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Organisational justice: New insights from behavioural ethics

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Abstract

Both organisational justice and behavioural ethics are concerned with questions of ‘right and wrong’ in the context of work organisations. Until recently they have developed largely independently of each other, choosing to focus on subtly different concerns, constructs and research questions. The last few years have, however, witnessed a significant growth in theoretical and empirical research integrating these closely related academic specialities. We review the organisational justice literature, illustrating the impact of behavioural ethics research on important fairness questions. We argue that organisational justice research is focused on four reoccurring issues; (i) why justice at work matters to individuals, (ii) how justice judgements are formed, (iii) the consequences of injustice, and (iv) the factors antecedent to justice perceptions. Current and future justice research has begun and will continue borrowing from the behavioural ethics literature in answering these questions.

Keywords

Organisational justice, Behavioural ethics, Fairness, Morality, Integrity

New high profile cases of injustice and unethical behaviour in organisations appear ever-present in the media. These stories cover a whole range of important issues, including (but not limited to) examples of business corruption, corporate avarice and greed, massive scale Ponzi schemes, the exploitation of people, mistreatment of employees, and on-going ecological/environmental catastrophes. Whatever the story, it appears that employees, employers, consumers, and politicians across the globe are paying special attention to justice and ethical behaviour.

The response of management scholars has been extensive but somewhat less impactful than might have otherwise been the case. Academic research has been limited by division. The study of moral work behaviour has been divided into two distinct scholarly traditions – organisational justice and behavioural ethics. While both organisational justice and behavioural ethics research are ostensibly concerned with questions of right and wrong in the context of work and organisations (Schminke et al., 1997), until recently these disciplines have largely developed independently of each other. They have chosen to focus on subtly different concerns, constructs, and research questions (Cropanzano and Stein, 2009).

Research on organisational justice has generally focussed on how and why managers and their organisations are judged as (un)fair by employees, and how these perceptions impact their performance and well-being at work (for reviews, see Cohen-Charash, and Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Organisational justice research has thus tended to be more descriptive (what people *actually* do or think) than prescriptive (what people *should* do or think), seeking to discover the dimensions along which people determine that an outcome, procedure or interaction is considered fair or unfair rather than prescribing particular ethical norms or standards of justice. Yet scholars recognise that early organisational justice research, for example the work on distributive justice by first Homans (1961) and later Adams (1965), was far more closely connected to, and derived from, wider philosophical

debate on justice and morality (e.g. Cropanzano and Stein, 2009). Indeed, there is an assumption in the organisational justice literature that equity is the prevailing justice norm in the contemporary workplace, with the result that distributive justice judgements are typically assessed as a balance of efforts and outcomes. However, the organisational justice literature is mute as to the appropriateness or legitimacy of equity as a justice norm, and generally unconcerned with whether or not people think that equity should be the common norm. The interrelated nature of ethics and justice has only recently been explicitly revisited as a subject in the literature on deontic justice, which explores the innate ethical value of a concern for justice 'for the sake of justice'.

The investigation of justice as a practice can be distinguished from behavioural ethics research, which has traditionally been more concerned with examining individual (un)ethical actions and behaviours (e.g. lying, stealing, charitable giving, whistleblowing) in the context of larger social prescriptions, values, or norms (for reviews, see Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2012; Treviño et al., 2006). In their review of the literature on ethical decision making, Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe (2008) lament the lack of agreement on what is and is not 'ethical' or 'moral'. Nevertheless, behavioural ethics research is specifically concerned with how people decide what they or others should do, and how they respond to other's behaviours in terms of what they believe the other should or should not have done. The distinction between organizational justice as practice and behavioural ethics as normative or moral standards allows us to conceive of each as relatively independent variables that can affect or be related to each other in interesting and informative ways.

The last few years, however, have witnessed a significant growth in theoretical and empirical research that has begun to integrate these closely related academic disciplines, in particular how ethics might influence the administration of justice or fairness or how experiences of (in)justice motivates ethical or unethical behaviours (e.g., Cropanzano and

Stein, 2009). Given the rapid expansion and development of this literature, and its increasing relevance to both academics and practitioners, we feel that the time is now right for this special issue. Through this review and special issue we aim to provide an analysis of this emerging body of work, identify future research opportunities, and introduce a number of new theoretical and empirical studies that are working at this particular intersection of organisational justice and behavioural ethics. To illustrate these ideas, we will structure the remainder of this introductory discussion in sections that introduce a principle domain of the organisational justice literature, and then examine that body of scholarly work while integrating relevant research on behavioural ethics. In this way we aim to explicitly reconnect the field of organisational justice with ideas derived from research into ethics and normative behaviour.

Organisational justice: A review and insights from behavioural ethics

'Justice' involves a type of moral appraisal. In particular, an action is said to be 'just' or 'fair' if it conforms to certain standards of ethical propriety. For instance, it is considered fair to provide people with information about workplace changes that might impact their well-being (Bies, 1987; Sitkin and Bies, 1993). When management scholars discuss organisational justice, they are generally taking a descriptive approach (Cropanzano and Stein, 2009). That is, organisational scientists examine the antecedents of fairness perceptions, as well as the consequences of those evaluative judgements (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997). This descriptive approach is distinct from, though complementary to, the normative approach taken by philosophers and many legal scholars. Scholars who approach fairness normatively seek to understand the qualities of events that make them actually or objectively fair (e.g., Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2012; Sandel, 2009). Philosophical inquiry is important because it articulates broad standards of conduct that underpin our sense of fairness. Despite their

differences, the descriptive approach taken by management scholars has been heavily influenced by its philosophical roots, as it extends philosophical inquiry by exploring how individuals respond when standards of justice are respected or violated (Cropanzano et al., 2011).

Considerations of structure

'Fairness' is a difficult idea to define and organisational scientists have attempted to do so by providing a thorough description of the facets of justice as an experience. Research suggests that individuals evaluate at least three aspects of their work environment.

- *Distributive justice* refers to the fairness of one's outcomes from a decision-making system. For example, some individuals prefer an equity-rule, whereby rewards are allocated in proportion to the contributions made.
- *Procedural justice* refers to the fairness of the processes used to decide those outcomes. For example, it is considered fair to provide workers with voice and to evaluate them with accurate procedures.
- *Interactional justice* refers to the fairness of the interpersonal exchanges that occur during work. For example, whether or not one is treated respectfully.

More recently, some scholars have divided interactional justice into two sub-factors. The first of these, *interpersonal justice,* pertains to the dignity and respect that one receives from others. The second of these, *informational justice,* pertains to whether one receives explanations and social accounts for events at work (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001).

Beyond these issues of description and structure, organisational justice research has tended to focus on four interrelated theoretical questions: (i) why justice at work matters to individuals, (ii) how justice judgements are formed, (iii) what are the consequences of justice and injustice, and (iv) what factors are antecedent to justice (e.g. Ambrose, 2002; Cropanzano

et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2001). It is around these four core questions that justice research has begun to incorporate ideas and concepts derived from the domain of behavioural ethics.

Why does justice matter? Content theories of fairness

Discussions of fairness go back many centuries (Sandel, 2009). As social beings we often struggle individually and culturally with the problem of the fundamental tension between self-interest and belonging, between being the same as others and being unique, and with coordinating and responding to these same interests and motives in others (Fiske, 1991, 1992; Brewer, 1991). It is not surprising therefore that justice is a crucial feature of what it means to be a social being. Indeed, neuroscientific research suggests that a concern for fairness is hard-wired into the human brain (Sanfey et al., 2003). For all of this empirical evidence, it is not readily obvious why people care about justice in the first place. Above and beyond their personal and material concerns, are there empirically demonstrable reasons why justice is important? Conceptual models that attempt to answer this question have been referred to as 'content theories' because they attempt to identify underlying needs or goals that drive human concerns with fairness (Cropanzano, et al., 2001).

In order to organise and integrate the various content theories, Cropanzano et al. (2001) argued for a multiple-needs model. They suggested that fairness met at least three sets of needs:

- Instrumental models maintain that justice provides the best long-range outcomes for people, usually by allowing them to predict and control the process.
- Interpersonal models of justice argue that fairness helps individuals meet their needs for positive social relationships and interpersonal standing among valued groups.

- Deontic models of justice argue that fairness is important for its own sake. Individuals prefer to live in ethical social systems; these are also seen as more meaningful. Behavioural ethics has provided much of the impetus for this work.

Evidence supports the multiple needs model (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2006; Goldman et al., 2008; Reb et al., 2006), and we use it to organise this review. We caution the reader that our presentation is only illustrative (for a more complete explication, see Cropanzano et al., 2011).

Instrumental models. Early organisational justice research was dominated by instrumental perspectives, proposing that individuals care about justice because fair systems are more likely to guarantee them valued economic gains, at least over the long-term. In its original version, Adams' (1965) equity theory assumes justice is a comparative calculation of one's inputs and rewards from a decision-making system (Moliner et al., 2013). Injustice is felt, therefore, when one is either over- or under-rewarded compared to a relevant other. Seminal procedural justice research also tended to take an instrumental view of justice, suggesting that fair procedures (such as providing employees with voice in decision-making) promote one's control over, and thus trust in, the long term favourability of personal gains from that decision-making system (e.g. Thibaut and Walker, 1975).

Interpersonal models. Research on procedural justice, while acknowledging that instrumental concerns are important, soon found that this perspective was unable to account for important phenomena in the real world. For example, individuals remained committed to institutions even when their outcomes were negative, but only when they viewed the process as fair (for

reviews of this pioneering work, see Lind and Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1990; Tyler and Blader, 2000; Tyler and Smith, 1998).

Tyler and Lind (1992) proposed a 'group-value' or 'relational' model. They argued that fair procedures matter because they give individuals a sense of their acceptance by, and membership in, desirable social groups (e.g. Tyler and Blader, 2000, 2003). Procedural justice helps one attain important relational as well as economic needs (Tyler and Degoey, 1995; Tyler et al., 1996). While some dispute the difference between these 'relational' and 'economic' perspectives, arguing that both are in fact instrumental self-interested models of justice (e.g. Greenberg, 2001), what isn't in doubt is the very strong support in the literature for both (Cropanzano et al., 2011; Shapiro and Brett, 2005; Tyler, 1990; Tyler and Smith, 1998).

Deontic models: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. Despite the extensive theoretical and empirical support for instrumental and relational models of organisational justice, behavioural ethics researchers have observed phenomena that are difficult to account for using these theoretical frameworks. For example, work on 'altruistic punishment' has found that individuals will give up some of their own earnings to punish a harm-doer, even if they do not know the people who were allegedly wronged (Turillo et al., 2002). These sorts of findings have encouraged researchers to explore individuals' potential moral motives for fairness (Cropanzano et al., 2001; Cropanzano and Stein, 2009). Folger's (1998) seminal work on the 'moral virtues' or 'deontic' model of organisational justice, argues that individuals care about fairness at work for its own sake (e.g. Folger et al., 2005).

The deontic perspective on organisational justice also provides new insights into why third parties often react negatively (punitively) to the injustices experienced by others (O'Reilly and Aquino, 2011). Empirical support for the importance of deontic or moral

motives for organisational justice is growing (for a review, see Cropanzano et al., 2003), with these studies often showing that individuals seek fairness at work even when they are personally disadvantaged by just decisions (e.g. Greenberg, 2002; Turillo et al., 2002).

How are justice judgements formed? Process theories of fairness

Earlier we saw that content theories suggest that there are a set of underlying human needs, and these can be met through fair treatment. Such a perspective, though useful, is conceptually incomplete. Researchers also need to specify how an individual evaluates an event with respect to these content needs. That is, models of justice need to articulate the cognitive and emotional processes by which fairness judgments are formulated. Cropanzano et al. (2001) refer to these types of frameworks as 'process theories' of justice. According to Goldman and Thatcher (2002), these theories fall into two general families: those that emphasize relatively careful and thorough cognitive processing and those that emphasize relatively superficial and heuristic processing (see also, Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2012; Bobocel et al., 1997).

Relatively deliberate processing. Historically speaking, many seminal theories of justice have tended to assume that people make several judgments, some of which are reasonably sophisticated. For example, the venerable equity theory (Adams, 1965) posits that individual evaluations of justice are made via a deliberate and reasoned calculation of one's inputs (i.e. skills, effort, performance) and outcomes (tangible and intangible rewards) in comparison to another's. Injustice is thus perceived when these input-outcome ratios are felt to be positively or negatively imbalanced.

A more recent model, which attempts to address equity theory's limitations, is fairness theory. Fairness theory argues that a situation or event will be interpreted as unfair

when three judgements are made by individuals, termed *would*, *could* and *should* judgements (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). First, individuals must have a negative experience that, in turn, causes them to think of alternative 'better' scenarios. In other words, how *would* an alternate reality have felt? Second, individuals attempt to allocate blame for this negative experience. It is only when an individual or organisation can be held accountable (i.e. that it is not some outside agent or environmental factor that has caused the negative experience), and thus *could* have acted differently, that perceptions of injustice are likely to follow. Finally, the situation or event itself, and the actions taken by individuals or organisations, must have breached some ethical principle or moral code. In other words, the institution (or its agents) *should* have acted differently (Cropanzano et al., 2004). While a growing number of articles show support for fairness theory (e.g. Gilliland et al., 2001; Kahn et al., 2013; McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003), explicit empirical testing of this model is still relatively limited and more research is needed.

Relatively automatic processing. According to Goldman and Thatcher (2002), other scholars have demonstrated that fairness judgments can be made relatively automatically, without a great deal of deliberate thought. Possibly the first time that this point was made explicitly, was when Lind (1992, 1995, 2001) proposed fairness heuristic theory. Lind maintained that individuals possess cognitive schemas representing just and unjust treatment. Violations of these schemas serve as a signal that something has gone wrong (Jones and Martens, 2009; van den Bos et al., 2001; van den Bos et al., 1997).

Uncertainty management theory grew from this seminal work (van den Bos and Lind, 2002). It assumes that the workplace presents employees with both opportunities for personal gain and for exploitation, and that this daily exposure to personal risk or uncertainty leads individuals to continuously evaluate the trustworthiness of the system and its agents (Lind,

1995). However, in order to deal with the sheer complexity of relationships and interactions that one faces at work, one must rely on cognitive shortcuts and schemas when making these trust judgements.

Through their experiences in work and life, people formulate “good enough” cognitive shortcuts. These are called heuristics, as they make judgments quicker and easier, though they sometimes compromise accuracy. Once developed, these fairness heuristics are repeatedly called upon (Lind, 1995, 2001). According to uncertainty management theory, decision procedures and interpersonal transactions make especially valuable heuristic tools. This is because all of the information is likely to be readily available, thereby allowing quick assessments to be made (van den Bos et al., 2001; van den Bos et al., 1997). Conversely, distributive justice requires that one know the outcomes received, and perhaps also the inputs made, by others. Hence, distributive justice is often more difficult to calculate. This effect has received a considerable amount of empirical testing, with research tending to confirm these propositions (e.g., Hui et al., 2007; Thau et al., 2007).

Process theories: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. The process theories of justice offer an important avenue for integrating behavioural ethics research. If fairness decisions are made through a series of cognitive steps, then there are a number of stages in which ethical considerations could intervene. A good example of this can be found in an important study by Schminke et al. (1997). These authors observed that individuals and philosophers tend to hold at least one of two ethical philosophies. Philosophical formalists are process-oriented. They tend to believe that action is ethical if it is consistent with rules and is in accord with normative standards. Philosophical utilitarians are outcome-oriented. They tend to believe that an action is ethical if it does the most good for the most people.

Schminke and his colleagues (1997) proposed that ethical formalists – those who subscribe to a set of rules for guiding ethical behaviour – will be more sensitive to procedural justice concerns. Conversely, ethical utilitarians – those who believe ethical actions are those where outcomes serve the greater good – will be more sensitive to concerns of distributive justice. They found empirical support for these hypotheses (Schminke et al., 1997).

What are the consequences of injustice?

Past research has shown perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (and overall justice) to predict a wide range of important work-related outcomes. This includes emotions (e.g. anger and sadness), attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction, trust in management and perceived organisational support), and behaviours (e.g. individual job performance, organisational citizenship behaviours) (see Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). In short, the positive implications of distributive, procedural and interactional (and overall) justice perceptions are extremely well founded in the literature.

Consequences of injustice: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. While justice and injustice have a number of important consequences for work organisations, a key insight has emerged from the behavioural ethics literature: Individuals often act to restore (what they see as) the loss of fairness in the workplace. These responses may be benign or, paradoxically, they may not be.

Most intuitively, employees seek to restore fairness by eliminating or discouraging unfair conduct. For example, people will self-report their own misbehaviour (Martinson et al., 2006), bring ethical issues to the attention of management (Treviño and Weaver, 2001), and sometimes will encourage whistleblowing (Seifert et al., 2010). Martinson et al. (2006) examined the role of organisational justice in promoting integrity in the scientific/academic

community. Their findings suggest significant relationships between individual experiences of distributive justice and procedural justice violations, and their own open/honest self-reporting of misbehaviour among a sample of scientists.

Other work has shown that individuals will act assertively to restore fairness, often engaging in retributive behaviour (e.g. Carlsmith and Darley, 2008; Jones, 2009; Tripp et al., 2002). These scholars argue that mistreatment and felt injustice lead to moral outrage (Bies, 1987; Bies and Tripp, 2012) and the desire to punish perpetrators. For example, employees may respond to unfairness by showing counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs), organisational deviance, sabotage, or aggression (Barling et al., 2009; Holtz and Harold, 2013; Treviño et al., 2006; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2010). Unfairness may also promote cheating (Searle, 2003) and stealing (Greenberg, 2002). From the point of view of the wronged individual, these seemingly anti-social acts are justified, as a way to 'even the score' when someone has behaved unfairly (Bies and Tripp, 2001, 2004, 2012; Cropanzano and Moliner, 2013).

What are the antecedents of justice perceptions?

In an ideal philosophical world, decisions about fairness would be thoughtfully derived by considering relevant aspects of the situation (cf. Barsky et al., 2011; Blackburn, 2001). However, this is not the case, and our moral judgements are influenced by both mental biases and aspects of the situation (e.g. Appiah, 2008; Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2012; Connolly and Hardman, 2009; Cropanzano and Moliner, 2013). The descriptive and empirical approach, when applied to organisational justice research, has identified a number of antecedents that impact justice perceptions, though these are not directly pertinent to the fairness-relevant events at hand. These antecedents can be usefully organised by their level-of-analysis: individual, interpersonal, and organisation-wide.

Research into the effects of *individual differences* and organisational justice has itself focussed on a wide range of attitudinal and personality variables. For example, studies have highlighted how attitudes such as organisational identification (e.g. DeCremer, 2005), organisational commitment (Crawshaw et al., 2012), and trust in management (Brockner and Siegal, 1996) may moderate reactions to injustice. In particular, employees that identify with their organisation, are committed to it, or hold trust in management tend to be more tolerant when events do not go in their favour.

Beyond these attitudinal effects, individual personality has also been shown to be important (Colquitt et al., 2006). Here we consider just a few examples. In their comprehensive meta-analysis, Barsky and Kaplan (2007) found that individuals high in dispositional positive affect reported more distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Conversely, those who were high is dispositional negative affect reported less of the three types of justice (for a more complete review, see Barsky et al., 2011). Likewise, Andrews and Kacmar (2001) found that as internal locus of control increased, respondents showed more procedural justice and more distributive justice.

At the *interpersonal level*, there is a growing body of work exploring the role of co-workers in influencing individuals' judgements of, and reactions to, injustice at work (e.g. Colquitt et al., 2005; Elovainio et al., 2002). This research suggests that as employees form close workgroups, they tend to adopt the fairness judgments of their teammates (Li and Cropanzano, 2009a). Another interpersonal influence on justice perceptions is culture. While justice seems to matter to people all over the world, individuals from different nations do not always respond identically (Brockner et al., 2001; Erdogan and Liden, 2006; Shao et al., 2013). Very generally speaking, there is evidence that western peoples place relatively more emphasis on justice, when compared to individuals from other cultures (Haidt, 2012; Li and Cropanzano, 2009b).

At the broadest level-of-analysis, a number of researchers have investigated *organisational-level* fairness. In this regard, there is evidence that organisational structure influences justice perceptions (Schminke et al., 2002). For example, procedural justice appears to decline with increasing centralization, but it increases with increasing formalization (Andrews and Kacmar, 2001).

While justice researchers have explored various factors that influence fairness perceptions, the results have been somewhat ad hoc. The incorporation of behavioural ethics models into organisational justice has yielded rich insights at three different levels of analysis – the individual, the interpersonal, and the organisational. We briefly consider each below, illustrating the concepts with research findings.

Individual – level antecedents of justice: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. Recent research has begun to examine the implications of individual's cognitive moral development on ethical decision making processes. Kohlberg (1969) and Rest (1986) famously proposed that people develop their ethical predispositions though three stages – pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. In other words, ethical behaviour is predicted not only by one's awareness or judgements of morality, but also by one's moral maturity (for reviews, see Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2012; Treviño et al., 2006).

At this individual level, therefore, justice scholars have begun to test for the moderating effects of individuals' cognitive moral development and moral motivation on their perceptions of, and reactions to, injustice (Cropanzano and Stein, 2009). For example, Myyry and Helkama (2002) showed that one's cognitive moral development (moral maturity) may also influence one's sensitivity to, and reliance upon, different procedural justice rules. Consistent with this, Greenberg (2002) reported that theft behaviour following a distributive injustice was significantly lower for those individuals with higher (conventional), rather than

lower (pre-conventional), levels of cognitive moral development. In related research, Patient and Skarlicki (2010) studied the delivering of justice by managers. They presented evidence that managers were more likely to exhibit high interpersonal and informational justice in delivering negative news when they were high in trait empathic concern (see also Patient and Skarlicki, 2005). Moreover, this relationship between trait empathic concern and interpersonal/informational justice was significantly stronger for those higher, rather than lower, in cognitive moral development (Patient and Skarlicki, 2010).

Another individual level contribution of behavioural ethics concerns work on moral identity (Shao et al., 2008). People who are high in moral identity view themselves as ethical. They consider moral conduct to be an important part of who they are as individuals. Those who are low in moral identity have a less firmly held view of themselves as moral actors. A number of studies have focussed specifically on the role of moral identity in predicting individuals' retributive actions in the face of third party injustices. Skarlicki et al. (2008) examined individuals' customer-directed sabotage behaviour in reaction to third party mistreatment (interpersonal injustice) by the customer. In experimental settings, they found support for the moderating role of moral identity. In other words, the relationship between third party mistreatment by customers and customer-directed sabotage was more pronounced for those employees high in moral identity. Skarlicki and Rupp (2010) have reported similar findings.

Building upon this research, an experimental study by Rupp and Bell (2010) found that individuals' reactions to third party distributive injustice were significantly different for those exhibiting retributive or moral self-regulation cognitions. Those exhibiting retributive norms were more likely to respond by taking action to punish the unfair third party, whereas those exhibiting moral self-regulation were less likely to punish the transgressor (Rupp and

Bell, 2010). Their research is particularly interesting as it shows that one's deontic response to third party injustices may not always be retributive.

Interpersonal – level antecedents of justice: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. Interesting work has also begun to explore the impact of ethical leadership behaviour on individual justice perceptions. Mayer, Bardes and Piccolo (2008), for example, explored the mediating role of employees' overall organisational justice perceptions in the relationship between servant leadership and individuals' need satisfaction and job satisfaction.

Taking a slightly different approach, Neubert et al. (2009) investigated the interaction between ethical leadership and interactional justice on their perceptions of ethical climate. They argued that through their role-modelling behaviours ethical leaders are organisational agents of virtue and, as such, ethical leadership behaviours should be closely related to the overall organisational ethical climate (Wright and Goodstein, 2007). Neubert et al. (2009) also proposed that a leader's fair day-to-day interactions with their employees (i.e. high interactional justice) would further heighten their moral authority and leadership and thus their influence on individuals' perceptions of overall organisational ethical climate. They found good support for these propositions in a self-report survey of 250 working individuals (Neubert et al, 2009).

Organisational level antecedents of justice: How behavioural ethics is informing this research. At the organisational level, a number of ethically-orientated contextual factors on employees' perceptions of, and reactions to, injustice have been identified. Models hypothesising, for example, the impact of an organisation's external and internal corporate social responsibility (e.g. Collier and Esteban, 2007; Rupp et al., 2010), ethical climate (e.g.

Treviño et al., 1998), and ethical leadership (e.g. Ehrhart, 2004) on individual justice judgements at work, have been proposed. To date the explicit testing of these ideas and models is limited, but again there are a growing number of studies.

Weaver (1995) highlights the importance of effectively written ethical codes in promoting justice perceptions. He suggests, and finds support for, a relationship between greater explanatory rationales in written codes of ethics and individual perceptions of organisational procedural justice. In related research, Treviño and Weaver (2001) explored the interaction between employees' perceptions of ethics programme follow-through (i.e. the organisation's commitment to delivering ethical policy) and overall justice climate in predicting employee unethical behaviour. Supporting their hypothesis, they found that the negative relationship between ethical programme follow-through and unethical behaviour was significantly enhanced when overall justice climate was perceived negatively (rather than positively). They argue that ethical policy follow-through matters more to individuals when the overall justice climate is viewed negatively, as under these conditions individuals have a greater motive to behave unethically and retributively. Their findings provide further support for employees' deontic motives at work.

The current special issue

Each of the five papers that you can read in this special issue further builds new bridges between organisational justice and behavioural ethics. They thus help to give new answers to the four core questions of organisational justice research: Why does justice matter? How justice judgments are made? What are the consequences of injustice? What are the antecedents to justice perceptions?

The first two papers explore important new connections between organisational justice and ethical behaviour by extending the so-called deontic model of justice. First,

Folger, Ganegoda, Rice, Taylor and Wo (2013; this issue) provide a much needed theoretical reflection, and extension, on our understanding of deontic motives for fair and ethical behaviour at work. In particular, they highlight the potential tensions individuals face between the countervailing motivations of reactance (the right to behave in certain ways – free behaviours) and deonance (the obligation to behave in certain appropriate ways – non-free behaviours). They argue that in trying to resolve these tensions, individuals may act in ways that they themselves perceive as ethical but other impartial observers do not. By theorising on these potential threats or challenges to deontic motives of justice and fairness, Folger and colleagues thus contribute further to our understanding of two main questions: why justice matters at work and, perhaps more importantly, how justice judgements are formed.

Greenbaum, Mawritz, Mayer and Priesemuth (2013; this issue) also further our understanding of the deontic model of organisational justice, by exploring the moderating effect of moral identity on the relationship between third-party injustice and individual responses. They propose that individuals higher in moral identity are less likely to respond to their supervisor's abuse of customers by initiating direct aggressive forms of organisational deviance. However, they are more likely to respond through forms of action that are higher in moral acceptance. This includes such actions as withdrawal (turnover intentions) or constructive forms of resistance. They argue that those high in moral identity are more likely to view organisation-directed deviance behaviours as inappropriate as they may cause harm to others and may also be seen as unethical or unfair in their own right. Withdrawal behaviours and constructive resistance, however, provide individuals with a deontic response to the supervisor's unethical actions without causing harm to others or breaching their own ethical/moral values. They report general support for these propositions across two field studies.

The final three papers are concerned with the delivery of justice by organisational authorities and, as such, they explore important new connections between organisational justice, unethical behaviour and different aspects of ethical leadership.

First, Resick, Hargis, Shao and Dust (2013; this issue) explore the mediating role of moral equity judgements in the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' discretionary workplace behaviours (avoidance of antisocial conduct and engagement in pro-social behaviour). Moral equity judgements, they argue, are evaluations of specific actions or events in terms of their moral rightness, justice and fairness. As such, these evaluations provide a form of ethical evaluation that integrates both theories of organisational justice and behavioural ethics. Resick and his colleagues propose that ethical leadership will promote greater *negative* moral equity judgements of others' workplace deviance (antisocial) behaviours and greater *positive* moral equity judgements of others' organisational citizenship (pro-social) behaviours. They also propose that these negative and positive moral equity judgements will in turn regulate employees' own behaviours, mediating the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' own avoidance of antisocial conduct and engagement in pro-social behaviour respectively. They find support for these propositions.

Hoogervorst, De Cremer and Van Dyke (2013; this issue) explore the conditions under which leaders are more or less likely to grant voice. Their study hypothesises that leaders are more likely to grant employees voice (enact procedural justice) when they perceive their subordinate has both a high need for control (and thus value voice opportunities) and also when they have a high need to belong to the organisation. They argue that leaders may not grant voice to individuals, even if they desire it (high need for control), if they feel that individuals may use this voice to cause harm to the organisation (i.e. those low in belongingness needs).

Finally, Zhang and Jia (2013; this issue) focus on the moderating role of interpersonal and informational justice climate on the relationship between supervisors' use of stretch goals and employees' unethical behavioural responses. Stretch goals are by definition extremely difficult (if not impossible) and/or extremely novel (Sitkin et al., 2011). Zhang and Jia propose a multi-level model, which explores the positive relationships between stretch goals and both unethical behaviour and relationship conflict. They hypothesise that interpersonal and informational justice climate will moderate these relationships. In line with uncertainty management theory, Zhang and Jia argue that leaders who promote a fairer team climate may reduce individuals' concerns regarding the potentially exploitative nature of stretch goals. This, in turn, should reduce the likelihood of an unethical reaction or response to such goal-setting strategies.

Conclusion

We hope to have provided the readership with a new insight into the potential opportunities that behavioural ethics research is affording organisational justice scholars in answering their core questions of justice at work. We firmly believe that a better integration of these two important disciplines can only be of benefit to both the academic and practitioner communities, and that through such integration we can further improve employees' working lives and hope that the five papers presented in this special issue will convince the reader that this direction is fruitful.

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