

# The Two Psychologies of Conflict Resolution: Differing Antecedents of Pre-Experience Choices and Post-Experience Evaluations

**Tom R. Tyler**  
*New York University*

**Yuen J. Huo**  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

**E. Allan Lind**  
*Duke University*

The literature on the 'myth of self-interest' model of perceived human motivation suggests that people believe that both they and others are more motivated by self-interest than is actually the case. Four studies are reported which test one implication of the myth of self-interest: the psychology of pre-experience preferences and post-experience evaluations will differ. We hypothesize that people arrive at pre-experience preferences for decision-making procedures based upon the belief that they want to maximize their self-interest. Further, they will define their self-interest in material terms. Consequently, they choose procedures that they believe promise them the best material outcomes. However, post-experience evaluations are based upon a different factor – the quality of the treatment received during the course of the procedure. The results of all four studies support the suggestion that the psychology of preference and of evaluation differ as predicted. The findings suggest that preference and choice should be viewed as reflecting different psychological processes.

**keywords** choice, satisfaction, self-interest, the relational model

Miller and Ratner (1996, 1998) have recently suggested that there is a discrepancy between the actual and the assumed power of self-interest in human motivation. The essence of their argument is that people overestimate the influence of self-interest on attitudes and behaviors.

---

#### **Author's note**

Address correspondence to Tom Tyler,  
Department of Psychology, New York  
University, 6 Washington Place, Room 550,  
New York, NY 10003, USA.  
[email: [tyler@psych.nyu.edu](mailto:tyler@psych.nyu.edu)]

a discrepancy between the real and the perceived causes of behavior that Miller and Ratner label 'the myth of self-interest'. Our goal here is to use the idea of the myth of self-interest to help resolve a problem which has existed for years within the social psychology of conflict resolution: how to reconcile the instrumental and relational models of reactions to conflict resolution procedures.

Two models have been put forward to explain people's evaluations of conflict resolution procedures: the instrumental and the relational. The instrumental model suggests that when dealing with others people are concerned about the favorability of their outcomes, and define outcomes in terms of material gains and losses (see e.g. Brett, 1986; Kurtz & Houlden, 1981). The relational model argues that people are concerned about the identity implications of how they are treated in the course of the conflict resolution experience, and draw identity information from the treatment they receive from others (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Each model assumes a single explanation for pre-experience choices among and post-experience evaluations of disputing procedures and experiences, and each model can claim some support in the research literature.

There are studies that clearly show strong links between positive reactions to procedures and a cluster of instrumental variables, such as the perceived favorability of their outcomes and estimates of control over those outcomes (e.g. Brett & Goldberg, 1983; Houlden, LaTour, Walker, & Thibaut, 1978; Kurtz & Houlden, 1981). Other studies show just as clearly that there are strong links between the quality of the treatment received from others, i.e. dignified or respectful treatment, the consideration of one's views, etc., and positive reactions to procedures (e.g. Lind, Erickson, Friedland, & Dickenberger, 1978; Lind et al., 1990; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985). In a previous analysis of this body of evidence, Lind and Tyler (1988) suggested that both self-interest and relational concerns play a role in reactions to procedures, but even if this analysis is correct, it remains unclear when one concern or the other predominates.

The development of research on the 'myth of self-interest' provides a basis for predicting when each set of concerns is more or less important. Specifically, the myth of self-interest suggests that people's preferences among procedures might be more heavily influenced by instrumental concerns than are their post hoc evaluations of those same procedures. Prior to experiencing a conflict resolution procedure, people, believing themselves to be concerned about the favorability of their outcomes, might choose among conflict resolution procedures based upon estimates of the likelihood of obtaining favorable outcomes through each procedure. However, after they actually experience a procedure people may evaluate it relationally, because the experience of disrespectful treatment is so distasteful and carries such negative identity-relevant imagery that even a positive material outcome cannot overcome these negative aspects of the experience.

In other words, there may be two psychologies of disputing. The first is a self-interested psychology of disputing, which people think reflects their desires. This psychology shapes pre-experience preferences and choices among procedures. The second is a relational psychology of disputing. This model manifests itself in post-experience evaluations and in behavioral reactions to conflict resolution decisions.

### **The 'myth of self interest'**

A core feature of cultural ideology is its depiction of the nature of human motivation (Miller & Ratner, 1996, 1998). Miller and Ratner use evidence from a variety of sources to suggest that within American society there is a widespread belief that all people are motivated to act based upon their self-interest. In a series of laboratory studies, they demonstrate that people overestimate the influence of personal self-oriented interests upon their own and others' attitudes and behaviors (Miller & Ratner, 1998). In other words, people believe that both they themselves and others shape their behaviors to maximize their individual self-interest.

Further, people define their self-interest in terms of material gains and losses. The concept

of self-interest itself does not indicate what people value when they deal with others. However, theories of self-interest have typically focused upon material goods. And the self-interest that is the focus of the Miller and Ratner work is the exchange of material goods. Hence, while it might be argued on theoretical grounds that being treated with dignity and respect (i.e. 'relational concerns'; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) is a valuable and desired outcome, people themselves think of outcomes in more material terms. This is consistent with the myth of self-interest, which suggests to people that they value material gains and losses.

Because choosing a conflict resolution procedure, or indicating one's preference *a priori* for using one procedure or another, is an exercise in predicting both one's own and one's opponent's behavior and reactions, work on the myth of self-interest would predict a strong effect for the perceived favorability of the procedure's outcome. That is, we expect people to choose, or to express a preference for, procedures that they think will give them what they want. A closely related idea, especially given the conflicting desires that people can anticipate in an interpersonal conflict, is that people will pick procedures that give them the most control over the outcome, i.e. that allow the person to dictate that his or her chosen outcome prevail over the chosen outcome of the other, supposedly equally selfish, party to the dispute.

### **The relational model**

A substantial and growing body of research shows that people are not so self-interested as the myth of self-interest portrays them as being. For example, research on reactions to real-world experiences with police or courts shows that people are more concerned about issues of morality and procedural fairness than about getting the best material outcome for themselves (Lind et al., 1990; Tyler, 1990). Hence, the factors that really affect attitudes and behavior may be substantially different from those that people, using the myth of self-interest, *think* will affect attitudes and behavior, and this

in turn can lead to post-experience evaluations that are driven by an altogether different set of concerns.

The studies just mentioned, along with many other studies of evaluations of disputing procedures and experiences (see Lind & Tyler, 1988, and Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997, for reviews) show that selfish, material, outcome concerns generally are less important to people than are the concerns about the social relationships that exist or arise within the disputing context. In particular, this body of research has shown that people place great weight on such things as whether they are treated politely and with respect, whether the conflict resolution process allows them some fundamental dignity, and whether their views and needs are considered. Tyler and Lind (1992) argue, in the course of proposing a 'relational model' of authority and conflict resolution, that these quality of treatment variables are important because they are seen as indicative of whether a sound social relationship exists with other disputants or third parties within the disputing context (see also Lind, in press). The relational model argues that people are concerned about their standing in groups and other social relations, since their membership in such social entities is an important aspect of their social self (Smith & Tyler, 1997). People use their treatment by others as one index of social status and, as a consequence, focus upon treatment by others when reacting to their personal experiences. Three aspects of treatment are particularly relevant – evidence of neutrality, trust in the motives of others, and treatment with respect and dignity (labeled generally as 'relational concerns'; Tyler, 1989b; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

A reconsideration of the literature on self-interest versus relational concerns in the evaluation of conflict resolution procedures reveals that some of the strongest support for self-interest antecedents of procedural evaluations is seen in studies that examine *a priori* preferences for one conflict resolution procedure over another (e.g. Kurtz & Houlden, 1981), while the strongest support for relational antecedents is seen in studies that examine post hoc

evaluations of experiences with one procedure or another. This pattern of support for the two models of evaluation makes sense if one assumes that actually experiencing a given procedure or process is more likely to engage the social identity processes that are assumed to underlie relational concerns. In this respect, actual experience is different than is 'simulating' one's reactions to an as-yet-unexperienced conflict resolution. This argument seems quite reasonable, since relational concerns are precisely the sort of social considerations that are neglected in the set of beliefs that constitute 'the myth of self interest'.

If the psychology of *a priori* choice and preference differs from the psychology of post hoc evaluation in the way we are suggesting, it would explain another common finding in the study of conflict resolution. Studies of conflict resolution suggest that people often end up feeling dissatisfied with the behavioral choices they make about how to deal with their conflicts with others, even when those choices appear to be freely made. Lind, Huo, and Tyler (1994), for example, find that, irrespective of how they try to resolve conflicts, people's post-experience evaluations of their choices are on average negative.

People often seem to choose behaviors, and then regret their choices, feeling post-experience regret and dissatisfaction with their dispute resolution experiences. Consistent with this argument, field studies of mediation have found a persistent discrepancy between choice and post-experience evaluation (MacCoun, Lind, & Tyler, 1992; Tyler, 1989a). The studies reviewed by MacCoun et al. and Tyler show that it is difficult to induce conflicting parties to choose mediation, a procedure that lessens third party control and that makes the sure attainment of any given outcome problematic, but that also engenders feelings of social engagement and involvement. However, once experienced, mediation procedures tend to be evaluated quite positively by the disputing parties, and to produce decisions that the parties are likely to find satisfactory and voluntarily accept.

We argue that the discontent that many peo-

ple experience with their conflict resolution experiences may come in part from their own choices, or more specifically from the criteria they use to choose a way of resolving the conflict. If procedures are chosen on one set of criteria, but evaluated on another, it is not surprising that the choices fail to result in much satisfaction for those with the original disputes.

## **Study 1**

The first study examines preference in a situation in which people are choosing among various types of behavior which they might engage in to resolve a social conflict. Two stages of conflict resolution are identified: pre-experience preferences among alternative procedures for resolving a conflict, and the post-experience evaluations of one's actual experiences with a conflict resolution procedure and its results. This study will examine the influence of two psychological antecedents on preference and evaluation. Those antecedents are: instrumental judgments of outcome favorability and outcome control; and relational judgments about the quality of treatment by others. Prior to a procedure participants are asked about whether a procedure, if chosen, is likely to lead to a favorable outcome and/or to dignified treatment by others. Following their actual experience using a procedure participants are asked whether the procedure in fact led to a favorable outcome and whether, during the procedure, they were in fact treated with dignity. By examining the strength of the relationship between instrumental and relational judgments and pre-experience preferences and post-experience evaluations, we can test the propositions we advance above.

This study focuses on the interpersonal conflicts that occur in the participant's work and personal life. Participants are first asked to consider a hypothetical interpersonal conflict and to indicate how they think they would prefer to deal with that conflict. Seven potential approaches are presented to the participants: ignoring the conflict, giving in to the other person, exerting social influence, trying to persuade, negotiating, seeking the services of a

mediator, and seeking the services of an arbitrator. Since participants may not be familiar with these various procedures, each is presented in a short paragraph that explains what the procedure involves. With each procedure the psychological basis of preferences was established by examining the relationship between the expected consequences associated with using that procedure (e.g. obtaining a favorable outcome; receiving dignified treatment) and preferences for using that procedure (I would like to use this procedure to resolve a conflict of this type).

Participants were then asked to give post-experience evaluations of a recent real conflict in their lives. The psychological basis of these evaluations was examined by asking the participants retrospective questions about what happened during the enactment of the procedure (e.g. 'I received a favorable outcome'; 'I was treated with dignity') and their post-procedural evaluations ('I would use this procedure again in a similar situation').

### **Method**

**Participants** There were 774 participants in this study. Of these, 324 were undergraduates at the University of California at Berkeley, who participated either in partial fulfillment of a requirement for an introductory psychology class ( $n = 183$ ) or for payment ( $n = 141$ ); another 206 were undergraduates at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who completed the questionnaires as part of a course requirement; and 244 were students at the University of Osnabrück, who also completed the questionnaires as part of a course requirement.

**Design** This study had two parts: a pre-experience assessment of hypothetical conflict resolution preferences and post-experience evaluations of real conflict experiences. In the first part, participants considered hypothetical disputes and indicated how they would respond to them. In the second part, participants described how they actually dealt with real disputes and how they subsequently evaluated their disputing experience. In each case two antecedents of reactions to conflict resolution pro-

cedures were compared: (1) variables associated with the favorability of the outcomes expected or experienced under the procedure in question and (2) variables associated with the quality of the treatment the participant received or expected to receive from authorities.

In the study participants responded to a two-part questionnaire. In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to consider a hypothetical scenario in which they were in conflict with another person. Several features of the scenario were manipulated: (1) the relationship of the disputants (friend vs. acquaintance); (2) the issues in dispute (money vs. insult); and (3) the similarity of the ethnic background of the other disputant to that of the participant (the same vs. different). Participants were asked to evaluate seven different ways that they might deal with the dispute: ignoring it, giving in, using friends to pressure the other person (social influence), trying to persuade the other person, negotiating a mutually acceptable solution, using mediation, and using arbitration. The procedure was a within-subject factor – each participant considered all of the seven procedures.

In the second part of the study participants were asked to recall an actual interpersonal conflict in which they had been involved and to answer questions regarding that conflict. The recall instructions included the ethnicity manipulation, with half of the participants asked to recall a conflict with another person of the same ethnic background, one-half with a different ethnic background. The 'ethnicity of the other party condition' to which the participant was assigned in the second part of the study was the same as that to which he or she had been assigned in the first part of the study. However, their relationship to the other party and/or the issues in dispute may have differed from those presented in the hypothetical scenario.

### **Questionnaire**

**Preference-related measures** Participants were first asked about their preferences for using each of the seven approaches to the conflict they were

considering: ignoring the situation and avoiding contact with the other person; giving in to the other person; using their power and their influence over friends and family to pressure the other person; trying to persuade the other person that they are right; negotiating to find a compromise that both parties will feel is acceptable; seeking the assistance of an impartial third party for suggestions; and seeking the assistance of an impartial third party to make a binding decision. We assessed the participants' preference for using each procedure by asking them to indicate 'how likely' they thought it was that they 'would try to deal with the problem' in each of these seven ways.

Participants then rated each of the seven procedures on a series of psychological dimensions. Instrumental judgments were measured by answers to the question: 'How likely is it that each method would lead to the solution you wanted?' (1: 'very unlikely' to 7: 'very likely', respectively). Relational judgments about the quality of people's treatment by others were measured by answers to five questions asking: 'How likely is it that the problem would be resolved in a dignified way'; '... that issues would be brought into the open'; '... that relevant facts would be considered'; 'that their views would be considered'; and '... that their rights as a person would be protected?' These five items were combined into a single scale (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

Two dependent variables were assessed: 'How likely is it that you would use the procedure to deal with the problem?' and 'How likely is it that the amount of conflict with the other person, now or in the future, would be reduced?' by using the procedure.

**Post-experience evaluations** Participants were next asked to think about a 'real interpersonal dispute' that they had recently experienced. They were asked to indicate what they did in resolving their own conflict. Participants were told at this point that 'we are interested in what you actually did to resolve the dispute, not what you would hypothetically do'.

One aspect of the actual dispute was manipulated: participants were asked to recall an

experience with a same or other ethnicity other (each participant received the same level of the 'ethnicity of other person' manipulation on the two parts of the experiment). Two aspects of the dispute were established in the questionnaire. First, participants indicated whether or not the person they dealt with was a friend ('Prior to the dispute, I felt very close to this person'). Second, participants were asked to indicate the cause of the dispute (Did this dispute occur because: 'The other person was rude or impolite to you' and/or because 'The other person refused to give you money or other things they owed you').

Participants were asked to evaluate their feelings 'during and after' the dispute. In particular, they were asked to evaluate the favorability of their outcome, and the quality of their treatment during the procedure. To assess outcome favorability, participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement that: 'The outcome of the dispute gave me what I wanted' and 'The outcome was very favorable to me' (Cronbach's alpha = .83). Quality of treatment was established by asking whether the participant agreed or disagreed with statements that: 'issues were brought into the open'; 'the dispute was resolved in a dignified way'; 'my rights as a person were protected'; 'my views were considered and taken into account'; and 'what I wanted was considered' (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

Two dependent variables were examined. First, participants were asked how likely they would be to try to use the same procedure in the future if they had a dispute of a similar type. Second, they were asked whether the conflict they experienced changed their relationship with the other person 'for the better'.

**Analytic considerations** Altogether, 774 participants completed questionnaires, with each giving information about seven procedures. This produced 5418 procedural evaluations. For the preference analysis these 5418 procedural evaluations were used as the basis for analysis. Each evaluation was weighted by 0.142857 (1/7) to restore the sample size to 774 and to avoid inflating the significance of statis-

tical tests (see Lind et al., 1994, p. 282, for a discussion of this methodology). Post-experience evaluations used the sample of 774 participants as the unit of analysis.<sup>1</sup>

## Results

**Dissatisfaction** In keeping with the finding of most prior research on dispute resolution, this study also finds that people typically prefer to settle their disputes through negotiation and persuasion (see Lind et al., 1994, for a more detailed discussion of this point). In this study people are generally found to express post-experience dissatisfaction with the manner in which they tried to resolve their conflicts, even when they use their preferred methods. On average, participants ended up expressing negative feelings in the post-experience ratings. An overall affect scale indicated that mean affect was negative for subgroups of participants using each of the seven procedural choices. In other words, no matter how participants had chosen to resolve their conflict, their average post-experience feeling was negative. This supports the suggestion that people are dissatisfied with the procedures they choose to resolve disputes.

**Pre-experience preferences** The first concern of this study is with the psychological antecedents of preferences for different methods of conflict resolution. Regression analysis was used

to address this issue. In the regression analysis outcome favorability and quality of treatment were entered as independent variables. They were used to predict the dependent variables: preference for dealing with the problem in a particular way and ratings of the likelihood of increased conflict. The manipulated characteristics of the conflict presented to the participants (for example, the conflict with a friend or acquaintance), as well as participant nationality were included as controls.<sup>2</sup> The results are shown in Table 1.

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that preferences for using a particular procedure to deal with a conflict are most strongly influenced by judgments concerning the likelihood that using the procedure will lead to a favorable outcome ( $\beta = .54, p < .001$ ). Assessments about whether or not the procedure is likely to lead to high quality relational treatment by others appear to have a lesser influence ( $\beta = .17, p < .001$ ). A statistical comparison of the magnitude of the correlations linking preference to instrumental and relational concerns is significant ( $t(771) = 5.34, p < .001$ ; see Blalock, 1972, p. 407, for a description of a procedure for comparing the magnitude of two correlations using a *t* test).

Judgments about the likelihood of conflict with others are strongly affected by judgments about the likelihood the respondent would

Table 1. Preferences among anticipated procedures: Study 1

	Want to deal with problem using this procedure	Conflict that will occur if the procedure is used
<b>Beta weights</b>		
Expectation of favorable outcome	.54***	.16***
Expectation of treatment with dignity	.17***	.27***
<b>Dispute characteristics</b>		
Friend?	.01	.04
Same ethnicity?	.00	-.01
Topic of dispute	-.01	.00
<b>Nationality</b>		
US vs. Hong Kong	-.03	-.09*
Germany vs. Hong Kong	-.07*	-.02
adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	45%***	16%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note: Entries are beta weights.

receive high quality relational treatment (beta = .27,  $p < .001$ ), and are also significantly influenced by the expected favorability of the respondent's outcomes (beta = .16,  $p < .001$ ). The magnitude of these two relationships is not significantly different.

Dispute characteristics – whether the dispute involved a friend or a person of the same ethnic background, or issues of honor or money – had little influence on either of the dependent variables. Similarly, the ethnic background of the disputants had little influence. These findings suggest that people make choices among procedures based primarily upon their sense of which procedures will lead to favorable outcomes. Hence, before they enter into a conflict resolution procedure people act as if they are the self-interest seekers described by the cultural 'myth of self-interest'. In terms of preferences, self-interest is not a myth. Interestingly, the impact of the myth of self-interest is not ubiquitous: the respondents recognized that relational issues would play at least as strong a role in shaping future conflict as would outcome favorability. Nonetheless, their views about which procedure to use were primarily shaped by instrumental judgments.

How do people evaluate their dispute resolution experiences after those experiences have

occurred? Again, regression analysis was used to examine this relationship. The results are shown in Table 2. The first question asked is whether or not the disputant would use the same procedure again in the future in a similar situation. The results indicate that both relational concerns (beta = .30,  $p < .001$ ) and instrumental concerns (beta = .27,  $p < .001$ ) influenced judgments about what people would do in the future. These two relationships are not significantly different in their magnitude. In contrast to pre-experience preference judgments, instrumental concerns were not the dominant factor. They were equal in importance to relational concerns in post-experience analyses.

Prior to experiencing the procedure people indicated that they felt that the quality of treatment by others would be as strong as the favorability of the outcomes they received in shaping future conflict. After the experience, however, their feelings about future conflict were only influenced by the quality of treatment by others. Outcome favorability had no significant influence on social climate. A comparison of the magnitude of these relationships indicates that quality of treatment was significantly more influential ( $t(771) = 5.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Table 2. Post-experience evaluations of procedures: Study 1

	Would you use this procedure again?	Conflict has lessened
Beta weights		
Favorability of outcome	.27***	.03
Quality of treatment	.30***	.34***
Dispute characteristics		
Same/diff. background	-.02	-.04
Close to other person?	-.05	.10**
Cause – rudeness?	-.08*	-.06
Cause – money?	-.07*	.00
Nationality		
US vs. Hong Kong	.10*	-.10*
Germany vs. Hong Kong	.03	-.23**
$R^2$	31%***	18%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note. Entries are beta weights.

## Discussion

The findings of Study 1 are consistent with the argument advanced by the myth of self-interest. As predicted by our analysis of the implications of the myth of self-interest and the relational model of authority, people's preferences were more strongly guided by their instrumental judgments than were their post-experience evaluations of their experiences.

## Study 2

Study 2 is based upon samples of students from the United States and Japan. The study has two parts. The first part replicates Study 1 by asking participants to respond to a hypothetical scenario in which they are involved in a dispute with another person. In the scenario, as in Study 1, the nature of (1) the dispute (money or insult), (2) the relationship among the disputants (friends or acquaintances), and (3) the similarity of their social backgrounds (similar, different) were varied. In the second part of the study students were asked to recall a real interaction with a professor or teacher and to respond to a series of questions about that interaction. These questions assessed the basis of post-experience evaluations of the experience.

### Method

**Participants** The participants in Study 2 were college students. In the United States, 181 students completed the questionnaire as partial fulfillment of a course requirement. In Japan, 165 students also completed the questionnaire as partial fulfillment of a course requirement.

**Design** Participants responded to a two-part questionnaire. In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to consider a hypothetical scenario in which they were in conflict with another person. The characteristics of that scenario were varied in: (1) the relationship of the disputants (friends vs. acquaintances); (2) the issues in dispute (money vs. insult); and (3) the similarity of the person's background to their own (similar vs. different). Each participant was asked to evaluate

seven different ways that they might deal with the dispute: ignoring it, giving in, using friends to pressure the other person (social influence), trying to persuade the other person, negotiating a mutually acceptable solution, using mediation, and using arbitration. Each participant considered all seven possible procedures, each of which was explained in a brief paragraph.

In the second part of the study participants were asked to recall a recent personal interaction with a professor. They were then asked questions about that interaction. Participants were asked to focus on the last time they discussed issues such as getting help with work, settling a conflict with the professor, discussing grades, or seeking help to resolve a conflict with others.

### Questionnaire

*Pre-experience preferences* Participants were first asked about their preferences for using each of the seven approaches to the hypothetical conflict outlined in Study 1. Participants then rated each of the seven procedures on the same psychological dimensions used in Study 1. Instrumental judgments were indexed by estimates of how likely it is that each method would lead to the solution the participant wanted. Relational judgments reflected the likelihood that each method would lead to a high quality of treatment. Expected quality of treatment was indexed using the same five questions used in Study 1 (Cronbach's alpha = .90). The two dependent variables measured in Study 1 were again assessed and were used in this study.

*Post-experience evaluation* Participants were asked to evaluate their feelings 'during and after' their recent dispute with a professor. Outcome favorability was assessed by asking participants 'how favorable' the outcome was to them. Quality of treatment was assessed by asking participants to respond to five questions: 'How seriously were your views considered?'; 'How much respect was shown for your rights?'; 'How much consideration was given to what you needed and wanted?'; 'How politely were you treated?'; and 'To what extent did the discus-

sion center on facts, not on irrelevant issues?' (Cronbach's alpha = .82).

The dependent variable was the willingness to use the procedure again. Participants were asked two questions, which were averaged to form an index of willingness to use the procedure again: 'If I had it to do over again, would I take this problem to the professor again?' and 'If a friend were in the same class, would I suggest that he/she take problems to the same professor?' (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

**Analytic considerations** A total of 346 participants were interviewed, with each giving information about seven procedures. This leads to 2422 procedural evaluations. As in Study 1, for the preference analysis these 2422 procedural evaluations were weighted by 0.142857 (1/7) to produce a sample size of 346. Participants also reacted to their own experience with the professor, however it was resolved. The sample of 346 participants was used as the basis for this analysis.

## Results

**Preference** The first concern of this study is with the psychological antecedents of preferences for different methods of conflict resolution. Regression analysis is used to examine the relationship between judgments about the likely consequences of using particular procedures and preferences for using those pro-

cedures. In the regression analysis outcome favorability and quality of treatment were entered as independent variables. They were used to predict the dependent variables: participant's preference for dealing with the problem in a particular way and ratings of the likely future conflict involved (Table 3).

As in Study 1, the results of the Study 2 analysis suggest that participants' decisions among possible dispute resolution procedures were primarily influenced by their evaluations of the likelihood of gaining a favorable outcome through the procedure ( $\beta = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There was also an apparently lesser influence of expectations about the quality of treatment that would be received from each procedure ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A comparison of the strength of these relationships indicates that the connection with expectations of favorable outcome is significantly stronger ( $t(343) = 2.67$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Nationality had no direct influence on preferences ( $\beta = .02$ , *ns*).<sup>3</sup>

Further, judgments about the likelihood of gaining a favorable outcome shaped people's expectations about how much conflict will occur ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while judgments about the quality of treatment had no direct effect ( $\beta = .09$ , *ns*). These two relationships were not significantly different in magnitude. Again, nationality had no direct influence ( $\beta = .01$ , *ns*). Further, the characteristics of the dispute – i.e. whether it involved a friend or a person of the similar background, or issues of

Table 3. Preferences among anticipated procedures: Study 2

	Want to deal with problem using this procedure	Conflict that will occur if the procedure is used
Beta weights		
Expectation of gain	.47***	.23***
Expectation of treatment with dignity	.16**	.09
Dispute characteristics		
Friend?	-.01	.01
Same ethnicity?	.01	.01
Topic of dispute	.00	.01
Nationality	.02	.01
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	35%***	9%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note. Entries are beta weights.

honor or money – had little influence on any of the dependent variables.

How do people evaluate their experiences after those experiences have occurred? Again, regression analysis was used to examine this relationship. The results are shown in Table 4. The dependent variable is whether or not the disputant would use the same procedure again in a similar situation in the future. The results indicate that both relational concerns ( $\beta = .50, p < .001$ ) and instrumental concerns ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ) influence judgments about what people would do in the future, and that relational concerns were the stronger determinant of returning to the professor with a similar problem. The difference between the two correlations is significantly different in magnitude ( $t(343) = 3.81, p < .001$ ). In contrast to pre-experience preference judgments, instrumental concerns are not the dominant factor. They are significantly less important than are relational concerns.

One important caution in interpreting the Study 2 data, which is not an issue in the Study 1 data, is that the situations participants are considering when making pre-experience and post-experience judgments are different. In making pre-experience assessments about the desirability of procedures participants were considering disputes in their everyday life. However, when making post-experience evaluations of an experience, they were evaluating an experience in which they had dealt with a university professor or instructor. Hence, the situations are not the same. Nonetheless, it is encouraging

Table 4. Post-experience evaluations of procedures:  
Study 2

	Would you use this procedure again?
Beta weights	
Favorability of outcome	.18***
Quality of treatment	.50***
Nationality	.16***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	43%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note.  $n = 346$ .

that these findings support those of Study 1, where the pre- and post-experience settings were comparable.

### Discussion

The findings of Study 2 are consistent with those of Study 1 and with the argument advanced by the myth of self-interest and the relational model. Again, people's preferences before they have an experience are more strongly guided by their instrumental judgments than are their post-experience evaluations of their experiences. As in Study 1, a discontinuity is seen between the factors shaping the willingness to use a procedure and the factors shaping the willingness to use a social procedure again after experiencing it once. Quality of treatment becomes more important after people have had personal experience with a procedure.

### Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 compare preferences and evaluations in a situation in which people are choosing among alternative ways of handling disputes and problems. While choice among procedures is examined in early studies of procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) and is important in studies of negotiation behavior, many procedural justice studies examine not choices among procedures, but the choice of whether or not to use one particular procedure in a specified sequence (see e.g. Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993; Lind et al., 1990). For example, in legal disputing, a plaintiff must first decide whether or not to engage the legal system at all in his or her dispute, then he or she must decide whether or not to use negotiation to resolve the dispute, then if negotiation fails he or she must decide whether or not to go to mediation and/or trial. Study 3 extends our test of the hypotheses to such a setting. Study 3 examines procedural choices and procedural evaluations among people who are deciding whether to sue someone who has caused them bodily injury.

We expect the same basic discontinuity to play out in the sequential choice of procedures.

If people are making choices using the cultural ideology represented by the 'myth of self-interest', they should make their choices about whether to pursue a claim in instrumental terms. They should believe that their satisfaction will depend upon whether they receive resources from the other person, not on how that person treats them. However, once they have been involved in a claiming experience, people should evaluate that experience by considering the quality of their treatment by others.

### **Methods**

The data for Study 3 were taken from a national survey of 2555 people who were either injured seriously enough to miss a day of their normal activity or who had filed some sort of claim as a result of an injury. The 2555 people were identified using a screening survey of approximately 10,000 households in the United States. (See Hensler et al., 1991, for a complete description of the survey design, methods, and findings.) Part of the interview administered to these participants asked about their thoughts and actions with respect to claiming compensation for their injury and their feelings about any claiming experience.

The pre-experience analyses reported here are based on 305 of these participants: those who reported that they had considered claiming for compensation from some person, organization, or institution and who also offered an estimate of how much they would obtain in compensation for their injury. The post-experience analysis is based upon 223 participants who received a monetary settlement and who could therefore report their satisfaction with the outcome of the claim.

**Measures** The participants were asked if they had ever thought about or talked about claiming compensation for their injury (claims to their own insurers or workers compensation claims were not included because most of these claims are not disputed). If they responded affirmatively, they were asked 'When you first considered trying to get compensation for this

injury, how much money did you think you might be able to get?' They were also asked 'How did you think you would be treated by the people you would have to deal with to get compensation?' These two items represented the measures of instrumental and relational expectations, respectively. (The dollar estimate was transformed using a logarithmic transformation to normalize it. Previous research has shown that the relationship between dollar estimates or dollar reports of outcomes and any psychological variable tend to be minimal unless a transformation of this sort is used; see e.g. Lind et al., 1993; Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, 1998.) As a measure of the extent to which the participants had activated the tort claiming system as a dispute resolution procedure, we computed a 'claiming procedure index', which is a count of the number of claiming options (e.g. direct claiming from the source of the injury, contacting an attorney, filing a lawsuit) activated by the respondent.

Participants who did in fact claim and who had received some monetary compensation were also asked two questions about the outcome of the dispute and one question about the fairness of the treatment they had experienced, a relational issue. The two outcome questions asked 'What was the total payment for all the claims and lawsuits against other people or organizations?' (using the logarithm of the amount in the analyses) and, to tap a more subjective assessment of outcome, 'How adequate did you think the amount you received was?' The post-experience fairness question asked 'How did you feel you were treated by the different people in the process: very fairly, somewhat fairly, somewhat unfairly, or very unfairly?' The dependent variable in the post-experience analyses was the respondent's rating in response to a question that asked 'At this point, how do you feel about the process you had to go through to try to get compensation from the person or group responsible for the injury?'

### **Results**

The results of the pre-experience report data analyses are given in Table 5. As can be seen,

**Table 5.** The pre-experience antecedents of claiming choice: Study 3

Expected outcome (log of expected outcome)	.12*
Expected quality of treatment	.05
adj. $R^2$	2%*

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note: Entries are beta weights.

the choice of whether and how much to invoke claiming procedures is significantly linked to the expected outcome of the claim, but not to perceptions about the likely treatment that would be received in pursuing the claim. However, the difference in the importance of these instrumental and relational indices is not significant ( $t(303) = 1.22$ , ns), suggesting that both factors have some role in shaping claiming decisions.

The analyses of the post-experience reports involved two regression analyses, both predicting overall satisfaction with the claiming procedures experienced. Table 6 reports the regression using the log dollars received and the quality of treatment rating; Table 7 reports the regression using the perceived adequacy of outcome and the quality of treatment rating. As can be seen from the tables, in both analyses the stronger regression coefficients were those associated with the quality of treatment variable. In both sets of analyses, a comparison of the magnitude of the association shows that quality of treatment is significantly more important (Table 6:  $t(220) = 6.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Table 7:  $t(220) = 8.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Discussion

The results of Study 3 replicate those of Studies 1 and 2. Choice is instrumentally based, while post-experience evaluation is dominated by relational concerns about the quality of the treatment received. In this case, however, the type of choice being studied is not a choice among alternatives. Instead, people are choosing whether or not to pursue a course of action. In addition, Study 3 shows the phenomenon in

**Table 6.** Post-experience satisfaction (log dollars gained): Study 3

Favorability of outcome (log of dollars received)	-.06
Quality of treatment received from others	.54***
adj. $R^2$	33%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note: Entries are beta weights.

the context of real-world choices of substantial policy importance.

Study 3 also has an additional importance. In Studies 1 and 2 people were not evaluating the same conflict during the pre-conflict and post-conflict stages. They were evaluating the same type of conflicts, but not the same specific conflicts. However, in Study 3 people were evaluating the same conflict at both stages of the analysis. Hence, it is reassuring that the findings of Study 3 are parallel to those of Studies 1 and 2.

Further, Studies 1 and 2 compare hypothetical conflicts, about which participants make choices, and real conflicts, about which they make evaluations. While there is no a priori reason to imagine that people will be more or less instrumental in hypothetical cases, Study 3 utilizes a real conflict for both types of judgment. Hence, it is further reassuring that Study 3 finds a pattern like that of Studies 1 and 2.

## Study 4

Like Study 3, Study 4 examines the choice of whether or not to move forward with a claim or

**Table 7.** Post-experience satisfaction (perceived adequacy of outcome): Study 3

Favorability of outcome (perceived adequacy of outcome)	.08
Quality of treatment received from others	.90***
adj. $R^2$	93%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Note: Entries are beta weights.

grievance. Study 4 examines the views of a sample of employees asked about their recent experiences in their workplace.

### **Method**

**Participants** Study 4 is based upon interviews with a sample of 409 employees in Chicago. Participants were drawn from a random sample of adults in the city of Chicago. The participants were chosen in two ways. The largest group ( $n = 303$ ) were participants who met three criteria: (1) they were working at least 20 hours a week; (2) they had a supervisor; and (3) they had a recent personal experience with their supervisor. Recent personal experience was established at the beginning of each interview by asking participants to recall an incident in which they had talked to their supervisor about 'getting help in solving problems, or making decisions, or settling disagreements about how work should be done, or to discuss issues of pay, promotion, work hours, or similar issues, or to help resolve a dispute with a customer, a co-worker, or with the supervisor themselves'. Of those contacted who met these criteria, 75 percent were successfully interviewed. A second sample of 106 participants, drawn from the same sampling frame, were screened in the same way, but were asked to think of a recent experience in which they ended up feeling 'angry or upset'. Of participants meeting these criteria, 73 percent were successfully interviewed.

**Design** Participants were asked about two issues. First, they were asked to consider two hypothetical scenarios. In the first scenario they considered a situation in which they 'were fired by their company without any explanation or opportunity to discuss the issue with their supervisor'. In the second scenario, they considered a situation in which they were fired because they 'had a dispute with their work supervisor over the quality of their work'. Following each scenario employees were asked to estimate the likelihood that they would go to court to sue their company. The study examined the impact of two factors on decisions about whether people felt they would go to

court: the likelihood of winning, and their judgments about the overall quality of their relationship with their work supervisor.

Employees were also asked about a recent personal experience with their supervisor. They were asked about the favorability of their outcome from and the quality of their treatment during that experience. These judgments were used to predict the degree to which they actually thought about or tried to go to court about the decisions made by their supervisor during their actual personal experience.

**Questionnaire** Employees were presented with two hypothetical scenarios: they were fired without explanation and they were fired after a dispute with their supervisor. In each case, they were asked to estimate the likelihood that they would go to court to try to get their jobs back. Employees were also asked to estimate the likelihood that if they went to court in each case, they would be successful in getting their job back.

In addition, employees were asked to evaluate the quality of treatment they had generally received from their supervisor. Six items were used. Participants were asked whether their supervisor generally: 'got the information needed to make good decisions'; 'treated people politely'; 'showed concern for people's rights'; 'allowed people to state their views before making decisions'; 'considered people's views'; and 'tried to be fair'. These items were used to create a general quality of treatment scale (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

Employees were also asked about their recent personal experience with their supervisor. Participants were asked about how they were treated during this experience using a 13-item quality of treatment scale (Cronbach's alpha = .94). The scale asked employees whether: 'they were treated politely'; 'their rights were respected'; 'good information was gathered'; 'issues were brought into the open'; 'their supervisor was honest'; 'they were given a chance to speak'; 'their views were considered'; 'fair procedures were used'; 'their supervisor tried to be fair'; 'their supervisor tried to explain decisions'; 'their supervisor gave honest

explanations'; 'their supervisor tried to take account of their needs'; and 'they were treated fairly'.

Following their description of their experience employees were asked about whether they thought about going to court to try to complain about their supervisor's decision. Two questions were asked: whether they thought about complaining and whether they actually did complain. These two items were correlated ( $r = .46$ ), so they were combined into a single index. Finally, employees were asked whether they thought that, if they went to court, they would have been effective in overturning the supervisor's decision.

## Results

According to the argument we have outlined, employee's responses to the hypothetical scenarios outlining circumstances in which they went to court in response to being fired under two distinct sets of circumstances should be shaped by judgments about the likelihood that they would win if they went to court. Table 8 shows the findings in the case of both scenarios. In each case, employees are significantly influenced by their judgments about whether or not they would win if they went to court to contest their firing (Scenario 1: beta = .51,  $p < .001$ ; Scenario 2: beta = .64,  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, the general quality of their treatment when

**Table 8.** Factors shaping whether employees considered suing in response to hypothetical firing scenarios: Study 4

	Scenario 1: Fired without explanation	Scenario 2: Fired after a dispute
Expectation of success if go to court	.51***	.64***
General quality of treatment by supervisor	.03	.04
adj. $R^2$	26%***	40%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

*Note.* Entries are beta weights for an equation in which all terms are entered at the same time.

**Table 9.** Factors shaping whether employees considered suing after a personal experience with their supervisor: Study 4

Expectation of success if go to court	.17*
Quality of treatment by supervisor during experience	.40***
adj. $R^2$	18%***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

*Note.* Entries are beta weights for an equation in which all terms are entered at the same time.

dealing with their supervisor had no influence upon whether or not they thought they would contest their firing when thinking about hypothetical situations in which they were imagining being fired (Scenario 1: beta = .03, ns; Scenario 2: beta = .04, ns). These differences in magnitude are significant in the case of Scenario 2 ( $t(138) = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but not in the case of Scenario 1 ( $t(138) = 1.49$ , ns).

Table 9 presents the results of a regression analysis in a situation in which employees are considering whether or not to sue their company after they have had a personal experience with their supervisor. In contrast to the hypothetical situation already outlined, when employees were asked about their reactions to a past personal experience with their supervisor, they reacted in terms of their treatment by their supervisor during that experience (beta = .40,  $p < .001$ ) more strongly than in terms of whether they felt that they would win if they went to court (beta = .17,  $p < .05$ ). This difference in magnitude of the correlations was significant ( $t(138) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In this situation, in which employees are reacting to an experience, they focused more strongly upon the quality of their treatment than they did upon their expectations of gain.

## General discussion

The studies reported above, and the literature on reactions to conflict resolution procedures, reveal a seeming paradox: people's choices and their evaluations appear to be out of line, with

preferences and choices being responsive to different factors than those that shape evaluations of disputing experiences. This paradox is difficult to explain using either social exchange theory or the relational model of procedure alone. Both models assume that choices and evaluations are determined by the same psychological factors. However, the apparent paradox can be explained by adding to the conceptual mix the processes involved in the 'myth of self-interest', which argues that people's preferences are shaped by different psychological dynamics than are their evaluations.

The 'myth of self-interest' model articulated by Miller and Ratner (1996, 1998) hypothesizes that people's thoughts about their own motivations are responsive to the cultural ideology of self-interest. As a consequence, when people think about the type of people that they believe themselves to be, when they try to 'model' their own psychology, they think that they will experience the greatest benefit when they do those things which most directly advance their own personal self-interest. In the case of interpersonal conflict, people believe that they will be happiest if they choose the procedures that will maximize their own personal gain. Further, they think of personal gain in material terms, as a gain or loss of material resources. Hence, in preference-expressing situations like those examined in Studies 1 and 2, people should prefer a forum for dispute resolution which they believe will lead to the material outcomes they want. In choice situations like those examined in Studies 3 and 4 they should move forward with grievances when they think that they are likely to prevail.

When making choices about procedures they have not yet experienced, people by definition cannot rely upon their personal experience to guide them. Hence, they must model their own likely reactions, relying upon their ideologies about what type of person they are. When they do this, they make choices that are based upon the belief that they will be happiest if they gain the most for themselves.

But the actual experience of a disputing procedure involves something quite different. Once people have experienced a procedure,

they have personal feelings about their experiences. These personal feelings are a reflection of their post-experience feelings, in which they are more concerned about issues of justice, morality, and social relationships than is suggested by the model embodied in the 'myth of self-interest' (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Consequently, people evaluate their experiences in terms of the quality of their treatment by others.

Why focus on quality of treatment? Tyler and Lind (1992; Lind & Tyler, 1988) argue that people are concerned about their inclusion status within social groups. Their treatment by others is a cue which people use to assess their social status (Smith & Tyler, 1997). Social status is important because people use it to understand their social identity and, through that understanding, to construct their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner, 1991; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Implicit in this account of the findings we report above is the idea that social considerations, such as those emphasized by the relational model, are under-considered in the pre-experience calculus. That is, people are unaware of the degree to which they utilize their experiences with others to construct their social identity, and hence place too little emphasis upon how they will be treated by others.

One of the core arguments of attribution theory is that people make the 'fundamental attribution error'. They put too little weight upon situational factors when making inferences about the causes of the behavior of others (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Interestingly, studies of the actor-observer bias suggest that this tendency is stronger when people are making inferences about the behavior of others (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). That is, people are more able to see the influence of social forces on their own behavior. However, the findings outlined here suggest that people are insensitive to another aspect of the social situation – the impact of the quality of treatment by others on their feelings. People do not recognize that a key input into their post-experience satisfaction is the quality of the treatment they receive from others.

The findings of our studies and our explanation of those findings resolve the apparent paradox about the differing antecedents of choice and evaluation, but an interesting question remains. Why do people, who after all have in the past generally experienced some manifestation of the procedures in question, continue to determine their preferences based on instrumental concerns? Why don't their preferences flow directly from their knowledge that in the past they have reacted most strongly to how they were treated by others? In other words, how can the 'myth' of self-interest be maintained? We might expect that people would learn from their experience and change the way they determine their preferences.

There are several possible explanations for the maintenance of the myth of self-interest. One explanation suggests that people may know why they are unhappy, but do not feel able to act differently. People may feel that they have to be responsive to the competitive nature of the social environment in which their conflict is occurring. They may feel that they must protect themselves from others, who would take advantage of their softness regarding instrumental issues (cf. Kelley & Stahelski, 1972). Hence, the competitive environment may encourage the emergence of a defensive orientation, which promotes a focus on instrumental issues. If so, then the key issue regarding the myth of self-interest is the belief that other people are instrumental in their orientation.

A second explanation for the findings has to do with a tension between cultural and personal views about how decisions should be made. People may understand that their happiness in a given conflict situation depends on the quality of interpersonal treatment, but they may lack confidence in their beliefs. In our individualistic culture, people are told that the way one obtains happiness is through obtaining the outcomes one wants – the 'myth of self-interest'. As we noted earlier, participants might intuit that happiness actually comes from the quality of treatment by others, more than from obtaining desired outcomes, but they may not trust their own judgment when finally pushed to choose a procedure. When they come to the point of

determining their preferences people may abandon their insights from their own experience in favor of the conventional wisdom that outcomes will predominate.

A third explanation is that people simply are not very good at intuiting the causes of their own happiness or unhappiness. They may emerge from disputes in which others treated them with dignity and consideration feeling good and from disputes in which others treated them poorly feeling bad, but they may not make the connection to the underlying psychology of relational judgments. Thus when procedures chosen to maximize self-interest end up being disappointing in terms of relational experiences, people may be aware that they are dissatisfied, but be uncertain about why dissatisfaction is occurring. They may simply know they are unhappy, and they may begin to search their ideology for explanations of their unhappiness. And their ideology may tell them that they are unhappy because the outcomes they received are not good enough. Hence, people may maintain the myth of self-interest because they have difficulties understanding their experience. Future research may be able to differentiate between these several explanations of the effect; for the moment it is important to demonstrate the phenomenon that underlies the discontinuity between preference and evaluation.

One interesting line of research that suggests insights about the ability to maintain the myth of self-interest is work on hindsight biases. This research shows that people make mistakes in their recall of what they thought would happen, even if they are motivated to be accurate (Dawes, 1988; Fischhoff, 1980). Hence, after the Berlin wall came down, people say that they expected that event to occur before it happened. Of course, if they had been interviewed about the event before it happened they would have estimated its likelihood of occurring to be low. While this research makes clear that people distort their image of the past, it does not completely explain the findings of these studies. If people distorted their views about the pre-experience past to be consistent with their post-experience judgments, we would expect

them to decide that they make their choices out of a desire to gain high quality of treatment. There is no evidence that people make such distortions.

As has been noted, the findings of these studies suggest that preferences for methods of dispute resolution, and reactions to these methods, should not be treated as resulting from a single psychological model. One implication of the myth of self-interest is that preference and evaluation might develop from two distinct psychological mechanisms. This discrepancy flows from the 'myth' aspect of the myth of self-interest – that people's ideology about motivation is not consistent with their true motivations. Hence, the paradox being outlined only occurs where people have an inaccurate image of their own motivation. These findings help to explain the puzzling literature on the psychology of mediation. By demonstrating that preference and evaluation are not based on the same psychological model the research reported here may provide an explanation for the difficulty of getting people to participate in mediation programs, in spite of the high approval ratings of those who do participate. This in turn suggests that there may be psychological support for mandatory mediation programs – only by mandating participation in such procedures can people be led into experiences that they will ultimately regard as quite satisfactory (see, Lind, 1997).

These studies are also important because they support relational model predictions about *when* relational concerns will be important. They suggest that they will be especially important after experiences, not before them. People's concerns about relationships are activated in the course of their efforts to resolve a dispute, when they experience favorable or unfavorable treatment from others.

Irrespective of why they are occurring, the findings outlined have implications far beyond interpersonal conflict. If the preferences governing behavioral choices are more instrumental in character than are post-experience feelings, then people may well open themselves to dissatisfaction in many areas of their life. Consider, for example, a job choice situation. If

people choose the high paying, but unfair, organization to work for, but subsequently evaluate their work environment in terms of the quality of their treatment by others, then they will experience job dissatisfaction. Choosing for instrumental reasons, but evaluating in terms of quality of treatment, will inevitably lead to dissatisfaction in a wide variety of interpersonal and organizational settings.

More generally, the basic phenomenon we see in the studies reported here may call into question a great deal of economic and political ideology about the validity of expressed preferences. Economic analyses of policy generally assume that people's choices or their expressed preferences, if met, will maximize their personal satisfaction. An important normative justification of market capitalism is that the way to maximize human happiness is to allow people free choice to the greatest extent possible. The line of thinking expressed here suggests that choices and preferences are arguably disconnected from what people actually experience as most satisfactory.

Similarly, important parts of democratic theory rest on the assumption that people will be most satisfied with leaders and policies they freely choose themselves. Might it be the case, we are forced to wonder, that people are so often dissatisfied with political leaders because they mismodel their post-election experiences with those leaders? In fact, political scientists have demonstrated a powerful incumbency effect, in which people are continually very favorable in their ratings of new Presidents, whose popularity inevitably declines during their term in office. It may be that such Presidents are chosen based upon the expected favorability of their policies, but evaluated through the manner in which they treat citizens.

Clearly these are very important issues. What is needed is an effort to identify the situations within which preference, choice, and evaluation converge, and situations in which they differ. In the latter type of situations the problems outlined above may emerge. In such settings, the psychology of evaluations and the psychology of preference may diverge, opening

the possibility of dissatisfaction with freely chosen procedures. Hence, we need a mapping of the domain of the myth of self-interest, which identifies those areas in which people are unaware of the true basis of their own feelings.

## Notes

1. Weighting the sample size to adjust for multiple ratings only deals with one of two problems introduced by using within-participant ratings. Each participant provided seven observations, so the observations are not entirely independent. Because this is true, it is important to treat the statistical analyses with caution. However, the conclusions of the studies are based upon comparisons of the importance of different factors within the same analytic approach. Assessments of relative importance should be less influenced by nonindependence than explorations of whether the importance of a factor is significantly different than zero.
2. The possibility of interactions between nationality and the importance placed upon instrumental or relational judgments was also tested. However, interactions were not found in any of the studies reported here.
3. As in Study 1, nationality was not found to interact with the importance placed upon receiving favorable outcomes or high quality of treatment.

## Acknowledgments

The research reported here was supported by National Science Foundation grants SES-9113863 and SES-9113752 and by the support of the American Bar Foundation. Thanks are due to Eileen Young, Pui Lau, and Annie Chen for their assistance in conducting Study 1. Note that other publications based on other aspects of the data sets reported here include: Tyler et al. (1997); Lind, Tyler, and Huo (1997); Lind et al. (1994); Huo, Smith, Tyler, and Lind (1996); Hensler et al. (1991).

## References

Blalock, H. M., Jr. (1972). *Social statistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Brett, J. M. (1986). Commentary on procedural justice papers. In R. Lewicki, M. Bazerman, & B. Sheppard (Eds.), *Research on negotiation in organizations* (Vol. 1, pp. 81–90). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Brett, J. M., & Goldberg, S. (1983). Mediator-advisors: A new third-party role. In M. Bazerman & R. Lewicki (Eds.), *Negotiating in organizations* (pp. 165–176). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Dawes, R. M. (1988). *Rational choice in an uncertain world*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Fischhoff, B. (1980). For those condemned to study the past. In R. A. Schwede & D. W. Fiske (Eds.), *New directions for methodology of behavioral science* (pp. 79–93). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition*. (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hensler, D. R., Marquis, M. S., Abrahamse, A. F., Berry, S. H., Ebener, P. A., Lewis, E. G., Lind, E. A., MacCoun, R. J., Manning, W. G., Rogowski, J. A., & Vaiana, M. E. (1991). *Compensation for accidental injuries in the United States*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications*. New York: Routledge.

Houlden, P., LaTour, S., Walker, L., & Thibaut, J. (1978). Preferences for modes of dispute resolution as a function of process and decision control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 14, 13–30.

Huo, Y. J., Smith, H. J., Tyler, T. R., & Lind, E. A. (1996). Superordinate identification, subgroup identification, and justice concerns. *Psychological Science*, 7, 40–45.

Kelley, H. H., & Stahelski, A. (1972). Social interaction basis of cooperators' and competitors' beliefs about others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 16, 190–197.

Kurtz, S. T., & Houlden, P. (1981). Determinants of procedural preferences of post court-martial military personnel. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 2, 27–43.

Lind, E. A. (1997). Testimony on the 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Settlement Act' (H.R. 2603, 105th Congress, 1st Session). Testimony, House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property, 9 October.

Lind, E. A. (in press). Fairness heuristic theory: Justice judgments as pivotal cognitions in organizational relations. In J. Greenberg & R. Cropanzano (Eds.), *Advances in organizational behavior*. San Francisco, CA: New Lexington.

Lind, E. A., Erickson, B. E., Friedland, N., & Dickenberger, M. (1978). Reactions to procedural models for adjudicative conflict resolution: A cross-national study. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 22, 318–242.

Lind, E. A., Greenberg, J., Scott, K. S., & Welchans, T. D. (1998). *The winding road from employee to complainant: Situational and psychological determinants of wrongful termination claims*. Paper presented to the Academy of Management meetings, August, San Diego, CA.

Lind, E. A., Huo, Y. J., & Tyler, T. R. (1994). . . . And justice for all: Ethnicity, gender, and preferences for dispute resolution procedures. *Law and Human Behavior*, 18, 269-290.

Lind, E. A., Kulik, C. T., Ambrose, M., & de Vera Park, M. V. (1993). Individual and corporate dispute resolution. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 224-251.

Lind, E. A., MacCoun, R. J., Ebener, P. A., Felstiner, W. L. F., Hensler, D. R., Resnik, J., & Tyler, T. R. (1990). In the eye of the beholder: Tort litigant's evaluations of their experiences in the civil justice system. *Law and Society Review*, 24, 953-996.

Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. R. (1988). *The social psychology of procedural justice*. New York: Plenum.

Lind, E. A., Tyler, T. R., & Huo, Y. (1997). Procedural context and culture: Variation in the antecedents of procedural justice judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 767-780.

MacCoun, R., Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. R. (1992). Alternative dispute resolution in trial and appellate courts. In D. Kagehiro & W. S. Laufer (Eds.), *Handbook of law and psychology*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Miller, D. T., & Ratner, R. K. (1996). The power of the myth of self-interest. In L. Montada & M. J. Lerner (Eds.), *Current societal concerns about justice*. New York: Plenum.

Miller, D. T., & Ratner, R. K. (1998). The disparity between the actual and assumed power of self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 53-62.

Nisbett, R., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Smith, H. J., & Tyler, T. R. (1997). Choosing the right pond: The influence of the status of one's group and one's status in that group on self-esteem and group-oriented behaviors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 146-170.

Thibaut, J., & Walker, L. (1975). *Procedural justice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Erlbaum.

Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social influence*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tyler, T. R. (1989a). The quality of dispute resolution processes and outcomes. *Denver University Law Review*, 66, 419-436.

Tyler, T. R. (1989b). The psychology of procedural justice: A test of the group value model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 830-838.

Tyler, T. R. (1990). *Why people obey the law*. New Haven, CT: Yale.

Tyler, T. R., Boeckmann, R. J., Smith, H. J., & Huo, Y. J. (1997). *Social justice in a diverse society*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Tyler, T. R., & Lind, E. A. (1992). A relational model of authority in groups. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 115-191.

Tyler, T. R., Lind, E. A., Ohbuchi, K., Sugawara, I., & Huo, Y. J. (1998). Conflict with outsiders: Disputing within and across cultural boundaries. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 137-146.

Tyler, T. R., Rasinski, K., & Spodick, N. (1985). The influence of voice on satisfaction with leaders: Exploring the meaning of process control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48, 72-81.

*Paper received 6 August 1998; revised version accepted 4 December 1998.*

## Biographical notes

tom r. t y l e r is in the Department of Psychology, New York University.

y u e n j. h u o is in the Department of Psychology, University of California at Los Angeles.

e. a l l a n l i n d is at Fuqua School of Business, Duke University.