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Framing advantageous inequity with a focus on others: A catalyst for equity restoration

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ABSTRACT

Prior research has found that framing inequity as an ingroup advantage, but not as an outgroup disadvantage, can lead the advantaged to be more supportive of redistributive policies towards disadvantaged groups. However, it is unclear whether these framing effects would occur in the same manner when inequity occurs between individuals. In two experiments, we test whether different inequity frames (self-focused vs. other-focused) can elicit different responses to advantageous inequity based on the level of inequity (individual-level vs. group-level) that is activated. In Study 1, we found that inequity frame and inequity level interactively predicted redistribution decisions, such that advantaged individuals engaged in more redistributive behaviors when the inequity was framed as another individual's disadvantage than when the inequity was framed as another group's disadvantage. These divergent effects occurred because individual-level inequity elicited less negative evaluation of others than group-level inequity in an other-focused frame (Study 2). These findings establish a boundary condition of previous research on inequity frame and highlight inequity level as an important moderator that affects advantaged individuals' willingness to engage in restorative behavior.

1. Introduction

Framing inequity as an ingroup advantage, but not as an outgroup disadvantage, has been shown to lead advantaged individuals to be more supportive of redistributive policies towards disadvantaged groups (e.g., Chow & Galak, 2012; Lowery, Chow, & Crosby, 2009; Lowery, Chow, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2012; Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007). Generally regarded as a response to perceived threat (Lowery et al., 2012), such framing effects have been shown in the context of racial relations (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Lowery et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2012; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005), gender (Branscombe, 1998), and income levels (Chow & Galak, 2012). That is, framing inequity as an ingroup advantage rather than outgroup disadvantage has been shown to elicit threat to the self-concept, and the response to this threat is to temper the advantage by redistributing resources to disadvantaged groups, such as Blacks (Lowery et al., 2007, 2012) and groups with low socioeconomic status (Chow & Galak, 2012). Yet, the self can be identified at different levels of abstraction (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Gaertner, Sedikides, & Gaetz, 1999) and emphasizing different levels of the self activates distinct psychological processes (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Crosby, Pufall, Snyder, O'Connell, & Whalen, 1989; Gaertner et al., 1999; Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, &

Lalonde, 1990). Hence, the consideration of distinct levels of the self raises the question: Would advantaged individuals respond to inequity frames in the same way when the inequity is between two individuals emphasizing the individual self, rather than between two groups which emphasizes the collective self?

In this paper, we examine whether different inequity frames (self-focused vs. other-focused) elicit different responses to advantageous inequity based on the level of inequity (individual-level vs. group-level). We base our investigation on the abundance of research that demonstrates that individuals react to inequity in vastly different ways depending on the level of self that is activated. For example, research on people's reaction to unfair treatment has found an asymmetry between how individuals feel about their own disadvantage versus how they feel about their collective disadvantage (Crosby et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1990). Similarly, previous research has found that individuals' reaction to stereotype threat is largely dependent on whether the stereotype is tied to the individual self or the group self (Wout, Danso, Jackson, & Spencer, 2008). We test whether (a) in a self-focused frame, a focus on the *collective* self's advantage rather than the *individual* self's advantage will lead to more or less support for resource redistribution, and (b) in an other-focused frame, a focus on the *individual* other's disadvantage rather than the *collective* other's disadvantage will

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lead to more or less support for resource redistribution. By empirically investigating this phenomenon, we hope to examine a boundary condition of previous research on inequity frame and highlight inequity level as a potential moderator that affects advantaged individuals' willingness to engage in restorative behavior.

2. Responses to inequity

Previous research has found that framing inequity as an in-group advantage (often referred to as privilege) rather than an out-group disadvantage is an aversive experience that elicits threat to the collective self (Branscombe, 1998; Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002; Lowery et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2012; Phillips & Lowery, 2015; Powell et al., 2005; Rosette & Tost, 2013). The recognition of an ingroup advantage highlights the uncomfortable idea that at least some of the group's status, power, and material resources are not earned through abilities and effort but rather granted to their group by a social system that unfairly favors one group over another. As such, this realization is threatening to one's collective self-concept. One way to attenuate these negative group-related feelings and to reduce such threat to the collective self is through increased support for a reallocation of resources (e.g., Chow & Galak, 2012; Lowery et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2009; Lowery et al., 2012). For example, exposure to advantageous inequity framed as White privilege lowered Whites' collective self-esteem towards their racial group, thus increasing their support for redistributive social policies (Lowery et al., 2012).

However, reactions to perceived threat may differ when it occurs at the individual level rather than at the group level. For example, while women readily acknowledge that there is discrimination against women as a collective social group, they are less likely to perceive that they have experienced the threat of personal discrimination because of their gender (Crosby et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1990). In the domain of racial inequity, Phillips and Lowery (2015) found that while Whites acknowledge that there is group level inequity between Blacks and Whites in the United States, they are more likely to claim hardship in their own lives when confronted with the potential threat that ensues from White privilege, thus allowing them to deny that they have personally benefited from privilege. These findings suggest that the experience of threat—whether it's being the target of prejudice or the recipient of privilege—differs depending on which level of the self is activated.

One reason this discrepancy exists is that there is a change in one's self-perception when the individual self rather than the collective self is considered, such that an individual shifts *towards* seeing himself/herself as a specific person with unique attributes and *away* from seeing himself/herself as a member of some social category with shared attributes (Sedikides, Gaertner, & O'Mara, 2011). Moreover, individuals are more likely to focus on their discrete, specific consequences as opposed to those outcomes that are more abstractly or conceptually associated with their social group (Crosby et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1990; Wout et al., 2008). In reconciling inequity at the collective level, the focus is on the inequity between two groups; hence, threats to collective esteem and the illegitimacy of the standing of the group is what prompts the response—increased support of redistribution of resources—to the perceived inequity (Lowery et al., 2012). In contrast, individual level inequity should draw attention of the individual with advantageous inequity towards themselves and their individual efforts and merit. Thus, as the focus of the self changes from that of the collective self to the individual self, it follows that the response to the inequity may also change.

Equally as important, a shift in inequity levels may change the way individuals think about the disadvantaged other. While past research has primarily focused on unpacking the psychological view of the *self* in the face of privilege (Lowery et al., 2007, 2012), we suggest that attention to perceptions of the other is just as important when different inequity levels are concerned. At group-level inequity, an other-focused frame brings advantaged individuals' attention to the disadvantage

faced by a collective social group. In contrast, at the individual level of inequity, an other-focused frame could direct advantaged individuals to think about the disadvantage faced by a specific, identifiable other. Given that an abundance of research has demonstrated that people respond to identifiable individuals versus collective social groups differently (e.g., pro-social and resource allocation situations; Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997; Small & Loewenstein, 2003), we expect that a focus on the disadvantage of a specific individual versus an abstract social group would lead to different redistribution decisions. As we will discuss next, the shift in focus from collective advantage to individual level advantage may influence the manner in which inequity frames affect views of the self (e.g., self-attribution), views of others (e.g., other attribution), and most importantly, redistributive decisions.

3. Two types of justification: positive attributions about the self and negative attributions about the other

Equity theory suggests that a prevalent response to the perceived threat experienced by the beneficiaries of advantageous inequity is justification (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). When justification occurs, those who are advantaged rationalize their standing in their favor through a strategic distortion of the attributions made for each party's input and output (Walster et al., 1978). One weakness of equity theory is that it does not specify the conditions under which the various types of justifications, such as positive attributions about the self (e.g., my good outcome is the result of my competence and hard work) or negative attributions about the other (e.g., his bad outcome is the result of his incompetence and laziness), takes place. These two types of justifications—positive attribution about the self and negative attributions about the other—may represent two possible explanations for distinctions in redistribution decisions at the individual and group levels.

3.1. Self-focused inequity frame

When advantageous inequity is framed with a self-focus, threat to the self-concept occurs at both the individual level and the group level; however, we predict that positive attributions about the self, also known as self-serving biases (a frequent response to perceived threat), are more likely to occur at the individual level than at the group level. When the individual self is the point of convergence, individual contributions and accomplishments are proximal and easily accessible (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). When confronted with the uncomfortable idea that one's accomplishment might be the result of privilege as opposed to one's own hard work, the threat to the self-image may be particularly intensified as one's unique attributions and distinctions become questionable. In dealing with this self-image threat, individuals are likely to engage in the self-serving bias and attribute positive outcomes to their own ability or merit (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998; Zuckerman, 1979). For example, self-serving biases are likely to occur when individuals are reminded of their head start in life (Chen & Tyler, 2003) and when their outcome is manipulated as advantaged (Smith & Spears, 1996) – conditions that are akin to advantageous inequity.

In contrast, when the collective self is at the forefront, individual responsibility is lessened and specific contributions of the individual muted (Darley & Latane, 1968). Accordingly, the threat response shifts from one that is focused on the independent self to one that is focused on the collective and the self-serving bias will be less likely to occur. Our theorizing is consistent with research examining the influence of individual identity versus group identity salience on the evaluation of outcomes in inequitable situations (Smith & Spears, 1996). In their research, Smith and Spears (1996) found that participants who received unfavorable outcomes during a laboratory task engaged in less self-serving attributions to justify their outcomes when their group membership was made salient than when their personal identity was made

salient. As Smith and Spears pointed out, “If the salient level of self is defined at the level of the social or group self, rather than the personal or individual self, it is possible that the individual will be less tied to the personal self-attribitional processes and identity management concerns that appear to characterize a more individual self-focus” (p. 692). While the focus of this research was on how disadvantaged individuals respond to inequitable situations, it is possible that similar processes occur for how advantaged individuals respond to inequitable situations. That is, when a *self-focused* frame is made salient, advantaged individuals may be more likely to engage in self-serving bias at the individual level of inequity than at the group level of inequity, resulting in less as opposed to more redistribution of resources.

3.2. Other-focused inequity frame

In an other-focused frame, advantaged individuals shift their attention from themselves to making sense of how the disadvantaged other came to their misfortune (Lowery et al., 2012). One prevalent explanation is that this misfortune or hardship is a result of a lack of ability or lack of motivation on the part of the disadvantaged (Chow & Galak, 2012; Lerner, 1980). However, we suggest that individuals are less likely to make these negative attributions when the disadvantaged is a specific individual rather than a social group. An identifiable other is concrete and generates a vivid image, and likely triggers prosocial responses such as sympathy and compassion (Erlandsson, Björklund, & Bäckström, 2015). Furthermore, individuals who focus on others' needs are more likely to act in a manner that benefits the other person (Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). In contrast, there is greater emotional distance to the suffering of a collective social outgroup as much of the suffering is the perceived culmination of historical, and perhaps less personal, events (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997).

Consistent with the idea that people respond more positively to an individual (vs. a group)'s disadvantage, research on the identifiable victim effects found that identifiable victims elicit a greater empathic response as well as greater willingness to provide aid (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997; Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Part of this was due to a shift in affect, such that specific victims elicited more positive arousal than did a group of individuals (Genevsky, Västfjäll, Slovic, & Knutson, 2013; Kogut & Ritov, 2005a). Similarly, research on workplace motivation has found that individuals demonstrated more prosocial behaviors when they were given the opportunity to have in-person contact with beneficiaries of their efforts than when they had no exposure to the beneficiaries (Grant et al., 2007). Thus, we posit that individuals may be less likely to make negative attributions about the other when the other is a specific individual than a collective social group. That is, when an *other-focused* inequity frame is salient, advantaged individuals are less likely to make negative attributions about others at the individual level of inequity but not at the group level of inequity, resulting in more rather than less redistribution of resources.

3.3. The present research

Taken together, we suggest that the differential ascription of positive attribution towards the self and negative attribution towards others represent two potential pathways that determine the extent to which advantaged individuals engage in redistributive behaviors at the individual and group level of inequity, respectively. When the inequity frame is self-focused, redistribution of resources should be greater at the group level rather than the individual level. This should occur as self-serving biases are likely more prevalent at the individual versus group level, representing an adequate justification to maintain the status quo and therefore restoring psychological equity rather than actual equity through redistribution. When the inequity frame is other-focused, redistribution of resources should be greater at the individual level than the group level. This should occur as advantaged individuals are less likely to make negative attributions about others at the

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of variables, Studies 1–2.

Study	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1	1 Redistribution (person)	305.02	363.39	–		
	2 Redistribution (group)	336.48	404.17	0.77***	–	–
2	1 Redistribution (person)	352.80	420.21	–		
	2 Positive attribution	5.01	0.90	–0.30***	(0.92)	
	3 Negative attribution	2.49	1.32	–0.14**	–0.12**	(0.97)

Notes. When appropriate, coefficient alpha or composite reliability estimates are listed in brackets. The intercorrelations are based on the scale scores of the variables. $N = 199$ in Study 1, $N = 494$ in Study 2.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

individual level versus the group level, as they are more likely to be empathetic towards an identifiable individual.

We tested our hypotheses with two experiments. In Study 1, we examined whether inequity frames (self- vs. other-focused) and inequity level (group vs. individual) interactively predict advantaged individuals' attitude towards redistributive policies. We expected to see greater support for redistribution at group level inequity than individual level inequity in a self-focused frame, but greater support for redistribution at individual level inequity than group level inequity in an other-focused inequity frame. In Study 2, we examined whether self-serving bias and negative attribution about others accounted for the interactive effect of inequity level and inequity frame on advantaged individuals' redistribution decisions. For both studies, we report all manipulations and measures collected, and do not exclude any participants unless otherwise specified. We only started data analyses after all data collection had been completed. We report means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of our variables in Table 1.

4. Study 1

We used the same inequity domain (racial inequity between Whites vs. Blacks in the United States) as prior research (Lowery et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2012). Whereas racial inequity has predominantly been discussed as a collective phenomenon between Blacks and Whites in past research, racial inequity can also take place (perhaps more pertinent to everyday life) between a Black and a White individual. We manipulated this key distinction in our study and predicted that this distinction (inequity level: group versus individual) moderates the impact that inequity frame has on beneficiary's redistribution decisions.

White participants read about a fictitious company and its proposed affirmative action policy. After reading about the inequity that prompted the policy, participants rated how much they would support the policy. We manipulated whether inequity was framed as self-focused (i.e., self-advantage) or as other-focused (i.e., other-disadvantage). Moreover, we manipulated inequity level as either between groups (i.e., all Black employees in the company) or between individuals (i.e., a Black employee in the company). We operationalized our dependent variable in two ways: (a) support for redistributive policies that would benefit a Black employee and (b) support for redistributive policies that would benefit all Black employees in the company.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and study design

We recruited 199 White participants (38% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.49$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 10.54$) from Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT). Past research has shown that AMT provides reliable data for research purposes

(Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). The study was constructed as a 2 (inequity frame: self-focused vs. other-focused) \times 2 (inequity level: individual vs. group) between-subjects design.¹

4.1.2. Materials and procedure

Participants read a scenario where they were asked to imagine that they worked at a fictitious company, Consumco, as a sales associate. The scenario described the participants as having worked very hard and had a successful year in sales. Based on the company incentive program, they were eligible to receive a \$2000 bonus as a result of their sales performance. However, a recent report of an internal audit performed at Consumco found that the existing sales policy may have unfairly given more sales opportunities to Whites in the company than their Black counterpart. In the individual-level inequity condition, participants read one of the following two versions (i.e., self-focused vs. other-focused):

This internal audit found that the existing sales policy at Consumco unfairly advantaged you because of your race [unfairly disadvantaged your fellow sales associate, C.H., because of his/her race].² That is, some features of the sales policy assigned you more sales opportunities because you are White [assigned him/her fewer sales opportunities because he/she is Black]. As a result of the existing sales policy, you received an unwarranted advantage [C.H. received an unwarranted disadvantage].

In the group-based inequity condition, participants read one of the following:

This internal audit found that the existing sales policy at Consumco unfairly advantaged White employees [unfairly disadvantaged Black employees]. That is, some features of the sales policy assigned Whites more sales opportunities [assigned Blacks fewer sales opportunities]. As a result of the existing sales policy, Whites received an unwarranted advantage [Blacks received an unwarranted disadvantage].

Participants were told that to correct for this finding from the internal audit report, Consumco was considering several options to amend the existing policy. Although the details of the options vary, they all involved having the participants giving up a portion of their \$2000 bonus to be redistributed. Participants then read about the two options one at a time, with the order of appearance counterbalanced.³ In the individual redistribution option, the policy asked the participants to, if any, give up a portion of their bonus to C.H., a fellow sales associate at Consumco who was Black. In the group redistribution option, the policy asked the participants to, if any, give up a portion of their bonus to be placed in a pool of funds that would be redistributed to all Black sales associates at Consumco. For both redistribution options, participants were asked to indicate, on a sliding scale, how much of their bonus they would be willing to give up to be redistributed. They could choose anywhere between \$0 (give up nothing) to \$2000 (the entire bonus).

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Redistribution of bonus to an individual Black employee

Using a 2 (inequity frame: self-focused vs. other-focused) \times 2 (inequity level: individual vs. group) between-subjects ANOVA, we found a significant main effect of inequity level, $F(1, 195) = 5.45, p = .021,$

¹ We used G*Power's (version 3.1; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) "Sensitivity: Compute required effect size — given α , power, and sample size" analysis for F tests with ANOVA for main effect and interactions to calculate the minimum required sample size. This analysis indicated that at $\alpha = 0.05$, the current sample of 199 participants provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $f = 0.24$.

² We matched the gender of the participants with the gender of the Black sales associate in the scenario.

³ We did not find any order effect for the two redistribution options.

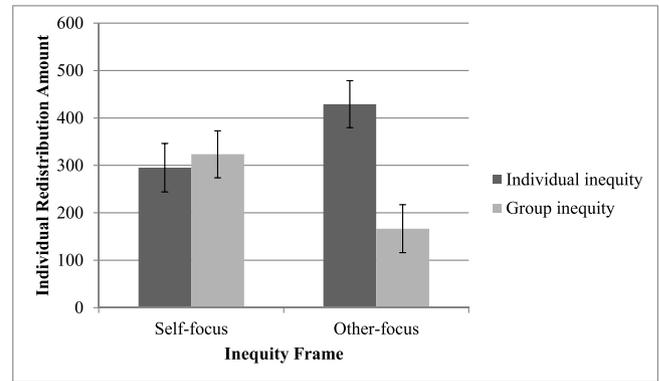


Fig. 1. The interactive effect between inequity level and inequity frame on the amount of bonus to be redistributed to an individual, Study 1.

$\eta^2 = 0.03$. However, this main effect was qualified by a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 195) = 8.40, p = .004, \eta^2 = 0.04$ (see Fig. 1). Simple effects analyses revealed that, when the inequity frame was other-focused, participants in the individual-based inequity condition gave up more bonus than participants in the group-based inequity condition, $F(1, 195) = 13.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.07$. However, we did not find a significant difference in the redistribution amount across the self-focused inequity frame conditions, $F(1, 195) = 0.16, p = .691, \eta^2 = 0.001$. Nonetheless, consistent with previous research (Lowery et al., 2007; 2012), when the inequity was group-based, participants in the self-focused inequity frame ($M = 323.37, SD = 358.46$) were willing to give up a greater amount of their bonus to be redistributed than participants in the other-focused inequity frame, ($M = 166.53, SD = 288.52$), $F(1, 195) = 4.91, p = .028, \eta^2 = 0.03$. However, the opposite effect was found at the individual level. When the inequity was individual-based, participants in the other-focused inequity frame were willing to give up more of their bonus to be redistributed ($M = 429.06, SD = 402.73$) than participants in the self-focused inequity frame, ($M = 295.08, SD = 353.41$), $F(1, 195) = 3.55, p = .061, \eta^2 = 0.02$.

4.2.2. Redistribution of bonus to all Black employees in the company

We found a significant main effect of inequity level, $F(1, 195) = 9.26, p = .003, \eta^2 = 0.05$, and a marginally significant main effect of inequity frame, $F(1, 195) = 3.19, p = .076, \eta^2 = 0.02$. These effects were qualified by a marginally significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 195) = 2.83, p = .094, \eta^2 = 0.01$ (Fig. 2). Simple effects analyses revealed that, within the other-focused inequity frame, participants in the individual-based inequity condition ($M = 417.78, SD = 391.94$) gave up more bonus than participants in the group-based inequity condition, ($M = 154.86, SD = 276.99$), $F(1, 195) = 11.22, p = .001, \eta^2 = 0.05$. There was no difference in the redistribution amount when the inequity frame was self-focused, $F(1, 195) = 0.92, p = .338, \eta^2 = 0.005$. Furthermore, when the inequity was group-based, participants in the self-focused inequity frame ($M = 347.75, SD = 381.07$) were more willing to redistribute their bonus to Black employees in the company than participants in the other-focused inequity frame, ($M = 154.86, SD = 276.99$), $F(1, 195) = 6.04, p = .015, \eta^2 = 0.03$. In contrast, there was no difference in the redistribution amount when the inequity was individual-based, $F(1, 195) = 0.005, p = .942, \eta^2 = 0.00$.

4.3. Discussion

Our findings revealed that in an other-focused inequity frame, redistribution was greater at the individual level than at the group level. This difference occurred for both redistribution made to a specific individual (i.e., a Black employee) and to the corresponding social group (i.e., all Black employees). Furthermore, our findings replicated prior research confirming that a self-focused rather than an other-focused

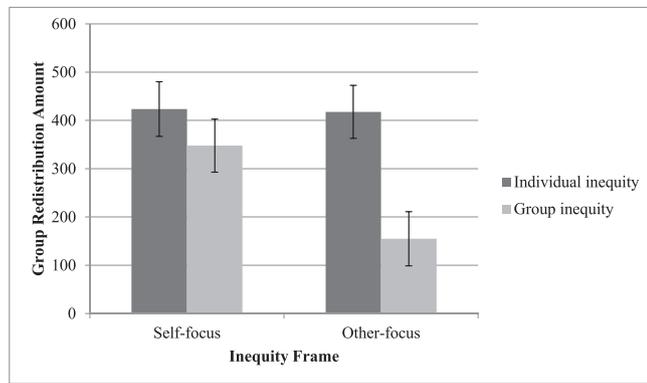


Fig. 2. The interactive effect between inequity level and inequity frame on the amount of bonus to be redistributed to a group, Study 1.

inequity frame increased Whites' support for a redistribution of resources at group level of inequity, and this occurred regardless of whether the target was an individual or a group. However, the opposite effect occurred at the individual level whereby a self-focused frame was shown to decrease redistribution when the target was an individual. Although a specific prediction was not made a priori that pitted different frames (i.e., self vs. other) at the individual level against different frames at the group level, this observed difference does suggest that the level of inequity (group vs. individual) may represent a boundary condition to previous work.

Furthermore, this boundary condition may be more pronounced across inequity frames as opposed to within them as we did not find support for our within self-focused condition frame. It is important to note that the cross-inequity frame difference in redistribution at the individual level was only noted when the target was the individual (e.g., a specific Black employee) not when the target was the entire social group (e.g., all Black employees). These results are not necessarily surprising: when the inequity is between two individuals, participants focus their attention on the specific, identifiable other and less so on the broad social group to which the individual belongs (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997; Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Furthermore, there was no explicit information on whether there was also inequity at the group level in the individual-based inequity conditions. These findings lend support to the idea that individual-level inequity can lead to different consequences than group-level inequity.

5. Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was threefold. First, we sought to replicate the findings from the previous study and show that an other-focused inequity frame leads to a greater redistribution of resources at the individual level than at the group level. Secondly, we wanted to assess the predicted mechanisms that may account for these differences. Specifically, we tested positive attribution about the self and negative attribution about others as two parallel mediators that drive the interactive effect of inequity level and inequity frame on redistribution decisions. Our a priori prediction was that individual level inequity would lead to greater justification through more self-serving bias, and thus less redistribution, than group level inequity within a self-focused frame; whereas group level inequity would lead to more negative attribution about others, and thus less redistribution, than individual level inequity within an other-focused frame. In light of Study 1 results, which found that the interactive effect of inequity level and inequity frame was largely driven by the different redistribution amount between individual- and group-level inequity within an other-focused frame, we predicted that negative attribution of others may be a stronger driver than self-serving bias within other-focus and self-focused inequity frames, respectively.

Thirdly, in addition to manipulating inequity level and inequity frame, we also introduced a third factor, attribution of individual contribution. In Study 1, participants were explicitly told that they were responsible for the successful sales year. Yet, individuals can be embedded in a larger group such as a sales team or an advertising department, in which case the individual contribution is less clear. Thus we included a third factor where we manipulated the nature of individual contribution, such that half of the participants read that they were responsible for the successful sales performance, and the other half read that their sales team was responsible for the successful sales performance. We wanted to examine whether making individual contribution explicit would affect redistribution decisions. However, this third factor did not interact with inequity level and inequity frame to affect redistribution amount. In light of this, we collapsed across this factor and focused our analysis efforts on the interactive effect of inequity level and inequity frame. Finally, having demonstrated in Study 1 that our proposed effect at the individual-level of inequity only occurred when the target recipient of redistribution was an individual and not a group, Study 2 solely focused on redistribution decisions for when the target recipient of redistribution was an individual.

5.1. Methods

5.1.1. Participants and study design

We recruited 494 White participants (47% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.59$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.80$) from Amazon Mechanical Turk.⁴

5.1.2. Measures

Participants were asked to indicate the amount of bonus they would like to redistribute to an individual Black sales associate in the company. Next, participants completed measures of self-serving bias and negative attribution of others (Chow & Galak, 2012). For self-serving bias, participants indicated the extent to which merit, ability, hard work, and talent contributed to their own sales performance, ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.92$). For negative attribution of others, participants indicated the extent to which laziness, lack of motivation, lack of skill, and unintelligence contributed to the performance of the Black sales associate, ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.32$; $\alpha = 0.97$). Both self-serving bias and negative attribution were measured with a 6-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 6 = *strongly agree*.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Redistribution of bonus to an individual Black employee

We conducted a 2 (inequity frame: self-focused vs. other-focused) \times 2 (inequity level: individual vs. group) ANOVA. We found a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 490) = 6.03$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$ (Fig. 3). Simple effects analyses revealed that when the inequity frame was other-focused, participants in the individual-level inequity condition ($M = 423.94$, $SD = 445.23$) were willing to give up more bonus than participants in the group-level inequity condition ($M = 321.21$, $SD = 435.13$), $F(1, 490) = 3.66$, $p = .056$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$. There was no difference in the redistribution amount between individual-level inequity ($M = 293.55$, $SD = 381.76$) and group-level inequity ($M = 375.80$, $SD = 410.89$) in the self-focused inequity frame, $F(1, 490) = 2.42$, $p = .120$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$. Consistent with our Study 1 findings, at the individual level, participants in the other-focused inequity frame were willing to give up a greater amount of their bonus to be redistributed than participants in the self-focused inequity frame, $F(1, 490) = 6.04$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. We did not find a difference in

⁴ G*Power's (version 3.1; Faul et al., 2009) "Sensitivity: Compute required effect size — given α , power, and sample size" analysis for F tests with ANOVA for main effect and interactions showed that at $\alpha = 0.05$, the current sample of 494 participants provided 80% power to detect a minimum effect size of $f = 0.15$.

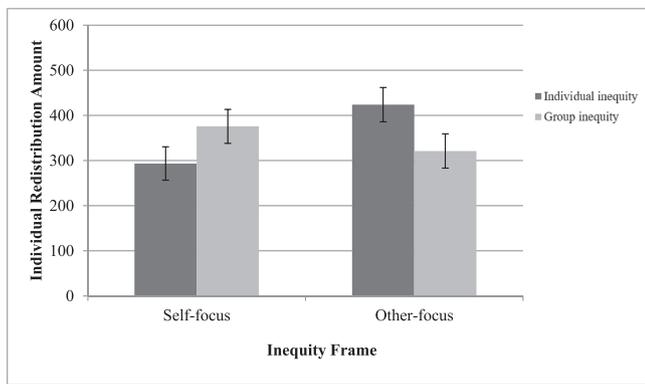


Fig. 3. The interactive effect between inequity level and inequity frame on the amount of bonus to be redistributed to an individual, Study 2.

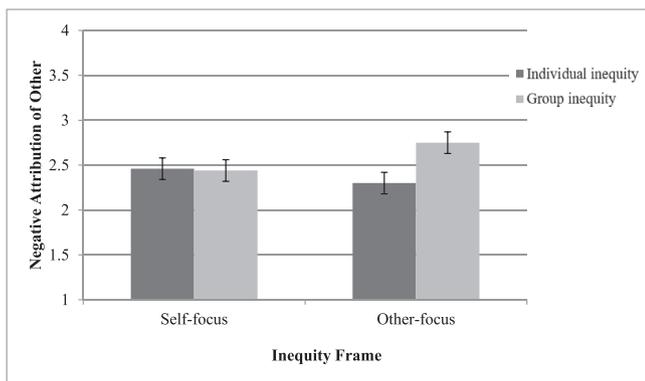


Fig. 4. The interactive effect between inequity level and inequity frame on negative attribution of other, Study 2.

redistribution amount between self-focused inequity frame and other-focused inequity frame at the group level of inequity, $F(1, 490) = 1.04$, $p = .308$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$.

5.2.2. Self-serving attributions

The 2×2 ANOVA revealed a significant inequity frame main effect: participants in the self-focused frame ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.86$) reported higher self-serving bias than those in the other-focused frame ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.94$), $F(1, 490) = 4.24$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$. We also found a significant inequity level main effect: participants in group-level inequity ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.85$) reported higher level of self-serving bias than participants in individual-level based inequity ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.95$), $F(1, 490) = 4.07$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$. The two-way interaction was not significant, $F(1, 490) = 0.002$, $p = .960$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$.

5.2.3. Negative attribution about others

The 2×2 ANOVA revealed a marginally significant inequity level main effect, $F(1, 490) = 3.14$, $p = .077$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$. This was qualified by a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 490) = 4.09$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$ (Fig. 4). Simple effects analyses revealed that in an other-focused inequity frame, participants in the group-level inequity condition reported more negative attribution about others ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.43$) than participants in the individual-level inequity condition, ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 490) = 7.09$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$. However, there was no difference in the amount of negative attribution about others between group-level inequity ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.23$) and individual-level inequity ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.37$) in the self-focused frame, $F(1, 490) = 0.03$, $p = .858$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$. Furthermore, we found a marginally significant simple effect in the group level conditions, where participants demonstrated a higher level of negative attribution

about others in the other-focused condition than in the self-focused condition, $F(1, 490) = 3.45$, $p = .064$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$. The simple effect in the individual level conditions was not significant, $F(1, 490) = 1.001$, $p = .318$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$.

5.2.4. Moderated mediation analyses

Finally, we conducted moderated mediation analyses to examine the amount of variance between the interactive effect of inequity frame and inequity level on redistribution decision that is explained by self-serving bias and negative attribution of others. Based on the model assumption that inequity level \times inequity frame \rightarrow self-serving bias and/or negative attribution of others \rightarrow redistribution amount, we used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7) with 5000 biased bootstrap samples in SPSS, with inequity level as the independent variable, inequity frame as the moderator, self-serving bias and negative attribution of others as two parallel mediators, and redistribution amount as the dependent variable. We chose this causal model on the basis of our theoretical argument and evidence from past research showing that inferences about the different parties who are in inequitable relationships predict one's compensatory behavior (Chow & Galak, 2012; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Lowery et al., 2009, 2012). Our analysis did not find self-serving bias to account for a significant portion of variance, total effect = 1.20, $SE = 24.57$, 95% CI $(-48.1533, 49.0711)$. In contrast, negative attribution of others did account for a significant portion of variance in the model, total effect = 27.06, $SE = 16.09$, 95% CI $(2.2573, 67.2200)$. Specifically, it absorbed a significant part of variance shared between inequity level and redistribution decision in the other-focused frame, indirect effect = 25.38, $SE = 11.99$, 95% CI $(6.7044, 54.9941)$ but not in the self-focused frame, indirect effect = -1.68 , $SE = 9.51$, 95% CI $(-22.8170, 16.3111)$.

5.3. Discussion

Study 2 replicated Study 1 results, finding that an other-focused inequity frame led to a greater redistribution at the individual level of inequity than at the group level of inequity. Furthermore, we once again found a difference in redistribution amount across the two inequity frames at the individual level of inequity, such that an other-focused frame led to greater redistribution than a self-focused frame. Study 2 also tested our predicted mechanisms, positive attributions about the self and negative attributions about the other, that may account for these differences. We found that negative attribution of others, but not positive attributions about the self, explained a significant amount of variance between the interactive effect of inequity frame and inequity level on redistribution amount. While we chose to use this mediation model based on our theoretical reasoning, it is fair to add that other theoretical models might also be possible (e.g., a model whereby self-serving bias and negative attribution of others are moderators, see Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018). These models may be differentiated through sound theorizing and experimentation in future research. For example, instead of measuring negative attribution of others as we did in the present paper, future research could manipulate it by providing explicit information about the other's intelligence and work ethics (or the lack thereof), and see whether this manipulation would qualify the effect of inequity level on redistribution decisions in an other-focused inequity frame.

Adding to extant work on inequity frame, which has primarily focused on how inequity frame affects the self-concept of the advantaged, our research suggests that inequity level and inequity frame interactively shape advantaged individuals' attitude towards the disadvantaged, and this attitude has equally important implications for redistribution decisions. Furthermore, we did not find self-serving attribution to explain a significant amount of variance. This result may suggest that individuals' response to self-concept threat when the self is made salient may be less elastic than we had initially considered, and that the experience of privilege may enact similar reactions regardless

of the level of inequity that is highlighted.

In sum, these findings reveal important insight regarding the different psychological experiences enacted by framing effects at individual versus group level inequity. Specifically, our data suggests how people think about others—as a specific person or a social group—accounted for the different framing effects between individual- and group-level inequity. Whereas past research examining group-level inequity has largely focused on the effect of privilege on the self, our findings suggest that considering how the nature of others can also shed light on advantaged individuals' willingness to engage in restorative behaviors.

6. General discussion

In these two studies, we showed that an other-focused inequity frame led to greater support for redistributive policies at the individual level of inequity than at the group level of inequity (Study 1), and this was the result of less negative attribution about the disadvantaged individuals rather than disadvantaged groups (Study 2). By doing so, we extend established findings on inequity framing by identifying inequity level as an important moderator. That is, previous findings about inequity frame and redistributive behavior observed at the group level may not be generalizable to the individual level of analysis. Furthermore, our findings suggest that understanding how people think about the disadvantaged others may be just as important as understanding how advantaged individuals think about themselves in framing inequitable situations in ways that encourage redistributive behaviors.

Our research also contributes to an ongoing dialogue in equity research. One of the principal tenets of equity theory is that when inequitable relationships yield anxiety (e.g., perceived threat), individuals seek relief by restoring actual equity (e.g., redistribution of resources) or psychological equity (e.g., cognitive rationalization of deservedness). Yet, one of the primary criticisms of equity theory is the lack of specification of the conditions under which each type of reaction will occur. Our results suggest that inequity frame (self- versus other-focus) in combination with the level of interaction (group versus individual) may be important factors to consider when attempting to reconcile this age-old fairness dilemma. Further, given that wealth and resource inequality (which frequently derives from inequitable relationships) is at an all-time high in the United States (Congressional Budget Office, 2013), it is important now more than ever that we attempt to understand the mechanisms that may help to reconcile such disparity. Our findings suggest that, at an individual level, a greater orientation towards others may serve as a catalyst towards rectifying these types of social inequities.

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