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Do Authorities Care About Respect?
A Test of the Group Value and Deservingness Models of Fairness

This study tests the effects of group standing and deservingness on authorities' perception of how fairly they have been treated. The Group Value theory asserts that respectful treatment is important because it conveys information about one's standing and status as a member of the group. According to the theory, people with insecure status respond strongly to disrespectful treatment because it conveys to them that they are not valued members of the group. This implies that respectful treatment only matters in situations where standing is uncertain and one's role is insecure. This study proposes that respectful treatment also matters to authorities who are secure in their position. We hypothesize that the effect of respect for fair treatment will be determined by people's beliefs about the degree to which they deserve to be treated respectfully by others. In a laboratory experiment, participants' position (authority versus subordinate), deservingness of position, security of position, and respectful treatment from another group member were manipulated in a group task to test whether the security of one's group position is less important than one's belief about what they deserve.