The Role of the Justice Motive in Economic Decision Making

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Abstract

In two studies, a dictator game was used to investigate the hypotheses that two types of justice motives should be differentiated, the need to belief in a just world and a self-attributed justice motive, that both justice motives could explain the decision for equal allocations, and that the explicit justice motive could explain the avoidance of an egoistic allocation. In Study 1, both justice motives predicted equally well the decision for an equal allocation, whereas the explicit justice motive predicted the avoidance of an egoistic allocation. A similar pattern of results emerged in Study 2. Additionally, the explicit but not the implicit justice motive covaried with social desirability, and social desirability explained the decision for equality and the avoidance of an egoistic allocation just as well as the explicit justice motive. Finally, allocation decisions were better explained in Study 2, where real money was at stake. The findings support the idea that allocation decisions can best be understood by taking the just world justice motive and social desirability into account.

Key words: dictator game, justice motive, just-world belief
The Role of the Justice Motive in Economic Decision Making

Allocation decisions are typical examples of justice-specific reactions. They are widely investigated in the context of social-moral development (Damon, 1977; Takezawa, Gummerum, & Keller, 2006) and human altruism (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003). Based on justice motive theory (Dalbert, 2001), we hypothesize that allocation decisions can be explained by two types of justice motives: (a) the need to believe in a just world and (b) the justice-related self-concept or self-attributed justice motive.

We use experimental game theory to test our hypotheses (Güth, Schmittenberger, & Schwarze, 1982). In the different paradigms of experimental game theory, the task is usually to allocate a certain amount of money. This money is generally a windfall that has not been earned by either the recipient or the allocator. A typical view is thus that it would be fair to distribute the money equally and egoistic for the allocator to keep all of the windfall. The conditions under which the decision is made differ across allocation games. These allocation games are of particular interest in the context of justice research, because the allocators have to decide whether or not to dispose of the money fairly, thus giving a clear indication of how much they care about justice in the world.

Our participants played the dictator game, in which the allocator has to decide how much, if any, of the money to give to an anonymous recipient whom s/he will never meet, and who has no say in the decision. In other words, the allocator acts as a dictator, who may decide to keep all the money without any negative repercussions. Interestingly, however, most players do not make such egoistic choices. Generally, three subgroups of allocation decisions can be identified. Most allocators split the money equally, a decision that is generally seen as striving for fairness (Konow, 2005). A significant proportion of allocators fall into a second group, keeping all of the money for themselves (“egoistic” allocation). Finally, the remaining players give a share to the recipients, but keep more than 50% for themselves. Konow (2005) interprets this type of decision as a “trade-off” or compromise between equality and the
temptation of egoism. Our research aimed to provide insights into the substantial interindivudual variation observed in these allocation decisions. We will do this by focusing on the two contrasting decisions, the one for equality and the one for an egoistic allocation.

When dealing with injustice, individuals are not always and not only driven by self-interest (e.g., Miller, 1999; Montada, 1998), as illustrated by the finding that most allocators opt for an equal distribution in the dictator game. Just world research has shown that people need to believe in justice, and that they strive for justice in order to defend and sustain their belief in a just world (e.g., Lerner & Miller, 1978). This justice motive varies between individuals and explains the striving for justice as an end in itself. The basic idea of the just world hypothesis is that people confronted with injustices suffer and feel the need to restore justice (e.g., Lerner, 1980). The belief in a just world indicates the strength of this unconscious need. It is thus a basic schema (Epstein, 1990), rather than a dimension of the reflective self-concept. Indeed, just world research shows that the belief in a just world impacts intuitive justice-driven reactions, such as cognitive reinterpretation of injustice (e.g., blaming the innocent victims of an unjust fate; for a review, see Hafer & Bègue, 2005), but is also associated with a decrease in the self-esteem of those committing injustice (Dalbert, 2001). Thus, theoretical and empirical research both suggest that the belief in a just world is an essential but unconscious source of responses to justice demands.

Within the framework of the dictator game, the decision for an equal allocation can be seen as the striving for fairness (Konow, 2005) and thus should be explained by the belief in a just world. Just world research has shown that it is necessary to distinguish the belief in a personal just world in which one is usually treated fairly from the belief in a general just world in which people in general get what they deserve (Dalbert, 1999; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). In line with the self-serving bias in general (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990) and in fairness reasoning in particular (Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985), research evidenced that people tend to endorse the personal more strongly
than the general belief in a just world and that both dimensions have a different meaning with
the belief in a general just world to be a better predictor for example of harsh social attitudes
(e.g., Bègue & Muller, 2006), and the personal belief in a just world to be a better indicator of
the justice motive. A laboratory study revealed that motive-incongruent behavior is censured
by a decrease in self-esteem for those with a strong just world belief (Dalbert, 1999); and that
this was only true for the personal, but not the general just world belief. Moreover, the belief
in a personal just world has been shown to be one of the important correlates of the
commitment to just means (Sutton & Winnard, 2007) and rule-breaking behavior (Correia &
Dalbert, in press; Otto & Dalbert, 2005). Therefore, we will focus here on the personal belief
in a just world as indicator of a justice motive which should explain the decision for equality
in the dictator game.

In line with theorizing on human motives (e.g., McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger,
1989; Spangler, 1992) and current debate on dual-process theories (e.g., Epstein, 1990; Strack
& Deutsch, 2004), justice motive theory assumes two distinct types of justice motive (Dalbert,
2001). Besides the just world justice motive we assume an explicit or self-attributed justice
motive. The explicit justice motive is an individual’s conscious self-description of his or her
justice-related values and is part of the self-concept. It can be assessed by self-report
questionnaires tapping reactions toward justice or injustice, particularly from an observer or
beneficiary perspective (e.g., Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004; Gollwitzer, Schmitt, Schalke,
Maes, & Baer, 2005). Individuals who describe themselves as particularly concerned with
justice should strive for fairness when confronted with an allocation decision. Moreover,
individuals who value justice greatly should avoid reactions which are in sharp contrast to
their self-concept. Therefore, we expect individuals with a strong explicit justice motive to
decide for equality and particularly to avoid an egoistic allocation.

Our research investigates the individually varying justice motive and its meaning for a
fairness related decision. This made it necessary to differentiate between a justice motive and
justice motivation. Motives are individual dispositions reflecting individual differences in the
tendency to strive for a specific goal. A justice motive is thus an individual disposition to
strive for justice as an end itself. We consider here two types of a justice motive, the just
world justice motive and the explicit or self-attributed justice motive. Motivation can be
defined as a person’s orientation toward a specific goal in a specific situational state; thus,
justice motivation means the orientation toward justice in a given situation. The striving for
fairness in the dictator game can be seen as such a justice motivation. Justice motivation is
triggered by specific situational circumstances – here the allocation task -- in interaction with
personal dispositions. In the case of justice motivation, that personal disposition may be the
justice motive or other dispositions (e.g., Lind & van den Bos, 2002; Miller, 1999). Or to state
it otherwise, we do not assume that the individual variation in allocation decisions can only be
explained by the justice motive, but we hypothesize that the justice motive is one of the
important sources for individual variation of this kind.

The present study investigates the structure of the justice motive and relationships
among the justice motive and allocation decisions in the dictator game. We predicted that (a)
two types of justice motive can be differentiated: a just world justice motive reflected by the
personal belief in a just world and an explicit justice motive reflected by conscious self-
descriptions. In addition, we expected that (b) both motives could explain the decision for an
equal allocation, and (c) the explicit justice motive would explain the avoidance of an egoistic
allocation. These hypotheses were investigated in two studies using variations of the dictator
game. In the first study, no real money was at stake. In the second study, a random 15% of
participants received the money specified by the allocator. The second study also controlled
for social desirability.

STUDY 1

Our first study examined the explicit justice motive, the just world justice motive, and
the allocation decision in a dictator game. We assessed the just world justice motive in terms
of the belief in a personal just world, and the explicit justice motive in terms of justice sensitivity and justice centrality. We expected both justice motives to predict the choice for an equal allocation, and the explicit justice motive to predict the avoidance of an egoistic allocation.

Method

Participants

Participants were 137 school students (36 male and 101 female) ranging from 15 to 20 years of age ($M = 17.6, SD = 0.7$), who were recruited at three academic-track secondary schools in Germany.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed during lesson time. The dictator game was administered as a questionnaire task after a series of questionnaires that were not part of this study, but before assessment of the explicit and just world justice motives. Participants were guaranteed anonymity. Participation was voluntary; parental consent was sought for those younger than 18 years. Intercorrelations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. All scale items were rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 ("totally disagree") to 6 ("totally agree").

Measures

Explicit justice motive. We employed two measures of the explicit justice motive to estimate the self-attributed justice motive factor and thus to avoid a confound with method variance: (1) Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, and Arbach’s (2005) Justice Sensitivity Scale – Beneficiary Perspective, with 7 items tapping feelings of distress over injustice that is to one’s own advantage (e.g., “I feel guilty when I receive better treatment than others”; $a = .86$); and (2) the extended version (Dalbert & Umlauft, 2003) of the Dalbert, Montada, and Schmitt (1987) Justice Centrality Scale, with 13 items gauging distress about injustice and satisfaction with one’s own fairness (e.g., “Injustice that I caused torments me for a long time,” “There
are few things that make me as happy as justice"; $\alpha = .91$).

*Just world justice motive.* We used Dalbert’s (1999) Personal Belief in a Just World Scale (7 items, $\alpha = .74$; e.g., “I believe that I usually get what I deserve”).

*Dictator game.* The dictator game was presented as a questionnaire task with no real money at stake. Participants were instructed to divide €50 between themselves and an anonymous recipient. The money could be allocated in steps of €5. Understanding of the task was controlled by a test task describing a specific allocation decision.

**Results**

Twelve participants did not solve the test task correctly, and six decided to allocate more than 50% to their partner. These 18 people were excluded from the analyses. Of the remaining 119 participants, 68 chose an “equal” allocation (= €25 each), and 7 an “egoistic” allocation, giving €0 to their partner.

We used structural equation modeling to examine relations among the explicit justice motive, the just world justice motive, and allocation decisions. The just world justice motive was identified by odd-even subscales and the explicit justice motive by justice centrality and justice sensitivity. Loadings from latent factors to their manifest indicators were set to be equal. In line with our first hypothesis, the motive factors were specified as independent latent factors, and models explaining the decision for an equal allocation and for an egoistic allocation were tested separately. To assess our hypotheses, the model specified paths from the explicit and the just world justice motive to the allocation decision.

We began by examining the decision for equal allocation ($\chi^2 = 15.61$, df = 6). Examination of individual paths revealed that the path from the implicit and the explicit justice motive could be set equal without a significant reduction in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.58$, df = 1, $p > .05$). The resulting model, depicted in Figure 1a, provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 16.19$, df = 7, $p = .02$, as corroborated by approximate fit tests, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .10 (see Bentler, 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 1998). Consistent with our second hypothesis, both
justice motives predicted the decision for an equal allocation ($\gamma = .30, p < .01$). Overall, our model explained 15% of the variance in allocation. The power of this model test was confirmed by the finding that an alternative model with a single justice motive factor did not fit the observed data, $\chi^2 = 93.14$, df = 7, $p < .001$ (Bentler, 2007).

We next examined the decision for an egoistic allocation ($\chi^2 = 6.07$, df = 6). Examination of individual paths revealed that the path from the just world justice motive to allocation could be fixed to zero without a significant reduction in model fit ($\Delta \chi^2 = 0.05$, df = 1, $p > .05$). The resulting model, depicted in Figure 1b, provided an excellent fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 6.12$, df = 7, $p = .53$, as corroborated by approximate fit tests, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00. Consistent with our third hypothesis, a stronger explicit justice motive predicted the avoidance of an egoistic allocation ($\gamma = -.53, p < .001$). Overall, our model explained 28% of the variance in allocation. The power of this model test was confirmed by the finding that an alternative model with a single justice motive factor did not fit the observed data, $\chi^2 = 73.49$, df = 7, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The results of our first study confirmed two independent justice motives and both motives could equally well explain the decision for an equal allocation. But only the explicit justice motive, which is defined by conscious justice-related self-descriptions, could explain the avoidance of an egoistic allocation, i.e. allocating no money to the other person, and thus an allocation which would be in great contrast to any justice driven self-concept. Our first study was, however, seriously limited by the fact that no real money was at stake, meaning that player reactions may not validly describe real-life allocations.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was conducted to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1. We used the same measures as in Study 1, measuring the just world justice motive in terms of the belief in a personally just world and the explicit justice motive in terms of justice sensitivity and justice
centrality. This time, however, real money was at stake. Participants again played a dictator
game with €50, but were informed that a random 15% of participants would actually receive
the money specified by the allocator. Furthermore, we controlled for social desirability. We
expected both justice motives to predict the decision for an equal allocation, and the explicit
justice motive to predict the avoidance of an egoistic allocation. We expected these
associations to persist when social desirability was controlled.

Method

Participants

Participants were 63 individuals (37 women and 26 men) ranging from 15 to 70 years
in age ($M = 24.8, SD = 8.6$). The sample included 41 students.

Procedure

In a single-person session lasting about 1 hour, participants completed questionnaires
tapping demographic information, study variables, and additional variables not considered
here. They received €5 compensation. Participants were then told that there were a few
minutes left, and invited to participate in a short additional study (i.e., the dictator game). All
participants decided to do so. To corroborate the cover story of it being an independent study,
the design of the dictator game material was different from that of the other study materials.
Intercorrelations among the study variables are presented in Table 2. All scale items were
rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (“totally disagree”) to 6 (“totally agree”).

Measures

Social desirability. The tendency to answer in a socially desirable manner was
assessed by 7 items of the Impression Management Scale (Balanced Inventory of Desirable
Responding; Paulhus, 1994; German version: Musch, Brockhaus, & Bröder, 2002; e.g., “I
never take things that don’t belong to me”; $\alpha = .67$).

Explicit justice motive. We employed the same two measures as in Study 1 to measure
the explicit justice motive: (1) the Justice Sensitivity Scale – Beneficiary Perspective (\(\alpha = \))
.89); and (2) the Justice Centrality Scale ($\alpha = .91$).

Just world justice motive. We again used the Personal Belief in a Just World Scale ($\alpha = .82$) to measure the just world justice motive.

Dictator game. The dictator game was presented as a lottery to decide on additional monetary reward for those participants who consented to fill in an additional questionnaire. Participants were told that they had to decide how prize money of €50 should be distributed between themselves and an anonymous partner who would be informed of their decision, and that 15% of all participants would receive the money specified by the allocator. The decision could be made in €5 steps. Anonymity was assured: participants submitted their decision in a sealed envelope marked by an individual code that would later allow the winning couples to be identified. Participants were then administered an item testing whether they had understood the allocation task before making their allocation decision. After completion of the study, a list of the 10 winning codes was mailed to all participants.

Results

Three participants did not solve the test task correctly, and one person decided to allocate more than 50% to his/her partner. These four people were excluded from the analyses. Of the remaining 59 participants, 40 chose an “equal” allocation (= €25 each), and 4 an “egoistic” allocation, giving €0 to their partner. The distribution of allocation decisions was thus very similar to in Study 1. As the sample size was, however, smaller, we collapsed those giving €0 to their partner with those 3 with a minimal deviation from strict egoism – giving €5 to their partner – to form a group with an egoistic decision.

We used structural equation modeling to examine relations among the explicit justice motive, the just world justice motive, social desirability, and allocation decisions. The just world justice motive and the social desirability factors were identified by odd-even subscales. Loadings from latent factors to their manifest indicators were set to be equal. In line with our first hypothesis, the motive factors were specified as independent latent factors. Both were
allowed to correlate with social desirability, and models explaining the decision for an equal allocation and for an egoistic allocation were tested separately. To assess our hypotheses, the model specified paths from the explicit justice motive, the just world justice motive, and social desirability to the allocation decision.

We began by examining the explanation for an equal allocation ($\chi^2 = 17.78$, df = 13). Examination of individual paths revealed that the correlation between the just world justice motive and social desirability could be fixed to zero without a significant reduction in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 2.17$, df = 1, $p > .05$). In addition, the path from the explicit justice motive on allocation could be fixed to zero without significant reduction in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.02$, df = 1, $p > .05$). The resulting model, depicted in Figure 2a, provided an excellent fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 19.97$, df = 15; $p = .17$, as corroborated by approximate fit tests, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .08. Consistent with our second hypothesis, a stronger just world justice motive predicted the decision for an equal allocation ($\gamma = .39$, $p < .01$); in addition, social desirability explained the decision for equality ($\gamma = .51$, $p < .01$). Overall, this model explained 41% of the variance in allocation. Thus, in contrast to Hypothesis 2, the explicit justice motive did not explain this decision when controlled for social desirability. Moreover, a model with a path from the explicit justice motive instead of social desirability to the allocation decision fitted the data less well, $\chi^2 = 21.25$, df = 15, $p = .13$. The power of these model tests was confirmed by the finding that an alternative model with a single justice motive factor did not fit the observed data, $\chi^2 = 60.10$, df = 15, $p < .001$.

We next examined the decision for an egoistic allocation ($\chi^2 = 29.75$, df = 13). Examination of individual paths revealed that the paths from the just world justice motive on allocation as well as the correlation between the just world justice motive and social desirability could be fixed to zero without a significant decrease in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.63$, df = 2, $p > .05$). Moreover, the path from the explicit justice motive on allocation could be fixed to zero without a significant decrease in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.36$, df = 1, $p > .05$). The resulting
model, depicted in Figure 2b, provided an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 31.74$, df = 16, $p = .01$, as corroborated by approximate fit tests, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .13. The stronger the tendency for social desirable responding the less likely the decision for an egoistic allocation ($\gamma = -.89$, $p < .01$). Overall, this model explained 80% of the variance in allocation. In contrast with our second hypothesis the explicit justice motive did not predict the decision for an egoistic allocation when controlled for social desirability. Moreover, a model with a path from the explicit justice motive instead of social desirability to the allocation decision fitted the data less well, $\chi^2 = 34.52$, df = 16 $p < .01$. The power of this model test was confirmed by the finding that an alternative model with a single justice motive factor did not fit the observed data, $\chi^2 = 57.69$, df = 15, $p < .001$.

Discussion

Our second study again provided empirical support for (a) justice motive theory (Dalbert, 2001), with personal belief in a just world forming a just world justice motive that was independent of the explicit justice motive defined by controlled justice-related self-descriptions, and (b) the just world justice motive explained an equal allocation when real money was at stake. Moreover, the just world justice motive was independent of social desirability, whereas the explicit justice motive was strongly associated with the tendency for social desirable responding. Finally, social desirability could explain the decision for equality and the avoidance of an egoistic allocation at least as well as the explicit justice motive.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Our studies revealed three important results. First of all, both studies unambiguously distinguished two independent justice motives, the just world justice motive and the explicit or self-attributed justice motive. Secondly, this just world justice motive consistently explained the decision for an equal allocation, whether real money was at stake or not. Finally, the explicit justice motive was associated with a decision for equality and also with the avoidance of an egoistic allocation. The meaning of the explicit justice motive was
however threatened by its strong association with the tendency for social desirable responding. As a consequence, social desirability could at least equally well explain the allocation decision as the explicit justice motive.

The avoidance of an egoistic allocation was explained by the explicit but not the just world justice motive. This can be interpreted that this decision is driven by controlled processes – the wish to react in line with one’s self-concept -- that are better explained by an explicit justice motive compared to a just world justice motive. However, the second study revealed that this process seems to be also influenced by social desirability, the respondent’s wish to appear more positive or socially acceptable through his or her responses. This pattern of results indicates that the avoidance of egoism is based on controlled processes, in particular to react in correspondence with highly valued consequences as consistency with one’s self-concept and social acceptance, but also that these controlled processes are not only motivated by the valence of justice norms, but by the desire for social acceptance. In sum, these findings question the validity of the concept of the explicit justice motive and its explanatory value for economic decision making in particular (Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004) and for justice-specific reactions in general. Further research is needed to test the predictive validity of the explicit justice motive for this and other types of justice-specific reactions.

In the light of our findings on the explicit justice motive, investigation of the just world justice motive and intuitive justice-driven reactions becomes increasingly important. Study 2 revealed that the implicit justice motive was independent of social desirability, and both studies showed that it predicted the decision for equality, and this was independent of other motivational forces as the stake (real money or not) or the tendency for social desirable responding. Both studies thus support our hypothesis that the personal belief in a just world represents a justice motive that explains justice-driven reactions and support our notion that interindividual variation in allocation decisions can be explained by taking the justice motive into account. Overall, the pattern of results is consistent with the reasoning that a just world
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justice motive should be differentiated from an explicit or self-attributed justice motive reflecting the self-concept (e.g., McClelland et al., 1989), and thus supports justice motive theory (Dalbert, 2001). In the light of the theoretical explanation of just world justice motivation (Lerner, 1980) and previous findings in just world research, justice-driven reactions explained by the just world justice motive are probably better understood as intuitive. In our view, the results of these studies are in line with this interpretation and thus the just world justice motive seems to correspond to the role of other implicit motives in motive theory.

In both studies, most dictators chose equal allocations (Study 1: 57%; Study 2: 68%), and the models were better able to explain the avoidance of an egoistic allocation (explained variance Study 1: 28%; Study 2: 80%) than the decision for an equal allocation (explained variance Study 1: 15%; Study 2: 41%). Most importantly, however, both choices were better explained in Study 2 than in Study 1. The studies differed in several respects. The participants in Study 2 were older and from more diverse educational backgrounds than the academic-track secondary students in Study 1. Study 1 implemented mass testing sessions during lesson time; Study 2 was conducted in single-person sessions in the lab. Finally, real money was at stake in Study 2. We suggest that the latter difference was primarily responsible for the greater explanatory power of Study 2. The fact that participants in Study 2 invested real money in line with their explicit and just world justice motive is likely to have increased the validity of the dependent variable. Accordingly, the theoretical model was better able to explain the allocation decision. We therefore see this pattern of results as further validating our theoretical model.

We used SEM to test our hypotheses. Because our models were based on small sample sizes, the appropriateness of this approach can be questioned (Barrett, 2007). Nevertheless, we chose this approach because it allowed the a priori theorized model to be tested (in particular, the independence of the two justice motive factors and their differential effects on
allocation), and method variance to be disentangled from trait variance for the explicit justice motive factor. Moreover, we specified a conservative model with loadings from factors to manifest indicators constrained to be equal, and we did not modify our model a posteriori by inspection of standardized residuals (Goffin, 2007). The small sample size in Study 2, in particular, is justifiable by the financial costs of the data assessment (Bentler, 2007). Finally and most importantly, we systematically tested alternative models (Bentler, 2007), including the social desirability model in Study 2 (see Figure 2) and alternative model tests with one justice motive factor instead of the two hypothesized; the alternative one-justice factor model did not explain the observed data in any of the four model tests and thus further corroborated the validity of our model tests. In sum, this approach allowed us to cross-validate a rigorously specified theoretical model.

To further test the proposed justice motive theory in the context of economic decision making, future research should replicate and extend our results -- for example, by playing economic games under real money conditions to further increase the validity of the allocation decision. It would also be interesting to compare the predictive power of the two justice motives across experimental conditions triggering more or less strategic considerations. Such an experimental approach would further increase the internal validity of the model tests. As the just world justice motive seems to operate on a more intuitive level compared to the explicit justice motive operating on more controlled processes, we would expect strategic concerns to more strongly impact on the explicit justice motive’s effects and to less impact on the just world justice motive’s effects.

To conclude, the pattern of results emerging from these studies presented is in line with the justice motive theory stating that two types of justice motives can be differentiated and that both motives can explain justice-driven reactions, whereas the explicit justice motive is better able to explain the avoidance of self-concept threat. However, the meaning of justice-related self-concept is challenged by findings on social desirability. Not only were the explicit
justice motive and social desirability positively correlated, social desirability explained controlled allocation decisions just as well as the explicit justice motive. The just world justice motive explained the decision for equality, especially when real money was at stake, and this effect was not challenged by social desirability. Overall, these studies are in line with the notion that two types of justice motives should be differentiated and they evidence that the decision for equality and particularly the avoidance of an egocentric allocation decision are also driven by the wish for socially desirable responding.

In our view, this pattern of results supports the notion that justice motive theory, and especially the differentiation of two types of justice motives, could have significant implications not only in the context of allocation decisions, but for understanding decision making in general. For many decisions there are several alternatives and typically some of them are seen as prototypical just compared to egoistic or vice versa. However, usually there are also many alternatives in between, with a wide range of consequences. A generalized interpretation of our findings would lead to the hypothesis that only decisions for obvious egoistic alternatives can be explained by value-based dispositions (or social desirability) and decisions for justice rather than other alternatives seem to be better explained by intuitive processes, where the just world justice motive might play an important role. Future studies on decision making should thus take the just world justice motive, the explicit justice motive, and social desirability into account to better understand the processes driving (economic) decision making.
References


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### Table 1

*Correlation Matrix of Variables in Study 1 (N = 119)*

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Justice centrality</th>
<th>Justice sensitivity</th>
<th>Personal BJW</th>
<th>Equal</th>
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<td>Justice sensitivity</td>
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<td>-.20 *</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* BJW = belief in a just world.

* *p < .05  ** * *p < .01*
Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Variables in Study 2 (N = 59)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Justice centrality</th>
<th>Justice sensitivity</th>
<th>Personal BJW</th>
<th>Social desirability</th>
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<td>-.23 +</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.27 *</td>
<td>.23 +</td>
<td>.26 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egoistic</td>
<td>-.35 **</td>
<td>-.36 **</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.35 **</td>
<td>-.53 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. BJW = belief in a just world.

+ p < .10    * p < .05    ** p < .01
Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Path model illustrating the explicit and the just world justice motives and their consequences for the allocation decision in a dictator game (€50, Study 1, standardized model).

*Figure 2.* Path model illustrating the explicit and the just world justice motives and their consequences for the allocation decision in a dictator game (€50), controlled for social desirability (Study 2, standardized model).
Note. * p < .05  ** p < .01.
Social desirability Subscale 1
Social desirability Subscale 2
Justice centrality
Justice sensitivity
Personal BJW Subscale 1
Personal BJW Subscale 2
Social desirability
Social desirability
Equal allocation
Just world justice motive
Explicit justice motive
Explicit justice motive
Egoistic allocation

Note: * p < .05  ** p < .01.