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Willing and Able: Action-State Orientation and the Relation Between Procedural Justice and Employee Cooperation

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Existing justice theory explains why fair procedures motivate employees to adopt cooperative goals, but it fails to explain how employees strive toward these goals. We study self-regulatory abilities that underlie goal striving, abilities that should thus affect employees' display of cooperative behavior in response to procedural justice. Building on action control theory, we argue that employees who display effective self-regulatory strategies (action-oriented employees) display relatively strong cooperative behavioral responses to fair procedures. A multisource field study and a laboratory experiment support this prediction. A subsequent experiment addresses the process underlying this effect by explicitly showing that action orientation facilitates attainment of the cooperative goals that people adopt in response to fair procedures, thus facilitating the display of actual cooperative behavior. This goal striving approach better integrates research on the relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation in the self-regulation and the work motivation literature. It also offers organizations a new perspective on making procedural justice effective in stimulating employee cooperation by suggesting factors that help employees reach their adopted goals.

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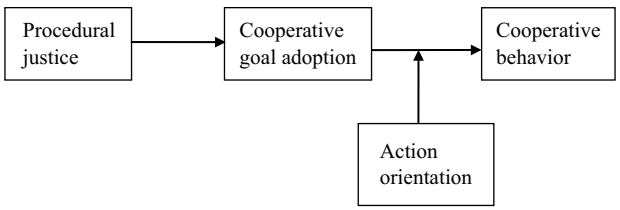
One of the most critical requirements of effective leadership is to stimulate employees to voluntarily contribute to the collective welfare (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). A valuable instrument for organizational leaders to promote such cooperative employee behavior is by enacting fair decision-making procedures, referred to as procedural justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Yee, 2001). Procedural justice motivates employees to display cooperative behaviors as diverse as voluntarily helping their supervisors and coworkers, defending the organization when it is criticized, speaking up to improve the way in which work is organized, and improving customer service. Such behaviors contribute significantly to organizational performance (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009).

Although a large number of studies show that procedural justice promotes employee cooperation, justice scholars acknowledge that our understanding of the processes that *explain* this important effect is rather limited (Blader & Tyler, 2005; Colquitt, Greenberg, & Scott, 2005). We believe that theoretical advancement can be made by drawing on the motivation and self-regulation literatures. Current research and theory on the relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation offer some helpful starting points for such an approach. Research shows that the effect of procedural justice on employee cooperation is mediated by social exchange and identity processes (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001) that direct employees' cooperative behaviors to the source of procedural justice (e.g., the organization or on one's work group; Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). As we will argue in more detail later on, these findings support a self-regulation perspective on the procedural justice–employee cooperation relationship by suggesting that employees adopt a cooperative goal in response to fair procedures (cf. De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). However, the motivation and self-regulation literatures make it clear that the processes that underlie the *adoption* of a certain goal (i.e., choosing *what* one wants to do or wants to happen) are fundamentally different from those that explain subsequent *striving* toward this adopted goal (i.e., *how* to do what you want to do or make happen what you want to happen; e.g., Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006; Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997; Locke & Latham, 2004; Mitchell, 1997).[1]

In the present research we distinguish goal adoption from subsequent goal striving to improve our understanding of the procedural justice–employee cooperation relationship. Making this distinction is arguably relevant because attaining one's cooperative goals may not be a straightforward thing to do. For instance, opportunities to strive toward one's cooperative goals can be restrained by formal organizational rules and regulations (Morrison, 2006) and by the goals and demands that are inherent in employees' primary tasks (Bell & Menguc, 2002). Furthermore, in some situations, displaying cooperative behavior can contribute to reaching one's self-interested goals, whereas in other situations, it can conflict with reaching these goals (Bergeron, 2007). These findings suggest that employees require effective self-regulation to display cooperative behavior after having adopted cooperative goals. We test this idea by introducing the construct of *action versus state orientation* in the procedural justice literature. Action-oriented (relative to state-oriented) individuals employ self-regulatory strategies that allow them to deal effectively with obstructions from goal attainment (e.g., Diefendorff, Hall, Lord, & Strean, 2000; Jostmann

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Figure 1
How Action Orientation Promotes Cooperative Behavioral Responses to Procedural Justice



& Koole, 2010; Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994). In the following sections, we further develop our argument that particularly action-oriented employees strive effectively toward the cooperative goals that they adopt in response to fair procedures, and thus display cooperative behavior. Figure 1 visualizes how we propose our constructs of interest relate to one another.

Procedural Justice and Voluntary Employee Cooperation

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of procedures that are used to arrive at allocation decisions (Tyler, 1988). Fairness perceptions are shaped by a number of different procedural elements. For instance, procedures are perceived as more fair when they are applied consistently over time and across people (van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1996), when they are applied accurately and do not regard authorities' self-interest (De Cremer, 2004), and when they allow employees to voice their opinion (e.g., Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

Fair decision-making procedures have been shown to promote voluntary employee cooperation. For instance, in experimental research, De Cremer, van Dijke, and Mayer (2010; Study 1) showed that being granted (vs. being denied) voice in the authority's decisions increased participants' cooperation. Similar effects have been obtained in field studies (see Blader & Tyler, 2009, for an overview). A particularly well-documented procedural justice outcome in terms of voluntary cooperation in field research is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; see Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001, for meta-analyses). OCB is an important index of voluntary cooperation because it describes various types of discretionary, extrarole behaviors that contribute to effective organizational functioning but that are not explicitly required (Organ, 1988).

Procedural justice researchers note that an important reason why fair decision-making procedures result in employee cooperation derives from social exchange processes (see Cropanzano et al., 2001; Lavelle et al., 2007; Moorman & Byrne, 2005, for overviews). Specifically, it is argued that employees value fair procedures highly, and that they cooperate to reciprocate the social rewards that accompany their perceptions of fair procedures (e.g., Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; van Dijke, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2010). Identity-based justice

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models (see De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Blader, 2003, for overviews) emphasize a somewhat different process by noting that fair procedures signal that employees are considered full-fledged members of the social collective, therefore increasing employees' sense of belongingness and identification with the collective (Blader & Tyler, 2009). Procedural justice motivates employees to contribute to the collective welfare by shifting employee identification and self-definition from the individual to the collective mode, thus making cooperative responses more desirable (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2002; van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & Van Quaquebeke, 2012).

A Self-Regulatory Perspective: Distinguishing Goal Adoption and Goal Striving

Goals are internal representations of desired states that can refer to outcomes or broad modes of conduct (e.g., Aarts, 2007; Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Goal adoption, that is, making a goal one's own, thus refers to choosing *what* one wants to do or what one wants to happen. In the present context, this refers to wanting to cooperate with the source of procedural justice or wanting this source to prosper, rather than, for instance, wanting to optimize one's own outcomes. Goal adoption results from evaluations of the feasibility and desirability of various alternative outcomes or behaviors. Subsequent goal striving refers to *how* one does what one wants to do or how one turns into reality what one wants to happen. Goal striving thus refers to the processes that lead from goal adoption to attainment of the adopted goal. In the present context, this refers to processes that allow employees to display actual cooperative behavior after having adopted a cooperative goal. Successful goal striving relies on self-regulatory processes that enable people to initiate goal-directed action, adapt to changing situations, shield goal-directed action from distractions, and temporarily disengage from a goal when the situation requires this (e.g., Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006).

As noted above, cooperative responses to procedural justice can take various different forms such as defending the organization when it is criticized, helping coworkers and supervisors, and improving customer support. Yet these various behaviors have been argued to represent different ways of supporting the specific source of procedural justice (e.g., the organization or one's supervisor; Bowen, Gilliland, & Folger, 1999). To test this idea, Lavelle et al. (2009) studied OCB types that clearly differentiate among intended beneficiaries. They showed that procedural justice from the organization mostly predicts employee OCB directed at the organization, and that this effect is mediated by organizational commitment. In contrast, procedural justice from the supervisor mostly predicts interpersonally oriented OCB, and this effect is mediated by commitment to the work group (also see Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003; see Lavelle et al., 2007, for an overview of relevant research). Through a self-regulation lens, these findings suggest that procedural justice stimulates employees to adopt a cooperative goal that is rather broad in nature but targeted at the source of procedural justice (cf. De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). Procedural justice presumably has this effect on the adoption of a cooperative goal because the social exchange and identity processes that result from fair procedures make employees want to benefit the source of procedural justice.

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Considering cooperative responses to procedural justice as deriving from the adoption of broad but targeted cooperative goals is helpful as a starting point to integrate procedural justice processes in the self-regulation literature. Yet the notion of how employees can effectively strive toward their adopted cooperative goals and thus display cooperation is absent in the models outlined above. Below, we argue how self-regulatory abilities in terms of individual differences in action versus state orientation may add to this literature.

Incorporating Employee Self-Regulatory Abilities: Action Versus State Orientation

Action control theory is concerned with self-regulatory abilities that support initiation and maintenance of actions toward goal achievement (see Kuhl, 2000; Kuhl & Goschke, 1994, for detailed overviews). This theory notes that behavior can be controlled at various levels, such as via direct stimulus-response patterns and also somewhat less directly by comparing one's current state with the state one wants to be in (i.e., with one's needs). People can also decouple behavioral control from needs and automatic responses by relying on internal, symbolic representations of external states, therefore resulting in behavioral control via intentions and action plans. Each of these behavioral control levels has its strengths and weaknesses. For instance, direct stimulus-response control offers fast and effortlessly enacted behavior. Yet it cannot cope with novel situations. Behavioral control via intentions can cope with new situations but runs the risk of becoming disconnected from one's needs and stimulus-response patterns. Effective goal-directed action therefore requires flexibly adapting the level of action control to the situation (i.e., meta-control). This is particularly important when conflicts and disconnects between the various control levels must be resolved (e.g., when one intends to quit a persistent habit like smoking, or when one feels one should help a coworker but is tempted to focus on one's own performance).

A central individual difference variable in action control theory is action versus state orientation. This variable refers to chronic individual differences in flexibility in adapting the level of action control to the situation (i.e., meta-control; Kuhl, 1994). Research shows that action-oriented people have a well-developed ability to initiate action, to commit to a course of action, and to handle multiple competing goals in the face of obstacles, failures, and setbacks. State-oriented people, on the other hand, are indecisive and hesitant to change their mental and behavioral states, making them relatively ineffective at action control (e.g., Jostmann & Koole, 2009, 2010; Koole, Kuhl, Jostmann, & Vohs, 2005, for overviews). State orientation can hamper goal-directed action through preoccupation or hesitation. Preoccupation refers to cognitive or emotional activity that is detached from one's current goals (i.e., rumination). Attempts to suppress these goal-irrelevant processes hamper meta-control, thus resulting in behavioral passivity. Hesitation describes a lowered threshold for activation of meta-control, making goal striving difficult. Hesitation and preoccupation both reduce control of goal-directed activities. Yet hesitation is broader than preoccupation because it is a summary term for any factor or process that impairs self-regulation in goal-directed action (including preoccupation; Kuhl, 1994).

As a consequence of these well-developed self-regulatory abilities, action orientation promotes goal pursuit across a variety of different situations. For instance, Diefendorff,

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Lord, Hepburn, Quickle, Hall, and Sanders (1998) found that action-oriented students reported being better at attending classes and completing assignments on time, controlling their emotions in frustrating situations, controlling their health, diet, and fitness concerns, and regulating their behavior in social domains. Action orientation has also been shown to have positive relationships with objective performance indices as varied as working memory performance (Jostmann & Koole, 2006), dieting (Fuhrmann & Kuhl, 1998), athletic performance (Heckhausen & Strang, 1988), and in-role and extrarole work performance (Diefendorff et al., 2000). Diefendorff, Richard, and Gosserand (2006) also showed positive effects of action orientation on employees' self-management performance. In line with action control theory, these effects were pronounced particularly among employees who performed nonroutine tasks. Finally, Jamarillo, Locander, Spector, and Harris (2007) showed that action orientation was positively related to objective sales performance. They also found that action orientation and intrinsic job motivation interact to strengthen each other's relationship with self-reported adaptive selling.

Importantly, these effects of action-state orientation cannot be attributed to other cognitive variables that facilitate performance such as intelligence, goal orientation, self-efficacy, or conscious emotion-regulation strategies. Furthermore, they are independent from general personality factors (i.e., the big five factors) and also from more specific factors such as proactive personality, personal initiative, and achievement motivation (for overviews of validation research, see Heckhausen & Strang, 1988, Jostman & Koole, 2010, and Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994; for validity evidence in organizational contexts, see Diefendorff et al., 2000, and Diefendorff et al., 2006).

The Present Research: Procedural Justice, Action Orientation, and Cooperation

We argue that variations in action versus state orientation are also highly relevant to understand the processes through which fair procedures lead to voluntary employee cooperation. Specifically, procedural justice may promote the adoption of cooperative goals (cf. De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). However, research suggests that attaining these cooperative goals and thus displaying cooperation is not necessarily a straightforward thing to do (Bell & Menguc, 2002; Bergeron, 2007; Morrison, 2006). Based on action control theory, we expect that this requires effective self-regulation. This argument leads to Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1: The effect of procedural justice on employee cooperation is more pronounced among action-oriented employees than among state-oriented employees.

Furthermore, it is also relevant to explicitly consider the adoption of cooperative goals in this process. Prior work suggests that employees adopt cooperative goals in response to fair procedures (cf. De Cremer & Tyler, 2005), but this has never been explicitly tested. Moreover, although goal striving and goal adoption rely on fundamentally different processes, they are also connected in a temporal manner because goal striving describes the phase from goal adoption to goal attainment. Measuring goal adoption thus allows for a more precise investigation of goal striving processes. This leads to Hypothesis 2:

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Hypothesis 2: Action orientation makes the effect of procedural justice on employee cooperation more pronounced by strengthening the effect of the cooperative goals that employees adopt in response to fair procedures on cooperative behavior.

Although these predictions follow from action control theory, we have not found any empirical evidence to sustain them. We are unaware of any research that has distinguished goal adoption from goal striving or that has addressed self-regulatory abilities in the context of procedural justice. In fact, apart from the research conducted by Diefendorff et al. (2000, 2006) and Jamarillo et al. (2007), we do not know of any research that has applied action control theory in organizational settings.

We tested our hypotheses in three studies in which we measured action versus state orientation using a well-validated measure (Diefendorff et al., 2000). This measure includes both the hesitation and the preoccupation dimension. In line with the vast majority of recent empirical studies (e.g., Baumann & Kuhl, 2005; Diefendorff et al., 2006; Fuhrmann & Kuhl, 1998; Jamarillo et al., 2007; Jostmann & Koole, 2006; Norman, Sheeran, & Orbell, 2003), we focused on hesitation because (a) it directly captures individual differences in the ability to initiate and maintain goal-relevant action (i.e., goal striving), making it the core of the action-state orientation construct, (b) it is broader in its operationalization than preoccupation (i.e., preoccupation is just one factor that produces hesitation; Kuhl, 1994), and (c) it is the only dimension that affected cooperative behavior in prior research (Diefendorff et al., 2000).[2]

Study 1 was a multisource field study in which we tested whether self-regulatory abilities in terms of action orientation facilitate cooperative responses to fair procedures (Hypothesis 1). Employees indicated their level of action versus state orientation and their perceptions of procedural justice by evaluating a number of different procedural aspects (cf. Colquitt, 2001). The employee's supervisor indicated the employee's level of cooperation. Study 2 was a laboratory experiment designed to replicate the findings of Study 1 in a controlled context. We influenced participants' procedural justice perceptions using the established manipulation of voice in the leader's decisions and measured their cooperative behavior toward the leader. Study 3 was another laboratory experiment. In this study we explicitly tested whether fair procedures result in the adoption of cooperative goals and whether action orientation makes it more likely that adopting cooperative goals leads to the display of cooperative behavior (Hypothesis 2; see Figure 1).

Study 1

Method

Respondents and procedure. A total of 309 members of a research panel who worked for at least 12 hours a week across a wide range of Dutch companies participated as focal employees (M_{age} = 44.51, SD = 10.31; 105 females). For their participation, they received credit points allowing them to choose certain gifts (e.g., tickets for the movies). Of participants, 25% had only a high school education, 27% had a vocational education, 29% had a bachelor's degree, and 18% had a master's degree. The mean job tenure was 5.58 years (SD = 6.88).

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The focal employees also invited their supervisor to respond to some items, of whom 103 participated (M_{age} = 46.78, *SD* = 9.13; 32 females). Of the supervisors, 2% had only a primary education, 24% had a secondary education, 27% had a vocational education, 32% had a bachelor's degree, and 15% had a master's degree. The mean job tenure was 6.60 years (*SD* = 6.08). Employees whose supervisor did versus did not respond to the questionnaire did not significantly differ in terms of the demographic variables and also not in terms of correlations between the study variables.

The focal employee and supervisor surveys were administered online. Focal employees forwarded a link to their respective surveys to their supervisors. Each supervisor reported on one focal employee only. To ensure that the surveys were completed by the correct sources, we emphasized the importance of integrity in the scientific process, stressing that it was essential for the focal employee and the supervisor to fill out the correct surveys.

Measures. We measured *action-state* orientation using Diefendorff et al.'s (2000) hesitation scale. This measure makes respondents choose between two options for eight different items. An example is, "When I know I must finish something soon: A. I have to push myself to get started. B. I find it easy to get it over and done with." For this item, Option A is state oriented and Option B is action oriented. Items were coded as 0 (*state oriented*) versus 1 (*action oriented*).

We assessed *procedural justice* with the seven-item scale validated by Colquitt (2001). Example items include, "Are you able to express your views and feelings?" and "Are procedures applied consistently?" (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much so*).

We measured *cooperation* with Moorman and Blakely's (1995) 19-item scale (indexed by the supervisor), which measures four OCB dimensions: "individual initiative" (e.g., "For issues that have serious consequences, this employee expresses opinions honestly even when others may disagree"), "interpersonal helping" (e.g., "This employee goes out of his/her way to help coworkers with work-related problems"), "personal industry" (e.g., "This employee rarely misses work, even when (s)he has legitimate reasons to do so"), and "loyal boosterism" (e.g., "This employee actively promotes the organization's products and services to potential users"; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*).

Prior work studying the relationship between procedural justice and OCB has sometimes combined various OCB dimensions (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009), whereas other work has focused on specific OCB dimensions (e.g., Lavelle et al., 2009). We therefore present results for the four subscales as well as for the overall OCB scale.

Results

Table 1 reports scale means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations.

We tested our hypothesis with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses in which OCB and the four subdimensions were predicted by the demographic control variables in Step 1. We entered the main effects of action-state orientation and procedural justice in Step 2 and entered the interaction between procedural justice and action-state orientation in Step 3 (based on mean-centered scores of the independent variables; Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Table 2 shows the regression results for Step 3. The main effects were similar at Steps 1 and 2.

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Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Study 1 Variables

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Procedural fairness	3.48	0.76	.91						
2. Action-state orientation	0.73	0.28	.28**	.77					
3. Individual initiative	4.93	1.14	.16	.25*	.92				
4. Interpersonal helping	5.13	1.10	.19*	.29**	.75***	.91			
5. Personal industry	5.27	1.10	.23*	.36**	.63***	.77***	.91		
6. Loyal boosterism	4.73	1.09	.21*	.25*	.65***	.66***	.63***	.91	
7. Total OCB scale	5.02	0.97	.23*	.33**	.87***	.91***	.87***	.84***	.96

Note: $N = 103$. Reliabilities (Cronbach's α coefficients) are on the main diagonal.
*r is significant at $p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 2
Regression Results of Study 1 for the Overall Procedural Justice × Action Orientation Interaction

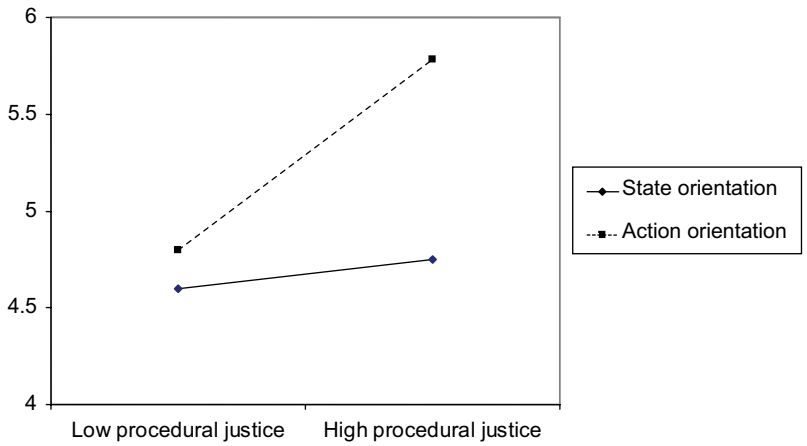
Dependent Variable	Individual Initiative	Interpersonal Helping	Personal Industry	Loyal Boosterism	Total OCB Scale
Step 1, R^2, R^2_{adj}	.07, .01	.06*, –.00	.10, .05	.04*, –.02	.07, .01
Step 2, R^2, R^2_{adj}, R^2_{change}	.15*, .07, .08*	.17**, .09, .11**	.27**, .20, .17**	.13*, .05, .09*	.21**, .14, .14**
Step 3, R^2, R^2_{adj}, R^2_{change}	.17*, .09, .02	.24**, .16, .07**	.30**, .22, .03*	.14*, .05, .01	.25**, .17, .04*
Gender	−.05	−.11	−.06	−.04	−.07
Age	.13	.06	.12	−.06	.07
Education level	.23*	.19#	.26*	.15	.24*
Tenure	−.01	.02	.09	.20	.09
Organizational level	.00	.06	−.12	.02	.01
Procedural justice	.17	.24*	.21*	.20*	.23*
Action-state orientation	.28*	.34**	.39**	.23*	.35**
Procedural fairness × action-state orientation	.18	.32**	.19*	.11	.23*

Note: $N = 103$. Table presents β coefficients at Step 3. For gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Most important, the OCB dimensions and overall OCB were significantly related to the procedural justice × action orientation interaction at Step 2, with the exception of loyal boosterism and individual initiative (the latter was marginally significantly related to the interaction). Figure 2 depicts this interaction on overall OCB. Due to space constraints, we do not present plots of the interaction on the various OCB dimensions. However, the shape of this effect was similar for each OCB dimension. Simple slopes analyses (Cohen et al., 2003) indicated that procedural justice was significantly related to overall OCB among action-oriented employees but not among state-oriented employees ($\beta = .46$, $p < .01$ vs. $\beta = .03$, *ns*). Similar findings were obtained for each OCB dimension. Procedural justice was significantly related to individual initiative ($\beta = .40$, $p < .05$ vs. $\beta = –.04$, *ns*), to interpersonal helping ($\beta = .42$, $p < .01$ vs. $\beta = –.02$, *ns*), to personal industry ($\beta = .42$, $p < .05$ vs. $\beta = .04$, *ns*), and to loyal boosterism ($\beta = .27$, $p < .05$ vs. $\beta = .14$, *ns*) among action- but not state-oriented employees.[3]

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Figure 2
The Relation Between Procedural Justice and Supervisor Ratings of Overall Organizational Citizenship Behavior as a Function of Action-State Orientation in Study 1



Study 2

Study 1 showed that fair (as opposed to unfair) procedures were positively related to employee cooperation. As expected, this effect was restricted to action-oriented employees. This study was conducted in the field, thus making us confident in the ecological validity of our findings. Study 2 was a laboratory experiment in which we manipulated procedural justice perceptions through voice in the decisions of the authority. The experimental design of this study allowed us to draw causal conclusions about our effect of interest.

Method

Participants and design. A total of 152 undergraduate business students (70 females; M_{age} = 20.43 years, SD = 1.85) participated in this study in exchange for course credits. They were randomly assigned to one level of our procedural justice manipulation (voice or no voice).

Experimental procedure. Participants were seated in separate cubicles, each containing a table, a chair, and a computer. All information was communicated via the computer. We told participants that we were developing a new questionnaire and that we needed a number of responses to ensure that it accurately measured the underlying construct. At this point, we measured action-state orientation.

When we had collected their responses, we told the participants that the study was finished and that we asked for only a few minutes of their time to engage in a brief selection procedure for a leader position in a "group decision-making study" that would run in a

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couple of weeks. We explained that participating would likely be attractive because other students, who already had participated as leaders, had found this to be a highly rewarding learning experience. Moreover, leader participants would also receive extra course credits. We explained that a student assistant would help us with the actual leader selection. This assistant had some basic information about each participant and would contact them via e-mail about the selection.

At this point, the procedural justice manipulation commenced. In the *voice* condition, participants received an e-mail stating,

> Hi, I'm working on an assignment to determine who will be in charge of the group decision-making study that will run in a few weeks. To do so, I'd like to know whether you think you should be the group leader or a group member. Please do not forget to communicate your choice to me.

Then, participants briefly indicated in an e-mail message to the student assistant whether they believed they should be the group leader or a group member.[4]

In the *no voice* condition, participants read,

> Hi, I'm working on an assignment to determine who will be in charge of the group decision-making study that will run in a few weeks. To do so, I won't ask whether you think you should be the group leader or a group member.

Subsequently, participants waited for about a minute and were then told that the student assistant had compiled information and suggested suitable team leaders to the experimenters. Then, we told the participants that the selection procedure was finished and that they would receive an e-mail in a couple of days informing them about the group decision study and their proposed role in it. We also told them that we were interested in what they thought about the selection procedure because this was the first time the student assistant was involved. At this point, we assessed our manipulation checks and mediating variable (cooperative intentions).

Finally, we told participants that the student assistant was working on a master's thesis and needed participants for this research. We asked participants whether they wanted to participate in this research. We stressed that we could not reward them for participating and that it would not influence their chances of becoming a group leader because the student assistant had already selected the leader. However, we told them that it would be really helpful for the student assistant. The research was a color perception task that would take 5 to 10 minutes. They would be asked to indicate the extent to which they found various colors to be the same or different. Participants who chose not to help the student assistant were fully debriefed. Participants who chose to help completed 40 color perception trials and were then fully debriefed.

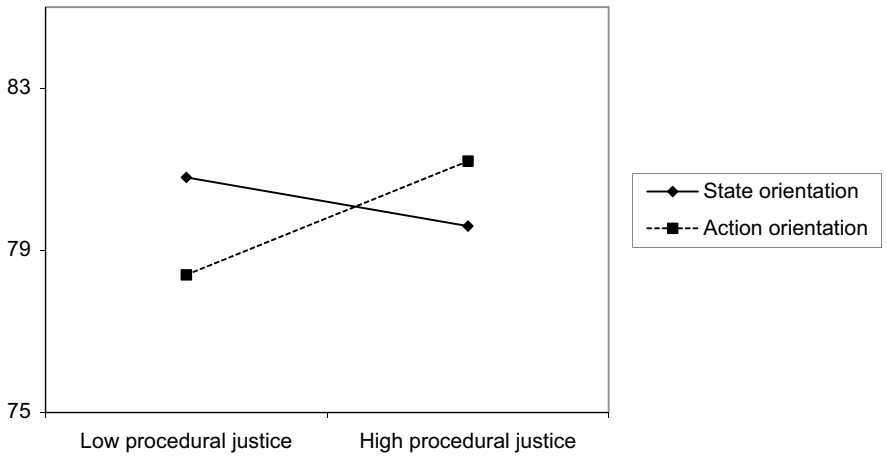
Study variables. We checked whether voice successfully manipulated perceived procedural justice by asking whether the research assistant made the decision in a "fair" and "just" manner (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

We measured *action-state orientation* with the same Diefendorff et al. (2000) instrument as in Study 1 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$; $M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.28$).

Cooperation was indexed by participation in the assistant's study (1) or not (0).

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Figure 3
The Effect of Procedural Justice on Cooperation as a Function of Action-State Orientation in Study 2



Results

Manipulation check. OLS regression showed that voice significantly influenced responses on the procedural justice scale ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.07$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$). Participants in the voice condition perceived higher levels of procedural justice ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.94$) than participants in the no voice condition ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.33$). No other effects were significant.

Hypothesis testing. Logistic regression revealed that voice significantly interacted with action orientation to influence cooperation ($b = .82$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 3.89$, $p < .05$). No other effects were significant. Figure 3 depicts the interaction. In support of Hypothesis 1, simple slopes analyses showed that procedural justice significantly promoted cooperation among action-oriented participants (one *SD* above the mean; $b = .99$; Wald's $\chi^2 = 2.84$, $p < .05$). This effect of procedural justice was not significant among state-oriented participants (one *SD* below the mean; $b = –.64$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 1.23$, $p = .27$).

Study 3

Study 2 again supported our argument that cooperative responses to fair procedures require effective self-regulation in terms of action orientation. Study 3 was another laboratory experiment employing a procedure that was identical to the one used in Study 2. However, now, we explicitly addressed the *process* that underlies the role of action orientation in promoting cooperative behavior in response to fair procedures as specified in Hypothesis 2. Specifically, we tested whether this effect results because action orientation

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facilitates striving toward one's adopted cooperative goals to display actual cooperative behavior (Figure 1).

Method

Participants and design. A total of 125 undergraduate business students (M_{age} = 19.45 years, *SD* = 1.63; 61 females) participated in exchange for course credits. They were randomly assigned to one level of our procedural justice manipulation (voice or no voice).

Experimental procedure. We used the same experimental procedure as in Study 2, but this time we measured adoption of cooperative goals directly after assessing the manipulation checks.

Study variables. We used the same manipulation checks as in Study 2 (Cronbach's α = .89).

We measured *action-state orientation* with the same Diefendorff et al. (2000) instrument as in Study 1 and 2 (Cronbach's α = .62; *M* = 0.58, *SD* = 0.25).

Cooperation was indexed by participation in the assistant's study (1) or not (0).

We measured *adoption of specific cooperative goals* with four items: "Would you be willing to help out the research assistant on future occasions?" "Do you intend to help the research assistant on future projects?" "Do you consider it your goal to help the student assistant succeed on future tasks?" and "Do you aim to help out the student assistant when this is necessary?" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*; Cronbach's α = .90; *M* = 4.35, *SD* = 1.40).

Results

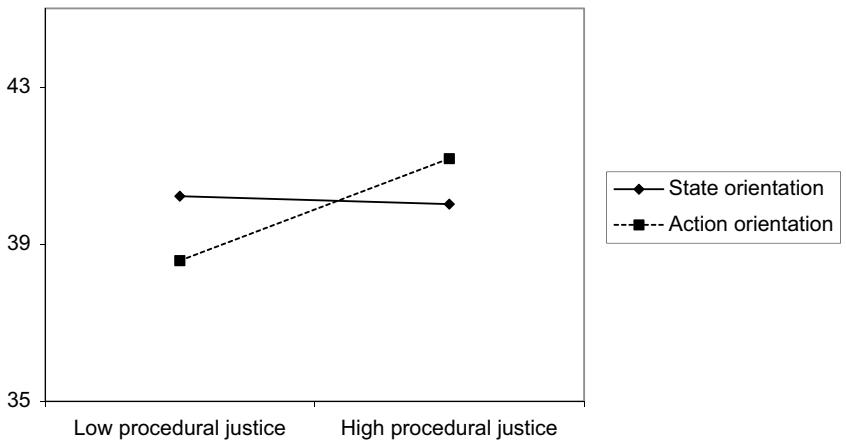
Manipulation check. OLS regression analysis showed that voice significantly influenced responses on the procedural justice scale (β = .31, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .1$). In the voice condition participants perceived higher levels of procedural justice (*M* = 5.01, *SD* = 1.07) than in the no voice condition (*M* = 4.14, *SD* = 1.47). The effect of action-state orientation and the interaction between action-state orientation and voice were not significant.

Hypotheses testing. Initial logistic regression without the mediators in the analyses revealed that voice marginally significantly interacted with action orientation to influence cooperation ($b = .56$, Wald's $\chi^2 = 2.09$, $p < .08$). No other effects were significant.

To test our complete theoretical model (see Figure 1), we used moderated mediation procedures (Hayes, in press). These procedures use OLS and logistic regression to estimate the various path coefficients. To test the (moderated) indirect effects, bootstrapping is applied because normal distribution assumptions are often violated for indirect effects tests in small samples. We were primarily interested in action orientation as a moderator of the cooperative goal adoption–cooperation path. As a stringent model test, we also included action-state orientation as a moderator of the voice–cooperative goal adoption path and of the direct (unmediated) voice–cooperation path.

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Figure 4
The Effect of Procedural Justice on Cooperation via Cooperative Goal Adoption as a Function of Action-State Orientation in Study 3



Voice significantly promoted adoption of cooperative goals (β = .19, t = 2.24, p < .05) Cooperative goals, in turn, promoted cooperation (b = .54, z = 2.42, p < .05). In line with Hypothesis 2, action orientation moderated the path from cooperative goal adoption to cooperation (b = .47, z = 2.08, p < .05) but not the path from voice to cooperative goal adoption (β = .07, t = 0.80, p < .42) or the direct path from voice to cooperation (b = .19, t = 0.91, p = .36).

Bootstrap analyses (with 5,000 bootstrap estimates) showed that voice affected cooperation via cooperative goal adoption among action-oriented participants (indirect effect = .27, 95% CI .01–.68) but not among state-oriented participants (indirect effect = .01, 95% CI –.07–.20). Figure 4 visually represents this effect.

General Discussion

An organizational field study showed that procedural justice promotes a number of employee behaviors that reflect voluntary cooperation among employees who are action oriented rather than state oriented. This finding was replicated in a laboratory experiment. A subsequent laboratory experiment also revealed evidence for the process underlying this effect. Specifically, action-oriented individuals are more likely than state-oriented individuals to attain the cooperative goals that they adopt in response to fair procedures and thus display actual cooperative behavior. Below, we discuss the implications and limitations of these findings.

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Theoretical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The positive relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation has robustly emerged in various meta-analyses. Yet these analyses also reveal substantial variation in the observed strength of this effect, implying the existence of potent moderators (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Identifying such moderators is not an easy task because of a deeper-rooted problem in the literature that links procedural justice and employee cooperation. We have come to view the relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation as self-evident, but our understanding of this relationship is, in fact, fairly limited (Blader & Tyler, 2005; Colquitt et al., 2005). Known moderators are grounded in social exchange and identity theories. For instance, De Cremer et al. (2010) showed that fair procedures promote cooperation particularly when the enacting leader represents the identity of the social collective. De Cremer and Tyler (2007) showed that trust in the enacting authority is required for fair procedures to promote cooperation, a finding that appears particularly meaningful from a social exchange perspective. Such findings suggest that fair procedures stimulate the adoption of cooperative goals (cf. De Cremer & Tyler, 2005). The present research introduces a novel perspective on the study of cooperative responses to procedural justice. Unlike prior work, we explicitly distinguished between the adoption of cooperative goals as a response to fair procedures and subsequent striving to reach these adopted goals.

Distinguishing goal adoption from goal striving allows us to better connect the processes underlying the relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation with the work motivation literature. The relevance of justice for work motivation has been acknowledged before. For instance, Latham and Pinder (2005: 505) note that "[o]rganizational justice is as important to leadership . . . as it is to employee motivation." However, prior work connecting procedural justice and motivation seems to have neglected the different elements that make up work motivation. A typical definition of work motivation includes a focus on "psychological processes involved with the arousal, direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal-directed" (Mitchell, 1997: 60). In line with current theorizing on motivation (e.g., Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006; Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997; Mitchell, 1997), we showed that it is important to differentiate between these different forces. Procedural justice provides *direction* to employee responses (i.e., by promoting the adoption of broad but targeted cooperative goals), but it provides insufficient arousal, intensity, and persistence to result in actual cooperative responses among all employees who have adopted cooperative goals.

Linking procedural justice with self-regulation suggests that developments in self-regulation research may also have interesting implications for future procedural justice research. Scholars argue that research should zoom in on moment-to-moment, within-subjects self-regulation processes. This requires theory development because existing theory is often not useful to predict such subtle processes (e.g., Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). Interestingly, here too one promising theory may be action control theory because it identifies volitional affect regulation as a mechanism that explains *why* action-oriented individuals display superior self-regulatory abilities (i.e., effective meta-control; e.g., Koole & Jostmann, 2004). Future research aimed at understanding moment-to-moment cooperative responses to

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procedural justice in the daily work context may well consider affect regulation. Such an approach also requires methodological improvements to the study of procedural justice. Moment-to-moment affect regulation (and corresponding cooperative responses) cannot be captured with traditional cross-sectional or longitudinal designs. Researchers can, for instance, rely on experience sampling and multiple-trial laboratory experiments.

Our findings also contribute more generally to the emerging literature on the role of action-state orientation in organizational behavior. To date, the limited literature has either focused on main effects of action-state orientation (Diefendorff et al., 2000; Jamarillo et al., 2007), or studied moderators of the relation between action-state orientation and employee performance that may reflect whether employees *can* actually manage their own performance (Diefendorff et al., 2006). Our results mirror these findings in showing that action orientation is relevant in understanding employees' voluntary, self-managed cooperative behavior. At the same time, our research takes a very different and novel approach. As far as we know, it is the first to show that action-state orientation interacts with variables that promote the adoption of specific goals (i.e., with variables that explain *what* employees want to do or want to happen).

We realize that our specific focus on action-state orientation and action control theory does not cover the full realm of models that have been developed to understand goal striving processes (cf. Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997). We relied on action control theory because it is the most comprehensively developed theory that we know of that directly addresses the self-regulatory demands that are involved in goal striving. However, there are other approaches to the study of goal striving processes. Perhaps the best known of these approaches is Gollwitzer's implementation intentions framework (see Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006, for an overview and meta-analysis). This research shows that forming an implementation intention ("If situation Y is encountered, then I will initiate goal-directed behavior X") makes people more effective in striving toward their adopted goals. Future research may address whether implementation intentions are also useful for employees who want to display cooperation.

Practical Implications

In line with prior work, we have shown that fairly enacted procedures form important tools for managers to promote organizational success because they motivate employees to voluntarily display cooperative behavior. However, at the same time, our results indicate that a single-minded focus on making employees adopt cooperative goals is incomplete. Hence, an important practical implication for managers is that they should acknowledge the relevance of employees' self-regulatory abilities that support goal striving when they want procedural justice to result in actual cooperative behavior. In illustrating this mechanism, we hope to help managers to understand why not all employees (can) react the same to procedural justice and what they might be able to do to facilitate a translation of procedural justice into cooperation.

Managers may, for example, often prefer to rely on employees to self-manage their contributions, which, as the present research reveals, can be expected from action-oriented employees. This suggests that, in addition to assessing general abilities such as intelligence,

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personnel selection may also consider the role of specific self-regulatory abilities (cf. Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997). However, state orientation does not necessarily lead to performance decrements (Koole et al., 2005; Kuhl, 1994). Although the present research does not address this, other work shows that state-oriented employees can effectively self-manage their contributions in structured contexts (Diefendorff et al., 2006). Therefore, if managers want to bring out the best in state-oriented employees, they should provide them with a well-structured work environment. Yet, note that this type of environment is becoming increasingly less common in modern Western economies (Frese, 1997).

Although action-state orientation is an individual difference variable, it is at least partly a learned response to environmental circumstances (e.g., Kuhl, 1994, 2000). Given that action orientation can be stimulated through therapeutic interventions (Kaschel & Kuhl, 2004), it is also likely that adapting organizational contexts can stimulate the development of action orientation. It has been argued that contexts that encourage people to motivate themselves during hindrances promote action orientation. In contrast, environments that discourage self-motivation (i.e., overly controlling or neglecting environments) promote state orientation (Jostmann & Koole, 2010; Kuhl, 1994). This suggests that interventions that create conditions in which employees influence and motivate their own performance such as empowerment interventions (e.g., Spreitzer, 2007; van Dijke et al., 2012) may stimulate employees to develop an action orientation. This, in turn, may improve the effectiveness of procedural justice in stimulating employee cooperation.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of the present research is that we combined different research methods to rigorously test our predictions. We examined whether action orientation facilitates the relationship between procedural justice and employee cooperation in a multisource field study with broad conceptions of procedural justice and employee cooperation, as indexed by four different OCB dimensions. This study allowed us to assess whether our effects can be observed in the field while at the same time controlling for common method and self-presentation concerns. We then improved the internal validity of our claims by conducting a laboratory experiment in which we manipulated procedural justice perceptions by relying on the procedural rule of voice in the leader's decisions. A subsequent experiment also allowed us to test the process that underlies our effect, that is, striving toward the cooperative goals that are adopted in response to fair procedures by action-oriented employees, rather than acting on a diffuse cooperative orientation. Our test of this moderated mediation model increases our confidence in our claims regarding how our constructs of interest relate to one another.

Like all research, our work has limitations. One limitation is that the specific shape of the interaction between procedural justice and action-state orientation was not completely the same across the studies (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). This difference results from finding a main effect of action-state orientation in the field study and not in the experiments. One explanation for this difference may be found in the different research methodologies. In the field study, factors other than procedural justice such as organizational leadership may have

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instilled cooperative goals in employees. Furthermore even when they are not motivated to voluntarily contribute to the source of procedural justice, employees may display OCB because it can help them achieve career goals such as a higher salary and better promotion opportunities (Bergeron, 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Given that action orientation should facilitate striving to these (unmeasured) prosocial *and* self-oriented goals, this would have resulted in an observed main effect of action orientation on voluntary cooperation in our field study. In the constrained laboratory context, it is less likely that factors other than variations in the leader's procedural justice influenced participants' motivation to cooperate, thus leading to an absent main effect of action-state orientation.

Another explanation for the different interaction patterns among the studies may be found in the specific operationalizations of cooperation. In the experiments, participating in the lab assistant's study may have been considered cooperative behavior, whereas not participating may have been considered retaliatory behavior. Action orientation should facilitate striving toward both types of goals, thus leading to relatively strong cooperative responses to a fair procedure and relatively strong retaliatory responses to an unfair procedure among action-oriented participants. In the field study, not engaging in the various types of OCB is unlikely to have been considered as retaliation. To test this idea, future research may address whether action-oriented employees respond particularly negatively to unfair procedures on measures of negative behavior such as deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

Future work should also study in more detail processes involved in striving toward cooperative goals. Action orientation may facilitate many of such processes: from initiating goal-directed action and adapting to changing situations to shielding goal-directed action from distractions and temporarily disengaging from a goal when the situation requires this (Jostmann & Koole, 2009, 2010). Unlike conscious goal striving strategies such as implementation intentions (e.g., Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006), the wide-ranging impact of action-state orientation (i.e., regulating the interplay of various broad action control levels) means that these processes are not accessible to conscious thought (e.g., Koole & Jostmann, 2004). Future work may develop cooperative tasks that allow studying each process, such as tasks that make initiating goal-directed activity difficult versus easy and tasks that do versus do not require one to temporarily disengage from a cooperative goal. In the present study, we focused on goal adoption as a mediating process. This can be measured with a self-report instrument because goal content is often accessible to conscious thought (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Measuring goal adoption already allows for a more precise test of broad goal striving processes because goal striving describes all processes that lead from goal adoption to goal attainment.

Concluding Remarks

Managers often feel that their efforts (e.g., showing genuine procedural justice concerns) are insufficiently reciprocated through voluntary cooperative behavior on the part of their employees. The present findings suggest that this is not necessarily the result of a lack of willingness to cooperate, but rather of a limited self-regulatory ability to initiate and maintain goal-directed action. In sum, voluntary displays of cooperation require one to be willing *and* able to cooperate.

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Notes

1. Our reference to the term *goal* is not meant to imply a conscious process. Although the content of many goals is consciously accessible, goal adoption and goal striving can occur largely outside of conscious awareness (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

2. Diefendorff et al. (2000) also measured a third construct, which is not part of action-state orientation: volatility. The role of volatility in action control theory (which is broader in focus than action-state orientation) and its relationship with hesitation and preoccupation are not well elaborated (empirically, volatility is uncorrelated with both dimensions). Hesitation and preoccupation indicate the (lack of) ability to escape state-oriented processing when this is required to initiate goal-directed action. Volatility may refer to overfunctioning of the action initiation system (items describe the ability to stay with self-initiated pleasant tasks; Kuhl, 1994). Like virtually all action-state orientation research, our studies did not include volatility. The lack of theoretical clarity obscures the relevance of volatility to our hypotheses.

3. We also performed regressions without the demographic predictors in the equation. These results were essentially the same, but slightly more pronounced than those presented in Table 2. Without the control variables, the main effect of procedural justice and its interaction with action orientation also significantly predicted the OCB dimension "individual initiative." This likely results because nonsignificant predictors decrease test power (Cohen et al., 2003).

4. Asking participants to reflect on their leader qualities may have raised their self-esteem, thus suggesting an alternative explanation for the effect of voice on cooperation. To test this, we measured trait self-esteem before the experiment using the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. Action orientation strengthened the effect of voice on cooperation regardless of whether self-esteem was included as a control variable or not. We also measured state self-esteem (directly after the manipulation checks) using Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) Performance Self-Esteem Scale. Voice did not influence state self-esteem.

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