
Do the Means Always Justify the Ends, or Do the Ends Sometimes Justify the Means? A Value Protection Model of Justice Reasoning

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This study explored whether personal identity concerns relate in important ways to how people decide whether an event is fair or unfair. Because moral mandates are selective expressions of values that are central to people's sense of personal identity, people should be highly motivated to protect these positions from possible threat. Consistent with predictions based on a value protection model of justice, whether people had a moral mandate on abortion, civil rights, or immigration was completely independent of the perceived procedural fairness of political institutions when those institutions posed no salient threat to these policy concerns. However, strength of moral mandate, and not prethreat judgments of procedural fairness of the Supreme Court or a state referendum, predicted perceived procedural fairness, outcome fairness, decision acceptance, and other indices of moral outrage when either the Supreme Court or a state referendum posed a possible threat to perceivers' moral mandates.

Current psychological theories of justice are based on the premise that people care about justice and fairness primarily because of their social identity needs. People are theorized to be especially attentive to information related to procedural fairness because the procedural actions of institutions and authorities communicate important information about social worth and value to involved parties (see Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997, for a review). It is theorized here that people are motivated to similarly affirm and protect their sense of personal identity and that personal identity needs also have an important influence on why and how people decide something is fair or unfair and the consequences of making that judgment.

There are a number of reasons to believe that personal identity—and particularly the need to maintain a positive personal identity—has a connection to how people think about fairness. People generally like to feel

good about themselves, and are motivated to maintain favorable self-appraisals, because downward shifts in self-appraisals lead to anxiety, depression, anger, and other forms of negative affect (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Higgins, 1987). Self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) emphasizes the idea that people strive for congruence between their personal moral values and their thoughts and behavior because lack of congruence leads to feelings of inauthenticity. Whenever people experience a threat to their personal identity by failing to live up to their moral standards, they will be highly motivated to act in ways that allow for public and private reaffirmation of the belief that they are authentically moral. Similar to Sir Thomas More (who preferred to be beheaded rather than sanction divorce), people value the self-respect and the self-satisfaction that comes with living up to and defending their internalized moral standards and often will defend their moral positions even in the face of extreme costs for doing so (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, people are likely to sometimes judge whether events are

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fair or unfair against the yardstick of their internalized moral values.

INTRODUCING A VALUE PROTECTION MODEL OF JUSTICE REASONING

To attempt to account for how personal identity relates to how people decide whether something is fair or unfair, a value protection model was developed that makes the following predictions: (a) Given that moral values are central to personal identity (Rokeach, 1973), people should be motivated to affirm their sense of self by selectively endorsing self-expressive moral positions or stands, or what will be referred to as moral mandates (i.e., "To know who I am is to know where I stand," Taylor, 1989); (b) a commitment to a moral mandate allows perceivers to classify the actions of institutions, authorities, ingroup or outgroup members, and even themselves into the mutually exclusive categories of legitimate thought or deed versus fundamental transgression. Therefore, outcomes and procedures will be perceived as legitimate and fair if they are consistent with perceivers' moral mandates and will be perceived as illegitimate and unfair if they are inconsistent with perceivers' moral mandates; and (c) thinking about, experiencing, witnessing, or behaving in a way that violates a moral mandate should be threatening to people's sense of both private and public personal identity. People will be motivated to protect their sense of personal identity when threatened and will do so by making a number of cognitive, affective, and behavioral adjustments, all of which have implications for whether they will feel events are fair or unfair. Defense strategies will primarily include moral outrage and moral cleansing (cf. Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, & Lerner, 2000). In the case of a personal transgression of a moral mandate, moral outrage will typically involve self-blame, self-loathing, and guilt. When people think about or experience a transgression of a moral mandate by others, moral outrage will typically involve negative attributions about the transgressor(s) that in turn lead to a perception of injustice, anger and contempt, negative sanctions, and/or protest. Simply thinking about, much less experiencing, the violation of a moral mandate on the part of self or others should lead people to experience moral outrage and to engage in moral cleansing (i.e., behaviors and thoughts directed toward reaffirming one's sense of self as a good person).

MORAL MANDATES

People are not expected to have moral mandates to guide their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in every context. A moral mandate is a selective self-expressive stand on a specific issue, not a generalized orientation

toward the world. Moral mandates are conceived as representing a special class of strong attitudes, where strong attitudes are defined in terms of extremity and importance (e.g., Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995; Krosnick, 1988) and/or attitude extremity and certainty (e.g., Gross, Holtz, & Miller, 1995). Strong attitudes represent the class of attitudes that are particularly stable, consequential, and difficult to change (Hovland, 1959; Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947). Moral mandates also are characterized by attitude strength, importance, and certainty but include the additional layer of moral conviction. Therefore, all moral mandates are strong attitudes, but not all strong attitudes are moral mandates.

Moral mandates result from heavily internalized norms (e.g., "thou shall not kill") and personal commitment to terminal values, such as freedom, equality, or the sanctity of life (Rokeach, 1973). Moral mandates are related to and consistent with Judd and Krosnick's (1989) notion of "crowning moral values" (i.e., those that trump other possibly relevant moral standards or values) and with Locke's (1991) emphasis on values as the motivational force that drives individual reasoning and choice.

Although moral mandates are rooted in core moral values, moral mandates are not values *per se*. Moral mandates are the selective expression of a core moral value or values. The emphasis on selective expression is important. For example, even though there are many policy positions that people should theoretically endorse if they have a strong commitment to the value of equality, we know that people are cognitive misers (Fiske & Taylor, 1996) who rarely have perfectly constrained ideological belief systems (Converse, 1964). Most people choose a finite number of strong moral positions to represent their commitment to a given value. For example, if someone deeply values the sanctity of life and sees their commitment to this value as a reflection of themselves as a decent and moral person, they may selectively express this commitment through a pro-life position on abortion. Having a moral position could well be psychologically sufficient for people to persuade themselves that they are authentic moral beings. Once an expression of their commitment to a specific value has been identified, people may feel little pressure to develop other attitudes around that same value (e.g., to also be against capital punishment). Therefore, even though values are the personal ideals that provide moral mandates with their motivational force, an attachment to a specific moral value may or may not lead to a logically constrained belief system or a specific set of moral mandates.

ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In contrast to the value protection model's emphasis on connections between personal identity needs and

how people decide whether something is fair or unfair, other current theories of justice emphasize the role of two different, but nonetheless self-related, motivations for why people care about justice: (a) because it serves their material interests (the instrumental approach; e.g., Adams, 1963; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973) or (b) because it serves a social identity function (e.g., the group value and relational models of justice; see Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Instrumental models of justice posit that people care about justice because it serves their long-term self-interest. For example, people care about whether they have voice in decisions because it allows for greater control over what happens and therefore a higher probability of a positive outcome (Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

In contrast, social identity theories of justice argue that perceptions of fairness are shaped primarily by the characteristics of procedures because procedures convey information about social standing (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). People are expected to be more interested in having their social standing validated by fair treatment than they are in the outcomes that procedures yield. Consistent with this idea, considerable research has found that people are more accepting of negative or unfavorable outcomes when they are arrived at by fair procedures (the "fair process effect"; e.g., Cohen, 1985; Folger, Rosenfield, Grove, & Cockran, 1979; Greenberg & Folger, 1983; Van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, & Vermunt, 1998).

Proponents of fairness heuristic theory (see Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993; Van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997; Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997) suggest that the fair process effect may be the result of more general cognitive processes rather than reflecting of people's social identity needs. For example, people often learn about procedures before they learn about outcomes. By the time outcome information is learned, it may be colored and biased in the direction of an already carefully constructed judgment of procedural fairness. Supporting the hypothesis that what matters most is what people learn first, Van den Bos, Vermunt, and Wilke (1997) found weaker fair process effects when people learned about outcomes before they learned about procedures. In addition, research testing fairness heuristic theory predictions also has found that people rely primarily on standards such as social-comparison-based equity information when forming fairness judgments about outcomes and it is only when social comparison information is absent that they use procedural information as a heuristic replacement for it in forming outcome fairness judgments (Lind et al., 1993; Van den Bos et al., 1998). In sum, the fairness heuristic program of research suggests that other impor-

tant reference points besides procedures will shape people's justice judgments when that information is sufficiently available to perceivers. I propose that moral mandates may be one important reference point that people use to decide whether outcomes—and procedures—are fair or unfair.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Because moral mandates are selective expressions of moral values that are central to people's sense of personal identity, people will be highly motivated to protect these positions from possible threat. Therefore, a procedural failure to uphold a moral mandate will be perceived to be a form of personal affront and will shape people's subsequent reactions to both the outcome and the procedure used to decide it. Based on this premise, the present study tested the following two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: The strength of a moral mandate will not be related to the perceived fairness of relevant procedures when there is no salient real or imagined threat to the moral mandate. However, strength of moral mandate will be negatively related to perceived procedural fairness under threat. Even an imagined threat to a moral mandate (e.g., if a morally mandated pro-choice person thinks about the possibility of the Supreme Court ruling to overturn *Roe v. Wade*) should lead to derogation of procedural fairness.

Hypothesis 2: The impact of procedural fairness on outcome judgments (e.g., outcome fairness and moral outrage) will be mitigated (or eliminated) when people have a strong moral mandate. In other words, when decisions are made in a morally mandated context, outcome fairness and moral outrage will be determined primarily by the perceiver's strength of moral mandate, an effect that will not be qualified by whether the perceiver believed the procedure to be fair or unfair before the threat. Similarly, when outcomes validate the perceiver's moral mandate, their sense of justice done will not be based on whether they believed the procedure to be fair or unfair in an outcome-neutral context but instead will be predicated primarily, if not solely, by the strength of the person's moral mandate. In short, when one has a moral mandate, any means will justify the mandated end.

To test these hypotheses, people's reactions to either the Supreme Court or a state referendum were examined under two different conditions: under no threat and under a threat to specific moral mandates.

METHOD

Participants

A random-digit-dialed (RDD) panel sample of 521 adults, representing a 58.5% response rate,¹ responded to a telephone survey on two occasions (once under no

threat to those with moral mandates and then again under a threat to specific moral mandates). The survey was conducted by trained interviewers at the Public Opinion Laboratory (POL, at Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, Illinois). The sample was drawn from a sampling frame of all households in Cook County, Illinois (Chicago and its immediate suburbs) that had telephones. Two hundred and seventy-two participants responded to the state referendum version of the survey, and 249 responded to a Supreme Court version of the survey.

The sample was 59.9% female and 40.1% male and consisted of 20.2% Black, 0.8% Native American, 4.2% Latino/Hispanic, .6% Filipino, 2.1% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 69.9% White respondents (the remaining 2.3% reporting either "other" or "don't know"). The sample ranged in age from 18 to 87, with the median age of 43. In addition, 1.4% of the sample completed less than eight grade, 3.6% completed some high school, 17.1% graduated high school, 16.9% had some college, 2.7% completed trade school following high school, 11.9% were 2-year college graduates, 27.3% graduated from a 4-year college, and 19.2% had some postgraduate education. These sample characteristics were consistent with patterns observed in other Cook County RDD samples (Metropolitan Chicago Information Center, 1997).

Reactions Under No Threat

Participants were randomly assigned to respond to either a Supreme Court or a state referendum² version of the survey. Two procedures were used to ensure a range of responses on procedural fairness measures and to increase generalizability across procedural domains. Participants were asked to provide assessments of the procedural fairness of the Supreme Court or a state referendum for deciding important policy questions, without any reference to specific policy content (i.e., under no threat to their moral mandates). For example, participants were asked, "Do you think the procedures of the Supreme Court [a state referenda] are a fair or unfair way to important public policy decisions?" "How much do you trust or distrust the Supreme Court [a state referendum] to decide important public policy questions?" and "How biased or unbiased is the Supreme Court [a state referendum] as a procedure for making decisions about important public policy questions?" Participants' degree of moral mandate across three different public policy domains (civil rights for homosexuals, abortion, and public services for illegal immigrants) also was assessed. Policy issues were presented to participants in three different orders; no effects for order emerged.

Operationalizing moral mandate. Participants' strength of moral mandates also was assessed in the first survey. Moral mandate was operationally defined as partici-

pants' attitude position within each domain weighted by the moral importance that they attached to this position. Specifically, attitude extremity and direction within each policy domain was tapped with 3 items measured on bipolar 7-point scales (-3 to +3). Moral importance and certainty were measured on 1 to 7 scales. Each participant's average importance score was multiplied by their extremity score to yield a moral mandate measure that ranged from *strongly against the change and morally important* to *strongly for the change and morally important*—in short, a measure of attitude strength combined with moral importance. Although this strategy yielded the appropriate bipolar scale that weighted extremity by importance, multiplying scale values could have the impact of also multiplicatively increasing measurement error. To correct for this potential problem, the resulting score was divided by 7, which returned the measure to a 7-point scale (i.e., -3 to +3, the original scale of measurement).

Reactions Under Threat

At the end of the first survey, an appointment was scheduled minimally 2 to 3 weeks later for the second interview that tapped participants' reactions under conditions of threat to specific moral mandates. According to the value protection model, even imagining a challenge to a moral mandate should lead people to respond with moral outrage and cleansing. Therefore, the second interview session began by presenting participants with a specific policy outcome in one of the three policy domains (presented in three different orders across participants). Within the homosexual civil rights domain, participants were told,

First I want you to take a moment and imagine that a referendum passed today [or the Supreme Court ruled today] that homosexuals should be granted full protection against discrimination. In other words, what if a vote were held in Illinois [or the Supreme Court ruled today] that decided that homosexuals could not be legally denied housing, jobs, or the benefits of marriage on the basis of their sexual preference?

In the abortion policy domain, participants were asked to consider that a state referendum passed or that the Supreme Court ruled today that abortion would no longer be legal in Illinois. In the immigration policy domain, participants were asked to consider that it was decided today that children of illegal immigrants could legally attend public schools. Thinking about these possible outcomes should have posed a context-specific threat (respectively) to participants with an antihomosexual civil rights moral mandate, a pro-choice moral mandate, or an anti-immigration moral mandate.

After being asked to think about a specific policy outcome, participants were then asked for their reactions to it. Measures included a four-item scale to tap perceived outcome fairness ($\alpha = .82$ to $.90$ across domains; e.g., “To what extent do you think this outcome would be fair or unfair?”), a three-item moral outrage measure ($\alpha = .68$ to $.72$ across domains; e.g., “How angry would you be about this outcome?” “Would you accept or reject this outcome as the final word on the issue?”), and a single-item direct assessment of the procedural fairness of either the state referendum or Supreme Court decision (“Do you think the procedures of the Supreme Court [a state referendum] are a fair or unfair way to make this kind of decision?”).³

RESULTS

Do people with moral mandates derogate procedures under threat? It was hypothesized that strength of moral mandate within a given domain would not be correlated with procedural fairness judgments when moral mandates were not under either real or imagined threat. In contrast, participants were predicted to derogate the fairness of these same procedures when a moral mandate was threatened. Results supported this hypothesis. As can be seen in Table 1, when there was no threat to perceivers’ moral mandate, judgments of procedural fairness and moral mandate were uncorrelated (see columns 4 to 8 at rows 1 to 3).⁴ However, when a judgment of procedural fairness was collected in the context of a threat to a moral mandate, strength of moral mandate that was threatened was significantly related to a corresponding devaluation of procedural fairness (see the bold correlations in columns 10, 13, and 16).

To put this hypothesis to an even stronger test, moral mandate and prethreat judgments of procedural fairness were used in a hierarchical regression to predict assessments of procedural fairness under threat (see Table 2 for more detail). All the prethreat judgments of procedural justice (bias, trust, representativeness, voice, and the overall judgment of procedural fairness) were entered as a first block, moral mandate was subsequently entered on a second block, and the interaction of procedural justice and moral mandate was entered as a third block⁵ to predict perceptions of procedural fairness under conditions of threat to moral mandates about civil rights, abortion, and immigration, respectively. Even when controlling for prethreat judgments of procedural fairness, moral mandate explained significant variance in postthreat judgments of procedural fairness, contributing between 6% and 13% additional explained variance across policy domains. Not surprisingly, given the independence of judgments of procedural fairness and

moral mandate under no threat, entering moral mandate on the first step did not alter the relative amounts of explained variance attributed to either class of variables (procedural fairness or moral mandate). Of importance, the effects of moral mandate were not qualified by prethreat judgments of procedural fairness—none of the interactions between procedural fairness and moral mandate were significant.

In sum, results supported Hypothesis 1 across all three policy domains: Having a strong moral mandate led people to devalue procedural fairness under conditions of threat to that mandate, a finding that was not qualified by whether they thought these procedures were fair or unfair ways to make important policy decisions when asked in a nonthreatening context.

What shapes perceptions of outcome fairness and moral outrage under threat? The second hypothesis predicted that judgments of outcome fairness and moral outrage would be shaped primarily, if not exclusively, by whether a moral mandate was rejected or supported and that the relationship between moral mandates and perceptions of outcome fairness and moral outrage would be independent of prethreat judgments of procedural fairness. Results also supported this hypothesis.

The expected relationships between moral mandate and perceived outcome fairness and moral outrage were observed in each policy context (see the bold correlations in columns 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 17). Strength of a threatened moral mandate was correlated with high moral outrage and low levels of perceived outcome fairness (with r s ranging in magnitude from $.53$ to $.75$).

Hierarchical regression also was used to test whether moral mandate explained significant unique variance in outcome fairness and moral outrage, after controlling for prethreat judgments of procedural fairness (see Table 2 for detail). Moral mandate explained between 30% and 53% of unique variance in outcome fairness judgments and between 28% and 40% of unique variance in moral outrage across policy domains. Prethreat assessments of procedural fairness did not explain any significant variance in perceived outcome fairness or moral outrage, and neither did prethreat judgments of procedural fairness qualify the effects of moral mandate on these variables. In other words, participants’ reactions to thinking about the outcome in each policy domain were completely independent of whether they thought the Supreme Court or a state referendum was generally fair or unfair ways to make important policy decisions.

Previous research has tended to find much stronger correlations between procedural and outcome fairness than those observed in the present study between

TABLE 1: Correlations of Moral Mandates With Procedural Fairness Under No Threat and With Outcome Fairness, Procedural Fairness, and Moral Outrage Under Conditions of Imagined Threat (N = 521).

	<i>No Threat to Moral Mandates</i>								<i>Threat to Moral Mandates</i>								
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>
Mean	1.22	-0.10	1.03	1.26	-1.33	0.55	-0.43	0.62	1.35	1.27	-1.59	-1.37	-0.09	0.29	0.96	1.00	-1.22
SD	1.18	1.32	1.63	1.97	1.54	1.87	1.96	2.18	1.92	1.81	1.53	2.05	2.12	1.79	1.96	1.94	1.57
Pre-threat measures																	
Moral mandate																	
1. Civil rights	1.00	.33**	-.26**	-.01	-.01	-.06	.02	-.01	-.55**	-.25**	.53**	-.29**	-.16**	-.28**	-.20**	-.04	.14**
2. Abortion		1.00	.13**	.03	-.03	-.03	-.01	.08	.42**	.22**	-.36**	-.75**	-.35**	.64**	.05	.04	-.07
3. Immigration			1.00	.06	-.01	.08	.04	.03	-.29**	-.06	.23**	.12	.03	-.11	-.66**	-.22**	.52**
4. Procedural fairness				1.00	.13**	.41**	-.12**	.53**	.06	.27**	-.07	-.01	.22**	-.04	.00	.30**	-.08
5. Voice					1.00	.20**	-.02	.13**	-.03	.06	-.04	.05	.10	-.06	.07	.08	.00
6. Representativeness						1.00	-.19**	.47**	.00	.19**	-.01	.00	.19**	-.01	.01	.20**	-.04
7. Bias							1.00	-.21**	-.04	-.18**	.03	.04	-.21**	-.07	.02	-.08	.05
8. Trust								1.00	.06	.35**	-.11	-.11	.23**	.02	.03	.08	-.05
Post-threat measures																	
Civil rights																	
9. Outcome fairness									1.00	.46**	-.76**	-.43**	-.15**	.34**	.25**	.15**	-.22**
10. Procedural fairness										1.00	-.43**	-.22**	.27**	.08	.10	.54**	-.20**
11. Moral outrage											1.00	.41**	.14**	-.29**	-.19**	-.13**	.24**
Abortion																	
12. Outcome fairness												1.00	.46**	-.72**	-.05	.01	.05
13. Procedural fairness													1.00	-.52**	.01	.41**	-.08
14. Moral outrage														1.00	.08	-.07	.02
Immigration																	
15. Outcome fairness															1.00	.40**	-.72**
16. Procedural fairness																1.00	-.47**
17. Moral outrage																	1.00

NOTE: Higher scores on the moral mandate measures indicated a moral mandate against the policy change (i.e., higher level of threat in the threat condition or anti-civil rights, pro-choice, or anti-public services for illegal immigrants), and low scores reflected a moral mandate for the policy change (i.e., low levels of threat or pro-civil rights, pro-life, and pro-public services for illegal immigrants). High scores on other measures represented higher levels of the named variable. Bold correlations reflect the crucial tests of the hypotheses.

** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2: R^2 Change at Steps in Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Reactions Under Threat as a Function of Prethreat Judgments of Procedural Fairness (PF), Moral Mandate (MM), and the PF \times MM Interaction ($N = 521$).

Criterion	R^2 Change		
	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
	Procedural Fairness	Moral Mandate	PF \times MM
Civil rights			
Procedural fairness	.14*	.06*	.00
Outcome fairness	.01	.30*	.01
Moral outrage	.02	.30*	.01
Abortion			
Procedural fairness	.10*	.13*	.00
Outcome fairness	.01	.53*	.00
Moral outrage	.01	.40*	.00
Immigration			
Procedural fairness	.14*	.06*	.00
Outcome fairness	.01	.43*	.00
Moral outrage	.01	.29*	.00

* $p < .01$.

prethreat judgments of procedural fairness and subsequent judgments of outcome fairness. However, many of these studies take a cross-sectional approach and have not necessarily explored whether third variables, such as moral mandates, might determine whether outcomes and procedures are seen as fair. The value protection model predicts that moral mandates are causally related to perceptions of both outcome and procedural fairness and that, therefore, there will be a weak relationship between how fair procedures are perceived to be under no threat to a moral mandate (or low outcome salience). However, procedural and outcome fairness should be correlated under threat (when outcomes are salient). Judgments of procedural and outcome fairness are predicted to be the result of a third variable under threat: whether outcomes match the perceiver's moral mandate. As expected, although prethreat judgments of procedural fairness were unassociated with outcome fairness judgments under threat, judgments of procedural fairness under threat and outcome fairness were much more strongly correlated (r s ranging from .40 to .46, all at $p < .001$; see rows 10, 13, 15 and columns 9, 12, and 15 of Table 1; results here are more consistent with the correlations observed in previous research). Taken together, these results indicated that moral mandates predicted not only judgments of procedural fairness, outcome fairness, and moral outrage but also provided an alternative account for the relationship between outcome fairness and procedural fairness than that one is necessarily the cause of the other.

In sum, perceptions of procedural fairness, outcome fairness, and moral outrage were shaped by moral mandates, results that were not qualified by whether people

felt the procedure was generally a fair or unfair way to make important policy decisions.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study supported the value protection model prediction that even imagining a threat to a moral mandate is associated with significant and important effects on perceived procedural fairness, outcome fairness, and moral outrage. When people's moral mandates were not under threat, their judgments of the procedural fairness of the Supreme Court or a state referendum were completely independent of their position on public policies related to civil rights for homosexuals, abortion, or services for the families of illegal immigrants. However, when a moral mandate was threatened, people responded by devaluing the fairness of the procedure that was associated with the potential threat, anger, and other components of moral outrage. Results supported the predictions of the value protection model across all three policy domains (civil rights for homosexuals, abortion, and public services for the families of illegal immigrants) and across two different procedures (a Supreme Court decision and a state referendum).

Although considerable research has indicated that fair procedures increase the likelihood that people will accept nonpreferred outcomes (the fair process effect), the results of the present study indicated that when a preferred outcome is tied to a moral mandate, the relative fairness of procedures does little to offset the sense of injustice that results if the moral mandate is threatened or rejected or the sense of justice done if the mandate is upheld. In short, when people have a moral mandate about an outcome, any means justifies the mandated end. Similarly, fair procedures do not ameliorate the sense of injustice people experience when a morally mandated outcome is threatened or rejected.

Implications

One implication of these results is that moral mandates may go beyond being strong moral guidelines that allow people to occasionally demonstrate to themselves and others that they have an authentic moral point of view. People's attachment to moral mandates could pose a serious threat to social and political stability. When large numbers of people have opposing moral mandates, crosscutting societal cleavages could arise that could completely undermine group stability and threaten institutional control, especially if people feel that their sense of personal identity is under threat. Taken to the logical extreme, moral mandates are likely to provide the foundation and justification for both mild and extreme forms of civil disobedience (e.g., peaceful or violent protest, terrorism, or revolution).

Although moral mandates may present a potential threat to group stability, there nonetheless may be prosocial benefits associated with people's commitments to moral mandates. For example, people's personal identity needs expressed through moral mandates may provide the motivational impetus for social movements aimed at accomplishing positive social change, such as seeking broader human rights, a clean environment, or solutions to problems such as racial profiling. In addition, although the primary psychological function of defending core moral values from threat is to protect one's sense of personal identity, the defense of moral values also could provide protection from exploitation on the part of malevolent authorities. Some observers have expressed concern that authorities can and do use the appearance of fair procedures to placate the masses without addressing legitimate claims (e.g., Greenberg, 1990; Haney, 1991). The results of the present study suggest that people use standards besides the appearance of fair procedures to decide whether something is fair or unfair. Hollow commitments to fairness in the form of artfully created procedures will do little to appease people when they have a clear moral standard (see also Van den Bos, Bruins, Wilke, & Dronkert, 1999).

It should be noted that people might sometimes also have strong moral mandates about procedures. For example, recent research indicates that a strong endorsement of the belief that people should be treated consistently (typically considered a procedural justice concept) predicted opposition to affirmative action programs that allowed disadvantaged minorities to be evaluated by different standards than the majority, even after controlling for prejudice (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998). Although not cast in moral mandate terms, the results of Bobocel et al. indicate that values associated with fair treatment also can have an important impact on when people will oppose the actions of institutions and authorities.

Methodological Notes

This study was designed to maximize the generalizability of its results by using a representative sample, testing hypotheses across a number of policy domains and procedures, and focusing on salient issues of concern to many citizens. The study design nonetheless has some limitations. For example, although people's real moral mandates and beliefs about the fairness of the Supreme Court and state referendum were assessed, participants responded to hypothetical rather than actual policy outcomes. That said, the value protection model proposes that people will be roused to defend moral mandates just upon thinking about a possible threat. Real threats to moral mandates should arouse even stronger cognitive, affective, and behavioral

responses, not weaker ones—a hypothesis born out by recent research that examined the relative power of moral mandates and pre-raid judgments of procedural fairness to predict post-raid and post-resolution judgments of outcome and procedural fairness in the Elián Gonzalez case (Skitka & Mullen, 2001).

In addition, by using a longitudinal panel design, we have a much clearer picture of cause and effect than would have been possible if a cross-sectional approach to testing hypotheses about how people reason about fairness had been used (as is often the case in justice research). Longitudinal panel designs allow researchers to meet two of the necessary (but not sufficient) criteria for determining causality: cause before effect and covariation. We can have much higher confidence about whether moral mandates are causal contenders than we would have from a cross-sectional design that could have only established whether strength of moral mandate covaried with procedural fairness, outcome fairness, or moral outrage but that could not have disentangled proposed causal contenders from their effects.

Finally, because participants acted as their own control group, there is evidence that the observed results were due to situationally specific moral mandates rather than individual differences in dogmatism or cognitive rigidity. Having a moral mandate in one domain was only weakly correlated with having a moral mandate in another. Therefore, participants with a moral mandate in one context (e.g., abortion) were the nonmandated group in another context (e.g., immigration). Although future research should measure and control for individual differences in dogmatism to more conclusively establish that the results observed here still hold when controlling for stable individual differences in cognitive or moral rigidity, the method of the present study (using people with a moral mandate in one policy domain as the nonmandated group in another policy domain) suggests that the results observed here were not due to a stable individual differences in moral rigidity.

Finally, although the primary focus of the present study was to test hypotheses about personal and social identity and their relative effects on the justice reasoning process, additional research also will be needed to more clearly establish that the moral mandate construct adds unique explanatory power beyond current measures of strong attitudes. Because moral mandates are hypothesized to have a privileged status because of their ties to the self, they should theoretically be more resistant to persuasion or change than equally strong, but nonmoral, attitudes.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the cognitive and motivational underpinnings of how people decide whether something is fair

or unfair is critical for understanding how to maintain social cooperation and avoid political disengagement or sociopolitical upheaval. The goal of the present study was to test the theoretical possibility that personal identity concerns play an important role in how people decide whether something is fair or unfair and to explore how these concerns relate to people's support or opposition of otherwise fair procedures, perceptions of outcome fairness, and moral outrage. The broader objective will be to eventually develop an integrative theory that can specify when people's concerns about justice will be determined more by needs related to each of James's (1892/1948) three different aspects of the self: the material, social, or spiritual and moral.

NOTES

1. The response rate was lower than observed in some telephone surveys because respondents were asked up front whether they would be willing to participate in a two-part survey that involved answering some questions now as well as making an appointment to respond to some additional questions 2 to 3 weeks from now. Once participants agreed to participate, sample retention was high (98%) across contacts.

2. Because a state referendum was less likely to be a familiar procedure for participants, participants were also told that "a state referendum is when a specific issue is put before the people to decide by a vote rather than having elected or appointed officials make the decision."

3. A complete copy of all survey items is available from the author upon request.

4. The Supreme Court was viewed to be modestly more biased than were state referenda, but no other between procedure differences were significant. Results were therefore reported collapsing across procedure.

5. A procedural justice component score based on a principal components analysis of the procedural justice items (and calculating the component score using the weighted regression method) was used as the procedural justice multiplier for the interaction term in these analyses.

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