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Gender and sport inequities : perceiving injustices and galvanizing change

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Gender and sport inequities: Perceiving injustices and galvanizing change

by

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<u>Abstract</u>

Gender and sport inequities: Perceiving injustices and galvanizing change

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We examined the effect of procedural and distributive justice on activism intent and donation. We did not find a direct effect from the justice messages on either activism intent or donation, however we also looked at moderators such as belief in a just world. We found that belief in a just world moderated activism intent, that is, people who scored low on the BJW scale had higher activism intent after reading the messages, and the messages had an inverse effect on those who scored high on the BJW scale. We did not find any effect on donation from either message.

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Gender and Sport Inequities: Perceiving injustices and galvanizing change

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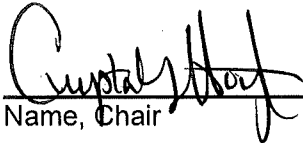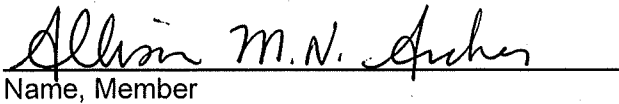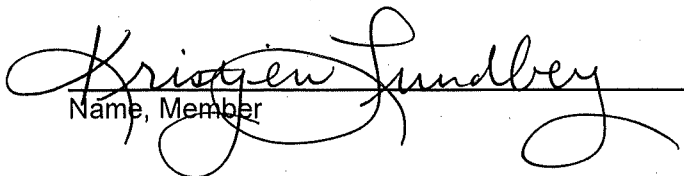
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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by *Ashley Gross* has been approved by his/her committee as satisfactory completion of the thesis requirement to earn honors in leadership studies.

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Introduction

Women have struggled to have equal access to opportunities across domains, including across athletics. A prime example of this is demonstrated by the success of the United States' Women (USWNT) vs. Men's (USMNT) National Soccer Teams and the number of resources given to each of them. In the past thirty years, "these women have become more watched, more profitable, and more successful than their male counterparts" (Zirin, 2016). According to the numbers, in 2015 the women generated more than $20 million more in revenue than the men did. Additionally, 25.4 million people watched the Women's World Cup final in 2015 which made it the most viewed U.S. soccer game, men's or women's (Zirin, 2016). However, they are still paid a fraction of the men's salaries. For winning a World Cup, the women's team receive the same compensation that men do just for showing up to play for the year. It is common practice for the U.S. women's soccer team to be significantly less compensated for the same or even more work put in as the men's team (Das, 2016). Further, in the 2016 Women's World Cup, the women were forced to play on artificial turf which is a sizable downgrade from grass fields. The organizers of international soccer have never made the men play on a surface of lesser quality like they made the women (Zilinger, 2015).

These inequities have spurred a lawsuit. On International Women's Day in 2019, the USWNT filed a lawsuit against the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). Twenty-eight current players used their platform of being some of the top paid female athletes in the world to claim institutional gender discrimination, despite the possible repercussions to their careers and personal lives (Hays, 2019).

Pay discrepancy across genders is not an isolated issue within the soccer community. The highest paid player in the WNBA is paid 13 percent of what the lowest NBA player is paid

(NBA Player Salaries 2018-2019, Lamonier, 2018). So far this year, out of the top 100 paid male U.S. tennis players, 71 percent of them have been paid higher prize money than their female counterparts (Levitt 2018). People argue that the men draw better crowds and so the salary discrepancy is a reflection of that. However, as I mentioned before, that is not necessarily the case and so inequality in pay has no grounding. In 2016, the International Cricket Council paid for men's teams to fly business class and women's teams to fly economy class to India for the World Cup (Kelly, 2016).

Seventy percent of sports now offer the same amount of prize money for men and women, but the difference runs in to the millions for the 30 percent that do not (Levitt, 2018). For instance, in 2018, the men's World Cup winners were rewarded $38 million. For simply going to the tournament, teams were granted $8 million each. During the last Women's World Cup in 2015, the US Women's National Team won. They were only rewarded $2 million for being the best in the world (Dunbar, 2018). Additionally, there are 8 men's soccer players paid over $26 million per year, yet the highest paid female soccer player in the world, Alex Morgan, only makes a $450 thousand salary. Stephen Curry of the NBA makes $34 million, making him the highest paid male basketball player. The NBA even has a minimum salary of $582 thousand. Meanwhile, the WNBA has a salary cap making it impossible for any of its players to make more than $113,500 per year (Lough, 2018).

Title IX is legislation that was enacted in 1972 in an effort to create equal opportunities for women. In 1975, a statute that included equal athletic scholarships was a part of the law (NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA, 2018). This increased the amount of participation available to women in college sports but provides no assistance after college. This is a promising start to having equal opportunities, but it is far from enough. An interesting study found that the

effect of Title IX on increasing women's participation in college sports has not necessarily been reflected in campus media. According to the study, "college newspapers in the study covered male athletes and events in 72.7 percent of their sports stories, and college television operations devoted 81.5 percent of their sports stories to males" (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004). Although outdated, this shows that years after this country-wide policy took place, there were still shocking disparities between genders in terms of what people thought were the highlights of sports. It also shows that although there have been initiatives, even small changes have taken many years. Today, there are still gender discrepancies in the media coverage of sports. Although women make up 40 percent of sports participants in the U.S., only 4 percent of media is devoted to covering their competitions. This leads to lower followership and a smaller fanbase. Thus, it is harder for female athletes to generate as much revenue as their male counterparts. However, the fact that they do in some instances, such as the U.S. women's soccer team, speaks volumes to the perseverance of the women in the organization in spite of the adversity they have had to face (Lilit, 2018).

This gender discrepancy runs into the leadership organizations as well. Only half of the governing bodies in sport currently meet the government's target to have women make up one quarter of the people sitting around the boardroom table. Coaches in women's team sports at the college level only earn 63 cents for every dollar earned by head coaches of men's teams (Pavlovich, 2016). So how do we affect change? What are the most effective ways of galvanizing social change to abolish these inequities?

Distributive and Procedural Justice

My work is looking at how to galvanize social change around inequalities. This is dependent largely on people understanding the situation as unjust. There are two types of justice:

distributive and procedural. Distributive justice is perceived fairness based on outcomes. This can be seen through a difference of "distributions of benefits and burdens across members of the society" (SEP, 2017). People have different distributive justice theories. Some people believe that distributive fairness is for people to get what they would have gotten if there was not a central authority interfering, granted that those worse off for arbitrary reasons are compensated by those who are better off (Allingham). Another theory of distributive justice is strict egalitarianism. This would require equal material goods to all members of society (SEP, 2017). A third idea for distributive justice is Rawls' theory that it would be morally just for inequities only so far as it helps the least advantaged in society (SEP, 2017). Although there are many different theories of distributive justice, the overarching idea of distributive injustice is that goods are not distributed fairly, usually to the disadvantage of minorities or oppressed groups.

Procedural justice, on the other hand, is perceived fairness based on processes. This is usually a way in determining the distribution of goods. Studies have shown that people care more about the fairness of processes rather than of outcomes (van den Bos, et al., 1997). According to Folger and Konovsky (2017), distributive injustice messages about pay led to higher levels of dissatisfaction with their pay, but procedural messages lead to worse "attitudes about the employing institution and its authorities, trust in supervisor and organizational commitment" (Folger, 2017).

Although we will attempt to create two separate messages highlighting each of the injustices, van den Bos, et al. (1997) argues there are meaningful interactions between the two. For this study, we will focus on looking at which justice message is more effective.

Research has shown that messages highlighting injustices can increase in activism toward making a change. However, not everyone responds the same way to messages about injustice.

For example, whether these messages promote activism can depend on people's ideologies and beliefs systems, such as political ideology. (Hoyt, et al., 2017).

Belief in a Just World

One important belief system that might influence how people respond to justice messages is belief in a just world (BJW). People fall along the spectrum of BJW. Those with low BJW scores believe there are many injustices in the world. Contrarily, those high in BJW believe the world is a just place and that people tend to get what they deserve. "According to justice motive theory, people have a need to believe that the world is a just place where individuals get what they deserve. Thus, people are motivated to defend belief in a just world (BJW) when it is threatened by evidence of injustice" (Hafer, Rubel 2015). BJW serves as an adaptive function because it enables people to view their social surroundings as stable (Dalbert, 2013). This adaptive state is because people need to believe that when they do something, they will be properly rewarded or punished, based on their actions so that the world around them does not appear to be chaos (Lerner, 1980).

According to Hafer and Rubel (2015), those high in BJW have a repressive coping style. This is consistent with other literature that those who have a strong belief that their surroundings are fair are more likely to "blame the victim" for their own situation (Dalbert, 2013).

Current Research

Based on the literature about procedural and distributive injustice, we hypothesized that the messages of injustice will increase people's likelihood to engage in activism around gender inequities in sports and increase their likelihood of donating to a group supporting the cause. Moreover, we predict that messages that enhance perceptions of procedural injustice will be more effective than those increasing perceptions of distributive injustice. Additionally, we

predict that BJW will moderate these effects. That is, we predict the messages to be more effective for those low in BJW, whereas those high in BJW will be motivated to justify the inequalities and they will NOT be motivated to engage in activism.

We created messages and measures as a part of a survey and disseminated it to 300 participants on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. By understanding the way to motivate people, we have a higher chance to make a lasting impact on the opportunities available to women in sports. It could be possible to get more people to care about the disparity between men and women until there are equal opportunities. This is important because it would lead to equality of opportunity, and "equality of opportunity is important for a social ideal because it expresses part of the moral value of equality" (Stanford University).

Methods

Participants and Procedure

We recruited 299 adults from the U.S. on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. We aimed for 300 participants with a four-group design. This allowed for 75 participants per condition which allowed for attrition and left us well powered to find effects. Participants who did not respond coherently to the post measure question asking for a brief summary were excluded from the analysis. There were 25 incoherent responses, leaving a final sample size of 274.

The sample included 114 women and 158 men, with an average age of 35.7 years old (SD = 10.25). Participants' median household income range was $40-60K per year. Participants were paid $1.00 to complete the survey and had the option to receive an additional $0.25 – which they could choose to donate to a group that supports creating opportunities for women in sports. In this study, participants were assigned to one of four conditions: receiving both, one, or neither of two justice messages. One message was aimed to portray distributive injustice while the other was intended to show procedural injustice. I will call these two conditions DIC and PIC, respectively.

Creating the distributive message, I aimed at highlighting unjust outcomes and showing the disparities in sports between men and women. Here is an excerpt from the distributive message: "The highest paid player in the WNBA is paid 13% of what the lowest NBA player is paid (NBA Player Salaries 2018-2019, Lamonier, 2018). In 2016, the International Cricket Council paid for men's teams to fly business class and women's teams to fly economy class to India for the World Cup (Kelly, 2016). In fact, in most sports men are not only paid more than women, they also get better gear, ride on nicer buses and get higher stipends for travel.

Additionally, although 40% of all sports participants are women, they only receive 4% of media coverage and only 0.4% of the total commercial investment in sport goes into women's sports."

Similarly, while constructing the procedural injustice message, I tried to focus on the processes being unfair, rather than the outcomes. Here is an excerpt from the procedural message: "Imagine twins, Josie and Joe, who both play soccer. They work out together every day and end up getting scholarships for college. Joe is a decent player on his mid-level college's team and Josie is the star of one of the top teams in the country. At the end of their college careers, Joe starts getting professional contract offers while Josie doesn't receive any."

After reading each message or not, depending on the group they were randomly assigned, participants were asked to briefly respond to a question about …

Then, all participants responded to a series of measures.

For each message

Measures

We had seven measures and found that each of the measures were reliable in accordance with Cronbach's Alpha. Note: we will use DIM and PIM, respectively, when talking about distributive and procedural measures, versus the DIC and PIC for the distributive and procedural conditions.

Procedural injustice measure (PIM). ($\alpha = 0.88$) There were 6 items included in this measure. Sample items include "women have fewer opportunities in sports than men" and "women face more discrimination in sports.". These were rated on a 7-point scale. Three items were recoded so that a higher rating reflected higher feelings of injustice.

Distributive injustice measure (DIM). (DIM-W: $\alpha = 0.89$; DIM-M: $\alpha = 0.83$) There were 6 items included in this measure. We separated these measures for women (DIM-W) and men

(DIM-M). Examples of DIM-W are, "women are offered the number of professional sports opportunities" and "female athletes are paid". The same questions were used for the measure for men. These were rated on a 7-point scale from "less than they deserve" to "more than they deserve" where lower ratings reflected higher feelings of injustice.

Belief in a just world. ($\alpha = 0.96$) There were 8 items included in this measure. For example, "I feel that people generally earn the rewards and punishments that they get in this world" and "regardless of the specific outcomes they receive, people are subjected to fair procedures.". These were rated on a 7-point scale where higher scores reflected stronger feelings that the world is just.

Gender essentialism[1]. ($\alpha = 0.89$) There were 10 items included in this measure. For example, "knowing someone's gender tells you a lot about a person" and "people that are the same gender have many things in common". These were rated on a 7-point scale where higher score reflected stronger feelings of gender essentialism.

Sports inequities activism intent. ($\alpha= 0.97$) There were 15 items in this measure. Sample items include "present facts to contest another person's opposing statement" and "post a story on social media about sports inequality". These were rated on a 7-point scale where higher scores reflected higher feelings of activism.

Donation. We told participants they would receive additional compensation and asked if they would like to donate it to a foundation committed to increasing opportunities for women in sports. They could donate all, a portion or none of this additional money to the cause. They did not have the option of donating the portion they were originally making for the survey.

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[1] We did not end up analyzing gender essentialism, it was simply exploratory.

Knowledge/learn more. We asked participants if they would be interested in reading more information about gender disparities in sports. They had to click yes or no to advance the page. If they answered "no", they continued on with the survey. If they answered "yes," they were directed to a page to see how long participants who clicked on reading more spent on the page.

Results

Table 1: *scale means, standard deviation and bivariate correlations*.

Dependent Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. **Procedural**	5.09	1.34									
2. **Women's Distributive**	4.94	1.55	-.528$^\blacklozenge$								
3. **Men's Distributive**	5.37	1.07	.390$^\blacklozenge$	-.193**							
4. **Activism**	3.46	1.67	.067	.133*	.250$^\blacklozenge$						
5. **Donation**	0.08	0.10	.048	.084	.146*	.337$^\blacklozenge$					
6. **Read More**	1.56	0.50	-.079	.141*	.135*	.372$^\blacklozenge$	.360$^\blacklozenge$				
7. **Belief in a Just World**	4.30	1.47	-.292$^\blacklozenge$	.460$^\blacklozenge$	-.154*	.026	.093	.118			
8. **Gender**	1.43	0.51	.202**	-.196**	.176**	.070	-.055	-.094	-.118		
9. **Procedural Condition**			.205**	-.097	.008	-.049	-.038	-.129*	-.028	.078	
10. **Distributive Condition**			.220$^\blacklozenge$	-.167**	.008	-.024	-.029	-.002	-.014	.039	.072

First, we conducted a manipulation check. We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with both procedural injustice condition (coded 0,1) and distributive injustice condition (coded 0,1) predicting both the procedural and distributive injustice measures. For instance, the control condition that received neither procedural nor distributive message was coded (0,0). We found that the messages were effective in increasing perceptions of injustice in sports. Specifically, the PIC message increased perceptions of procedural injustice ($F (1, 270) = 9.22$, $p = .003$), and the DIC message increased perceptions of BOTH procedural ($F (1, 270) = 11.60$, $p = .001$), and distributive injustice ($F (1, 270) = 6.95$, $p = .009$).

Next, we tested the primary hypothesis that the messages would increase activism intent and donation and that the procedural message would be more effective than the distributive message. We conducted a MANOVA with PIC and donation ($F (1, 268) = .393$, $p = .53$), PIC and activism ($F (1, 268) = .35$, $p = .55$), DIC and donation ($F (1, 268) = .221$, $p = .64$), and DIC and activism ($F (1, 268) = 013$, $p = .91$). We did NOT find that the messages were effective in
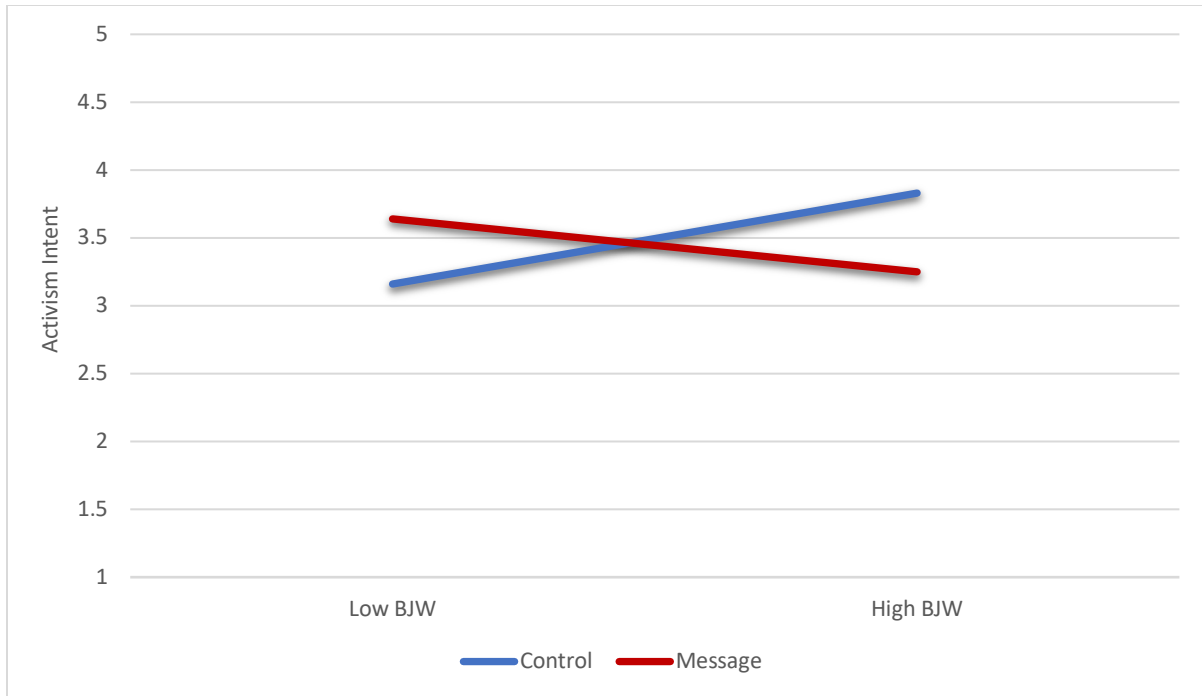
increasing participants activism intent (p > .05). Thus, there was no significant interaction between the messages and activism. However, as we will expand in the discussion, this is because it had the opposite effect on some participants.

Next, we tested the prediction that BJW will moderate the effect of messages on activism intent and donation. To test the hypothesis that BJW will moderate the relationship between condition and outcome measures, we used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro. This macro uses an ordinary least squares regression-based path analytical framework to analyze statistical models involving moderation, mediation, and their combination, termed conditional process modeling. Specifically, we employed Model 1 to test our moderation predictions, regressing the outcomes on BJW condition, and their interaction.

First, we looked at the outcome, activism intent, and the DIC. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between BJW and condition (β = -.35, p = .012, 95% CI= -.62, -.08). Simple slope follow-up analyses revealed that the message significantly decreases activism intent for high BJW (p = .05, 95% CI= -1.13, -.01) and marginally increases activism intent for low BJW (p = .11, 95% CI= -.10, 1.06). See Figure 1.

Looking at the PIC and BJW, predicting activism intent, the interaction effect was marginal (β = -.22, p = .11, 95% CI= -.496, .05). The pattern is similar with the message decreasing intent for high BJW but increasing intent for low BJW.

Figure 1

Additionally, there seems to be an effect based on condition for who chose to read more about the issue. However, looking closer at the data, we found that those who decided to look at more information about the topic were simply the ones who had been in the control group and had not read any message at all at the beginning. This could be expected, and we did not find any significance beyond this. However, like BJW moderated the effect between the messages and activism, there may be a variable that moderates those who read more, which could be looked at in further research.

We did not find effects on the donation outcome for either condition.

Discussion

Our goal was to galvanize social change through messages relating to perceived justice. We were able to successfully manipulate justice perceptions and found that although they did not directly influence engagement in activism, the did with BJW as a moderator.

Another interesting finding to note that we did not discuss is that although participants low in BJW were more likely to see injustices for women in sports and want to engage in activism after reading the DIC message, they did not express feelings that men had too much. They only saw the injustice as female athletes having less than, not that male athletes having too much.

Distributive vs Procedural Messages

Overall, both messages were effective in increasing perceptions of injustice. The fact that we saw that the distributive injustice message had an effect on BOTH perceptions of procedural and distributive justice could be because procedural injustice is inferred by the participant when reading about the distributive injustices. This was confirmed by looking at the effect the DIC message had on participants. There was a significant effect ($p = .001$) of the distributive injustice message on the procedural injustice measure. This is aligned with the literature that distributive injustice messages often have implicit procedural injustices messages (van den Bos, et al., 1997).

Van den Bos, et al. (1997) also argue that people are influenced more by what they are told first than by what they are told next in terms of justice messages. This agrees with our research in that ideas that people have before taking this survey, such as their system justification beliefs, can affect and overrule these opposing messages we give them.

BJW effect

Overall, there was no direct effect of either message on activism. The lack of effect, however, is driven by certain people actually responding in the opposite direction than expected. We saw that participants who do not believe the world is just are successfully influenced by the intentions of our distributive message – they are more likely to engage in activism after they have read the message, as we would expect. The more potent finding is that people who read the messages who have a high belief in a just world actually become less likely to engage in activism. This is reflected in the literature as the more someone believes the world is just, the more they try to justify evidence against their beliefs (Dalbert, 2013). They try to make sense of their own world and rather than be persuaded by new information, they justify it and have the opposite effect that what was intended (less likely to engage in activism in this case). Additionally, they oftentimes blame the victim in oppressive situations and justify the status quo (Dalbert, 2013).

A study shows that people high in BJW are able to cope with anger better than those low in BJW (Dalbert, 2002). Further, research shows that system justification, like BJW, mitigates moral outrage which has been shown to increase support for disadvantaged populations (Wakslak, et al., 2007). This means that we need to figure out a way to bring out anger in those high in BJW in order to increase care and further action around injustices.

Implications

Limitations

One limitation we had was our sample size. Our resources limited us to the number of participants we could distribute the survey to, and future research may benefit from having a larger sample size. Another limitation is who was able to take the survey. In order to be a

member of Amazon's Mechanical Turk, participants must have access to internet. This cuts out some of the population that we were not able to reach through this project.

Further Research

We found that there are strong motivational forces such as BJW that work against the intent of the messages shown. An implication is that we need to be careful with these messages because highlighting injustices can have the opposite effect on participants with other fundamental motives. Future research should further examine other fundamental motives people have that might thwart the intentions of such messages (such as system justification motives). System justification "designates any motivational tendency to defend, bolster, or rationalize existing social, economic, and political arrangements. It is conceptualized as a response tendency possessed by many, or perhaps most, members of society to see aspects of the overarching social system as good, fair, and legitimate" (Jost, 2011).

Additionally, further research should look at what we can do to satisfy those motives in order to allow messages about injustice to have their intended effect. Activists trying to promote social change need to be careful because sometimes highlighting injustices can have opposite effects of what was intended.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

We found that our procedural and distributive injustice messages were significantly effective in predicting our procedural and distributive measures according to alpha. We also found that our distributive message was effective in predicting our procedural measure. Possibly the most interesting result of this research is through looking at belief in a just world as a moderator for activism. We found that participants with a low belief in a just world were marginally affected by reading about injustices in the world and thus became more likely to

engage in activism. However, participants who rate moderate or high on the belief in a just world scale become significantly less likely to engage in activism after reading the distributive justice message, with a level of 95 percent confidence. As mentioned in the implications section, activisms looking to galvanize social change must be careful with messages to avoid causing the opposite of the intended effect.

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