

## Positive versus Negative Framing Affects Justice Judgments

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*This research demonstrates the effect of framing on justice judgments. Presenting identical allocation situations in different modes of accomplishing the resource allocation, resulting in either positive (benefits) or negative (harms) outcomes, affects justice judgments. Two independent studies revealed that participants judged non-egalitarian principles (i.e., merit, ability, effort, need, and tenure) as more just when allocation of a resource was presented in the positive framing manner (e.g., to deliver goods or to withhold bads) relative to presenting the exact same resource allocated in a negative framing manner (e.g., to deliver bads or to withhold goods). It is suggested that the way resource allocation is framed evokes favorable (or unfavorable) associations that cause people to judge the situation as more (or less) just.*

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**KEY WORDS:** framing; justice judgments; resource allocation; positive versus negative modes of allocation.

Issues regarding the just distribution of social resources engage many scholars in philosophy and the social sciences, and different theories champion different distributive principles (for a taxonomy of theories, see Sabbagh, 2002). The empirically oriented social science approaches are concerned with examining the justice principles that are adopted by people in everyday situations (Elster, 1995; Sabbagh, 2002).

The normative tradition of Miller's Theory of Justice (Miller, 1976) and the multi-principle approach (Deutsch, 1985; Törnblom, 1992) identify three principles as central to the concept of distributive justice: *equity*, *equality*,

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