

Inconsistencies in the Perception of Fairness in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Based on fairness theory, I examine how employees' perceptions of how fairly they are treated (i.e., perceived procedural justice for self) and their perceptions of how fairly other employees are treated (i.e., procedural justice for others) influence different dimensions of their work performance and their turnover intentions. Results suggest that employees are aware of and are influenced by both procedural justice for self and for others – and, for some outcomes, how much perceived justice for self and others differ. Employees were more likely to be altruistic toward their coworkers when they perceived that they were treated more fairly than others. They were more likely to engage in neglect when they were treated more (or less) fairly than others were treated. Whereas employees had the highest turnover intentions when they perceived low procedural justice for themselves and others, their in-role performance was only influenced by how fairly they were treated.

KEYWORDS: *job performance, procedural justice, turnover.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M54*

1. INTRODUCTION

Decades of research suggest that employees care about how fairly they are treated at work – but more recent research suggests that employees also care about how fairly *others* are treated (e.g., Colquitt, 2004; Phillips, Douthitt & Hyland, 2001). Examining how employees view their own fair treatment *and* others' fair treatment acknowledges that procedural justice – the fairness with which procedures are applied – is a relational concept: The use of fair procedures provides a signal to employees about how much they and their coworkers are valued by their organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). For example, employees who perceive that they and others receive *similarly unfair* treatment are likely to feel that employees in general are not highly valued by their organization. Such conclusions – combined with a consideration of the likely outcomes associated with different behavioral responses -- may increase the salience of either self-interest or other-interest. For example, other-interest is likely to have increased salience when employees perceive that they are treated *more* fairly than their coworkers are treated – especially when considering whether to behave altruistically toward their coworkers.

Much research suggests that the extent to which employees perceive that they are treated fairly influences work outcomes that are highly relevant to organizations such as in-role performance, citizenship behaviors, counterproductive work behavior, and turnover (e.g., Ambrose, 2002; Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Colquitt, 2004). However, little is known about how employees' judgments of their own fair treatment may combine with their judgments of how fairly others are treated to predict these important outcomes. This is unfortunate because research and theory suggest that doing so may enhance our understanding of how procedural justice judgments influence different dimensions of job performance and turnover intentions.

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The present study extends past research examining how employees' judgments and behavior vary depending on how fairly they and others are treated. Although somewhat inconsistent, findings suggest that employees differentiate how fairly they are treated from how fairly others are treated and are influenced by the extent to which others receive fair treatment (e.g., Colquitt, 2004; Grienberger, Rutte, & van Knippenberg, 1997; *cf.* Ambrose, Harland, & Kulik, 1991; Ambrose & Kulik, 1989). Because employees consider both how they are treated and how others are treated – and because these dual considerations may (1) convey information about how valued the employee is and (2) may elicit concerns of one's own self-interest or of others' interests, I explore whether employees' perceptions of how they are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self) and how other employees are treated (i.e., procedural justice for others) influence employees' in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior (i.e., altruism), counterproductive work behavior (i.e., neglect), and turnover intentions.

The results of this study are likely to make several contributions to theory and practice. First, the results will contribute to the literature on procedural justice by determining how employees' perceptions of their own and others' fair treatment individually and jointly combine to influence different dimensions of employees' work performance (in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive work behavior) and influence employees' turnover intentions. Second, our study examines which outcomes may be more likely when employees are treated less fairly than others and which responses may be more likely when employees are treated more fairly than others. Lastly, the results are likely to have important practical implications, as our findings are likely to enhance understanding of the combined effects of procedural justice for self and others, aiding managers in their efforts to enhance performance and prevent turnover.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Motivation for this Study

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcome allocation or distribution (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980). Among the determinants of procedural fairness are the accuracy of the information used to make decisions and the consistency with which procedures are applied (Leventhal, 1980; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980). Perhaps because consistency serves as one of the bases for procedural justice considerations, individuals can and do differentiate how fairly they themselves are treated and how fairly others are treated. Employees may perceive that they are treated more or less fairly than others when managers differ in the extent to which they adhere to formal procedures, differentially apply procedures to the employees they supervise, discriminate against some employees, and differ in the extent to which they encourage or listen to employees' concerns, among other possibilities.

For these reasons, I differentiate *procedural justice for self* (i.e., the extent to which employees believe they themselves are treated fairly) and *procedural justice for others* (i.e., the extent to which individuals believe that other employees are treated fairly). Employees' relative procedural justice can exist in either a positive or negative direction. Employees may perceive themselves as treated more fairly than others, i.e., procedural justice for self is *greater* than procedural justice for others (referred to as *favorable relative procedural justice*). Alternately, employees may perceive themselves as treated less fairly than others are treated, i.e., procedural justice for self is *less* than procedural justice for others (referred to as *unfavorable relative procedural justice*).

Although some studies have examined procedural justice for self and others, the present study differs from these in several ways. Most of the existing studies examining reactions to differences in procedural justice have been laboratory studies with undergraduate students (e.g., Ambrose et al., 1991; De Cremer, Stinglhamber, & Eisenberger, 2005; Grienberger et al., 1997; Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998; Spencer & Rupp, 2009). In contrast, the present study consists of a field study of working adults, thus allowing an examination of the generalizability of these experimental findings. In addition, in many past studies on this topic, the “other” has been a single fictional other (e.g., De Cremer & Van Hiel, 2010; Kray & Lind, 2002; Ven Den Bos & Lind, 2001) or a limited number of recent acquaintances (Lind et al., 1998; Spencer & Rupp, 2009). In contrast, I define the “other” more broadly as “most employees” in the organization. This more general view of the “other” provides a new referent for understanding the broader domain of employees’ justice considerations at work – and I would argue that this referent group is likely to mirror more closely the referent group that employees consider when making justice judgments.

Past studies that have examined procedural justice for self and others have focused on a variety of outcomes including fairness judgments (e.g., Ambrose et al., 1991; Grienberger et al., 1997), affective reactions (De Cremer et al., 2005; De Cremer & Van Hiel, 2010; Spencer & Rupp, 2009), outcome satisfaction (Ambrose et al., 1991; Ambrose & Kulik, 1989), and supervisor evaluations (Kray & Lind, 2002; Lind et al., 1998). Although a limited number of studies have examined the influence of procedural justice for self and others on some dimensions of performance (i.e., Colquitt, 2004; De Cremer, Van Dijke, & Mayer, 2010; Lind et al., 1998), these studies have focused on team contexts (and hence team performance). In contrast, in this present study, I examine multiple dimensions of job performance (i.e., in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior) and turnover intentions in a non-team setting in order to examine how relative comparisons of justice for self and other influence employees’ individual behavior and behavioral intentions.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Definitions

Although many theories of justice exist, fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001) serves as the theoretical foundation of this paper. Evolved from equity theory (Adams, 1965) and referent cognition theory (Folger, 1987), fairness theory is concerned with unfavorable conditions perpetrated by others that violate an ethical principle of social conduct (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). Fairness theory argues that justice judgments result from counterfactual thinking; individuals consider what *would* have been, what *could* have been, and what *should* have been to determine the extent to which their situation is fair. In the “*would*” component of fairness theory, the individual assesses how another more positive situation would have felt. In considering the “*could*” component of fairness theory, the individual considers whether the organization or the manager could have acted differently. For example, employees who view others being treated more fairly than they themselves are treated are likely to believe that they could have been treated better. In the “*should*” component of fairness theory, the employee considers whether the harmful actions defy an ethical principle of interpersonal treatment.

According to fairness theory, individuals determine how unjust a situation is by comparing their own situation to that of others (Folger & Cropanzo, 1998). And, in this study, I use the lens of social comparison to understand how differences in procedural justice for self and for others influence employee behavior. Relative procedural justice provides employees with more information when judging the fairness of procedures because it entails the consideration

of a social referent. In other words, beyond assessments of the degree of application of fair procedures to themselves, relative procedural justice allows employees to assess the extent to which they and other employees are treated similarly or whether they are treated more or less fairly than others.

In line with fairness theory, I argue that different procedural justice conditions prompt considerations about what could, would, and should have been – and that answers to these questions serve to (1) convey information about how valued the employee is by the organization and (2) increase the salience of either self-interest or other-interest, particularly when considering different responses (i.e., altruism, neglect, in-role performance, and turnover intentions). Through these theorized mechanisms, I seek to explain the conditions that increase (or decrease) altruism, neglect, in-role performance, and turnover intentions. Figure 1 depicts our model relating procedural justice for self and procedural justice for others to the three dimensions of job performance and turnover intentions through our theoretical mechanisms.

Perceived Value to Organization	High	<i>High procedural justice for self:</i> In-role performance (H2)	<i>Favorable relative procedural justice:</i> Altruism (H1) Neglect (H3b)
	Low	<i>Unfavorable relative procedural justice:</i> Neglect (H3a) <i>Low procedural justice for self & others:</i> Turnover intentions (H4)	----
Theoretical Mechanisms		Self-Interest Salient Interest	Other-Interest

Figure 1. Model Relating Employees’ Perceived Value to Organization and Salient Interest to Different Performance Dimensions and Turnover Intentions

Source: author’s own conception

2.3 Procedural Justice and Altruism

Employees who perceive that they are treated *more* fairly than others (i.e., favorable relative procedural justice) may be more likely to engage in altruistic behavior, i.e., citizenship behavior that entails helping coworkers (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). I argue that favorable relative procedural justice is likely to convey to employees that they themselves are highly valued by the organization. Additionally, favorable relative procedural justice is likely to increase the salience of other-interest – especially when considering altruism because it involves a concern with others.

When treated more favorably than others, employees' motives associated with other-interest may become salient, thus motivating employees to seek ways to benefit coworkers. In the relative absence of procedurally fair treatment of others by the organization, the employee may consider how they themselves would like to be treated in a similar situation and seek to behave in such a manner towards others. Thus, employees may seek to improve the treatment of coworkers by helping them. In short, this inconsistency in fair treatment prompts counterfactual thinking regarding their coworkers. It suggests that their coworkers *could* and *should* have been treated differently, while employees may consider that they *would* find a fairer situation to be desirable, thus prompting altruistic behavior.

Additionally, the relative favorable procedural justice is likely to convey that these employees are highly valued by their organization. Although such conditions may increase the salience of other-interest, it is important to note that engaging in altruism does not require employees to sacrifice their self-interest. Helping coworkers does not compromise the valued position that employees who are treated more favorably hold. Altruistic behavior indirectly benefits the organization (Koh, Steers & Terborg, 1995; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997) while allowing employees to alleviate feelings of guilt arising from their favorable position. Altruistic behavior may be a way for employees to address their relatively favorable situation with few costs -- and may even convey some benefits. That is, employees may reap internal benefits (e.g., viewing themselves as an ethical person) and external benefits (e.g., being viewed as helpful by the supervisor). Employees may also engage in altruistic behavior to minimize the potential envious feelings of their coworkers due to the employee's relatively favorable situation. Recent research suggests that individuals who are concerned with being envied by others tend to respond with pro-social behavior (van de Ven, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2010). For these reasons, I expect that favorable relative procedural justice will be positively related to employees' altruistic behavior.

Hypothesis 1: Employees' altruistic behavior increases as they perceive that other employees are treated less fairly than they themselves are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others).

2.4 Procedural Justice and In-role Performance

Employees who perceive that they are treated fairly – irrespective of how fairly their coworkers are treated -- may have better in-role performance, i.e., “actions specified and required by an employee's job description and thus mandated, appraised, and rewarded by the employing organization” (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004: p. 369-370). As shown in Figure 1, employees are expected to have better in-role performance when they feel highly valued by the organization and are focused on their self-interest. In sum, I argue that, when considering engagement in in-role performance, employees' justice considerations focus on counterfactual thinking involving the self, that is, they consider how they *would* have felt if they were treated more or less fairly, and how the organization *could* and *should* have treated them more or less fairly.

First, I argue that higher procedural justice for self is likely to convey to employees that they themselves are highly valued by the organization. And employees who feel highly valued by the organization are likely to reciprocate by engaging in role-prescribed behavior (Tyler, Degoey & Smith, 1996). Indeed, some past research suggests that employees' perception of how fairly they are treated is positively related to in-role performance (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Second, self-interest is likely to be more salient when considering engagement in in-role performance. Because failure to meet job expectations is likely to have consequences for the employee, employees' in-role performance is likely to be more affected by fair treatment of themselves than by the fair treatment for others. As a result, in-role performance is likely to be more influenced by employees' self-interest so that, when procedural justice for self is higher, in-role performance will be higher. Research suggests that employees' in-role performance tends to form the basis for supervisor ratings of overall job performance (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), and thus likely a strong determinant of outcomes that employees are concerned with, such as compensation and promotion decisions. Thus, it is consistent with employees' self-interest to engage in in-role performance.

Hypothesis 2: Employees' in-role performance is positively related to how fairly they perceive they themselves are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self).

2.5 Procedural Justice and Neglect

Neglect behavior is a passive and destructive counterproductive work behavior, defined as a decline in effort and interest in one's job (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers & Mainous, 1988). When employees perceive that they are treated better *or* worse than others (as opposed to perceiving that they are treated similarly to others), they may be more likely to respond with neglect – for example, by taking more breaks, working more slowly, or showing up late.

When relative procedural justice is not in the employees' favor (i.e., procedural justice for self is lower than procedural justice for others), they are likely to feel that they are not valued by the organization and are likely to have more salient concerns with self-interest. The inconsistency in fair treatment is likely to prompt counterfactual thinking focused on the self: the inconsistency suggests that they *could* and *should* have been treated differently, and, because they are treated less fairly than others, they *would* find a fairer situation to be desirable, thus prompting neglect.

Because they feel unvalued by their organization – while others appear to be more highly valued, employees are likely to feel exploited. When employees feel they are being exploited, they reduce their cooperative behavior (Lind, 2001) and increase counterproductive work behaviors (Jones, 2009). Additionally, because their self-interest is highly salient, employees may seek to “balance” the ill treatment they have received through more passive negative actions toward the organization (neglect). By reducing their effort toward the job, employees may feel better about their situation and reduce their sense of exploitation associated with the unfavorable relative procedural justice.

Above, I argued that procedural justice discrepancies that are not in the employees' favor (i.e., procedural justice for self is *lower* than procedural justice for others) are likely to be associated with increasing levels of neglect. Here I argue that favorable relative procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for self is *higher* than procedural justice for others) is also likely to be associated with increasing levels of neglect. When relative procedural justice is in the employees' favor (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others), they are likely to feel that they are valued by the organization and to have increased concerns with other-interest because they see how others are treated worse than they are. This inconsistency in fair treatment prompts counterfactual thinking regarding their coworkers. It suggests that their coworkers *could* and *should* have been treated differently, and, employees may consider that they *would* find a fairer situation to be desirable, thus prompting neglect as a way of redressing the situation.

When employees are treated more fairly than other employees, they may show support of the mistreated colleagues through passive negative actions toward the organization, such as neglect. Specifically, employees who are not directly harmed are more likely to choose a passive and mild form of retribution such as neglect (e.g., rather than stealing or harming company property) because there are fewer potential negative consequences than more aggressive retribution – and there may even be positive outcomes associated with neglect behavior (as detailed below) (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007; Kelloway, Francis, Prosser & Cameron, 2010). Under conditions of favorable relative procedural justice, employees are more likely to choose passive and mild retribution, such as neglect, than aggressive retribution because they are unlikely to want to threaten their favored position in the company as a valued employee. Additionally, engaging in neglect may help the employee to relieve their negative emotions such as anger and may garner better treatment from coworkers if they are viewed as being supportive of coworkers who have been treated unfairly. This is consistent with the view that unfair treatment of others may negatively affect observers of such unfair treatment, and that employees may respond to the negative emotions inspired by such events by engaging in retributive behavior (Spencer & Rupp, 2009).

In sum, I have argued that, as compared to situations in which employees perceive that they are treated similarly to others, discrepancies that are in the focal employees' favor and not in the focal employees' favor are likely to be associated with increasing levels of neglect. However, of the two types of procedural justice discrepancies, I expect that neglect will be more strongly related to *unfavorable* relative procedural justice than to *favorable* relative procedural justice. Research has consistently established that recipients of unfair treatment react strongly in multiple ways – emotions, attitudes, and behaviors – toward perpetrators (Posthuma, Maertz & Dworkin, 2007; Colquitt et al., 2001; Moorman, 1991). Self-interest as compared to other-interest is likely to inspire the stronger behavioral responses. For these reasons, I expect that unfavorable relative procedural justice will be more strongly related to neglect than favorable relative procedural justice.

Hypothesis 3a: Employees' neglect of work increases as they perceive that other employees are treated more fairly than they themselves are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self is lower than procedural justice for others).

Hypothesis 3b: Employees' neglect of work increases as they perceive that other employees are treated less fairly than they themselves are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others).

Hypothesis 3c: Employees are more likely to neglect their work when they experience unfavorable relative procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for self is lower than procedural justice for others) than favorable relative procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others).

2.6 Procedural Justice and Turnover Intentions

I argue that employees are more likely to consider leaving their organization when both they and their coworkers' are treated unfairly (i.e., both procedural justice for self and others is low). Such conditions are likely to elicit beliefs that employees in general are not valued by the organization. And, because leaving an organization has particularly high costs associated with it, such as the potential loss of income and psychological investment in the organization (Withey & Cooper, 1989), employees may be more concerned with self-interest when considering whether to leave the organization. Consequently, employees' turnover intentions should be highest when they perceive that they have little control over the situation and

believe that improvements in working conditions are unlikely (Parker, 1993). In sum, this consistency in unfair treatment suggests that, although the organization *should* have acted differently and the employee *would* have preferred this, it seems that the organization will act differently in the future, thus prompting employees to consider leaving the organization.

When procedural justice for self and others is consistently low, this is likely to signify to the employee that the organization has an established culture of unfairness that fails to value employees. Such an established culture suggests that the employee is unlikely to effectively change the extent to which they and others are treated fairly. Such consistency is also likely to be viewed as more predictable (Leventhal, 1980), and may thus make a difficult decision easier to consider. When employees perceive that they themselves *and* other employees are treated with lower levels of procedural justice, they are more likely to believe that these conditions are part of the organizational culture and are unlikely to change – hence increasing their intentions to quit. In sum, although these behavioral intentions are motivated by self-interest, they are especially likely when employees perceive that their and others' procedural justice is low.

Hypothesis 4: Employees' turnover intentions are highest when they perceive that they and other employees are treated unfairly (i.e., procedural justice for self and procedural justice for others is lower).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants and Procedures

Our sample included employees (and their direct managers) of three different companies in the service sector (i.e., a healthcare, hospitality, and financial services organization). In each of the companies, I administered written surveys to employees and managers onsite. The employee survey included measures of procedural justice for self, procedural justice for other employees, neglect, and turnover intentions. The manager survey included a measure of the focal employee's altruistic behavior and in-role performance.

In total, I collected complete data from 174 employees (with matching data from their direct manager), resulting in a 72% response rate. Approximately thirty-seven percent (36.8%) of the employee sample was male and 16.1% had managerial/supervisory responsibilities. The mean age was 38.4 while the mean number of years of education was 15 years. Employees' average tenure with the organization was 22.1 months; their supervisor's average organizational tenure was 11.6 months.

3.2 Measures

Procedural justice for self. To assess the extent to which employees felt they were treated fairly, I asked employees to respond to five (of the six) items of the procedural justice scale (Moorman, 1991). Sample items are “Job decisions that affect me are made by my manager in an unbiased manner,” and “My manager makes sure that my concerns are heard before job decisions affecting me are made.” I excluded one item because it did not refer distinctively to self: “At my organization, all job decisions regarding most employees are applied consistently across all affected employees” and would not allow us to consider relative procedural justice. Employees responded to each item using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I averaged the scale items such that higher scores indicate more procedural justice for self ($\alpha = .90$).

Procedural justice for others. I measured the extent to which employees perceived that other employees were treated fairly by asking employees to respond to a modified version of the procedural justice scale (Moorman, 1991). Specifically, I modified the five items used to measure procedural justice for self to refer to the fair treatment of other employees besides themselves. Employees were asked to respond to each item in relation to all other employees besides themselves in their organization using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items are “At my organization, job decisions regarding most employees are made in an unbiased manner,” and “At my organization, concerns of most employees are heard before job decisions regarding them are made.” I averaged the scale items so that higher scores indicate more procedural justice for others ($\alpha = .80$).

Altruism. To measure employees’ altruistic behavior, managers responded to four items from the altruism subscale of the organizational citizenship behavior scale (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990). Sample items are “The employee willingly gives of his/her time to help others who have work-related problems” and “The employee frequently lends a helping hand to other employees.” Managers responded to each item using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I averaged the scale items so that higher scores indicate more altruistic behavior ($\alpha = .84$).

In-role performance. I measured employee job performance by asking managers to respond to four items from the job performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Sample items are “Fulfills all responsibilities required by his/her job” and “Always completes the duties specified by his/her job.” Manager responded to each item using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I averaged the items, so that a higher score indicates better job performance ($\alpha = .90$).

Neglect. I measured employees’ neglect behavior at work using Tetrick et al.’s (2001) six-item measure of neglect. The six items were, “When you felt that your organization has not lived up to its promises, to what extent have you: (1) worked more slowly?, (2) made more errors?, (3) called in sick?, (4) taken more breaks?, (5) done less work?, and (6) showed up late to work? ” Employees responded to each item using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). I averaged the scale items so that higher scores indicate more neglect behaviors ($\alpha = .75$).

Turnover intentions. I measured employees’ turnover intentions using a three-item measure created by Williams and Anderson (1991). Sample items are “I am actively looking for a job outside my organization” and “I am seriously thinking about quitting my job”. Employees responded to each item using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I averaged the scale items so that higher scores indicate higher turnover intentions ($\alpha = .88$).

Control variables. I included two variables as statistical controls, a dummy variable representing two of the three organizations included in the sample. Because I collected data in three different organizations, I statistically controlled for each organization because, although these organizations have some similarities, they may differ in terms of both the independent variables and dependent variables included in this study. For example, employees in different organizations may differ in the extent to which they may intend to turnover because of different employment alternatives for employees in different companies.

3.3 Analytic Strategy

In several of the hypotheses, I am concerned with relative procedural justice, that is, the extent to which there is an incongruence between how fairly employees believe they are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self) and how fairly employees believe other employees are treated (i.e., procedural justice for others). Although many researchers have examined the effects of incongruence (or congruence) using difference scores, the use of difference scores introduces a variety of methodological problems (e.g., Cronbach, 1958; Edwards, 1994). For example, difference scores are often less reliable than the individual measures with which they are constructed (Johns, 1981). In addition, difference scores reduce a three-dimensional relationship into two dimensions, thus restricting the ability to analyze the joint contributions of each component measure.

To avoid these problems, we used polynomial regression analysis to test our hypotheses. I mean-centered both independent variables and then, following the steps outlined by Edwards (1994), fitted a hierarchical regression model for each of our dependent variables. In the first step, we entered the two control variables representing the organizations where the data was collected. In the second step, I entered the mean-centered independent variables of procedural justice for self and procedural justice for others. Finally, in the third step, I entered the interaction term of the independent variables, and the quadratic forms of the independent variables. When warranted, I used the response surface methodology to interpret the coefficients of the polynomial regression model. I should note that I used this method for all dependent variables for consistency, although not all of the hypotheses require the inclusion of polynomial terms.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Initial Analyses

Before testing our hypotheses, I examined whether the two procedural justice measures (i.e., procedural justice for self and procedural justice for others) had satisfactory discriminant validity. To do so, I performed a confirmatory factor analysis. I found that a two-factor model fit our data satisfactorily and better than a one-factor model ($\chi^2(29, N = 174) = 69.27$, CFI = .96, TLI = .94, SRMR = .05). Thus, I proceeded to analyze procedural justice for the self and procedural justice for other employees as distinct constructs.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of and Correlations between Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Procedural justice-self	5.15	1.41	(.90)						
2. Procedural justice-others	4.47	1.23	.66***	(.80)					
3. In-role performance	5.75	1.22	.25**	.12	(.88)				
4. Altruism	5.81	1.07	.21**	.19*	.63***	(.63)			
5. Turnover intentions	3.37	1.84	-.49***	-.46***	-.20**	-.14	(.84)		
6. Neglect	1.38	0.45	-.30***	-.16*	-.13	-.09	.30***	(.75)	
7. Organization 1	0.49	0.50	-.30***	-.26**	-.10	.03	.09	.07	

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Organization 2	0.22	0.41	.19*	.26**	-.01	-.03	-.01	-.01	-.52***

Note. N = 174 Cronbach's alpha in parentheses.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for and correlations between all study variables. Employees' perception of procedural justice for self and their perception of procedural justice for others are negatively related to their intentions to quit ($r = -.49, p < .001$, and $r = -.46, p < .001$; respectively) as well as to their neglect behavior ($r = -.30, p < .001$, and $r = -.16, p < .05$; respectively). Employees' perception of procedural justice for self is positively related to their altruistic behavior ($r = .21, p < .01$) and in-role performance ($r = .25, p < .01$).

I also examined whether the employees in our sample experienced both favorable and unfavorable relative procedural justice. I found that, on average, employees' perceived they were treated more favorably than how others were treated. A paired-sample t -test revealed a significant positive difference between procedural justice for self and procedural justice for others (mean = .68, SD = 1.11, $t(174) = 8.13, p < .001$). Further inspection revealed that 66% of employees rated procedural justice for self *higher* than they rated procedural justice for other employees, 21% rated procedural justice for self *lower* than they rated procedural justice for other employees; and the remaining 13% rated procedural justice for self *equal* to procedural justice for others.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted that employees' altruistic behavior will increase as they perceive that other employees are treated less fairly than themselves. To test this hypothesis, I examined the interaction term of procedural justice for the self and procedural justice for other employees on employees' altruistic behavior. As can be seen in Table 2, the interaction term is significant ($\beta = -.37, p < .05$). Due to the fact that none of the polynomial terms were significant and for ease of interpretation, I did not use a response surface graph for this interaction. Instead, I explicated the interaction by calculating and plotting the relationship between employees' procedural justice for self and employees' altruistic behavior when employees' perceive other employees are treated with low procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for others is one standard deviation below the mean) and when they perceive other employees are treated with high procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for others is one standard deviation above the mean). Figure 2 shows the relationship between employees' perception of procedural justice for themselves and their altruistic behavior when they perceive that others are treated with either low or high procedural justice. Aligned with our predictions, I found that, when employees perceive other employees are treated with low procedural justice, procedural justice for self is significantly positively related to their altruistic behavior ($b = .35, p < .05$). Thus, I found support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that, employees' in-role performance is positively related to how fairly they perceive themselves to be treated. As can be seen in Table 2, I found that employees' perception of procedural justice for self is positively related to their in-role performance ($\beta = .29, p < .01$), thus supporting Hypothesis 2.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Predicting Altruism and In-role Performance

Variable	Altruism		In-role performance	
	β	t	β	t
Step 1				
Organization 1	.02	0.18	-.15	-1.65
Organization 2	-.02	-0.25	-.09	-1.01
ΔR^2	.01		.02	
Step 2				
Organization 1	.08	0.93	-.08	-0.91
Organization 2	-.05	-0.56	-.09	-1.06
Procedural justice-self	.18	1.75	.29	2.85**
Procedural justice-others	.11	1.08	-.07	-0.67
ΔR^2	.06**		.06**	
Step 3				
Organization 1	.10	1.15	-.09	-0.97
Organization 2	-.02	-0.25	-.10	-1.09
Procedural justice-self	.16	1.30	.24	1.92
Procedural justice-others	.13	1.21	-.05	-0.48
PJ-self ²	.21	1.31	-.07	-0.46
PJ-others ²	.11	0.89	.02	0.19
PJ-self x PJ-others	-.37	-2.05*	-.00	-0.02
ΔR^2	.03*		.00	

Note. N = 174. Total $R^2 = .09$ and $R^2_{adj} = .05$ for altruism; Total $R^2 = .08$ and $R^2_{adj} = .04$ for in-role performance.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Next, I tested Hypotheses 3a – 3c, which predicted that employees’ work neglect behavior will increase when they perceive that other employees are treated *more* fairly than they themselves are treated (Hypothesis 3a), and when they perceive other employees are treated *less* fairly than they are (Hypothesis 3b), and that employees’ neglect behavior will be more positively related to unfavorable relative procedural justice than to favorable relative procedural justice (Hypothesis 3c).

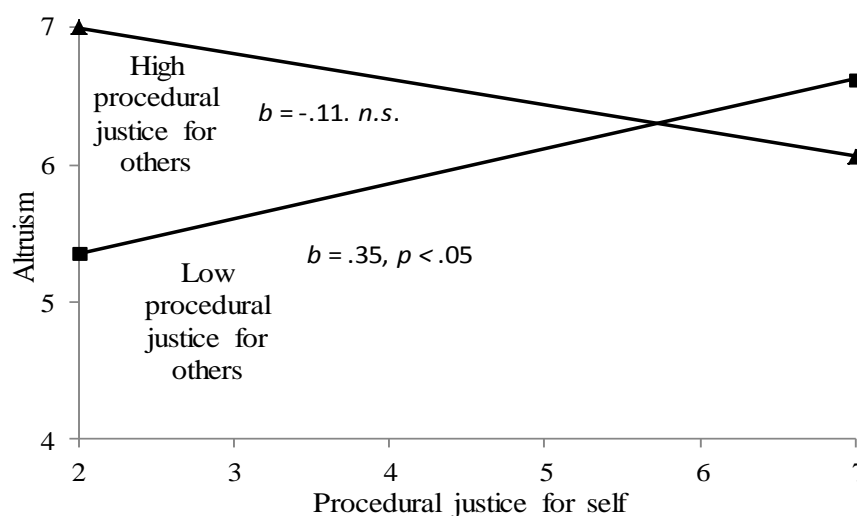


Figure 2. Employees’ Procedural Justice for Self and Supervisor-rated Altruistic Behavior for Perceived Low and High Procedural Justice for Others

Source: the author

To test these hypotheses, I conducted a hierarchical polynomial regression as previously described (as shown in Table 3). The interaction term between self and other procedural justice was statistically significant ($\beta = -.52, p < .01$). In addition to the interaction term, the quadratic term for procedural justice for others was also statistically significant ($\beta = .24, p < .05$), therefore, I plotted a response surface to assist in the interpretation of these results (as shown in Figure 3). Taken together, Hypotheses 3a and 3b predict that neglect behavior will increase when employees are not treated equally, such as when employees perceptions of procedural justice for themselves is incongruent with their perception of procedural justice for other employees. To test this I analyzed a salient feature of the response surface graph (Figure 3), the curvature of the line of non-congruence, $y = -x$ (i.e., procedural justice for others = - procedural justice for self). Support for Hypotheses 3a and 3b would be found if this line has a convex or U-shaped curve. The analysis revealed that this line does have a significantly convex curve ($a_2 = .20, p < .01$), thus showing support for Hypothesis 3a and 3b. That is, both favorable and unfavorable relative procedural justice patterns are related to employee neglect.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Predicting Neglect and Turnover Intentions

Variable	Neglect		Turnover intentions	
	β	t	β	T
Step 1				
Organization 1	.09	1.02	.12	1.32
Organization 2	.03	0.38	.05	0.59
ΔR^2	.01		.01	
Step 2				
Organization 1	.01	0.11	-.02	-0.29
Organization 2	.04	0.49	.11	1.49
Procedural justice-self	-.33	-3.36**	-.34	-3.88***
Procedural justice-others	.05	0.50	-.27	-3.11**
ΔR^2	.08**		.28***	
Step 3				
Organization 1	.04	0.41	-.02	-0.18
Organization 2	.07	0.82	.12	1.52
Procedural justice-self	-.40	-3.34**	-.32	-2.96**
Procedural justice-others	.11	1.09	-.27	-2.88**
PJ-self ²	.22	1.47	.06	0.43
PJ-others ²	.24	2.03*	.01	0.12
PJ-self x PJ-others	-.52	-2.97**	-.05	-0.30
ΔR^2	.05*		.00	

Note. N = 174. Total $R^2 = .14$ and $R^2_{adj} = .11$ for neglect; Total $R^2 = .29$ and $R^2_{adj} = .26$ for turnover intentions.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

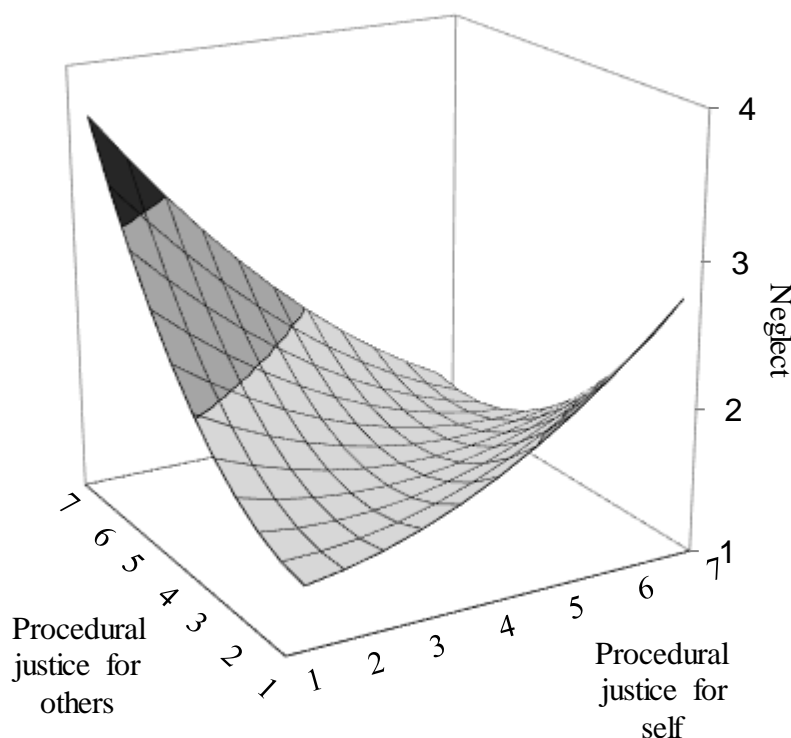


Figure 3. Response Surface of Employees' Work Neglect Behavior with Procedural Justice for the Self and Procedural Justice for Others

Source: the author

Finally, Hypothesis 3c predicts that employees are more likely to neglect their work when they experience unfavorable relative procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for the self is lower than procedural justice for others) than favorable relative procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others). To test this hypothesis, I once again analyze the line of non-congruence ($y = -x$) on the response surface graph. In particular, I am concerned with the slope of the line of non-congruence at the point that it intersects the line of congruence. To do this, I calculate the quantity a_3 , where $a_3 = b_1 - b_2$. When the value of a_3 is not significantly different from zero, it indicates that the likelihood of employees neglecting their work is not significantly different for both situations of favorable and unfavorable relative procedural justice. If a_3 is significantly positive, it would indicate that the response surface is sloping upward as it crosses the line of congruence, suggesting that employees are more likely to neglect their work in situations of favorable relative procedural justice (than unfavorable procedural justice). However, in this study, a_3 is significantly negative ($a_3 = -.17, p < .01$), which indicates, that the response surface continues to slope downward as it crosses the line of congruence, suggesting employees are more likely to neglect their work in situations of unfavorable relative procedural justice. Thus, I found support for Hypothesis 3c.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that employees' turnover intentions will be highest when perceptions of procedural justice for self *and* procedural justice for others are low. To test this hypothesis, I examined the direct effect of procedural justice for the self and procedural justice for other employees on employees' turnover intentions. I found that both procedural justice for self ($\beta = -.34, p < .001$) and procedural justice for other employees ($\beta = -.27, p < .01$) are

significantly negatively related to employees' turnover intentions. As was the case with in-role performance, there was not a significant change in R^2 when I added the block of variables (i.e., procedural justice self², procedural justice others², and procedural justice self x procedural justice other) in the third step of our hierarchical regression ($\Delta R^2 = .00$, *n.s.*). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this paper was to examine whether and how employees' perceptions of how they themselves are treated (i.e., procedural justice for self) and how other employees are treated (i.e., procedural justice for others) influence employees' in-role performance, altruism, neglect, and turnover intentions. Overall, the results suggest that employees are aware of and are influenced by both procedural justice for self and for others – and, for some dimensions of job performance, how much these two differ. Based on fairness theory, I presented two theoretical mechanisms: (1) the extent to which the employee feels valued by the organization and (2) the increased salience of self-interest or other-interest that are prompted by different justice conditions and behaviors.

Specifically, I found that employees were more likely to help their coworkers when they perceived that they were treated more fairly than their coworkers were treated. When employees' procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others, employees may respond with altruism because their favorable position, compared to others, is likely to make other-interest more salient. This result is consistent with other research that found that employees who personally experience fair treatment are more likely to engage in helping behavior (Kamdar, McAllister, Turban, 2006; McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison, & Turban, 2007).

In regards to in-role performance, I found that employees are only influenced by how fairly they are treated. Although employees may be concerned about the fair treatment of their coworkers, it is not enough for them to deviate from the required tasks of their jobs. Furthermore, personally experienced high procedural justice increases intrinsic motivation (Zapata-Phelan, Colquitt, Scott, and Livingstone, 2009) and reduces uncertainty (Desai, Sondak, Diekmann, 2011), both of which likely benefit performance.

I also found that employees had increasing neglect responses when they were treated more fairly than others were treated. Employees may engage in neglect as a form of retribution to the organization; perhaps in an act of solidarity, they show support of their mistreated colleagues through passive negative actions toward the organization (alternately, it may be that employees' favorable relative procedural justice led to feelings of entitlement and contributed to increasing complacency at work.) Furthermore, I also found that employees had increasing neglect responses when they were treated *less* fairly than others were treated. When employees experience unfavorable relative procedural justice, they likely respond with neglect to offset feelings of exploitation due to their unfavorable treatment compared to other employees.

Lastly, I found that employees have higher turnover intentions when they perceived low procedural justice for themselves *and* for other employees. It seems likely that when employees view themselves and others as being treated poorly, they believe that poor and unfair treatment is an enduring part of the organizational culture, thus precipitating their intentions to leave the organization. In addition, this consistently low level of procedural justice is likely to create an environment high in uncertainty (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009),

which could also strengthen employees' intentions to quit.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for theory and research on organizational justice. At the broadest level, our findings appear to be consistent with some of the underlying assumptions and contentions of fairness theory. First, consistent with fairness theory, they suggest that employees make social comparisons when considering organizational justice – and that the result of these comparisons leads to different outcomes. Second, consistent with fairness theory, they suggest that employees hold agents – such as the manager or the organization – accountable. For example, our finding that employees had higher turnover intentions when they perceived both their own procedural justice and the others' procedural justice as low suggests that employees hold the organization responsible for their and others' fair treatment.

The findings speak to the need to consider procedural justice as a relational construct that may have a bearing on workplace relationships (Lind & Tyler, 1988). That is, our findings suggest that employees consider their relative standing in their social context when evaluating their relationship with an organization and its members, which in turn, influences their behavior. Specifically, our finding that differences in how fairly employees themselves are treated and how fairly their coworkers are treated predict behaviors such as neglect and altruistic behavior suggests that employees' relative (not only absolute) treatment determines important workplace outcomes. These findings are in line with other research that employees rely on social information in making justice judgments (e.g., Hollensbe, Khazanchi, & Masterson, 2008) and that such information helps to predict important workplace outcomes (e.g., Henderson et. al., 2008).

The findings also inform recent research on procedural justice climate, a group-level cognition about how fairly a work group as a whole is treated (Naumann & Bennett, 2000). Research has found that procedural justice climate is positively related to related outcomes such as helping behavior (Naumann & Bennett, 2000) and turnover intentions (Simons & Roberson, 2003). And recent refinements to the construct of procedural justice climate have distinguished climate level, the mean level of fair treatment perceived by the group, and climate strength, the extent to which group members agree about the justice climate level (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002). Findings from studies that have used this two-dimensional definition of procedural justice climate have found that climate strength moderates the relationship between procedural justice climate level and outcomes such as burnout and team performance, such that the relationships are weaker when climate strength is low (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002; Moliner, Martinez-Tur, Peiro, Ramos, & Cropanzano, 2005). One reason this may be is that weak agreement about procedural justice climate level (i.e., low climate strength) may be due to either favorable *or* unfavorable relative procedural justice, and our findings suggest that these two conditions are likely to have differing relationships to outcomes such as performance. I would go further to suggest that even consistent ratings by employees about the procedural justice climate level do not ensure that the underlying perceptions of procedural justice for self and other are consistent among employees. For example, for two employees who provide similarly average ratings of the procedural justice climate level, one may arrive at this judgment because she perceives that procedural justice for self and others are similarly average whereas the other employee may arrive at this judgment because he perceives high procedural justice for self and low procedural justice for others. Future research should examine how employees' perceptions of procedural justice for self and others relate to their perceptions of the procedural justice climate.

According to our theorized mechanisms, some justice conditions increase the saliency of employees' self-interest and other conditions increase the saliency of others' interests. Specifically, I argued that justice conditions such as unfavorable relative procedural justice (i.e., when procedural justice for self is lower than procedural justice for others) increase the salience of self-interest. Our findings regarding unfavorable relative procedural justice are consistent with findings of equity theory in cases of under-reward (e.g., Greenberg, 1990; Ambose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002). That is, when employees perceive that they are treated worse than others as in the situation of unfavorable relative procedural justice or in the situation of under-reward, employees react with concern for their self-interest and take action in hopes of restoring equity such as by reducing inputs through neglect behaviors.

I also argued that justice conditions such as favorable relative procedural justice (i.e., when procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others) increase the salience of other-interest. Our findings regarding favorable relative procedural justice diverge from findings regarding conditions of over-reward. Although equity theory originally proposed that employees will act to restore balance in conditions of over-reward (Adams, 1965), research suggests that, in conditions of over-reward, employees tend to remain concerned with self-interest and justify their over-reward rather than seek to restore equity (e.g., Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). In contrast, I found that in situations of favorable relative procedural justice, employees appear to act with concern for others and seek ways to benefit their coworkers, such as acting altruistically.

Furthermore, our findings suggest that, in situations in which procedural justice for self and others differ, employees are likely to respond with either organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., altruism) or counterproductive work behaviors (i.e., neglect). This is in line with research that has found that employees use these behaviors to adapt to a less than an ideal situation (Dalal, 2005). Because neglect is a passive behavior (Rusbult et al., 1988) and because altruism is prosocial and indirectly beneficial to organizations (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997), employees are likely to engage in these behaviors in these conditions because they carry fewer costs in the form of negative repercussions from the organization than do the more active responses such as leaving the organization. It may be that employees consider the costs of their responses and whether their dissatisfaction with the discrepancies between their own and others' procedural justice exceeds these costs. When weighing their own self-interests and their moral outrage due to an unjust situation concerning others, they may be likely to choose more passive or prosocial responses that may preserve their self-interest and address their moral outrage. These findings extend other research that has considered conditions – such as on high interdependence tasks (Colquitt, 2004) or in cooperative conditions (De Cremer & Van Hiel, 2006) – when relative procedural justice predicts outcomes. Namely, the present research suggests that relative procedural justice determines only some outcomes and only in some conditions.

5.2 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

This study has several notable strengths. Notably, our study extends previous research and theory by its field study setting, its broad consideration of the “other”, the use of two data sources, its examination of multiple dimensions of job performance, and its use of polynomial regression with the response surface method, which avoids the limitations of other analytical techniques.

As with all studies, the present study has some limitations. First, although I found that employees can – and do – perceive that their own fair treatment can differ from others’ fair treatment, I do not know how employees arrive at these different perceptions. Future research should examine what information employees use to form these perceptions. Second, I do not know whether employees choose from these responses or if they engage in multiple responses under some conditions. For example, I found that favorable discrepancies between one’s own and others’ procedural justice (i.e., procedural justice for self is higher than procedural justice for others) was associated with both neglect *and* altruism. Because it seems difficult to imagine that employees are simultaneously engaging in both neglect and altruism, future research using other research designs should investigate what factors may determine whether employees perceiving favorable relative procedural justice are more likely to choose neglect or altruism.

Another avenue for future research is to examine individual differences as potential moderators of the relationship between relative procedural justice and job performance. For example, one such moderator could be individuals’ belief in a just world for self and belief in a just world for others (Lipkusa, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). When employees believe that the world *does not* treat them fairly (i.e., low belief in just world for self), being treated unfairly may have minimal influence on them because this situation is consistent with their belief. On the other hand, when employees believe the world *does* treat them fairly (i.e., high belief in a just world for self), being treated unfairly is likely to have a significant influence on them because this situation is inconsistent with their beliefs. Similarly, when employees believe that the world *does not* treat others fairly (i.e., a low belief in a just world for others), seeing a coworker treated unfairly may have minimal influence on them because this situation is consistent with their belief. On the other hand, when employees believe the world *does* treat others fairly (i.e., high belief in a just world for others), seeing a coworker treated unfairly is likely to have a significant influence on them because this situation is inconsistent with their beliefs.

5.3 Practical Implications

The results of the present study also have practical implications. Our findings expand on previous research demonstrating the importance of a fair work environment. Our results suggest that managers should be aware that employees are concerned with not only how fairly they are treated but also how fairly they believe others are treated. It seems likely that managers may contribute to increased fairness perceptions by creating greater transparency in procedures. In addition, managers must take care in adhering to formal organizational procedures. Our findings suggest that a fair work environment requires that managers apply procedures consistently to their direct employees and that other managers within the organization apply those procedures consistently to their direct employees. Furthermore, when exceptions are made for individual employees, they should be done with great care and solid justification. Such exceptions may directly benefit a single employee – and may increase his or her contributions to the organization. However, exceptions could have a ripple effect -- leading to perceived discrepancies in procedural justice by other employees. And, because multiple employees may perceive these discrepancies, their resulting negative responses may outweigh any benefits accrued by the single employee who received the exception.

6. Conclusion

The present study suggests that employees can and do differentiate how fairly they themselves

are treated and how fairly other employees are treated – that these considerations differ in their relationship to in-role performance, altruism, neglect, and turnover intentions. In sum, our findings suggest that the influences on these workplace outcomes are determined by how favorable their treatment is, sometimes by considering its favorability relative to others.

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