for especially unjust words lies in the personal importance and versatile negative consequences of experiences of injustice, and the fact that justice is strongly rooted both in social life and in neural substrates.

We propose that the present research contributes to the increasing amount of empirical justice research that focuses on cognitive mechanisms that operate at early, perhaps automatic stages of social perception (e.g., Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008; Van den Bos & Rijkema, 2009). We also think it offers important insights for the literature on people's reactions to threats to their beliefs in a just world (Hafer, 2000; Lerner, 1980). First, the present findings present a more fine-grained picture of attention by adopting a paradigm that focuses on two separate processes underlying visual attention. Second, the present findings point to a default attention effect for unjust

words that is present even without additionally threatening the belief in a just world or without actually experiencing unjust events. Future research should further elucidate whether unfair experiences (e.g., a threat to the belief in a just world) lead to stronger attention effects, relative to this default attention effect. Future research may also want to explore whether attention effects are attenuated after the belief in a just world is restored (e.g., by signaling a "safe" situation).

In conclusion, the justice concept is an abstract cognitive construction and deliberations regarding justice are often regarded (at least partly) as higher order mental processes (e.g., Kant, 1959; Kohlberg, 1971). Previous research on visual attention effects has focused on relatively simple and concrete information (e.g., Koster et al., 2005; Papiés et al., 2008). The present study suggests that reactions to unjust information can be formed quickly and spontaneously (cf. Ham & Van den Bos, 2008). Taken together, we think that the attention effects presented here inform us on the importance of justice for people, and especially supports the drawing and holding capacities of unjust information.

Chapter 5

Toward a Better Understanding of the Justice Judgment Process: The Influence of Fair and Unfair Events on State Justice Sensitivity

People differ in the way they regard justice. Although some people may be relatively unaffected by justice issues, many others regard justice as a very important concept and react to it accordingly. Prior research suggests that this sensitivity to justice is a stable personality trait. In three studies, we show that (compared to neutral events) experiencing just and unjust events (directed towards the self or others) can elevate state levels of justice sensitivity. We discuss the implications of these findings, including the notion how these results can lead to a better understanding of the justice judgment process.

This chapter is based on Wijn, R. & Van den Bos, K. (in press-b). Toward a better understanding of the justice judgment process: The influence of fair and unfair events on state justice sensitivity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

Generally, people are sensitive to justice. This statement should lead to no surprise as fair and unfair events can be observed regularly and often have a big impact on people. For example, fair outcome distributions provide us with an equitable share of resources (Adams, 1965) and fair treatments tell us whether we are valued and respected group members and are not excluded from important groups or exploited by authorities (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). In line with these literatures, the experience of fair events has been shown to lead to a broad array of positive consequences (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Lind, 2001; Tyler, 1990), whereas the experience of unfair events typically leads to negative consequences (e.g., Huo et al., 1996; Lind, 2001; Lind et al., 2000; Vermunt et al., 1996).

As a result of these comprehensive effects following fair and unfair experiences, it is commonly assumed in justice research that people are very sensitive to justice, that justice is a very central theme in people's lives (see Cohen, 1986, for an overview), and that justice concerns are a powerful motivating force in social behavior (Lerner & Lerner, 1981). Theories about the importance and consequences of fair procedures also seem to imply that we are constantly (or at least very frequently) sensitive to cues informing us about the fairness of events (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Directly measuring sensitivity to justice (Mikula, 1994) has until recently received little research attention, however. In recent research investigations the Justice Sensitivity Scales have been shown to reliably measure individual differences that can be captured in a stable personality trait (Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, & Arbach, 2005). In the present chapter, we investigate the process of how justice judgments are formed. Specifically, we try to gain insight into the stability of this personality trait and whether prior events can influence justice sensitivity.

Research into the subject of justice sensitivity is important because justice sensitivity can have a strong influence on the experience of fair and unfair events and on reactions that are the result of the experience of fair and unfair events, such as personal well-being, emotions, and behavior. For example, people who score high on justice sensitivity react with stronger resentment to being deprived of a desired outcome than people low in justice sensitivity (Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt & Mohiyeddini, 1996). Justice sensitivity has also been found to amplify the effect of procedural unfairness on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being (Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999).

The validity of the Justice Sensitivity Scales has been shown by relating them to justice constructs, self and other related concerns, pro- and anti-social behavior, and multiple personality factors (Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004; Gollwitzer, Schmitt, Schalke,

Maes, & Baer, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2005). This research showed that up to 63% of the variance of the Justice Sensitivity Scales can be explained by personality traits (Schmitt et al., 2005). Although this percentage is impressive, the number also indicates that a substantial share of variance is not explained by these stable individual differences in justice sensitivity.

Two lines of research, from the personality and media psychology domains, may offer insights into the unexplained variance, or variability, of the justice sensitivity measure. First, considerable evidence points to some plasticity of personality traits, especially in youth and early adulthood (McCrae & Costa, 1990; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000) and according to some also in later adulthood (Ardelt, 2000; Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). Both Ardel (2000) and Caspi and his colleagues (2005) suggest that situational factors may contribute to the development of personality traits. Thus, everyday experiences may ultimately mold and form these traits.

Second, research on sensitization and desensitization to media violence has shown that repeated exposures to media violence influences people's sensitivity to real-life violence and to the suffering of victims (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003). Most notably, recent research has investigated the development of sensitization and desensitization over repeated exposures to violent media scenes (Fanti, Vanman, Henrich, & Avraamides, 2009). This research shows a curvilinear effect of sensitization. Initially, after a few exposures to media violence, participants became more sensitive to the suffering of a victim but this sensitivity showed a decline after viewing multiple violent scenes, resulting in less sympathy for the victim. One explanation of this effect is that sensitivity and desensitization are closely related to physiological arousal, which rises due to the impact, but fades away as a result of habituation (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007).

Following these lines of research we propose that the unexplained variance that is observed in the research by Schmitt and his colleagues (2005) may result, at least partially, from situational factors. The influence of situational factors on justice sensitivity has thus far not been investigated. Arguably, previous encounters with fair and unfair experiences may be important factors influencing justice sensitivity and may result in temporary (cf., Fanti et al., 2009) or more lasting effects (cf. Ardel, 2000) on justice sensitivity. Therefore, in trying to assess the plasticity of justice sensitivity, we focus on events that we think are most likely to influence it, that is, the experience of fair and unfair events. Specifically, we measured justice sensitivity after participants experienced equal and unequal outcome distributions toward themselves and toward others and

expect that justice sensitivity will be higher after people experienced fair or unfair events in contrast to neutral events.

Furthermore, previous research and theorizing has shown that especially the experience of unfair (compared to fair) events has a strong influence on affect and justice judgments (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001). In fact, Folger (1984) has argued explicitly that whereas psychologists tend to think and talk about the psychology of justice, unjust events affect people's cognitions and reactions stronger than just events (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997), suggesting that *injustice* plays a more prominent role and that, in fact, it might be better to talk about the psychology of *injustice* as opposed to justice (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). For the current purposes it suffices that these suggestions lead us to confidently expect that justice sensitivity is influenced more after the experience of unfair as opposed to fair events.

The Justice Sensitivity Scales consist of three separate ten-item questionnaires to assess people's reactions to victim, beneficiary, and observer perspectives to fair and unfair events (Schmitt et al., 2005).^{5.1} In Studies 5.1 and 5.2 we focus on reactions after participants experienced fair and unfair situations themselves. In Study 5.3 we focus on people's reactions after they observed fair and unfair situations with others. By thus investigating the different roles one may be in (i.e., being a victim, observer, or beneficiary of fair and unfair events) we try to assess whether the subscales will be differentially affected. Different effects would underline the different sensitivities of the scales and would add to the available evidence on the construct validity of the facet structure of justice sensitivity (Schmitt et al., 2005; Gollwitzer et al., 2005).

Study 5.1

Method

Participants and design. Eighty-seven students (30 men and 57 women)^{5.2} at Utrecht University participated in exchange for money or course credit. Participants

^{5.1} In the original work of Schmitt and his colleagues (2005) the three scales are labeled the victim scale (containing items like, e.g., "It worries me when I have to work hard for things that come easily to others"), observer scale (containing items like, e.g., "It worries me when someone else has to work hard for things that come easily to others") and perpetrator scale (containing items like, e.g., "It bothers me when things come easily to me that others have to work hard for"). However, following Gollwitzer and his colleagues (2005) we feel that the label beneficiary instead of perpetrator better covers the content of this scale. Therefore, in the present paper we use the label beneficiary scale when referring to the original perpetrator scale.

^{5.2} In all studies in Chapter 5, gender did not interact with our hypotheses ($F_s < 1$).

were randomly assigned to either an unequal lottery ticket distribution condition or to a neutral condition in which participants were informed about their outcome after they had filled out the Justice Sensitivity Scales.

Experimental procedure. On entrance to the laboratory, participants were led to separate cubicles containing a computer and were informed that all instructions would appear on the computer screen. In the instructions, we told participants that their computer was connected to the computer of the experimenter as well as to the computers of other participants. Participants would have to complete an estimation task after which their results would be compared to that of another participant (Van den Bos, 1999). Relative to their performance, lottery tickets would be divided between them and the other participant. The lottery tickets gave participants a chance to win 50 euros in a lottery to be held after all participants had participated in the study. The more lottery tickets participants would win, the greater their chance to win the 50 euros in the lottery. In reality, there was no real other against whom participants were playing and all responses of the bogus other participant were pre-programmed.

After the estimation task, participants in both conditions were told that they had performed equally well as the other participant. Next, in the unequal distribution condition we asked participants to think for one minute about what division of lottery tickets they would perceive of as fair. We then told these participants they would receive 1 lottery ticket, whereas the other participant would receive 3 lottery tickets. In the neutral condition we left participants unknowingly about the division of lottery tickets until after the Justice Sensitivity Scales. We asked participants in the neutral condition to think about everyday things for one minute. We then told these participants that after the complete study was finished we would inform them on how many lottery tickets they would receive. After a 5 minute filler task, all participants filled out the Justice Sensitivity Scales (Schmitt et al., 2005). At the end of the studies, we informed our participants (both who were and who were not yet promised lottery tickets) on the purposes of the study and that the winner of the lottery would randomly be chosen from all participants, a procedure to which none of the participants objected.

The items on the Justice Sensitivity Scales were measured on seven point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) and the reliabilities of the victim ($\alpha = .84$), beneficiary ($\alpha = .87$), and observer subscales ($\alpha = .88$) were high. At the end of the experiment, participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

Results

A significant effect of our fairness manipulation was found on the *victim* scale, where participants reported higher justice sensitivity following the unequal distribution of lottery tickets ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.78$) than when the lottery tickets were not yet distributed ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.93$), $F(1, 85) = 6.24$, $p < .02$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Also, a significant effect was found on the *beneficiary* scale. Participants reported higher justice sensitivity on the beneficiary subscale following the unequal distribution of lottery tickets ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.09$) than when the lottery tickets were not yet distributed ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.76$), $F(1, 85) = 5.69$, $p < .02$, $\eta^2 = .06$. An effect that approached significance was found on the *observer* scale where participants reported somewhat higher justice sensitivity following the unequal distribution of lottery tickets ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.10$) than when the lottery tickets were not yet distributed ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.90$), $F(1, 85) = 3.65$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$.

Discussion

In Study 5.1 we found that the personal experience of an unfair distribution of lottery tickets (vs. not yet knowing the lottery ticket distribution) led to higher justice sensitivity ratings on the victim scale (i.e., injustices that can be done to oneself) and on the beneficiary scale (i.e., injustices that one profits of at the expense of others). The personal experience of an unfair lottery ticket distribution (vs. not yet knowing) showed a marginally significant effect toward higher justice sensitivity ratings on the observer scale (i.e., injustices that one observes with others). Thus, in Study 5.1 we find that all scales (although marginally so on the observer scale) are affected after the experience of unfairness toward oneself, such that participants became more sensitive to justice. In Study 5.1 we find that the subscales were all equally affected as a result of the focus of the experience of the unfair situation (i.e., being a victim of an unfair situation). This latter finding is in line with the notion that personal experiences of unfair events generally lead to the strongest effects on people's reactions (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001). In Study 5.2 we examined the effects on justice sensitivity after participants experienced an equal as opposed to a neutral distribution of lottery tickets.

Study 5.2

Method

Participants and design. Fifty-nine students (14 men and 45 women) at Utrecht University took part in the current study in exchange for money or course credit.

Participants were randomly assigned to an equal distribution condition or a condition where we informed participants on their own outcome only (i.e., neutral condition).

Experimental procedure. The procedure in Study 5.2 was largely similar to the procedure of Study 5.1. After the estimation task, all participants were told that they had performed equally well as the other participant. Then, in the equal distribution condition we told participants that they as well as the other participant against whom they were playing would receive 2 lottery tickets. In the neutral condition we told participants that they would receive 2 lottery tickets but we did not inform them about how many lottery tickets the other participant would receive. After participants had learned how many lottery tickets they had won the experiment leader entered their cubicle to hand them their lottery tickets and participants continued with the computer tasks, including the Justice Sensitivity Scales. Reliabilities of the victim subscale ($\alpha = .75$), beneficiary subscale ($\alpha = .82$), and observer subscale ($\alpha = .85$) were high.

In Study 5.1 we did not check directly whether our fairness manipulation had been successful, although several participants in the unequal distribution condition noted in a debriefing procedure that they did feel treated unfairly. Because in Study 5.2 we used a subtler manipulation, as receiving an outcome equal to someone else (i.e., a fair event) may be less salient to people than receiving an unequal outcome (i.e., an unfair event; see, e.g., Folger, 1984), we asked participants to indicate on 7-point scales how just, fair, justified, and appropriate they found the division of lottery tickets (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *totally agree*, $\alpha = .96$). Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

Results

Fairness manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA showed a significant effect of our manipulation on perceived fairness. The fair condition was perceived as more fair ($M = 6.31$, $SD = 1.02$) than the neutral condition ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.05$), $F(1, 57) = 33.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .58$.

Justice Sensitivity. As expected, in the equal distribution condition participants reported higher ratings on the victim subscale ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.74$) than participants who were informed on their own outcome only, ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.84$), $F(1, 57) = 4.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$. This indicates that participants were more sensitive to injustice towards themselves when they had previously experienced a fair event. The beneficiary subscale did not show statistically significant higher ratings after the equal distribution of lottery tickets ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.89$) as opposed to the neutral condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.85$), $F < 1$, $\eta^2 = .00$. The observer subscale also did not show statistically significant

higher ratings after the equal ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.84$) as opposed to the neutral ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.08$) distribution of lottery tickets, $F(1, 57) = 1.55$, $p = .20$, $\eta^2 = .03$.

Discussion

Study 5.2 shows that after an equal distribution of lottery tickets, as opposed to a neutral distribution where participants only knew their own outcome, participants reported higher justice sensitivity ratings on the victim scale. This suggests that after experiencing a fair event people are more concerned with the experience of unfairness toward themselves. The beneficiary and observer scales did not show significant effects as a result of our experimental procedure. These results are in accordance with our expectation that the specific role one may be in (viz., being personally affected by a fair event, as reflected in the victim scale) differentially affects the subscales. Taken together, Studies 5.1 and 5.2 reveal that both unfair and fair (vs. neutral) experiences can lead to higher justice sensitivity ratings. Moreover, when people experience an unfair event (vs. a neutral event; Study 5.1) the effects are more comprehensive than when people experience a fair event (vs. a neutral event; Study 5.2). That is, experiencing an unfair event in Study 1 led to higher justice sensitivity ratings not only on the victim scale, but also on the beneficiary scale and marginally on the observer scale. In Study 5.3 we assessed whether observing others receiving an unfair (vs. fair) outcome, instead of being personally involved as in Studies 5.1 and 5.2, will lead to higher justice sensitivity ratings. This procedure allowed us to further investigate whether the effects on the different Justice Sensitivity Scales are congruent with the perspective that people have when experiencing unfair events (i.e., being a victim, observer, or beneficiary of fair or unfair events). We expected that being an observer of an unfair event would primarily affect the observer subscale of the Justice Sensitivity Scales.

Study 5.3

Method

Participants and design. Seventy-three students (17 men and 56 women) at Utrecht University took part in the study in exchange for money or course credit. In Studies 5.1 and 5.2 we contrasted fair and unfair distributions with a neutral distribution. In Study 5.3 we wanted to focus directly on the relation between fair and unfair distributions. Participants were therefore randomly assigned to either an equal or unequal distribution condition of our experimental design.

Experimental procedure. Stimulus materials for this study were inspired on a media campaign of the Dutch national Aids Fund. In this media campaign the unequal global distribution of anti-Aids medicines was highlighted. In accordance with the campaign, in the unequal distribution condition we told participants that anti-Aids medicines are hardly available in Third World countries, resulting in many deaths that could have been prevented. In the equal distribution condition we informed participants that, among others due to the hard work of the Aids Fund, anti-Aids medicines were now equally available in western countries and third world countries, saving many lives. After reading this information participants continued with the questionnaires containing the Justice Sensitivity Scales. Reliabilities of the victim subscale ($\alpha = .86$), beneficiary subscale ($\alpha = .79$), and observer subscale ($\alpha = .81$) were high. After filling out the Justice Sensitivity Scales, participants indicated how just, fair, justified, and appropriate they found the global division of anti-Aids medicines on 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *totally agree*, $\alpha = .97$) to check whether our manipulations had been successful. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA showed a significant effect of our manipulation such that the unequal distribution condition ($M = 1.61$, $SD = 0.71$) was perceived as more unfair than the equal distribution condition ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.56$), $F(1, 65) = 48.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .75$.

Justice sensitivity. As expected, a significant effect of our manipulation was found on the observer scale, where participants reported higher justice sensitivity following an unequal distribution of anti-Aids medicines ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.75$) than when the anti-Aids medicines were equally distributed ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.75$), $F(1, 65) = 5.62$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .13$. An effect that approached significance was found for the beneficiary scale. Participants reported somewhat higher justice sensitivity on the beneficiary subscale following an unequal distribution of anti-Aids medicines ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.78$) than when the anti-Aids medicines were equally distributed ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.79$), $F(1, 65) = 1.96$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Participants did not report significantly higher justice sensitivity on the victim subscale following an unequal distribution of anti-Aids medicines ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.82$) than when the anti-Aids medicines were equally distributed ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.99$), $F(1, 65) = 1.13$, $p = .29$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

Discussion

These results support our prediction that unfair events elevate justice sensitivity more than fair events do. The findings also provide support for our prediction that when

one is an observer of an event, the scale that corresponds with that role (i.e. the observer scale) is primarily affected. As citizens of an industrialized country participants may have felt as beneficiaries too. We think that for this reason the results point to an effect on the beneficiary subscale that approached significance.

General Discussion

Taken together, our three studies show that justice-related events can lead to higher justice sensitivity ratings. That is, in Study 5.1, where participants reacted to a division of outcomes that they received themselves personally, an *unequal* (vs. neutral) division of outcomes led to increased justice sensitivity on the *victim* scale, the *beneficiary* scale, and a marginally significant effect on the observer scale. Study 5.2 used a similar set-up as Study 5.1 and revealed that an *equal* (vs. neutral) division of outcomes that participants received themselves personally led to higher justice sensitivity ratings on the *victim* scale, and to no statistically significant effects on the other two scales. Study 5.3 showed that following an *unequal* (vs. equal) distribution of anti-Aids medicines allocated toward others (i.e., Third World children), participants reported higher justice sensitivity on the *observer* scale, marginally higher on the beneficiary scale, and not significantly on the victim scale.

These results add to a better understanding of justice judgment process, in general, and the influence of fair and unfair events on state justice sensitivity, in particular. The fact that an unequal division of outcomes leads to increased justice sensitivity on 2 (almost 3) scales (Study 5.1) whereas an equal division of outcomes leads to increased sensitivity on one scale only (Study 5.2) is in line with the notion that unfair events tend to lead to stronger effects on people's reactions than fair events do (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001). Furthermore, the findings of Studies 5.2 and 5.3 correspond with the idea that the strongest effects on justice sensitivity can be found when experiences are congruent with the perspective that people have when experiencing fair or unfair events. That is, when participants personally experienced an equal division of outcomes (Study 5.2) this increased justice sensitivity as it pertains to victims (and not the other JS scales). When participants reacted to fair and unfair events pertaining to other people (Study 5.3) this increased justice sensitivity as it is related to others (and not the other JS scales). Thus, although previous studies suggested that justice sensitivity is a stable and robust construct, the current findings suggest that justice sensitivity may consist of both stable and more state-like components, the latter being influenceable in predictable ways by previous justice-related experiences. These

findings are in line with research showing sensitizing effects of media violence (Fanti et al., 2009) and the fluidity of personality traits (e.g., Aldert, 2000; Caspi et al., 2005).

A limitation of the present findings relates to the development of justice sensitivity over time. In the current studies, we let participants experience only one fair or unfair event. Research on media violence, showing the influenceability of sensitivity to victims, has mostly focused on the desensitizing effects of repeated exposures to media violence (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003). Potentially, this may suggest that justice sensitivity can show a decline after many repeated exposures to fair or unfair events. Alternatively, it may be by experiencing and observing that people acquire and form in their lives a sense of justice sensitivity (cf., Aldert, 2000; Caspi et al., 2005). Future research may investigate these processes and their short-term and more long-term effects by re-testing participants (e.g., in close succession or with the use of longitudinal designs). We would applaud further research pertaining to the validity of shorter versions of the Justice Sensitivity Scales as well. We think that this may ease repeated testing of participants and thus, potentially, facilitate our understanding of the processes underlying justice sensitivity.

A second limitation relates to the effects on different scales following the different manipulations. We suggest that the differential sensitivities of the scales add to the available evidence on the construct validity of the facet structure of justice sensitivity (cf. Schmitt et al., 2005; Gollwitzer et al., 2005). Future research could shed light on the exact mechanisms underlying these differential effects. Possibly, observing or experiencing fair or unfair events may ease access to information stored in memory on previously experienced or observed fair and unfair events. The larger number of fair and unfair events the person recalls may subsequently change his or her justice sensitivity. This may offer an explanation for why the effect sizes found in the current studies are quit similar. It seems that the perspective of experiencing a fair or unfair event has an influence on the subscale that is congruent with the experience, but not on the strength of the effect. Future research may pay attention to these processes that may underlie the flexibility of justice sensitivity.

In conclusion, with the present studies we try to contribute to the growing research interest into the issue of how justice judgments are formed (e.g., Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008). These studies are also relevant to the question why people refer to justice when communicating to others what they have experienced (e.g., Finkel, 2001; see also Chapter 2). Furthermore, it has been stated that “the importance of justice cannot be overstated” (Folger, 1984, p. ix). Some would remark that this is more

the case for some people than for others (Schmitt et al., 2005). In addition to these statements, the current studies show that this is more the case after some experiences than others. That is, following fair and unfair instances directed toward others and the self people become more sensitive to justice issues, a construct that is regarded in the literature as a stable personality trait.

Chapter 6

Summary and General Discussion

Obviously, justice is a subject that is on our minds and on our tongues. But why exactly do we use justice talk? And when do we use it? And why should we study the subject of justice at all?

Justice exists between individuals and groups of individuals and is thus a social phenomenon (Van den Bos & Lind, in press). People treat others fairly or unfairly, are treated by others fairly or unfairly, and observe fair or unfair treatments with others. At the same time, people talk about their fair or unfair treatments of others, the fair or unfair treatment they received from others, and the fair or unfair treatments they have observed with others, and hence create shared visions of what is and what is not fair and just (e.g., Lerner, 1980; Van den Bos & Lind, 2001). Communication constitutes a very important part of the social construction of what is considered fair or unfair. It is for this reason that an examination of how and when people talk about justice, and what the consequences of such communications are, is so important.

Early modern justice researchers reasoned that people value justice for instrumental reasons. Fair outcome distributions ascertain that rewards and resources are in proportion to contributions, and fair procedures, such as the ability to voice an opinion, would give people control over their outcome, thus increasing the probability of a favorable or equitable outcome (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1978; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Later findings and theorizing showed that other, noninstrumental reasons can cause people's concern for justice. For example, Lind and Tyler and their colleagues emphasize the value-expressive function of justice judgments (Lind et al., 1990; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). According to these authors, an important reason why people value fair treatment is because it conveys relational information, such as respect, standing, trustworthiness and inclusion in the group. People display great appreciation when fairness is done, but when people believe that injustice has prevailed they experience aversive reactions, such as anger, fear, and disgust (Mikula et al., 1998). Thus, justice cues provide important information for people and can have strong effects.

As it appeared, instrumental concerns can explain some, but not all of the reactions to fair and unfair outcomes and procedures (Lind et al., 1990; Tyler et al., 1985). Since then, researchers have largely ignored the instrumentality issue of justice and this may have come at the expense of an important distinction. Early justice research focused on the instrumentality of justice judgments and assumed that this instrumentality was by and large a self-interested motive (e.g., Adams, 1965; Thibaut & Walker, 1975, Walster et al., 1978). This self-interest account seems to be at odds with

fundamental characteristics of justice (Folger 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980).

As I suggest in Chapter 1, there may be an instrumental functionality in justice judgments that is distinct from self-serving motives as put forth by earlier researchers (e.g., Adams, 1965; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Specifically, given that voice procedures constitute such a central aspect of justice research and lead to a broad array of effects because they convey valuable information, and given that justice is central to people's evaluations of social situations (Tyler et al., 1997; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002), I suggest that justice can be employed by people (e.g., by adopting it in communications) to influence others or to attract others' attention. A related view has been expressed by Tyler (2001) who discussed the use of fair procedures as a strategy for exercising authority. Others have argued that people adopt justice in their rhetoric to strengthen their argumentation (Lerner, 1981, p.15; Reis, 1984, p. 37; Messick & Sentis, 1983, p. 90; Miller, 2001, p. 534; Finkel, 2000). However, only a small amount of research studies has paid attention to the content of what people voice, when they voice their opinion about the fairness of an outcome or procedure. This research has described *what* aspects of fairness people focus on when they talk about personal experiences of injustice (Finkel, 2000; Messick et al., 1985; Mikula et al., 1990). Until now, it has largely remained unclear when and why people spontaneously refer to justice and how people react when they encounter justice-related arguments in the communications of others.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I present experiments that aim to shed light on the reasons for people to adopt justice assertions in their communications. I argue that people both strategically employ justice in communications, and will be influenced by justice information in communication. Although these suggestions have been made before, they were never tested empirically and have always been viewed as motivated by self-interested goal attainment. I further suggest that justice assertions can be employed to serve a specific function that not necessarily needs to be one's own interest. On the contrary, due to its specific characteristics (i.e., impartiality as a prerequisite for fairness), I argue that justice assertions will be mainly employed to further others' interests.

Related research studies that are particularly interesting for the purposes as outlined in Chapter 1 have to do with more basic processes underlying justice judgments. Previous research has shown that people spontaneously activate justice knowledge after having read statements implying fair and unfair events (Ham & Van den Bos, 2008), become more preoccupied with fairness after a just world threat, such that

these justice-related words capture attention (Hafer, 2000), and react more vigilantly to justice judgments after being alarmed, even outside of their immediate awareness (Van den Bos et al., 2008; Van den Bos & Rijkema, 2009). These lines of research reveal some interesting signaling characteristics of justice information. To gain a better understanding of these signaling characteristics, early-stage cognitive reactions to fairness-related information are investigated in Chapter 4 where I examine the attention drawing and holding function of unjust information. In Chapter 5, I investigate the sensitizing function of just and unjust events.

In the following sections I will briefly summarize the line of reasoning and the findings of the empirical chapters presented in this thesis, and offer suggestions for future research.

Part 1: Antecedents and consequences of justice talk

Chapter 2: On the social-communicative function of justice

In Chapter 2, I try to combine the justice and communication literatures by showing the influence of communication goals and personal involvement on the use of justice-related words in communication. I argue that the importance of justice manifests itself in communications regarding justice and morality-related issues (e.g., Finkel, 2000, 2001; Miller, 2001; Schreier et al., 1995; Tyler, 2001). Chapter 2 aims to show that an important reason why people make use of justice assertions in their communications is that people assume that justice assertions add to the persuasive power of what is being said (Finkel, 2000; Finkel, 2001; Miller, 2001, p. 534; Reis, 1984, p. 37).

What is considered persuasive is not only determined by the content of what is said but also by characteristics of the situation and how message receivers interpret these situational characteristics (Flavell, 1979; 1992; Friestad & Wright, 1994; Frith & Frith, 1999; Jost et al., 1998; Premack & Woodruff, 1978). For example, people are often suspicious that others' attitudes and behaviors are mainly guided by self-interested motives thereby reducing the persuasiveness of the message (Petty & Wegener, 1998). In Chapter 2, I reason that the role of self-interest is especially important for communications that involve justice-related issues because self-interest and justice are two strongly related concepts. When referring to justice one refers to an objective, higher-order norm that conflicts with self-interest. Also, prior research points to a conflict between self-interest and claims of discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2001), a subject related to fairness and justice. On the basis of this research I suggest that the

use of justice assertions may have negative effects when they are used to communicate about events that happen to oneself, whereas the reverse may be true when justice assertions are used to communicate about what happens to others.

Communicators are generally well aware of message receiver's self-interest expectations, and of how claims of fair and unfair treatment might be interpreted (Flavell, 1979; 1992; Friestad & Wright, 1994; Frith & Frith, 1999; Jost et al., 1998; Petty & Briñol, 2008; Premack & Woodruff, 1978). Communicators are also generally presumed to be capable of anticipating these expectations, and to adjust their message to the audience they are communicating with (Clark & Murphy, 1982; Fussel & Krauss, 1989; Fussel & Krauss, 1992). Research also shows that some people (i.e., high self-monitors) are more sensitive to social cues and are better able to adjust their behavior to a situation than others (i.e., low self-monitors; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986; for a review, see Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

The studies in Chapter 2 show that people use justice assertions to persuade others, but only when all conditions were present that warranted successful employment of justice assertions (i.e., no apparent self-interest, and able to adjust behavior to a situation). Study 2.1 shows that people with a goal to persuade others used more justice-related words than people who had a goal to be accurate or people who were not given an explicit communication goal. In Study 2.2, I replicate this finding and in addition show that especially when participants had to write about unfairness that was directed at someone else (vs. themselves) they made more use of justice-related words in their communication. Finally, Study 2.3 is meant to show how pervasive the role of self-interest is for communications about justice. People are very suspicious of others' self-interest goals and a pilot study shows that anonymity of a communicator raises this suspicion. Thus in Study 2.3, I investigate how people adjust their communication when they are anonymously trying to persuade others of an unjust event that has taken place. I argue that anonymity would raise a communicator's concerns to appear self-interestedly, and therefore a communicator would avoid the use of persuasive justice assertions. I also focus on the individual's general ability to adjust his or her behavior to a situation (high vs. low self-monitors). I show that people who are well able to adjust their communication to a situation (i.e., high self-monitors) used more justice assertions as a tool to persuade when they communicated about others and were not anonymous. In other situations participants refrained from using justice assertions as a persuasive tool, either because they understand that the situation

renders these assertions less persuasive, or because they do not appreciate the persuasiveness of these assertions at all.

In Studies 2.1 and 2.2, I also present correlational data showing that the use of justice assertions in communication renders a message more persuasive when they are used to stand up for others, but not when they are used for oneself. The correlational nature of these data prevented me from drawing strong conclusions about the causality, however. Both the persuasiveness of the texts and the use of justice assertions could have been caused by the eloquence of the communicator. This subject is experimentally investigated in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: When justice persuades people to do the right thing

In Chapter 3, I build on the research findings from Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I reason that justice assertions are persuasive when used in argumentation. I also focus on the special relationship between justice and self-interest. Self-interest and justice are two strongly related concepts. When referring to justice one refers to an objective, higher-order norm that conflicts with self-interest. However, in situations unrelated to justice issues the expression of self-interest is sometimes normative and can enhance persuasion. Therefore, I argue that when justice assertions are absent, or when assertions are used that do not conflict strongly with self-interested motives, the presence of self-interest exerts a less detrimental influence on persuasion. In Chapter 3, I present experimental research data that shows that adopting justice assertions in communications renders a message more persuasive when the communication source is not pursuing self-interested goals.

In Study 3.1 participants in a controlled laboratory setting watched a video interview with an African truck driver who distributed rice for the United Nations World Food Program. Participants subsequently played an online game in which they could donate rice for the World Food Program. Participants invested more time playing the online game when the interviewee had used justice-related words in his speech than when he had not used these words. However, this is only the case when the interviewee expressed that he had no personal interest in this cause. Study 3.2 shows the same pattern of results in a supermarket where I measured customers' buying behavior. Participants bought more products that were promoted by a consumer organization when justice-related words were used to describe the purposes of the organization and the organization was perceived not to pursue self-interested goals. When evaluative words were used, or the organization was perceived as pursuing self-

interested goals, less promoted products were bought. Importantly, in Chapter 3, I pay attention to real behavior, adding significantly to the ecological validity of the findings (Kraus, 1995).

Chapter 3 shows that justice assertions are strongly intertwined with the self-interest concept. Self-interest violates basic justice norms and the two seem mutually exclusive. The impression that the source is truly selfless dovetails well with the objectivity of the justice concept and consequently leads to the persuasiveness of justice assertions. On the other hand, when a communication source expresses his or her self-interest, or when a source is perceived as self-interested, justice assertions lose their persuasiveness. The effects of self-interest seems not to be general but, rather, especially potent for communications concerning justice issues. I conclude that justice assertions can persuade people to do the right thing but only in the absence of self-interested motives.

Part 2: Studying the processes leading to justice judgments and justice reactions

Chapter 4: When things are unfair we direct and keep our attention there

Situations involving unjust events convey meaningful information that needs to be attended and responded to. The presence or absence of injustice informs people of their social standing (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992), and experiences of injustice are particularly aversive and threatening, and elicit strong negative emotions (e.g., Folger, 1984; Markovsky, 1988; Mikula et al., 1998; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walster et al., 1978; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001). Injustice thus has an important signaling function. Research on emotional disorders and research examining threatening stimuli has shown that negative, threatening or otherwise aversive information receives more attention than neutral information, especially for high state or trait anxious individuals (e.g., Bradley et al., 1997). Attention is thought to be functional and adaptive, and to support behavior that achieves goals (Yantis, 2000). For example, attending to unjust events can facilitate the restoration of the injustice that has been done, either in actuality or through rationalization (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; see also Chapter 3). In order for attention to be functional, relevant information should both be rapidly detected as well as carefully scrutinized. In Chapter 4, I suggest that because of the aversive and threatening characteristics, and the social meaningfulness of injustice, unjust information will draw and hold attention stronger than just, positive and neutral information and possibly information that is equally negative but less socially meaningful.

Using an exogenous cuing task, Study 4.1 supports this hypothesis. Relative to just, positive and neutral, but not to negative words, unjust words draw attention faster. Relative to negative, positive, neutral, and marginally to just words, unjust words hold attention longer. These attention effects inform us on the importance of justice for people, and support the comprehensive emotional and cognitive essence of the justice concept. They may also shed light on the findings portrayed in Chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters, I show how persuasion goals, and situational and personal characteristics influence the strategic use of justice assertions and how the use of these assertions function to persuade people. Possibly, the signaling function of justice-related words (and especially unjust words) plays a role in these processes.

Chapter 5: The influence of fair and unfair events on justice sensitivity

Chapter 5 focuses on the processes behind the justice judgment process. The studies in Chapter 5 attempt to contribute to the growing research interest into the questions how justice judgments are formed (e.g., Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008) and why people refer to justice when communicating to others what they have experienced (e.g., Finkel, 2001; see also Chapter 2). In Chapter 1, I suggest that people talk about things that are important to them or that they are sensitive to. In Chapter 5, I try to gain more insight into justice sensitivity and how justice sensitivity can be influenced by previous encounters with fair and unfair events.

Fair and unfair events can be observed regularly and often have a big impact on people. This makes people generally sensitive to justice. Recent studies point in the direction of individual differences regarding justice sensitivity (Gollwitzer et al., 2005; Mikula, 1994; Schmitt et al., 2005). This research shows that people differ in the way they regard and react to fair and unfair events. Whereas some people may react strongly to events that concern justice, others may be affected less strongly. Justice sensitivity can have a strong influence on the experience of fair and unfair events and on reactions that are the result of the experience of fairness, such as personal well-being, emotions, and behavior (Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt & Mohiyeddini, 1996; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999).

Important for the current purposes, personality traits often show some flexibility during the course of life (Ardelt, 2000; Caspi et al., 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1990; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Situational factors, such as encounters with fair and unfair experiences, may contribute to the development of personality traits. Also, research on sensitization and desensitization to media violence has shown that

repeated exposures to media violence first sensitize, and in a later stadium desensitize people to the suffering of victims (Fanti et al., 2009). The influence of situational factors on the formation of justice sensitivity has thus far been uninvestigated. In Chapter 5, I suggest that, building on observations by Schmitt et al. (2005) that justice is not be evenly important to everyone, justice is not evenly important at any moment in time. Also, because negative as opposed to positive information often has a greater impact on people (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001), I expected stronger effects on justice sensitivity after the experience of unfair as opposed to fair events.

In line with the predictions, I show in Study 5.1 that justice sensitivity ratings are significantly higher on the *victim* and *beneficiary* scales and marginally so on the *observer* scale after people received an *unfair* (vs. neutral) outcome. In Study 5.2, justice sensitivity ratings are significantly higher on the *victim* scale (but not statistically significant on the other scales) after people received a *fair* (vs. neutral) outcome. Study 5.3 shows higher justice sensitivity ratings on the *observer* scale and marginally higher on the *beneficiary* scale after participants read information about the globally *unfair* (vs. fair) distribution of anti-Aids medicine. The differential effects on the justice sensitivity scales in the three studies underline the specific sensitivity of the scales and are in accordance with the hypothesis that effects are strongest when the perspective of the experience and the perspective of the scale are similar. The seemingly strongest results in Study 5.1 may (at least partly) be due to the fact that the personal experience of *unfair* events leads to the strongest effects on people's reactions (Folger, 1984; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001).

These results add to our understanding of state effects of justice sensitivity. Although previous studies suggested that justice sensitivity is a stable and robust construct, the current findings suggest that justice sensitivity may consist of both stable and more state-like components, the latter being influenceable by previous justice-related experiences. These effects may be temporary or evolve into desensitization over repeated exposures, or, potentially, the present research may shed light on the process of how people acquire sensitivity to justice. That is, it may be by experiencing and observing that people acquire and form in their lives a sense of justice sensitivity (see also Aldert, 2000, and Caspi et al., 2005).

Future directions

The present thesis focuses on the functionality of the justice judgment process and its consequences on human behavior (such as global citizenship behavior) and

other reactions (such as drawing and holding of human attention as well as increased sensitivity to justice issues). In the present thesis I argue that people use justice assertions for functional reasons and that justice assertions function as persuasive forces in communication. Furthermore, unjust information draws and holds attention, and experiencing and observing fair and unfair events sensitize people to justice issues. Now, I will try to offer suggestions for future directions and integrate the findings.

The findings as presented in Part 1 of this thesis shed a new light on the concept of social justice, as it is studied thus far. The most important conclusion to be drawn is that justice assertions are functional and are used as such. This can have important implications for how people and companies present themselves and their products and how these assertions should be interpreted. For example, people filing complaints that concern themselves may avoid the use of justice assertions. This should not be taken to mean, however, that people find the procedures or outcomes to which they protest fair. Because of the important implications of unfair treatments and outcomes, organizations or individuals receiving complaints might do well to pay extra attention to the fairness of procedures and outcomes, as they may not be explicitly voiced as such.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the communicator, individuals or organizations may wish to emphasize their uninvolvedness in a matter when they use justice assertions in their communications to others to render their message more persuasive. Merely accentuating uninvolvedness alone may not be sufficient to foster the persuasiveness of their justice assertions. People are practiced receivers of persuasive messages and they may not be deceived easily. Therefore, when one is really uninvolved in a matter, or does not pursue self-interested goals, the adoption of justice assertions will facilitate the persuasiveness of the message. In light of these findings, probably the most successful adopters of justice assertions in terms of their persuasiveness are non-profit or not for profit organizations, or individuals who take a stand for others.

Interestingly, the present findings seem to suggest that adopting justice assertions in one's message does not harm persuasiveness, even if one is actually self-interested. However, important to note, in the studies performed in this thesis, communicators were never seen as extremely self-interested by the participants involved in my experiments. Future research could pay attention to effects of justice assertions voiced by communicators who are extremely self-interested, such as individuals or commercial organization seeking maximal profit. Possibly, when

communicators do appear very self-interested their justice assertions may backfire and do more harm than good with respect to their persuasion goals.

Another point relates to the use of justice assertions to describe oneself, instead of a situation. In Chapter 3, justice assertions are used to describe global differences in the accessibility to food and the treatment of third world farmers. I have not investigated how the use of justice assertions to describe oneself is perceived by a message recipient and how this influences the persuasiveness of a message. For example, a recent media campaign of Aegon, a large international insuring company, advertised by being fair about insuring. How does such use of justice assertions affect attitudes concerning the insuring company, or their products? Future research could find answers to these and related questions.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the drawing and holding capabilities of unjust information. People seem to focus on unjust information and to pay more attention to it. I reason that this is the result of the social meaningfulness and personal importance that people attach to such information. Conversely, it also means that people will notice information that pertains to unfairness in their environment faster and that this information may color their perceptions of social situations or messages. Interesting, most previous research on attention for negative information has demonstrated attention effects in high state or trait anxious individuals. Furthermore, previous research on Stroop interference for justice-related words, showed an attention effect after a high threat to the belief in a just world, but not after a low threat (Hafer, 2000). In Chapter 4, I show both grabbing and holding processes to underlie attention to unjust stimuli and that both processes are not moderated by individual differences or by a previous threat. This suggests that there is a default preferential attention effect for important social information, such as unjust information.

Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on the influence of encounters with fair and unfair situations on justice sensitivity. There may be considerable implications to these findings. For example, some groups of individuals (e.g., minority groups) may more frequently experience unfair events (e.g., discrimination). This may make these individuals more sensitive to justice. In turn, this may affect their well-being (Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, 1997; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999; Schmitt & Mohiyeddini, 1996), or lead individuals to interpret situations that are not necessarily discriminatory or unjust as unfair (Van den Bos, 2007). One may also think of situations in which the effect reverses. For example, it has been shown that repeated exposure to media violence desensitizes people to real-life violence and to the suffering of victims (e.g., Anderson et

al., 2003; Carnagey et al., 2007), and recently a curvilinear effect of sympathy for victims after repeated exposures to media violence has been shown. Initially, participants became more sensitive to the suffering of a victim but this sensitivity showed a decline after viewing multiple violent scenes, resulting in less sympathy for the victim (Fanti et al., 2009). Whether a comparable process exists for justice sensitivity remains to be investigated, as well as the question how the judgments on the various scales develop over repeated exposures to fair or unfair events.

On a more process-based note, it would be worthwhile to investigate what it is in justice encounters that makes people more sensitive. In the present thesis, various situations led to higher ratings on justice sensitivity. Is it an accessibility effect, such that these situations make the concept of justice accessible, and brings to the mind previous encounters with unfair situations or the impact of unfairness, thereby enhancing justice sensitivity? Finally, individual characteristics may predict the stability of justice sensitivity. Future research could shed light on the question whether some people may be easier sensitized to justice than others.

Integration of the findings

How do the findings of Part 1 of this thesis relate to Part 2? As I show in Chapter 2, people sometimes use justice assertions to persuade others of their views. In Chapter 3, I show that people are more persuaded when justice assertions are used. Interestingly, the mere use of three justice-related words in the studies presented in Chapter 3 brought about significant changes in participants' behavior. Most notably, the mere use of three justice-related words by a not self-interested source in Study 3.2 resulted in a robust triplication of number of fair products that participants bought. What can account for such an effect? Of course, the most obvious answer to this question, as introduced in Chapter 1, is because people care about justice. I suggest this caring triggers several processes, of which I have focused on two in Part 2 of this thesis.

The first process that I focus on in Part 2 of this thesis is attention to unjust information. Unjust information draws our attention and holds it to its location. This suggests that such information receives priority to be processed, such that it is processed faster than other information, and that it is prioritized over other competing tasks (i.e., reacting to an asterisk) compared to other information. I note in Chapter 4 that attending to important information in one's visual field supports behavior that achieves goals (Yantis, 2000). An important goal people seem to have is to restore injustice or to prevent or restore the negative effects of injustice (Hafer & Bègue, 2000;

see also Chapter 3). By attending to information that pertains to unfair events the pursuit of this goal can be facilitated. For example, the well-attended unjust information may offer an interpretation frame for the rest of the message (Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997), or alarm people to the importance of the message (cf. Van den Bos et al., 2008; Van den Bos & Rijkema, 2009).

Future research could investigate whether the effect of justice assertions on persuasiveness is mediated by attention given to these assertions. In other words, does the level of attention given to justice assertions predict their persuasiveness? If there is a relation between attention for justice assertions and persuasion, a next question would be how this relation occurs. Do justice-related words act as a heuristic or do they promote elaborate cognitive processing? In other words, do justice assertions trigger the human alarm system (Van den Bos et al., 2008) and do they color surrounding information with their unique associations, or do they promote elaborate thinking and evaluation of the message? Or, alternatively, do justice assertions trigger specific justice-related knowledge immediately illustrating to the individual the importance of the assertions?

The second process that is investigated in Part 2 of this thesis is how justice-related information heightens people's sensitivity to justice. I propose that justice sensitivity may mediate the relation between justice assertions and their persuasiveness. Conceivably, people who are high in justice sensitivity may be more persuaded by justice assertions. Conversely, justice assertions may also enhance people's sensitivity to justice, and thereby rendering a message more persuasive. By reading about the African hunger problem, or by reading about the treatment of third world farmers in terms of fairness, people may become more sensitive to the injustices in the world, which may motivate them to act to restore the injustice.

I think these and related research questions are interesting and necessary to be investigated to gain a better understanding of the justice judgment process. I also think future justice research should pay attention to the functionality of justice judgments. The studies in this thesis make explicitly clear that there often is a functional basis underlying justice judgments. Investigating these processes helps to obtain a value-free, pragmatic, and complete representation of the manners in which people use and interpret justice judgments and justice-related experiences, and contribute to our understanding of the justice judgment process.

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Samenvatting

(Summary in Dutch)

Rechtvaardigheid is een onderwerp waar we over denken en waar we over praten. Maar waarom doen we dat en wat voor gevolgen heeft het? En waarom zouden we het onderwerp rechtvaardigheid überhaupt moeten bestuderen?

Rechtvaardigheid is een concept dat gaat over gedrag tussen individuen en groepen individuen en is dus een sociaal fenomeen (Van den Bos & Lind, in druk). Mensen kunnen anderen eerlijk of oneerlijk behandelen, kunnen door anderen eerlijk of oneerlijk behandeld worden of observeren eerlijke en oneerlijke behandelingen bij anderen. Tegelijkertijd praten mensen over of ze eerlijk of oneerlijk behandeld zijn, of ze anderen eerlijk of oneerlijk behandeld hebben en over eerlijke en oneerlijke behandelingen die ze bij anderen geobserveerd hebben. Door daarover te praten creëren mensen gedeelde ideeën over wat wel en niet eerlijk is (Lerner, 1980; Van den Bos & Lind, 2001). Het is daarom belangrijk om te bestuderen hoe en wanneer mensen over rechtvaardigheid communiceren en wat de consequenties zijn van dergelijke communicaties.

Aanvankelijk veronderstelde men dat mensen rechtvaardigheid belangrijk vinden omdat het van nut was voor het eigenbelang (Adams, 1965; Thibaut & Walker, 1975, Walster et al., 1978). Eigenbelangverklaringen van rechtvaardigheid druisen echter in tegen fundamentele kenmerken van rechtvaardigheid (Folger 1977; Hovland & Mandell, 1952; Leventhal, 1980). Een kerneigenschap van rechtvaardigheid is dat ze vrij is van eigenbelang. Bovendien, instrumentele (nut) overwegingen kunnen wel een deel maar niet alle reacties op rechtvaardige en onrechtvaardige uitkomsten en procedures verklaren. Ook wanneer mensen geen enkele invloed hebben in een uitkomst of proces reageren zij doorgaans positief op eerlijke procedures. (Lind et al., 1990; Tyler et al., 1985). Deze bevindingen zorgden ervoor dat er vervolgens weinig aandacht meer werd besteed aan het nut, of de functionaliteit, die aanvankelijk werd toegekend aan rechtvaardigheidsoordelen.

In Hoofdstuk 1 beargumenteer ik dat rechtvaardigheidsoordelen toch een nut of functionaliteit zouden kunnen hebben die evenwel niet voortkomt uit eigenbelang. Omdat rechtvaardigheid zo belangrijk is voor mensen stel ik dat rechtvaardigheid

gebruikt kan worden (bijvoorbeeld in communicatie) om anderen te beïnvloeden of om de aandacht te trekken. Wanneer men refereert aan rechtvaardigheid, dan refereert men aan een objectieve hogere orde norm die conflicteert met eigenbelang. Daarom stel ik bovendien dat rechtvaardigheidsuitspraken voornamelijk gebruikt zullen worden om voor belangen van anderen op te komen. Dit is niet eerder onderzocht en niet eerder is aandacht besteed aan *wat* mensen zeggen wanneer ze iets zeggen over de rechtvaardigheid van een situatie (bijvoorbeeld in inspraakprocedures). Daarom is het onduidelijk wanneer en waarom mensen spontaan aan rechtvaardigheid refereren in hun communicatie en hoe mensen reageren wanneer ze rechtvaardigheidsargumenten aantreffen in communicatie van anderen.

De studies in Hoofdstuk 2 tonen aan dat mensen rechtvaardigheidsuitspraken doen met het doel om anderen te overtuigen, maar alleen wanneer de omstandigheden geschikt zijn voor succesvol gebruik van die uitspraken (geen eigenbelang, en sprekers moeten beschikken over de capaciteit om hun gedrag aan te kunnen passen aan de situatie). Studie 2.1 laat zien dat mensen die een ander willen overtuigen meer over rechtvaardigheid spreken dan mensen die het doel hebben om accuraat te communiceren of mensen die geen specifiek communicatiedoel hadden. Studie 2.2 toont aan dat vooral wanneer mensen overtuigend communiceerden over een situatie die onrechtvaardig is voor iemand anders (in plaats van voor henzelf) ze meer rechtvaardigheidsargumenten gebruikten. Ten slotte laat Studie 2.3 zien hoe invloedrijk de rol van eigenbelang is voor communicaties over rechtvaardigheid. Mensen verwachten vaak dat anderen zich laten leiden door eigenbelang. Een pilot-studie toont dat anonimiteit die verwachting versterkt. Daarom onderzoekt Studie 2.3 op wat voor manier mensen hun communicatie aanpassen wanneer ze anoniem een ander moeten overtuigen van de onrechtvaardigheid van een situatie. Anonimiteit vergroot de zorg van een spreker om egoïstisch over te komen en daarom vermijden mensen het gebruik van overtuigende rechtvaardigheidsuitspraken onder die omstandigheden. Niet iedereen is echter even goed in staat om zijn of haar gedrag aan te passen aan een situatie (hoge vs. lage zelf-monitors). Ik laat zien dat mensen die goed in staat zijn om hun gedrag aan te passen aan een situatie (hoge zelf-monitors) meer rechtvaardigheidsargumenten gebruikten om een ander te overtuigen wanneer zij communiceerden over anderen en niet anoniem waren. In alle andere situaties vermeden mensen het gebruik van rechtvaardigheidsargumenten, ofwel omdat ze begrepen dat door de specifieke situatie rechtvaardigheidsuitspraken niet overtuigend zouden zijn, ofwel omdat mensen zich niet bewust waren van de overtuigendheid van rechtvaardigheidsuitspraken.

In Studies 2.1 en 2.2 presenteer ik ook correlatieve data die laten zien dat de aanwezigheid van rechtvaardigheidswoorden in communicatie een boodschap overtuigender maken wanneer die gebruikt worden om op te komen voor een ander, maar niet wanneer iemand ze gebruikt om op te komen voor zichzelf. Omdat correlatieve data geen inzicht geven in de oorzakelijkheid van een verband kon ik hierover nog geen sterke conclusies trekken. Zowel de overtuigendheid van een tekst en het gebruik van rechtvaardigheidswoorden kunnen bijvoorbeeld veroorzaakt zijn door de eloquentie van een spreker. Dit onderwerp heb ik uitvoeriger onderzocht in Hoofdstuk 3.

Hoofdstuk 3 bouwt voort op Hoofdstuk 2. In Hoofdstuk 3 redeneer ik dat rechtvaardigheidsargumenten overtuigend zijn wanneer die worden gebruikt in communicaties. Ik richt mij hier ook op de speciale relatie tussen rechtvaardigheid en eigenbelang. Wanneer men refereert aan rechtvaardigheid, dan refereert men aan een objectieve hogere orde norm die conflicteert met eigenbelang. In situaties die ongerelateerd zijn aan rechtvaardigheid kan het uiten van eigenbelang echter normatief acceptabel en geruststellend zijn voor ontvangers van een boodschap. Ik argumenteer daarom dat wanneer rechtvaardigheidsargumenten afwezig zijn, of wanneer argumenten worden gebruikt die niet conflicteren met eigenbelang, eigenbelang een minder negatieve invloed heeft op de overtuigingskracht van de boodschap. In Hoofdstuk 3 presenteer ik onderzoek dat laat zien dat het gebruik van rechtvaardigheidsargumenten een boodschap overtuigender maken, mits ontvangers van de boodschap geen eigenbelang in de communicator zien.

In Studie 3.1 bekeken deelnemers in een gecontroleerde laboratorium setting een interview met een Afrikaanse vrachtwagenbestuurder die rijst distribueerde voor de Verenigde Naties. Vervolgens speelden deelnemers een online spel waarin ze rijst konden doneren aan het Wereld Voedsel Programma van de Verenigde Naties. Wanneer de geïnterviewde vrachtwagenbestuurder rechtvaardigheidswoorden had gebruikt in zijn verhaal investeerden deelnemers meer tijd in het online spel dan wanneer de geïnterviewde dat niet had gedaan. Echter, dit was alleen het geval wanneer de geïnterviewde ook duidelijk maakte dat hij geen persoonlijke belangen had. Studie 3.2 laat hetzelfde patroon van resultaten zien in een supermarkt waar ik het koopgedrag van deelnemers analyseerde. Deelnemers kochten meer producten die door een organisatie werden aanbevolen wanneer rechtvaardigheidswoorden waren gebruikt om de doelen van die organisatie te omschrijven en wanneer deelnemers dachten dat de organisatie geen eigenbelang nastreefde. Wanneer evaluatieve woorden

(bijvoorbeeld: goed, slecht) werden gebruikt in plaats van rechtvaardigheidswoorden (bijvoorbeeld: eerlijk, rechtvaardig), of wanneer deelnemers dachten dat de organisatie eigenbelang nastreefde, kochten deelnemers minder van de aanbevolen producten. Hoofdstuk 3 besteedt aldus aandacht aan echt gedrag en draagt zo bij aan de ecologische validiteit van de bevindingen (Kraus, 1995).

In Deel 2 van dit proefschrift presenteer ik onderzoek naar meer basale cognitieve processen die ten grondslag liggen aan rechtvaardigheidsoordelen. Eerder onderzoek (Hafer, 2000; Ham & Van den Bos, 2008; Van den Bos et al., 2008; Van den Bos & Rijkema, 2009) duidt op een signalerende werking van rechtvaardigheidsinformatie. Om die signalerende werking van rechtvaardigheidsinformatie beter te begrijpen, bestudeer ik in Hoofdstukken 4 en 5 processen die ten grondslag liggen aan hoe mensen rechtvaardigheidsinformatie verwerken.

In Hoofdstuk 4, bestudeer ik hoe onrechtvaardigheid de aandacht trekt en vasthoudt. Situaties die gaan over onrecht bevatten belangrijke informatie waar aandacht aan moet worden besteed en waarop gereageerd moet worden. Ervaringen van onrechtvaardigheid zijn bijzonder aversief en bedreigend en leiden tot negatieve emoties (bijvoorbeeld Folger, 1984; Markovsky, 1988; Mikula et al., 1998; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walster et al., 1978; Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001) en informeert mensen over hun sociale positie (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Het aandachtssysteem is functioneel en adaptief en ondersteunt doelgericht gedrag (Yantis, 2000). Aandacht besteden aan onrechtvaardige gebeurtenissen kan aldus helpen onrecht of de negatieve gevolgen ervan te herstellen (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; zie ook Hoofdstuk 3). Om functioneel te zijn, moet het aandachtssysteem relevante informatie snel herkennen en gedetailleerd analyseren. Daarom argumenteer ik dat onrechtvaardigheidsgerelateerde informatie aandacht meer zal trekken en vasthouden dan rechtvaardigheidsgerelateerde, positieve en neutrale informatie en mogelijk informatie die even negatief is maar minder sociaal betekenisvol is.

Met een exogene signaleertaak is het mogelijk om verschillende processen (richten en vasthouden) die ten grondslag liggen aan aandachtsverschuivingen te meten. Studie 4.1 laat zien dat onrechtvaardigheidswoorden sneller de aandacht kunnen trekken dan rechtvaardigheids-, positieve en neutrale woorden. Ook laat deze studie zien dat onrechtvaardigheidswoorden langer aandacht vasthouden dan positieve, neutrale en negatieve woorden. Deze aandachtseffecten werpen licht op het belang van rechtvaardigheid voor mensen en ondersteunen de brede emotionele en

cognitieve essentie van het rechtvaardigheidsconcept. De bevindingen werpen mogelijk ook licht op de bevindingen uit Hoofdstuk 2 en 3. Mogelijk speelt de signalerende rol van onrechtvaardigheid een rol in deze processen.

In Hoofdstuk 5 onderzoek ik de manier waarop mensen gevoeligheid voor rechtvaardigheid ontwikkelen en richt mij daarbij op voorgaande rechtvaardige en onrechtvaardige ervaringen. In Hoofdstuk 1 opper ik dat mensen spreken over dingen die belangrijk voor ze zijn of waarvoor ze gevoelig zijn. In Hoofdstuk 5 probeer ik meer inzicht te verkrijgen in gevoeligheid voor rechtvaardigheid en hoe die gevoeligheid beïnvloed kan worden door eerdere ervaringen met rechtvaardige en onrechtvaardige situaties.

Rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid is een stabiele persoonlijkheidseigenschap (Gollwitzer et al., 2005; Schmitt et al., 2005). Persoonlijkheidseigenschappen vertonen echter ook enige flexibiliteit gedurende het leven (Ardelt, 2000; Caspi et al., 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1990; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Situationele factoren zoals ervaringen met eerlijke en oneerlijke situaties kunnen bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van persoonlijkheidseigenschappen. Verder heeft onderzoek naar mediageweld laten zien dat herhaalde blootstelling aan geweld in de media mensen in eerste instantie gevoeliger, en in een later stadium minder gevoelig maakt voor het lijden van slachtoffers (Fanti et al., 2009). De invloed van situationele factoren op de vorming van de persoonlijkheidseigenschap rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid is nog niet eerder onderzocht.

De vragenlijst om rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid te meten, bestaat uit drie onderdelen die vanuit drie verschillende perspectieven meten hoe begaan mensen zijn met rechtvaardigheid. In Studie 5.1 laat ik zien dat rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid hoger is op de *slachtoffer* en *begunstigde* schalen en marginaal hoger op de *observer* schaal nadat mensen een oneerlijke (vs. neutrale) uitkomst kregen. In Studie 5.2 is rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid hoger op de *slachtoffer* schaal (maar niet significant op de andere schalen) nadat mensen een eerlijke (vs. neutrale) uitkomst hadden gekregen. Studie 5.3 toont hogere rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid op de *observer* schaal en marginaal op de *begunstigde* schaal nadat deelnemers lazen over de wereldwijde eerlijke (vs. oneerlijke) verdeling van anti-AIDS medicijnen. De verschillende effecten op de verschillende schalen in de drie studies ondersteunen de specifieke gevoeligheid van de schalen en zijn in overeenstemming met de hypothese dat de effecten het sterkst zijn wanneer het perspectief van de rechtvaardigheidsgerelateerde ervaring en de schaal gelijk zijn. Deze studies laten aldus zien dat rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid

bestaat uit zowel stabiele en meer beïnvloedbare componenten, de laatste te beïnvloeden door rechtvaardigheidsgerelateerde ervaringen.

Conclusies

Dit proefschrift heeft zich gericht op de functionaliteit van rechtvaardigheidbeoordelingen en de gevolgen voor gedrag (zoals hulpgedrag) en andere reacties (zoals voor het aandachtssysteem en rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid). De studies in dit proefschrift laten zien dat mensen gebruik maken van rechtvaardigheid in hun communicatie om instrumentele redenen en dat rechtvaardigheid in communicatie functioneert als een overtuigende kracht. Bovendien heb ik laten zien dat rechtvaardigheid automatisch aandacht kan trekken en vasthouden en dat het observeren of ervaren van rechtvaardige en onrechtvaardige situaties mensen gevoeliger maakt voor rechtvaardigheid. Deze bevindingen leveren belangrijke inzichten voor hoe mensen zichzelf presenteren en voor hoe we die presentaties kunnen interpreteren. Bijvoorbeeld, mensen die een klacht indienen zullen het gebruik van rechtvaardigheidsclaims vermijden. Dat betekent echter niet dat ze de uitkomsten of procedures eerlijk vinden. Vanwege de omvangrijke gevolgen van ervaringen van onrecht is het belangrijk hier aandacht aan te besteden. Omgekeerd, wanneer mensen anderen willen overtuigen van het onrecht dat heeft plaatsgevonden, doet men er verstandig aan te benadrukken geen eigenbelang na te streven.

De bevindingen uit Hoofdstuk 4 zijn belangrijk omdat ze benadrukken hoe belangrijk rechtvaardigheid is voor mensen en hoe het de aandacht stuurt. Dat informatie over rechtvaardigheid sneller opgemerkt wordt dan andere informatie betekent ook dat deze informatie een interpretatiekader kan leveren voor andere informatie. Rechtvaardigheidsargumenten zouden op die manier een prominente rol kunnen krijgen in de interpretatie van een boodschap. Een mogelijke implicatie van de bevindingen uit hoofdstuk 5 is dat individuen of groepen van individuen die vaker dan anderen te maken hebben met onrecht (zoals bijvoorbeeld minderheidsgroepen), gevoeliger worden voor rechtvaardigheid. Dit kan gevolgen hebben voor hun welbevinden (Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, 1997) en zou er toe kunnen leiden dat situaties die niet per se onrechtvaardig zijn, toch sneller als onrechtvaardig ervaren worden (Van den Bos, 2007).

De onderzoeksbevindingen uit de twee delen van dit proefschrift zijn ook onderling te relateren. Het is interessant om op te merken dat het gebruik van slechts drie rechtvaardigheidswaarden in de studies van Hoofdstuk 3 sterke invloed had op het

gedrag van de deelnemers. In Studie 3.2 resulteerde het gebruik van slechts drie rechtvaardigheidswoorden zelfs in een verdrievoudiging van aankopen van producten die gepromoot werden in die studie. De aandacht voor de rechtvaardigheidswoorden speelt mogelijk een belangrijke rol voor het effect dat die woorden hebben op het gedrag van mensen. Aandacht vergemakkelijkt het nastreven van doelen en een belangrijk doel dat mensen hebben is om onrecht te voorkomen of de negatieve gevolgen ervan te beperken. Door de aandacht die mensen besteedden aan de rechtvaardigheidsinformatie is het mogelijk dat zij beter is staat waren te reageren op die informatie en daardoor meer hulpgedrag vertoonden. Toekomstig onderzoek zou kunnen ingaan op de vraag of het effect van rechtvaardigheidswoorden op overtuigingskracht gemedieerd wordt door aandacht voor die rechtvaardigheidswoorden. Verder zou toekomstig onderzoek zich kunnen richten op de medierende rol van rechtvaardigheidsgevoeligheid. Rechtvaardigheidsgevoelige mensen zijn wellicht gevoeliger voor rechtvaardigheidsargumenten dan minder rechtvaardigheidsgevoelige mensen.

Deze en gerelateerde onderzoeksvragen zijn belangrijk om te bestuderen om zo een beter begrip te krijgen van hoe en waarom mensen tot rechtvaardigheidsoordelen komen. Toekomstig onderzoek zou ook verder in moeten gaan op de functionaliteit van rechtvaardigheidsoordelen. De studies in dit proefschrift hebben bovenal duidelijk gemaakt dat er vaak een functionele basis is voor het gebruik van rechtvaardigheidsoordelen. Onderzoek naar dergelijke processen helpt om een waardevrije, pragmatische en complete representatie te verkrijgen van de wijze waarop mensen rechtvaardigheidsoordelen en -ervaringen gebruiken en interpreteren, en draagt bij aan een beter begrip van het rechtvaardigheidsbeoordelingsproces.

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Ten slotte, lieve Kiek, in de wetenschap gaat het altijd over gemiddelden. Uitschieters kunnen de data vertekenen. Maar jij komt niet in de buurt van het gemiddelde; jij bent mijn grootste en de mooiste uitschieter. Wat een geluk dat ik je gevonden heb.

Curriculum Vitae

As a young scientist in the make, Remco Wijn (born Januari 22, 1979) tested and successively graduated from three high schools before entering the Art Academy where he swiftly realized that real art is in the mind and might be better pursued in cognitive form in a university setting. After receiving his master's degree in Social Psychology in 2005 with a minor in Organizational Psychology, Remco found himself to be one of the happy few accepted as a PhD-student at Utrecht University. There, in the spirit of the university's motto (Sol Justitiae Illustra Nos) he conducted research together with Kees van den Bos on the subjective feeling of being treated fairly or unfairly and the antecedents and consequences of these feelings. Eventually, this research project has resulted in the present thesis and the publication of several research articles. Starting October 2009, Remco Wijn will be working as a researcher at The Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO).

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