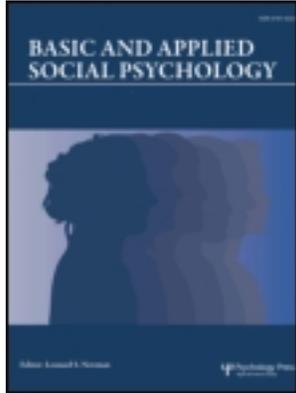


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Gender Differences in Entitlement: The Role of System-Justifying Beliefs

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Two studies examine the relationship between system-justifying beliefs and perceived pay entitlement and how this relationship differs as a function of gender. In Study 1, personal endorsement of system-justifying beliefs was associated with higher levels of pay entitlement among men. In contrast, personal endorsement of system-justifying beliefs was associated with slightly, but not significantly, lower levels of pay entitlement among women. In Study 2, a system-justification prime significantly increased reports of pay entitlement among men but had no effect on reports of pay entitlement among women. Results illustrate that system-justifying beliefs contribute to the creation and maintenance of gender differences in entitlement.

Compared to men, equally qualified women are underpaid for doing similar work (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Gender inequality in pay is a complex and multifaceted problem. Gender differences in previous work experience, the value placed on salary relative to other factors such as schedule flexibility, marital status, child-care responsibilities, union membership, negotiation practices, and discrimination all contribute to the pay gap (Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Ostroff, & Vancouver, 1987; Judge & Livingston, 2008; Stuhlmacher & Walters, 1999). Differences between women and men in perceived entitlement to pay for work also contribute to the pay gap (Major, 1994). The present research examines the role that system justification processes play in creating and perpetuating gender differences in perceived entitlement to pay.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENTITLEMENT

Entitlement is an affectively laden cognitive judgment that a person *should* receive a particular set of outcomes by virtue of who they are or what they have done (Major, 1994). The present research focuses on people's sense of *personal* entitlement—that is, the outcomes that people believe they personally deserve to receive as a result of their inputs. *Inputs* refer to an individual's contribution to a task (e.g., intelligence, skills), whereas *outcomes* (e.g., salary, benefits) refer to the consequences that an individual receives in exchange for his or her inputs (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973).

Research indicates that men's sense of personal entitlement to pay is higher than women's (Blanton, George, & Crocker, 2001; Blysm & Major, 1992; Callahan-Levy & Messe, 1979; Crosby, 1982; Hogue & Yoder, 2003; Jost, 1997; Major, 1994; Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984; Pelham & Hetts, 2001). In a classic study, male and female college students worked on a clerical task for 20 min (Major et al., 1984, Study 1). Afterward, participants paid themselves under private

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conditions the amount that they thought was fair for their work. On average, men paid themselves more than \$3, whereas women paid themselves less than \$2. Thus, even though their actual inputs were equal, men believed they were entitled to receive greater outcomes than women believed they were entitled to receive. In a follow-up study, participants were paid \$4 and asked to do as much work as they thought was fair in exchange for the payment. Given equal pay, men worked for significantly shorter periods of time, did less work, and did less accurate work than women (Major et al., 1984, Study 2). Thus, when men's and women's outcomes were constrained to be equal, men's sense of what they should contribute in terms of inputs was less than that of women. More recent research has replicated this basic pattern of gender differences in pay entitlement (Hogue & Yoder, 2003; Pelham & Hetts, 2001).

How do such gender differences in entitlement develop? According to status construction theory, mere recognition of group differences in pay is sufficient to make people believe that the higher paid group is more competent and worthy than the lower paid group (Ridgeway, 1991, 2001). Participants in a minimal groups study were randomly assigned to a low-pay or a high-pay condition and received information about the group difference in pay (Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998). Participants in the low-pay condition subsequently came to believe their group was less competent. Thus, merely belonging to a group that was paid less made individuals feel that their inputs were inferior compared to the higher paid group.

SYSTEM-JUSTIFYING BELIEFS AND ENTITLEMENT

We propose that, for group differences in pay to translate into group differences in entitlement, people must believe that existing group differences in pay are legitimate. System justification is a process through which group differences in outcomes are legitimized (Jost & Banaji, 1994). According to system justification theory, people have a basic psychological need to believe that the system they live in is just and fair. As a result of this need, belief systems develop that justify unequal relationships among groups in society. In the United States, examples of these *system-justifying beliefs* (SJBs) include the Protestant work ethic, beliefs in a just world, meritocracy, and individual mobility (Furnham & Proctor, 1989; Lerner, 1980; Major et al., 2002; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Weber 1904–1905/1958). These beliefs justify the social system by holding people responsible for their outcomes. They also explain group differences in the distribution of social and material goods in terms of group differences in effort and merit

(Crandall, 1994; Furnham, 1990; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Lerner, 1980; Major, 1994).

SJBs imply that group differences in outcomes, such as the gender gap in pay, are deserved. SJBs may encourage people to infer that men must have greater inputs (e.g., intelligence, skill) than women simply because men have greater outcomes (e.g., salary). In turn, the belief that men have greater inputs than women may lead to the conclusion that men *deserve* greater outcomes. Thus some researchers have speculated that SJBs may reinforce existing gender differences in salary by encouraging people to think that men are entitled to more pay than women (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Major, 1994; O'Brien & Major, 2009).

There is some preliminary evidence consistent with this hypothesis. In a study by Hafer and Olson (1989), participants were denied an opportunity to obtain "bonus points" on a task that would have helped them to obtain a desirable outcome. Participants were subsequently asked to rate the fairness of the procedures used to assign bonus points. The belief in a just world, a SJB, was positively related to the perceived fairness of the procedures. Thus, under conditions of personal deprivation, a condition that mirrors the condition of many women, the belief in a just world was related to perceptions of fairness. However, this study did not compare entitlement in low- and high-status groups, nor did it specifically examine gender.

The current research tests the hypothesis that endorsement or activation of SJBs will increase the gender gap in personal entitlement. For men, we predict that either endorsing or activating SJBs will *increase* their sense of personal pay entitlement. In contrast, we predict that endorsing or activating SJBs will *decrease* the sense of personal pay entitlement among women.

There are reasons to suspect, however, that the effect of SJBs on pay entitlement may be stronger for men than for women. Levin and colleagues have argued that high-status and low-status groups may have different motivations for endorsing SJBs (Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). For high-status groups such as men, the motive to justify the system is consistent with the motive to advance the status and well-being of oneself and one's ingroup. Thus for men, the motivation for endorsing SJBs is likely to be driven by a desire both to justify the system and to promote and maintain the high-status position of the ingroup. For this reason, we predict a robust and positive relationship between SJBs and entitlement among men.

For low-status groups such as women, however, the motive to justify the system is in conflict with the motive to advance the status and well-being of oneself and one's ingroup (Jost & Burgess, 2000). As a result, SJBs can create attitudinal ambivalence and cognitive dissonance among members of low-status groups (Jost, Pelham,

Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Rankin, Jost, & Wakslak, 2009). Thus, it is not surprising that some researchers have found that the endorsement of SJBs have less straightforward implications for members of low-status groups as compared to members of high-status groups—a finding that has been referred to as the ideological asymmetry effect (e.g., Levin et al., 1998; Rabinowitz, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz, 1994). For example, endorsement of SJBs has a moderate and statistically significant *positive* correlation with psychological well-being among Whites. In contrast, the correlation between endorsement of SJBs and psychological well-being tends to be weaker and *negative* among Blacks and Latinos (O'Brien & Major, 2005; Rankin et al., 2009; cf. Jost & Thompson, 2000). Because SJBs are at odds with promoting and improving the status of the ingroup for women, we expect to find a negative but weak relationship between SJBs and entitlement among women.

CURRENT RESEARCH

The goal of the present research is to examine the relationship between SJBs and entitlement and how this relationship differs as a function of gender. Whereas a number of previous studies have found gender differences in entitlement such that men tend to have higher levels of entitlement than women, none of these studies have specifically examined the role that SJBs may play in creating and maintaining this difference (e.g., Callahan-Levy & Messe, 1979; Jost, 1997; Major et al., 1984). Specifically, we hypothesize that SJBs widen the gender gap by increasing entitlement among men and decreasing entitlement among women.

We report the results of two studies testing our hypotheses about the relationship between SJBs and personal entitlement among men and women.¹ Study 1 examines the relationship between individual differences in endorsement of SJBs and perceived personal entitlement to pay among men and women. By using a correlational approach, Study 1 allows us to examine the naturally occurring relationship between SJBs and entitlement as a function of gender. Study 2 uses a priming procedure to experimentally examine the impact of SJBs on pay entitlement. By using an experimental approach, Study 2 allows us to test the causal nature of the relationship between SJBs and entitlement.

¹A description of the results of a subset of the present data was included in a literature review on entitlement (O'Brien & Major, 2009).

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

Participants were 53 (25 men, 28 women) individuals approached on the University of California Santa Barbara campus. The sample included 25 Whites, 13 Latino/as, 12 participants of various other ethnicities, and three people who did not disclose their ethnicity. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 ($M = 20.7$, $SD = 1.6$).²

Procedure

Participants were approached on campus by an experimenter and asked to complete a short questionnaire. The questionnaire contained a short vignette, a measure of entitlement, a brief measure of SJBs, and demographic questions. Half of the participants received the vignette and entitlement measure followed by the measure of SJBs, whereas the other half of the participants received the SJB measure first, followed by the vignette and entitlement measure. Demographic questions always came last.

Materials

SJBs. Participants were asked to complete a nine-item measure of SJBs, adapted from items used by O'Brien and Major (2005). See the appendix for a copy of the items. Responses could range from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scale was reliable ($\alpha = .80$). The mean for SJBs was 2.62 ($SD = .93$). There were no differences between men and women on endorsement of SJBs, $|t| < 1$.

Vignette. Participants read the following paragraph:

Dr. Bailey, a professor at UCSB, has asked you to work for him for one month this summer. When Dr. Bailey hired you, he mentioned that he wanted you to help with data entry on a summer research project for between \$6.75-10.75 an hour. When the project was complete, Dr. Bailey met with you and thanked you for helping.

²There were an additional seven participants between the ages of 27 and 35 who were excluded from the analyses because they qualified as outliers on age (more than 1.5 box lengths above the interquartile range). Consistent with the notion that age may be another status indicator, this group of older participants ($M = 9.57$) scored higher in entitlement than the younger participants ($M = 8.63$), $t(58) = -1.89$, $p = .06$. Including these seven participants in the analyses did not alter the interpretation of the results.

Self-reported entitlement. Participants reported the minimum hourly pay they thought would be acceptable for the data entry job, ranging from \$6.75 to \$10.75. The mean for self-reported entitlement was \$8.63 ($SD = \1.23).

Demographics. Participants were asked to indicate their age, ethnicity, and gender.

Results

We used hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypothesis that SJBs would interact with gender to predict pay entitlement. SJBs (centered around zero; see Aiken & West, 1992) and gender were entered at Step 1, and the interaction between SJBs and gender was entered at Step 2. Step 1 was not significant, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p = .63$. However, as predicted, Step 2 was significant, $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $\beta = .49$, $p < .05$. See Figure 1. As predicted, simple slopes tests revealed a significant positive relationship between SJBs and entitlement among men, $\beta = .37$, $t(49) = 2.06$, $p < .05$. In contrast, the relationship between SJBs and entitlement was negative among women; although this relationship was not significant, $\beta = -.28$, $t(49) = -1.39$, $p = .17$.

The main effect of gender on pay entitlement was not significant, $\beta = .11$, $p = .44$. Given that past research often has observed sex differences in perceived pay entitlement, we examined whether sex was related to entitlement for individuals who were high in SJBs (at least 1 SD above the mean) versus low in SJBs (at least 1 SD below the mean). Among individuals who were high in SJBs (3.55 on the SJB scale), there was a significant effect of gender such that men were higher in entitlement than women, $\beta = .43$, $t(49) = 2.26$, $p < .05$. However, among participants who were low in SJBs (1.69 on the SJB scale), there were no gender differences in entitlement, $\beta = -.22$, $t(49) = -1.16$, $p = .25$.

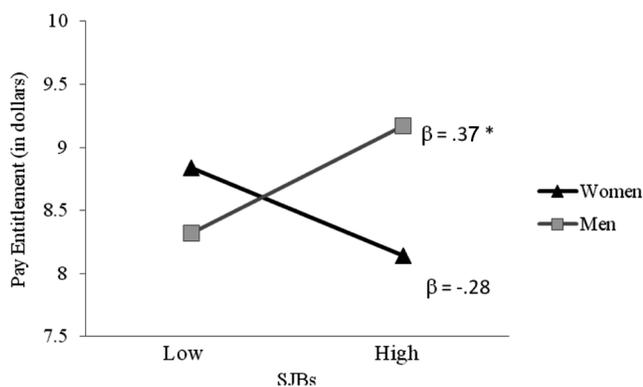


FIGURE 1 The relationship between system-justifying beliefs (SJBs) and entitlement as a function of participant gender. * $p < .05$.

Discussion

In Study 1, the relationship between SJBs and pay entitlement was different for men and women. Consistent with predictions, among men SJBs were associated with higher levels of pay entitlement. As expected, SJBs were associated with lower levels of pay entitlement among women, although the relationship did not reach statistical significance. This pattern of significant positive relationships between SJBs and outcomes among members of high-status groups and weaker, negative relationships between SJBs and outcomes among members of low-status groups has also been found by other researchers (e.g., Levin et al., 1998; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Rabinowitz, 1999; Rankin et al., 2009; Sidanius et al., 1994). The weaker pattern of relationships among members of low-status groups may be related to the conflict between system justification motives and group and ego justification motives that is present for low-status groups but not high-status groups.

Significant gender differences in entitlement only emerged among individuals who strongly endorsed SJBs. This finding is seemingly inconsistent with past research that showed more robust differences between men and women in pay entitlement (e.g., Jost, 1997; Major, 1994; Pelham & Hetts, 2001). It is possible that as women's status has increased and gender differences in pay have decreased over time, overall gender differences in entitlement have become smaller. On college campuses, female students now outnumber male students, and women may no longer perceive themselves as a low-status group.

Alternatively, the lack of gender differences in entitlement in the present study may be due to the fact that participants were asked to imagine how much they deserved to be paid for future work as opposed to completed work. Drawing upon cognitive dissonance theory, Blanton and colleagues (2001) argued that effort justification depresses entitlement among women in the case of work that has already been performed but that effort justification does not apply to future work. According to this logic, women realize that they cannot change the past and therefore they are more likely to accept and rationalize gender-based inequalities that have occurred in the past. However, because the future can theoretically be changed, there is less need to engage in effort justification. Consistent with this reasoning, Blanton and colleagues showed that gender differences in entitlement are greater for completed work than for future work. Accordingly, in Study 2, we assessed women's and men's perceived entitlement to pay for completed work in order to further explore the relationship between SJBs, gender, and entitlement.

In addition to examining perceived entitlement to pay for completed work as opposed to hypothetical work,

there were two other important reasons for carrying out a second study. First, Study 1 examined the naturally occurring correlation between endorsement of SJBs and entitlement. A major goal of Study 2 was to determine whether experimentally priming SJBs also impacts entitlement. If experimentally priming SJBs impacts entitlement, this would suggest that SJBs have a causal impact on entitlement. Second, we also wanted to include a measure of behavioral entitlement in which participants pay themselves actual money. This dependent measure has been used by past entitlement researchers (e.g., Callahan-Levy & Messe, 1979; Major et al., 1984), and so we wanted to determine whether SJBs would impact a behavioral measure of entitlement as well as a self-report measure of entitlement.

STUDY 2

We made three major changes to the design of Study 2. First, participants indicated their entitlement to pay after completing actual work instead of their entitlement to pay for imagined future work. Second, we tested the impact of SJBs on perceived pay entitlement by experimentally priming SJBs rather than measuring them as an individual difference variable. Third, we added a behavioral measure of entitlement in which participants paid themselves for their work.

All participants worked for 20 min. Subsequently, participants received either a neutral prime or an SJB prime. Finally, participants reported their pay entitlement and paid themselves for the work they had completed. Based on previous research (Major et al., 1984), we predicted that women would perform more work than men, report that they deserved lower pay for their work, and pay themselves less for their work. Furthermore, we predicted that gender differences in pay entitlement would be greater when SJBs were primed as compared to when participants received a neutral prime. For men, we predicted that the SJB prime would significantly *increase* entitlement relative to the neutral prime. In contrast, we predicted that for women, the SJB prime would *decrease* entitlement relative to the neutral prime. However, given findings of past research (O'Brien & Major, 2005; Rankin et al., 2009) and Study 1, we expected that the effect of the prime might be weaker for women than for men.

Method

Participants

Participants were 79 (28 men, 51 women) students from the University of California Santa Barbara and

Tulane University.³ Participants were recruited via the use of a small monetary incentive (\$8) and were paid upon their arrival.

Design and Procedure

The design was a 2 (gender: male or female) \times 2 (prime: SJB or neutral) between-subjects factorial. Participants were asked to complete two different tasks that allegedly measured cognitive perceptual ability, defined as the ability to focus on important information in the environment while screening out irrelevant information. Participants were then instructed to complete a circling task for 20 min (described next). After 20 min, participants were randomly assigned to complete either the SJB priming task or the neutral priming task. After participants finished the priming task they were instructed to give themselves bonus pay and complete a questionnaire. Participants were then fully debriefed.

Materials

Circling task. The circling task was designed to be tedious and repetitious. Participants were given an article on obscure Environmental Protection Agency regulations broken down into sections. Participants were instructed to go through each section and circle every *e* that they saw. The task was adapted from Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, and Tice (1998) because the task can be learned easily and quickly. When they had circled each *e* in the section, they were instructed to count them and write the total in the margin. Participants were given more work than they could possibly complete in the 20-min time limit. The most sections completed by any participant was 11. Within each section, accuracy was calculated by determining how closely participants' estimate matched the actual number of *e*'s in the section. An average accuracy score was calculated for each participant.

SJB prime. Participants received the same priming task used by McCoy and Major (2007). Participants unscrambled 20 sets of five words to form 20 four-word sentences. The SJB prime contained 15 sentences intended to invoke meritocratic beliefs, a powerful type of SJB prevalent in American society (Major et al., 2007). Sample sentences from the SJB prime include *Rich people deserve it* and *Persistence leads to success*.

³Eighty-nine participants were originally run through the experimental procedure. We removed two participants from the data set because they objected to study procedures out of principle (taking bonus pay—one of our dependent variables). Eight more participants were removed because they indicated suspicions as to the purpose of the experiment. The degrees of freedom vary slightly between different analyses due to missing data points.

The other five sentences were unrelated to SJBs. The neutral prime contained 20 sentences that were unrelated to meritocratic beliefs. Sample sentences from the neutral prime included *Social gatherings are fun* and *College goes by quickly*.

Behavioral entitlement. After participants completed the two tasks, the experimenter handed them an envelope containing instructions, four \$1 bills, and four quarters, and then left the room. The instructions were as follows:

The university requires that, whenever we use university funds to pay research participants, we pay participants up front for their participation in this study. That is why we gave you your \$8 payment when you arrived. However, we know these cognitive perceptual tasks are difficult and draining—especially the first task. So, we are offering people bonus pay for their work. Instead of coming out of university funds, this bonus pay comes from our laboratory's participant funds. You can take up to \$5 of bonus pay, the only requirement is that you take what you think is fair for the work you completed. Please pay yourself the money that you feel you deserve. Put the remainder in the envelope and then put it with the other envelopes in the box.

To enhance feelings of anonymity, participants were also instructed to leave the envelope with other envelopes they believed were from other participants. The amount of money participants took out of the envelope served as the behavioral measure of entitlement.

Self-reported entitlement. Participants indicated the hourly pay they would be entitled to receive for performing the type of work they had performed during the experiment. This served as a self-report measure of entitlement.

Results

Preliminary Results

Correlations among study variables. We first examined the correlations among all study variables (see

TABLE 1
Correlations Among Study 2 Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Work completed	—	.26*	-.16	-.08
2. Accuracy		—	-.09	.01
3. Self-report entitlement			—	.43**
4. Behavioral entitlement				—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 1). Amount of work completed was positively related to accuracy ($r = .26, p < .05$). The self-report measure of entitlement was related to the behavioral measure of entitlement ($r = .43, p < .05$). Work completed and accuracy were both unrelated to the measures of entitlement; all correlations were nonsignificant. Because work completed and accuracy were unrelated to the measures of entitlement, we did not include them as covariates in any of the analyses of entitlement.

Work completed. A 2 (gender) \times 2 (prime) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on how many sections participants completed in the circling task revealed a main effect of gender, $F(1, 78) = 5.45, p < .05, d = .56$. Consistent with Major et al. (1984), women ($M = 7.80, SD = 2.24$) completed significantly more work (sections) on average than did men ($M = 6.36, SD = 2.84$). Because the priming manipulation was introduced after participants completed the circling task, we did not expect the prime to affect work completed. Both the main effect of prime and the prime by gender interaction effect were nonsignificant ($F_s < 1$).

Accuracy. A 2 (gender) \times 2 (prime) ANOVA on participants' accuracy showed no effects, all $F_s < 1$. Thus, although female participants were faster in completing their work (i.e., completed more sections than male participants), they were not forfeiting accuracy to do so.

Hypothesis Testing

Self-reported entitlement. A 2 (gender) \times 2 (prime) ANOVA on participants' self-reported pay entitlement for completed work revealed a significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 70) = 11.91, p < .001, d = .75$. Men ($M = \$9.60, SD = \3.44) reported they deserved significantly higher hourly rates than did women ($M = \$7.11, SD = \3.24). This main effect was qualified by the

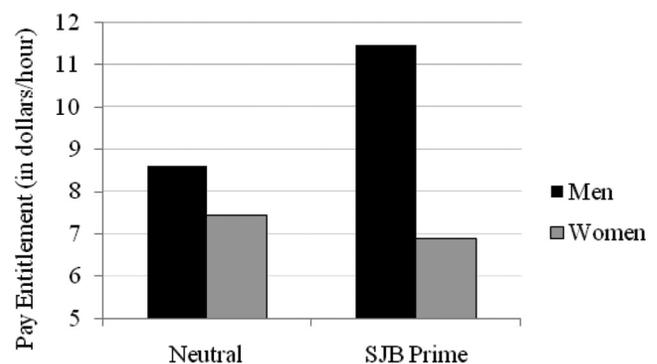


FIGURE 2 The effects of a system-justifying belief (SJB) prime on entitlement as a function of participant gender.

expected interaction with the prime, $F(1, 70) = 4.23$, $p < .05$. See Figure 2. As predicted, exposure to the SJB prime significantly increased men's sense of entitlement ($M = \$11.47$, $SD = \$3.51$) relative to exposure to a neutral prime ($M = \$8.61$, $SD = \$3.06$), $F(1, 67) = 4.58$, $p < .05$, $d = .87$. In contrast, women exposed to a SJB prime ($M = \$6.89$, $SD = \$2.99$) felt they deserved slightly less pay than women exposed to a neutral prime ($M = \$7.44$, $SD = \$3.65$), although this effect was not significant, $F < 1$, $d = .16$.

Looked at another way, in the SJB prime condition, men felt they deserved a significantly higher hourly rate compared to women, $F(1, 67) = 13.43$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.40$. Men in the control condition also reported deserving a higher hourly rate compared to women in the control condition; however, this difference was not statistically significant, $F = 1.12$, $p = .29$, $d = .35$.

Behavioral entitlement. A 2 (gender) \times 2 (prime) ANOVA on how much bonus pay participants' gave themselves revealed only a main effect of gender, $F(1, 78) = 6.40$, $p < .05$, $d = .63$. Consistent with Major et al. (1984), male participants ($M = \$3.79$, $SD = \$1.56$) gave themselves significantly more bonus pay than female participants gave themselves ($M = \$2.73$, $SD = \$1.82$). The predicted interaction between gender and prime on bonus pay was not significant, $F = 1.90$.

Discussion

As predicted, men reported they deserved higher pay for their completed work than did women, and exposure to a SJB prime significantly increased the magnitude of this gender difference. The influence of the SJB prime on gender differences in pay entitlement was primarily due to a significant increase in entitlement among men primed with SJBs compared to men shown a neutral prime. In contrast, the decrease in entitlement among women primed with SJBs compared to women in the control condition was small and nonsignificant. This particular pattern of results—a stronger effect of SJBs on the high-status group as compared to the low-status group is consistent with research on the ideological asymmetry effect and with Study 1 (e.g., Levin et al., 1998; Rabinowitz, 1999; Sidanius et al., 1994).

Gender differences in behavioral entitlement revealed a different pattern. Men paid themselves a bigger bonus than women regardless of which prime they were exposed to. This gender difference in pay is remarkable in light of the fact that women actually performed more work than men. Thus, compared to men, women paid themselves less money for performing more work with equal accuracy. Activation of SJBs did not enhance, or diminish, this effect.

The behavioral and self-report measures of entitlement were moderately correlated (see also Pelham & Hetts, 2001). Researchers have generally assumed that the same processes affect both behavioral and self-reported entitlement. Although social psychologists often view unobtrusive and behavioral measures as superior to self-report measures (e.g., Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980; Greenwald et al., 2002), in this particular case, self-reports may be a purer measure of entitlement. In contrast to self-reported entitlement, participants' behavioral entitlement may have been affected by factors such as how much they needed or desired the money. If more factors affect the behavioral measure of entitlement as compared to the self-report measure, then the behavioral measure may be subject to more sources of error. These increased sources of error may explain why the SJB prime did not impact the behavioral measure. Future research should delve more deeply into the relationship between self-report and behavioral measures of entitlement and focus on which measure is more likely to predict real-world behavior such as salary negotiations.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We proposed that SJBs create and maintain gender differences in entitlement to pay by increasing men's feelings of entitlement and decreasing women's feelings of entitlement. In two studies we obtained qualified support for this hypothesis. Study 1 examined the correlation between individual differences in endorsement of SJBs and perceived entitlement to future pay. Study 2 experimentally manipulated the salience of SJBs and assessed the impact of this manipulation on perceived entitlement to pay for work already performed.

Both studies demonstrated that SJBs are associated with increased self-reported entitlement among men. Men who endorsed SJBs more strongly, or who were exposed to an SJB prime versus a control prime, felt entitled to higher levels of pay. In contrast to the robust effects of SJBs on men, the effect of endorsement or activation of SJBs on women's perceived entitlement was not significant in either study. The trends, however, were in the expected direction. In Study 1, greater endorsement of SJBs was associated with slightly lower levels of entitlement among women whereas in Study 2, activating SJBs led women to report slightly less entitlement to pay. The current findings are supportive of Pelham and Hetts's (2001) suggestion that gender differences in entitlement may be better understood in terms of men's elevated entitlement as compared to women's depressed entitlement.

At first glance, the lack of a strong effect of SJBs on entitlement among women across two studies is somewhat puzzling. However, the finding is consistent

with evidence that, compared to members of high-status groups, the effects of system justification on members of low-status groups are less consistent. In some studies, members of low-status groups are *more* likely to justify the social system as compared to members of high-status groups (e.g., Henry & Saul, 2006; Jost et al., 2003). In other studies, members of low-status groups are *less* likely to justify the social system than members of high-status groups (e.g., O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For members of low-status groups, system justification motives are in conflict with ego and group justification motives, which may create attitudinal ambivalence and instability (Jost & Burgess, 2000). These conflicting motives may explain why some other studies have also demonstrated weaker relationships between SJBs and outcomes among members of a low-status group as compared to members of a high-status group—a phenomenon that is frequently referred to as the ideological asymmetry effect (e.g., Levin et al., 1998; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Rabinowitz, 1999; Rankin et al., 2009; Sidanius et al., 1994).

A second possible explanation for the weaker impact of SJBs among women is that SJBs can have dual meanings (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009; Levy, West, Ramirez, & Karafantis, 2006). The surface meaning of SJBs such as the belief in a meritocracy is that people who are talented and work hard will get ahead. However, these beliefs can also be used to justify existing inequalities by implying that those who do not get ahead lack merit. For high-status groups such as men, both meanings of SJBs are positive—these beliefs justify their high status and promise reward for their hard work and effort. For low-status groups such as women, however, the dual meanings of SJBs are not unambiguously positive. SJBs suggest that women are low status because they lack merit but that they may be able to achieve higher status in the future by working harder. The results of Study 2 in particular suggest that women may be taking these beliefs to heart as they worked harder than the men in the study. For hardworking women, the negative implications of SJBs for entitlement due to their low status may be counteracted by the positive implications of SJBs for entitlement due to their hard work.

The present studies build upon past research by demonstrating that gender differences in self-reported entitlement vary across situations (e.g., Hogue & Yoder, 2003; Pelham & Hetts, 2001). For example, Pelham and Hetts (2001) showed that gender differences in entitlement emerged on difficult, but not easy, tasks. Increasing women's perceptions of their own status can also eliminate gender differences in entitlement (Hogue & Yoder, 2003). In the present studies, gender differences in self-reported entitlement were not significant among participants who rejected SJBs (Study 1) or among participants exposed to a neutral prime

(Study 2). The present findings suggest that weakening beliefs that justify the system may help to eliminate gender differences in self-reported entitlement to pay.

Unfortunately, the picture is less hopeful when one considers the gender differences on the behavioral measurement of entitlement in Study 2. Men took bigger bonuses than women, regardless of which prime they were exposed to and in spite of the fact that they had performed less work than women. The lack of effect of prime on self pay may be due to ceiling effects in self-pay. We provided participants with \$5, and men took, on average, nearly \$4. The SJB prime may have had more impact on men's self-pay had we provided participants with a larger sum of money from which to draw.

What role do gender differences in expectations play in the creation of gender differences in entitlement? Whereas entitlement refers to a person's beliefs about what he or she ought to be paid, expectations refer to a person's beliefs about what he or she will be paid. Social comparisons have a strong influence on expectations about what one is likely to be paid for performing work (Bylsma & Major, 1992; Major, 1994; Major & Testa, 1989). Whereas men tend to have a default tendency to seek out social comparison information from other men, women have a default tendency to seek out social comparison information from other women (Major & Testa, 1989). Because there is a gender gap in pay between men and women, the tendency to seek out same-sex social comparison information leads to a gender difference in expectations about pay. In fact, when social comparison information is manipulated so that men and women expect to be paid the same amount of money, they experience similar levels of entitlement (Bylsma & Major, 1992; Major et al., 1984).

SJBs encourage people to think that the social system is fair and just. SJBs should therefore strengthen the relationship between what people *expect* to be paid and what people feel they are *entitled* to be paid. That is, people should come to believe that what they *expect* to be paid is what they *ought* to be paid. This suggests that in cases where gender inequality exists and men and women have different expectations, SJBs should encourage men and women to think these gender differences are fair and deserved. However, in cases where gender equality exists and men and women have similar expectations, SJBs should encourage men and women to think gender equality is fair and deserved. Although the present study was unable to test these ideas, this will be an important avenue for future research.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research suggests that SJBs may perpetuate gender differences in entitlement by increasing men's

sense of entitlement relative to women's. Men's elevated sense of entitlement may lead them to negotiate for higher salaries (Gerhart & Rynes, 1991) and to feel less satisfied with their pay, compared to women. Elevated feelings of entitlement may also blind men to seeing when they are overbenefited, allow them to justify their privileged position, and lead them to regard efforts to "level the playing field" as unjust. In contrast, a depressed sense of entitlement among women may prevent them from seeing when they are targets of discrimination (Major et al., 2002) and reduce the likelihood that they will engage in collective action to challenge the distribution of social goods (Crosby, 1982; Hafer & Olson, 1989). In this way, gender differences in feelings of personal entitlement may serve to perpetuate and maintain gender inequality.

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APPENDIX

Measure of System Justifying Beliefs, Study 1

1. I feel that people earn the punishments and rewards they get.
2. I feel that people treat each other with the respect that they deserve.
3. Differences in status between groups in America are fair.
4. Individual members of certain groups are often unable to advance in American society. (R)
5. I feel that people get what they are entitled to have.
6. Differences in status between groups in American society are the result of injustice. (R)
7. I feel that people get what they deserve.
8. America is an open society where all individuals can achieve higher status.
9. Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really only have themselves to blame.

Note. A parenthetical R indicates reverse-coded items.