

Inequality, Discrimination, and the Power of the Status Quo: Direct Evidence for a Motivation to See the Way Things Are as the Way They Should Be

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How powerful is the status quo in determining people's social ideals? The authors propose (a) that people engage in *injunctification*, that is, a motivated tendency to construe the current status quo as the most desirable and reasonable state of affairs (i.e., as the most representative of how things should be); (b) that this tendency is driven, at least in part, by people's desire to justify their sociopolitical systems; and (c) that injunctification has profound implications for the maintenance of inequality and societal change. Four studies, across a variety of domains, provided supportive evidence. When the motivation to justify the sociopolitical system was experimentally heightened, participants injunctified extant (a) political power (Study 1), (b) public funding policies (Study 2), and (c) unequal gender demographics in the political and business spheres (Studies 3 and 4, respectively). It was also demonstrated that this motivated phenomenon increased derogation of those who act counter to the status quo (Study 4). Theoretical implications for system justification theory, stereotype formation, affirmative action, and the maintenance of inequality are discussed.

Keywords: inequality, discrimination, system justification, naturalistic fallacy, affirmative action

Consider the following: In 2003, women represented 15.7% of the corporate officers in the United States' 500 largest companies and 1.1% of the Fortune 1000 chief executive officers (CEOs; Catalyst 2001 Census of Woman Board Directors of Fortune 1000 Companies). In Canada, the situation is only marginally better, with women significantly underrepresented in the highest paid positions of the corporate sector and upper management (Statistics Canada, 2006).

These demographic factors—that is, the way things are—clearly present women with many objective obstacles to advancement, such as a lack of sufficient role models, a sense of exclusion from senior colleagues, and exclusion from informal networks. What may be equally troublesome, however, are the consequences these types of underrepresentations may have on perceptions of what the ideal social structure should look like.

Work on anticipatory rationalizations has demonstrated that as potential changes to the system are thought to be more likely, they are judged as more desirable (Kay, Jimenez, & Jost, 2002; Wilson,

Wheatley, Kurtz, Dunn, & Gilbert, 2004), and system justification theory explicitly argues that people are motivated to perceive existing social arrangements as just and legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008). It is reasonable to predict, then, that people may be motivated to view the status quo, even if unfair, as the most desirable state of affairs—that is, as most fair, reasonable, and generally representative of the way things should be. We term such a tendency *injunctification*.

If such a bias exists—and applies in contexts of social inequality and public policy—the implications for intergroup relations, policy support, and the general redress of social problems are significant indeed. Although Canada, for instance, represents one of the world's more equitable societies, large economic disparities between the majority (i.e., male Caucasians) and many minority groups (and women, as well) persist. For every dollar that men earn, women earn 70 cents (Canadian Labour Congress, 2008). Even when statistically controlling for important variables that could account for this difference, such as length of employment and education, inequality remains (Lips, 2003). The situation for visible minorities is similarly perturbing: They continue to be underrepresented in high-level positions (Black & Hicks, 2006; Klie, 2007), and despite the fact that certain groups of visible minorities are more likely than Caucasians to hold university degrees, unemployment rates for visible minorities are double that of Caucasians. To lessen this discrimination or at the very least its impact, citizens need to both recognize that it exists and be willing to support policies aimed at redress; a motivated process of the type outlined here, however, would reduce the likelihood of either occurring. Thus, to gain equality in society, disadvantaged groups will have to do more than simply overcome the obstacles inherent

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in how the current social system is structured; they will also have to alter how people think it should be structured. However, does such a motivated bias actually exist?

To this end, there were three primary goals of the research presented here: (a) to investigate the extent to which such a tendency—that is, to view what is as what ought to or should be—exists in contexts of public policy and inequality, (b) to investigate the extent to which this bias results from the system justification motive, and (c) to demonstrate the downstream consequences of such a bias for intergroup relations and the maintenance of inequality.

A Motivation to Justify the Status Quo: The Nature of Past Evidence

According to system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), people are motivated to defend and legitimize the systems in which they operate—that is, the rules and sociopolitical institutions within which people function (also see Kay et al., 2008). Such a tendency, it has been suggested, is an adaptive natural psychological response instigated to reduce sources of threat and anxiety (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Acknowledging that one is forced to conform to the rules, norms, and conventions of a system that is illegitimate, unfair, and undesirable is likely to provoke considerable anxiety and threat (Kay et al., 2008; Laurin, Kay, & Moscovitch, 2008); thus, when little can be done to change this reality, people will likely be motivated to justify their system in an attempt to view it in a more legitimate, fair, and desirable light.

The general tenet of system justification theory, therefore, is relatively straightforward: People possess a motivation to defend their social systems. The evidence supporting the theory, however, is not as direct. Although an impressive amount of empirical support has been garnered over the past decade, most (if not all) has relied on indirect tests of the system justification motive, offering demonstrations that imply, rather than directly test, its existence. For instance, previous research primarily examined the existence of system-legitimizing stereotypes—and their responsiveness to manipulations and consequences of activation—to infer the existence of a general need to view what is (within one's system) as what should be. Past research has found that (a) people's endorsement of stereotypes legitimizes differences in group status (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 2001; Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002), (b) cognitive activation of system-justifying stereotypes leads people to view the status quo as more legitimate and fair (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay, Czaplinski, & Jost, 2008; Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay et al., 2007), and (c) increasing people's motivation to justify their system leads them to more strongly endorse system-justifying stereotypes (see Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Lau, Kay, & Spencer, 2008).

Although this burgeoning program of research has provided compelling evidence for a link between stereotyping and system maintenance, which implies a motivation to justify and rationalize the social system, there has been no direct evidence of a bias to transform views of what currently is happening in one's system to judgments of what should be happening in one's system—even though such a prediction may very well represent the most basic test of the theory. Given its relevance for the empirical grounding of system justification theory, the fact that such evidence is missing is very noteworthy.

Although research within the domain of system justification theory has been mostly indirect, relying on phenomena of stereotyping to infer the existence of a system justification motive, there is research within the broad field of judgment and decision making that has explicitly assessed the existence of a general tendency to prefer the current status quo to any alternative—a *status quo bias* (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). Loss aversion (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Thaler, 1980), endowment effects (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1991), regret avoidance (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982), sunk costs (Bornstein & Chapman, 1995), and people's general evolutionary need to conserve energy (Anderson, 2003; Thaler, 1980) have been cited as underlying drivers of status quo bias effects (for a complete review of cognitive effects underlying the status quo bias, see Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). This research, however, has not focused on demonstrating the motivational component to such a bias; in fact, much of it has argued, either implicitly or explicitly, for a purely cognitive explanation.

We do not dispute the important role that cognitive processes may play in generating past status quo bias effects. In fact, in contexts that have little to do with meaningful aspects of one's system (see Kay et al., 2002), to the extent that the status quo bias exists, it may be entirely driven by cognitive factors. Indeed, much of the past research investigating the status quo bias was performed within the contexts of behavioral economic paradigms. However, in contexts that people see as relevant to the legitimacy and justifiability of their system, if people do in fact show a tendency to view the current status quo as the most desirable state of affairs, we propose this process will be driven (at least in part) by a motivational mechanism.

Assessing the Motivational Account

In the present research, therefore, our goal was not to merely present direct evidence for the tendency to injunctify the status quo in contexts of public policy and social inequality but to demonstrate the role of motivation in producing this phenomenon. Given that the system justification motive is assumed to help people cope with the existential and epistemic threats of being more or less forced to operate within a system that they have little control over, it makes sense that certain conditions—in particular, those conditions most likely to exacerbate the potential threat—would be more likely than others to activate this motivation. Thus, to assess the role of the system justification motive in producing the effects in which we are interested, each study presented included a manipulation of the strength of the system justification motive. Namely, across the four studies we present, we employed three manipulations of the system justification motive. These include manipulations of (a) system dependence, (b) system inescapability, and (c) system threat or affirmation.

System Dependence

The system justification motive is thought to result, in large part, from attempts to psychologically protect the self from beliefs that something that has considerable control over one's welfare and outcomes is illegitimate and unfair. Thus, to the extent that people feel increasingly dependent on a given system (i.e., the more it is presumed to influence the social and economic outcomes of people's life), the more they should be motivated to defend and justify

it. Accordingly, manipulations that increase feelings that one's outcomes are dependent on a particular system—feelings of system dependence—should increase the defense of those specific systems (Kay & Zanna, 2009). Importantly, as is demonstrated in the pretest data accompanying Study 3, such manipulations increase feelings of system dependence without instigating increased group-level identification.

System Inescapability

Leaving or changing a social system—whether it is one's country, religion, family, university, or place of employment—is usually not considered a feasible option. This is likely a reason why systems are so frequently justified and rationalized (Laurin, Kay, Gaucher, & Shepherd, 2009). When people acknowledge that the outcomes in their lives are dependent on a system's rules and they believe little can be done to change this, the choice is often to rationalize or justify such arrangements (cf. Festinger, 1957). All else being equal, then, those systems perceived as relatively inescapable are most likely to be defended by their constituents. Manipulations that increase perceptions of the relative difficulty with which people can exit a given overarching system, therefore, should increase the system justification motive.¹ Several studies have demonstrated that manipulations of the perceived difficulty of leaving a system lead to increased system defense (namely, the tendency to attribute economic disparities between groups as due to innate, natural differences rather than discrimination; Laurin et al., 2009). Importantly, it has also been shown that system inescapability manipulations (such as the one used here, in Study 1, which manipulates beliefs regarding the difficulty of emigrating from one's home country) increase the desire to legitimize the social system (in this case, one's federal government) but do not affect identification with it (Laurin et al., 2009).

System Threat

Just as self-threat manipulations increase the proclivity to engage in self-defensive processes (e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983), threatening the system increases the penchant to engage in processes of system justification (see Hafer, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermami, & Mosso, 2005; Kay et al., 2005). This prediction is consistent with recent demonstrations that blocking pursuit of a particular goal results in increased efforts to reach it (Atkinson & Birch, 1970; Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Troetschel, 2001) and research demonstrating that meeting a desired end state greatly reduces those motivated processes generally used to achieve that end state (e.g., Forster, Liberman, & Higgins, 2005). Thus, to the extent that a given psychological phenomenon originates from the motive to defend a particular social system, a threat to the legitimacy of that system should increase the need to engage in this phenomenon.

In the laboratory, manipulations of system threat generally involve exposing participants to (fictitious) news articles describing someone's opinion regarding the sociopolitical climate of a particular system (see Jost et al., 2005; Kay et al., 2005; Lau, Kay, & Spencer, 2008). As an example, Kay et al. (2005) found that system-threat manipulations lead individuals to engage in greater stereotyping behavior to maintain system-justifying beliefs.

Whereas threatening the system is one way to heighten people's motivation to engage in justification, affirming the system is a technique that can be used to quell people's desire to justify the system (see Kay et al., 2005). The system-threat and affirmation manipulations used in previous research (e.g., Kay et al., 2005) and employed here (in Study 4) have been shown to affect perceptions of system justification, but not feelings of group or self-esteem (see Kay et al., 2005).

In each of the studies reported, one of the aforementioned manipulations—system dependence, system inescapability, or system threat/affirmation—was employed. To the extent a replicable pattern of results emerged across the four studies, this variety of manipulations of the system justification motive would allow us to be more confident that the observed pattern was due to the motive to defend one's system, as opposed to the idiosyncrasies of one type of manipulation.

The Present Research

We present four experiments that tested for the existence of injunctification. In each study, we expected people to construe the status quo (what currently is) as the most desirable state of affairs (what should or ought to be) and that people would be most likely to engage in this process when their motivation to justify their sociopolitical system was highest. We tested the proposed driver of this effect by experimentally varying people's motivation to justify their system through the employment of system relevance (Study 2), dependency (Studies 2 and 3), inescapability (Studies 1 and 2), and threat (Study 4) or affirmation (Study 1) manipulations.

Furthermore, to highlight the impact of injunctification for issues of social psychological and societal relevance and to stress the breadth of this effect, we examined injunctification in the context of political structure (Study 1), public policy (Study 2), and gender inequality (Studies 3 and 4). Last, Study 4 illuminated an important consequence of injunctification—namely, the derogation of people who act counter to the injunctified status quo.

Although the domains in which we tested for injunctification vary, we used a similar paradigm across all four studies. In each study, we first manipulated people's motivation to justify their sociopolitical system using one or more of the system justification motive manipulations described above. Next, we presented people with information about the status quo. Finally, we assessed the extent to which they injunctified this apparent status quo. Throughout the studies, injunctification was assessed by the extent to which people thought that the normative status quo—that is, the one we made them believe reflected reality—was most desirable, fair, legitimate, and/or representative of the way things ought to or should be.

Study 1: Injunctification of Political Power

Study 1 sought to demonstrate the existence of injunctification in the political domain. To test this, we presented participants with

¹ More specifically we are referring to manipulations designed to make people think that they cannot easily leave from a controlling, overarching system, not one's social group. This is an important distinction from similar manipulations used in social identity research (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

information about the political status quo. Specifically, participants read data describing the fact that an overwhelming majority of the governmental officials in the Canadian House of Commons are wealthy (i.e., are part of the 90th percentile in national income). Next, participants were asked the extent to which they thought that the House of Commons should be made up exclusively of the wealthy. To test our motivational account of injunctification, we employed two manipulations—system escapability and system affirmation—that were designed to either heighten or lessen people’s desire to justify the system.

We expected participants to injunctify the political status quo—that is, deem the wealthy’s monopoly over political power as representative of the way it should be—more when the motive to justify their sociopolitical system was heightened (in this case, when participants were led to believe their system was highly inescapable). Furthermore, if injunctification was truly a result of the motive to defend one’s system, then a system affirmation should have eliminated system-defensive behavior—that is, eliminated the effect of the inescapability manipulation on injunctification tendencies. This would be consistent with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of self-affirmation at reducing self-defensive behavior (Sherman & Cohen, 2002).

Method

Participants. Thirty-six participants (16 men and 20 women; M age = 23 years, SD = 8.75) were recruited from undergraduate psychology courses at the University of Waterloo (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada) and participated in exchange for either a candy bar or course credit.

Procedure and materials. Participants volunteered for an on-line study ostensibly on attitudes toward world issues. First, they were asked to read one of two paragraphs describing research findings relevant to world issues. Half of the participants read a passage describing the legitimacy of the Canadian system—this served as the system affirmation manipulation. The other half read a neutral control passage. Excerpts from the affirmation passage include:

In the past, Canadian society has been held up across the world as an example to follow. For instance, our system of free education and healthcare was touted as the best and most accessible in the world The quality of Canadian school and hospital systems has been constant or improved in each of the past few decades

Participants in the no-affirmation (control) condition instead read a neutral passage describing the improving survival rates of an endangered species of frog. After filler questions consistent with the ostensible purpose of the experiment, participants read another set of research findings that constituted our manipulation of system inescapability. This manipulation was taken directly from Laurin et al. (2009). Participants read the following passage. Where the conditions differed, text for the low-inescapability condition is in brackets.

Since the 1950s, a group at Harvard University, in Cambridge, has been using current political and international trends to predict patterns of population movements. Recent reports by this group of experts have indicated that people who wish to move out of Canada will find it increasingly difficult [easy] to do so, in the coming years. Thus, even if the number of Canadians wishing to leave and settle elsewhere remains

constant, we should expect a significant slow-down [increase] over the next few years in terms of those who actually are able to do so.

Next, participants were told that we would evaluate their attitudes toward research findings specific to Canada. Participants read a paragraph stating that current political power in Canada rests in the hands of the wealthy. Specifically, participants read the following passage:

In Canada there has been an increase in the demand for government accountability. Of particular interest to the public is the governmental body, the House of Commons. The House of Commons consists of members appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Chancellor. Formally a committee of the Privy Council, the House of Commons holds a lot of power and is responsible for both the administration of the Government and the establishment of its policy. Recently, the government watch dog group, Informed, investigated the composition of the Canadian House of Commons. They found that 92% of the Canadian House of Commons was made up of members whose families were from the highest income bracket in Canada

Participants then rated the extent to which they thought that the makeup of the House of Commons should be the way it currently is. This served as the dependent measure for this study. Specifically, participants were asked to place an x on one of eight lines; the leftmost line was labeled “the House *should be* made up exclusively of people with average income,” and the rightmost line was labeled “the House should be made up exclusively of wealthy people.” Scores were assigned as follows: 1 for placing an x on the leftmost line, 2 for placing it on the line immediately to the right of the leftmost line, and so on up until 8 for placing an x on the rightmost line. Higher numbers, therefore, indicated increased injunctification (i.e., stronger beliefs that the demographics of the House of Commons should be primarily composed of the wealthy).

Results

We conducted a 2 (affirmation vs. control) \times 2 (inescapability: high vs. low) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) on participants’ injunctification scores. As predicted, the interaction between these two factors was significant, $F(1, 32) = 5.42$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$ (see Figure 1). In the no-affirmation (control) condition, participants were more likely to injunctify the status quo when they were led to believe that it was difficult to escape their system ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.06$) than when they were led to believe that it was easy ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 32) = 5.73$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. When the system had just been affirmed, however,

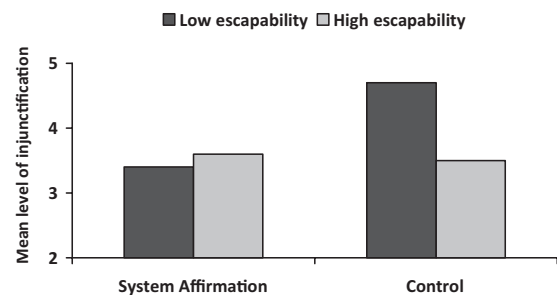


Figure 1. Mean level of injunctification as a function of system inescapability and system affirmation (Study 1).

participants showed the same degree of injunctification regardless of whether it was difficult ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.71$) or easy ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.16$), $F(1, 32) < 1$, *ns*, to escape. Post hoc tests (Fisher's least standard difference) confirmed that participants in the high-inescapability and no-affirmation condition injunctified the status quo more strongly than participants in each of the other three conditions (all $ps < .05$), which in turn did not differ from one another (all $ps > .36$).

Discussion

We found support for injunctification in the domain of political power. When people's motivation to justify their sociopolitical systems was heightened—under conditions of high system inescapability—they deemed the status quo (i.e., the fact that political power is largely held by a majority of wealthy politicians in the House of Commons) as significantly more desirable (power should be held by the wealthy). When the legitimacy of people's system had first been affirmed and the motivation was presumably satiated, this effect disappeared. Encouraged by these results, in Study 2, we tested for the existence of injunctification in another domain highly relevant to the functioning of one's social system (public policy), employed a different manipulation of the system justification motive, and added additional dependent measures to assess potential downstream consequences of the injunctification process.

Study 2: Injunctification of Public Policy

The purpose of Study 2 was twofold. First, we wanted to examine injunctification in a different context—this time, public policy. Second, we sought to conceptually replicate the findings of Study 1—that is, to again demonstrate the role of the system justification motive in producing injunctification—but via a different experimental paradigm. We hypothesized that people would deem extant public policy to be the most desirable, fair, and reasonable policy, but only when the system justification motive was heightened. To test this, we employed a system dependency manipulation—in which we manipulated the extent to which one of two systems (i.e., either the participants' university or federal government) was described as controlling the participants—to activate the system justification motive and crossed this with a manipulation that varied the context in which a policy had been instituted (i.e., either the participants' university or federal government). Injunctification of the policy was then assessed. An interaction was expected, such that participants would engage in increased injunctification (i.e., deem the current meritocratic funding policy as the most desirable, fair, and reasonable funding policy) for the university policy when they had been made to feel dependent upon the university system and increased injunctification for the federal policy when they had been made to feel dependent upon the federal government.

Method

Participants. Fifty-five undergraduate participants were recruited from a public venue on campus.² All participants completed our survey booklet on site and received a chocolate bar for participating.

Procedure and materials. Students were recruited to participate in a study ostensibly on the attitudes of university students. First, participants were asked to read one of two paragraphs, framed as new research findings, which acted as our manipulation of system dependency—that is, our manipulation of the system justification motive (manipulation checks ensured these manipulations affected perceptions of system dependency in the predicted direction but did not affect self- or group esteem—these data are presented in detail in Study 3). In the university control condition, they read the following passage, emphasizing the extent to which the university they attended controlled important outcomes in their lives:

Many new students feel that the decision they made to attend their particular university was a very important one. In fact, recent surveys of university alumni report even at age 40 that their choice of university was one of the most impactful decisions of their life. Indeed, sociological studies comparing the outcomes of students and alumni of various universities show that there might be some truth to these perceptions. In particular, it seems that the university you attend has enormously broad effects on your life and wellbeing. In terms of financial wellbeing, for instance, the fees you pay and the job opportunities made available to you during and after graduation are all to a large extent under the control of your university. But even in terms of social and personal wellbeing, the university you attend has substantial impacts: the quality of your peers and professors, the extracurricular activities you have access to, the people you are likely to meet and befriend and even eventually settle down with—all these aspects of your life are ones that are, at least according to these studies, to some degree dependent on your university.

In the country dependency condition, participants read the following passage, emphasizing instead the extent to which their country they chose to live in impacted important outcomes in their lives:

Many young people feel that the decision they make in terms of where to live is a very important one. In fact, recent surveys report that even at age 40, people still consider that their choice to live where they do was one of the most impactful decisions of their life. Indeed, sociological studies comparing the outcomes of residents of various countries show that there might be some truth to these perceptions. In particular, it seems that the country you live in has enormously broad effects on your life and wellbeing. In terms of financial wellbeing, for instance, the taxes you pay, the job and investment opportunities made available to you and the general state of the economy are all to a large extent under the control of your country's government. But even in terms of social and personal wellbeing, the country you live in has substantial impacts: the quality of your social services (health and education), the leisure activities you have access to and time to pursue, even the likelihood that you will be happy with your eventual life-partner—all these aspects of your life are ones that are, at least according to these studies, to some degree dependent on the country you live in.

Next, participants were given the injunctification measure. For half of our participants, we measured injunctification of a countrywide public policy, and for the other half, we measured injunctification of the same policy but applied only to their university. In

² Due to an omission on the part of the researchers, demographics were not collected for this sample.

both cases, participants were told that the overarching system (country or university) distributed funds unequally to its various divisions (provinces or academic departments, respectively). Participants in the university context condition read the following passage:

The Office of Internal Finances is responsible for the funding of all of University of Waterloo's academic departments. Funding starts with the Foundation Grant, which gives every department a basic level of funding for each student registered in the department. This means that every department receives at least some form of funding from the university, however, additional funding is given to departments that exhibit a high caliber of education as measured by various indices of student achievement and performance. This means that some departments receive more funding than others.

Participants in the federal government context condition read a conceptually identical passage, but in the context of the federal government:

The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs is responsible for the federal funding of all of Canada's provinces. Funding starts with the Foundation Grant, which gives every province a basic level of funding for each citizen resident of that province. This means that every province receives at least some form of funding from the federal government, however, additional funding is given to provinces that exhibit high economic performance and effective administration of social services. This means that some provinces receive more funding than others.

Next, participants completed dependent measures assessing their injunctification of the funding policy. Participants were asked to place an x on one of eight lines to represent how they felt funding to the departments (or provinces) should be distributed. The leftmost line was labeled "every department [province] should receive exactly the same funding," and the rightmost line was labeled "some departments [provinces] should get more funding than others." Scores were assigned as follows: 1 for placing an x on the leftmost line, 2 for placing it on the line immediately to the right of the leftmost line, and so on up until 8 for placing an x on the rightmost line. Participants then answered four questions on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*definitely*): "How fair is this distribution of funding that you read about?", "Do you think it is reasonable to allot departments [provinces] equal funding?", "Do you think it is reasonable to allot some more funding than others?", and "How desirable is the current distribution of funding to UW academic departments [Canadian provinces]?" Responses on the second item were reverse-scored, so that higher scores on all items represented more injunctification. Scores on all five items were combined into a single index of injunctification by first standardizing the scores (because the first item was scored out of 8 while the others were scored out of 7) and then averaging them ($\alpha = .78$).

Results

We conducted a 2 (system dependency: university vs. federal government) \times 2 (context of policy: university funding policy vs. federal government funding policy) between-subjects ANOVA. As predicted, the interaction between the two factors was highly significant, $F(1, 51) = 8.78, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .15$ (see Figure 2). As predicted when participants had just been reminded of how dependent they were on their country, they were more likely to injunctify the funding policy of their federal government ($M = 0.12, SD =$

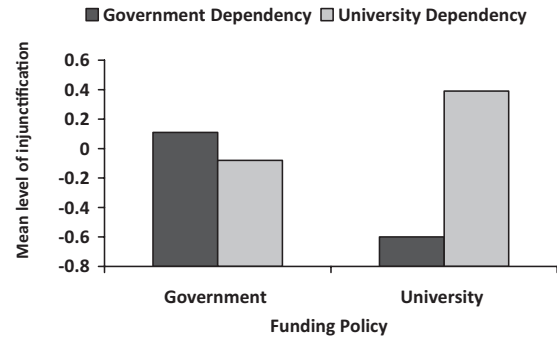


Figure 2. Mean level of injunctification as a function of system dependency and context of policy (Study 2).

0.55) than their university ($M = -0.58, SD = 1.05, F(1, 51) = 5.86, p < .02, \eta_p^2 = .16$). In contrast, when participants had just been reminded of how dependent they were on their university, they were more likely to injunctify the funding policy of their university ($M = 0.41, SD = 0.58$) than of their country ($M = -0.07, SD = 0.71$), although this difference was only marginally significant, $F(1, 51) = 3.03, p < .09, \eta_p^2 = .13$. In other words, people were most likely to injunctify the status quo of the system they were most motivated to justify.³

Discussion

Study 2 provided support for injunctification in the domain of public policy. When the system justification motive was experimentally heightened, participants injunctified the policy they were led to believe was currently in place. This finding is noteworthy as it not only provides further evidence for our hypothesis but holds important implications for public policy support and change. In addition, these data highlight the precision of these effects. When the system justification motive was activated via a dependency manipulation, participants did not injunctify all policies with which they were presented. Rather, the manipulation produced increased injunctification only for elements of the status quo that were directly related to the context in which the justification motive was activated.

Thus, across Studies 1 and 2, we have observed injunctification of both political structure and public policy, and we have seen that this effect is dependent on manipulations (e.g., system dependency, system escapability, and system affirmation) that increase or decrease the relative salience of system justification needs. In neither of these studies, however, did we manipulate the status quo

³ Because these scores represent a composite of scores that were standardized from different scales, they cannot be converted back into a single scale. However, in the interest of providing the reader with an idea of the absolute extent to which people justified the norm with which they were presented, we converted all scores to 7-point scales and averaged these scores across the five items. Using this composite as the dependent variable, results were virtually unchanged, and the means were as follows: country dependency, country policy: $M = 5.76, SD = 1.03$; country dependency, university policy: $M = 5.01, SD = 2.06$; university dependency, university policy: $M = 6.35, SD = 1.09$; university dependency, country policy: $M = 5.76, SD = 1.03$.

itself. Rather, in Study 1, the status quo was left constant, and the system justification motive was manipulated; in Study 2, the status quo was varied, but the dependent measure varied, too. Manipulations of the status quo, so long as the system justification motive is active, should also produce changes in what participants deem to be most desirable, fair, and reasonable. In Studies 1 and 2, we chose not to manipulate the status quo, so as to keep the demonstration relatively simple and straightforward and to isolate the effects of the system justification motive manipulations. In Studies 3 and 4, however, we manipulated both the system justification motive and the apparent status quo. In addition, for these final two studies, we shifted our focus to norms of gender inequality. In Study 3, we investigated injunctification in the context of extant gender inequality in politics, and in Study 4, we investigated injunctification in the context of extant gender inequality in upper management.

Study 3: Injunctification of Unequal Gender Arrangements (in Politics)

In Study 3, we tested the hypothesis that exposure to norms of gender inequality, when combined with conditions that heighten system justification needs, would lead to the injunctification of these norms. To this end, participants were exposed to a manipulation designed to enhance or decrease their system justification motive (a system dependency manipulation) and were then presented with one of two sets of normative information regarding the demographics of women in politics, suggesting there are either many or few women currently in this domain. (Although we did not actually vary the absolute number of women working in politics, we manipulated the extent to which the number we provided was perceived as large or small.) We then assessed the extent to which people injunctified the norm to which they were exposed. When people were first informed that there are many women in politics, we expected them to deem women's participation in the political realm as *more* representative of the way it should be than those who were informed that there are few women in politics. Importantly, we predicted the aforementioned effect to emerge when participants were motivated to justify their sociopolitical systems (i.e., under conditions of high system dependency) and to attenuate when their system justification motive was not activated.

Method

Participants. Sixty-four Canadian-born female undergraduates (M age = 19.5 years, SD = 2.45; 55% European/White, 27% Asian, 5% East Indian, 3% African, and 10% other) participated in lab in exchange for course credit (N = 29) or in the university's student center in exchange for a chocolate bar (N = 25). Two participants suspicious of the cover story were excluded.

Procedure and materials. Participants volunteered for a study ostensibly examining beliefs about Canadian politics. First, participants completed demographics information, including an item assessing political orientation (ranging from *very liberal* to *very conservative*) and a three-item measure of personal interest in politics (α = .90). Next, participants completed the system dependency manipulation, which was designed to heighten needs to defend the federal government. In the high-system-dependency

condition, participants read a bogus newspaper article, ostensibly from the *Toronto Star*, suggesting that recent sociological studies have suggested the federal government's policies substantially influence citizens' personal and career outcomes and that recent surveys show many Canadians believe the government's actions directly affect their quality of life (the wording of this article was virtually identical to the manipulation employed in Study 2). In the low-system-dependency condition, the article's wording was reversed to suggest that government decisions have little or no effect on one's life.

Next, participants were exposed to the status quo manipulation. Participants read a passage ostensibly from a Canadian government Website that described the role of Canadian Members of Parliament (MPs). Embedded in the passage was a graph showing the number of female MPs over time, with the most recent parliament containing approximately 20% women. In both conditions, the number of female MPs indicated by the graph was the same (20%), though the y-axis of the graph was manipulated to affect participants' perceptions of that number. In the condition meant to convince participants there were few female MPs, the graph's y-axis ranged from 0% to 100%, so that the line representing women appeared small. In the condition meant to convince participants there were many female MPs, the graph's y-axis ranged from 0% to 25%, so that lines in the graph appeared tall.⁴ Last, participants completed an eight-item measure of injunctive norms about women in politics (α = .92). Items included "To what extent do you believe that women should be in politics?", "To what extent do you believe that it is desirable to have women as members of Parliament?", and "To what extent do you believe that it is ideal to have women MPs?"

Results

Manipulation check. To ensure that this manipulation (and the one used in Study 2) did in fact affect perceptions of system dependency, but not other variables that could drive similar effects, such as social identification, we pretested our system dependency passages on a separate sample of Canadian-born undergraduate participants (N = 30). Participants read one of the two passages from this study or the high-country-dependency passage from Study 2. Participants then completed a two-item measure of system dependency ("The decisions and actions of the federal government affect me personally," and "Individual Canadians' success depends on the government making good decisions"), the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale (10 items, α = .80), and a scale of collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)

⁴ A manipulation check conducted on a separate group of participants (N = 40) confirmed that our manipulation altered people's perception of the number of female politicians in Canada. Participants read one of the two status quo manipulations and then were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement "There are many female Members of Parliament (MPs) in Canada" on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. A significant effect of the manipulation emerged such that participants who read the graph designed to convey that there are many female politicians (i.e., the one with the y-axis compressed) more strongly agreed with the statement that there are many female MPs in Canada than those who saw the graph conveying few female politicians (i.e., the graph with the y-axis left ranging from 0% to 100%), $F(1, 46) = 9.90, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .21$ (M_s = 2.90 and 4.05, SD_s = 0.97 and 1.32, respectively).

adapted to use their university (16 items, $\alpha = .82$) and Canada (16 items, $\alpha = .87$) as reference groups. We expected participants in the two high-system-dependency conditions to show more system dependency, compared to the low-system-dependency condition, but that condition would not affect any of the other measures.

For the system dependency measure, a one-way univariate ANOVA revealed a significant omnibus effect, $F(2, 27) = 3.56$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. Planned contrasts indicated that the high-system-dependency manipulations from this study ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.02$) and Study 2 ($M = 5.67$, $SD = .90$) did not lead to different reported levels of system dependency, $t(27) < 1$, and that, combined, participants in these conditions felt more system dependency than in the low-system-dependency condition ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(27) = 2.63$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. Importantly, none of the other three measures differed by condition (all F s < 1). This suggests that our manipulations had the desired effect on feelings of system dependency while leaving other constructs unaffected.

Primary results. We conducted a 2 (system dependency: high vs. low) \times 2 (status quo: few vs. many women in politics) between-subjects ANOVA. A marginal main effect of status quo emerged, $F(1, 58) = 3.69$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Participants in the few-women condition rated women's participation in the political domain as less ideal, desirable, and representative of the way it should be ($M = 6.85$, $SD = 1.05$) than those in the many-women condition ($M = 7.35$, $SD = 1.11$).

This main effect, however, was qualified by the predicted interaction, $F(1, 58) = 7.12$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$ (see Figure 3). In the high-system-dependency condition, when participants were led to believe that there were many women in politics, women's participation in politics was seen as more ideal, desirable, and representative of the way it should be ($M = 7.56$, $SD = 1.03$) than when participants were led to believe there were few women in politics ($M = 6.36$, $SD = 0.82$), $F(1, 29) = 12.80$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .31$. In contrast, in the low-system-dependency condition, there was no effect of the status quo manipulation (M s = 7.12 [many women] vs. 7.31 [few women]; $F < 1$). Controlling for political orientation and personal interest in politics increased the strength of these effects.

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with the injunctification hypothesis and with the general pattern of data observed in Studies

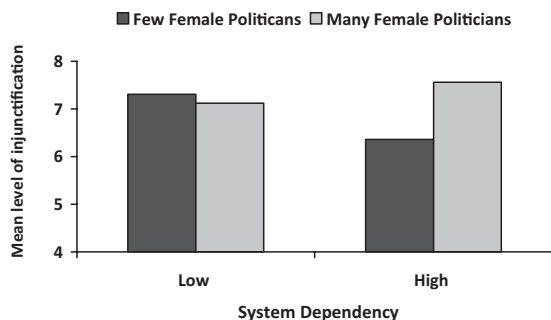


Figure 3. Mean level of injunctification as a function of system dependency and status quo of few versus many female politicians (Study 3). Higher scores indicate more support for female politicians.

1 and 2. When people were motivated to justify their sociopolitical system, they injunctified gender arrangements in whichever direction they had been led to believe reflected the status quo. Participants who perceived that there are few women in politics believed that women were less ideal and desirable as MPs, whereas those who perceived that there are many women in politics deemed women as relatively more desirable and ideal MPs. When system justification needs were not strengthened, the status quo manipulation did not influence people's judgments. As all of the participants in this study were women, this study provided a very stringent test of the injunctification hypothesis and one not easily explainable by social identity theory (in addition, as was demonstrated by the manipulation check data, the manipulation of system dependency exerted no discernible effect on feeling of personal or group identity).

In Study 4, we again tested for the injunctification of norms of inequality but, to ensure the effects of Study 3 were not due to something specific about our paradigm, did so via a different set of manipulations and dependent measures. In addition, given the evidence for injunctification already obtained in the previous three studies, in Study 4, we set out to investigate a very important potential consequence of the injunctification process. We suspected that once people injunctify a given aspect of the status quo, they will react negatively to somebody who acts counter to the way things should be. To illustrate, recall our example from the introduction regarding the lack of women in business. If people observe that there are few women CEOs and injunctify that status quo, it is possible they will also come to view female CEOs negatively—after all, female CEOs are deviating from what should be. In Study 4, therefore, beyond offering a conceptual replication of Study 3, we tested this very implication within the context of women aspiring to positions in the world of business.

Study 4: Injunctification of Unequal Gender Arrangements (in Business)

In Study 4, participants were presented with information depicting the status quo regarding the gender composition of CEOs in Canada's top Fortune 500 companies. Participants were presented with one of two sets of data describing the gender breakdown of males and females in these high-powered business positions. To maintain believability, in both conditions, men were made to appear more common in such positions. However, the relative gender disparity was made to look much more extreme in one condition as compared to the other. Before reading these data and under the guise of a memory task, half of the participants were randomly assigned to read a fictional newspaper article, which served as a system-threat manipulation (in which a foreign journalist described the social and economic downturn of Canada) to activate the system justification motive. Study 4, therefore, employed a 2 \times 2 between-subjects design, in which there were two levels of system threat (threat vs. no threat) and two levels of the status quo (high inequality vs. low inequality).

Two dependent measures were employed in this study. First, we assessed participants' injunctification of the gender status quo—that is, their judgments of whether women and men should be equally or unequally represented in upper management positions. Second, we also employed a subtler, more ecologically valid, and highly consequential dependent measure. At the end of the exper-

iment, participants were told that the experimenter (a woman) was a business student at a nearby university and that this project was part of her educational requirements (an aspect that fit nicely with our cover story, which was that the study was designed to collect information about business-related issues). Participants were asked to rate the performance of the female business experimenter and told that these ratings, which the participants were to place directly in a sealed envelope, would be mailed to her advisor and used as a basis for her grade.

We predicted an interaction between the threat and status quo manipulations would emerge for both dependent measures. In the high-threat condition, we expected participants to injunctify the status quo, deeming men as more desirable managers in general and the female business student they interacted with as less competent, following exposure to the manipulation portraying few compared to many women in top business positions. In the no-threat condition, the effect of the status quo manipulation on both dependent measures was expected to considerably lessen or disappear completely.

Method

Participants. Thirty-six students (M age = 20.00 years, SD = 1.80) participated in our study in exchange for course credit. All participants were Canadian-born females.

Procedure and materials. Participants were asked to come into the lab to fill out a questionnaire package ostensibly about the Canadian workplace. The package included two manipulations according to a 2×2 design (i.e., system-threat vignette vs. no vignette and our status quo manipulation) as well as our primary dependent measures (i.e., the injunctification items and ratings of the female experimenter). For those randomly assigned to the threat condition, the first page in the package was our system-threat manipulation. An article ostensibly published by a British newspaper after a British journalist's recent trip to Canada served as our system threat. Past research has shown this system-threat manipulation to be particularly effective at increasing the system justification motive (see Kay et al., 2005; Lau et al., 2008) while leaving self- and collective esteem unmoved. Participants in the no-threat condition read no article.

The next page in the package served as our manipulation of the status quo. Participants were exposed to one of two articles ostensibly written by Statistics Canada in which a pie chart displayed the gender disparity of CEOs in the top 300 companies as either very large (i.e., a 5:95 female to male ratio) or much less extreme (i.e., a 45:55 female to male ratio). As a manipulation check, participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the following statement on a scale of 1 = *not at all true* to 7 = *very true*: "Based on the information in the article, according to Stats Canada there are many female CEOs." Importantly, the experimenter was masked to condition. All of the materials given to participants contained a blank cover page that hid the manipulations beneath.

On the final page, three items were used to assess participants' injunctification of current gender composition in business. The items were "In general, men and women should have equal opportunities to obtain CEO positions," "In general, men and women should be given equal consideration when applying to obtain a CEO position," and "To what extent do you believe that a female

is desirable to have in a position as CEO?" All three items used a 7-point response format (for the first two items, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; for the third item, 1 = *not at all desirable*, 7 = *extremely desirable*). The three injunctification items were averaged to form a reliable composite (α = .77).

Last, after participants handed back their questionnaire packages to the experimenter, the experimenter told the participants that she was a business student from a nearby university conducting this research as part of her business requirements. Participants were further told that, to help her instructor evaluate her performance, it would be appreciated if they would fill out an evaluation form regarding her performance, which would be mailed directly to her advisor and which the experimenter would never see herself. On the experimenter evaluation form, participants were asked, "Overall, how well do you feel that your experimenter ran the study?" on a scale of 1 = *not at all well* to 7 = *extremely well*, "How likeable did you perceive your experimenter to be?" on a scale of 1 = *not at all likeable* to 7 = *extremely likable*, "How professional did you perceive your experimenter to be?" on a scale of 1 = *not at all professional* to 7 = *extremely professional*, and "How competent do you feel your experimenter was?" on a scale of 1 = *not at all competent* to 7 = *extremely competent*. These four items were averaged to form a reliable overall rating of experimenter composite (α = .85). Participants were instructed to put their completed forms into the envelope and seal it.

Once finished, participants were probed for awareness or suspicion of our hypotheses and any presumed relation between our independent and dependent variables, which none reported. Finally, they were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation check. A manipulation check verified that participants who read that only a small discrepancy in the number of female and male CEOs existed (i.e., the many-women-CEOs condition) were more likely to agree with the statement that "there are many female CEOs" than participants who read that a very large discrepancy in the number of female and male CEOs existed (i.e., the few-women-CEOs condition), $F(1, 32) = 47.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .60$ (M s = 5.56 and 2.06, SD s = 1.25 and 1.21, respectively).⁵

Injunctification items. A two-way univariate ANOVA was conducted with the threat (two levels: threat vs. no threat) and the status quo manipulations (two levels: few women CEOs vs. many women CEOs) entered as fixed factors. A main effect of the status quo condition emerged, such that participants in the few-women-CEOs condition were less likely to say that women should be in business than participants in the many-women-CEOs condition, $F(1, 32) = 6.80, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .18$ (M s = 5.96 and 6.70, SD s = 1.21 and 0.44, respectively). The interaction between the threat and status quo variables did not reach significance, $F(1, 32) = 1.92, p = .175, \eta_p^2 = .06$.

Follow-up analyses, however, supported our hypothesis. Under threat, participants in the many-women condition were more likely

⁵ A main effect of threat condition also emerged, such that participants in the threat condition were significantly more likely to agree with the statement "There are many female CEOs" than those in the no-threat condition, $F(1, 32) = 8.91, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .22$ (M s = 3.94 and 2.74, SD s = 1.82 and 1.45, respectively). No other effects emerged.

to say that there should be more women in business than participants in the few-women condition, $t(15) = 2.15, p = .048$ ($M_s = 6.74$ and $5.54, SD_s = 0.36$ and 1.63 , respectively). Under no threat, however, participants in the many-women and few-women condition did not differ in their rating of whether women should be in business, $t(17) = 1.33, p = .20$ ($M_s = 6.67$ and $6.30, SD_s = 0.53$ and 0.66 , respectively).

Ratings of the female business experimenter. The key dependent measure from this study was the ratings participants offered for the female experimenter's performance. A two-way univariate ANOVA was conducted with the threat (two levels: system threat and no threat) and the status quo manipulations (two levels: few women CEOs vs. many women CEOs) entered as fixed factors. A main effect of the status quo condition emerged, such that participants in the few-women-CEOs condition rated the female business experimenter less positively than those in the many-women-CEOs condition, $F(1, 32) = 6.08, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .16$, ($M_s = 6.53$ and $6.85, SD_s = 0.59$ and 0.24 , respectively). This was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction between the system-threat and status quo manipulations, $F(1, 32) = 5.25, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .14$.

Follow-up analyses verified that this interaction took the form we predicted (see Figure 4). In the system-threat condition, participants who read that there were very few female CEOs rated the female business experimenter less positively than participants who read that there were many females CEOs, $F(1, 15) = 7.54, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .33$ ($M_s = 6.28$ and $6.96, SD_s = 0.74$ and 0.09 , respectively). In the no-threat condition, however, no difference in the rating of the female experimenter was observed, $F(1, 15) = 0.026, ns$.

Discussion

In this fourth and final study, injunctification was again observed, and evidence for the role of the system justification motive in producing this bias was again obtained (through the use of yet another manipulation). Under conditions of high system threat, participants who learned that women are highly underrepresented in high-level business positions subsequently rated a female business student with whom they interacted as significantly less likable and competent, as compared to participants who learned that women were relatively well represented in such positions. The implications of these findings for processes of intergroup relations and the maintenance of inequality are unmistakable. In addition,

participants in the crucial condition (high system threat and high underrepresentation of women in business) were significantly more likely than participants in the other three conditions to report that women should not occupy such positions.

General Discussion

The results of these diverse studies are consistent with an injunctification hypothesis: People are motivated to view the current status quo as the most desirable state of affairs. Across four studies and a variety of domains—political power, public policy, and women's representation in politics and business—evidence of a motivated bias to reconstrue the normative status quo (what is) as most desirable (what should be) was found (Studies 1–4). Moreover, the implications of this psychological tendency for preventing social change and maintaining inequality were demonstrated (Study 4).

Study 1, conducted in the context of political power, provided initial support for our hypothesis that people injunctify the status quo and that this tendency is related to the system justification motive. When people's motivation to justify their system was high (i.e., they were told that it is difficult to emigrate from Canada), they were more likely to injunctify the current state of affairs in the House of Commons, compared to when their motivation to justify was low (i.e., they were told that it is relatively easy to leave Canada). Lending further credence to our motivational interpretation of this effect, when a system affirmation manipulation was added to the design, the between-condition effect disappeared.

In Study 2, we expanded our analysis to include the injunctification of public policy and employed different manipulations of the system justification motive (i.e., system dependency). People were most likely to engage in injunctification of public policy—that is, deem a policy as more reasonable, desirable, and representative of the way things should be—when their system justification motive was strongest.

Studies 3 and 4 demonstrated the injunctification effect in the context of observed norms of gender inequality, again employed novel manipulations of the system justification motive (i.e., system threat in Study 4), manipulated the status quo itself, and assessed consequences of injunctification on derogation of those who act counternormatively. In Study 3, we observed that under conditions of increased system justification needs, those who were led to believe there were few female politicians believed there should be fewer female politicians than those who were led to believe there were many female politicians. Under control conditions, beliefs about the status quo had no such effect. In Study 4, the consequences of the injunctification bias for the maintenance of inequality were more closely examined. Participants exposed to demographic information suggesting that women were highly, as compared to only moderately, underrepresented in upper level management positions were more likely to suggest that women should be underrepresented in such positions and, intriguingly, were also significantly more likely to give poor competence and likeability ratings to a woman whom they believed to be violating the descriptive norm to which they had just been exposed. These ratings, it should be noted, were highly consequential: participants were told they were to be mailed directly to the woman's advisor. Also, a system-threat manipulation again provided evidence for the role of the system justification motive in producing this bias, that

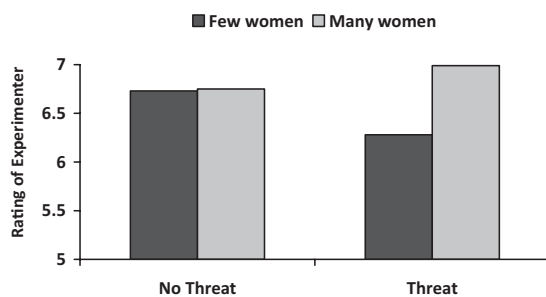


Figure 4. Mean ratings of the female business experimenter as a function of system threat and status quo of few versus many female chief executive officers (Study 4). Higher scores indicate more positive ratings of the business student experimenter.

is, the extreme underrepresentation of women in business manipulation increased injunctification and derogation of the female business student only for those participants first exposed to a system-threat manipulation.

Before moving on, it is also worth noting that across these studies, we see evidence that this injunctification process appears to be exquisitely tuned both to the relevance of the system (Study 2) and to the specific content of the norm in question, regardless of its direction (Studies 3 and 4). That is, participants did not simply injunctify anything they were presented with or change their values in only one direction when the motivation to justify the system was heightened. Rather, they injunctified the specific norms of the relevant system only.

These findings have implications for three related literatures: system justification, intergroup relations, and affirmative action.

System Justification and the Motivational Nature of Preference for the Status Quo

Most directly, these studies provide perhaps the most basic and fundamental test of the system justification motive (Jost & Banaji, 1994) to date. Most experimental evidence for the system justification motive has come from investigations of general stereotyping tendencies and/or the relation between stereotype content and beliefs in system fairness (for reviews, see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004, and Kay et al., 2007, respectively; cf. Kay et al., 2002). Given that Jost and Banaji's (1994) seminal piece introducing the system justification motive was largely inspired by the desire to understand the specifics of stereotype content (namely, outgroup favoritism), this emphasis in the literature is understandable. In the present article, however, we have provided a different, and arguably more direct, set of evidence in support of system justification theory. In each of the four studies presented, participants judged the current status quo (as it was described to them)—even if unfair—as the most desirable state of affairs, a tendency that (a) disappeared under system affirmation—when people's need to justify their system was satiated—and (b) was strengthened under conditions of system relevance, threat, and dependency.

These findings also bear some relevance to the oft-discussed *naturalistic fallacy*. In 1903, G. E. Moore famously described the naturalistic fallacy as the false belief that whatever is natural (i.e., is found or occurs in the natural world) is necessarily good and desirable (Moore, 1903). Today, the naturalistic fallacy is more commonly understood to represent any leap in reasoning in which one deduces an *ought* from an *is*—that is, any assumption regarding the way things should be derived from merely observing the way things are. Given its history in philosophy, this fallacy has been discussed primarily with respect to its impact on the credibility of arguments—indeed, philosophical giants ranging from Kant to Hume to Bentham have all relied heavily upon this error in reasoning in crafting philosophical arguments. Psychologists, on the other hand, have not directed as much serious attention to this bias. Is it a real social psychological phenomenon? If so, why and when do people engage in this bias, and what social psychological consequences might it hold? The studies presented in this article demonstrate that a phenomenon akin to the naturalistic fallacy does indeed occur and can be brought about by people's motivation to view their social systems as just, legitimate, and desirable.

Of course, we are by no means suggesting that a bias for the status quo can be driven only by motivational factors. Indeed, several purely cognitive factors, ranging from mere exposure to primacy effects, may also contribute to a psychological preference for the status quo (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). However, the results of these studies make clear that, at least in situations in which crucial aspects of one's sociopolitical system are at stake, motivational concerns also drive people's preference for the status quo.

Implications for Intergroup Relations

This research also has implications for other phenomena of intergroup relations that have been implicated in the maintenance of social inequality. Stereotypes that reflect role divisions and status inequalities are often observed in society. The psychological shift from the observation of the status quo to evaluative injunctive beliefs may represent a mediating factor in the formation of such stereotypes. That is, the motivation to view what is as what should be may lead to the creation of stereotypes that, in effect, legitimize reality, however unfair reality may be. This phenomenon was a central proposition of system justification theory at its inception (Jost & Banaji, 1994) and, years before that, was proposed by Allport (1954). Employing similar paradigms to those used here, empirical investigations of the consequences of the psychological shift from *is* to *ought* for the formation of specific stereotype contents and for the resistance to stereotype change represent important directions for future research.

Similarly, recent theorizing on benevolent stereotyping and the paternalistic treatment of women suggests that (consciously or not) certain gender stereotypes (even seemingly positive ones) and interactional norms are propagated to preserve the subjugation of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Lau et al., 2008; Moya, Glick, Expósito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007; Rudman, 2005; Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005). Such interactional styles and stereotypes—that depict women, for example, as more refined, delicate, and fragile than men—legitimize inequality through placating and flattering women into viewing themselves as ideally suited to the subordinate roles they traditionally occupy (e.g., Kilianski & Rudman, 1998), while also casting men as better suited to the higher stress and more demanding roles they typically occupy. The origin and formation of such ideologies, however, remain an open question. One possibility, of course, is that these sociocultural forms of inequality maintenance are instituted and originated by those groups in power (in this case, men) so as to maintain their advantageous position. Indeed, the case for such a possibility has been convincingly put forth in the social dominance (and other related) traditions (Jackman, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

However, beyond the motivation of those in power to preserve and protect their power, a general motivational tendency by the powerful and powerless alike (indeed, in Studies 3 and 4 all participants, including those who derogated the female experimenter, were themselves female) to view what is as what ought to be could additively contribute to the adoption of phenomena such as benevolent sexism and paternalism. Previous correlational research and theory have suggested such a possibility. For example, Glick et al. (2000), across several geographically and culturally diverse regions, demonstrated a strong, positive correlation be-

tween levels of gender inequality within a society and the endorsement of benevolent sexist attitudes within that society. Although one can never be sure of the causal direction of such an effect, those data may reflect a motivation to justify the status quo, such that the more gender inequality exists within a system, the more members of that system are motivated to create beliefs that justify that inequality (Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). Future research directly examining the extent to which the (system justification) motivated shift from *is* to *ought* we have identified here actually contributes to the support and propagation of phenomena such as benevolent sexism and paternalism would be a worthwhile avenue for future research.

Implications for Affirmative Action

Finally, the data presented here have obvious implications for the debate surrounding affirmative action policies and the more general issue of correcting broad social inequality. Although our data clearly fall in line with other social psychological data in support of affirmative action policies (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003), insofar as they support the contention that affirmative action policies should be effective at opening avenues of advancement to disadvantaged group members, they also provide a unique set of empirical and theory-driven suggestions for the redress of social inequality. In particular, this article highlights that, if one's goal is to change those competency-based stereotypes that reinforce inequality, simply working to transform the demographic realities within which people function (e.g., increasing the number of women admitted to graduate engineering programs) may not be the most effective means of doing so; what may be equally, if not more, important in such an endeavor is working to change perceptions of those demographics. Although changing the demographic landscape may often be enough to change people's perceptions of that landscape, in the absence of changed perceptions, the effectiveness of actual changes may be limited. The implications of our analysis suggest that if affirmative action changes are dramatic enough to lead to—or, even better, are coupled with marketing campaigns that clearly reflect—perceptions of an equal status quo, social redress may be particularly feasible. Indeed, this suggestion was demonstrated especially potently in Study 3, in which we manipulated not the actual number of women in politics but only participants' construal of this number.

Are These Effects Reducible to Social Identity Needs?

Although other sources of motivation—most notably, motives to protect the integrity of one's group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)—could also drive a similar psychological phenomenon in the real world or even add to the potency of some of the effects observed here, no one documented source of motivation fits with the variety of paradigms employed across our four studies as well as the system justification motive. Manipulation checks in Study 3 demonstrated strongly that our passages affected feelings of system dependency without influencing personal or collective self-esteem. Furthermore, the manipulations employed in Studies 2, 3, and 4 have all been shown in previous research to engender processes of motivated system defense without directly affecting self- or group identity (Kay et al., 2005; Laurin et al., 2009). In

addition, the pattern of results obtained in Studies 3 and 4, in which female participants derogated a female experimenter and supported norms that disadvantaged women, lends itself much more parsimoniously to a system justification interpretation than any theory based on identity protection.

Thus, although it is certainly feasible that a similar phenomenon could be shown to result from other sources of motivation, such as the motive to protect one's group identity, we do not believe the effects observed here are reducible to that particular motive. Future research that demonstrates the extent to which the system justification motive and social identity needs can act in concert to produce particularly strong effects of this sort in the real world or that elucidates the conditions in which one or the other is more prominent is a logical next step for researchers to pursue.

Concluding Remarks

In the present research, we have attempted to better understand the exact process through which people come to justify their current social arrangements and, in doing so, have highlighted the immense power of the status quo for determining people's social ideals. The social landscape is not passively received; rather, when combined with the motivation to defend one's social system, it is an important factor contributing to people's beliefs about what is most desirable. The studies presented in this article demonstrate that injunctification does indeed occur; can be brought about by people's motivation to view their social systems as just, legitimate, and desirable; and has important implications for intergroup relations and the maintenance of inequality. Although framed here as a hindrance to positive social change, this ability to adapt to one's surroundings and context can also be viewed as another example of the remarkable human capacity to adjust social desirabilities to the constraints of social reality. Moreover, our evidence suggests that as reality and the media come to reflect a more equitable social landscape, a tipping point may be reached and that the very same process that once thwarted social equality should come to facilitate it.

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