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Motivated cognition and fairness: Insights, integration, and creating a path forward

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INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Motivated Cognition and Fairness: Insights, Integration, and Creating a Path Forward

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How do individuals form fairness perceptions? This question has been central to the fairness literature since its inception, sparking a plethora of theories and a burgeoning volume of research. To date, the answer to this question has been predicated on the assumption that fairness perceptions are *subjective* (i.e., "in the eye of the beholder"). This assumption is shared with motivated cognition approaches, which highlight the subjective nature of perceptions and the importance of viewing individuals arriving at those perceptions as *active* and *motivated* processors of information. Further, the motivated cognition literature has other key insights that have been less explicitly paralleled in the fairness literature, including how different goals (e.g., accuracy, directional) can influence how individuals process information and arrive at their perceptions. In this integrative conceptual review, we demonstrate how interpreting extant theory and research related to the formation of fairness perceptions through the lens of motivated cognition can deepen our understanding of fairness, including how individuals' goals and motivations can influence their subjective perceptions of fairness. We show how this approach can provide integration as well as generate new insights into fairness processes. We conclude by highlighting the implications that applying a motivated cognition perspective can have for the fairness literature and by providing a research agenda to guide the literature moving forward.

Keywords: motivated cognition, fairness, justice, motives, perception

Something is 'fair' . . . because some person or persons believe it to be.
—Cropanzano, Goldman, and Benson (2005, p. 63).

Are our social judgments fully determined by our social knowledge, or are they also influenced by our feelings and desires?
—Kunda (1999, p. 1)

Fairness is a fundamental concern for individuals and organizations with important implications for a wide range of outcomes (cf. Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013; Rupp, Shao, Jones, & Liao, 2014). One of the most central questions in the fairness literature has examined how people perceive fairness (cf. Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001).

Researchers have tackled this question from a variety of angles, sparking a voluminous number of studies and an impressive array of theories. Whereas some theories have focused on why people care about fairness (e.g., instrumental, relational, and deontic models), others have emphasized the processes underlying the formation of fairness perceptions (e.g., equity theory, fairness theory, and fairness heuristic theory). Despite the diversity of approaches, research in this area has been predicated on two key assumptions. First, fairness is in the "eye of the beholder"—that is, fairness is a subjective experience that depends on the individual(s) involved and how they perceive fairness issues (Greenberg, Bies, & Eskew, 1991). Second, fairness can be a motivated phenomenon in which individual and environmental factors influence perceptions and responses (Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001).

As the literature has evolved and permeated other fields, these key tenets have often taken a less prominent role, sometimes fading into the background. However, numerous scholars have recently called for a refocusing of attention on the subjectivity of fairness perceptions (e.g., Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Siegel, Bobocel, & Liu, 2015; Guo, Rupp, Weiss, & Trougakos, 2011; Rupp, 2011; Shapiro, 2001; Shapiro, 2010; Weiss & Rupp, 2011; Whiteside & Barclay, 2015).

We aim to make two main theoretical contributions. First, we provide an integrative review of critical issues related to the formation of fairness perceptions, including why individuals care about fairness (i.e., fairness motives), the processes underlying

when, how, and why individuals process fairness information (e.g., automatic vs. controlled processing), and how affect (e.g., moods, emotions) and ones' perspective (e.g., recipient, observer, or actor) can influence fairness perceptions. Second, we examine how applying a motivated cognition perspective can enrich our understanding of the above questions and provide deeper insights into the subjectivity of fairness perceptions. Further, we demonstrate how a motivated cognition perspective can provide an integrative framework that helps reconcile the various theories and findings that have emerged in the literature. Specifically, theories in this domain have different perspectives on how fairness perceptions are generated (e.g., by automatic vs. controlled processes) and how perceptions can be influenced by various motives. We propose that recognizing the common foundation provided by a motivated cognition perspective can synthesize findings, highlight synergies across seemingly disconnected lines of research, and generally enhance our understanding of fairness perceptions.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the key tenets of the motivated cognition approach. Next, we address the question of why a motivated cognition approach should be applied to the fairness literature and why this may be the ideal time to integrate these literatures. This is followed by a review of key questions in the contemporary fairness literature relating to the formation of fairness perceptions and a discussion of how a motivated cognition approach can provide insights and integration for these questions. Finally, we discuss the implications that this approach has for the fairness literature and advance an agenda for future research.

What Is Motivated Cognition?

Motivated cognition (also termed motivated reasoning) approaches are based on the fundamental assumption that people should be viewed as active and motivated processors of information (Kunda, 1990). Within this context, motivation ("motives") refers to "any wish, desire, or preference that concerns the outcome of a given reasoning task" (Kunda, 1990, p. 480). These motives can initiate cognitive processes as well as influence the type and the nature of the processing that occurs (Dunning, Kunda, & Murray, 1999).

There is general agreement that motives fall into two classes—directional and nondirectional (Kruglanski, 1996; Kunda, 1990). Whereas directional motives are aimed at reaching a specific conclusion, nondirectional motives are often geared toward obtaining the most accurate conclusion possible (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Both directional and nondirectional motives can guide cognitive processes by influencing the choice of beliefs and strategies that individuals use to support the desired conclusion (e.g., by initiating recall, information searches). As an example, a directional motive might focus on beliefs and strategies that allow people to see themselves in a positive light while the nondirectional motive of accuracy relies on beliefs and strategies that are likely to yield a "correct" conclusion. Given the importance of directional and nondirectional motives for motivated cognition, we provide an overview of these motives before examining how (and why) a motivated cognition perspective can be applied to the fairness literature.

Nondirectional (Accuracy) Versus Directional Motives

Although different nondirectional motives have been explored (e.g., desire for clarity, closure; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), the vast majority of research on nondirectional motives have emphasized accuracy (e.g., Kunda, 1990). Accuracy motives focus on arriving at the most precise, appropriate, or "correct" conclusion, regardless of what the conclusion may be (Kunda, 1990). When activated, accuracy motives encourage people to spend more cognitive effort carefully processing information, attending to relevant information, and using more complex rules (Kunda, 1990). However, being *motivated* to be accurate does not guarantee that people *will* be more accurate (cf. Kruglanski & Freund, 1983).

In contrast to accuracy motives, directional motives encourage people to use strategies that allow them to reach a desired conclusion (see Dunning, 1999 for a review). However, individuals are not at liberty to arrive at any conclusion that they wish; rather, their ability to arrive at a desired conclusion is constrained by whether they can provide a seemingly rational justification for the conclusion (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). This desire to maintain "an illusion of objectivity" can influence the way that individuals process information. For example, they can selectively draw on memories or information (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999) or creatively combine knowledge to construct beliefs to support their desired conclusion (Kunda, 1990), both processes that may occur outside of conscious awareness.

Notably, accuracy and directional motives are not orthogonal and the presence of an accuracy goal does not "switch off" the motivational processes linked to directional goals. Rather, a directional motive can combine with an accuracy motive thereby encouraging people to more deeply process information while simultaneously searching more arduously for evidence that can support their desired conclusion. At the same time, one's ability to reach a desired conclusion is constrained by the availability of evidence to support that conclusion (or the presence of irrefutable evidence against it). That is, accuracy can also constrain the influence of directional motives, such that people "will believe undesirable evidence if they cannot refute it, but they will refute it if they can" (Kunda, 1990, p. 490).

Why Should a Motivated Cognition Perspective Be Applied to Fairness and Why Now?

Within the fairness literature, the pendulum is currently swinging toward a renewed appreciation of the subjectivity of fairness perceptions. This involves a move (a) from the consequences of fairness and toward an emphasis on its antecedents (i.e., treating fairness as a dependent variable), (b) from conditions that have fostered an emphasis on the objective rules of *justice* and toward the subjectivity of *fairness*, and (c) from increasing fragmentation of the theories and toward integration. This state of transition has created the ideal time for the integration of motivated cognition into the fairness literature. In this section, we outline these changing conditions, highlight how a motivated cognition perspective can respond to and shape these paradigmatic shifts, and examine how this perspective can facilitate the integration of theories and findings within this complex literature.

Riding the Fifth Wave of Fairness: Emerging Research on Fairness as a Dependent Variable

In their historical review, Colquitt, Greenberg, and Zapata-Phelan (2005) noted that the literature has been characterized by

four major waves, (a) a distributive justice wave (i.e., the fairness of outcomes, such as pay; Adams, 1965), (b) a procedural justice wave (i.e., the fairness of procedures used to derive the outcomes; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), (c) an interactional justice wave (i.e., the fairness of interpersonal treatment; Bies & Moag, 1986), and (d) an integration wave (i.e., examining the dimensionality of justice and interplay between the justice dimensions; Colquitt, 2001).[1] Notably, these waves have all focused on the consequences of fairness (cf. Brockner et al., 2015). However, there is increasing attention on the *antecedents* of fairness, which highlight the psychological states and motivations that can affect individuals' fairness perceptions (i.e., "fairness as a dependent variable"; Folger & Skarlicki, 2001). Brockner et al. (2015) have termed this the "fifth wave" of fairness research. Given that a central focus of the motivated cognitions literature is on *how* motives influence cognition (Kunda, 1990), we propose that the increasing attention on the antecedents of fairness provides an opportunity as well as a point of assimilation for the introduction of the principles of motivated cognition into the fairness literature. That is, a motivated cognition perspective can enhance our understanding of the antecedents and processes underlying fairness perceptions.

Subjectivity of Fairness: Moving Beyond Assessments of Objective Criteria

Three significant shifts in the literature indicate the re-emergence of an emphasis on the subjectivity of fairness perceptions. First, traditionally there has been a strong focus on identifying the various justice rules and criteria that people can use when evaluating fairness (e.g., distributive rules, such as equity, equality, and need, Deutsch, 1975; procedural rules, such as consistency, Leventhal, 1980; interactional rules, such as truthfulness, Bies & Moag, 1986). However, with the emergence of person-centric perspectives, researchers are now calling for more emphasis on how individuals subjectively perceive and experience fairness rather than how objective criteria are subjectively filled (e.g., Guo et al., 2011; Rupp, 2011).

Second, despite the ubiquity of *indirect* scales that assess the degree to which a justice rule or criteria has been met (e.g., Colquitt, 2001), there have been concerns about whether this type of measurement can capture the "depth and richness of individuals' justice experiences" (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009a, p. 491) and whether these measures reflect the way that individuals form fairness perceptions. For example, questions have been raised about how individuals assess and aggregate these rules to form fairness perceptions, whether other rules should be considered, whether individuals are motivated to use these rules, and what drives these assessments (for a recent discussion, see Cropanzano, Fortin, & Kirk, 2015). As researchers seek to answer these questions and begin to adopt new measures (e.g., overall justice; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009a), it is important to consider subjectivity in these processes.

Third, the contemporary literature has typically used the terms justice and fairness synonymously and only recently have these constructs been clearly differentiated (cf. Goldman & Cropanzano, 2015). Whereas "justice" reflects whether a set of normative rules or standards has been adhered to, "fairness" reflects subjective and evaluative judgments about rules and standards, with an emphasis

on how individuals' motives, needs, and desires subjectively influence their evaluative processes and experiences.[2] Given emerging empirical studies showing the dissimilar nature of these constructs (e.g., Ambrose & Schminke, 2009a; Kim & Leung, 2007), a number of researchers have called for theoretical and empirical distinctions to be made between these constructs (e.g., Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Cugueró-Escofet & Rosanas, 2013; Goldman & Cropanzano, 2015). We argue that a motivated cognition perspective is particularly well suited for improving our understanding of the subjectivity of *fairness*.

A Burgeoning and Complex Literature: The Risks of Silos and Fragmentation

As fairness research has developed, the literature has been both blessed and vexed by the plethora of theories that have emerged. On the one hand, the surfeit of theories has provided a deep understanding of core questions. For example, several theories address why people care about fairness (e.g., instrumental, relational, and deontic models) and several more examine the processes underlying how people assess fairness (e.g., equity theory, fairness heuristic theory, and fairness theory). On the other hand, the presence of differing perspectives for the same phenomenon can create confusion, a lack of cohesion, conflicting findings, and the possibility that "opposing models might apply in different situations" (Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001, p. 173). Further, despite sharing a common foundation, the theories are often used in ways that focus on differences rather than similarities. Indeed, the literature is developing "silos" in which researchers are not fully acknowledging the research associated with a different theory, are failing to acknowledge how disparate theories may yield different insights, and/or are not explicitly recognizing why one particular theory is more appropriate than another for a specific research question. The result is an increasingly complex and fragmented literature. In this review, we argue that motivated cognition can help distill these theories to a more foundational framework, while recognizing their commonalities and distinctions. Although each theory provides a piece of the puzzle, adopting a motivated cognition perspective can help create a broader overview by generating more generalized insights and unity to the field.

The Case for Motivated Cognitions: Fairness as a Motivated Phenomenon

Applying a motivated cognition perspective to the fairness literature is a natural fit given its shared emphasis on subjectivity and

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[1] Colquitt's (2001) influential article recognized the separate dimensionality of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice as well as further delineated interactional justice into interpersonal justice (i.e., treatment reflecting respect and dignity; Bies & Moag, 1986) and informational justice (i.e., providing an adequate explanation; Greenberg, 1993).
[2] To maintain consistency with the literature, we will often use the phrasing used by original studies, even though it may not be reflective of this distinction. For example, the measure of overall "justice" (cf. Ambrose & Schminke, 2009) is more reflective of "fairness" because it taps into individuals' subjective assessments of fairness without explicitly examining justice rules. In our own arguments, we aim to use the terms fairness and justice with this distinction in mind.

strong theoretical foundation for understanding how motivation can shape perceptions. In fact, to some extent, this perspective is already embedded in the fairness literature. Although few studies have explicitly drawn upon this perspective, numerous studies have implicitly used a motivated cognition perspective. In the next section, we examine key questions in contemporary fairness research. We demonstrate how an explicit and more systematic application and appreciation of the motivated cognition perspective can yield new insights and a path forward for fairness researchers.

Critical Research Questions in the Fairness Literature: Understanding the Influence of Motives, Processing, Affect, and Perspectives

Fairness researchers have examined a number of important research questions related to the formation of fairness perceptions. Within each of these research domains, however, "silos" have developed as researchers tackle these questions using different perspectives and without always acknowledging alternative perspectives. In this section, we examine four main research areas that have emerged in the literature. We highlight the key insights within these domains and how applying a motivated cognition perspective to these questions can broaden those insights. Given the plethora of theories in the fairness literature and their relevance across multiple questions, we have chosen to selectively highlight exemplar theories and studies. We begin by examining why people care about fairness with a focus on instrumental, relational, and moral fairness motives. Using uncertainty management theory, we examine the interplay between these motives and integrate them with the accuracy motive from the motivated cognition literature. Next, we explore the processes underlying fairness perceptions (i.e., controlled vs. automatic), with an emphasis on equity theory, fairness heuristic theory, uncertainty management theory, and system justification theory. We then build on this to investigate the interplay between affect and cognitions in the formation of fairness perceptions, using theories such as affect as information, affective model of justice reasoning, affect infusion model, and deontic models to guide our discussion. Finally, we examine the importance of perspective in fairness perceptions, with a focus on the observer and actor as well as the influence of beliefs (e.g., just world beliefs) and the importance of social emotions.

Research Question #1: Why Do People Care About Fairness? The Role of Motives

Given the central role of fairness motives and the breadth of this literature, several influential reviews have been offered (e.g., Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001; Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001; Gillespie & Greenberg, 2005). Typically, these reviews cluster the fairness motives into three streams: (a) instrumental, which highlights economic self-interest and control motives, (b) relational, which emphasizes belonging and esteem motives, and (c) moral, which stresses internalized moral duties and norms. In this section, we briefly review the three streams, highlight why these motives matter for fairness perceptions, and examine how these streams have been integrated. We conclude by applying a motivated cognition lens to identify novel insights and opportunities for further integration.

Instrumental motives. Within this category of motives, people can care about fairness because it gives them control over their outcomes and helps them feel confident that they will receive beneficial outcomes in the future. These instrumental motives typically reflect a self-interested perspective on fairness. For example, a consistent finding in the literature is that people find favorable outcomes to be fairer (i.e., the outcome favorability bias; Skitka, Winquist, & Hutchinson, 2003). Numerous theories have been classified into the domain of instrumental motives (for a discussion, see Cropanzano, Rupp, et al., 2001), including broadly based social exchange theories (e.g., equity-based theories; Adams, 1965), economic rationality (e.g., Brett, 1986), and the control model (e.g., Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

Relational motives. This category of motives focuses on how fairness fulfills people's need to feel good about themselves and have a sense of belonging. That is, fairness matters because it provides people with information about their relationship with the group and whether they are respected members (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988). Relational motives can have a powerful influence on what individuals perceive to be fair and how fairness information is used. For example, noninstrumental voice is a more powerful predictor of procedural fairness perceptions when the voice is granted by an in-group (vs. out-group) member (Platow et al., 2013).

Moral motives. Whereas the instrumental and relational motives have often been characterized as self-interested (cf. Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001), the moral motives category posits that individuals care about fairness because it is "the right thing to do" (e.g., Folger, 2001). That is, moral motives emphasize the importance of moral duties and norms. For example, the deontic perspective focuses on perceived "oughts" (Folger & Glerum, 2015) and "moral accountability" (Folger, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2005) whereas the "justice motive" perspective is grounded in the notion that people should get the treatment that they deserve (cf. Lerner, 1980). The moral motives approach is exemplified by research on observer reactions that illustrates that even as seemingly "unaffected" bystanders people value fairness for its own sake (e.g., Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002) and are willing to abandon their own self-interest to punish unfair decision makers (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986).

Key insights from the role of motives. While empirical support for each category of motives exists in abundance, scholars have positioned the motives as complementary rather than competing (cf. Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001). On the one hand, this has allowed research on each of the motives to proliferate, particularly for the instrumental and relational perspectives. On the other hand, this has meant that these motives are seldom tested against each other, which has obscured insights into when each motive has the most explanatory value. Instead, studies frequently draw on multiple perspectives (e.g., instrumental and relational) to support the same argument rather than testing whether or how they relate to one another. There are some notable exceptions and when these motives are jointly tested the usefulness of this perspective becomes clear. For example, Lind, Kanfer, and Earley (1990) showed that noninstrumental effects (relational motives) accounted for incremental variance in fairness perceptions beyond instrumental effects. The authors noted that "the entire range of procedural justice phenomena can be explained only if it is accepted that fairness judgments are driven both by instrumental,

informed self-interest concerns and by non-instrumental, group-value concerns" (p. 953).

However, few attempts have been made to integrate instrumental and relational motives. By contrast, research on moral motives has consistently differentiated moral motives from other fairness motives as well as clearly demonstrated the incremental predictive power of moral motives (e.g., Folger, 2001; Turillo et al., 2002). Researchers examining moral motives may have made this effort because of the later emergence of this perspective, the initial focus of this perspective on observers (as opposed to recipients), and/or an emphasis on interpersonal fairness (i.e., assigning moral blame; Folger et al., 2005).

Given that each motive can explain variance in fairness perceptions and that the motives have been said to peacefully coexist, the question becomes whether integration across motives is actually needed. Some scholars have already tried. For example, Gillespie and Greenberg (2005) advocated for a "motive hierarchy" that ranks the various motives in terms of their importance to individuals. However, these early integrative approaches do not reconcile the substantial volume of evidence for the importance of each of the motives nor do they recognize the interplay between the motives. In fact, Cropanzano, Rupp, and colleagues (2001, p. 95) pointed out that "premature integration could obscure unique insights peculiar to one perspective" and that integration may be difficult because of disparities in the underlying assumptions of each stream. However, in the 15 years since this assertion, we argue that the field has substantially matured and the literature is now in need of integration. Without integration, it is difficult to account for how the motives work together and parsimonious explanations are hindered. Further, examining the motives in isolation makes it difficult to examine the additive effects and interactions that help explain the general dynamics of motivated fairness in organizations. By focusing on each motive in (relative) isolation, we may be losing the whole by emphasizing the parts.

Integrating motives with motivated cognition. Applying a motivated cognition lens to this literature highlights the emphasis that fairness research has placed on directional motives; instrumental, relational, and moral motives can stimulate the individual to care about fairness for different reasons and guide the processing of fairness information in different ways relative to their specific emphasis (see integrative section below). By contrast, accuracy—a key motive from the motivated cognition literature—has been underemphasized or often overlooked. Instead, the term *accuracy* has been relegated to being a quality of fair procedures (cf. Colquitt, 2001; Leventhal, 1980). While research has shown that fairness perceptions can be enhanced when decision makers adhere to accuracy rules (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001), whether people are actually accurate when they make their fairness judgments, and, more importantly, whether they are *motivated* to be accurate in their fairness perceptions has received little attention.

On the one hand, it is questionable whether fairness perceptions can ever truly be "accurate" partly because it is unclear what accuracy means in this context. For example, accuracy requires the assessor to have a complete set of information about all fairness-relevant aspects, knowledge of what norms or rules to apply, and the ability to correctly weight the rules to form perceptions. Even then, the inherent subjectivity in fairness perceptions raises questions related to what normative rule is most appropriate and/or what viewpoint should be adopted; factors that are also likely to be chosen and perceived differently across individuals. On the other hand, regardless of whether individuals can be "truly" accurate, it seems plausible that people can care about accuracy as a fairness motive. For example, individuals may seek to have an accurate assessment of an event so that they can make appropriate decisions. Similarly, accuracy may combine with directional motives, such as when individuals are motivated to determine their actual standing in a group so that they can take action to improve their standing (or exit the group). In these cases, an accuracy goal may enhance the effortful processing of information while the presence of a directional goal biases one's information search.

Uncertainty management theory seems particularly relevant for explaining when and why the accuracy motive may be present in the formation of fairness perceptions (cf. van den Bos, 2001). People who are motivated to reduce uncertainties may also be motivated to be more accurate because this can enhance their ability to predict future unfairness and lessen the possibility of unpleasant surprises and disappointments. This notion has received some empirical support. For example, Ambrose, Harland, and Kulik (1991) found that people who were given high control over an outcome focused on this outcome when forming their fairness perceptions. However, people who had less control over an outcome (i.e., more uncertainty) incorporated additional information into their fairness perceptions (i.e., the outcomes that others received). This suggests that uncertainty can trigger a more thorough search for information, and arguably activate accuracy motives. However, it is also possible that individuals can be less motivated for accuracy or less able to engage in accuracy under certain circumstances (e.g., when they lack coping resources; Lazarus, 1991).

There are also likely to be some instances in which accuracy and directional goals conflict. Using the example above, although individuals may be motivated to make an accurate assessment of their standing in a group, this may also be self-threatening (e.g., if they have low standing). Thus, they may also be motivated to engage in self-protective behaviors to maintain their relational needs. This suggests that directional goals may constrain the influence of accuracy goals on processing, with important moderators determining when each motive is likely to be most influential. This also implies that it is critical to examine not only how these motives activate processing but also how they influence how this processing unfolds.

Taken together, by introducing nondirectional motives and facilitating the integration of the current fairness motives, it is clear that a motivated cognition approach can deepen our understanding of why people care about fairness. Further, using motivated cognitions as a foundation allows distinctions between the motives to be maintained, while also providing parsimony for the effects. Applying a motivated cognition lens also raises important questions, such as what happens when motives are in conflict, how do these motives interact with each other, and how does this interplay between the motives influence how fairness information is processed? We return to some of these questions in our integrative discussion below. For now, we shift our focus to examining how fairness information is processed.

Research Question #2: How Do People Form Fairness Perceptions? The Role of Controlled Versus Automatic Processing

Theories within the fairness literature have diverged in their emphasis on the processes through which fairness perceptions are

formed. Whereas some theories emphasize the formation of fairness perceptions through a careful, effortful, and conscious consideration and evaluation of information (i.e., controlled or systematic processing), other theories suggest that fairness perceptions can rely on more readily available information for quick judgments (i.e., automatic processing). Further, some researchers have noted that the various fairness theories can be categorized by where they fall on a continuum from controlled to automatic processing (e.g., Bobocel, McCline, & Folger, 1997; Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001). However, as Cropanzano, Byrne, et al (p. 171). noted in 2001, "researchers have not adequately considered the implications of this continuum" and this statement remains almost as true today as it was over a decade ago. Although studies examining the formation of fairness perceptions have emphasized both controlled and automatic approaches, few studies have used an integrated approach that considers the interaction between automatic and controlled processes (for an exception, see our discussion of fairness theory below). In this section, we review insights from each approach, identify areas in need of attention and places for integration, and consider the opportunities highlighted by motivated cognitions.

Key insights from controlled processing approaches. Controlled processing approaches typically treat fairness perceptions as the result of deliberate processing, often based on the evaluation of justice rules or criteria (e.g., German, Fortin, & Read, 2016). For example, equity theory suggests that people compare the ratio of their own inputs/outputs to a referent other's inputs/outputs ratio to determine if they are being treated fairly (Adams, 1965) while procedural justice rules (e.g., consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, ethicality, and representation) also require recall or processing of an event or entity (Leventhal, 1980).

Support for the importance of controlled processing abounds in the literature. In many cases, studies have emphasized rule-bound explanations for the emergence of perceptions (e.g., Leventhal's criteria, equity theory) and have manipulated one or more rules (e.g., Lind et al., 1990; Taylor, Tracy, Renard, Harrison, & Carroll, 1995) or elements of a situation (e.g., Thibaut & Walker, 1975) to examine how this influences evaluations of fairness. Further, studies overwhelmingly focus on the recipient, but actors and observers can also use cognitively oriented judgment processes, applying justice rules to generate fairness perceptions. Skarlicki and Rupp (2010), for example, examined how engaging in rational versus experiential processing after observing another's mistreatment influences observers' retributive tendencies (see also: Research Question #4: How Does Perspective Influence Fairness Perceptions?).

Finally, the literature tends to emphasize one rule or one norm at a time; for example, voice may be given or taken away, rules may be applied consistently or not. However, as Cropanzano et al. (2015, p. 326) point out, people may apply different rules at different times, they may weigh the rules differently over time, or they may simply not "consciously examine the full range" of justice rules. This last point takes us to research on what happens when individuals are unwilling or unable to process all the relevant fairness information in a given context. That is, when people use an automatic process to form their perceptions of fairness.

Key insights from automatic processing approaches. Individuals are not always motivated to systematically process fairness information (German et al., 2016). Instead, they may use automatic processing, which occurs outside of awareness, involves less effort, and uses relatively few cognitive resources (Kunda, 1999).

Within the fairness literature, the dominant theories examining automatic processes are fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 2001) and uncertainty management theory (van den Bos, 2001).

In fairness heuristic theory, Lind (2001) argues that people are motivated to form fairness perceptions relatively quickly upon entering a work situation ("judgment phase"), creating a heuristic that guides daily life and interactions in the organization ("use phase"). Individuals rely on these heuristics until a critical phase-shifting event occurs that necessitates a reappraisal of the heuristic (e.g., recognizing that the relationship in question is changing or that an event is outside of what would be expected from the heuristic). In these cases, individuals will return to the judgment phase to recalibrate the fairness perception. Empirical support for this assertion has been provided by numerous studies. For example, Lind, Kray, and Thompson (2001) found that fairness perceptions are strongly influenced by the first fairness information that a person encounters in a new situation (i.e., primacy effect) and that fairness information presented later is far less influential. Similarly, people can experience a confirmatory bias (i.e., an automatic process whereby ones' expectations come to match perceptions), such that their expectations for fairness (i.e., "anticipatory" fairness) predict the extent to which they perceive fairness (i.e., "experienced" fairness; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Shapiro & Kirkman, 2001).

In uncertainty management theory, van den Bos (2001) highlights the importance of uncertainty for determining when and why fairness matters to people. Basic tenets of this theory include the notions that people have a fundamental need to feel certain, are motivated to reduce uncertainty because it can be threatening, and therefore, care more about fairness when they feel uncertain. On the one hand, uncertainty may lead to the effortful processing of information; increased uncertainty may be one of the mechanisms by which individuals move from the "use" phase back into the "judgment" phase (cf. Proudfoot & Lind, 2015). On the other hand, uncertainty can play a more automatic role in the formation of fairness perceptions. For example, personal uncertainty can trigger the "human alarm system" that can cause individuals to unconsciously form more extreme fairness judgments because they feel uncertain and/or self-threatened (van den Bos et al., 2008).

Fairness heuristic theory, and to a lesser extent uncertainty management theory, have dominated the literature on automatic fairness perceptions. However, there are other emerging perspectives that identify additional antecedents of automatic processes and/or types of automatic processes that can influence the formation of fairness perceptions. We examine individual differences, system justification theory, and moral mandates as examples.

Individual differences. Numerous studies have emerged focusing on how individual differences can work in a manner similar to a heuristic (i.e., filtering fairness-relevant information to shape fairness perceptions). For example, Bianchi and Brockner (2012) found that people who were more trusting (i.e., have higher dispositional trust) had more positive perceptions of fairness, even when they were exposed to identical fairness information as those who had lower dispositional trust. Similarly, Holtz and Harold (2009) showed that trust predicted variance in fairness perceptions both within and between individuals over time. Specifically, employees who trusted their supervisors perceived more fairness and had more stable fairness perceptions over time than employees who did not trust their supervisors. This suggests that trust can operate in an automatic, heuristic-like manner. Likewise, individ-

uals respond more strongly to voice when they hold a proself versus a prosocial orientation (van Prooijen et al., 2008). Again, the frame or filter through which employees view their environment shapes how they perceive fairness information.

System justification theory. Another perspective on automatic fairness judgments gaining traction in the literature is the system justification approach. Jost and Banaji (1994) argue that people have a motivated tendency to perceive the systems (e.g., organizations, societies) that they work and live in to be fair. As a result, unfairness can be perceived as particularly threatening and may (ironically) result in employees defending unfair procedures to preserve their belief that the system is fair (Proofoot & Lind, 2015). Using samples from the United States and Hungary, van der Toorn, Berkics, and Jost (2010) found that people with strong system justification tendencies perceived more fairness when they were asked to evaluate things that were typical of their own culture or society. A system justification perspective also nicely integrates with uncertainty management theory; employees can reduce uncertainty and manage threat by believing that their environment is the way it should be (i.e., the system is fair). However, although system justification theory is often described in terms of automaticity, it may also be possible for people to engage in controlled processing, in which they are consciously and actively motivated to justify the system. Future research should test this possibility.

Moral mandates. Defined as "selective expressions of moral values" (Skitka, 2003, p. 590), moral mandates are central to people's sense of personal identity. Further, people are motivated to protect these positions from possible threat. Moral mandates have taken on different roles within the literature. From a value protection perspective (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Mullen, 2002), moral mandates have been argued to influence how fairness is interpreted. Specifically, this perspective suggests that outcomes and procedures are deemed to be legitimate and fair when they are consistent with one's moral mandate. That is, moral mandates can "override" evaluations of procedures such that the use of an objectively fair process does not improve perceptions of distributive or procedural fairness when moral mandates are violated (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). However, other scholars have argued that perceptions of fairness continue to matter even in the presence of strong moral mandates (e.g., Napier & Tyler, 2008). This perspective holds that moral mandates can influence and temper the effects of fairness but they do not "override" the effects of fairness. Moreover, fairness itself may also be considered a moral mandate for some individuals. From a motivated cognition perspective, these different positions suggest that moral mandate may have some automaticity (i.e., function at an unconscious level; Bargh, 1997) and/or may provide a context in which more controlled processes can occur. Regardless of whether this is a truly automatic role or one in which automaticity shapes controlled processes, it is clear that moral mandates can influence fairness interpretations in a motivated manner.

Integrating Automatic and Controlled Processing With Motivated Cognitions

Although research examining automatic and controlled processing has developed relatively independently, there is empirical and theoretical evidence that integrating these perspectives can yield fruitful insights. This possibility is highlighted by studies examining the interplay between individual differences and automatic/controlled processing. Some research has shown that individual differences can decrease the likelihood of controlled processing. For example, research examining regulatory focus has indicated that individuals can differ on whether they have a promotion versus prevention focus, which can influence people's emotions, thoughts, and actions (cf. Higgins, 1998). Building on this foundation, Li and colleagues (2011) examined the interactive effects of promotion or prevention focus (primed) and how a message was framed (as a gain or a loss) on the perceived fairness of unfavorable events, with an emphasis on regulatory fit (e.g., congruency that results when a promotion focus is paired with explanation framed as a gain). The presence of regulatory fit induced a "feel-good" experience in individuals, thereby enhancing the tendency to automatically process fairness information and decreasing the use of consciously constructed counterfactuals to make sense of the explanations that were provided. Specifically, individuals who experienced a fit between their regulatory focus and the characteristics of the explanation were less likely to believe that managers could or should have done something differently and consequently were less likely to perceive unfairness. Other research has shown that individual differences can enhance controlled processing. De Cremer and Blader (2006), for example, demonstrated that people with a stronger need to belong engaged in more systematic processing of procedural fairness information.

There is also some research pointing to the possibility that individuals shift between automatic and controlled processing. Colquitt and Chertkoff (2002), for example, examined the effectiveness of explanations in improving fairness perceptions and how individuals may use two different processing strategies to arrive at a fairness perception. The authors argued that the activation of these processes was dependent on whether expectations related to the outcome were violated. Specifically, they suggested that when expectations are violated, this should "trigger a shift to systematic (rather than heuristic) processing strategy" (p. 604). In such a situation, explanations for the violation should be especially relevant. Indeed, explanations had the most positive effects in light of unexpected, unfavorable outcomes. These findings also fit with the idea of "phase shifts" from fairness heuristic theory. Further support for the possibility of shifts between automatic to controlled processing was provided by Mayer and colleagues (Mayer, Greenbaum, Kuenzi, & Shteynberg, 2009; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009) who found that people were motivated to retroactively look for flaws in procedures when they experienced an outcome that violated their identity. The authors argued that this switch to controlled processing and the deliberate search for information postoutcome was driven by the need to justify displeasure with the outcome.

However, not all theories and empirical evidence suggest that a "shift" needs to occur between automatic and controlled processing. For example, Kahneman (2011) suggests that these processes are likely to work in tandem, although in complex and blended ways. This suggests that these processes can coexist and influence each other. Consistent with this approach, fairness theory provides an example of the potential interplay between automatic and controlled processing as well as how these processes can shape each other (cf. Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). Specifically, fairness theory emphasizes the role of counterfactuals (e.g., would,

could, or should) in generating assessments of accountability. Whereas its predecessor, referent cognitions theory (RCT; Folger, 1987), focused on the active/conscious construction and comparison of referents, fairness theory allows for the possibility that counterfactuals can occur at an unconscious level. That is, counterfactuals can occur more automatically (cf. Bargh, 1997), such that individuals do not need to consciously bring to mind alternatives to generate a counterfactual (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Further, counterfactuals that operate outside of conscious awareness can create a background or context that can shape controlled processes. Similar to the way that gray appears lighter against a black background but darker against a white background, the presence of a counterfactual outside of conscious awareness can provide a background that can influence controlled processes.[3]

A motivated cognition perspective can significantly enhance our understanding of these processes. For example, the above studies by Mayer and colleagues highlight the influential role of motives in shifting the processing of fairness-relevant information from primarily automatic to controlled or vice versa. System justification theory also ties together elements from motivated reasoning with controlled and automatic processing. In this perspective, people maintain the belief that their organization is fair by self-protectively rationalizing unfairness, changing frames, or simply applying only those justice rules that do not induce dissonance (e.g., switching to an equality rule from an equity rule to defend a lack of merit based pay; Cropanzano et al., 2015). Interestingly, people only override this protective tendency when the evidence becomes too overwhelming to ignore or when the transgression is too extreme (Proudfoot & Lind, 2015). This insight sits nicely within the duality of accuracy and directional goals that is so central to motivated reasoning. People will perceive what they want to perceive for as long as they can, but once they can no longer refute the evidence, they will accept it.

The role of motivated cognition in the relationship between controlled and automatic processes does not end there. Although fairness heuristic theory (and system justification theory) suggest that a vivid (or undeniable) instance of unfairness has to occur before people reevaluate their heuristic and move out of the "use" phase, motivated reasoning would suggest that a simple shift in goals (e.g., from accuracy to feeling good) can just as easily lead to "phase shifting." Applying a motivated perspective can allow predictions about the extent to which the new heuristic would be bound by both accuracy and directional goals, thereby providing a more fine-grained approach to the phase shifting process.

Similarly, the motivated cognition literature shows that people's thinking is guided by their preferred outcomes (i.e., what people want to be true is perceived as true), particularly under conditions of uncertainty (e.g., Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989). Combining this with uncertainty management theory has interesting implications for how fairness perceptions might unfold. Under conditions of uncertainty, people may be paying more attention to the fairness-relevant information in the environment (van den Bos et al., 2008). However, motivated cognition suggests that they will also be working harder to align these perceptions with what they want to be true. Likewise, motivated reasoning indicates that people's ability to accurately process information will be bounded by their available cognitive resources. For example, people have difficulty meeting accuracy goals when they are depleted and instead perform in a similar way to those with no motivation to be

accurate (Pendry & Macrae, 1994). In these instances, fairness perceptions should be largely governed by directional goals (what they want to perceive) and there may be constraints on when and how people *can* shift into controlled processing.

Taken together, the above studies illustrate the richness that can accompany an integrated perspective. However, for the literature to be truly integrative, two more steps are necessary. First, it is important to determine if there are indeed "shifts" that occur between the processes (e.g., from mostly controlled to predominantly automatic) and, if so, what are the moderators that prompt these shifts? Second, research is needed that fosters a deeper understanding of the interplay between automatic and controlled processes. Although the studies noted above often assume a shift between processes, it may not always be necessary for a "shift" to occur. These studies could also be reinterpreted to consider how automatic processes can create a context for the influence of controlled processes. That is, rather than triggering shifts between processes, it may be important to examine how the presence of factors related to automatic processes can influence controlled processing (e.g., are rules preferentially selected, are comparisons standards shifting upward/downward). Clearly, a motivated cognition perspective can provide deep and rich insights into automated and controlled processing as well as the interplay between these processes within the context of fairness, creating new research directions that can enhance our understanding of *how* fairness perceptions are formed.

Research Question #3: How Are Fairness Perceptions Influenced by Affect and Its Interplay With Cognitions?

Whereas early justice theories (e.g., Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961) and research (e.g., Mikula, 1986) emphasized the concomitant nature of emotions with the sense of (in)justice, the emphasis on emotions faded as researchers focused on the cognitive aspects of this phenomenon (cf. Barclay & Kiefer, 2014), perhaps because of the cognitive revolution taking place within psychology. As an emphasis on justice rules emerged, this highlighted controlled processes and their attending cognitions, often at the expense of affect. That is, cognition and affect were typically treated as distinct constructs, with cognition being emphasized and emotion taking a secondary role.[4] Indeed, scholars have noted that affect has been "underemphasized and underappreciated" (Bies & Tripp, 2001, p. 205) and is often "lost" within the cognitive landscape of fairness (cf. Barclay & Kiefer, 2014, p. 1858). In their integrative review of fairness and affect, Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic (2011, p. 3) noted that "given the natural affinity between (in)justice and affect, integrating the two literatures has been slower than one might expect."

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[3] We thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.

[4] There has been debate in other literatures about whether emotion and cognition are distinct or whether emotion is a form of cognition (e.g., Forgas, 1995). Our review of the fairness literature suggests that emotion and cognition are often treated as distinct constructs that nevertheless are intricately related and have significant interplay. We leave the question of whether emotion should be seen as part of cognition for future research. For the purposes of this article, when we refer to the term cognition, we do not refer to the emotional aspect.

However, there has been a recent surge in affect-related research within the fairness literature (Colquitt et al., 2013). The majority of research in this domain has examined cognition and affect as related but distinct constructs. Specifically, affect (particularly emotions) has been predominately characterized as an outcome of controlled and rational ("cold") cognitive processes (cf. Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008; van den Bos, 2007). However, affect can also precede and/or accompany fairness perceptions (cf. Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008). Researchers studying affect from this perspective have emphasized the intricate interplay between affect and cognition. For example, affect can initiate cognitive processes (e.g., Haidt, 2000) and elicit appraisals that provide "a lens for interpreting subsequent situations" (e.g., Lerner, Small, & Loew-enstein, 2004, p. 337). That is, affect can influence the formation of fairness perceptions through the creation of "hot cognitions" (e.g., van den Bos, 2007). This suggests that emotion and cognition may not be quite as distinct as had been assumed in the fairness literature, but rather can have a complex interplay that together can form perceptions (Forgas, 1995). In this section, we explore the influence of affect on the formation of fairness perceptions. Further, we distinguish between the influence of trait affect, moods (i.e., generalized affective states), and emotions (i.e., targeted, short-term affective states). We also examine the relationship between affect and fairness motives as well as the ways that a motivated reasoning perspective can provide further insights into these processes.

Key insights from trait affect approaches. Individual differences in affect can influence the formation of fairness perceptions through several pathways. Trait affect can (a) serve as a lens through which individuals interpret stimuli (similar to our earlier discussion on how individual differences influence cognitions), (b) influence how individuals experience affective events, and (c) impact the treatment that individuals receive from others thereby influencing the likelihood of encountering fairness-related events and requiring fairness-related evaluations (Barsky & Kaplan, 2007). Individual differences can also combine with other variables in an automatic or controlled manner to influence the formation of fairness perceptions. For example, Maas and van den Bos (2009) examined how affect intensity interacts with experiential-intuitive or rational-cognitive systems. Whereas experiential systems are more passive, intuitively based, and focused on associative connections, rational systems are more active, abstract, and focused on cause-effect connections. Individuals with high affect intensity and who were primed with an experiential mindset were found to react more strongly to fairness-related events than those who were low on affect intensity and primed with a rational mindset.

Key insights from mood approaches. Perhaps the most influential paradigm focusing on mood has involved the integration of uncertainty management theory with affect as information. Specifically, van den Bos (2003) argued that individuals can use their affective state when forming fairness perceptions, particularly under conditions of information uncertainty. When individuals lack directly relevant information, they may rely on "how do I feel about it" heuristics (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 1983) or affect-infusion processes to form their fairness perceptions (e.g., Forgas, 1995, 2002). Indeed, Barsky and Kaplan's (2007) meta-analysis found that state positive affect enhanced whereas state negative affect diminished fairness perceptions. Importantly, affect can influence fairness perceptions even when the affective states are incidental to the situation (i.e., have no logical or objective bearing on the fairness perception being formed; van den Bos, 2003). However, when directly relevant information is available, generalized affective states have weaker effects on fairness judgments.

Individuals can also rely on their moods to determine if they have a sufficient basis for forming perceptions, which can trigger different types of processing. Generally speaking, negative moods prompt systematic processing by signaling the presence of a threat to one's goals whereas positive moods can signal that the situation is safe and that heuristic processing is sufficient (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Despite the relevance of mood-related effects for fairness, Cropanzano et al. (2011, p. 160) noted that fairness researchers have paid "little heed" to these effects. In a later section, we describe some of the innovative and elaborate theoretical perspectives on the role of mood. For now, we turn to the key insights from emotions.

Key insights from emotion approaches. Research has also begun to explore how emotions can impact the content of judgments, influence information processes, and shape how fairness perceptions are encoded and aggregated (Barsky, Kaplan, & Beal, 2011; Cropanzano et al., 2011; Rupp & Paddock, 2010). Several theories and studies have examined how emotions can initiate different types of processing. On the automatic processing side, individuals can experience emotions that reflect the unfairness of an event (e.g., deontic anger or moral outrage) even when the elements of the situation that are unfair are not consciously available to the individual (e.g., Cropanzano, Goldman, & Folger, 2003; Folger, 2001). In these cases, fairness-related affect can be particularly functional because it is related to the situation at hand and can be used as a "rational" substitute for more controlled processing (van den Bos, 2003). Tiedens and Linton (2001) found that emotions can also shift preferences for the type of processing; automatic processing is promoted by emotions that are characterized by certainty (e.g., anger), whereas controlled processing is activated by uncertainty-related emotions (e.g., sadness).

Most research, however, emphasizes the role of controlled processing, with attention focused on how emotions can influence appraisal processes. For example, the presence of anger can enhance the tendency to perceive risk and make hostile attributions (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Further, emotions (e.g., anger, guilt) can prompt cognitive assessments of the event (Scher & Heise, 1993). The influence of emotions, however, can also be mitigated through cognitive processes. For example, De Wit and van den Bos (2007) found that when individuals experienced negative affect in reaction to underpayment, they were more likely to view their outcome as unfair. These effects were alleviated when people were told that a (placebo) pill that they had taken had influenced their emotional reactions. In this case, individuals were less likely to attribute their negative feelings to the underpayment and therefore less likely to feel unfairly treated. In contrast to uncertainty management theory, which focuses on moods and examines affect as a substitute for information, these studies suggest that moods and emotions can also activate and influence the cognitive appraisal system (cf. Cropanzano, Byrne, et al., 2001).

Other theories have explored the interactive and reciprocal nature of emotions and fairness perceptions. Although some models emphasize the role of cognitions (e.g., Mullen, 2007), there is also recognition for the primacy of strong emotional states (e.g., Bies, 1987). When emotions are activated first, individuals' deeply

ingrained values and moral standards prompt them to deem something as "unfair" without engaging in logical reasoning or providing justifications. As Barsky et al. (2011, p. 252) argued, "appraisal [for fairness perceptions] begins with a set of fast, relatively automatic appraisals that are unmediated by conscious, deliberative thought." These experiences then activate secondary appraisals, in which individuals seek to provide meaning and interpret the implications of the event (i.e., determine why it was unfair).

Interestingly, Barsky et al. (2011) noted that the emotions and fairness literatures have differentially characterized the outcome of secondary appraisals. Whereas the emotions literature suggests that these appraisals give rise to discrete emotions, the fairness literature indicates that these appraisals can yield counterfactuals (e.g., would, could, and/or should counterfactuals; Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Despite sometimes been characterized as a "cold" perception, in actuality, counterfactuals are not limited to being cognitive events. Indeed, counterfactuals can also include "counterfactual emotions" (e.g., frustration, regret, grief; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). That is, counterfactuals can generate both emotional and perceptual outcomes. In their theoretical model, Barsky et al. (2011, p. 253) highlight how secondary appraisals are likely to yield emotionally infused perceptions of fairness "because these two processes occur in tandem."

Integrating affect with motivated cognitions.   Clearly, this is an area ripe with potential for a motivated cognition perspective. Indeed, motivated cognitions are already being explicitly considered, especially in extant theories. In this section, we overview integrative theoretical perspectives that clarify the interplay between affect, fairness perceptions, and motivated cognitions. We also provide examples of empirical findings that highlight the insights that can be gained by integrating a motivated cognition approach into this domain.

Theory and empirical research has indicated that affect can motivate reasoning as well as preferences for directional versus accuracy motives. For example, Mullen's (2007) affective model of justice reasoning suggests that people experience a primary appraisal in which they examine whether the treatment was favorable or unfavorable. This is followed by an emotional state that drives further processing. However, the nature of the processing depends on the certainty of the emotions (see also Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Individuals who have an initial negative appraisal and experience a relatively certain emotional state (e.g., anger or disgust) are likely to engage in controlled processing in which they overvalue evidence consistent with these emotions. In contrast, when emotions characterized by uncertainty are experienced after the initial negative appraisal (e.g., fear) then individuals are more likely to use controlled processing that favors accuracy. From a motivated cognition perspective, this suggests that emotions can influence the activation of directional or accuracy goals, which guide the processing that occurs. Further, although it is often assumed that emotions will bias cognitive assessments, Lench and Bench (2015) found that strong positive or negative emotional reactions can actually *decrease* biases when people had the time and capacity to engage in controlled processing. This suggests that accuracy motives may be triggered by either uncertain or strong emotions.

There is evidence that moods can also influence the strategies that individuals employ to process information (e.g., "affect infusion model"; Forgas, 2000), whether it is direct access processing

(i.e., individual retrieves something from memory), motivated processing (i.e., individual is motivated by a specific goal), heuristic processing, (i.e., individual relies on automatic processing), or substantive processing (i.e., individual relies on controlled processing). Moods can also shape the content of the processing, such as preferences for different justice rules. Sinclair and Mark (1991, 1992) found that, as compared to individuals in positive moods, those in a negative mood were more discriminating between allocation rules (equity, equality, and need), were less likely to endorse egalitarian macrojustice principles, and were more likely to adhere to equity when allocating outcomes. Taken together, this suggests that mood not only serves as an input into the formation of perceptions but it can also influence the nature of the processing, including the activation of motivated reasoning and preferences for justice rules.

The activation of accuracy goals can also influence the effect of mood on processing strategies. Tiedens and Linton (2001, p. 973), for instance, indicated that "when a person's goal is accurate judgment or decision making, that person will look to his or her mood as an indicator of whether he or she knows enough." Emerging theories (e.g., Barsky et al., 2011) also integrate both mood and emotions with motivated cognitions and fairness motives. For example, when motives are combined with moods and emotions, individuals can change the priority given to information related to threat versus rewards (Watson, 2000). Given that positive affect is related to approach motivations (Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999), it directs attention to approach motives and to the relevance of events relating to rule adherence (Barsky et al., 2011). By contrast, negative affect signals that something is wrong in the environment and is associated with avoidance motivations (Gray, 1987). This can focus attention on rule violations (Barsky et al., 2011). Thus, affect can influence the salience of different concerns (fairness motives; fairness vs. unfairness), how events are appraised, and the aspects of the event that are relevant.

In their recent review, Fortin, Blader, Wiesenfeld, and Wheeler-Smith (2015) argued that a deeper understanding of the intersection of fairness and affect can be gained by explicitly considering the relationship between fairness motives and affect-based processes. Further, they highlight the motivated nature of these processes. For example, the valence of affect (i.e., the degree to which the affect is characterized by pleasurable feelings) can determine whether one is even motivated to engage in fairness-related reasoning, with negative affect initiating these processes and positive affect dampening them. This relates to self-interested (instrumental) motives for fairness since it indicates that individuals are motivated to engage in fairness-related reasoning when their self-interest is threatened (but not necessarily when it is served). Similarly, emotions that are high on uncertainty are associated with the uncertainty reduction motive, moral emotions are related to moral motives, and emotions high on social dynamic dimensions (e.g., high on social orientation, inward emotions, and congruence) are connected with relational motives. Taken together, affect can determine whether motivated reasoning is initiated and signal the importance of certain motives in that context, which then focuses attention on different aspects of the situation. Further, the activation of motives can also elicit specific discrete emotions (e.g., moral motives may elicit anger and disgust; relational motives may elicit emotions such as loneliness). Moreover, these

processes can be activated in all of the parties to a fairness interaction (e.g., recipient, observer, and actor).

Despite the presence of elaborate theories, researchers have been slow to empirically investigate these processes and further integrate cognitions and affect (Cropanzano et al., 2011). Whereas many researchers still emphasize "cold" cognitive processes (as exemplified by the pervasive use of indirect measures), our review highlights the richness that can emerge when affect and cognitions are studied in tandem and how the interplay between them can influence the formation of fairness perceptions. Clearly, more research is needed to explore when and how affect versus cognitions can drive the processing of information and the implications of these different starting points for the type and the nature of processing that occurs. For example, research from a deontic perspective implies that emotions are more likely to drive processing when the individual has experienced violations of a moral or identity-based nature (vs. instrumental concerns; Folger, 2001; Frijda, 1988). This suggests that the fairness motives may be intricately intertwined with the way that information is processed and the emotions that are likely to be influential. Developing insights into how and why affect can infuse cognitions may also guide our understanding of how the formation of fairness perceptions can differ for cold versus hot cognitions and how these different types of cognitions can be effectively managed.

In summary, although theoretical integration is occurring in this area, empirical studies examining the implications of this integration are desperately needed. Motivated cognitions are woven into the theoretical foundation of this domain, but empirical research is in a nascent state, with numerous opportunities to examine how the interplay between affect and cognitions can enrich our understanding of the formation of fairness perceptions.

Research Question #4: How Does Perspective Influence Fairness Perceptions?

Although the fairness literature has predominantly focused on the perspective of the recipient, there has been an increasing shift toward studying observers (those who are not direct recipients but who witness the fair or unfair treatment of others; also termed third-parties; Skarlicki & Kulik, 2004) and actors (those who "deliver" fairness, e.g., managers; Folger & Skarlicki, 2001). In this section, we examine how observers and actors form fairness perceptions and highlight the strong (but often implicit) influence of motivated cognition.

Key insights from the observer perspective. In their seminal chapter, Skarlicki and Kulik (2004) outlined two primary motives for why observers care about the fairness of others' treatment. Similar to recipients, observing unfairness can spark self-interested concerns because observers want to avoid comparable treatment and/or have internalized the harm caused to another. However, as demonstrated by moral motives and the deontic perspective, observers can also care about others' treatment for moral reasons. Indeed, empirical evidence indicates that observers are willing to protest unfair treatment and punish the transgressor, even if it comes at a personal cost to themselves (e.g., Turillo et al., 2002).

Although much of the research in this domain has assumed that these motives operate relatively independently, Skarlicki, O'Reilly, and Kulik (2015) applied an adaptationist perspective to argue that these motives can be complementary and operate simul-

taneously. That is, observers may react to the unfair treatment of others because of innate and evolutionary-based psychological mechanisms that center on moral concerns but these reactions can also serve a self-interested function (e.g., by maintaining cooperative behaviors in groups). Further, observers may not be consciously aware of the self-interested nature of their reaction.

Observers are also motivated to consider a number of different antecedents when forming fairness perceptions. There is some evidence indicating that the recipient's motives can influence observers' perceptions. Farrell and Finkelstein (2011), for example, found that observers perceived rewards for organizational citizenship behaviors to be fairer when their coworker was believed to have engaged in these behaviors for altruistic rather than impression management reasons. Similarly, observers can weigh allocation criteria differently, with equity being emphasized when individuals want to reward and motivate performance and equality being deemed as more fair when the goal is to decrease social tension (Hysom & Fisek, 2011). Further, the broader social context can also influence observers' fairness perceptions. For example, observers' fairness perceptions can be influenced by their location in the social network (e.g., Umphress, Labianca, Brass, Kass, & Scholten, 2003) and/or by the culture or climate that has developed within a group or organization (Naumann & Bennett, 2000; Roberson, 2006).

Key insights from the actor perspective. Historically, the fairness literature has been characterized by a managerial-centered perspective. In other words, (un)fairness was important because of its impact on outcomes of relevance to the organization (cf. Bies & Tripp, 2002). Correspondingly, an emphasis was placed on how managers can effectively manage the fairness perceptions of others through their own decisions and actions (e.g., Leventhal, 1980) and how organizations can promote fairness (e.g., through managerial training in justice principles; Skarlicki & Latham, 1996). Given this focus, it is perhaps not surprising that research in this area has been dominated by a strong behavioral emphasis, with studies focusing on how managers enact or deliver fairness to others—that is, how managers address the perceptions of others (Brockner et al., 2015). Less attention has been devoted to understanding the fairness-related motives and perceptions of managers themselves. In this section, we maintain the emphasis of our review by focusing on fairness as a dependent variable as it relates to perceptions rather than behaviors. A focus on perceptions is critically important because it sheds light into how managers experience fairness and these intrapersonal processes can enhance our understanding of why one behaves in a certain way (cf. Ambrose & Schminke, 2009b).

Of particular importance to the managerial perspective is the notion that people are motivated to perceive themselves as fair (e.g., Lerner, 1980). Being perceived as fair can have a variety of positive outcomes for managers, including promoting positive and mitigating negative behaviors in organizations (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2001), providing managers with legitimacy for executing their own work (e.g., Greenberg, 1990), motivating subordinates, and enhancing relationships with ones' employees (Long, 2016). Beyond these external outcomes, being a "fair person" is a desired social identity and managers are motivated to engage in behaviors that will establish and maintain this identity (Greenberg, 1990). That is, perceiving oneself as a fair person may convey positive psychological benefits (e.g., esteem). Most individuals share a basic

desire to be perceived as a fair person (Lerner, 1980), with some managers placing even more importance on this aspect of their identity (e.g., via differences in the self-importance of moral identity; Aquino & Reed, 2002, or social identity; Skitka, 2003). Empirical evidence supports the importance of this identity-based perspective. In a multiround experiment, for example, Oc, Bashshur, and Moore (2015) showed that being perceived as unfair by subordinates led managers to feel more guilt and behave more fairly in subsequent interactions. Once they were perceived as being more fair, their guilt was reduced (and they subsequently became less fair). This demonstrates the potential for an effect of managers' beliefs about the perceptions of others (and oneself) on actual behaviors. That is, managers will change their behaviors to be seen as fair and to maintain their self-image.

Matching one's behaviors with subordinates' preferences may be particularly important because managers can focus on different aspects and/or conceptualize fairness differently than employees. For example, Tata (2000) found that managers are more likely to focus on procedural justice principles whereas subordinates emphasize distributive justice principles. Managers and subordinates are also likely to use different reference points, which can influence the way that they process information and the presence of various biases (e.g., self-serving bias; Charness & Haruvy, 2000). In a qualitative study, Long (2016, p. 762) noted that "managers reported emphasizing and combining particular elements of fairness in ways that differed somewhat from established subordinate-based conceptualizations." Further, managers had a broader conceptualization of the factors that enhance perceived fairness beyond the traditional justice dimensions (e.g., factors that promote employee development, enact managerial propriety, and demonstrate moral leadership). Taken together, these studies indicate that the perceived importance of different justice criteria, the scope of antecedents to fairness, and even one's definition of what constitutes fairness may change depending on one's role in the interaction.

Integrating perspectives with motivated cognitions. Theoretical and empirical research in this domain is increasingly taking into account the implications of fairness being in the eye of the beholder and is primed for a motivated cognition approach. In this section, we highlight research indicating how a motivated cognition approach can enhance our understanding of the influence of perspective on the formation of fairness perceptions and demonstrate how this approach can facilitate integration across the perspectives.

With respect to the observer perspective, Skarlicki et al. (2015) offered an integrated model of observer reactions to unfair treatment, which emphasizes the cognitive and perceptual processes that can guide observer reactions to the treatment of another. Similar to recipients, when observers recognize that another person has been negatively impacted, they are motivated to locate blame (cf. Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). However, this process can be influenced by the observers' own motives. For example, observers are more likely to perceive unfairness when they identify with the victim (e.g., when they like the victim or when they have personal or group similarities; Brockner & Greenberg, 1990) or feel that their own outcomes may be threatened (Chaikin & Darley, 1973). In contrast, observers are less likely to perceive unfairness when they identify with the transgressor (e.g., Kramer, 1993) or when the victim is perceived to be outside of the observers "scope of justice" (i.e., outside of the boundaries for which one's moral values apply; Opotow, 1990). Blader, Wiesenfeld, Fortin, and Wheeler-Smith (2013) also demonstrated the influential role of social emotions in these processes; observers experiencing congruent emotions with the victim tend to perceive the situation in similar ways as the recipient, whereas observers experiencing incongruent emotions with the victim (e.g., envy, jealousy, and schadenfreude) are more likely to perceive objectively unfair outcomes as fair.

Even when observers see objectively unfair treatment, their perceptions may depend on their beliefs (e.g., desire to maintain a belief in a just world; cf. Lerner, 1980). Specifically, individuals are motivated to believe that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. However, these beliefs can be threatened when observers recognize the unfair treatment of another, which can motivate them to restore justice (e.g., Skarlicki et al., 2015; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). When observers perceive unfairness but are unable to respond, they may experience guilt or distress (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), which can motivate them to reassess the situation (e.g., increase victim derogation, align themselves with the transgressor, or reevaluate whether the treatment was truly unfair).

Colquitt (2004) demonstrated how observers' perceptions are based not only on their own treatment but also on the treatment of others (e.g., teammates in the same context). This study found a powerful interaction in which one's own fairness perceptions were influenced by the treatment that occurred in the team, such that positive reactions were more likely to occur when the fairness of treatment was perceived as being consistent within the team. The interaction was also stronger when task interdependence was high (vs. low). This is consistent with a motivated cognition perspective, which indicates that observers should be more concerned about the fairness of others when it impacts them and/or when they perceive similarities with others (e.g., Skarlicki et al., 2015).

Research has also highlighted the importance of beliefs for managers, especially beliefs related to being a fair person. Paralleling our earlier discussions on how accuracy motives can constrain directional motives and the illusion of objectivity, Scott, Colquitt, and Paddock (2009) highlight how managers justify their behaviors to uphold their beliefs about themselves. These authors argue that while managers are unlikely to consciously decide to be unfair, they may consciously engage in actions that may be perceived as unfair but justify those behaviors as fair. Using the example of a manager who denies an employee the opportunity to appeal a decision, the authors propose that the manager may acknowledge the lack of correctability but "fail to define the action as unfair per se (after all, it was purportedly performed for reasons that may benefit the functioning of the department)" (p. 758). Thus, the desire to be perceived as fair may influence the way that managers attempt to justify their decisions and actions, but these justifications are not always shared or considered valid by others (e.g., the recipients).

Managers' fairness perceptions may also be influenced by the range of perspectives that they should consider (e.g., their own perspective as well as their employees, observers, and other stakeholders) and by their beliefs about what others will consider to be important in that situation (Kunda, 1999). This may shape the goals they adopt (accuracy or directional). For example, whereas managers who are only considering their own perspective may be

guided by their own directional motives (e.g., relational) while processing fairness relevant information, managers who know they must also communicate this information to their employees may incorporate motives that they think may be important to others (e.g., instrumental for employees; moral for observers) as well as more heavily weight the accuracy motive to ensure that their communications are appropriate based on their assessment of the situation.

Conversely, managers may also be motivated in some instances *not* to perceive an issue as fairness-related (Brockner et al., 2015). For example, some managers are predisposed to recognizing and/or interpreting issues as fairness-related (e.g., those who are high on justice sensitivity or justice orientation; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009b), while others are not. Managers are also more likely to be focused on fairness when they have the resources to process fairness-related information (i.e., can engage in controlled processing) and when their identity has been threatened. Managers may also have motives that are activated other than fairness (e.g., efficiency; Folger & Skarlicki, 2001) that can change the way that they frame the issue and communicate it to others (e.g., they may focus less on adhering to justice criteria because this schema has not been activated).

Clearly, managers are not only motivated to see themselves as fair but can also be motivated to ensure that others perceive them as fair so that they may garner psychological and social benefits (e.g., esteem) by reinforcing their identity or by enhancing other outcomes (e.g., ability to do their job). However, managers are unable to achieve this goal simply by engaging in "fair" behaviors. Instead, managers must be sensitive to potential differences in perceptions for the same behaviors and recognize that they must actively manage impressions of their behaviors to demonstrate fairness to different organizational stakeholders (e.g., Greenberg, 1990). Specifically, Greenberg argued that subordinates evaluate the fairness of their managers based on egocentric biases (i.e., what is fair is what benefits me; Greenberg, 1987) and the degree to which a behavior supports one's self-image (e.g., what is fair is what makes me feel good about myself; Greenberg, 1991). Thus, managers who want to be "seen as fair" are encouraged to align their actions with the needs, motives, and expectations of their subordinates.

Taken together, a motivated cognition approach can provide significant insights into the experiences not only of recipients but also actors and observers. Although research examining the various perspectives has developed relatively independently, it is also important for researchers to consider the interplay between these perspectives. We consider this notion below.

Creating a Path Forward: Leveraging Insights From Motivated Cognitions to Develop a Research Agenda for the Fairness Literature

Above, we examined how motivated cognitions can deepen insights and facilitate integration within central research questions that relate to the formation of fairness perceptions. In this section, we expand our perspective beyond these specific research questions to explore some broader implications of a motivated cognition perspective. First, we provide examples of how motivated cognitions can encourage integration *across* the research questions. Specifically, we highlight how a motivated cognition per-

spective can clarify the role of motives in fairness perceptions as well as enhance our understanding of dyadic influences. Second, we provide examples of the implications that a motivated cognition perspective has for how we study fairness issues, including the importance of clarifying constructs and measures. Third, we follow this by providing examples of how a motivated cognition approach can facilitate integration with other literatures. Fourth, we discuss potential boundary conditions of a motivated cognition perspective within the context of fairness. Finally, we conclude by "flipping the lens" and explore how using a motivated cognition foundation can create new research opportunities that have not yet been examined in the fairness literature.

Integration Across Research Questions

In this section, we explore how a motivated cognition perspective can provide integration across the research questions that were discussed above. Specifically, we focus on how this perspective can enhance our understanding of the motives, including their interplay and integration as well as the influence of context. We also broaden our discussion beyond the individual to consider the role of dyadic influences.

Interplay and integration. One of the key insights emerging from applying motivated cognitions to the fairness literature is the recognition that the directional goals (e.g., instrumental, relational, or moral motives) identified in fairness research may be constrained and influenced by accuracy goals. Although individuals can be motivated to assess fairness in ways that "feel good" to them, they can also be motivated to ensure that these evaluations are rational and justifiable (Kunda, 1990; Scott et al., 2009). Applying this insight across the research questions discussed above suggests a number of new perspectives for understanding how individuals process fairness information and allows for the integration of research on automaticity versus controlled processes, emotions, and perspectives. For example, different goals can differentially focus people's attention on fairness-relevant information so that they highlight or ignore unfairness. These goals may also activate different emotions; instrumental motives may activate envy, relational motives may enhance loneliness, whereas moral motives can spark moral outrage. These emotions can infuse cognitions and may also influence the type of processing that occurs. Similarly, different parties to the experience (e.g., recipients, actors, and observers) may be motivated by very different goals. As we discuss below, this lack of agreement about what information is relevant, how it is processed, and the potentially disparate emotions experienced by the differently motivated parties may also dynamically influence how events unfold, thereby shaping (un)fairness perceptions over time. Clearly, delving into these insights and process-based explanations can enhance our understanding of how individuals form fairness perceptions, experience fairness, and how these experiences evolve.

Placing fairness motives in context. A focus on motivated cognitions emphasizes that although fairness is a critical concern (cf. Lerner, 1980), it is not the driving force for all interactions. For example, individuals are often motivated by other concerns including wanting to obtain favorable outcomes, maintaining self-conceptions, appearing competent or legitimate, or following the path of least resistance (cf. Brockner et al., 2015). Egocentric concerns (van Prooijen, 2008) and efficiency concerns can also

take precedence over fairness (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001). Moreover, individuals may view something as fair or overlook unfairness because it is in their interest to do so (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2002).

The fact that people may be polymotivated is not a new idea. However, explicitly recognizing this has important implications for our understanding of how fairness perceptions emerge. For example, it forces us to consider the relationship of established fairness motives and alternative motives, including nondirectional motives from the motivated cognition literature (e.g., accuracy, efficiency). Further, it encourages consideration of how fairness and nonfairness motives relate to one another in a given context. Consider managers who need to deliver negative news—a multiphase process that involves preparation, delivery, and transition (cf. Bies, 2013). Specifically, before delivering bad news, managers must prepare by processing the information themselves. The presence of alternative motives may influence how fairness-related information is attended to, the biases that can emerge, and even the way that information is encoded (e.g., Tetlock, 1983, 1985). For example, a manager who is motivated by maintaining a positive self-concept may utilize different strategies than a manager focused on fairness. Further, even if managers are motivated to deliver negative news in a fair manner, processing the situation with a bias toward their own self-concept may influence the information that is made salient and how they frame the situation when communicating to an employee. Similar to the way that accuracy goals can place constraints on the influence of directional goals, the presence of nonfairness motives may influence the impact of fairness motives and how fairness information is processed.

Moving beyond individuals: The importance of dyadic influences. Theoretically, there is strong recognition for the importance of examining how the various parties (e.g., recipient, observer, and actor) can dynamically influence each other. However, empirical studies examining these effects are still relatively scarce. Given that each party can have differing motives, it is critical to explore how fairness experiences unfold over time, as motives change, and as different parties dynamically influence each other. We propose that a motivated cognition perspective may be particularly helpful for understanding these interactions. Consider predicaments of injustice, defined as "an occurrence in which one party believes he or she is being fair; however, the other party does not perceive the transaction or interactions as such" (Cooper & Scandura, 2012, p. 109). Differences in motives and perceptual processes can shape the emergence of predicaments of injustice as well as how they unfold over time (Bies, 1987; Cooper & Scandura, 2012; Swann, 1987; Swann & Ely, 1984). Specifically, managers and employees can experience incongruence in their perceptions because they have divergent schema about what constitutes fairness, are motivated by different considerations, are paying attention to and processing different fairness information, and/or are processing fairness information in dissimilar ways (see above discussion; also see Folger & Cropanzano, 2001; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Whiteside and Barclay (2015) argued that predicaments of injustice can trigger a "tug-of-war" in which the manager and the employee simultaneously seek to protect their self-conceptions by validating their own perceptions through strategies such as self-verification (i.e., actions aimed at resisting or disconfirming false social perceptions; Swann, 1987) and behav-ioral confirmation (i.e., actions aimed at validating perceptions; Swann & Ely, 1984). This highlights the importance of examining the interplay between parties' motives and perceptual processes as well as how this impacts individuals, the relationship, and how the situation unfolds.

Understanding fairness from a motivated dyadic perspective may also help managers more effectively address fairness issues; managers who understand their employees' motives may be better able to tailor fairness to meet these needs. Siegel, Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Liu (2016), for example, found that recipients have a lower desire for process fairness when experiencing noncontingent success (i.e., the perception that one's positive outcomes are not the result of one's actions, such as when people are simply in the right place at the right time). In these cases, recipients may find fairness to be self-threatening (e.g., they experience anxiety about whether the positive outcomes will continue) and want to engage in self-protective actions. Rather than decreasing fairness, effective managers are likely those who recognize these needs in their employees and provide additional support (e.g., by providing a supportive environment, encouraging a promotion vs. prevention mindset, providing ways to self-affirm). A motivated perspective indicates that not only does fairness matter—the *way* that fairness is delivered also matters.

Implications for Studying Fairness

A motivated cognition perspective not only has implications for what questions fairness scholars should examine but also *how* these questions are studied. In this section, we explore the implications of a motivated cognition perspective for the study of fairness issues, including the importance of distinguishing between fairness/unfairness and methodological considerations.

Distinguishing between fairness and unfairness. A motivated cognition approach echoes calls in the fairness literature to distinguish between fairness and unfairness (e.g., Bies, 2001; Colquitt, Long, Rodell, & Halvorsen-Ganepola, 2015; Cropanzano et al., 2011; Gilliland, 2008; Hillebrandt & Barclay, 2013) and highlights several reasons for doing so. First, the antecedents of unfairness and fairness are likely to be differently motivated. Whereas perceptions of unfairness are likely to be shaped by threats to one's self-interest and a prevention focus (e.g., vigilance and concerns about safety), perceptions of fairness are likely to be shaped by a promotion focus (e.g., concerns about becoming one's ideal self; Colquitt et al., 2015; Fortin et al., 2015). Second, fairness is likely to be driven by "cold" cognitions while unfairness is likely to be driven by "hot cognitions" (Barsky et al., 2011; Hillebrandt & Barclay, 2013). In terms of motivated cognitions, this can prompt differences in what information is processed and how it is processed, preferences for automatic versus controlled processing, and the way that memories are encoded, recalled, and used at a later time (Kihlstrom, Eich, Sandbrand, & Tobias, 2000).

Third, consistency in the fairness of one's treatment may matter. Matta, Scott, Colquitt, Koopman, and Passantino (in press), for example, found that variability in treatment was associated with greater uncertainty and stress than consistently fair or unfair treatment. From a motivated cognition perspective, this variability may influence the motives that are activated (e.g., control) as well as the cognitive processes that individuals are likely to use (e.g., controlled vs. automatic processing). Further, individuals may be

motivated to "tip the scales" toward evaluations of unfairness or fairness, simply to provide some relief from the constant processing of fairness-related information and to provide certainty about their status. Whereas "tipping the scale" toward fairness can enhance esteem, consistently perceiving unfairness can also be beneficial. There is some evidence that individuals who become habitually sensitive to perceiving themselves as being unfairly treated (e.g., "collectors of injustice") can benefit from being assigned the label of "victim" because it can be identity-verifying and even empowering (e.g., Swann & Read, 1981; Tripp & Bies, 2009). A motivated cognition perspective may provide insights related to the motives and processes underlying these effects and also potential points of prevention that may be targeted before one's perceptions of unfairness spiral into an entrenched judgment of unfairness that cannot be shaken.

Methodological implications.   Earlier, we noted the influential role of measurement and that the pervasive use of indirect measures has guided the field toward how objective rules and criteria have been subjectively filled (e.g., Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2015). However, this review highlights the importance of assessing the subjectivity of individuals' perceptions (e.g., one's motives may influence how perceptions are formed including what criteria are evaluated). Further, many indirect criteria (e.g., whether procedures are based on accurate information) may be more aligned with "accuracy" rather than directional motives and/or these criteria may be differentially weighted depending on one's motives. Although measures that assess overall fairness perceptions may be better able to tap into one's subjective assessment of fairness (e.g., Ambrose & Schminke, 2009a), these measures are not without their limitations. For example, overall fairness is currently assessed through a primarily cognitive lens (e.g., "In general, I can count on this organization to be fair") and incorporates items related to fairness and unfairness (e.g., "Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly").

We argue that the current state of theory and measurement highlights the importance of several key considerations. First, researchers should reexamine our measures and ensure that they reflect the distinguishing features of the constructs (e.g., justice vs. fairness, justice vs. injustice, and fairness vs. unfairness). Second, we echo calls for better alignment between measures and research questions, such that researchers use the measure that is most valid for the question at hand rather than simply adopting the most widely used measure (cf. Colquitt & Rodell, 2015; Colquitt & Shaw, 2005; Shapiro, 2010). Third, the literature has been dominated by between-person approaches and static conceptualizations of fairness (cf. Jones & Skarlicki, 2013). Although this approach may enable researchers to examine what happens when a particular motivation is activated, it is unlikely to tap into the richness of the motivated cognition approach and how this can influence people as they actively experience and respond to (un)fairness over time and in dyadic situations. A motivated cognition perspective may be most readily captured by qualitative methods that can provide rich and deep insights into the subjectivity of experiences as well as by within-person approaches that focus on processes that occur over time. Further, multiperspective approaches can highlight how motivations differ between parties, how they dynamically change, and how these changes influence individuals' perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. Given that the answers to our research questions are shaped by the methodologies used, we encourage fairness researchers to expand our methodological toolsets to tap into these opportunities.

Insights into Other Fairness Questions

Although our review has focused on how motivated cognitions can influence the formation of fairness perceptions, the usefulness of a motivated cognition perspective is not restricted to this domain. In this section, we expand outward to note how a motivated cognition approach can provide insights into other fairness phenomena. Below, we discuss memory and self-regulation as examples of areas where motivated cognition may be particularly insightful for advancing our knowledge on other questions that fairness researchers are currently addressing.

Memory.   Motivated cognition can have significant implications for memory. Individuals who are motivated to maintain their beliefs (e.g., belief in a just world) are more likely to distort and selectively remember the past in ways that support this belief (e.g., by engaging in selective memory biases to portray outcomes as more fair; Callan, Kay, Davidenko, & Ellard, 2009). Memory is also influenced by one's state of mind at the time of the event and how the event was encoded (e.g., Tetlock, 1983, 1985). Over time, individuals are also more likely to remember the meaning that they imposed on events and behaviors (i.e., the final evaluative judgment) and often forget the details (i.e., the details that created the perception). Consider an individual who perceives that his or her manager failed to provide an adequate explanation or implement a procedure properly. Moving forward, this person is more likely to focus on the meaning created (i.e., the manager behaved "unfairly") as opposed to recalling the specific behaviors that lead to this assessment. When this happens, it becomes more difficult for individuals to locate and use details from memory that could lend different meaning to an observed behavior (i.e., the perception that the manager was unfair is likely to persist; Kunda, 1999). Further, memories of past events are typically reconstructed in ways that are influenced not only by the expectancies, beliefs, goals, and feelings at the time of the event but also by those that are active at the time of recollection, which can further bias our memories in systematic ways. Applying these insights to fairness can provide a deeper understanding not only of how perceptions are formed, but also how perceptions are aggregated, the stability of perceptions, when/why they may be resistant to change, and how/when individuals can use information differently to reinterpret events.

Self-regulation.   The role of self-regulation in fairness processes is currently receiving increased scholarly interest across all of the focal parties, including recipients (e.g., Thau & Mitchell, 2010), actors (e.g., Johnson, Lanaj, & Barnes, 2014; Whiteside & Barclay, 2016), and observers (e.g., Rupp & Bell, 2010). Self-regulation and motivated cognition are intricately intertwined. For example, self-regulation is involved when individuals select which goals to pursue (e.g., promotion or prevention, self-enhancement or self-verification), which strategies are used to pursue one's goals (e.g., modifying perceptions of one's self or others, seeking or avoiding certain types of information), and when one controls emotions, to name a few (Kunda, 1999). Whereas many studies are currently focusing on the outcomes of regulation, motivated cognition can also provide insights into *why*, *how*, and *when* people

can engage in these self-regulation processes to manage fairness issues.

Creating Opportunities for Integration Between Fairness and Other Literatures

A motivated cognition perspective can also be used as a foundation to facilitate meaningful integration between the fairness literature and other domains, including moral judgments, behavioral economics, ethical decision making, and behavioral ethics. Consider behavioral ethics as an example—numerous scholars have advocated for integration between behavioral ethics and fairness (e.g., Crawshaw, Cropanzano, Bell, & Nadisic, 2013; Cropanzano & Stein, 2009; Folger et al., 2005; Fortin, Nadisic, Bell, Crawshaw, & Cropanzano, 2016; Schminke, Ambrose, & Noel, 1997). An interesting find was that the reasons for proposed integration are often (implicitly) related to motivated cognitions (e.g., the presence of similar motives, the importance of identity; e.g., Skitka, 2003).

We propose that a motivated cognition framework can provide a strong and effective foundation for this integration. A motivated cognition approach provides a way to assimilate the various fairness and ethics-related motives and sheds light on how the various forms of identity can influence information processing. For example, research on moral convictions can broaden the focus of fairness from a "convention" (i.e., expectation of conduct that does not have a moral weight) to a moral conviction (i.e., internalized beliefs related to ethical principles), which has stronger psychological meaning for the individual (Skitka, 2010; Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2008). A motivated cognition perspective predicts that individuals will engage in different processing, depending on the degree to which an individual has internalized beliefs on these issues (Kunda, 1999). Similarly, individual differences in ethical frameworks can influence perceptions of fairness. For example, ethical formalists (i.e., individuals who emphasize moral judgments as reflecting rules or principles rather than outcomes) are more sensitive to procedural justice whereas ethical utilitarians (i.e., individuals who emphasize outcomes) are more sensitive to distributive justice (Schminke et al., 1997). Taken together, a motivated cognition perspective can help guide the effective integration of these literatures by highlighting areas of similarities and differences as well as by providing an organizing structure that can focus the literatures on key issues (e.g., motives, processing, and individual differences).

Boundary Conditions of a Motivated Cognition Perspective Within the Context of Fairness

Given the pervasive implications of a motivated cognition perspective, this raises questions such as "what are the limits of a motivated cognition perspective" or "where might this approach be less useful for fairness"? The answers to these questions likely reside in the assumptions underlying our discussion. Although fairness scholars can be motivated to interpret situations through a fairness lens, fairness is not relevant in all situations (cf. Shapiro, 2010). For a motivated cognition perspective to be influential for (un)fairness, we assume that fairness is a relevant concern in the situation and that the (un)fairness is self-relevant to the individual. While self-relevance is not a necessary condition to trigger justice

reasoning, it may determine how strongly motivational processing influences such reasoning. For example, studies using self-regulation have shown that individuals are more likely to be motivated by unfair events when these events are directly relevant to the individual (e.g., when unfairness is blocking one's goals; Barsky et al., 2011; Karoly, 1993). This implies that motivated cognitions may be less influential when individuals do not perceive fairness to be a relevant concern and/or when (un)fairness is not considered self-relevant, such as when unfairness is perceived as mild, does not block one's goals, and/or it is not fully experienced (e.g., if the situation is too artificial to prompt authentic fairness reactions and initiate genuine processing, such as in some laboratory paradigms).

However, assuming that (un)fairness is relevant in a given situation and considered self-relevant, when might a motivated cognition perspective be less influential? Research from the motivated cognition literature may provide some clues. Some research has indicated that motivated reasoning depends on the availability of resources (e.g., Paharia, Vohs, & Deshpandé, 2013). Specifically, when cognitive resources are diminished, individuals are less able to engage in the motivated processing of information. This implies that motivated cognitions should be less influential under conditions of cognitive load (e.g., when the demands on working memory are high; e.g., Sweller, 1988) and/or regulatory depletion (e.g., when regulatory resources are diminished; e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998) because individuals do not have the capacity to shift resources toward processing fairness-related information. However, it is also possible that the motives may be differentially impacted by the availability of resources. For example, accuracy motives may require more resources than instrumental motives. This implies that the various motives may also have different boundary conditions. That is, the factors that activate and/or constrain each motive may differ, which suggests that the motives may have varying influence under disparate conditions. Future research should explore these effects.

Our above discussion is primarily based on the premise that individuals are motivated to reach desired ends. However, individuals can also experience "amotivation" in which they are not motivated to regulate in some situations (e.g., because of lack of control, not valuing something, perceived incompetence; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals experiencing amotivation may have diminished drive to process information and, by extension, the influence of motivated cognitions may also be less impactful in these situations. Similarly, motivated cognitions may be less influential when the situation is unequivocal (i.e., in the absence of ambiguity). Given that individuals are constrained by the "illusion of objectivity," we expect motivations to be more influential when the situation has some uncertainty. However, when the situation is so strong that it would be difficult to hold an alternative interpretation (e.g., if there was universal consensus that something was unfair/fair), motivated cognitions should be less influential.

"Flipping the Lens": Using Motivated Cognitions as a Foundation to Create New Research Directions

Above, we focused on how integrating a motivated cognition perspective into the fairness literature can build on and enhance the contemporary fairness literature while also considering the boundary conditions that may exist for these effects. However, the power

of a motivated approach goes beyond the existing literature and has the potential to take fairness research into new domains that have not been previously identified. In this section, rather than integrating motivated cognitions into the fairness literature (i.e., using fairness as the conceptual foundation), we flip the lens and consider how starting with a motivated cognition foundation and integrating fairness into this literature can also create new opportunities for researchers. We argue that this approach can provide novel research opportunities for both the motivated cognition and fairness literatures, which can enhance our understanding of both phenomena and their interplay.

From a motivated cognition foundation, examining the influence of motives over time may enhance our understanding of the antecedents and reactions to (un)fairness. Building on our above discussion, it is likely that motives can influence how individuals initially process fairness information and form heuristics. However, over the course of time, the influence of these motives in forming the heuristics is likely to be forgotten, while the influence of the heuristic persists. Similar to the way that an emotion can become a mood as it loses its target and becomes more broadly diffuse (e.g., Frijda, 1988), it is possible that a motive can remain influential through a heuristic even as the specific motive fades. Further, it would be useful to examine the processes that the individual must go through to "undo" the influence of the motives that were operational during the formative stages of the heuristic. That is, how do motives shape the heuristic and does the individual have to move back into the judgment stage and create a new heuristic to diminish the influence of the motive that was operational at the time of its formation? What level of investment (cognitive or otherwise) would an individual need to undo or adjust such a heuristic and what would trigger such an investment? For example, if a heuristic was created when the accuracy motive was operational, does the individual have to move back into the judgment phase if their motives change to instrumental or can these motives shape the current heuristic and simply "nudge" it in the direction consistent with the "new" motive? The motive that is active at the time of the creation of the heuristic may also influence the stability of the heuristic. Future research should examine these processes.

We have argued that the motives may also influence the way that individuals form their perceptions. Although previous research has shown that individuals can be influenced by others' fairness perceptions when forming their own judgments (e.g., Degoey, 2000), studies have typically examined how individuals have received this in a passive way, such as by overhearing one's peers (e.g., Jones & Skarlicki, 2005). However, research examining gossip has demonstrated that individuals may actively seek information from others by providing positive and/or negative evaluative statements to others to confirm their own perceptions or gain access to the information that they need to form their perception (Brady, Brown, & Liang, 2017). We suggest that individuals may seek out information when forming their fairness perceptions and the motive that is operational at the time may influence *how* individuals seek out this information. For example, if they want to bond with others over an injustice (e.g., relational motive), they may seek out peers who have also experienced injustice from the same perpetrator (e.g., using their "friendship network" to find support) whereas if they want accurate information, they may be inclined to seek out information from other sources with unique

information about the perpetrator (e.g., find individuals more central in the target's social network who are likely to have access to concrete information about the target). Taken together, this suggests that individuals should be viewed as active in this process—not just actively processing information but also actively seeking (or avoiding) it, depending on their motives.

Given that individuals can have multiple motives, it may also be important to examine "motives clusters"; that is, how clusters of different motives can impact the processing of information and subsequent reactions. For example, even if a moral motive is a dominant theme of two clusters of motives, a morally themed cluster that also includes accuracy and relational motives is likely to operate differently than a morally themed cluster that also includes instrumental and efficiency motives.

Clearly, the motivated cognition perspective is not only important for enhancing our understanding of the existing literature but can also push scholars into new research avenues that are novel for the fairness literature and that can enhance our understanding of fairness issues.

Conclusion

Motivated cognitions have long been implicitly embedded in the fairness literature. Throughout our review, we have highlighted how explicitly examining the fairness literature through the lens of motivated cognition can integrate seemingly disparate streams of existing theories and research questions, provide new insight into fairness processes, and build a foundation to create synergies with other fields. Further, this approach opens novel and theoretically important research questions, has significant methodological implications, and can provide insights into how fairness can be effectively managed in the workplace.

Importantly, the fairness literature has evolved to a state where the conditions are ripe for a fruitful integration. We strongly encourage fairness researchers to explicitly examine how integrating motivated cognitions can further enrich our understanding of the subjectivity of fairness and other important fairness-related questions. Further, we encourage researchers to go beyond simply replicating findings from the motivated cognition literature. Instead, our understanding can be significantly deepened by considering how motivated cognitions might inform the situational and temporal boundary conditions of our theories (e.g., Bamberger, 2008) and mechanisms that explain relationships among them (e.g., Cappelli & Sherer, 1991). These insights can be reintegrated back into theory, which not only enhances our understanding of fairness but can also create a more comprehensive theory of motivated cognition (cf. Bamberger, 2008). Taken together, examining motivated cognition within the context of fairness can undoubtedly spark new and meaningful insights. Applying a motivated cognition lens not only enhances our theoretical knowledge but also ensures that the fairness literature continues to compellingly speak to those who experience and those who must manage fairness issues within organizations.

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