

The Application of Organizational Justice Theories to Selection Fairness Research

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This paper aims to serve three purposes: (1) to review the literature on organizational justice research, where both theory and research with reference to distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice will be examined, (2) to review the literature on selection fairness which has been so far dominated by psychometric issues of test use in employment selection, and (3) to identify areas in selection fairness to which justice theories can fruitfully be applied. Findings of recent studies on the application of procedural justice theories to managerial selection and the application of outcome justice theories to preferential selection are discussed.

Social psychological research has shown that justice is the central concern of human beings (e.g., Lerner, 1982) and that in situations involving the allocation of resources, individuals' attention is drawn primarily to the question of equity (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988). In a selection context whereby employment opportunities are allocated, job candidates are likely to attach significant importance to the fairness of the selection. This concern for fairness would be particularly pressing at the present time of declining economic resources and shrinking employment opportunities. In the recent literature of organizational psychology, various issues of fairness in organizational settings have been examined within the framework of organizational justice theories. However, this justice framework has not been systematically applied to selection fairness research. This paper aims to (1) present a review of recent developments in organizational justice theories and a review of selection fairness research, (2) identify areas of selection research to which the conceptual framework of organizational justice theories could fruitfully be applied, and (3) examine the available empirical evidence concerning the application of organizational justice theories to selection fairness research.

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Organizational Justice Theories

In a comprehensive review, Greenberg (1987) categorised organizational justice theories according to two dimensions: a reactive-proactive dimension and a process-content dimension. The former dimension distinguishes reactive justice theories dealing with individuals' reactions to injustice from those proactive theories attempting to prescribe means to attain justice. The latter dimension distinguishes justice theories, emphasising procedural justice, and those stressing outcome justice. Process theories concern procedural justice or the fairness of the processes used to determine the final outcome of an allocation. Content theories, on the other hand, focus on distributive justice or the fairness of the final outcome of an allocation. Since Greenberg's review, rapid advancement has been made in theory and research with reference to both outcome and procedural justice.

Outcome Justice:

Earlier organisational research on distributive or outcome justice has been dominated by propositions derived from equity theory (for a review, see Mowday, 1987). Although the conceptual basis for several recent studies examining issues of organisational justice still stems from equity theory (e.g., Dornstein, 1989; Greenberg, 1989; Greenberg, 1990; Griffeth et al., 1989), the theory has become less popular since the mid-1980s (Furby, 1986; Reis, 1986).

The inadequacies of equity theories as a

conceptual framework for organisational justice research have been noted by several researchers (e.g., Folger, 1986a; Locke & Henne, 1986; Miles et al., 1989). These inadequacies include first, the definition of inequity solely as a social comparison process in terms of the outcome/input ratio, second, the neglect of procedural justice notion, and third, the lack of specificity in the prediction of individuals' reactions to perceived injustice. In addressing these inadequacies, Folger (1986a, 1986b) has proposed a referent cognitions theory (RCT). Within the RCT framework, injustice is conceptualised as a result of a hypothetical comparison process rather than a social comparison process between two persons. The hypothetical comparison is between a state of reality and a state of imaginable referent (i.e., a referent cognition or "what might have been instead"). The RCT framework also makes provisions for the procedural justice notion by way of the assumption that outcomes are evaluated against all "possible circumstances" that are instrumental in producing the outcomes (i.e., the "instrumentalities"). The theory further postulates that individuals' reactions to injustice are based on the procedures used in achieving the outcome. Discontent is hypothesised to occur when people believe that if different procedures had been used by the decision maker, the outcome would have been more fair. With few exceptions (e.g., Ambrose et al., 1991), empirical research generated from the referent cognitions theory of justice is in general supportive of the theory (Cropanzano & Folger, 1989; Folger & Konovsky, 1989).

The theory of relative deprivation is another outcome justice theory that has recently received considerable attention in organisational justice research. Relative deprivation theory is concerned with first, an individual's (or individuals') feelings of deprivation resulting from comparing his or her (or their) rewards with those of a comparative referent person (or group); and second, the behavioral effects of such feelings of deprivation (for a review, see Greenberg, 1987; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). The theory makes the distinction between egoistic deprivation and fraternal or group deprivation. Egoistic deprivation occurs as a result of a comparison between two individuals. Fraternal deprivation refers to the discontent stemming from the status of the entire group to

which an individual belongs, as compared to a referent group.

Several advances of the relative deprivation concept have been made. Applying the referent cognitions concept, Folger (1986b) argued that feelings of relative deprivation could also be a result of an individual's referent cognitions in terms of "what would/should have been". In the context of a social categorisation theory of entitlement, Lansberg (1989) conceptualises fraternal deprivation as a result of applying illegitimate criteria in deriving differential group entitlements. With reference to the application of relative deprivation theory to pay inequity research, Wegener (1990) found that people's perceptions about social economical distributions were distorted as a result of the levelling vs. sharpening processes in social hierarchy perceptions. Wegener argued that the observed misperceptions about social distributions create illusory justice evaluations and hence, relative deprivation research would need to take account of this general perceptual phenomenon.

In terms of empirical research, early relative deprivation studies reported evidence of deprivation based on racial and gender inequities (for a review, see Martin, 1981). The theory has recently been applied to organisational issues including pay satisfaction (Sweeney et al., 1990), sex-based pay inequities (Dornstein, 1989; Jackson, 1989) as well as deprivation concerning employment and career opportunities (Tougas et al., 1991; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988, 1989; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989).

Several other outcome justice theories focus primarily on the key determinants of a fair outcome of a distribution or allocation. Lerner's (1977, 1982) justice motive theory, Leventhal's (1976, 1980) justice judgement theory and Deutsch's (1985) theory of distributive justice are a few examples. The norms for distributive justice in these theories vary according to the characteristics of the situation, particularly social relations (e.g., competitive vs. cooperative). Meindl (1989) identified the social conditions under which leaders are likely to adopt either a parity or an equity rule in making a fair resources allocation.

In the context of outcome justice, Lansberg (1989) examined the development of individuals' justice perceptions of the entitlements they receive in exchange for their group

membership and contributions to an organization. Lansberg's three-step justice model contends that justice perceptions of an individual's entitlement depend on the outcomes of a group categorization process, a social comparison process involving similar referents, and a social contrast process involving dissimilar referents.

More recently, the outcome justice notion has been applied to cross-cultural research on responsibility and justice (Kurosawa, 1992) as well as on resources allocation and conflict resolution (e.g., Bond et al., 1992). These studies, by extending the concept beyond the Western mode, can help broaden the scope for outcome justice theories to predict behaviour across cultures.

Procedural Justice:

Traditional approaches to justice issues in organisations concentrate primarily on distributive or outcome justice. However, stimulated by Thibaut and Walker's (1975, 1978) original work on the justice of legal procedures concerning process control vs. decision control, organisational researchers have since taken an increasing interest in issues of procedural justice.

The most significant advances in the concept of procedural justice since Greenberg's (1987) review, can be found in Lind and Tyler (1988). Based on empirical evidence from the legal, political, economical, organisational as well as social psychological arenas, Lind and Tyler concluded that people are more concerned with the justice of procedures than the justice of final outcomes, and that perceptions of the fairness of procedures are important determinants of attitude and behaviour. Addressing the fundamental issue of the underlying psychological reasons for the observed importance accorded procedural justice, Lind and Tyler (1988) have proposed two explanatory models. The extended self-interest model contends that concerns about procedural justice are primarily due to individuals' self-interest from a long-term perspective. Individuals aim to optimise their final outcomes by ways of process controls. An alternative explanation takes a group perspective. The group value model asserts that procedures represent norms and values of the group. Because individuals are social beings, they place high value on social interactions and group membership, and they

therefore have basic concerns about procedural justice. This model has received empirical support (Tyler & Lind, 1990).

As Lane (1988) points out, a third reason for a greater concern for procedural rather than outcome justice can be found in Juster and Courants (1986) notion of "process-benefits". Based on the observation that individuals derive greater satisfaction from "performing" certain activities than from the final outcome of the activities, Lane argued that people would care more for the procedures leading to a just outcome than the outcome itself. Procedural justice research has been extended from Thibaut and Walker's pioneer work on issues related to legal dispute resolutions (for a review, see Lind & Tyler, 1988) to areas including conflict management in organisations (e.g., Chusmir & Mills, 1989; Karambayya & Brett, 1989), grievance systems (e.g., Klaas, 1989), participation and organisational democracy (e.g., Whiddon & Martin, 1989), resources allocation and recruitment (Bies & Shapiro, 1988), pay raise and compensation (Folger & Konovsky, 1989), satisfaction with union and management (e.g., Fryxell & Gordon, 1989), managerial promotion practice (McEnrue, 1989), employees' reactions to co-workers' layoffs (Brockner, 1990) as well as employee drug testing (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). More recently, the procedural justice notion has also been extended to cross-cultural research (e.g., Lind & Earley, 1992).

While Lind and Tyler are more concerned with conceptual issues of procedural justice, other theorists focus on identifying the key principles of fair procedures. The allocation preference theory (Leventhal et al., 1980) adopts such a proactive orientation. The theory identifies several key principles that can be used to achieve justice in the allocations of resources: applying consistency rules, allowing input in the soliciting of information and the choice of decision-making agents, avoiding biases, observing moral and ethical standards, as well as making provisions for appeals against the final decision. Empirical research generated by the allocation preference theory is, in general, supportive of the theory (e.g., Ayers, 1992; Greenberg, 1986a; 1986b; 1987).

Interactional Justice

As a special case of procedural justice, the concept of interactional justice has recently

been proposed (e.g., Bies & Moag, 1986; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Interactional justice refers to the quality of interpersonal treatment an individual receives in the process of a resources allocation. The importance of interactional justice lies in its potential in sustaining human dignity and enhancing self-esteem (Lind & Tyler, 1988). In other words, being treated fairly in social interactions and communications provides individuals with the opportunity to "experience their own dignity" (Lanc, 1988, p.316). Folger (1988) also conceptualises justice as dignity and argues that it is an intrinsic human desire to treat others, and to be treated by others, in a just and fair manner.

Research on interactional justice has focused primarily on the identification of the key criteria for fair interactions or treatments in a variety of organisational settings. The criteria identified include "open and honest communications" in recruiter-candidate interactions (Bies, 1986), "sincerity" (Bies, 1987b) and "providing vital information and discussing expectations" in manager-subordinate interactions (Sheppard & Lewicki, 1987), as well as "seriousness of treatment" in entrepreneur and bank personnel interactions (Koper & Vermunt, 1988). Several recent studies further showed that managerial behavior, indicative of interpersonal sensitivity in interactions with employees, had a "fairness-enhancing effect" on employees' perceptions of the decision making processes (e.g., Brockner, 1990; Greenberg, 1990; Tyler & Bies, 1990).

Other Developments in Organisational Justice Research

Provisions of Justifications :

One recent line of justice research focuses on a victim's desire in seeking causal explanations for the injustice. Bies (1987) has conceptualised perceptions of justice as "the product of a process of argumentation or persuasion" (p.304). Specifically, perceptions of justice or injustice of an outcome are influenced more by the provision of a social account (or explanatory justifications) for the outcome, rather than solely by the favorability of the final outcome. Bies argued that feelings of discontent or perceptions of injustice associated with unfavorable outcomes are primarily due to the inadequacy or absence of justifications. When adequate justifications are provided, feelings of injustice would be significantly reduced. Recent

empirical evidence has shown that the provision of such justifications help reduce a victim's feelings of injustice in workplace layoff situations (Brockner, 1990), pay cuts decisions (Greenberg, 1990), and in interpersonal interactions between management and employees (Folger & Bies, 1989; Tyler & Bies, 1990).

Fabrications of Justice:

Instead of taking the perspective of the recipient of a distribution, another recent line of justice research takes a "distributor's" perspective and concentrates on "harmdoer's" (those responsible for the injustice) behaviour aiming at the maintenance of injustice. Cohen's work on "fabrications of injustice" (Cohen, 1989) is representative of this new research direction. Cohen (1989) argued that harmdoers who unjustly benefit from an injustice, typically want to maintain the injustice. Their strategies may involve the creation of fabrications of justice or "false beliefs about justice". Victims of an injustice are intentionally led to hold such false beliefs and consequently, through such intentionally-induced fabrications or deceit, injustice is maintained. Cohen further argued that "voice procedures" could potentially be deployed to create a false belief of having control and dignity. While genuine opportunities of being able to express one's opinions typically enhance the person's fairness perception of the decision as well as his/her compliance with the goals of the decision (for a review, see Lind & Tyler, 1988), the potential deceptive use of voice procedures by harmdoers could create illusions of control and dignity in victims and thereby help the maintenance of the injustice. Cohen warned against such deceptive use of voice procedures and advocated a reexamination of previous voice research "with an eye toward discovering the potentially deceptive use of the symbols of justice" (p.38).

Scope of Justice:

Implicit to distributive and procedural justice theories, the scope of concern for justice is thought to be confined by group membership status. Concern for justice is only applicable to members of a group having mutual cooperative relations (Deutsch, 1985; Messe, Hymes, & MacCoun, 1984; Optow, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1990). In examining the effect of group membership on concern for justice, Tyler and

Lind (1990) made the distinction between inclusionary effects involving the relationship among in-group members and exclusionary effects concerning the relationship among out-group members. Their data on inclusionary effects showed that centrality of group membership had an effect on justice concerns. Members of intermediate group status had the greatest concern for justice. Brockner (1990) examined the effect of layoffs in the workplace on survivors' job attitudes and behaviour. The results showed that when layoff victims were within the survivors' scope of justice, as defined by the closeness of personal relationships or similarity in attitudes, survivors were more withdrawn from their jobs and perceived that the layoffs were handled unfairly.

While most justice theories assume that concern for justice is constrained by the scope of group boundaries (Tyler & Lind, 1990), Lerner (1982) contends that concern for justice is a basic human motive. Folger (1988) also shares a similar belief in justice in that justice concerns are an intrinsic aspects of human behaviour. In these conceptual contexts, an individual's concern for justice has no bounds, that is, it extends to all other human beings.

Psychology of Improving Justice:

Cook (1990) has advocated a psychology of improving justice by promoting respect and liking for subordinate social groups or victims of social injustice, with the aim of extending the scope of justice to include these groups. With reference to affirmative action policies, it has also been argued that effective affirmative action programmes can help achieve true equality of opportunity and hence improve overall social justice (Crosby & Clayton, 1990; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987).

Literature on Selection Fairness

The literature on selection fairness is dominated by discriminatory issues with reference to the use of interviews and tests in selection. Fairness research concerning interviews has concentrated on the biasing effects of various non-job relevant factors on interview decision making (for a review, see Campion & Arvey, 1989). Fairness research regarding the use of tests has focused on the psychometric issues over the last three decades. The key question addressed was whether the psychometric properties of the tests were to blame for the

consistently lower hiring rates of ethnic minorities.

In a recent review, Sharf (1988) has identified the years 1964, 1971 and 1988 as "significant milestones" in the development of the definition of selection fairness. In 1964, selection fairness was defined in Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act. The emphasis of the 1964 definition was on the rights of any individual candidate irrespective of his/her personal characteristics. The implication in terms of the definition of selection fairness is that fair selections involve the use of objective job-relevant qualifications as selection criteria and hence obey the fundamental principle of meritocracy. The primary intention of Title VII was then to "eradicate any discriminatory barriers to employment opportunities" (Bolick, 1988, p.320). In the context of this legislation, discrimination is defined in terms of differential or disparate treatment given to two similarly qualified candidates of different (racial) background.

However, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Griggs v. Duke Power* case (1971) gave an alternative interpretation to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Discrimination was redefined in terms of the presence of "adverse impact" that is, a lower hiring rate of minority candidates. In this context, fairness of a selection practice is determined in terms of whether it has achieved approximately equal hiring rates for both majority and minority groups. The fundamental principle underlying selection fairness has therefore shifted from that of individual meritocracy to one stressing group equality in terms of employment results (e.g., Sharf, 1988; Gottfredson, 1988).

Because using tests in selection typically yielded unequal subgroup selection ratios (See Schmitt & Noe, 1986; Schmitt, 1989 for a review), the (US) public was suspicious that tests might consistently and unfairly under-predict minority candidates. This concern, together with the frequent legal charges against discrimination in employment selections, has prompted an upsurge of research in test validation (in particular, the existence of differential validity), as well as the development of "test fairness models" during the 1970s and for most of the 1980s. As a result of such effort, it has become clear that differential validity does not exist (for a review, see Schmidt, 1988)

and that employment tests appear equally valid for all racial subgroups (p.275).

Research on the development of test fairness models aimed primarily at the elimination of adverse impact. These models (e.g., Darlington's 1971 subjective regression model, Einhorn and Bass's 1971 equal risk model, Coles's 1973 threshold utility model, Thorndike's 1971 constant ratio model) varied in proposed procedures of test use, in particular, the procedures of setting test-criterion cut-offs and of applying the test-criterion regression lines. However, critical analyses of these test fairness models have revealed that none of the proposed procedures would succeed in the elimination of adverse impact. They merely reduce the discrepancy in hiring rates between majority and minority groups (e.g., Schmidt, 1988, p.288). Furthermore, utility research has shown that for all these models, a small reduction in adverse impact typically is at the expense of a significant loss in overall estimated organizational productivity (for a review, see Boudreau, 1991; Cascio, 1990; Schmitt, 1989). The goal of achieving equality in subgroup selection rates (i.e., to eliminate adverse impact) on the one hand, and the goal of optimising organisational productivity, on the other hand, appear to be virtually incompatible. Given this, researchers then turned to the search for the best balanced "tradeoff" between the two goals.

Using utility comparisons, the best tradeoff procedures identified so far involve a "top-down within-subgroup" selection method. It has been shown that among all quota hiring systems, this within-group top-down method, not only eliminates adverse impact (Schmidt, 1988; p.288), but also yields the least productivity loss (5% to 15% as compared to the Cleary method) than any of the other quota methods (for a review, see Hartigan & Wigdor, 1989). Recently several researchers (e.g., Hartigan & Wigdor, 1989; McKinney, 1987; Schmidt, 1988; Wigdor & Hartigan, 1988) conclude that it is difficult to identify an alternative selection method that represents a better tradeoff between the goals of optimising productivity and eliminating adverse impact.

Despite its current popularity, this top-down within-group selection method is also regarded as discriminatory because a job-irrelevant factor, candidate ethnicity, is used explicitly as a hiring criterion (e.g., Schmitt & Robertson,

1990, p.309). It then appears that in order to eliminate adverse impact, a non-job relevant hiring criterion would have to be used. In other words, selections based solely on merit would always result in adverse impact. The reason for this lies in the existence of significant subgroup differences in job-relevant abilities (e.g., Gottfredson, 1986a; 1986b; 1988; Gottfredson & Crouse, 1986; Schmitt, 1989; Schmitt & Noe, 1986; Wigdor & Garner, 1982). The implications of such differences are clear for the fairness of selection outcomes: so long as subgroup ability differences exist, it is theoretically difficult to define fairness of a selection in terms of the absence of adverse impact. This is because the absence of adverse impact means equal rates of selection for subgroups, which in turn, carries the presumption that subgroups are equally merited in terms of job-relevant qualifications. Consequently, a call for the return of the original definition for selection fairness based on meritocracy has been voiced recently (e.g., Gottfredson, 1988; Sharf, 1988). This trend is also reflected in the recent Supreme Court decisions in the 1988 *Watson* case and the 1989 *Ward Cove Packing Co.* case. From a legislative perspective, these decisions thus allow employers to "refocus on individual merit as the touchstone of equal employment opportunity" (Sharf, 1988; p.236).

While research effort to date has clarified the psychometric, utility and differential ability issues relating to quota-based vs. merit-based selections, the rights and wrongs of such selections are still being intensely debated at all sectors of the society. With the psychometric debates over validation and fairness models abating (Guion & Gibson, 1988) and evidence on the existence of subgroup ability differences becoming increasingly conclusive (for a review, see Gottfredson & Sharf, 1988), selection fairness research is now reassuming its original focus on ethical and social justice concerns.

Applying Organizational Justice Theories to Selection Fairness Research

Two general conclusions can be drawn from the previous review. First, organizational justice theories provide a comprehensive and integrative conceptual framework for research into justice or fairness issues in organizations. Second, selection fairness research has moved away from a psychometric focus to one that emphasises a concern for social justice. How-

ever, no systematic application of the organizational justice framework to selection fairness is yet available. Such an application would serve two unique purposes. The first is to enhance understanding of selection fairness issues from the perspective of current organizational justice theories, in particular, fairness issues associated with both selection outcomes and selection procedures. The second purpose of applying the justice framework to selection is to allow a systematic examination of possible consequences of a fair, or an unfair, selection practice within the theoretical contexts of relevant justice theories, since most outcome and procedural justice theories postulate on the behavioural consequences of injustice. The following sections discuss possible applications of justice theories to fairness issues in selection.

Applying Procedural Justice Notion to Selection

(A) *Identifying Determinants of Fair Selection Procedures*

As discussed previously, Leventhal et al's (1980) allocation preference theory provides an ideal theoretical framework for research aiming at identifying determinants of fair procedures. Adopting the open-ended question and factorial analysis method used by Greenberg (1986a) in identifying fair procedures of performance appraisal, Singer (1990a) examined the underlying determinants of a fair selection practice. For managerial selection, six factors were identified as the key fairness factors: "honest communication and choice of selectors" "information soliciting" "open objective competition" "consistency and ethicality" "bias avoidance" and "prior knowledge of future colleagues". The first five factors are in close agreement with the principles of procedural justice proposed by the allocation preference theory. Because the level or status of the position has been shown to affect both selection procedures and selection decisions (e.g., Hopper, 1977; Singer & Eder, 1989), the above study was repeated with a sample of entry-level job applicants. Five factors, similar to those identified by managerial professionals, emerged as significant determinants of fairness (Singer, 1990a). These findings therefore suggest that the principles of fair procedures specified in the allocation preference theory are applicable to both managerial and entry-level selections.

(B) *Consequences of Fairness Perceptions on Candidates' Later Job Attitudes*

In a recent selection literature, Herriot (1989) argued that selection research should conceptualise the selection process as the first stage of a continuing social interaction process between the organization and the applicant. A similar view was expressed by Taylor and Bergmann (1987) as well as Robertson and Smith (1989). Several studies have taken this approach in examining the effect of candidates' perceptions about recruiters on their post-selection attitudes towards the job and the organization (e.g., Harris & Fink, 1987; Phillip & Dipboye, 1989; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987).

In the justice literature, Lind and Tyler (1988) have explicitly argued that the real proof of the value of the procedural justice perspective lies in its power to generate new testable hypotheses such as possible behavioural consequences of procedural fairness perceptions. In this context, Singer (1992a) examined the effects of candidates' fairness perceptions about the selection procedures on their later job attitudes. Specifically, the effects of fairness perceptions about "process-control" procedures and "decision-control" procedures (Thibaut & Walker, 1978; Tyler, 1987) were compared. In Thibaut and Walker's (1978) original theory, decision-control was conceptualised as the more decisive means in assuring fair outcomes. Individuals resort to relying on process controls when they recognize that direct control over final decisions is unattainable or impractical. Process controls are hence indirect means in assuring the fairness of final outcomes. In managerial selection, "to have a voice in information-soliciting" is an example of process-control procedures; whereas "to use job-relevant factors such as past work experience as a selection criterion" exemplifies a decision-control procedure. It was found that fairness perceptions about process-control procedures were predictive of candidates' post-entry organizational commitment, work satisfaction as well as their perceptions of overall organizational effectiveness. However, candidates' fairness perceptions about decision-control procedures had no impact on these job attitudes (Singer, 1992a).

Applying Outcome Justice Notion to Preferential Selection

(A) Factors Affecting Outcome Fairness of Preferential Selection

Although consideration of distributive justice is fundamental to preferential selection (or quota hiring), and theorists have argued for (e.g., America, 1986) and against (e.g., Newton, 1973) the fairness of preferential selection, only limited empirical research has addressed this issue. These studies have identified a number of factors having a significant effect on outcome fairness judgements about preferential selection:

1. *Merit Discrepancy*: It has been found that fairness perceptions about preferential selection are significantly affected by the size of discrepancy in merit between the rejected but more merited majority candidate and the minority appointee; the greater the discrepancy, the more unfair the decision was judged. This merit discrepancy effect has been consistently observed for both gender-based and ethnicity-based preferential selection as well as in either a within-subjects or between-subjects design (Singer, 1991a; 1992b).

2. *Objective vs. Subjective Perspective of the Perceiver*: Although justice theorists have argued for the importance of the rules of "veil of ignorance" (Rawls, 1971) and "impartiality" (Soltan, 1987) in judgements of justice, there is evidence suggesting that ethnicity-based preferential selection is judged as unfair, irrespective of whether respondents taking a subjective participant perspective or an objective bystander's perspective (Singer, 1991a). Furthermore, fairness judgements about gender-based selection outcomes appear comparable between findings of a study using a "self-reporting" approach (a subjective perspective) (Veilleux & Tougas, 1989) and that using a hypothetical "scenario" approach (an objective perspective) (Singer, 1991b).

3. *Victim vs. Beneficiary Status of the Perceiver*: While the potential victims of either gender-based (i.e., males) or ethnicity-based (i.e., whites) selections consistently perceived such selection outcomes as unjust (Heilman et al, 1991; Singer, 1991a, 1992b; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989), findings on fairness perceptions of the beneficiaries (females for gender-based selections and ethnic minorities for ethnicity-based selections) appear to be influenced by

merit discrepancy. When merit discrepancy was small, beneficiaries of preferential treatment did not seem to consider it as unfair (Heilman et al., 1991; Singer, 1991b; 1992b).

4. *Individual Differences*: While several studies have examined individual differences in justice judgements (e.g., Mayor et al., 1989; Sweeney et al., 1991), only one study was carried out with reference to selection. Based on Pettigrew's (1958) theory of category width, Singer (1990b) hypothesised that narrow categorisers, being more sensitive to differences between stimuli, would be more influenced by the size of merit discrepancies between candidates. They are therefore likely to perceive preferential selection as more unfair. However, no significant difference in perceived fairness was found on the individual differences dimension of category width. Future research could ascertain whether fairness perceptions about preferential selection are likely to be influenced by differences in social political or ethical beliefs.

5. *The Provision of Justification*: In arguing that the provision of justifications could significantly reduce victim's feelings of injustice, Bies (1986a) made the distinction between an ideological account and a causal account in justifying an unfavourable outcome or action. The former provides justification for an action by invoking value-laden "superordinate goals" based on ethical or moral reasoning; the latter refers to an excuse aiming at lessening the responsibility of the harmdoer. In the context of preferential selection, it was found that the provision of either an "ethical" (i.e., ideological) or a "legislative" (i.e., causal) justification for the preferential treatment of the candidates, rather than reducing perceptions of injustice, further exacerbated the perceived injustice (Singer, 1991b; 1992b).

6. *"Framing" Effect*: People's opinions on preferential selection have been shown to be subject to the framing effect (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Kinder and Sanders (1990) showed that when preferential selection is framed as "reverse discrimination" as opposed to "unfair advantage" there was a further decrease in the level of people's approval for the program. Future research could ascertain whether individuals' fairness perceptions about preferential selection are also similarly affected by such a framing effect.

(B) *Consequences of Outcome Fairness Perceptions on Behaviour:*

Evidence so far is convergent in showing that preferential selection results in perceptions of injustice. In interpreting these findings (Heilman et al., 1991; Singer, 1991a, 1992b; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989), the most relevant theory appears to be the outcome justice theory of relative deprivation. Because relative deprivation theory has provisions for group comparisons (i.e., the notion of group or fraternal deprivation), the theory could directly address the issue of group inequity as a result of preferential selection. Such an application could further allow the examination of possible behavioural reactions induced by the perceived injustice.

Two studies have demonstrated directly that gender-based selection also induced feelings of deprivation and discontent among the potentially disadvantaged group (i.e., males) (Singer, 1991b; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989) and that the level of felt deprivation and discontent can be predicted by the size of merit discrepancy (Singer, 1991b). These studies therefore have paved the way for further application of the theory to preferential selection. Specifically, the theory could then be applied to examine relevant behavioural consequences of such feelings of deprivation. Several directions for future research are suggested:

(1) For the groups potentially disadvantaged by preferential selection, the theory postulates that feelings of deprivation may lead to reactions that are either individual-oriented or system-oriented (e.g., Crosby, 1976; Martin, 1981). Although it has been suggested that destructive system-oriented reactions to gender-based selection such as social unrest are unlikely (Veilleux & Tougas, 1989, p.493), males' reactions are likely to be individual-oriented; they may resent females for getting a better deal in job applications, or they may lower their expectations about their own future employment prospects (Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

(2) For the beneficiaries of preferential selection, available research suggests that females also perceived gender-based selections as unjust (Heilman et al, 1991; Nacoste, 1987; Singer, 1991a, 1991b). Nacoste (1989) further showed that such selections had self-devaluing consequences for women who perceived the selections as unfair. In the context of relative

deprivation theory, it has been shown that females also experienced feelings of deprivation or discontent when they perceived that males were disadvantaged by gender-based selection (Singer, 1991b; Tougas & Veilleux, 1989). Such "feelings of deprivation on behalf of others" (i.e., Runciman, 1966) may have positive behavioural consequences for inequities in society (e.g., Tougas et al., 1987; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989). One possible behavioural consequence of females' feelings of discontent on behalf of men could be that these women would also oppose gender-based preferential treatment in selection. Furthermore, research could ascertain whether the reported negative effects of gender-based selection on women's self-evaluations (Heilman et al, 1987; Heilman et al, 1991) and on their job commitment and satisfaction (Chacko, 1982) are related to their feelings of discontent on behalf of men.

Other Potential Applications of Justice Notions to Selection Fairness

Interactional Justice in Selection:

In the entire selection process, interviews provide an unique opportunity for face-to-face interactions between recruiters and job candidates. Because the traditional focus of interview research has been on the identification of biasing factors in interview decision making (e.g., Campion & Arvey, 1989; Eder & Ferris, 1989; Singer & Bruhns, 1991) and on the rectification of these decisional biases (e.g., Campion et al., 1988; Heilman & Martell, 1986; Singer & Sewell, 1989), the dynamic nature of the two-way interactional processes has been largely overlooked. In the context of justice theories, the notion of interactional justice appears particularly relevant to the recruiter-candidate exchange process during interviews. Future research could first, identify key criteria for fair recruiter-candidate interactions in interviews, and second, examine the impact of interactional justice on candidates' post-interview reactions and post-entry attitudes and behavior.

Justification Effects in Selection:

Although evidence so far suggests that the provision of justification reduces perceptions of injustice about a variety of managerial decisions (e.g., Brockner, 1990; Greenberg, 1990; Tyler & Bies, 1990), the provision of justification for preferential selection decisions further exacerbated feelings of injustice

(Singer, 1991b, 1992b). There are a number of likely reasons for the observed inconsistency in the justification effect. These include the presence or absence of a winner referent, the dispositional vs. situational nature of the justification, and the extent to which psychological reactance is generated by the justifications provided (Singer, 1992b). Future research should examine the underlying mechanism of the justification effect with the aim of identifying moderator factors in the justification and selection fairness relationship. The findings would have practical significance for the successful implementation of preferential selection programmes.

Scope of Justice and Selection:

Research on the scope of justice to date suggests that an individual's scope of justice has a significant effect on his/her judgement of justice (Tyler & Lind, 1990). In the context of preferential selection, the key research question concerns whether an individual's group membership status in terms of gender or racial group, significantly affects the person's perceptions of the fairness of gender-or race-based selections. It is likely that the strength of the social identity (Tajfel, 1982) an individual ascribes to his/her own gender or ethnic group would determine the person's scope of justice and hence influence the fairness judgements of preferential selection outcomes.

Extending Cook's Notion of Improving Justice to Selection Issues:

While Cook's (1990) notion applies primarily to subordinate social categories including lower social classes, ethnic minorities and women (p.148), the concept of improving justice is relevant to all social issues including the allocation of employment opportunities. In this context, the implementation of preferential selection and other affirmative action policies as a means to promote social justice remains a most significant and challenging issue of justice. Evaluations of such policies would have to go beyond the outcome, procedural and interactional justice issues, and to include considerations of compensatory, retribution and restitution justice (e.g., Clayton & Tangri, 1989; Groarke, 1990).

Practical Implications

The findings of research applying organizational justice theories to selection fair-

ness may have significant practical implications for recruiting organizations. In the context of procedural fairness, the determinants of fair selection procedures identified (Singer, 1990a, 1992a) provide a useful guide for planning the recruiting process. The findings of the consequences of fairness perceptions (Singer, 1992a) suggest that recruiters should also be mindful of the significant associations between selection procedures and successful candidates' post-entry job commitment and satisfaction.

In terms of outcome fairness, the issue of preferential selection is highly relevant to any multicultural society. As reviewed previously, the trend in the United States during the Reagan and Bush administrations has been one of conservatism and anti-preferential treatments of minorities. Although the US Congress passed the new Civil Rights Bill in 1990 and 1991, on both occasions the Bill was vetoed by President Bush. The Bill was intended to have made the provisions for preferential hiring of minorities more specific. It has been argued that the Bill "would ostensibly return the courts to the *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* standards" (Schmidt et al., 1992, p.650) and that it would "make litigation more likely for employers and more lucrative for employees" (Smith, 1992, p.1). However, under the new Democratic administration, it is almost certain that the Civil Rights Bill of 1991 would be enacted as law.

In New Zealand, the recent development in employment legislation under the National government appears to have made any preferential treatment in employment hiring more difficult. While both the Human Rights Commission Act of 1977 as well as the New Zealand State Sector Act of 1988 required employers to operate a personnel policy which is based on merit and equal opportunities, employers were also required to recognise not only the need for a greater involvement of the Maori people in the public service, but also the employment requirements of other ethnic or minority groups (State Sector Act, 1988, Part V). However, since then the National government has repealed the 1990 Employment Equity Act and introduced the Employment Contracts Act of 1991. Several scholars have argued that such legislative development would place minority groups in a more disadvantaged position in the labour market (e.g., Brosnan & Rea, 1991; Sayers, 1991). The current political climate for the provision for employment

equality thus appears to be similar to that during the Reagan-Bush era in the United States.

Because employment selection decisions may have far-reaching consequences for individual candidates, for the recruiting organizations, as well as for the society as a whole, it is important to understand people's views on the overall justice of the selection practice (e.g., Crosby & Clayton, 1990). Although Schmidt et al. (1992) recently argued that research "cannot resolve the conflict between the competing values of . . . individual merit, economic efficiency, and international competitiveness, on the one hand, and economic equality and opportunity for minorities, on the other" (p.662), further research could nonetheless contribute to the design and implementation of effective selection programmes.

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