

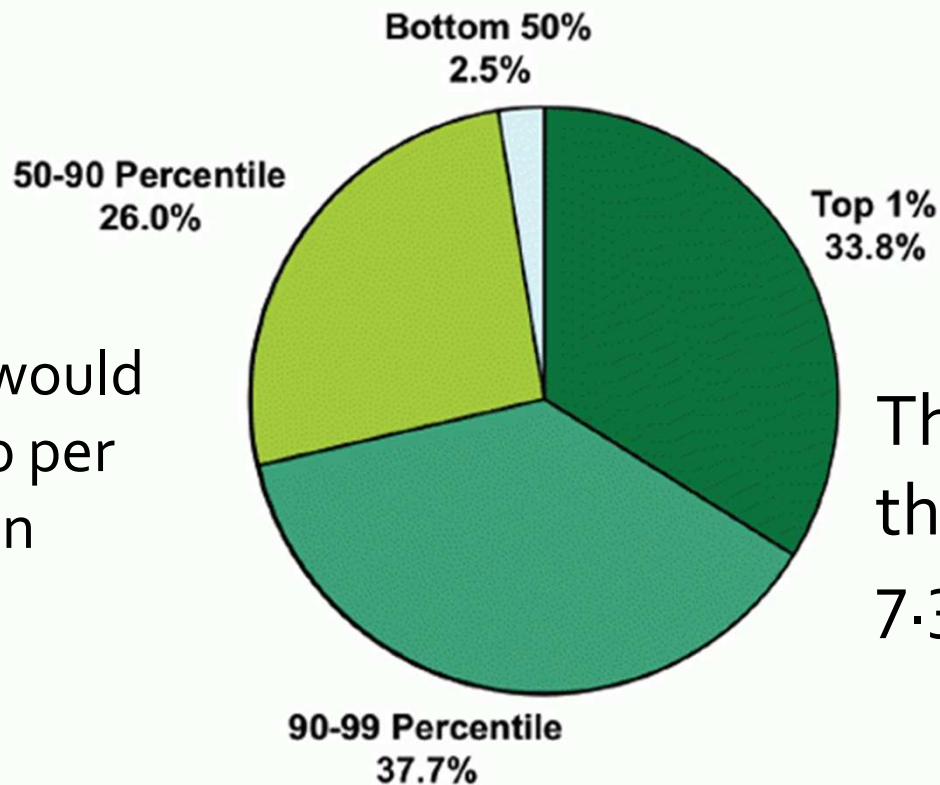


Kristin Laurin, Gráinne Fitzsimons, & Aaron Kay

# Justice Beliefs, Goal Pursuit and Group Membership

# Known inequalities

Distribution of U.S. Wealth, 2007



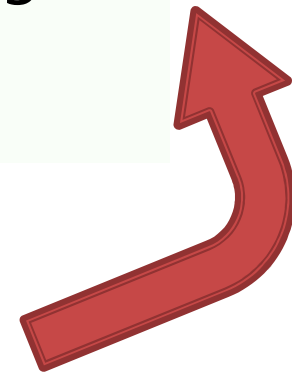
A fair share would be \$217,000 per American

The richest 10% of those had about 7.3 million \$ each

In 2007:

Half of Americans had about \$10,800 each

Population of 301.3 million had about 1.5 million \$ each



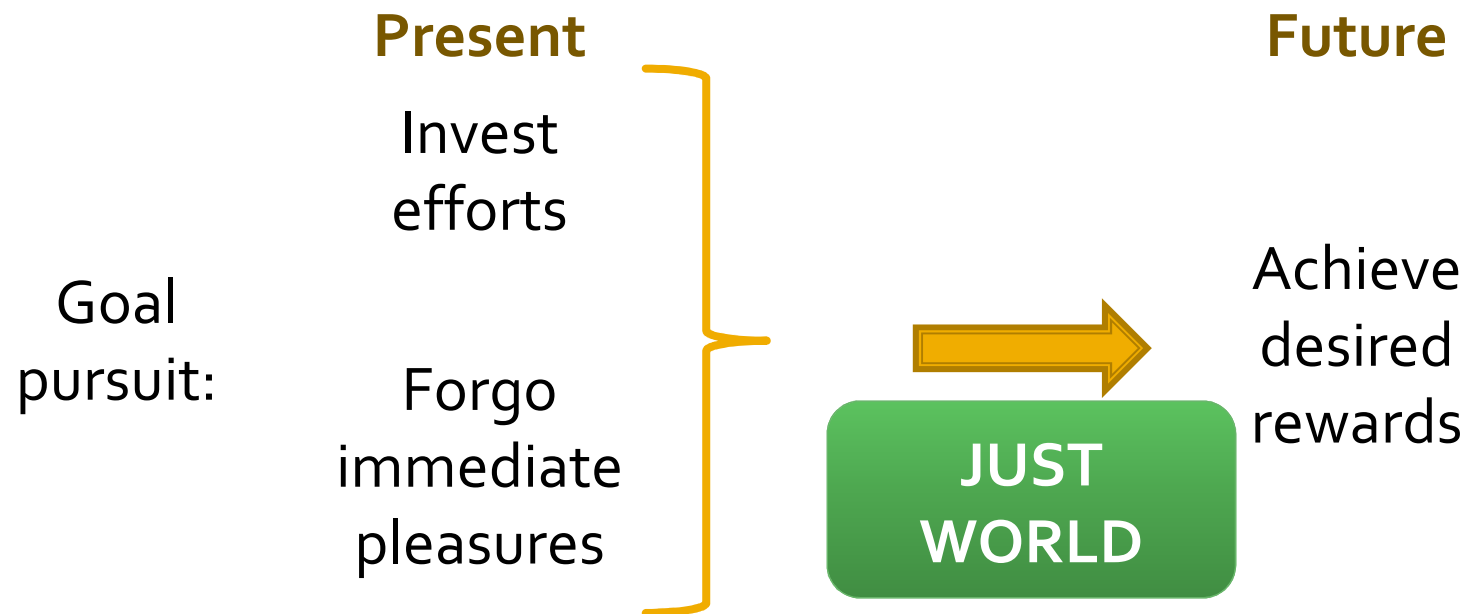
# And yet...

- People are reluctant to attribute this to *injustice* (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner & Miller, 1978)
- Consistent with many theoretical approaches
  - Just World Theory, System Justification Theory, Uncertainty Management Theory, etc.

# Functions of justice beliefs

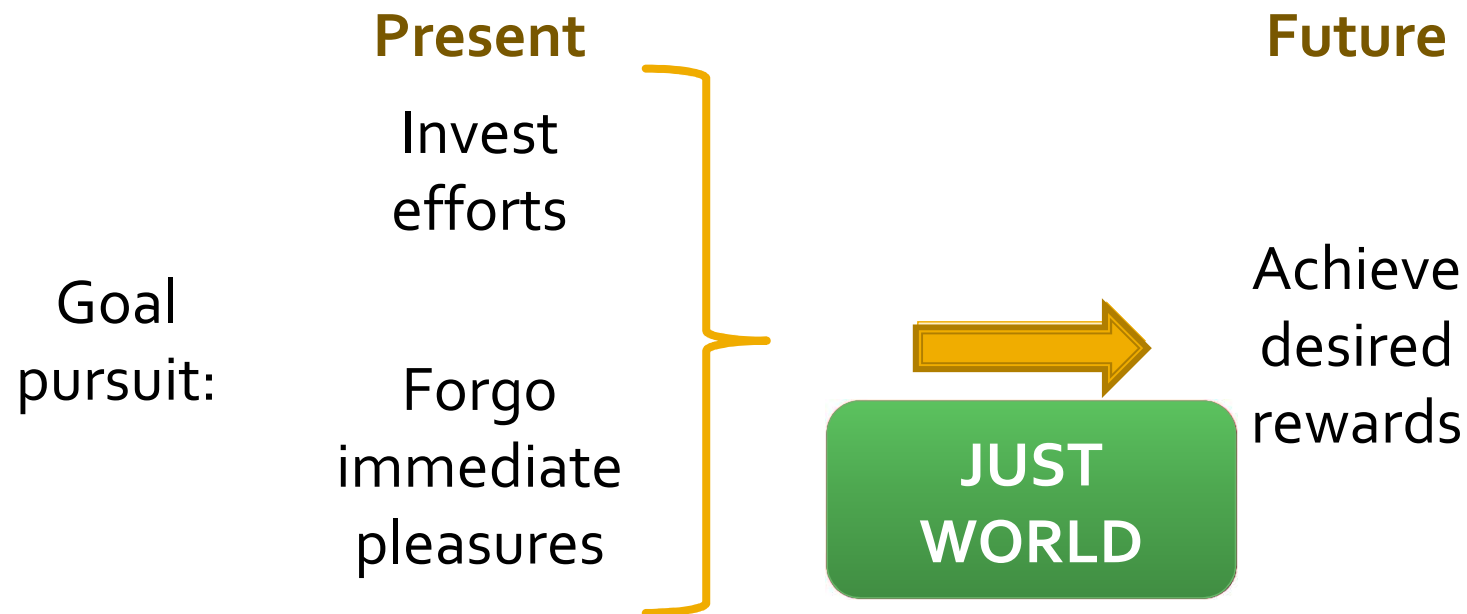
- Functions as a positive illusion (Dalbert, 2002)
- Helps people cope with uncertainty (van den Bos, 2001)
- Satisfies need for autonomy (van Prooijen, 2009)
- Satisfies need for belongingness (Lind & Tyler, 1988)
- Serves existential & epistemic needs (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004)
  
- **Present research:**
  - **Justice beliefs facilitate long-term goal motivation**
  - **Especially for members of socially disadvantaged groups**

# Justice beliefs and motivation



# Justice beliefs and motivation

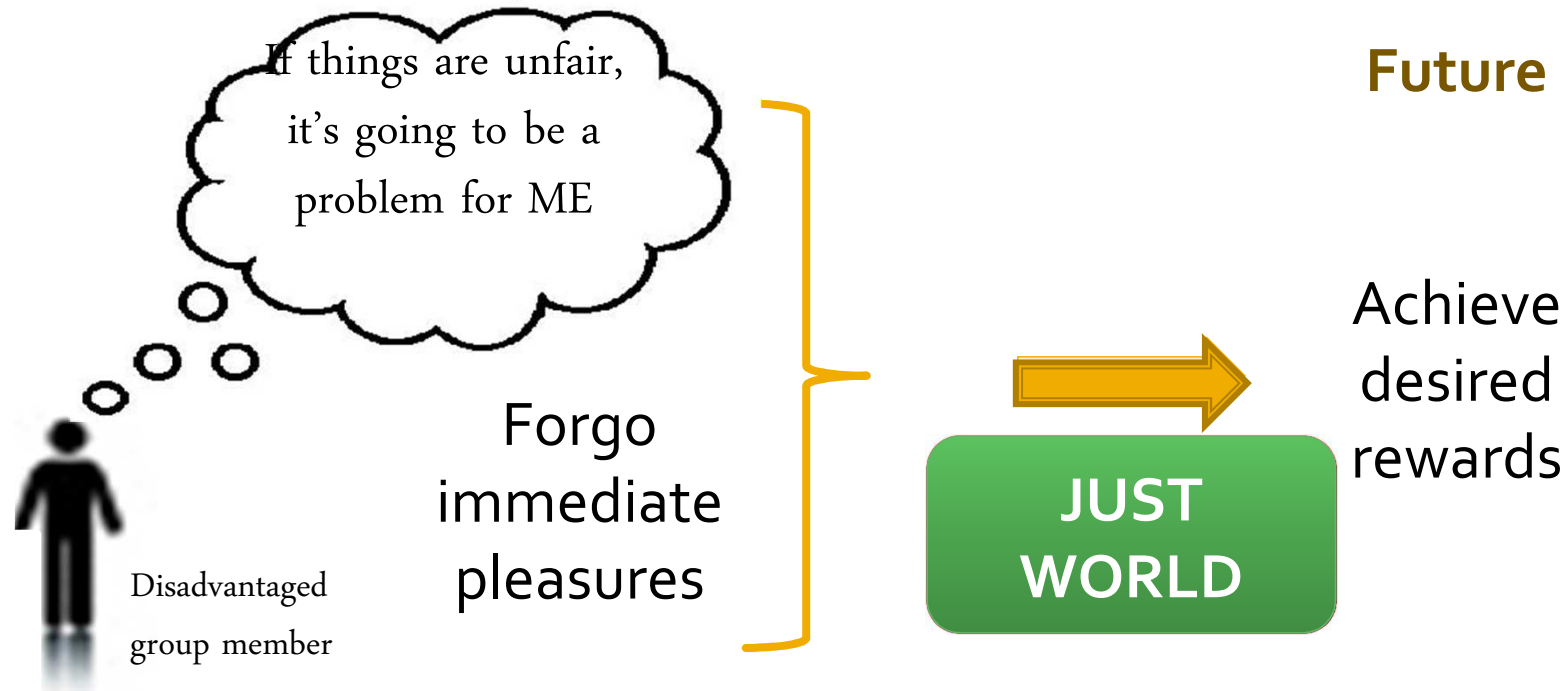
- Injustice is demotivating



- Justice beliefs encourage motivation

# Socially DISADVANTAGED groups

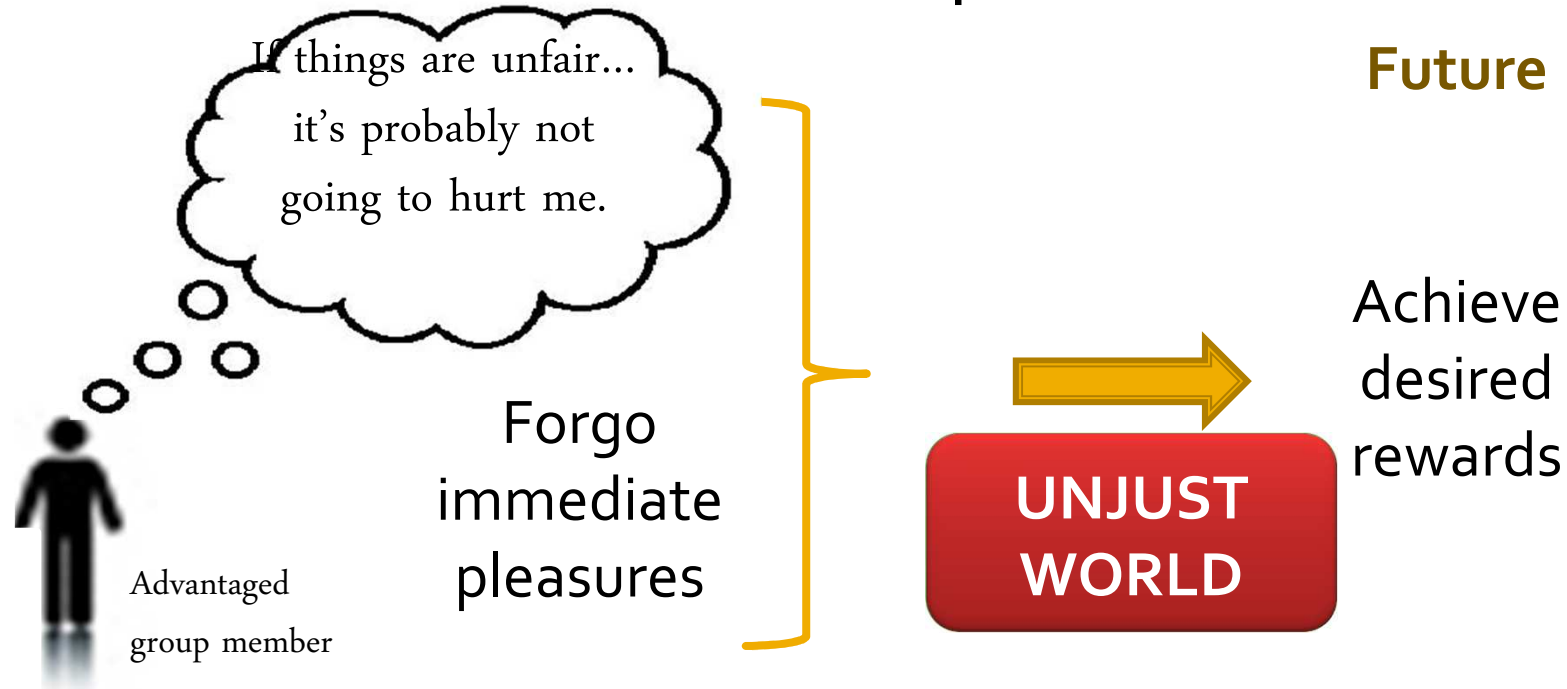
- Members may know they are likely targets of societal injustice



- Justice beliefs encourage motivation**

# Socially ADVANTAGED groups

- Members may see societal injustice as irrelevant to their own personal outcomes



- Justice beliefs **not** linked to motivation

# Study 1

- Justice beliefs are associated with long-term goal motivation, but only among members of **socially disadvantaged groups**

# Independent variables

- **Justice beliefs (Belief in a Just World)**  
e.g., I feel that people get what they deserve
- **Membership to disadvantaged group (SES)**  
self-rated position on a 7-pt scale of socioeconomic status

# Dependent measure

- Willingness to invest effort in career goals
  - Rate interest in investing effort in pursuit of each of four well-regarded careers


Willingness to  
invest effort



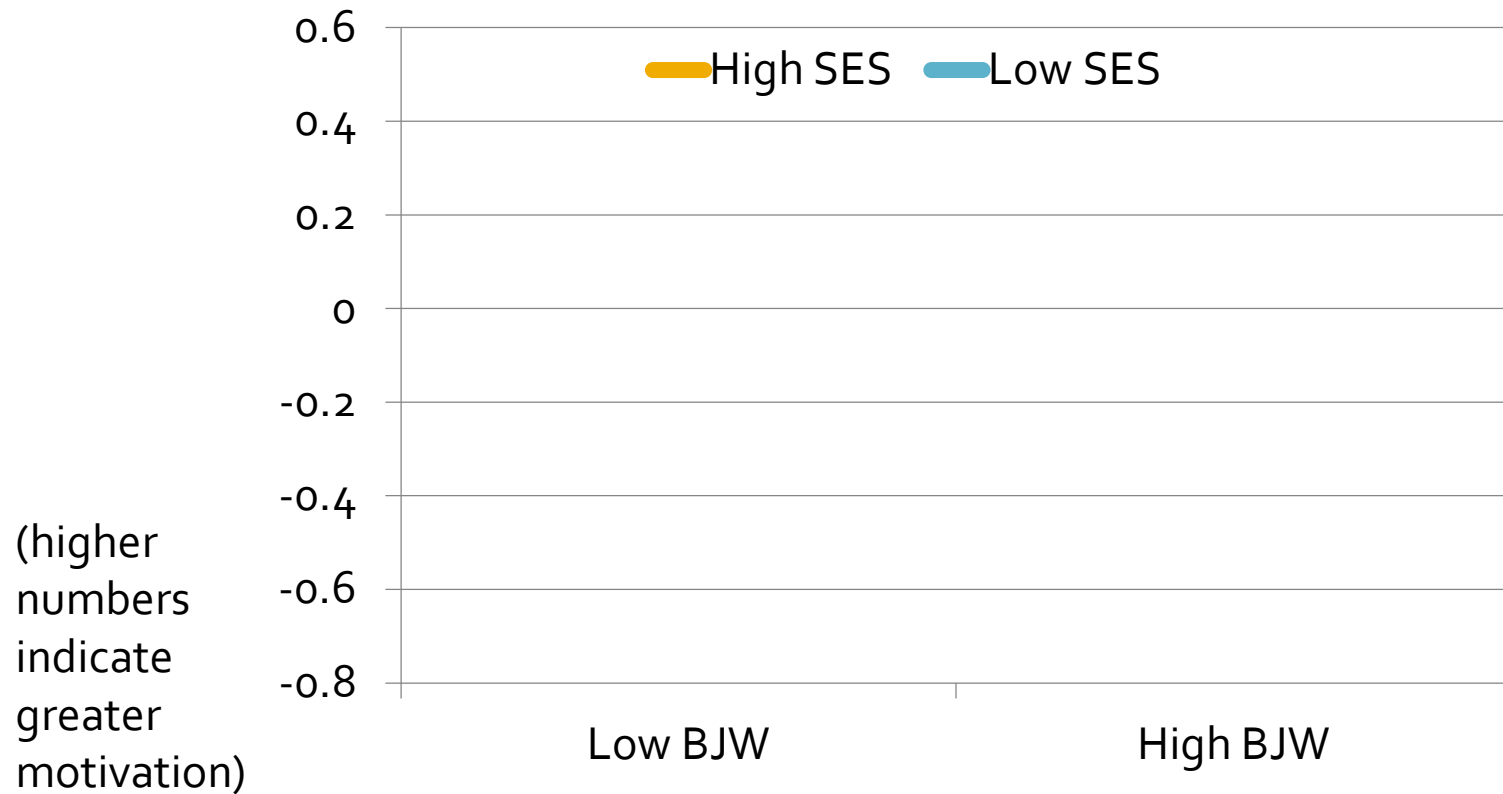
Appeal of  
careers  
themselves



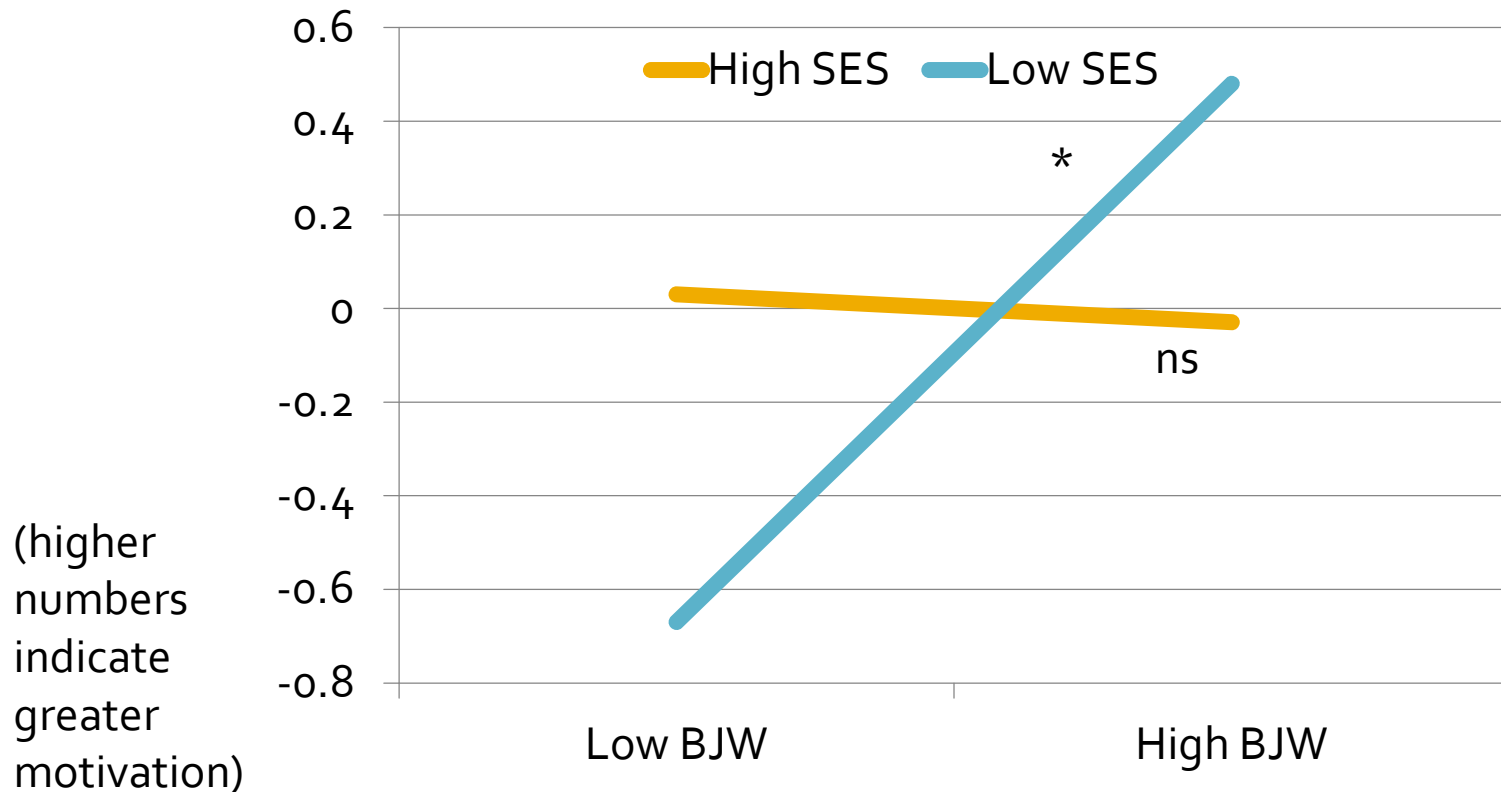
# Dependent measure

- Willingness to invest effort in career goals
    - Rate interest in investing effort in pursuit of each of four well-regarded careers
- 
- Willingness to invest effort
- Appeal of careers themselves
- Also measure appeal of careers themselves
  - Final measure: interest in investing effort, with appeal of careers themselves partialled out

# Willingness to invest effort



# Willingness to invest effort



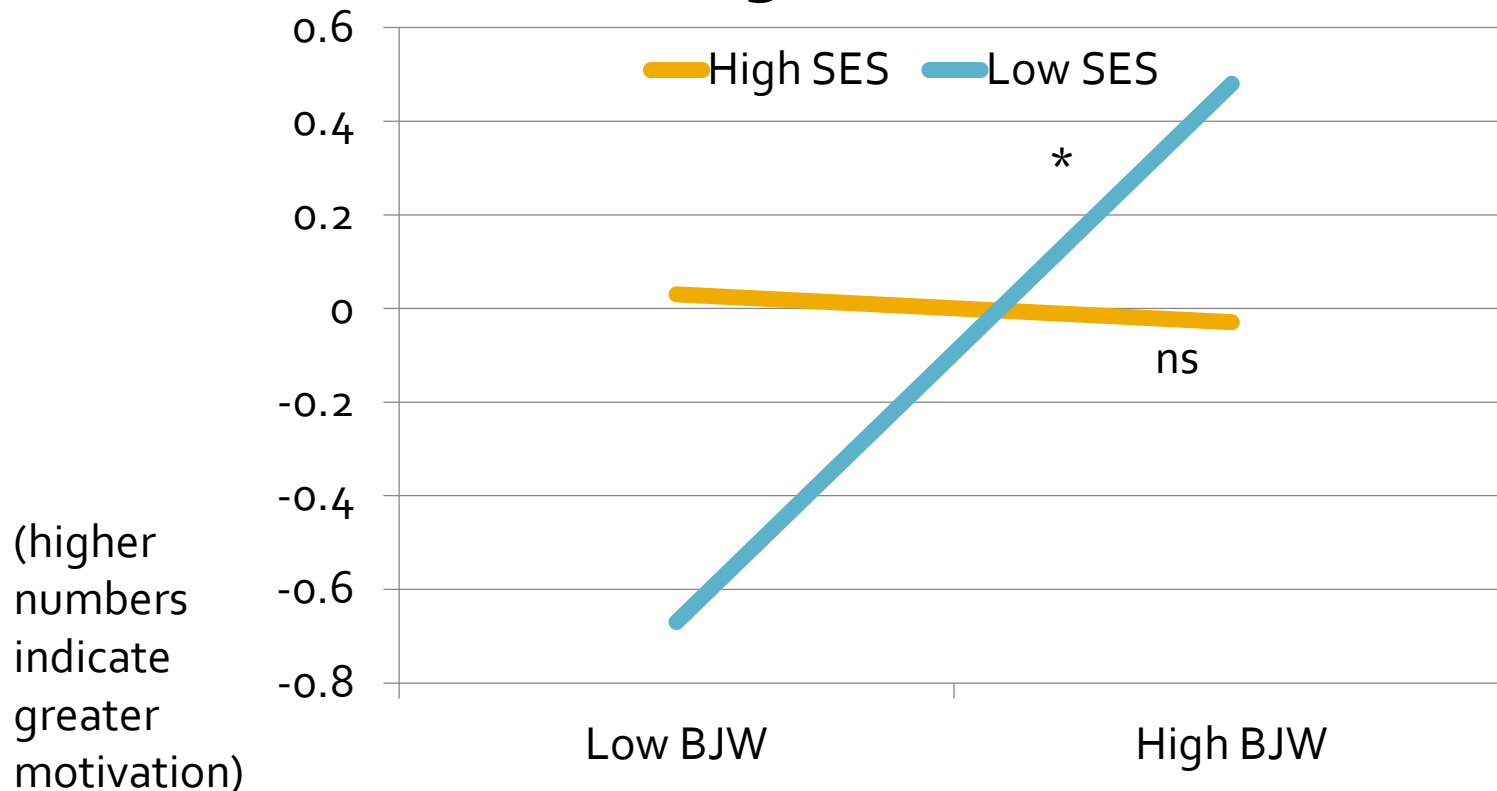
(higher numbers indicate greater motivation)

Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay (2011) *JPS*

BJW X SES,  
 $\beta = -.23, t(107) = 2.27, p < .03$

# Among low SES individuals...

## Justice beliefs predict motivation (willingness to invest effort)



Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay (2011) *JPS*

BJW X SES,  
 $\beta = -.23, t(107) = 2.27, p < .03$

# Studies 2 and 3

- Establish causal role of justice beliefs
- Generalize to other indicators of membership to a disadvantaged group

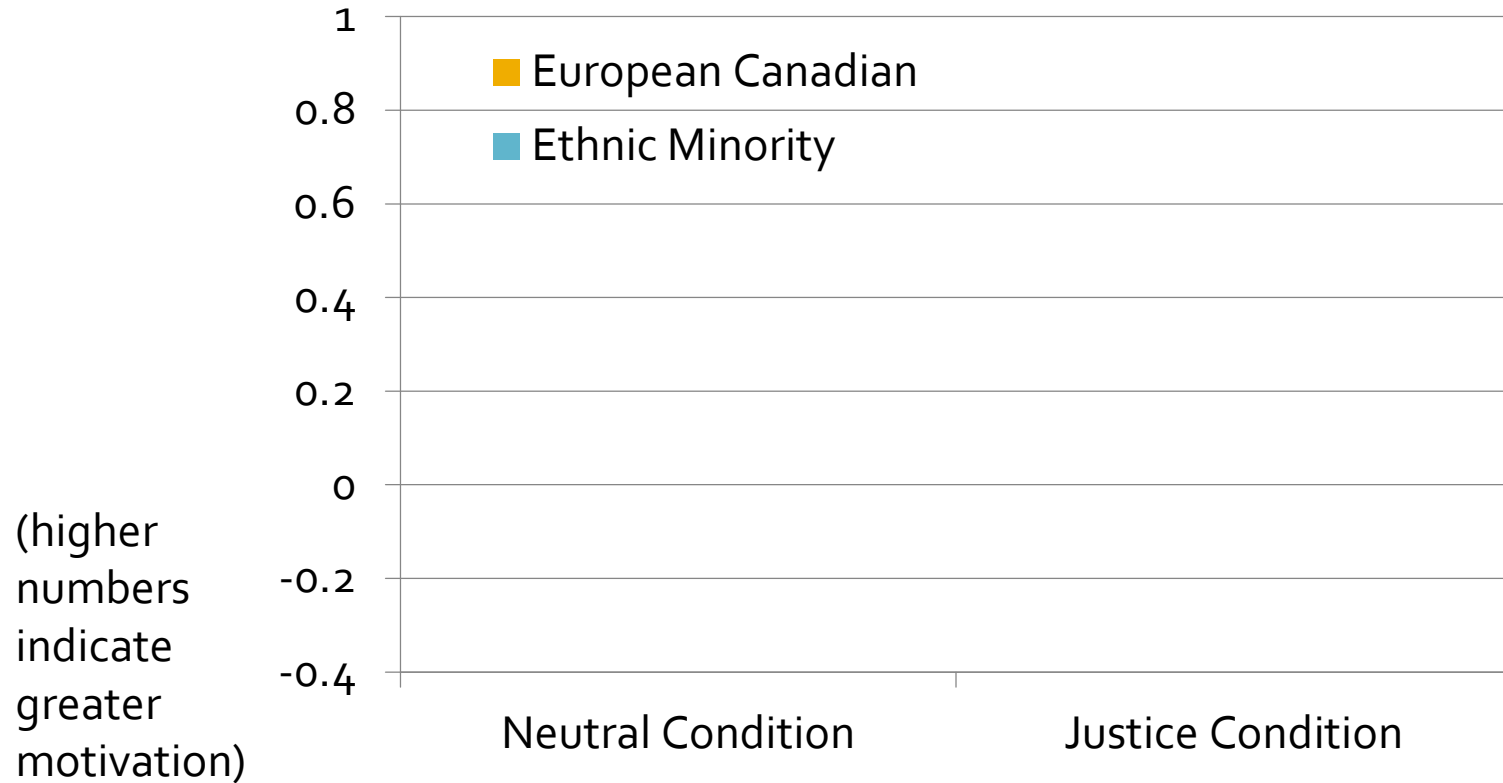
# Manipulations

- Study 2:  
Bogus newspaper article
  - Justice condition: Justice is increasing in Canada
  - Neutral condition
- Study 3:  
Scrambled sentence paradigm
  - Justice condition: Justice / deservingness theme
  - Neutral condition: no theme

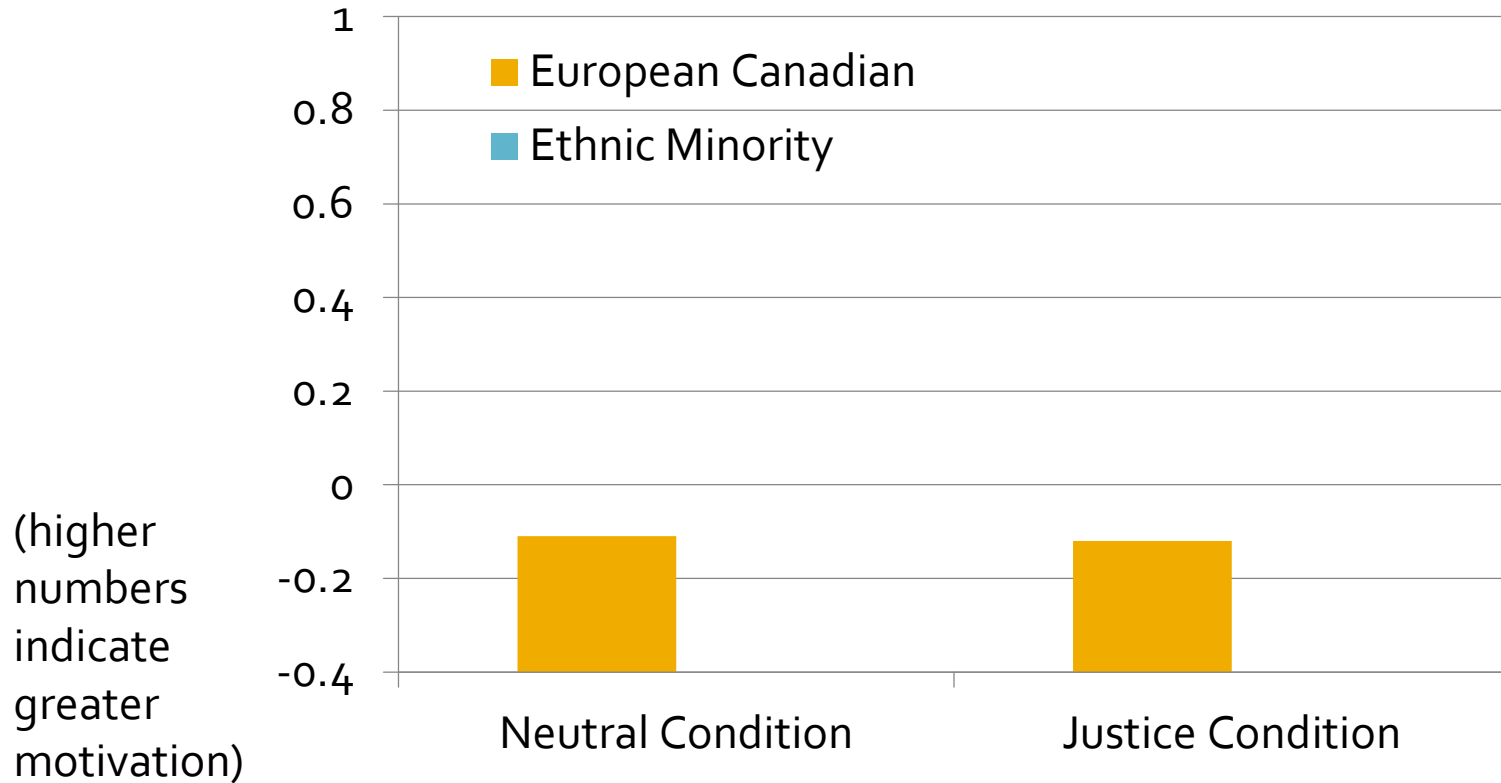
# Measures

- Membership to disadvantaged group
  - Ethnic majority vs. minority status
- DV: Willingness to invest effort in career goals
  - As in Study 1

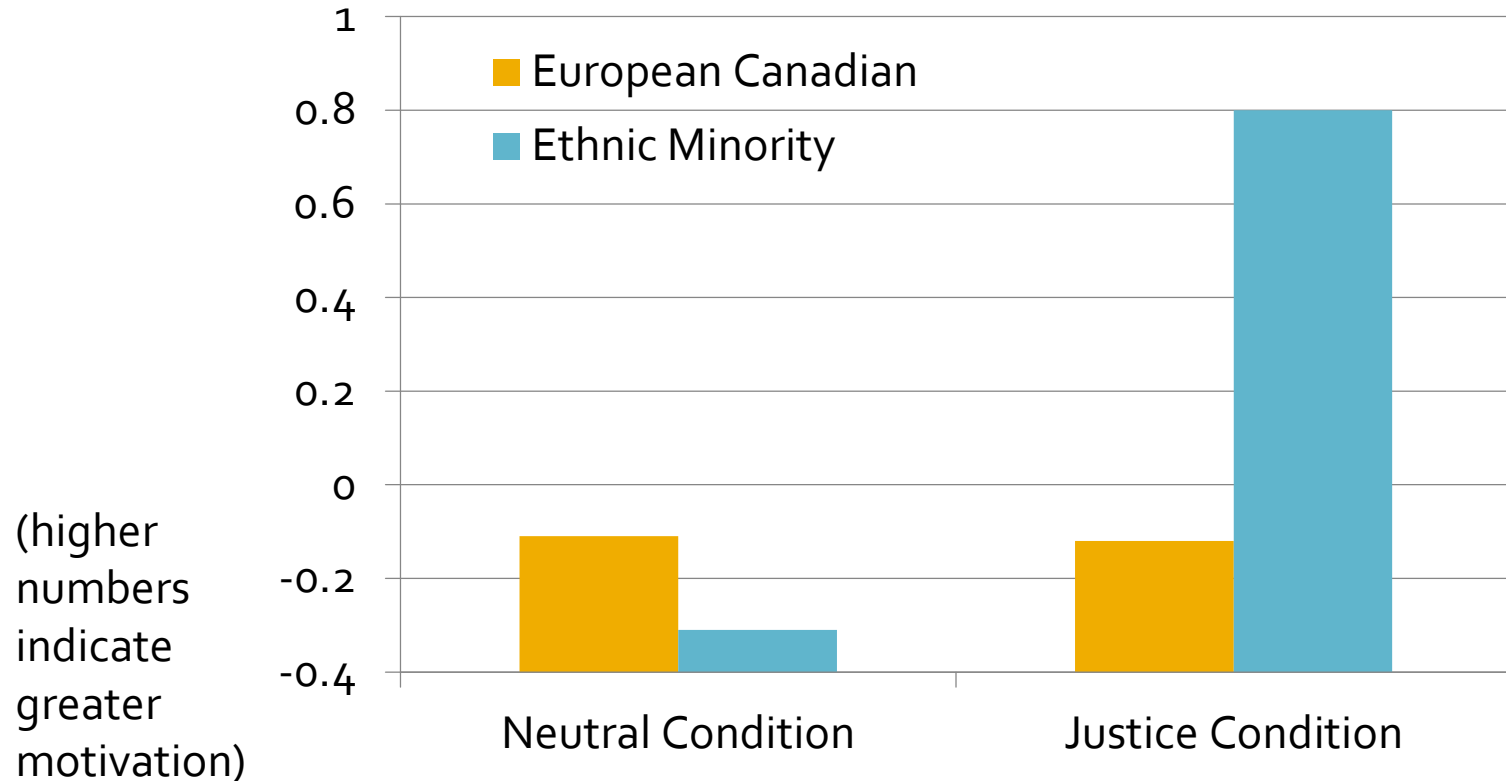
# Willingness to invest effort



# Willingness to invest effort



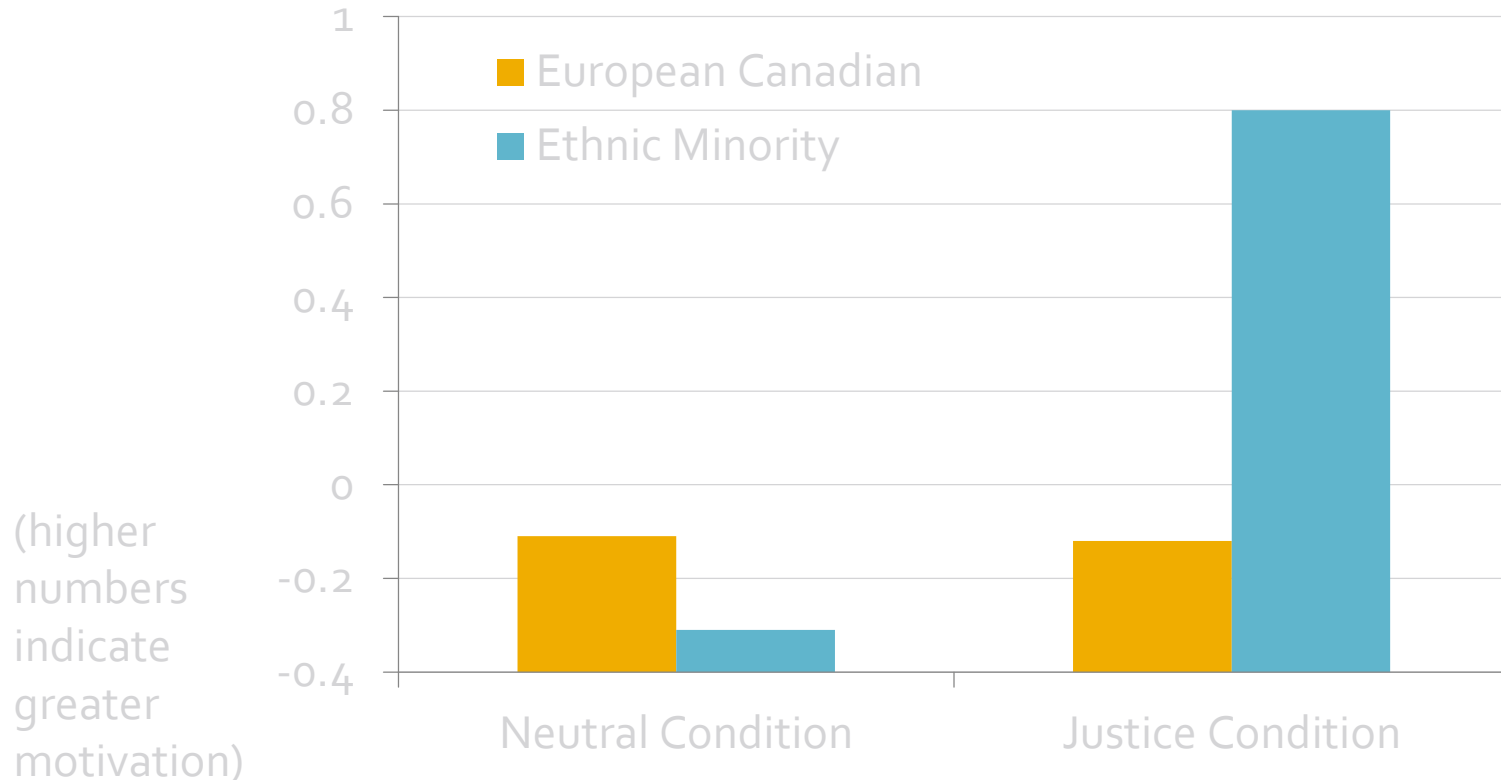
# Willingness to invest effort



Group membership X Condition,  
 $F(1, 70) = 6.25, p < .02$

# Among ethnic minority participants

## Justice beliefs facilitate motivation (willingness to invest effort)



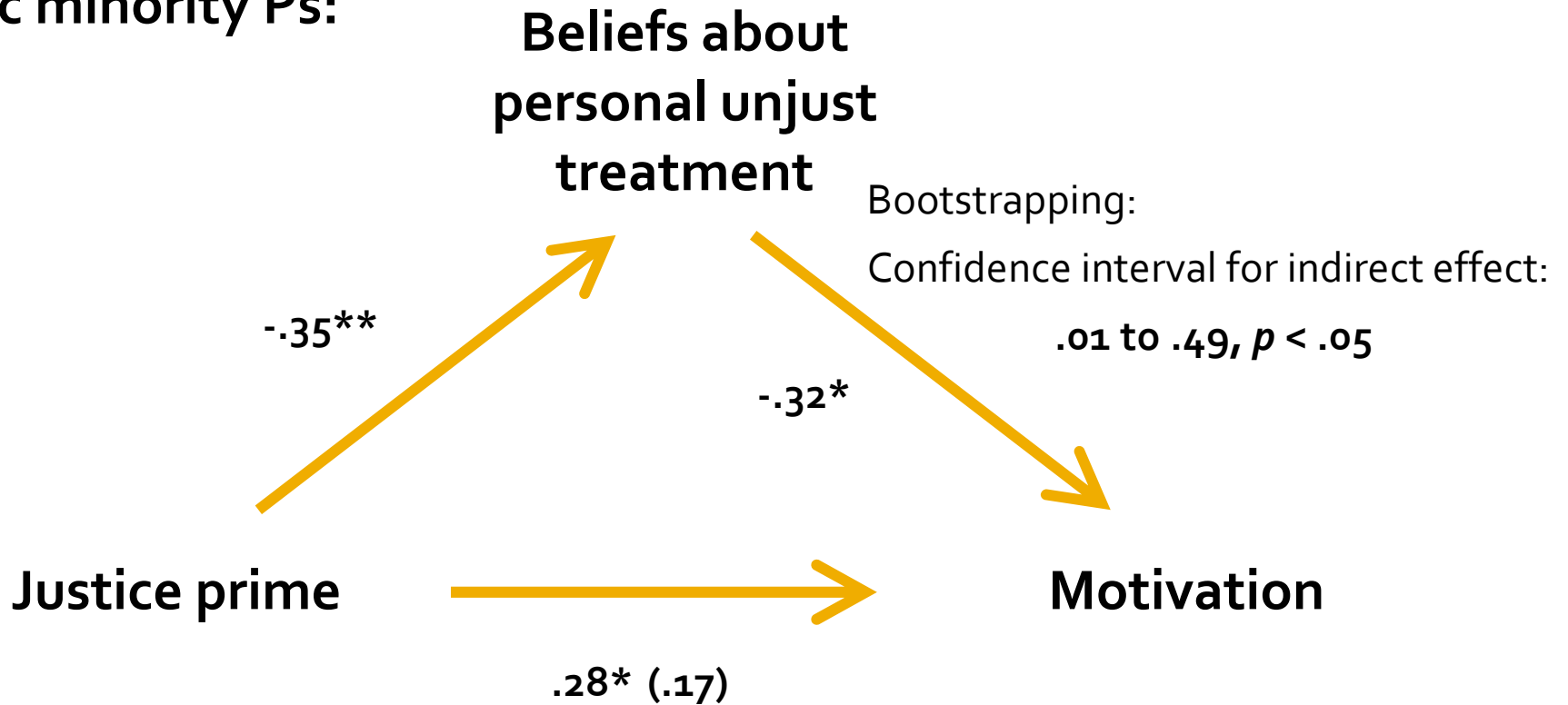
Group membership X Condition,  
 $F(1, 70) = 6.25, p < .02$

# Study 3: Mediator

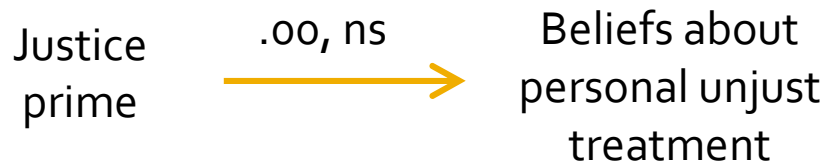
- **Personal relevance of societal justice**
- Measure before DV:
- Beliefs about *personal* unjust treatment
  - e.g., How likely do you think it is that people like you are treated differently than they would be in a perfectly fair world?

# Beliefs about personal unjust treatment

Ethnic minority Ps:



European Canadian Ps:



Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay (2011) *JSPS*

# Conclusions

- Among members of socially disadvantaged groups, justice beliefs enable long-term goal motivation
- Members of socially disadvantaged groups tie societal injustice to their own personal just / unjust treatment, more so than members of socially advantaged groups

# Implications

- Function of the justice motive
- Influence of environment on goal pursuit
- Calibrating motivation to justice beliefs: functional or not?
- Implications for well-being and equality: justice beliefs and actual justice

# Thank you



# Good news for Canada

Recent sociological advances have permitted researchers to establish a single unbiased index of fairness using objective indicators such as education levels, individual wealth and health outcomes within a given country. For instance, this index takes into account how well people's financial outcomes and professional success are determined by their hard work and the education they complete, as opposed to being attributable to demographic variables and biased perceptions.

This research has recently focused on Canada, and has found that in the past decade, Canada has become a much more fair place. In other words, it is becoming more and more likely that the hard work of Canadian citizens will translate into occupational success, and less likely that factors such as gender or family connections will have an influence. Furthermore, the inequalities between demographic groups in terms of physical health and emotional wellbeing are becoming smaller and smaller.

# Study 4: Cross-national sample

- Replicate the effect using a more diverse sample
- World Values Survey
  - Data available from citizens of 49 countries
  - Widely varying demographics

# Measures

- Justice beliefs
  - Hard work usually brings...  
*1 (a better life) to 10 (nothing, it's all luck or connections)*
  - People are usually poor because...  
*1 (laziness) vs. 2 (an unfair society)*
  - People have... of escaping poverty  
*1 (a good chance) vs. 2 (not much chance)*
- Combined into single index  
(higher numbers = higher fairness beliefs)

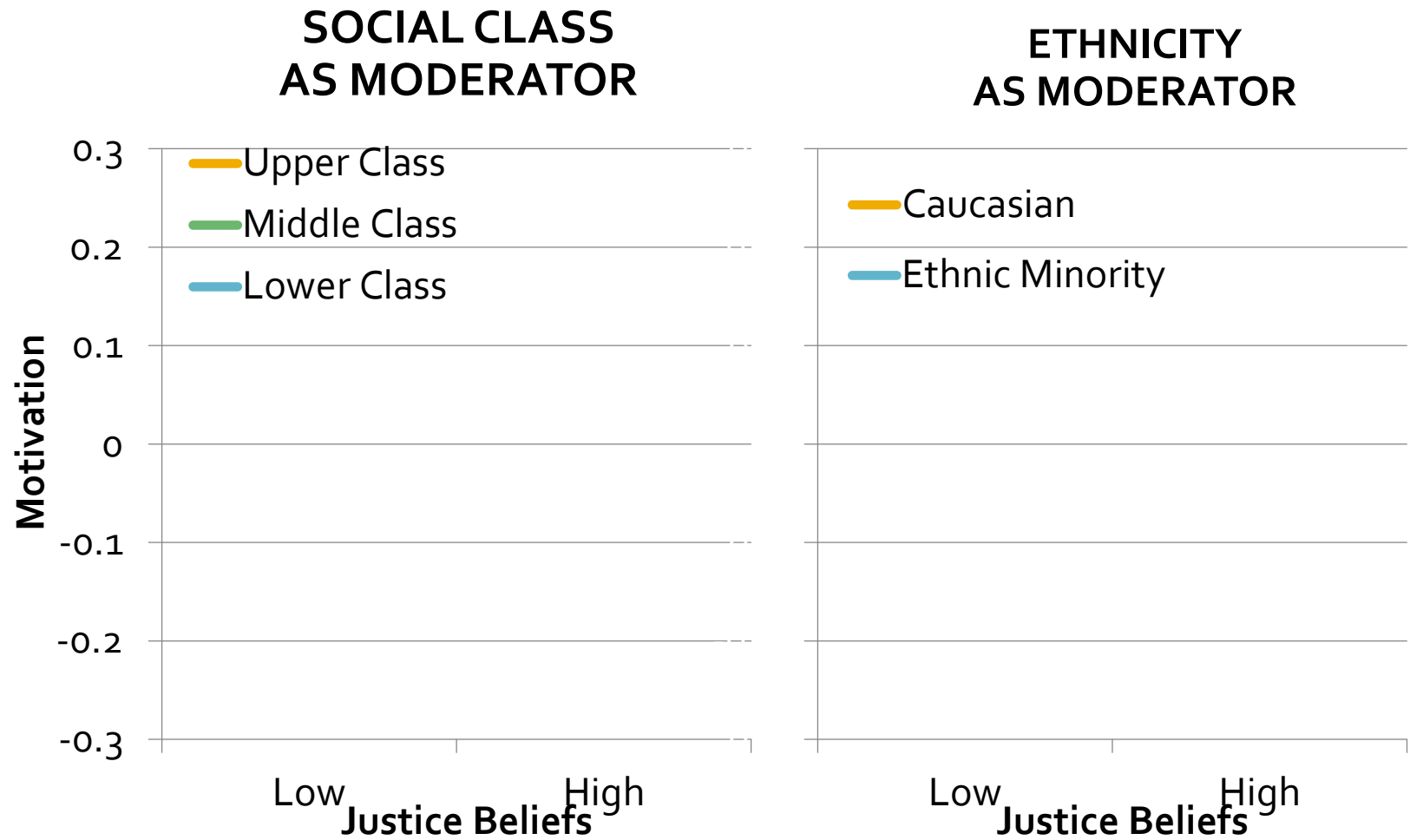
# Measures

- Justice beliefs
- Membership to a disadvantaged group
  - Social class  
Self-rating on a five-point scale from *lower class* to *upper class*
  - Ethnic status  
Countries where Caucasians formed largest single-ethnicity group,  $N = 17$   
Ethnic majority (Caucasian) vs. ethnic minority

# Measures

- Justice beliefs
- Membership to a disadvantaged group
- Motivation to pursue long-term goals
  - Relative prioritization of work vs. leisure  
*1 (it's leisure that makes life worth living, not work) to 5 (it's work that makes life worth living, not leisure)*
  - Importance of hard work  
*1 (very important) to 4 (not at all important)*
- Combined into single index  
(higher numbers = higher motivation)

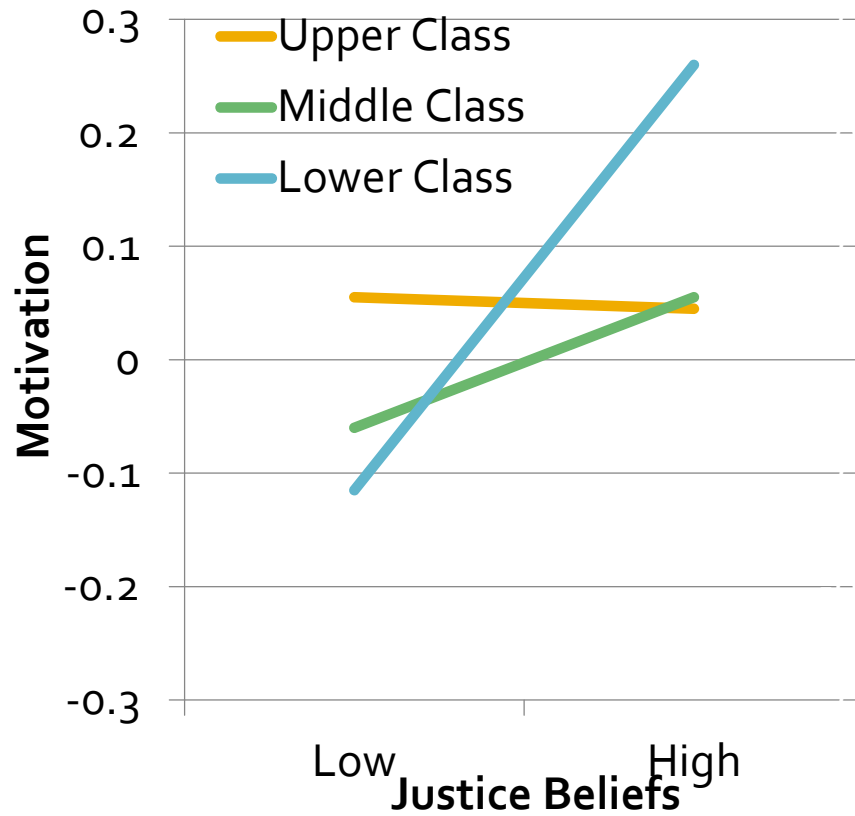
# Results



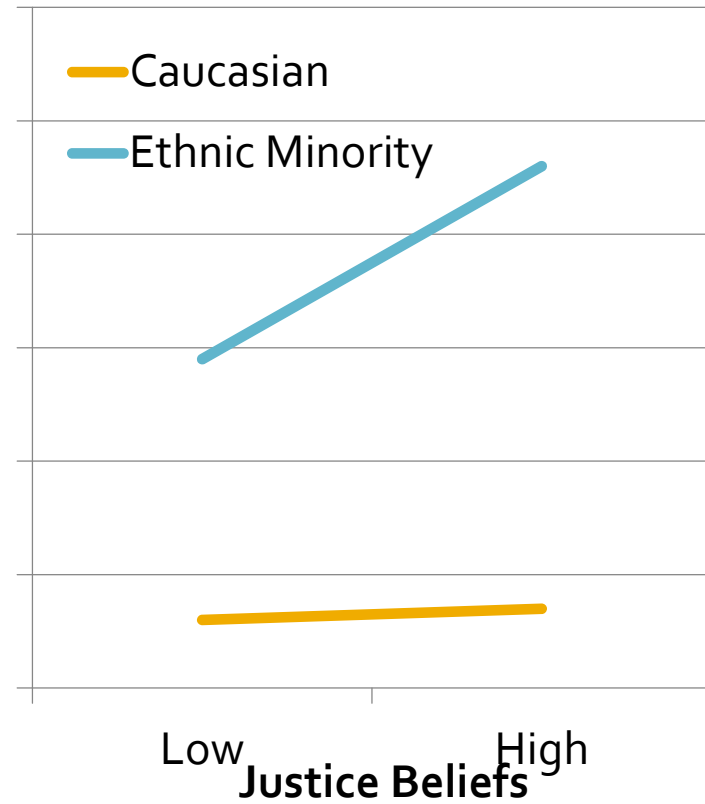
Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay (2011) *JPSP*

# Results

### SOCIAL CLASS AS MODERATOR



### ETHNICITY AS MODERATOR



Class X Condition,  
 $\beta = -.012, t(53390) = 2.68, p < .01$

Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay (2011) *JPSP*

Ethn.X Condition,  
 $\beta = -.09, t(14685) = 5.71, p < .001$