READING 18

The Psychology of Procedural Justice: A Test of the Group-Value Model

Tom R. Tyler • Northwestern University and American Bar Foundation

Research on the psychology of procedural justice has been dominated by Thibaut and Walker's (1975) theory about the psychology of procedural preference. That theory suggests that people are concerned with their direct and indirect control over decisions. Lind and Tyler (1988) proposed a group-value theory that suggests that several noncontrol issues—the neutrality of the decision-making procedure, trust in the 3rd party, and the information the experience communicates about social standing—influence both procedural preferences and judgments of procedural justice. This study examines 3 issues. The first is whether judgments about neutrality, trust, and social standing have an independent impact on judgment of procedural justice. The results suggest that they do. The second is how Thibaut and Walker's control theory developed. The results suggest that control issues are central to the setting studied by Thibaut and Walker—disputes—but are less important in other situations. Finally, the implications of these findings for a group-value theory of procedural justice are examined.

In their 1975 book on procedural justice, Thibaut and Walker suggested that people's reactions to third-party allocation and dispute—resolution decisions are influenced by the fairness of the decision-making procedures, independent of the influence of either the favorability or the fairness of the decisions reached. This procedural justice effect has since been widely replicated in legal, industrial, political, and interpersonal settings (see Lind & Tyler, 1988). It is now a well-established fact that people care about the justice of allocation and decision-making procedures.

In addition to suggesting that people care about procedural justice, Thibaut and Walker (1975) articulated a psychological model to explain procedural preferences. That model suggests that the distribution of control between the participants and the third party is the key procedural characteristic shaping people's views about both fainess and desirability. Thibaut and Walker distinguished between two types of control: process control and decision control. *Process control* refers to participants' control over the presentation of evidence; *decision control* refers to participants' control over the actual decisions made.

Underlying the control model are several important assumptions. The most obvious is that people focus on their direct and indirect control over the decisions made by the third party. It is assumed that people are not concerned with their long-term relationship to the third party or to the institutions they represent. In other words, people are primarily concerned about their relationship to the person or people with whom they have a

dispute. Their concerns include an interest in the specific dispute they are engaged in and a concern about maintaining a long-term, productive exchange relationship with other parties to the dispute. As people's concern in dealing with a third party is with the dispute at issue, it is control over aspects of the procedure related to the resolution of the dispute that are central to the control model (Thibaut & Walker, 1975, 1978).

Research subsequent to Thibaut and Walker (1975) has generally followed the control model by focusing its attention on the distribution of control within various types of procedure (see Lind & Tyler, 1988, for a review). That research supports Thibaut and Walker's suggestion that the distribution of control within a procedure influences assessments of its procedural fairness (Lind & Tyler, 1988), so Thibaut and Walker's control theory has been widely confirmed. In their original theory of control, Thibaut and Walker placed their primary emphasis on decision control, viewing process control as an indirect means of exerting decision control. In contrast, subsequent research has suggested that (a) process control is usually more important than decision control, and (b) process control is important even if it is not linked to decision control (Lind, Lissak, & Conlon, 1983; Tyler, 1987; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985). As Thibaut and Walker predicted, people care about control. However, their concerns about control do not correspond to the predictions of Thibaut and Walker's control model.

Group-Value Model

Lind and Tyler (1988) proposed a different conception of the psychology of procedural justice, one that they labeled the *group-value model*. The group-value model suggests that there are important aspects of the psychology of procedural justice that are not represented in Thibaut and Walker's (1975) control model. The group-value model assumes that people are concerned about their long-term social relationship with the authorities or institutions acting as third parties and do not view their relationship with third parties as a one-shot deal. Instead, people care about their relationship with the third party. This leads them to be concerned with three noncontrol issues: the neutrality of the decision-making procedure, trust in the third party, and evidence about social standing. It is predicted that these three group-value issues will have an effect on reactions to experiences that is independent of the influence of outcome favorability or the distribution of control.

The basic assumption of the group-value model is that people value membership in social groups; that is, group identification is psychologically rewarding. People want to belong to social groups and to establish and maintain the social bonds that exist within groups. Research shows that people establish such connections if given even the most tenuous basis for group identification (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Messick & Brewer, 1983; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

One reason that people seek group membership is that groups provide a source of self-validation (Festinger, 1954), giving their members information about the appropriateness of their attitudes and values. Groups also provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Finally, groups are important sources of material resources. For these reasons, people find evidence that they are accepted members of social groups rewarding and are troubled by evidence that they are being rejected by the groups to which they belong (Cartwright & Zander, 1953; Schachter, 1951).

The groups that people identify with and belong to can be either small groups (such as family, friendship, or work groups) or large organizations. In addition, people identify with and belong to local, state, and national legal and political groups. This study focuses on people's identification with their common membership in a legal-political system, which has formalized rules, institutions, and authorities. Although the legal system is a larger group than a family, friendship, or work group, people nonetheless identify strongly with the legal-political system and feel a striking sense of personal obligation to legal and political authorities (Tyler, in press). This identification continues to occur, although in a weaker form, both within minority groups and among the poor.

Neutrality

In a long-term relationship, people cannot always have what they want. Instead, they must compromise and sometimes defer to others' desires and

needs. Hence, a simple focus on outcome favorability in any specific situation is not realistic. People must think about their outcomes over time. Given that people cannot easily focus on short-term outcome favorability, how can they evaluate whether their outcomes from the group are reasonable? Lind and Tyler (1988) suggested that people assume that, over time, all will benefit fairly from the application of fair procedures for decision making. The first implication of a group-value perspective, therefore, is that people will focus on whether the authority has created a neutral arena (i.e., a "level playing field") in which to resolve their problem or conflict, instead of focusing on whether they receive a favorable outcome in any given decision. In any particular situation people will be concerned with having an unbiased decision maker who is honest and who uses appropriate factual information to make decisions.

Trust

In addition to leading to a focus on the neutrality of decision-making procedures, the long-term nature of group membership leads people to focus on the intentions of third parties. Formal authorities, like judges, are given a large element of discretion about the way in which procedures are enacted (Tyler & Bies, in press). Their use of that discretion is shaped by their intentions. Trust involves the belief that the intentions of third parties are benevolent, that they desire to treat people in a fair and reasonable way.

The intentions of authorities are especially important because current interactions allow people to predict the future (Heider, 1958). Because people are in organizations for the long term, their loyalty depends on their predictions about what will happen in the long term. For this reason, people's commitment to the group changes as their attributions about the intentions of the authorities change. If they believe that the authorities are trying to be fair and to deal equitably with them, they develop a long-term commitment to the group.

Standing

Third, people care about their standing in the group. Interpersonal treatment during social interactions gives people information about their status within the group. If people are treated rudely, they know that the authority they are dealing with regards them as having low status within the group. Conversely, polite and respectful treatment communicates that the authorities involved regard them as having high status in the group. Similarly, if authorities show respect for individuals' rights as a group member, individuals gain knowledge that those rights will be respected, whereas abuse of one's rights brings their existence into question. When the police harass minorities or treat them rudely, for example, they communicate to members of those groups both their low social standing and the fact that the authorities may not protect them and may, in fact, even hurt them.

Why Did Thibaut and Walker Develop a Control Theory?

This study examines why, if noncontrol variables are an important determinant of reactions to experiences with legal authorities, Thibaut and Walker's (1975) research resulted in a control theory. One hypothesis is that their control theory is appropriate for their research setting—dispute resolution—but does not generalize to other settings.[1] Several recent studies have lent plausibility to this possibility by suggesting that people assess the fairness of procedures in different ways under different circumstances (Barrett-Howard & Tyler, 1986; Lissak & Sheppard, 1983; Sheppard & Lewicki, 1987; Sheppard, Saunders, & Minton, 1988; Tyler, 1988).

Thibaut and Walker's (1975) research is also limited in the type of people they studied. Their work typically used college or law students as subjects (and as third parties). Sears (1986) has pointed out that college-student participants differ in many respects from the general population. In particular, (a) college students tend to be oriented toward cognitive and verbal skills, and may have viewed control over the opportunity to present evidence and arguments as a particularly key feature of procedural justice, and (b) questions of group identification and long-term group loyalty were not particularly salient to college students, who are less oriented toward long-term group relationships. In addition, the participants were members of artificially created, short-term groups, and probably felt limited loyalty to those groups. It is also possible, therefore, that Thibaut and Walker's theory of procedure would have differed if they had used a broader sample of the population as subjects.

[1] Although very important, dispute resolution in formal courtroom trials is not the typical type of experience that people have with legal authorities. The random sampling approach used in this study led to a random sample of people's experiences with legal authorities. In the sample, only 7% of people's experiences involved going to court to resolve a dispute (out of 23% who went to court for any reason).

Group-Value Model

Finding noncontrol effects supports the hypotheses of the group-value model. It does not, however, demonstrate the validity of that model, if other theories can also potentially explain the findings reported. To support the group-value interpretation, it is necessary to show that people care about neutrality, trust, or standing because they care about group status and group membership.

This study includes two types of analysis that more directly test the group-value explanation for the importance of noncontrol issues. The first involves distinguishing between the three different group-value concerns: neutrality, trust, and standing. Of these, standing is the most directly linked to group-value issues. If people prefer information about their status in the group to favorable outcomes, that preference directly supports a group-value interpretation. Trust is also linked to the group-value model when people's trust in the intentions of the authority they have dealt with is being generalized to the group. In other words, if people believe that they will never again deal with the particular judge they have encountered, then that judge is a symbol of the group, and reactions to him or her support a group-value model. If people are involved in a continuing relationship with the third party, then concern about the third party's intentions may reflect either group-value or social exchange concerns. In contrast to standing and trust, neutrality can be explained by both group-value and social exchange models. Hence, evidence that standing and trust matter is especially supportive of a group-value interpretation.

The group-value model also predicts that those people who are committed to the social group will care particularly strongly about group-value issues. In other words, the meaning of procedural justice will be different for such people, who will regard control issues as less central to definitions of procedural justice. Social exchange theory conversely predicts that more committed group members will care more about control. Hence, exploring the relation between commitment and definitions of procedural justice provides a second way to differentiate the group-value and social exchange models of procedural justice.

Method

Subjects

The data used in this study were obtained through survey interviews with a random sample of the population of Chicago. The interviews were conducted over the telephone during the spring of 1984. The sample of telephone numbers called represented a random sample of existing numbers in the city of Chicago, and 63% of the numbers yielded completed interviews. Some respondents had had several experiences with different legal authorities. Those respondents were asked questions about their most important experience. The use of a random sampling approach leads to a broad range of experiences with legal authorities, including appearances in court (22%), calls to the police for help (47%), and being stopped by the police (31%). The sample included 652 residents of Chicago interviewed following an experience with legal authorities.

Materials

Independent Variables

Outcome favorability. Outcome favorability was assessed in both absolute and relative terms.[2] The absolute quality of the outcome was determined by coding respondent statements indicating the nature of the experience's outcome. In the case of calls to the police, respondents were asked whether the police had solved the problem about which they were called. In situations in which the respondent had been stopped by the police, respondents were asked whether the police had cited them for a violation of the law and whether they had arrested the respondent or taken him or her to a police sta-

[2] For the complete wording of all questions and the frequency of all responses, write to Tom Tyler.

tion. With court cases, respondents were asked to indicate whether the outcome of their case was positive or negative. To form an Outcome Favorability scale, the previously outlined judgments of outcome favorability were weighted by the self-reported seriousness of the problem.

Outcome favorability was also assessed relative to four standards of reference. First, respondents were asked to compare their experience with experiences they have had in the past. Second, they were asked to compare their experience with their expectations before the experience, however derived. Third, they were asked to compare their experience with what they thought generally happened to other members of the public. Finally, they were asked to compare their experience with recent experiences of their friends, family, or neighbors.

Control. Process control was assessed by asking respondents how much opportunity they had had to present their problem or their side of the case before decisions were made about how to deal with it. Decision control was assessed by asking respondents how much influence they had over the decisions that were made by the third party. Responses to the two items were correlated ($r = .57$), so the process and decision control items were averaged to form a single control index ($\alpha = .72$).

Neutrality. Neutrality was operationalized as proper behavior, factual decision making, and a lack of bias. Lack of bias in the authorities' behavior was established by asking respondents whether their treatment or the outcome of their interaction was influenced by their race, sex, age, nationality, or some other characteristic of them as a person. In addition, in those cases in which there was a dispute between parties, respondents were asked whether the legal authorities involved had favored one party over another. The three items were highly correlated (mean $r = .54$, $\alpha = .78$).

Neutrality also included propriety or impropriety of behavior. Impropriety was assessed by combining responses to two questions: whether the authorities "did anything that was improper of dishonest" and whether officials had lied. The two items were highly correlated ($r = .44$, $\alpha = .61$).

Finally, neutrality included factual decision making. The factual quality of decision making was assessed in two ways. First, respondents were asked whether the authority involved had "gotten the information they needed to make good decisions about how to handle" the problem. Second, respondents were asked whether the authorities had tried to "bring the problem into the open so that it could be solved." The two items were highly correlated ($r = .59$, $\alpha = .74$).

To construct the Neutrality scale, subscales were created reflecting each of the three elements of neutrality. Each subscale was created by counting the number of instances of nonneutrality mentioned. The three subscales were found to be positively correlated ($r = .21$), so a Neutrality scale was created by averaging the three subscales ($\alpha = .44$).

Trust. Trust is linked to inferences about the intentions of the authorities. People's impressions about those intentions were assessed by asking respondents to indicate how much effort the authority had made to be fair to them. The assumption that underlies this operationalization of trust is that people use the intentions of the authority dealt with to predict the future behavior of all authorities. In other words, people both (a) predict from the past to the future and (b) generalize from an experience with one or two people to the future behavior of all legal authorities.

To test the reasonableness of the assumptions underlying this operationalization of trust, the degree to which people predict and generalize was tested. Respondents were asked both how typical the authorities they dealt with were of all such authorities, and how much information their experience gave them about how legal authorities would act toward them in the future. These two judgments were combined into a single-scale Generalization scale, and various aspects of experience were used to predict generalization. As predicted, the degree of trust was found to predict the degree of generalization ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < .001$). Generalization was also related to whether the authorities were polite and showed respect for people's rights ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). Outcome favorability did not predict generalization (absolute $r = .11$, *ns*; relative $r = .00$, *ns*). Control did not predict generalization ($r = .10$, *ns*). Finally, neutrality did not predict generalization ($r = .10$, *ns*).

Standing. Information about social standing is conveyed by the quality of the interpersonal treatment a person receives from third parties. Standing was measured in two ways. First, respondents were asked whether the authorities had been polite to them. They were also asked whether the authorities had shown respect for their rights. These two measures were highly correlated ($r = .73$), so they were averaged to form a Standing scale ($\alpha = .84$).

Although distinct conceptually, the different psychological judgments outlined are not independent of one another. The three operationalizations of the group-value model are intercorrelated (mean $r = .58$), as well as being correlated with the control index (mean $r = .53$) and with outcome favorability (mean $r = .34$). Similarly, control judgments are related to outcome favorability ($r = .32$).

Dependent Variables

Four dependent variables were used in the analysis. The first was the respondents' judgment about the fairness of the procedures used during their experience with the police or courts. Respondents were asked how fair the procedures used by the authorities had been and how fairly they had been treated. These two items were highly correlated ($r = .81$), and were averaged to form a single scale indexing procedural justice ($\alpha = .90$). Respondents were also asked about the fairness of the outcome of their experience. They were asked about the fairness of the outcome and whether they had received what they deserved. These two items were highly correlated ($r = .78$), so a single scale of outcome fairness was formed by averaging ($\alpha = .88$). The correlation between the Procedural Fairness and Outcome Fairness scales was. 74.

Respondents also indicated their affect toward the authorities they had dealt with by indicating whether they felt angry, frustrated, or pleased with the authorities. These three items were highly correlated (mean $r = .56$), so an Affect scale was created by averaging responses ($\alpha = 79$).

Finally, respondents were asked to evaluate the overall fairness of the authorities, that is, to generalize from their own experience with particular police officers or judges to views about whether those authorities generally treat citizens fairly. Respondents first indicated how fairly the police or courts treat people and handle their problems. They also indicated how often the police (courts) treat people fairly. Finally, they indicated how fairly they thought that they would be treated by the police (courts) if they were to deal with them in the future. These items were highly correlated (mean $r = .49$ for the police items; mean $r = .46$ for the court items), so they were averaged to form a single scale ($\alpha = .74$ for the police; $\alpha = .72$ for the courts). All respondents were given a score for the scale reflecting their views about the fairness of the authorities they had dealt with (the police or the courts).

Control Variables

Thirteen variables were measured for use as control variables. Six are demographic variables: education, income, self-described political liberalism-conservatism, age, sex, and race. Five are characteristics of the experience: the authority dealt with, whether a dispute was involved, whether the interaction was voluntary, and the self-reported importance of the outcome and of the quality of treatment by the authorities. Finally, two general questions were included that index beliefs about whether the authorities generally treat citizens equally.

People's commitment to the social group was also used as a control variable in the analysis. That commitment was measured in two ways. First, support for legal authorities was assessed. Eight items were used to establish affective attachment to those authorities, including "I feel proud of the [police/courts]" and "I respect the [police/courts]." Those items were correlated (mean $r = .40$, $\alpha = .84$), so they were averaged to form a single index of support. Perceived obligation to obey legal authorities was also assessed using a six-item scale, consisting of items such as "I always try to follow the law, even if I think that it is wrong." Those items were also positively correlated (mean $r = .18$). so they were averaged to form an obligation scale ($\alpha = .57$).

Results

Do Neutrality, Trust, and Standing Matter?

The first question is whether neutrality, trust, and standing explain variance in people's reactions to their experiences with legal authorities that cannot be explained by judgments about control or the favorability of outcomes. If these noncontrol issues are important, they should explain significant amounts of independent variance when variations in control and outcome favorability are controlled for. One way to test for such an idependent influence is through a multiple regression equation with independent variable indexes

reflecting outcome favorability, control, neutrality, trust, and social standing.

Table 1 shows the extent to which each of the independent variables under consideration can explain variance in the dependent variables when considered (a) alone or (b) in addition to whatever variance has already been explained by all of the other variables in an equation. The results strongly suggest that neutrality, trust, and standing are a key input into people's reactions to their experiences with third parties. They consistently explain a significant amount of independent variance. In fact, they always explain more variance in the dependent variables than do control issues, irrespective of whether they are considered alone or in addition to other variables.

In the case of procedural justice judgments, for example, neutrality, trust, and standing explain 65% of the variance in procedural justice judgments if considered alone ($p < .001$), and 22% of variance in procedural justice judgments that cannot be explained by outcome favorability or control judgments ($p < .001$). Control issues, in contrast, explain 39% of the variance in procedural justice judgments when considered alone ($p < .001$), and only 1% of unique variance ($p < .001$), Similarly, outcome favorability explains 21% of the variance in procedural justice judgments when considered alone ($p < .001$), and 1% of unique variance ($p < .001$), Neutrality, trust, and standing similarly dominate judgments of distributive justice, affect toward third parties, and beliefs about the justice of legal authorities.

A second type of regression analysis uses beta weights to explore the magnitude of the influence of the independent variables. This analysis allows the independent influence of each of the three noncontrol variables—neutrality, trust, and standing—to be examined. The beta weight shown in Table 2 suggest that issues of trust and of standing within the group are especially important in shaping both people's judgments about whether they have received procedural justice and their reactions to their experience. Both of these judgments are more important than either control judgments or outcome favorability. Neutrality is most important when the issue of concern is outcome fairness. If people are deciding whether the outcome of their experience is fair, they place weight on the neutrality of the decision-making procedure. Such concerns are more important than control issues. Outcome justice judgments are also linked to the favorability of the outcome.

Controlling for Potentially Confounding Third Variables

Because the data used in this study are correlational, it is always possible that the results reported represent a spurious joint association of the variables examined to some unassessed third variable. Such a possibility can never be definitively refuted, as all such possible third variables can never be identified and included in the equation. The possibility of a spurious result can be minimized, however, by including plausible third variables in the equation as controls. In addition to presenting the regression analysis already outlined, Table 2 presents a similar analysis that includes control variables reflecting individual and situational differences.

The results of the regression analysis with added control variables suggest that introducing third-variable controls has essentially no influence on the conclusions previously outlined regarding the importance of neutrality, trust, and standing. All of the regression analyses that include control variables continue to support the suggestion that noncontrol issues have an independent influence on procedural justice judgments and reactions to experience.[3]

TABLE 1. The Ability of Each Variable to Explain Variance

Independent variable	Procedural justice		Distributive justice		Affect toward authorities		Beliefs about the justice of the authorities	
	Alone (%)	Unique (%)	Alone (%)	Unique (%)	Alone (%)	Unique (%)	Alone (%)	Unique (%)
Absolute and relative outcome favorability	21	1	34	16	16	2	12	3
Control	39	1	23	0	26	1	12	0
Group-value variables	65	22	50	20	49	19	23	8
Total	68		66		52		26	

Note. $n = 652$. The percentages reported in the Alone variance columns represent the amount of variance explained by the factor(s) when entered into an equation alone. The percentages reported in the Unique variance columns represent the amount of variance explained by each psychological factor above what can be explained by all of the other factors. All nonzero entries are $p < .001$.

TABLE 2. The Influence of Differing Psychological Characteristics

Independent varible	Procedural justice	Distributive justice	Affect toward authorities	Beliefs about the justice of the authorities
	Without third variable controls			
Outcome favorability				
Absolute	.16***	.19***	.15***	.20***
Relative	.07**	.31***	−.01	.05
Control	.17***	.03	.11**	.05
Group-value issues				
Neutrality	.15***	.27***	.10*	.01
Trust	.30***	.27***	.25***	.23***
Group standing	.29***	.17***	.31***	.18***
Total	68%	66%	52%	26%
	With third variable controls			
Outcome favorability				
Absolute	.15***	.13***	.16***	.13**
Relative	.06*	.37***	.00	.01
Control	.19***	.10**	.11**	.09
Group-value issues				
Neutrality	.13***	.24***	.10*	−.02
Trust	.31***	.33***	.24***	.18***
Group standing	.28***	.20***	.28***	.12**
Total	69%	70%	52%	47%

Note. All entries are standardized regression coefficients for an equation in which all terms were entered simultaneously. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Why Did Thibaut and Walker Develop a Control Theory?

To test the possibility that the choice of setting or of participants influenced the psychological model of procedural justice developed, an analysis was conducted to examine the criteria used by different types of people, and by people in different situations, to define the fairness of procedures. Respondents were divided into subgroups along two dimensions: personal differences and situational differences. Each variable was used in a regression analysis of the type already outlined in the discussion of differences in levels of group commitment. As before, interaction terms were added to a regression of outcome, control, and group-value criteria on judgments of procedural justice. In the cases in which a significant interaction effect was found, separate regression analyses were conducted for each of the two subgroups defined by the situational variable being considered. A comparison of the beta weights within these two regression equations shows the relative importance of the various aspects of procedural justice within each subgroup.

[3]A second possible confounding influence is the effect of prior views about authority in general on interpretations of particular experiences. Because control judgments are more experience specific, and group-value judgments are more global, group-value judgments may be more influenced by prior attitudes. To test this possibility, panel data collected on 291 respondents were analyzed. Those respondents were interviewed both before and after their experiences (see Tyler, in press, for a fuller description of this sample). A replication of the analysis shown in Tables 1 and 2 was conducted, with additional variables added to reflect attitudes toward authority before the experience. With these additional variables in the equation, significant group-value effects continued to be found with all four dependent variables. The additional controls had essentially no influence on judgments of procedural justice, distributive justice, or affect. They diminished, but did not eliminate, the effect of group-value judgments on generalizations to views about the fairness of the authorities. Hence, potential confounds with prior attitudes are not an explanation for group-value effects.

To test the possibility that different types of people do not define procedural justice in the same way, the six demographic variables (race, sex, income, education, age, and liberalism) were used as variables for subgroup analyses. The subgroup analyses yielded no significant differences in the importance of control in the definition of a fair procedure. Of the 18 interactions created by the three group-value variables, only one was statistically significant.[4]

It is also possible that the importance of control or of the group-value issues in defining procedural justice varies depending on the nature of the situation in which people are dealing with legal authorities. Seven situational dimensions were used to explore this possibility: the authority dealt with (police or courts), whether a dispute was involved, whether the experience was voluntary, whether the outcome was favorable, the importance to the respondent of receiving a favorable outcome, and the importance to the respondent of receiving fair treatment from the authorities. Two additional scales were used that measured people's general views about whether the legal authorities treat all citizens equally. The first scale asks respondents whether all citizens are treated equally, and the second asks whether the particular group to which the respondent belongs is treated worse than others.[5]

Unlike the findings in the case of demographic differences, subgroup analysis using situational differences revealed several variations in the role of control in defining the meaning of procedural justice. In two of the seven cases—that is, in the case of variations in whether a dispute was involved and whether the outcome was favorable—significant variations in the importance of control were found. Control was a significantly more important determinant of procedural justice judgments in dispute settings and when outcomes were unfavorable. These findings suggest that Thibaut and Walker's (1975) focus on control is due to their focus on disputes, not to their use of college students as participants.

Do More Committed People Care More About Group-Value Issues?

The previously outlined results suggest that people generally care about neutrality, trust, and standing. If these concerns reflect the concerns identified by group-value theory, those people who are more committed to the social group should care particularly strongly about them. To test this suggestion, two variables tapping group loyalty were used for subgroup analysis. The first is support for legal authorities, an affective measure of positive feeling toward the police and courts. The second is the perceived obligation to obey those authorities.[6] Respondents were divided into subgroups by dividing the sample at the median.

Regression analysis was used to explore subgroup differences in the role of group-value issues in defining procedural justice. In the regression analyses performed, as in those shown in Table 2, an equation was run that included all psychological factors as independent variables. In addition, an interaction term was included for the interaction of the subgroup variable—loyalty to the group—with each psychological factor. Finally, a term was included to reflect the main effect of the subgroup variable itself. All respondents were included in the analysis.

The results of the subgroup analysis—shown in Table 3—support the hypothesis that those more committed to a group care more about group-value issues. For both variables, group-value issues are more important among those with greater commitment to legal authorities. In the case of support, those high in support defined procedural justice significantly more strongly in terms of the neutrality of the decision-making procedure, and those low in support defined procedural justice significantly more strongly in terms of the favorability of their outcome. In the case of obligation, those high in commitment to legal authorities defined procedural justice significantly more strongly in terms of their trust in the authorities. Although these findings support the theory, it is also important to recognize that the level of support is weak. There are six opportunities for group-value variables to interact with commitment, and only two of those interactions are significant. It is important not to overstate the strength of this finding: It is significant, but weak. Neither of the two measures of commitment resulted in a significant control interaction, although those low in support were found to care more about the favorability of the outcomes they obtained.

[4]Minority group members were found to place significantly greater weight on evidence about their social standing than did White group members.

[5]As previously noted, it is important to remember that evaluations of the legal authorities were influenced by the respondents' experiences; that is, those who thought that they were fairly treated evaluated the legal authorities more positively. Interestingly, views about whether the authorities treat citizens equally were found to be unrelated to anything involving past experience (mean $r = .05$, *ns*). Although this issue suggests an important caution in interpreting the findings reported here, this analysis is concerned with the meaning of procedural justice. It seems less likely that people change their views about what constitutes procedural justice as a result of their experience.

[6]Using support and obligation as variables in this analysis requires one caution. Because the experiences being discussed occurred before the interview, whereas attitudes were assessed at the time of the interview, the experiences may have influenced attitudes. In fact, they did (see Tyler, in press). In this case, however, that problem is less important because the issue is the meaning of procedural justice.

TABLE 3. Group Commitment Influences on the Meaning of Procedural Justice

Independent variable	Support			Obligation		
	High	Low	Difference	High	Low	Difference
Absolute outcome favorability	.03	.26***	*	.14***	.20***	–
Relative outcome favorability	.00	.19***	–	.10**	.09	–
Control	.15**	.17*	–	.21***	.20***	–
Neutrality	.20***	.10*	*	.12**	.16**	–
Trust	.35***	.27***	–	.38***	.22***	*
Standing	.30***	.35***	–	.26***	.32***	–
Total(R^2)	61%	71%		68%	68%	

Note. The entries in each column are beta weights from an equation in which all six psychological factors are entered simultaneously. An asterisk in the difference column indicates that the interaction term was statistically significant at $p < .05$ or greater in an equation including main effects and interactions.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Thibaut and Walker's (1975) initial theory of procedural justice emphasized the role of control judgments in shaping people's assessments about the fairness of procedures. The results of this study support their suggestion that control issues do matter. The findings suggest strongly, however, that a broader perspective on the psychology of procedural justice explains a great deal about the psychology of procedural justice that cannot be understood using control theories. When issues of neutrality, trust, and standing are examined, they explain more about people's reactions to their experiences than do variations in perceived control or outcome favorability.

The importance of judgments about neutrality, trust, and standing suggests that people care about more than the issue or problem that initially brings them to a third party. People care about their relationship to the third party. They react to evidence about how that person makes decisions, to information about their intentions, and to the interpersonal context of their interaction with each other.

These findings help to explain two anomalous findings in the control literature. Those findings are that, although Thibaut and Walker (1975) focused on decision control, studies typically find that (a) having process control is more important to people's feelings of being fairly treated than is having decision control, and (b) people value process control even when it is not linked to decision control (Lind et al., 1983; Tyler, 1987; Tyler et al., 1985). These findings are understandable if the importance of people's connection to authorities is recognized. Those with problems value the opportunity to present their problems to authorities. By allowing people to bring problems to them, authorities reaffirm people's social standing and their right to call on the organization for help. Tyler (1987) supported this interpretation by finding that the opportunity to address authorities is only valuable if people believe that what they say has been considered by the authorities when a decision is being made. People's standing in the group is not validated by being ignored, and being ignored would not suggest that an organization is responsive to appeals for help.

Hence, the results suggest the need to broaden the theoretical framework within which procedural justice is understood beyond the control theory articulated by Thibaut and Walker (1975). One theoretical framework that suggests a broader framework is that proposed by Leventhal (1980).

Leventhal (1980) suggested six criteria that might influence judgments about the justice of a procedure. Four of those criteria are aspects of third-party neutrality: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, and correctability. A fifth criterion is *ethicality*, by which Leventhal meant compatibility with prevailing moral and ethical standards. That criterion is similar to the issue of standing in the group, although Leventhal did not explicitly link the use of ethical standards to the question of standing in the group. Finally, like Thibaut and Walker, Leventhal suggested that control is important. In his framework, control is referred to as *representation*. Hence, many of the findings of this study are anticipated in Leventhal's discussion of procedural justice. Leventhal, however, did not frame his discussion of these issues in terms of people's long-term connection to social groups, as does group-value theory.

An interesting question raised by these findings is why neutrality, trust, and standing were not more important in Thibaut and Walker's (1975) original theory of the psychology of procedural justice. The results of the subgroup analysis suggest why control emerged as the key issue in their work. Within the context of disputes, control is the major issue defining the justice of procedures. On the other hand, disputes represent only one context within which people deal with legal authorities. In other contexts noncontrol concerns are more important.

Thibaut and Walker's (1975) control theory of procedural justice is based on the social exchange model of Thibaut and Kelley (1959). That model stresses people's instrumental concerns in their interaction with others. The group-value model, in contrast, emphasizes the importance that people place on membership in social groups. Both models suggest that people care about long-term group membership, but the models link that concern to different issues. Social exchange theories link such concerns to an interest in rewards from the group, and group-value theories link it to information about group status.

The findings of this study support a group-value interpretation of procedural justice concerns. They do so in several ways. First, issues of standing and trust are more important than the issue of neutrality. Because standing and, to a lesser degree, trust more directly reflect group-value concerns than does neutrality, their importance to those studied supports a group-value interpretation of the findings reported here. This finding provides very strong support for the group-value model of procedural justice effects, as those indicators that are most strongly linked to group-value theory are the most important, and those most strongly linked to social exchange theory are the least important.[7]

The group-value interpretation of noncontrol effects is also supported by the finding that those who are more committed to the group care more about group-value issues. Although consistent with the predictions of group-value theory, this finding is weaker than the first finding. Only two of six possible interactions are significant. In contrast, however, there is no support for the social exchange theory prediction that more committed group members, who should be more invested in securing group outcomes, care more about their degree of control over outcomes.

The value that people place on group membership has two implications. First, people have a long-term commitment to the group and to its authorities, rules, and institutions. Instead of focusing on a single outcome, people look for evidence suggesting whether, over time, they will benefit fairly from group membership. Second, people value favorable social standing in the group. Hence, information about such standing, which is linked to the interpersonal aspects of interaction with authorities, is important and shapes people's interpretations of their experiences.

The group-value model argues for a broader conception of the meaning of procedural justice than is presented in the control model. It suggests that people in organizations focus on their long-term association with a group and with its authorities and institutions. People expect an organization to use neutral decision-making procedures enacted by trustworthy authorities so that, over time, all group members will benefit fairly from being members of the group. They also expect the group and its authorities to treat them in ways that affirm their self-esteem by indicating that they are valued members of the group who deserve treatment with respect, dignity, and politeness (Barber, 1983; Bies & Shapiro, 1987; Lane, 1988).

Another group-value issue is standing in the group, which is reflected in the quality of the interpersonal treatment people experience when dealing with authorities. Lane (1988) noted that one of the most important aspects of procedural justice to citizens dealing with political authorities is that the procedures used support their sense of self-respect. Similarly, Tyler and Folger (1980) examined citizen–police contacts and found that a key issue to citizens in such contacts was a "recognition of citizen rights" (p. 292). Similarly, Bies and Shapiro (1987) examined job applicants' reactions to job interviews in a corporate recruiting setting and found that candidates reacted to the politeness of their treatment, as well as to the neutrality issues of decision-maker bias, consistency, and honesty.

The linkage of procedural justice to issues of group identification also suggests the possibility that there will be limits to the areas in which procedural-justice issues arise, with those limits being defined by the contours of people's group identifications. This suggestion corresponds to the argument in the distributive justice literature that concerns about distributive justice will occur within cooperative communities (Deutsch, 1985; Opotow, 1987). The findings of Tyler (in press) support this suggestion. Tyler found that people who are more committed to the institutions represented by authorities pay more attention to issues of procedural justice when they evaluate those authorities.

It is also possible that the range of procedural justice is limited by the expectation of future interaction. If people recognize that they will not be in a relationship with the other person in the future, they may feel less concerned with maintaining a social bond with that person, and may focus less heavily on issues of procedural justice. Although this idea has not been directly tested, several studies have suggested that people pay less attention to issues of procedural justice when they regard the maintenance of group harmony as a less important issue (Barrett-Howard & Tyler, 1986; Tyler & Griffin, 1989).

[7]The absolute importance of standing and trust should be distinguished from their importance relative to issues of neutrality. One potential explanation for the relative weakness of the Neutrality scale is that it is the least reliably measured of the three constructs.

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