WHAT COUNTS AS WORK?: HOW IDENTITY AND STATUS SHAPE DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE PROCESSES

by

TENSHI KAWASHIMA

(Under the Direction of Jody Clay-Warner)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how identity and status processes shape perceptions of fair wages among employees and employers in the United States. The first study examines how work identity verification in everyday workplace interaction shapes perceptions of distributive justice. Using original survey data from 530 employees, I find that symbolic workplace rewards—such as praise and recognition—elevate workers' reward expectations rather than compensating for low pay. This challenges the widely held but untested assumption that passion-driven workers accept lower wages in exchange for high symbolic rewards. The second study uses these same data to explore whether the meaningfulness workers derive from their labor influences their responses to underpayment. The results reveal that meaningful labor (conceptualized as work identity *prominence*) serves as a psychological resource, buffering against the stress of underpayment and encouraging proactive responses to underpayment. In contrast, workers with less prominent work identities often feel the stress of underpayment more acutely and lack the resources and motivation to address unfair compensation. This study offers insights into the longstanding sociological inquiries about labor alienation and false consciousness by integrating core concepts of identity theory into the distributive justice framework. The third study shifts the

focus to the employer side of perceptions and examines how their valuation of employees' labor is influenced by status characteristics such as parenthood, gender, and leave-taking behavior. Using a conjoint experimental framework, I presented 870 real-life managers with fictitious employee profiles and analyzed their allocation of resources under different pay allocation rules. I find that employees who took leave in the past year are allocated raises approximately five percentage points lower than those who did not. Male managers were more likely than female managers to penalize leave-takers, and this penalty was intensified under the equity-based allocation rule, which links rewards to employee contributions. These findings highlight how practices framed as "fair" can perpetuate wage inequalities in social contexts where caregiving responsibilities are seen as individual issues.

INDEX WORDS: Distributive Justice, Equity Theory, Justice Evaluation, Status Value Theory, Reward Expectation, Identity Theory, Identity Verification, Identity Prominence, Identity Salience, Work, Labor, Work Value, Motherhood Wage Penalty, Ideal Worker Norm, Wage Disparities, Conjoint Analysis

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TENSHI KAWASHIMA

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TENSHI KAWASHIMA

Major Professor:	Jody Clay-Warner
Committee:	Dawn T. Robinson
	Justine Tinkler

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

To everyone whom I am lucky enough to call family. Thank you for always believing in me and forgiving my shortcomings. I dedicate this to you with all my gratitude.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is not perfect, but it is something I am truly proud of, and I am grateful to have accomplished something in my life that fills me with pride. In this section, I want to acknowledge the love and support I have received, whether in the form of mentorship, friendship, or partnership, that made it possible for me to dedicate years to the work I am passionate about. I have never taken, and will never take, for granted the people who have helped me along the way. My gratitude for this journey is something I will carry with me for years to come.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Jody Clay-Warner. Jody has taught me everything about being an independent researcher—how to ask meaningful research questions, design studies, analyze data, and write manuscripts. One of my most memorable and favorite assistantship tasks was when Jody shared a dataset with me and encouraged me to develop my own research question. This experience allowed me to be creative, and she gave the resources to support it. Jody has always prioritized providing high-quality training, even when it meant taking a more time-consuming or difficult path for her.

The reason I can take pride in my dissertation is because of Jody's meticulous attention to my work. She often paid as much, if not more, attention to my writing as I did, and never overlooked 'conceptual slippage.' She taught me the importance of structuring my arguments clearly (e.g., one paragraph one idea), and consequently I have come to embrace the process of deleting and rewriting until I am confident that arguments are clear and compelling.

Beyond her direct mentorship, Jody's *Social Psychology* and *Gender, Crime, and Justice* courses shaped my intellectual development. These courses helped me better understand the relationship between structure and agency in a concrete way, which is an insight I continue to come back to in my research. She also introduced me to justice frameworks as tools for understanding how inequality persists beyond organizational dynamics. Most importantly, Jody has always believed in me, even at times when I doubted myself. Her support over the years has meant more to me than I can express. I hope she doesn't mind remaining my imagined reader whenever I write academic manuscripts!

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my committee members, Drs. Justine Tinkler and Dawn T. Robinson, who have truly made up the dream team I have been fortunate to work with. Although I have never had the chance to express this, Justine has helped me feel comfortable expressing and articulating my ideas. She has an incredible talent for understanding what I am trying to say, even when my thoughts are not yet fully formed. When I struggled to articulate an idea and could only express fragments, Justine somehow pieced them together and helped me develop them into something meaningful. I am also deeply grateful for her mentorship, especially in research methodology—from *Research Methods* (which still is the best research methods class!) to introducing me to conjoint experiments. Justine has also helped me build connections with others who have supported me throughout the years, for which I am immensely grateful.

I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from the universe of knowledge and expertise of Dawn. She always welcomed me into her office with a delicious cup of tea to and a warm and engaging space to discuss research ideas, sociology, and broader topics related to academia and professionalization. I would leave her office feeling grateful for her

willingness to share valuable information and fortunate to have gained the knowledge and her insights on a variety of topics. Dawn always had a book or article recommendation to explore, and her suggestions helped me connect my research interests with theoretical perspectives in new and exciting ways. She has also become my role model for conferencing and networking. I hope one day I can navigate networking and exchange of ideas with the same ease, excitement, and authenticity as she does.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable mentorship I have received over the years from Drs. Gordon Gauchat, Noelle Chesley, Aki Roberts, Aurelien Mauxion, and Yingve Digernes. Gordon guided me through my very first research project, teaching me how to build on existing scholarship and develop my own ideas. He has also helped me develop analytical skills by spending all day in the computer lab with me and sharing many useful STATA commands. Noelle's class on *Gendered Institutions* at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee sparked my interest in gender and work, particularly devaluation theory and the ways different forms of rewards—both monetary and non-monetary—interact. Aki-sensei shaped my path as a quantitative researcher. After taking her statistics class, I discovered the joy of statistical analysis and felt inspired to continue learning, which has also influenced my approach to teaching. Drs. Mauxion and Digernes were my entry points into the discipline of sociology. Their classes were where I first became interested in sociology, and their support helped me navigate difficult material when I struggled. Looking back, I realize that their courses were what inspired me to pursue graduate school, and for that, I am incredibly grateful.

I am deeply grateful for the community within the sociology department, which I now call family. A full acknowledgment of every aspect of support I have received would be too long, so I will focus on what have directly influenced my academic journey.

First, I want to express my appreciation for my cohort members—Rebekah Groth, Steph Hanus-Knapp, Kylie Smith, Yue Zhang, and Chelsey Adams. Rebekah taught me that my English-speaking self is not as bad as I thought! I never thought I could be my authentic self while speaking English, but her friendship demonstrated that I can be myself and feel comfortable doing so. Steph does her best and excels in every aspect of grad school—whether taking classes as a student, doing research, teaching, or engaging in service activities—and seeing her set goals and accomplish them has been truly inspiring. I had the privilege of going through the major milestones of the Ph.D. program with Kylie, and I can confidently say that I wouldn't have made it through without her. Chelsey is thoughtful and brings lightness and humor to the group. She was also my favorite roommate during our first year in the program. Yue has offered support in thoughtful ways, for example, through sharing food, handmade Christmas ornaments and stockings that made me feel at home, or by consistently checking in on me throughout the years.

Beyond my cohort, many others have played an essential role in my academic and personal journey. In roughly the order in which I met them: Sarah Groh and Cerenity Collins have been role models and star mentors, always willing to share resources and offering incredible support to me and other students. They genuinely celebrate their friends' accomplishments, and when we struggle, they give us both practical solutions and emotional support. Keely Fox and Shelby Clark brought a fresh energy to the department, creating the foundation for the supportive community we have today. They are the brightest light on the fourth floor of Baldwin Hall. Phattra Marbang and Ciara Peebles have been unwavering sources of kindness and encouragement, always ready to help and making every moment together fun. Simply put, they are my best friends. Ziding Shen has been someone I could always count on,

helping me organized and focused. She has also fostered an environment where people can feel comfortable sharing their work and relying on one another. Maddy Williams has kept everyone healthy by organizing a running a group. She is also my favorite conference buddy. Ben Pham and Deven Douglas made me feel at home away from home, with their kindness and feeding me delicious food. Zara Jillani made learning about status fun and showed me how enjoyable exchanging ideas can be. I also admire her passion for learning. Winnie Liu and Leon Lee have brought warmth, as we shared struggles as international students, and sharing a meal occasionally with them has been such a pleasure. Rachael Weaver was a fantastic co-TA, and I learned so much from her about staying on top of responsibilities. She is also a great listener who always makes me feel validated. Lastly, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Melissa Leizear, Bryan Carver, and Kathy Lou, who have always gone above and beyond to help students. Their support ensured that I never had to worry about administrative hurdles, which made my journey through the program much smoother. I am fortunate to have been surrounded by such a supportive and generous community throughout my time in the department.

My family in Japan has always believed in me, and there is not a single day that I think of them without feeling overwhelmed by nostalgia and gratitude for their support in my decision to move to the U.S. to pursue higher education. Looking back, my mother was the first person to (informally) introduce me to *sociological imagination*. Whenever I faced interpersonal challenges, she would encourage me to consider what might be going on in the other person's life rather than judging them solely by their behavior in the moment. There are countless things I have learned from her, but the lessons most relevant to completing this dissertation have been persistence and patience—qualities she consistently exemplifies.

My father supported me financially in coming to the U.S. for my undergraduate education. He trusted me, believed in me, and invested everything he had to make this journey possible. I am forever indebted to his generosity. Every time I experience a sense of accomplishment, I think of him and remember that my life as it is today exists because of his decision to support me on this path. My siblings—Tsutae, Denryu, and Yoshika—have always supported their oldest sibling's wild dream of moving abroad without a single complaint. Knowing that I would get to see them during breaks kept me going, and it has been my joy to watch them grow into determined adults with whom I can now have deep, meaningful conversations.

Last but not least, I am profoundly grateful to my husband, Thiago. Pursuing a Ph.D. is intense work, and me focusing on my dissertation and other responsibilities often meant that he was the one picking up the slack at home. It is also worth noting that I initially followed him into graduate school—he is the one who informed me that graduate programs could be fully funded and introduced me to the world of academia. I deeply admire his growth mindset and his ability to take criticism, reflect, and continuously improve. Never did I imagine that I would find someone who would complete my soul from the opposite side of the globe! I also want to acknowledge my dog, Sparky, for his unconditional companionship. He followed me around the house, making sure I still loved him when I was absorbed in my writing. Sparky demanded me go outside at least three time a day, feeling the fresh breeze and watching his fluffy butt wiggle as he walked brought moments of joy in the middle of long working hours.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT COUNTS AS WORK?

In preparation for teaching *Gender and Work*, I reviewed a handful of Sociology of Work textbooks to find a definition of "work." After searching through multiple sources, I sensed a hesitancy among sociologists to define the term. In *The Sociology of Work*, Grint (2005) notes that no single objective definition of work exists:

> Work tends to be an activity that transforms nature and is usually undertaken in social situations, but exactly what counts as work is *dependent on the specific social circumstances under which such activities are undertaken* and, critically, *how these circumstances and activity are interpreted by those involved*. Whether any particular activity is experienced as work or leisure or both or neither is intimately related to the *temporal, spatial, and cultural conditions* in existence. (Grint 2005:6, emphasis added)

The definition of work is socially constructed, meaning that it is constantly negotiated across different social contexts. As Grint suggests, what counts as work depends on the circumstances in which labor takes place, the characteristics of the laborer, and the interpretation of the activity itself. The same task may or may not be recognized as work depending on various factors.

For example, in medical settings, the act of forming an emotional bond with patients is recognized as work when performed by male physicians. However, when female nurses engage in the same behavior, it is often dismissed as women simply "being women" (Gray 2010). Workers of marginalized groups, particularly women of color, must carefully manage their emotions in the workplace. Despite facing higher incidents of racism and microaggressions, they are often expected to suppress dissatisfaction and navigate the difficult balance of appearing authoritative while remaining likable and approachable (Ridgeway, Korn, and Williams 2022;

Wingfield 2010). These hidden efforts, however, might not be acknowledged by those around them as labor.

Certain types of labor are not perceived as labor even by the individuals performing it, especially in the realm of household labor. Cognitive labor, defined as the often invisible mental effort involved in planning and managing household responsibilities, is disproportionately performed by women (Daminger 2019). Yet, because this type of labor is not easily observable, even those who perform it may not always recognize that work has taken place.

What are the consequences of this ambiguity and subjectivity in 'what counts as work'? One way this ambiguity and subjectivity contributes to wage disparity is through their influence on wage fairness perceptions. In this dissertation, I draw on the distributive justice framework (Adams 1965; Homans 1974; Jasso 1980) to examine how the subjective evaluation of workers' contributions to an organization shapes individuals' perceptions of what constitutes a fair wage for themselves and for others.

Wage fairness perceptions are subjective and shaped by a variety of social factors. For instance, two employees of the same rank earning identical wages may perceive fairness differently: One might feel underpaid, while the other might feel that they are "fairly" compensated. Similarly, employees contributing equally might receive different compensation based on how pay allocators value their work. Therefore, in the above example of nurses' emotional labor, nurses may perceive themselves as contributing more due to the heightened emotional demands of their work and, consequently, believe they deserve higher compensation. However, this perspective may not be shared by those who determine their pay if emotional labor is not recognized as work.

This dissertation examines how employees and employers construct perceptions of a "fair" wage through two key questions: (1) What counts as an employee's contribution to an organization, and what factors shape its perceived value? (2) How do employees respond to underpayment, and what motivates them to address wage injustice? I collect two sets of original data: an online survey (N = 530) to analyze employees' perspectives and an online experiment (N = 870) to explore biases in how employers assess the value of employee contributions. This research extends the distributive justice framework by integrating insights from identity theory (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000) and the status value approach (Berger et al. 1968). In what follows, I outline an overview of each chapter and relevant theories.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

Chapters 2 and 3 explore perceptions of fair wages and responses to underpayment from the employees' standpoint. Specifically, I examine how individuals' work role identity shapes the value they see in their contributions and, in turn, influences distributive justice processes. Chapter 2 focuses on how work-role identity verification in everyday workplace interactions shapes employees' reward expectations and perceptions of distributive justice.

Perception of Distributive Justice

Perception of distributive justice is formed by the comparison between actual reward individuals receive and the reward they consider to be fair (Jasso 1980). According to Jasso's justice evaluation formula, the degree to which individuals perceive their reward as fair can be calculated as a logarithmic ratio of actual reward received and their idea of "just" reward, which is: $\ln(\frac{Actual\ Reward}{Just\ Reward})$. The idea of a just reward is guided by the equity principle (Homans 1974), which suggests that outcome (e.g., salary) should be proportional to individuals' inputs (e.g., contribution to organization) (Adams 1965). Most research on distributive justice focuses on

factors at the societal, organizational, and group level that affect people's assessment of *outcome* and their perceptions of *input*. Existing research, however, has not paid enough attention to the impact of identity processes on perceptions of injustice.

Identity Verification

Identity consists of the meanings that individuals attach to themselves. Particularly, role-based identity is formed when individuals internalize social positions and their meanings as part of their self-concept (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). Therefore, the meanings associated with work roles are shaped by the larger societal environment. Role-based identities also provide a set of behavioral expectations and guidance, and fulfilling these duties can lead to feelings of agency and achievement, thereby increasing efficacy-based self-esteem (Stets 2018). Individuals attach meanings to these roles and communicate these meanings during social interactions to maintain their role identities. This highlights the way in which society shapes the self, which in turn shapes behavior.

During social interactions, individuals strive to verify the meanings associated with a particular identity by seeking feedback from others that aligns with their identity standard, or set of meanings they ascribe to themselves in a given role (Burke and Stets 2023; Stryker and Burke 2000). This identity verification process operates as a feedback loop. First, individuals observe how others perceive them in the situation, a perception referred to as reflected appraisal. They then evaluate the degree to which the reflected appraisal aligns with their own identity standard. When the appraisal matches their identity standard, it results in positive emotions and satisfaction. When it does not, however, this discrepancy leads to negative emotions and distress.

Chapter 2 Main Findings

I find that identity nonverification, measured as the discrepancy between the identity standard and reflected appraisals, is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. Furthermore, I find that positive discrepancy, where a worker reports that their coworkers perceive them more positively than they perceive themselves, significantly influences reward expectations and perceptions of fairness. Specifically, one standard deviation increase in positive discrepancy corresponds to a $14,540 increase in annual salary expectations, which in turn reduces perceptions of fairness in their actual income. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals for whom work identity is more prominent. These findings have important implications for fair workplace practices, suggesting that symbolic rewards, such as praise and recognition, may not always compensate for the absence of material rewards. Instead, it is essential to provide a salary that aligns with the symbolic rewards employees receive to maintain perceptions of fairness.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 examines what happens after individuals form perceptions of distributive justice—their responses to underpayment. This chapter applies the concepts of identity salience and prominence to explore how the meaning workers derive from their labor influences their reactions to underpayment. I draw on research on work values (Kalleberg 1977) and identity-relevant stress (Thoits 2012) to test two competing hypotheses regarding the moderating role of work identity prominence and salience in the relationship between perceived underpayment and emotional responses. Figure 1.1 illustrates the proposed identity-justice process model.

Identity Salience and Prominence

Importance of an identity to an individual can be evaluated in two dimensions: salience and prominence. Identity salience refers to the likelihood that a specific identity will be activated in social interaction and is influenced by an individual's behavioral commitment to that identity (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Identity prominence, on the other hand, reflects the subjective and affective value that an individual places on a particular identity (McCall and Simmons 1978). Identity theory posits that various identities are organized into a hierarchy of salience and prominence, where a role-identity's salience and prominence reflect the relative commitment/value it has for individuals' overall conception of one's ideal self.

Emotional Responses to Distributive Injustice

Perceived distributive injustice can trigger negative emotions (Clay-Warner 2006; Hegtvedt and Parris 2014). These emotions may be intensified when individuals value receiving fair compensation for their work (Markovsky 1985; Younts and Mueller 2001), and when they view the source of injustice as being caused by the actions of others (Homans 1974).
Once these emotions are experienced, individuals may choose to express negative emotions they feel in the workplace. Expressing emotions allows others to see one's response, which may have consequences (Clay-Warner 2006). Emotions can be used to complain (Markovsky 1985) or try to persuade the decision-maker to change the outcomes or procedures, or to organize colleagues to advocate for change. These approaches directly address the injustice, but they come with costs, such as being punished by authority (Hegtvedt et al. 2009).

Jasso (1986:258) classified responses to perception of unfair reward into two categories, responsive and purposive behaviors. Purposive behavior is aimed at changing the level of justice evaluation, while responsive behavior does not seek to change the level of justice evaluation. In

other words, purposive behavior encompasses actions individuals take to redress perceived injustice, whereas responsive behavior generally refers to emotional responses, which may catalyze purposive behavior. Previous studies have identified conditions that hinder workers' ability to engage in purposive behavior. For example, when resource distribution is endorsed by their colleagues, workers may feel less certain about the unfairness they perceive and, consequently, may be less likely to express dissatisfaction (Johnson et al. 2016). However, we know little about the factors that motivate purposive action.

Chapter 3 Main Findings

I find that work identity prominence buffers the stress of underpayment by reducing negative felt emotions. However, once workers feel negatively about their pay, it amplifies the expression of negative emotions, as those with prominent work identities are more likely to voice dissatisfaction. These findings highlight a paradox: while meaningful work can mask negative emotions and render workers vulnerable to wage exploitation, it also equips them with the motivation to advocate for fair pay. In contrast, workers who find their job less meaningful often feel the stress of underpayment more acutely while lacking the resources and motivation to address unfair compensation.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 4

The fourth chapter shifts its focus to employers' perceptions of a "fair" wage for their employees. I examine how pay allocators evaluate employees' status characteristics, such as parenthood, gender, and leave-taking behavior, and how these evaluations influence wage decisions. I extend prior research in two ways. First, I use a conjoint experimental framework, which allows for the simultaneous manipulation of multiple attributes of fictitious employees, overcoming limitations of resume-based factorial designs (e.g., Albiston and Correll 2023;

Benard and Correll 2010). Second, I incorporate a manipulation of pay allocation rules, instructing allocators in the treatment condition to apply the equity principle (Homans 1974), which emphasizes the link between contribution and reward. I draw on the status value theory of distributive justice (Berger et al. 1968) to theorize that the value of *input* is influenced by larger cultural and societal context surrounding parenthood and leave-taking behavior.

Status Value Theory of Distributive Justice

The status value approach to distributive justice (Berger et al. 1968; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972) refines the concepts of "inputs" and "investment" as discussed in the equity theories by Homans (1974) and Adams (1965) by linking them to status inequalities in broader social structures. Berger and colleagues (1968) focus on the role of shared cultural expectations in the valuation of individuals' inputs across social positions. Individuals with higher-status characteristics are perceived as more competent, which in turn enhances the perceived value of their contributions. For example, fathers may be seen as more committed to their work organizations, and as a result, their inputs might be regarded as more valuable than those of mothers, who are often stereotyped as less dedicated to their jobs due to presumed caregiving responsibilities. Even if two employees make identical contributions to an organization, their perceived value may differ based on their status characteristics.

I conducted an online experiment (N = 870) to examine the wage penalties associated with parenthood, gender, and leave-taking behavior. In the experiment, real-life managers were asked to allocate a $10,000 raise between two fictitious employees whose attributes, such as gender, parenthood status, and leave-taking behavior, were randomly varied. In the treatment condition, managers were explicitly instructed to distribute raises equitably, linking

compensation directly to employees' contributions. This manipulation allowed me to test whether making an employee's contributions more salient intensified the status-based wage penalty.

Chapter 4 Main Findings

The results reveal that employees who had taken leave in the past year received raises about five percentage points lower than those who had not. Male managers penalized leave-takers more than female managers, with this penalty intensified under equity-based allocation rules. These findings reveal how practices framed as “fair” can perpetuate wage inequalities when caregiving responsibilities are viewed as individual issues. This study extends equity theory by demonstrating how status characteristics can skew the perceived value of employee contributions, particularly under equity-based allocation frameworks, which are paradoxically regarded as the gold standard for fair workplace practices (Cugueró-Escofet and Fortin 2022).

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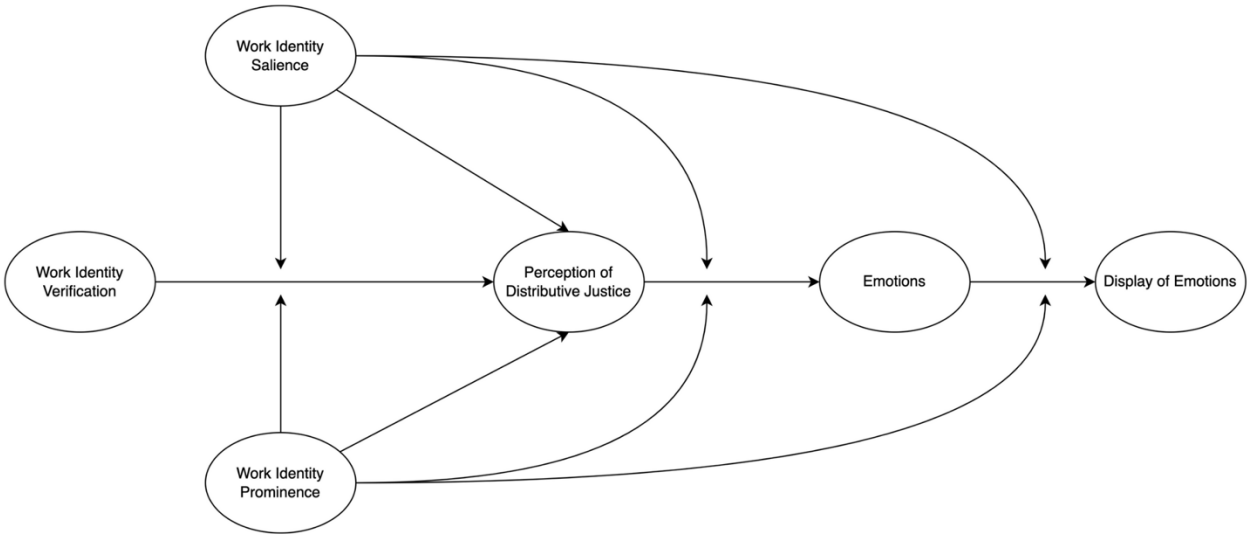
Figure 1.1 Justice-Identity Model



CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY NONVERIFICATION, REWARD EXPECTATIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE[1][2]

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ABSTRACT

This study uses insights from identity theory and distributive justice theory to understand cognitive responses to identity nonverification. Specifically, I investigate whether work identity verification in everyday workplace interactions shapes workers' reward expectations and perceptions of distributive justice. Using original survey data from 525 U.S. employees, I find that identity nonverification, measured as the discrepancy between the identity standard and reflected appraisals, is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. Furthermore, I find that positive discrepancy, where a worker reports that their coworkers perceive them more positively than they perceive themselves, significantly influences reward expectations and perceptions of fairness. Specifically, one standard deviation increase in positive discrepancy corresponds to a $14,540 increase in annual salary expectations, which in turn reduces perceptions of fairness in actual income. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals for whom work identity is more prominent. These findings have important implications for fair workplace practices, suggesting that symbolic rewards, such as praise or recognition, may not compensate for the absence of material rewards. Instead, it is essential to provide a salary that aligns with the symbolic rewards employees receive to maintain perceptions of fairness.

Workers' perception of fairness in the distribution of rewards has significant implications for individuals, organizations, and society. Empirical examination of distributive justice theories (Adams 1965; Homans 1974; Jasso 1980) has shown that perceived distributive injustice (i.e., underpayment) can lead to psychological stress, including negative emotions (Hegtvedt and Parris 2014; Schieman et al. 2020), job dissatisfaction (Clay-Warner, Reynolds, and Roman 2005; Narisada and Schieman 2016), and decreased organizational commitment (Colquitt et al. 2013; Conlon, Meyer, and Nowakovski 2005). Conversely, failure to perceive injustice can contribute to social inequality when societal and organizational factors limit individuals' ability to perceive and seek justice. Therefore, the distributive justice framework is an important lens through which to examine the perpetuation of wage inequality (Clay-Warner 2001; Tyler 2001).

While previous research has uncovered structural correlates of justice processes, such as income inequality and occupational segregation (Shepelak and Alwin 1986; Valet 2018) and organizational factors (Clay-Warner, Hegtvedt, and Roman 2005; Johnson et al. 2016; Molm, Quist, and Wiseley 1994; Narisada 2020; Van den Bos 2005), existing research has paid less attention to the impact of identity processes on perceptions of injustice. This paper aims to address this gap by examining how identity verification, or the alignment between reflected appraisals and the identity standard, shapes perceptions of distributive justice. To do so, I incorporate key concepts from identity theory (McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000) into the distributive justice framework.

This question is particularly interesting because salary is not the only identity-relevant feedback involved in maintaining a work identity. Work identity is a role-based identity, and its successful verification provides individuals with a sense of self-efficacy (Stets 2018). While monetary rewards play a significant role, I argue that the perception of being seen as competent

by others, as well as its alignment with one's work identity standard, is equally important for sustaining work identity. This study investigates whether identity verification in workplace interactions shapes perceptions of "just" rewards and explores how non-monetary feedback might influence justice evaluations. Examining this question also sheds light on how individuals may cognitively adjust their justice standard (i.e., amount of just reward) in response to identity-nonverifying feedback.

I use an original survey of full-time employees in the United States (N=525) to answer this question. This study conceptualizes identity nonverification as the discrepancy between identity standards and reflected appraisals. Using a series of OLS regression analyses, it investigates whether identity discrepancies shape respondents' perceptions of distributive justice. By bridging identity theory and distributive justice theory, this research offers a new perspective on the mechanisms underlying reward expectation and wage fairness perceptions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity Theory

Identity consists of the meanings that individuals ascribe to themselves, known as identity standards, which are communicated through social interactions. Particularly, role-based identities, such as student, spouse, and worker, emerge when individuals internalize the meanings of their social positions as part of their self-concept (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). For example, when individuals occupy a role of worker within the social structure, they may internalize meanings associated with being a good worker, such as being studious, responsible, and cooperative. Thus, role-based identities guide action by providing a framework for behavioral expectations. Fulfilling the expectations associated with a role identity can lead to feelings of agency and achievement, thereby enhancing efficacy-based self-esteem (Stets 2018).

Identity Verification

During social interactions, individuals strive to verify the meanings associated with a particular identity by seeking feedback from others that aligns with their identity standard, or set of meanings they ascribe to themselves in a given role, such as 'passionate teacher' in the context of a worker role identity (Burke and Stets 2023; Stryker and Burke 2000). This identity verification process operates as a feedback loop. First, individuals observe how others perceive them in the situation, a perception referred to as reflected appraisal. They then evaluate the degree to which the reflected appraisal aligns with their own identity standard. When the appraisal matches their identity standard, it results in positive emotions and satisfaction. When it does not, however, this discrepancy leads to negative emotions and distress. According to the control principle, which suggests people's preference for consistency, both positive and negative discrepancies can cause distress. In response to such discrepancies, individuals might engage in behavioral or cognitive strategies to reduce the mismatch.

Identity theory emphasizes that individuals are agents who act to accomplish identity verification. Agency is granted, however, in the context of a social hierarchy, where those in high status positions possess the resources to accomplish self-verification to a greater extent than those lower in the hierarchy (Stets and Harrod 2004; Thoits 1991). The inequality is evident especially when the identity requires competence and resources (e.g., academic/work identities) compared to non-task related identities (such as friend) (Stets and Harrod 2004). Resources can be personal (e.g., self-worth, mastery), interpersonal (e.g., liking, trust) and/or structural (e.g., occupation, education, income) (Stets 2018).

Similarly, when examining the relationship between social structure and identity verification, it is evident that the verification process can be challenging for certain groups of

people. Burke (Burke 1991; Burke and Stets 2023) highlights that interference from another social role can impede the verification loop. This interference can be a time-based conflict between roles, such as when family responsibilities hinder the fulfillment of work-related duties. Alternatively, it can be a meaning-based conflict. For instance, Burke's example of being both a man and a minister illustrates the concept of this conflict: the societal expectation for men often involves acting tough, whereas being a minister involves acting tender. Another relevant form of disruption to the work identity occurs in situations where individuals' behaviors have little or no impact, leading to their efforts going unrecognized (Burke 1991). This phenomenon occurs when efforts to verify identity are not easily visible or acknowledged in the workplace. The concept of 'invisible labor' (Crain, Poster, and Cherry 2016; Daniels 1987) exemplifies this, where individuals' efforts to affirm their identity meanings fail due to low visibility, resulting in negative discrepancy between the identity standard and reflected appraisals and feelings of unrecognized contributions.

Identity theory therefore emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between identity and social structure. Identity is shaped by the structure and, in turn, has the capacity to influence and reshape the social structure. The identity standard, or the meanings individuals attach to the self in a given situation, is shaped by societal expectations, particularly those associated with social roles. The identity verification process has significant implications for social action, as the theory posits that individuals strive for consistency between the feedback they receive and their identity standards. Consequently, identity serves as a guide for action. However, this agency is constrained by structural factors, as the extent to which individuals can achieve identity verification depends on the type of identity and the resources available to them.

Consequences of Identity Nonverification

Research consistently shows that identity verification enhances well-being and happiness, while identity nonverification negatively impacts one's self-concept. Identity verification is associated with higher levels of happiness (Stets et al. 2022), and nonverification is linked to depression, anxiety (Burke and Stets 2024; Gallagher, Marcussen, and Serpe 2022; Stets et al. 2023), and negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, shame, and guilt (Stets and Burke 2014; Trettevik 2016).

Although identity theory predicts that identity nonverification in either a positive or negative direction has detrimental effects, empirical research finds variation in emotional responses between under-evaluation and over-evaluation. The experience of negative emotion is more profound in cases of under-evaluation. For example, Stets and colleagues (Stets 2003, 2005; Stets and Asencio 2008) conducted experimental studies where participants received either expected, overly positive, or overly negative feedback from a confederate supervisor upon completing clerical tasks. The results revealed that respondents who received negative feedback felt a higher level of anger, resentment, and disgust compared to those who received expected feedback.

Those who received positive feedback, in contrast, reported higher levels of positive emotions, such as satisfaction, gratitude, and feelings of deservingness, compared to those who received expected feedback (Stets 2003, 2005; Stets and Asencio 2008). Survey research examining the effects of overly positive feedback, or positive discrepancy between identity standards and feedback, suggests that the degree of over-evaluation must be substantial before it causes distress. Previous studies found that slight over-evaluation, or being slightly overrated, is generally experienced positively (Burke and Stets 2014; Trettevik 2016). Furthermore, Burke

and Stets' (2014) study of moral identity suggests that this threshold may be higher in situations where moral dilemmas are lower. For example, in their study using a sample of college students, moral dilemma was rated as more salient in situations where students had to decide whether to allow a drunk friend to drive home, compared to situations like deciding whether to let their friend copy their exam answers. When situations are less relevant to moral identity, the threshold for over-evaluation was higher before negative emotions were experienced.

Therefore, the direction of discrepancy is an important consideration, as the experiences of over-evaluation and under-evaluation are not entirely symmetrical. Research examining both overall nonverification (i.e., nondirectional, collapsed across over- and under- evaluation) and directional nonverification (i.e., over- vs. under-evaluation) reports a negative correlation between the nonverification measure and the over-evaluation measure. This suggests that the overall nonverification measure primarily captures the experience of under-evaluation (Burke and Stets 2014; Trettevik 2016).

Furthermore, when both measures (nondirectional and directional) are assessed simultaneously in a single model, both remain statistically significant (Burke and Stets 2014; Trettevik 2016). The nondirectional measure is positively associated with negative emotions, whereas the directional, over-evaluation is negatively associated with such emotions. This indicates that among individuals experiencing similar levels of identity nonverification, those whose nonverification stems from positive discrepancy report less negative emotion.

Thus, despite identity control theory's prediction and its reliance on the self-consistency motive, empirical studies reveal the complexity of over-evaluation. Given these findings, the current study will consider both the nondirectional, overall identity discrepancy and the specific direction of identity discrepancy. The following sections will review literature on distributive

justice and hypothesize how both overall discrepancies and positive discrepancies may influence perceptions of distributive justice.

Reward Expectation and Perception of Distributive Justice

Perceptions of fairness in compensation are formed as a comparison between the reward one receives and what one believes to be a fair reward, often referred to as the just reward. According to Jasso's justice evaluation formula (1980), the perceived fairness of a reward can be expressed as the logarithmic ratio of the actual reward received to the perceived just reward: $\ln(\frac{Actual\ Reward}{Just\ Reward})$. The concept of just reward is rooted in the equity principle (Homans 1974), which posits that "outcomes" should be proportional to individuals' "inputs" (Adams 1965).

Equity theory describes a direct exchange relationship between two individuals (Person and Other) and argues that fairness is achieved when the outcome-to-input ratio equals one. In this framework, outcomes refer to the benefits gained from an exchange, minus the associated costs. Costs may include sacrifices made to participate in the exchange or risks incurred. Inputs represent the resources individuals contribute, such as effort, skills, experience, education, and training. Importantly, equity theory emphasizes the comparison of ratios rather than absolute outcomes. Thus, even if the Person receives a smaller reward than the Other, the exchange can still be perceived as fair if the Other's greater reward is seen as justified by a proportionally larger investment.

Identity Nonverification and Perception of Distributive Justice

Research on distributive justice often examines how societal, organizational, and group-level factors shape perceptions of both outcomes and inputs, ultimately influencing reward expectations. For example, Narisada (2020) expands the concept of inputs beyond individuals' effort by demonstrating that job pressure, measured as overwhelming demands and time

constraints, and the resulting work-family conflict, increase expectations of rewards, thereby negatively affecting perceptions of distributive justice. He further notes that this aligns with Sauer and May's (2017) argument that workers who experience a lack of recognition and low-quality relationships with coworkers and supervisors are more likely to feel entitled to higher compensation.

Building on this perspective, my first hypothesis predicts that, regardless of the direction of identity discrepancy, work identity nonverification is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. Previous studies indicate that identity nonverification is a source of stress and psychological discomfort (e.g., Burke and Stets 2024). This effect may be even more pronounced in the context of work identity, as work identity activation inherently involves labor. When individuals do not receive identity-verifying feedback in the workplace, it may feel especially burdensome, heightening their sense of unfair treatment.

Hypothesis 1: Work identity nonverification is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice.

Positive Discrepancy and Perception of Distributive Justice

In addition to measuring nonverification as the absolute discrepancy between reflected appraisals and identity standards (i.e., nondirectional), this study also includes a measure of directional identity discrepancy, following previous research (Gallagher et al. 2022; Trettevik 2016). A nondirectional measure alone cannot determine whether negative or positive discrepancy is driving changes in perception of distributive justice. To better understand whether the effects of nonverification stem from over- or under-evaluation, it is necessary to examine a directional discrepancy measure. Prior research suggests two possible explanations.

First, it is possible that over-evaluation, but not under-evaluation, leads to a decrease in perceptions of distributive justice. This can be explained by how individuals cognitively adjust their identity standards after receiving overly positive feedback. As Gallagher (2022:144) suggests, "cognitive responses to over-evaluation would attempt to shift the self-image to be more positive, whereas cognitive responses to under-evaluation would need to shift the self-image to be more negative."

Second, the opposite may also be true: under-evaluation, rather than over-evaluation, leads to lower perceptions of distributive justice. This prediction is informed by the alternative compensation hypothesis, which suggests that over-evaluation can function as alternative rewards that decrease financial reward expectation. In the following sections, I review relevant theories and literature that motivate these competing hypotheses.

Cognitive Adjustment Hypothesis

One way individuals cognitively respond to non-verifying feedback is by adjusting their identity standards. Those who receive over-evaluating feedback, where reflected appraisals exceed their identity standard, may raise their justice standard, leading them to feel entitled to higher compensation that aligns with their perceived over-evaluation. Conversely, individuals who receive under-evaluative feedback may lower their justice standard, reducing their expectations of fair compensation. This pattern is documented in Stets and colleagues' laboratory research (Stets 2003, 2005; Stets and Asencio 2008). In their experiment, participants acting as workers completed clerical tasks three times and received feedback immediately after each task. The researchers found that participants who were rewarded with points double their expected amount initially experienced feelings of satisfaction and gratitude. However, over the course of the three trials, these positive emotional responses to over-evaluation gradually weakened (Stets

and Asencio 2008). Stets (2003:118) explains that overly positive feedback signaling "you are good," led individuals to adjust their standards to this new level.

Individuals shifting their identity standard to match the over-evaluation has also been observed in survey research. Cast and Cantwell (2007) examine how discrepancies between people's self-view and their spouse's view of them lead to changes in self-view. For example, when a husband believes his wife is more intelligent than she believes herself to be, the wife's self-view also shifts in the direction that reflects his view of her. This further highlights the possibility that overly positive feedback raises the reward expectations, which, in turn, reduces the perception of distributive justice.

The status value approach (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972) to distributive justice provides insight into this process, describing how symbolic rewards granted to high-status individuals can shape their expectations of future rewards. Berger and colleagues (1972) argue that a person's status value influences how their inputs or investments in social exchanges are perceived. Specifically, people with high status characteristics (e.g., white, male) are culturally perceived as more competent, and this perceived competence enhances the value of their contributions. As a result, those with higher status and power are more likely to expect fair rewards and develop a sense of entitlement (Major, McFarlin, and Gagnon 1984; Sawaoka, Hughes, and Ambady 2015). Similarly, repeated instances of receiving over-evaluating feedback may lead individuals to raise their justice standard and reward expectation, which reduces their perception of distributive justice.

> Hypothesis 2: People who perceive that they are over-evaluated for their performance will have lower perceptions of distributive justice than people who perceive that they are fairly evaluated.

Alternative Compensation Hypothesis

Shifting our focus to the outcome side of the equity equation raises the question of whether the opposite effect may also be true. It is important to recognize that pay is not the only relevant outcome in the equity equation. Adams (2005:136) identifies a range of outcomes that employees may receive in an exchange relationship, including pay, intrinsic rewards, satisfying supervision, status symbols, poor working conditions, and seniority benefits. It should also be highlighted that the original equity theory conceptualizes 'outcome' as rewards minus costs, suggesting that individuals take into account multiple types of rewards and cost when evaluating their input-to-outcome ratio (Walster, Berscheid, and Walster 1973).

For example, Narisada and Schieman (2022) propose the alternative compensating rewards hypothesis, suggesting that certain job qualities can mitigate the negative impact of perceived pay injustice on job dissatisfaction. Their findings indicate that not all outcomes compensate for concerns about pay. Organizational and interpersonal-level resources, such as supervisor support, schedule flexibility, and advancement opportunities, serve as alternative forms of compensation, whereas individual-level resources, such as job challenge and autonomy, do not. This aligns with arguments distinguishing symbolic rewards from material rewards and how they might compensate each other.

This perspective leads to a competing hypothesis, which I call the alternative compensation hypothesis, opposing the cognitive adjustment hypothesis. It predicts that over-evaluative feedback (positive discrepancy) functions as an alternative compensating reward. That is, when individuals receive positive feedback from others at work, this symbolic reward may be perceived as part of the "outcomes" they receive in exchange for their labor, thereby enhancing their perception of distributive justice.

Hypothesis 3: People who perceive that they are over-evaluated for their performance will have higher perceptions of distributive justice than people who perceive that they are fairly evaluated.

Role of Work Identity Prominence

In this study, I further examine whether the importance of work identity to an individual's self-concept moderates the effect of work identity nonverification on perceptions of distributive justice. The significance of an identity is conceptualized through the idea of work identity prominence.

Identity prominence reflects the subjective and affective value an individual assigns to a given identity (McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Identity theory posits that individuals organize their various identities into a hierarchy of prominence, where a role-identity's position in this hierarchy reflects its relative importance in shaping one's ideal self.

Research suggests two ways in which identity prominence influences how individuals react to nonverification. First, identity nonverification is more psychologically harmful for prominent identities compared to those that are lower in prominence. This is because prominent identities share meanings with other identities within the self-concept. As a result, nonverification of a prominent identity causes nonverification in other identities, leading to a broader and more harmful impact.

Recent studies suggest that identity prominence moderates the effect of identity nonverification on psychological distress. Gallagher, Marcussen, and Serpe (2022) found that the impact of identity nonverification on psychological distress is particularly pronounced for obligatory identities, such as those related to being a spouse, parent, or worker, compared to

voluntary identities like religious identity. Because obligatory identities are typically time- and emotion-intensive (Gallagher 2016) and carry both cultural and personal significance (Burke and Stets 2009), their findings indicate that prominence of an identity intensifies emotional responses to identity nonverification. Burke and Stets (2024) further demonstrate that difficulties in enacting certain identities during the COVID-19 pandemic were associated with poor mental health, and this effect was stronger for prominent identities.

As discussed in relation to Hypothesis 1, psychological distress related to work increases the perceived value of *input,* which raises the reward expectation and leads to perceptions of distributive injustice (Narisada 2020). Building on this argument, Hypothesis 4 proposes that identity prominence moderates the relationship in Hypothesis 1, such that the effect of work identity nonverification on distributive justice perceptions is stronger for individuals whose work identity is more prominent.

Hypothesis 4: The negative effect of work identity nonverification on perceptions of distributive justice is amplified by work identity prominence.

The second way in which identity prominence shapes individuals' reaction to nonverification is by motivating them to put greater effort in perceptually controlling meanings to align with their identity standard during social interaction (Burke and Stets 2023). In other words, the self-consistency motive may be stronger for prominent identities compared to less salient or less personally significant identities (Stets and Asencio 2008).

Longitudinal research has shown that individuals work harder to verify an identity when it holds greater prominence. For example, Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker's (2014) study on the scientist identity among underrepresented college students in STEM fields found that identity

prominence predicted identity enactment, suggesting that subjective value placed on an identity motivates individuals to maintain the meanings associated with that identity.

These insights build upon the discussion of Hypothesis 2, Cognitive Adjustment Hypothesis, which predicts that positive identity discrepancy is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice due to the cognitive adjustment of justice standards in response to over-evaluation, which raises reward expectations. Given individuals' motivation to verify more prominent identities, Hypothesis 5 predicts that the impact of positive discrepancy on perceptions of distributive justice will be more pronounced for those with higher levels of work identity prominence.

Hypothesis 5: The negative effect of over-evaluation on perceptions of distributive justice is amplified by work identity prominence.

DATA AND METHODS

The data were collected through Prolific between April and May 2024. The inclusion criteria for the sample were (1) full-time employees (2) residing in the United States, (3) aged between 25 and 65, with (4) more than two years of work experience at their current organization. Participants also needed to regularly interact with other employees and not due to start a new job within the next month. The sample consists of 525 individuals. The survey took approximately 17 minutes to complete, and participants were compensated $3 for their time, which is equivalent to an hourly rate of $10.58.

Dependent Variables

Three dependent variables were used to measure respondents' perceptions of distributive justice.

Fair Pay was measured using a single item that asked, "On a scale of 0 to 10, how fair is the pay you receive in your job?" Responses ranged from 0 (=Unfair) to 10 (=Fair).

I also include *Perception of Underpayment* as a measure of distributive justice. Following Valet (2018), which modified Jasso's (1980) original justice evaluation formula, it is calculated as Justice Evaluation= $(-1)\times \ln(\frac{Actual\ Reward}{Just\ Reward})$. Actual reward was measured by asking, "What is your annual salary before any taxes or deductions?" Fair reward was assessed with the question, "Based on your education, training, experience, position, and effort, what annual salary do you feel would be fair?" In this formula, higher scores indicate greater perceived underpayment, a score of zero indicates perceived fairness, and negative scores indicate perceived overcompensation. The sample's mean justice evaluation score was 0.21, indicating a slight perception of undercompensation, which is consistent with findings from a large-scale household survey in Germany (Valet 2018).

Finally, I measure *Distributive Justice* via a nine-item scale (α = .95). Each of the items was rated on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree)

- "I am fairly rewarded for the amount of effort I put in."
- "I am fairly rewarded considering the responsibilities I have."
- "I am fairly rewarded in view of my experience."
- "I am fairly rewarded considering the amount of education and training I have."
- "Compared to my coworkers, I am fairly compensated for my work."
- "I feel that my compensation is in line with industry standards."
- "Where I work, the amount of pay employees receive is distributed fairly."
- "Where I work, employees receive an amount of fringe benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans) that are fair."
- "The overall rewards workers receive where I work are fairly distributed."

Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree), with an alpha reliability score of 0.80.

Independent Variables

Following previous studies (Gallagher et al. 2022; Trettevik 2016), this study conceptualizes identity verification as the discrepancy between the identity standard and reflected appraisals.

Identity Standard was measured using 13 bipolar characteristics associated with work identity meanings. Respondents rated themselves on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 for each characteristic. These characteristics included:

- Unskilled (0) / Skilled (10)
- Incompetent (0) / Competent (10)
- Incapable (0) / Capable (10)
- Unknowledgeable (0) / Knowledgeable (10)
- Not Motivated (0) / Motivated (10)
- Not Dedicated (0) / Dedicated (10)
- Lazy (0) / Hardworking (10)
- Irresponsible (0) / Responsible (10)
- Passive (0) / Assertive (10)
- Follower (0) / Leader (10)
- Unreliable (0) / Reliable (10)
- Dependent (0) / Independent (10)
- Unhelpful (0) / Helpful (10)

Each response was standardized and then summed ($\alpha = .96$) to create the identity standard measure. These adjectives were adapted from previous studies that involved measurement of competence and student identities (Brennan 2009; Burke and Reitzes 1981; Correll 2004; Ridgeway et al. 1998; Simon 1997; Trettevik 2016).

Reflected Appraisals was measured using the same 13 bipolar scales. Respondents were asked, “How do you think others at work in general would rate you on the following 13 characteristics?” The scores were standardized and summed to create the reflected appraisal measure ($\alpha = .96$).

Two measures of identity discrepancy were created using this semantic differential scale. First, *Squared Identity Discrepancy (Work Identity Meanings)* was calculated by subtracting the identity standard from the reflected appraisal and squaring the difference. To ease interpretation, this scale was standardized. Squaring the difference captures the distance between reflected appraisal and the identity standard, regardless of the direction of the discrepancy.

Next, *Positive Identity Discrepancy (Work Identity Meanings)* was constructed by simply subtracting the identity standard from the reflected appraisal (Positive Discrepancy=Reflected Appraisal−Identity Standard). Higher scores indicate that respondents believe others at work view them more positively on these characteristics (e.g., responsible, reliable, helpful) than they view themselves.

In addition to identity discrepancy based on work identity meanings, I measure identity discrepancy based on positive self-view (Gallagher et al. 2022, Stets and Harrod 2004). Three items were used to construct the measures.

- "How positively do you view yourself at work?" (0 = Not at all positively; 10 = Extremely positively)
- "How positively are you viewed by colleagues in your workplace?" (0 = Not at all positively; 10 = Extremely positively)
- "How positively are you viewed by supervisors in your workplace?" (0 = Not at all positively; 10 = Extremely positively)

Squared Identity Discrepancy (Positive Self-View) was calculated by subtracting reflected appraisal (the average of perceived positivity ratings by colleagues and supervisors) from the identity standard (positive self-view) and squaring the difference.

Positive Identity Discrepancy (Positive Self-View) was calculated by subtracting the identity standard from reflected appraisal. Higher scores indicate that respondents perceive they are viewed more positively by colleagues and supervisors than they view themselves.

Moderating Variable

Work Identity Prominence (α=.91) was measured using a scale consisting of the following eight items.

- "My work is an important part of my self-image."
- "My work is an important reflection of who I am."
- "I have come to think of myself as a professional in my field of work."
- "I have a strong sense of belonging to the professional community associated with my work."
- "Work is something I rarely even think about" (reverse coded).
- "If I had to give up my work, I would feel like I had lost an important part of myself."
- "I really don't have any clear feelings about my work." (reverse coded)
- "Being a member of my profession means more to me than just having a job."

Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). These items were adapted from previous studies (Brenner et al. 2014; Callero 1985; Markowski and Serpe 2021).

Control Variables

The analyses controlled for a range of demographic and job-related factors. Demographic variables included age, gender, race, marital status, and annual income. Job and work characteristics included weekly work hours, workplace authority, job autonomy, and opportunities for creativity.

Job Authority was measured as a total count of "yes" to the following four questions (Schieman et al. 2020). "Do you decide how much pay others receive?" "Do you have the authority to hire or fire others?" "Do you supervise or manage anyone as part of your job?" and if yes to the last question, "Do any of those people you manage supervise anyone else?"

Job Autonomy (α = .86) was measured as the mean of the following four items (Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Narisada and Schieman 2022; Schieman et al. 2020), including "I have the freedom to decide what I do in my job." "It is my own responsibility to decide how my

job gets done." "I decide when I start and finish work each day." "I have a lot to say about what happens in my job." Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree).

Job Creativity ($\alpha = .78$) was measured as the mean of the five items (Mirowsky 2011; Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Schieman and Young 2010) including "How often does your job require you to be creative?" "How often do you have the chance to learn new things?" "How often do you have the chance to solve problems?" "How often does your job allow you to develop your skills or abilities?" "How often does your job involve doing the same thing in the same way repeatedly?" Response ranged from 1 (Never) to 6 (Always).

Analytic Strategy

All three dependent variables are continuous, so Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression modeling was used in the analyses. To facilitate interpretation, all four identity discrepancy measures were standardized, and beta coefficients are reported for each model.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.1 reports the descriptive statistics of the sample. On average, respondents were 42 years old (SD = 10.29), worked approximately 42 hours per week (SD = 5.7), and earned $78,000 annually before taxes and deductions (SD = 47.46). Nearly half (48.19%) of the respondents identified as women, and the racial composition of the sample was 67.43% White, 13.9% Black, and 18.67% identifying as "other" races.

In terms of marital status, 36.19% of respondents were single, slightly more than half (53.52%) were married, and 9.33% were divorced or separated. The majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (47.24%) or higher, including Master's degrees (18.67%), Professional

degrees (1.90%), or Doctoral degrees (3.05%). Only two respondents (0.38%) had less than a high school diploma, and 7% reported a high school diploma as their highest level of education.

The average score for workplace authority was 1.25, indicating that respondents, on average, were responsible for supervising others, determining pay, or making hiring and firing decisions. The mean workplace autonomy score as well as creativity score was about 4 on a 1-6 scale, suggesting that the respondents' job allowed above-average job autonomy and creativity.

Turning to the focal variables of this study, the average score for *Fair Salary* ("How fair is the pay you receive in your job?") was 6.4 on a 0-10 scale. This perception is further reflected in the mean *Perception of Underpayment* score of 0.21, suggesting a slight sense of undercompensation.

On average, respondents "somewhat agreed" (mean = 3.84) with statements such as "I am fairly rewarded considering [*comparison*]," and with statements about the fair distribution of rewards in their workplace. For the *identity prominence* measure, respondents generally "somewhat agreed" with the related statements (mean = 4.19).

Pearson correlations between the study variables are reported in Table 2.2. The positive correlation between squared identity discrepancy and positive (linear) discrepancy ($r = .6$, $p < .01$) suggests that overall identity nonverification is primarily driven by positive identity discrepancy (i.e., over-evaluation). This contrasts with previous studies, which suggests the opposite pattern, where nonverification is driven by negative discrepancy (Burke and Stets 2014; Trettevik 2016).

Squared discrepancy is also positively correlated with perception of underpayment ($r = .241$, $p < .01$), indicating that greater distance between self-view and reflected appraisals is related to perceptions of wage as unjustly low. Squared discrepancy based on positive self-view

is also positively correlated with positive discrepancy based on positive-self view (r = .107, $p <$ .05), suggesting a similar pattern as above where overall discrepancy is driven by positive discrepancy, meaning respondents report that people at work in general view them more positively than they view themselves.

Squared discrepancy based on positive self-view is negatively associated with perception of pay fairness (r = -.225, $p < .01$) and distributive justice (r = -.206, $p < .01$). Positive discrepancy based on positive self-view is also negatively correlated with perception of pay fairness (r = -.167, $p < .01$) and perception of distributive justice (r = -.139, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 1: Identity Nonverification and Perception of Distributive Justice

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 presents the results regarding Hypothesis 1: Non-directional measurement of identity discrepancy and perceptions of distributive justice. Table 2.3 reports regression analyses examining the relationship between *squared identity discrepancy based on work identity meanings* and measures of wage fairness perceptions. Of the three outcome variables, the only significant model was for *perception of underpayment*. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.214$, b = 0.047, $p < 0.01$) indicates that a one standard deviation increase in squared identity discrepancy is associated with a 0.214 standard deviation increase in the justice evaluation score. Since a larger score reflects a perception of wages as unjustly low, this result suggests that greater distance between the identity standard and reflected appraisal is associated with stronger perceptions of being underpaid.

Table 2.4 examines non-directional identity discrepancy operationalized through *positive self-view*[3] (the discrepancy between how positively one views themselves at work and how

[3] This is different from positive discrepancy (Hypothesis 2). Here, identity discrepancy is operationalized as a non-directional (squared) discrepancy based on a positive self-view. It is measured using a questionnaire that asks how positively individuals view themselves compared to how positively they believe others perceive them. The squared discrepancy is calculated as (others' positive view – self's positive view)

positively they believe others view them). This model was significant for perception of salary fairness and perceptions of distributive justice. Specifically, one standard deviation increase in squared identity discrepancy is associated with a 0.37 decrease ($\beta = -0.15$, $b = -0.369$, $p < 0.01$) in perceptions of *salary fairness* and a 0.15 decrease ($\beta = -0.13$, $b = -0.149$, $p < 0.01$) in perceptions of *distributive justice*.

These findings generally show support for Hypothesis 1, which predicted that squared identity discrepancy (=identity nonverification regardless of direction) is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. Specifically, squared identity discrepancy based on work identity meanings was positively associated with perception of underpayment, and identity discrepancy based on positive self-view was negatively associated with perception of fair pay and distributive justice.

Hypotheses 2 vs 3: Positive Discrepancy and Perception of Distributive Justice

Hypothesis 2 predicted that over-evaluation, where reflected appraisal surpasses identity standard, is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice, while Hypothesis 3 predicted that over-evaluation is positively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. To test these hypotheses, I analyzed a subset of the sample who reported over-evaluation. This resulted in an analytical sample of 334 individuals (for analyses using work identity meanings) and 428 individuals (for analyses using positive self-view). Results reported in Table 2.6 generally suggest support for Hypothesis 2, negative association. Table 2.5 reports the models predicting three outcomes of fairness perceptions using the positive discrepancy measure (reflected appraisal - identity standard) based on work identity meanings. However, this measure did not predict any of the outcomes at $p < 0.05$.

Models reported in Table 2.6 operationalized positive discrepancy using positive self-view. This independent variable indicates the extent to which one believes others at work view them more positively than they view themselves. This positive discrepancy was significantly associated with *fair salary* (b = -0.681, β = -0.214, $p < 0.01$) and *distributive justice* (b = -0.209, β = -0.143, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that positive discrepancy based on a positive view of self is negatively associated with perceptions of wage fairness.

Hypotheses 4 and 5: The Role of Identity Prominence

Table 2.7 reports models that are almost identical to those in Table 2.2, which used squared discrepancy measures based on work identity meanings to predict the three fairness perception measures. The difference is that the models in Table 2.7 include measures of work identity prominence and the interaction term between prominence and identity discrepancy. Table 2.8 reports models that include the discrepancy measure based on positive self-view.

Table 2.7 indicates that work identity prominence is a strong indicator of wage fairness perception. Work identity prominence is positively associated with *fair salary* (b = 0.663, β = 0.121, $p < 0.01$) and *distributive justice* (b = 0.3937, β = 0.339, $p < 0.01$). Work identity prominence was not significantly associated with *perception of underpayment*, however. As for the moderating effect of prominence, the model predicting the nine-item *distributive justice* scale showed significant interaction effects between squared identity discrepancy and prominence (b = 0.1433, $p < 0.05$). Figure 2.1 visualizes the significant interaction effect between prominence and squared discrepancy predicting the perception of distributive justice. The figure indicates that those with lower levels of work identity prominence experience the effect of discrepancy more acutely compared to those with higher levels of identity prominence, whose perception of

distributive justice seems to be unaffected by the distance between the identity standard and reflected appraisal.

Table 2.8 shows that, when squared discrepancy is operationalized using positive self-view, work identity prominence has a significant moderating effect predicting *fair salary* (b = 0.210, $p < 0.05$). Figure 2.2 illustrates the interaction effect predicting perceptions of *fair salary*. This pattern is similar to that of Figure 2.1. This suggests that squared discrepancy impacts justice perception of those with lower work identity prominence more negatively than those with higher work identity prominence.

Tables 2.9 and 2.10 report linear identity discrepancy and its interaction effects with work identity prominence. Table 2.9 includes the linear discrepancy measure (positive discrepancy) based on work identity meanings. The only model that demonstrated a significant moderating effect of work identity prominence was the model predicting *perception of underpayment* (b = 0.030, $p < 0.05$). Figure 2.3 describes the moderating effect of identity prominence. It suggests that, among those with high identity prominence, positive identity discrepancy increases the perception of underpayment. In contrast, among those with lower work identity prominence, positive discrepancy tended to decrease the perception of underpayment, potentially serving as an alternative reward. This pattern is the opposite when the independent variable was the squared identity discrepancy, where prominence served as a buffer against the stress of identity nonverification.

Table 2.10 reveals that when positive discrepancy is measured using positive self-view, there is no significant moderating effect of identity prominence.

Supplemental Analyses: Does Positive Discrepancy Increase Reward Expectation?

I was intrigued by the finding that positive discrepancy (based on work identity meanings) increased the perception of underpayment. I speculated that this might partially stem from the fact that receiving feedback that surpasses one's identity standard raises reward expectations. To investigate this, I ran a series of additional analyses. I employed four independent variables: (1) positive discrepancy based on a positive view of self with a supervisor (i.e., the supervisor views the respondent more positively than the respondent views themselves), (2) positive discrepancy based on a positive view of self with colleagues, (3) positive discrepancy based on a positive view of self with supervisors and colleagues combined, and (4) positive discrepancy based on work identity meanings.

All models reported in Table 2.11 predict respondents' reporting of a "fair" annual salary (i.e., annual salary which respondents consider would be 'fair' based on their contribution) before tax and deductions. For ease of interpretation, this continuous outcome variable is divided by 1,000, making the dependent variable "fair reward" in thousands of dollars.

The only significant predictor was (4) positive discrepancy based on work identity meanings. The results indicate that a one standard deviation increase in positive discrepancy is associated with a $14,540 increase in respondents' perception of a "fair" reward ($b = 14.540$, $p < 0.01$), after controlling for their actual salary. This suggests that reflected appraisals exceeding the identity standard raise reward expectations.

I further examined whether the impact of positive discrepancy depended on work identity prominence (Table 2.12). The positive and significant coefficient ($b = 12.673$, $p < 0.01$), reveals that positive identity discrepancy increased reward expectations among those with higher

prominence (Figure 2.4) while decreasing reward expectations among those with lower prominence.

Summary of Findings

In summary, I found support for Hypothesis 1, which predicted that overall identity nonverification is negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice. Regarding the competing hypothesis between Hypothesis 2 (Cognitive Adjustment Hypothesis) and Hypothesis 3 (Alternative Compensation Hypothesis), Hypothesis 2 was supported, although only when linear (= positive) work identity discrepancy was conceptualized through positive self-view. When respondents reported that others in general at work viewed them more positively than they viewed themselves (positive discrepancy), this was negatively associated with perceptions of distributive justice (*fair pay* and *distributive justice* scale).

Hypothesis 4, which predicted that the negative effect of work identity nonverification on perceptions of distributive justice would be amplified by work identity prominence, was not supported. Although there was a statistically significant moderating effect of work identity prominence (Tables 2.7 and 2.8) in models predicting fair pay and distributive justice (but not justice evaluation), this effect appeared to be buffering rather than amplifying. Specifically, work identity prominence weakened the negative impact of work identity nonverification on distributive justice perceptions. In other words, work identity nonverification had a more substantial negative effect on perceptions of salary fairness among individuals with low work identity prominence, whereas those with higher work identity prominence were largely unaffected.

In contrast, Hypothesis 5, which predicted that the negative effect of over-evaluation on perceptions of distributive justice is amplified by work identity prominence, was supported. As

predicted by the Cognitive Adjustment Hypothesis, individuals with higher work identity prominence tended to perceive their wages as unjustly low when they experienced higher positive discrepancy. In other words, in response to over-evaluation at work, those with higher work identity prominence tended to adjust reward expectations to a higher standard, which in turn led to perceptions of their wages as unfairly low.

This pattern is demonstrated in supplemental analyses predicting fair annual salary. I found that one standard deviation increase in linear identity discrepancy (positive discrepancy) was associated with a $14,540 increase in the fair annual wage (i.e., amount of annual wage they consider would be 'fair' given their contribution). This association between over-evaluation and greater reward expectation (amount of 'fair' wage) was stronger among individuals with higher work identity prominence (Figure 2.4). Interestingly, Figure 2.3 suggests that among those with low work identity prominence, positive workplace discrepancy was likely perceived as an alternative reward, as low level of prominence buffered the association between over-evaluation and perception of wages as unjustly low.

DISCUSSION

This study examined cognitive responses to identity nonverification by investigating how it shapes perceptions of distributive justice. Specifically, I asked whether work identity nonverification, or receiving feedback in daily workplace interactions that does not align with one's self view, shapes workers' reward expectations and perceptions of distributive justice. To do so, I integrated key concepts from identity theory (McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000) into the distributive justice framework.

Sociological theories of distributive justice and identity theory share a common foundation in the principle of cognitive consistency (Stets and Ascencio 2008). Both theories

assume that discrepancies between individuals' expectations, which is referred to as the "identity standard" in identity theory and conceptualized as "just reward" in distributive justice theory, and the feedback or outcomes people receive can generate negative emotions that motivate efforts to reduce these discrepancies. Bridging these two theoretical perspectives has long been called for (Hegtvedt 2018; Stets 2005). Studies connecting these frameworks have conceptualized under- and over-reward as instances of identity nonverification, demonstrating that under-reward elicits negative emotions (Stets 2005; Stets and Osborn 2008). Therefore, research has established that under-reward represents identity-threatening feedback. However, existing research has not explored whether the everyday experience of work identity verification influences workers' perceptions of wage fairness.

Incorporating identity verification into the equity framework provides insights into how various types of identity-relevant feedback relate to one another. Burke and Stets (2023:238-239) state that reflected appraisals, self-appraisals, and actual appraisals all contribute to the verification process but how they interact with each other is yet to be uncovered. This study contributes to our understanding of how discrepancies between identity standards and reflected appraisals affect justice evaluations by offering insights into whether reflected appraisals compensate for deficits in actual appraisals, such as salary, or instead, raise standards for actual appraisal.

The findings suggest that over-evaluation, or the perception that others at work in general see an individual as more competent, responsible, helpful, or motivated than they see themselves, raises reward expectations. As a result, higher reward expectations lower perceptions of distributive justice. In response to identity nonverification, individuals may adjust their justice standard upward to match how others perceive them, which makes their actual wage feel unfair.

This provides insight into Burke and Stets' (2023) argument about how various forms of feedback interact with one another. In this study, reflected appraisals, when exceeding identity standards, seem to increase expectations for actual appraisals (i.e., salary).

This study found that identity nonverification is driven by over-evaluation, where respondents report a more positive view of self through others' perspectives compared to their own. Given that previous studies generally found under-evaluation to be the primary mechanism of nonverification (Burke and Stets 2014), a couple of potential biases should be acknowledged.

First, it is possible that respondents were influenced by the humility (modesty) bias. Humility bias refers to individuals' tendency to downplay their own abilities and attribute successful experience to external factors (Farah, Dobbins, and Cheng 1991). This might have caused them to report lower identity standards compared to reflected appraisals.

Second, the role of positivity bias in shaping respondents' reports of over-evaluation should be noted. Positivity bias refers to individuals' tendency to recall past experiences more favorably, hold positive expectations, and favor positive information in reasoning (Hoorens 2014; Matlin and Stang 1978). Given this, it is possible that the sample overestimated how positively others view them, potentially by mainly recalling more favorable workplace interactions with colleagues and supervisors. This bias might be correlated with identity prominence and reward expectation, such that individuals who overestimate others' view of them might have also over-reported the importance of work to their self-concept and reported inflated expectations for annual salary. Therefore, the possibility of a spurious relationship, where a third factor (positivity bias) is related to independent, moderator, and dependent variables in the model, cannot be fully eliminated. However, the observed negative effect of over-evaluation on perceptions of wage fairness indicates that even when individuals recalled positive experiences

in workplace interactions, they did not necessarily perceive their wages as fairer. Therefore, positivity bias is unlikely to undermine the central findings of this paper.

The findings of this paper have real-world implications, particularly regarding the incongruence between symbolic and material rewards accorded to certain types of labor. Research suggests that symbolic rewards, such as recognition and esteem, can obscure inequalities based on financial compensation. Valentino's study (2020) on occupational prestige in gendered occupations (both male- and female-dominated fields) finds that these occupations are often granted higher prestige and seen as socially valuable and esteemed. However, because many gendered occupations are financially devalued in the labor market, Valentino argues that society may symbolically reward these occupations as a way to compensate for the lack of material rewards. This contributes to the persistence of financial devaluation in gendered occupations.

Another area of research highlighting the inconsistency between symbolic and financial rewards is the experience of frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. While they were widely praised as heroes, their wages remained low, which led to increased frustration and skepticism among many frontline healthcare workers (Hennekam, Ladge, and Shymko 2020). A qualitative study further suggests that even financial bonuses were seen as inadequate, and many workers saw other forms of additional compensation such as hazard pay and salary increases as necessary to truly recognize their contributions (Pangborn et al. 2023). These empirical accounts, combined with my findings that positive identity discrepancy increases reward expectations, suggest that symbolic rewards should be accompanied by material compensation that aligns with the esteem attributed to workers' contributions to ensure fairness in the workplace.

Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations. It uses a cross-sectional design, thus, cannot establish causality. Therefore, the support for the Cognitive Adjustment Hypotheses should be interpreted with caution. While my results suggest that identity nonverification in everyday work interaction, only through over-evaluation, leads individuals to adjust their justice standard upward, thereby decreasing perceptions of distributive justice, all measures were collected at one time point. Future research should examine this process longitudinally to track changes in reflected appraisal and reward expectations over time to establish causal mechanisms more clearly.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study shows how identity and justice processes intertwine to shape justice standards, reward expectations, and perceptions of distributive justice. The findings show that over-evaluation plays a key role in shaping workers' perceptions of fairness by raising their expectations of a *just* reward. This pattern was especially strong among individuals with high work identity prominence. Ensuring that material compensations reflect the symbolic value attributed to workers' contributions is a necessary step toward fairer workplace practices.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics (N=525)

	Mean/Frequency	SD/%	Min.	Max.
Dependent Variables				
Fair Salary	6.4	2.56	0	10
Perception of Underpayment	0.21	0.22	-0.29	2.61
Distributive Justice	3.84	1.16	1	6
Independent Variables				
Squared Discrepancy based on Work Identity Meanings	71.78	269.57	0	2682.16
Squared Discrepancy based on Positive Self-View	.77	1.66	0	17
Positive Discrepancy based on Work Identity Meanings	0	8.48	-32.72	51.80
Positive Discrepancy based on Positive Self-View	0	.88	-3.72	4.11
Moderator				
Prominence	4.19	1.07	1.12	6
Control Variables				
Income in thousands	78.35	47.46	5	450
Age	42.13	10.29	25	65
Weekly Work Hour	41.72	5.76	30	80
Job characteristics				
Authority	1.25	1.31	0	4
Autonomy	3.93	1.31	1	6
Creativity	4.04	0.84	1	6
Education				
Less than HS	2	0.38%		

HS graduate	38	7%
Some college	113	21.52%
Bachelor's degree	248	47.24%
Master's degree	98	18.67%
Professional degree	10	1.90%
Doctoral degree	16	3.05%
Gender		
Woman	253	48.19%
Man	266	50.67%
Other	6	1.14%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	354	67.43%
Black/African American	73	13.90%
Other	98	18.67%
Marital Status		
Single	190	36.19%
Married	281	53.52%
Divorced/Separated	49	9.33%
Other	5	0.95%

Note. The independent variables in the model are standardized, however, unstandardized values are reported here. Note that the mean value of positive discrepancy measures (linear discrepancy) is still close to zero. This is because it is calculated as a sum of standardized items on each adjective associated with work identity meanings.

Table 2.2. Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Squared Discrepancy - Work Identity Meanings	-													
2. Squared Discrepancy - Positive View of Self	0.009	-												
3. Positive Discrepancy - Work Identity Meanings	0.600**	-0.068	-											
4. Positive Discrepancy - Positive View of Self	-0.003	0.107*	0.179**	-										
5. Fair Pay	-0.038	-0.225**	0.039	-0.167**	-									
6. Perception of Underpayment	0.241**	0.059	0.071	0.058	-0.482**	-								
7. Distributive Justice	0.003	-0.206**	0.052	-0.139**	0.772**	-0.388**	-							
8. Prominence	0.088*	-0.236**	0.038	-0.263**	0.264**	0.021	0.319**	-						
9. Income	-0.018	-0.011	0.022	-0.073+	0.326**	-0.272**	0.234**	0.058	-					
10. Age	-0.002	-0.064	0.036	-0.179**	0.139**	-0.056	0.046	0.157**	0.110*	-				
11. Education (ordinal)	0.094*	0.047	0.008	-0.147**	-0.041	0.024	-0.044	0.165**	0.337**	-0.056	-			
12. Weekly Work Hour	-0.011	0.162**	-0.038	-0.061	-0.022	-0.031	-0.039	0.076+	0.163**	0.010	0.117**	-		
13. Job Characteristics-Authority	-0.023	-0.008	-0.020	-0.073+	0.187**	0.009	0.154**	0.274**	0.282**	0.139**	0.170**	0.225**	-	
14. Job Characteristics-Autonomy	0.062	-0.209**	0.100*	-0.066	0.276**	-0.003	0.266**	0.338**	0.249**	0.125**	0.155**	0.014	0.404**	-
15. Job Characteristics-Creativity	0.029	-0.183**	0.057	-0.155**	0.205**	0.053	0.225**	0.544**	0.207**	0.112*	0.191**	0.054	0.251**	0.465**

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.3. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Squared Work Identity Discrepancy based on Work Identity Meanings (N=525)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Squared Discrepancy (Identity meanings)	-0.045	-0.018	0.047**	0.214	0.016	0.014
	(0.102)		(0.009)		(0.048)	
Income in thousands	0.016**	0.296	-0.001**	-0.309	0.005**	0.196
	(0.002)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.009	0.037	-0.001	-0.051	-0.004	-0.038
	(0.011)		(0.001)		(0.005)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.246	-0.048	0.001	0.003	-0.237*	-0.102
	(0.213)		(0.019)		(0.100)	
Other	-0.751	-0.031	0.062	0.030	-0.117	-0.011
	(0.957)		(0.084)		(0.448)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.088	0.012	0.048+	0.076	0.173	0.052
	(0.303)		(0.027)		(0.142)	
Other	-0.438	-0.067	0.007	0.012	-0.103	-0.035
	(0.267)		(0.024)		(0.125)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.552*	0.108	-0.009	-0.020	0.208+	0.090
	(0.235)		(0.021)		(0.110)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.202	-0.023	0.081*	0.108	0.022	0.006
	(0.394)		(0.035)		(0.185)	
Other	0.972	0.037	-0.075	-0.033	0.169	0.014
	(1.076)		(0.095)		(0.504)	
Education	-0.442**	-0.179	0.015	0.072	-0.186**	-0.166
	(0.106)		(0.009)		(0.050)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.029	-0.066	-0.000	-0.004	-0.013	-0.065
	(0.018)		(0.002)		(0.009)	
Job Authority	0.076	0.039	0.013	0.077	0.021	0.023

	(0.089)		(0.008)		(0.042)	
Job Autonomy	0.321**	0.165	-0.004	-0.022	0.140**	0.158
	(0.095)		(0.008)		(0.044)	
Job Creativity	0.223	0.073	0.025*	0.096	0.175**	0.127
	(0.139)		(0.012)		(0.065)	
Constant	5.386**		0.197*		3.631**	
	(1.037)		(0.091)		(0.486)	
R squared	0.216		0.174		0.163	

$^{+}p < 0.1$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$

Table 2.4. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Squared Work Identity Discrepancy based on Positive View of Self at Work (N=334)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Squared Discrepancy (Positive Self-View)	-0.038	-0.014	0.039**	0.164	-0.010	-0.008
	(0.137)		(0.012)		(0.064)	
Income in thousands	0.015**	0.286	-0.001**	-0.284	0.004**	0.169
	(0.003)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.011	0.040	-0.000	-0.019	-0.004	-0.030
	(0.015)		(0.001)		(0.007)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.235	-0.045	-0.015	-0.033	-0.203	-0.086
	(0.278)		(0.025)		(0.131)	
Other	0.321	0.012	0.040	0.016	0.084	0.007
	(1.380)		(0.126)		(0.650)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.257	0.033	0.020	0.029	0.139	0.039
	(0.404)		(0.037)		(0.190)	
Other	-0.600+	-0.087	-0.004	-0.007	-0.098	-0.031
	(0.353)		(0.032)		(0.166)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.623*	0.119	-0.026	-0.057	0.217	0.092
	(0.300)		(0.027)		(0.141)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.426	-0.042	0.116*	0.131	-0.080	-0.018
	(0.558)		(0.051)		(0.263)	
Other	0.623*	0.119	-0.026	-0.057	0.217	0.092
	(0.300)		(0.027)		(0.141)	
Education	-0.438**	-0.168	0.011	0.046	-0.118+	-0.100
	(0.142)		(0.013)		(0.067)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.037	-0.074	-0.000	-0.004	-0.020	-0.088

	(0.026)		(0.002)		(0.012)	
Job Authority	0.122	0.062	-0.001	-0.004	0.078	0.088
	(0.112)		(0.010)		(0.053)	
Job Autonomy	0.418**	0.206	-0.004	-0.025	0.185**	0.201
	(0.121)		(0.011)		(0.057)	
Job Creativity	0.022	0.007	0.050**	0.188	0.086	0.063
	(0.177)		(0.016)		(0.083)	
Constant	6.059**		0.112		3.821**	
	(1.427)		(0.130)		(0.672)	
R squared	0.225		0.166		0.165	

$^{+}p < 0.1$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$

Table 2.5. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Positive Work Identity Discrepancy (over-evaluation) based on Work Identity Meanings (N=525)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Positive Discrepancy (Identity meanings)	0.040	0.016	0.016^{+}	0.074	0.040	0.034
	(0.102)		(0.009)		(0.048)	
Income in thousands	0.016**	0.296	-0.001**	-0.320	0.005**	0.194
	(0.002)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.009	0.036	-0.001	-0.050	-0.004	-0.039
	(0.011)		(0.001)		(0.005)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.255	-0.050	0.000	0.000	-0.244*	-0.105
	(0.214)		(0.019)		(0.100)	
Other	-0.752	-0.031	0.048	0.023	-0.131	-0.012
	(0.957)		(0.086)		(0.448)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.079	0.011	0.058*	0.092	0.176	0.053
	(0.302)		(0.027)		(0.142)	
Other	-0.428	-0.065	0.007	0.013	-0.097	-0.033
	(0.268)		(0.024)		(0.125)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(.)		(.)		(.)	
Married	0.565*	0.110	-0.015	-0.033	0.211^{+}	0.091
	(0.235)		(0.021)		(0.110)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.200	-0.023	0.088*	0.116	0.029	0.007
	(0.394)		(0.036)		(0.185)	
Other	0.993	0.038	-0.086	-0.038	0.172	0.014
	(1.075)		(0.097)		(0.504)	
Education	-0.446**	-0.181	0.020*	0.096	-0.184**	-0.165
	(0.106)		(0.010)		(0.050)	

Weekly Work Hour	-0.029	-0.066	-0.000	-0.002	-0.013	-0.064
	(0.018)		(0.002)		(0.009)	
Job Authority	0.081	0.041	0.011	0.068	0.022	0.025
	(0.089)		(0.008)		(0.042)	
Job Autonomy	0.314**	0.161	-0.002	-0.012	0.137**	0.155
	(0.095)		(0.009)		(0.044)	
Job Creativity	0.223	0.073	0.024+	0.094	0.175**	0.126
	(0.139)		(0.013)		(0.065)	
Constant	5.426**		0.177+		3.637**	
	(1.036)		(0.093)		(0.486)	
R squared	0.216		0.135		0.164	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.6. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Positive Work Identity Discrepancy (over-evaluation) based on Positive View of Self at Work (N=428)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Positive Discrepancy (Positive Self-View)	-0.681**	-0.214	0.021	0.075	-0.209**	-0.143
	(0.142)		(0.014)		(0.069)	
Income in thousands	0.015**	0.291	-0.001**	-0.300	0.005**	0.201
	(0.003)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.008	0.031	-0.001	-0.049	0.000	0.002
	(0.012)		(0.001)		(0.006)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	0.102	0.020	-0.018	-0.040	-0.120	-0.051
	(0.230)		(0.022)		(0.111)	
Other	0.822	0.035	-0.021	-0.010	0.477	0.044
	(1.011)		(0.098)		(0.489)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	-0.038	-0.005	0.063+	0.091	0.096	0.027
	(0.347)		(0.034)		(0.168)	
Other	-0.372	-0.057	-0.002	-0.003	-0.055	-0.019
	(0.283)		(0.027)		(0.137)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.490*	0.096	-0.012	-0.025	0.121	0.052
	(0.248)		(0.024)		(0.120)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.314	-0.033	0.122**	0.145	-0.086	-0.020
	(0.447)		(0.043)		(0.216)	
Other	0.659	0.028	-0.064	-0.030	-0.025	-0.002
	(1.052)		(0.102)		(0.509)	
Education	-0.529**	-0.219	0.019+	0.088	-0.180**	-0.162
	(0.113)		(0.011)		(0.054)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.032	-0.069	-0.001	-0.028	-0.012	-0.056

	(0.021)		(0.002)		(0.010)	
Job Authority	0.145	0.074	0.010	0.058	0.038	0.043
	(0.095)		(0.009)		(0.046)	
Job Autonomy	0.303**	0.156	-0.003	-0.020	0.143**	0.160
	(0.101)		(0.010)		(0.049)	
Job Creativity	0.141	0.047	0.024+	0.090	0.141+	0.103
	(0.149)		(0.014)		(0.072)	
Constant	6.296**		0.236*		3.491**	
	(1.172)		(0.113)		(0.567)	
R squared	0.259		0.128		0.180	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.7. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Interaction Term between Squared Discrepancy based on Work Identity Meanings and Prominence (N=525)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Squared Discrepancy (Work Identity Meanings)	-0.273^{+}	-0.107	0.043**	0.194	-0.118^{+}	-0.102
	(0.139)		(0.013)		(0.064)	
Work Identity Prominence (standardized)	0.663**	0.121	-0.018^{+}	-0.084	0.393**	0.339
	(0.114)		(0.011)		(0.056)	
Discrepancy x Prominence	0.242^{+}		0.007		0.143*	
	(0.125)		(0.011)		(0.057)	
Income in thousands	0.017**	0.324	-0.001**	-0.320	0.006**	0.233
	(0.002)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.003	0.014	-0.001	-0.045	-0.008	-0.068
	(0.011)		(0.001)		(0.005)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.367^{+}	-0.072	0.004	0.010	-0.309**	-0.133
	(0.208)		(0.019)		(0.096)	
Other	-0.645	-0.027	0.058	0.028	-0.054	-0.005
	(0.930)		(0.084)		(0.428)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.079	0.011	0.050^{+}	0.079	0.167	0.050
	(0.295)		(0.027)		(0.136)	
Other	-0.428^{+}	-0.065	0.007	0.012	-0.097	-0.033
	(0.260)		(0.024)		(0.119)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.523*	0.102	-0.010	-0.022	0.191^{+}	0.082
	(0.228)		(0.021)		(0.105)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.219	-0.025	0.080*	0.107	0.012	0.003
	(0.383)		(0.035)		(0.176)	
Other	0.953	0.036	-0.075	-0.033	0.158	0.013
	(1.045)		(0.095)		(0.481)	

Education	-0.498**	-0.202	0.016+	0.078	-0.219**	-0.196
	(0.104)		(0.009)		(0.048)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.032+	-0.073	-0.000	-0.001	-0.015+	-0.074
	(0.018)		(0.002)		(0.008)	
Job Authority	0.024	0.013	0.015+	0.091	-0.010	-0.012
	(0.088)		(0.008)		(0.040)	
Job Autonomy	0.282**	0.145	-0.003	-0.015	0.117**	0.132
	(0.092)		(0.008)		(0.042)	
Job Creativity	-0.152	-0.050	0.035*	0.134	-0.047	-0.034
	(0.152)		(0.014)		(0.070)	
Constant	5.041**		0.208*		3.427**	
	(1.010)		(0.092)		(0.464)	
R squared	0.262		0.179		0.243	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.8. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Interaction Term between Squared Discrepancy based on Positive Self-View and Prominence (N=525)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Squared Discrepancy (Positive Self-View)	-0.081	-0.032	0.012	0.054	-0.115	-0.010
	(0.139)		(0.013)		(0.064)	
Work Identity Prominence	0.574**	0.122	-0.012	-0.057	0.364**	0.313
	(0.122)		(0.011)		(0.057)	
Discrepancy x Prominence	0.210*		0.002		-0.023	
	(0.090)		(0.008)		(0.042)	
Income in thousands	0.017**	0.325	-0.002**	-0.324	0.006**	0.235
	(0.002)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.001	0.004	-0.001	-0.044	-0.007	-0.062
	(0.011)		(0.001)		(0.005)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.317	-0.062	0.005	0.012	-0.300**	-0.129
	(0.207)		(0.019)		(0.096)	
Other	-0.482	-0.020	0.048	0.023	-0.035	-0.003
	(0.924)		(0.087)		(0.429)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.082	0.011	0.059*	0.093	0.149	0.045
	(0.292)		(0.027)		(0.136)	
Other	-0.399	-0.061	0.003	0.005	-0.089	-0.030
	(0.258)		(0.024)		(0.120)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.525*	0.102	-0.015	-0.034	0.189+	0.081
	(0.227)		(0.021)		(0.105)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.177	-0.020	0.083*	0.110	0.045	0.011
	(0.381)		(0.036)		(0.177)	
Other	0.929	0.035	-0.082	-0.036	0.096	0.008
	(1.041)		(0.098)		(0.483)	
Education	-0.504**	-0.204	0.020*	0.096	-0.204**	-0.182
	(0.104)		(0.010)		(0.048)	

Weekly Work Hour	-0.029	-0.066	-0.000	-0.010	-0.012	-0.061
	(0.018)		(0.002)		(0.008)	
Job Authority	0.026	0.014	0.011	0.067	-0.012	-0.013
	(0.087)		(0.008)		(0.040)	
Job Autonomy	0.254**	0.130	0.002	0.013	0.102*	0.116
	(0.093)		(0.009)		(0.043)	
Job Creativity	-0.127	-0.042	0.033*	0.126	-0.041	-0.030
	(0.150)		(0.014)		(0.070)	
Constant	5.430**		0.182+		3.381**	
	(1.015)		(0.095)		(0.471)	
R squared	0.273		0.134		0.239	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.9. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Interaction Term between Positive Discrepancy based on Work Identity Meanings and Prominence (N=334)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Positive Discrepancy (Work Identity Meanings)	-0.815	-0.303	-0.108^{+}	-0.454	-0.530	-0.434
	(0.698)		(0.065)		(0.323)	
Work Identity Prominence	0.578**	0.250	-0.032*	-0.155	0.324**	0.309
	(0.154)		(0.014)		(0.071)	
Discrepancy x Prominence	0.156		0.030*		0.105	
	(0.141)		(0.013)		(0.065)	
Income in thousands	0.017**	0.324	-0.001**	-0.295	0.005**	0.216
	(0.003)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.006	0.021	-0.000	-0.016	-0.007	-0.054
	(0.014)		(0.001)		(0.007)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.375	-0.072	-0.009	-0.019	-0.282*	-0.119
	(0.272)		(0.025)		(0.126)	
Other	0.667	0.024	0.043	0.018	0.288	0.023
	(1.343)		(0.125)		(0.622)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.241	0.031	0.020	0.029	0.130	0.037
	(0.392)		(0.037)		(0.182)	
Other	-0.583^{+}	-0.084	-0.004	-0.007	-0.088	-0.028
	(0.342)		(0.032)		(0.159)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.614*	0.118	-0.031	-0.067	0.210	0.089
	(0.292)		(0.027)		(0.135)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.405	-0.040	0.102*	0.115	-0.074	-0.016
	(0.545)		(0.051)		(0.252)	
Other	2.330^{+}	0.097	-0.148	-0.070	0.550	0.051
	(1.223)		(0.114)		(0.566)	
Education	-0.510**	-0.196	0.012	0.052	-0.160*	-0.135

	(0.138)		(0.013)		(0.064)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.031	-0.063	-0.000	-0.003	-0.017	-0.075
	(0.026)		(0.002)		(0.012)	
Job Authority	0.050	0.025	0.004	0.021	0.038	0.043
	(0.110)		(0.010)		(0.051)	
Job Autonomy	0.354**	0.175	-0.002	-0.010	0.149**	0.162
	(0.119)		(0.011)		(0.055)	
Job Creativity	-0.368+	-0.122	0.063**	0.237	-0.137	-0.100
	(0.193)		(0.018)		(0.090)	
Constant	5.818**		0.175		3.708**	
	(1.408)		(0.131)		(0.652)	
R squared	0.273		0.185		0.244	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.10. Wage Fairness Perceptions Regressed on Interaction Term between Positive Discrepancy based on Positive Self-View and Prominence (N=428)

	Fair Salary		Perception of Underpayment		Distributive Justice	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Positive Discrepancy (Positive Self-View)	-0.968*	-0.304	0.065	0.229	-0.018	-0.013
	(0.434)		(0.042)		(0.206)	
Work Identity Prominence	0.393**	0.169	-0.005	-0.025	0.337**	0.315
	(0.134)		(0.013)		(0.063)	
Discrepancy x Prominence	0.121		-0.014		-0.029	
	(0.120)		(0.012)		(0.057)	
Income in thousands	0.017**	0.314	-0.001**	-0.305	0.006**	0.241
	(0.003)		(0.000)		(0.001)	
Age	0.006	0.023	-0.001	-0.048	-0.002	-0.013
	(0.012)		(0.001)		(0.006)	
Gender (ref=Man)						
Woman	-0.024	-0.005	-0.015	-0.032	-0.208+	-0.089
	(0.230)		(0.023)		(0.109)	
Other	0.940	0.040	-0.030	-0.014	0.493	0.046
	(1.001)		(0.098)		(0.474)	
Race (ref=White)						
Black	0.018	0.002	0.060+	0.086	0.113	0.031
	(0.344)		(0.034)		(0.163)	
Other	-0.376	-0.058	-0.002	-0.003	-0.058	-0.019
	(0.280)		(0.027)		(0.132)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)						
Married	0.465+	0.091	-0.010	-0.023	0.111	0.047
	(0.245)		(0.024)		(0.116)	
Divorced/Separated	-0.313	-0.033	0.121**	0.143	-0.104	-0.024
	(0.442)		(0.043)		(0.209)	
Other	0.654	0.028	-0.063	-0.030	-0.017	-0.002
	(1.039)		(0.102)		(0.492)	
Education	-0.548**	-0.227	0.019+	0.088	-0.199**	-0.179
	(0.112)		(0.011)		(0.053)	

Weekly Work Hour	-0.032	-0.070	-0.001	-0.032	-0.014	-0.065
	(0.020)		(0.002)		(0.010)	
Job Authority	0.085	0.043	0.012	0.069	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.096)		(0.009)		(0.045)	
Job Autonomy	0.271**	0.139	-0.002	-0.012	0.124**	0.139
	(0.100)		(0.010)		(0.048)	
Job Creativity	-0.104	-0.035	0.029+	0.108	-0.051	-0.037
	(0.165)		(0.016)		(0.078)	
Constant	5.961**		0.236*		3.154**	
	(1.167)		(0.114)		(0.553)	
R squared	0.282		0.132		0.236	

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.11. Supplemental Analysis- Does Positive Discrepancy Increase Reward Expectation? Positive Identity Discrepancy (over-evaluation) Predicting Just Reward ($ in thousands)

	Supervisor Positive Discrepancy		Colleagues Positive Discrepancy		Supervisor + Colleagues Positive Discrepancy		Work Identity Meanings Positive Discrepancy	
	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β	b/se	β
Supervisor Positive Discrepancy	0.454	0.005						
	(2.866)							
Colleagues Positive Discrepancy			1.283	0.014				
			(3.051)					
Supervisor+Colleague Positive Discrepancy					0.917	0.011		
					(2.887)			
Positive Discrepancy based on Identity Meanings							14.540**	0.194
							(2.761)	
Income in thousands	1.011**	0.713	1.011**	0.713	1.011**	0.713	1.020**	0.698
	(0.052)		(0.052)		(0.052)		(0.060)	
Age	-0.060	-0.009	-0.055	-0.008	-0.055	-0.008	-0.037	-0.005
	(0.243)		(0.241)		(0.242)		(0.300)	
Gender (ref=Man)								
Woman	-0.778	-0.006	-0.808	-0.006	-0.846	-0.006	-2.890	-0.020
	(4.680)		(4.647)		(4.667)		(5.618)	
Other	-3.531	-0.006	-3.666	-0.006	-3.695	-0.006	-1.755	-0.002
	(20.509)		(20.483)		(20.501)		(27.904)	
Race (ref=White)								
Black	7.790	0.037	7.824	0.037	7.839	0.037	-1.722	-0.008
	(7.043)		(7.035)		(7.040)		(8.158)	
Other	-1.342	-0.008	-1.378	-0.008	-1.337	-0.008	-0.218	-0.001

	(5.746)		(5.741)		(5.743)		(7.126)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)								
Married	-1.256	-0.009	-1.250	-0.009	-1.243	-0.009	-1.158	-0.008
	(5.033)		(5.031)		(5.032)		(6.056)	
Divorced/Separated	28.678**	0.113	28.746**	0.113	28.677**	0.113	33.338**	0.119
	(9.075)		(9.068)		(9.070)		(11.276)	
Other	-9.465	-0.015	-9.394	-0.015	-9.394	-0.015	-8.363	-0.013
	(21.336)		(21.329)		(21.333)		(25.436)	
Education	4.554*	0.070	4.591*	0.071	4.586*	0.071	3.287	0.045
	(2.285)		(2.282)		(2.285)		(2.861)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.159	-0.013	-0.145	-0.012	-0.155	-0.013	-0.078	-0.006
	(0.417)		(0.418)		(0.417)		(0.532)	
Job Authority	0.132	0.003	0.087	0.002	0.104	0.002	-0.660	-0.012
	(1.933)		(1.935)		(1.935)		(2.257)	
Job Autonomy	-0.967	-0.019	-0.860	-0.017	-0.919	-0.018	-1.947	-0.035
	(2.042)		(2.060)		(2.049)		(2.453)	
Job Creativity	7.205*	0.090	7.274*	0.091	7.268*	0.091	10.697**	0.127
	(3.028)		(3.018)		(3.027)		(3.579)	
Constant	-18.855		-20.661		-19.918		-31.565	
	(23.484)		(23.873)		(23.762)		(28.837)	
R squared	0.575		0.575		0.575		0.593	
N	428		428		428		334	

$^{+}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2.12. Supplemental Analysis- Fair annual wage ($ in thousands) predicted by positive identity discrepancy (work identity meanings) and work identity prominence (N=334)

	Interaction with Prominence	
	b/se	β
Linear Identity Discrepancy (positive discrepancy)	-46.845**	-0.625
	(14.141)	
Prominence	-6.088+	-0.094
	(3.113)	
Discrepancy x Prominence	12.673**	
	(2.864)	
Income in thousands	1.019**	0.698
	(0.059)	
Age	-0.065	-0.009
	(0.293)	
Gender (ref=Man)		
Woman	-1.893	-0.013
	(5.512)	
Other	2.777	0.004
	(27.212)	
Race (ref=White)		
Black	-1.764	-0.008
	(7.940)	
Other	-0.063	-0.000
	(6.936)	
Marital Status (ref= Single)		
Married	-2.853	-0.020
	(5.906)	
Divorced/Separated	28.284*	0.101
	(11.036)	
Other	-9.431	-0.014
	(24.769)	
Education	3.121	0.043
	(2.803)	
Weekly Work Hour	-0.012	-0.001
	(0.519)	
Job Authority	0.265	0.005

	(2.234)	
Job Autonomy	-1.603	-0.028
	(2.407)	
Job Creativity	11.746**	0.140
	(3.919)	
Constant	-10.670	
	(28.514)	
R squared	0.617	

$^{+}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 2.1. The Effect of Squared Identity Discrepancy (Work Identity Meanings) on Perception of Distributive Justice by Work Identity Prominence

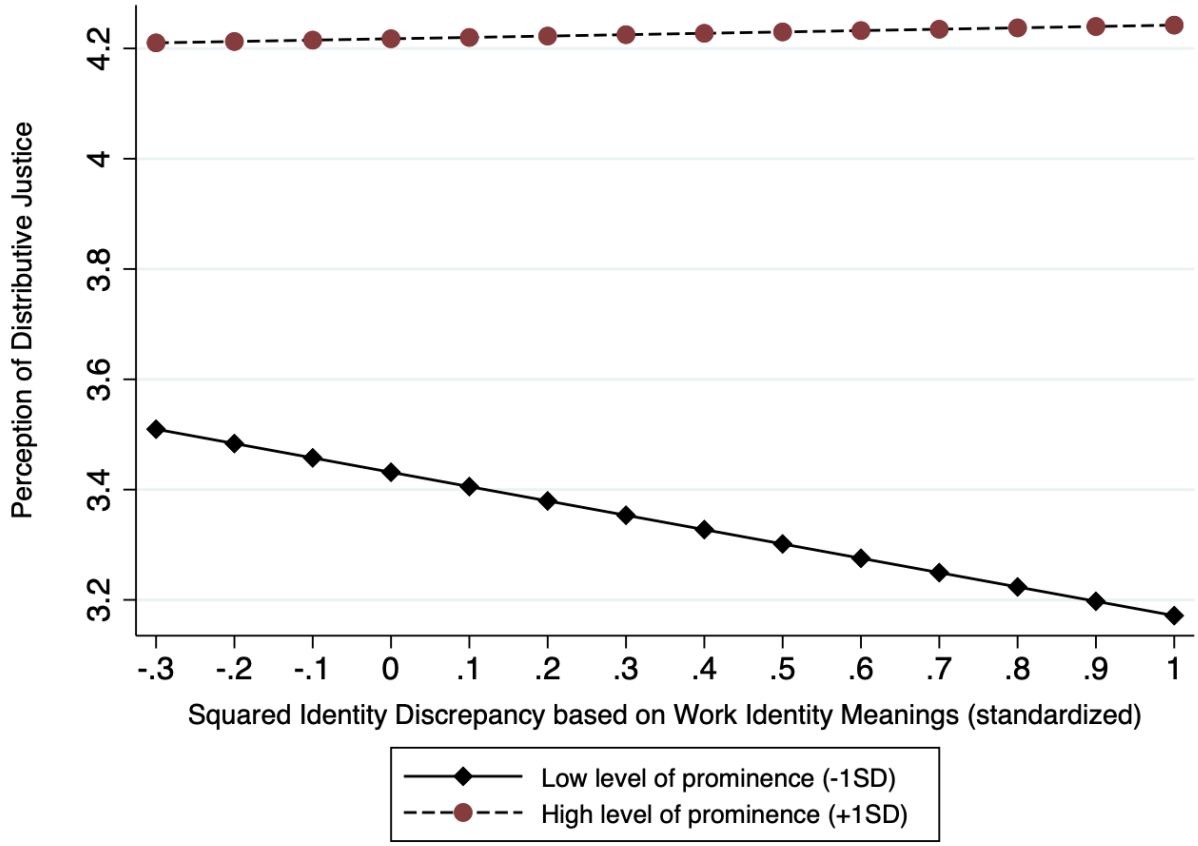


Figure 2.2. The Effect of Positive Identity Discrepancy (Reflected Appraisal - Identity Standard) on Perception of Salary Fairness by Level of Work Identity Prominence

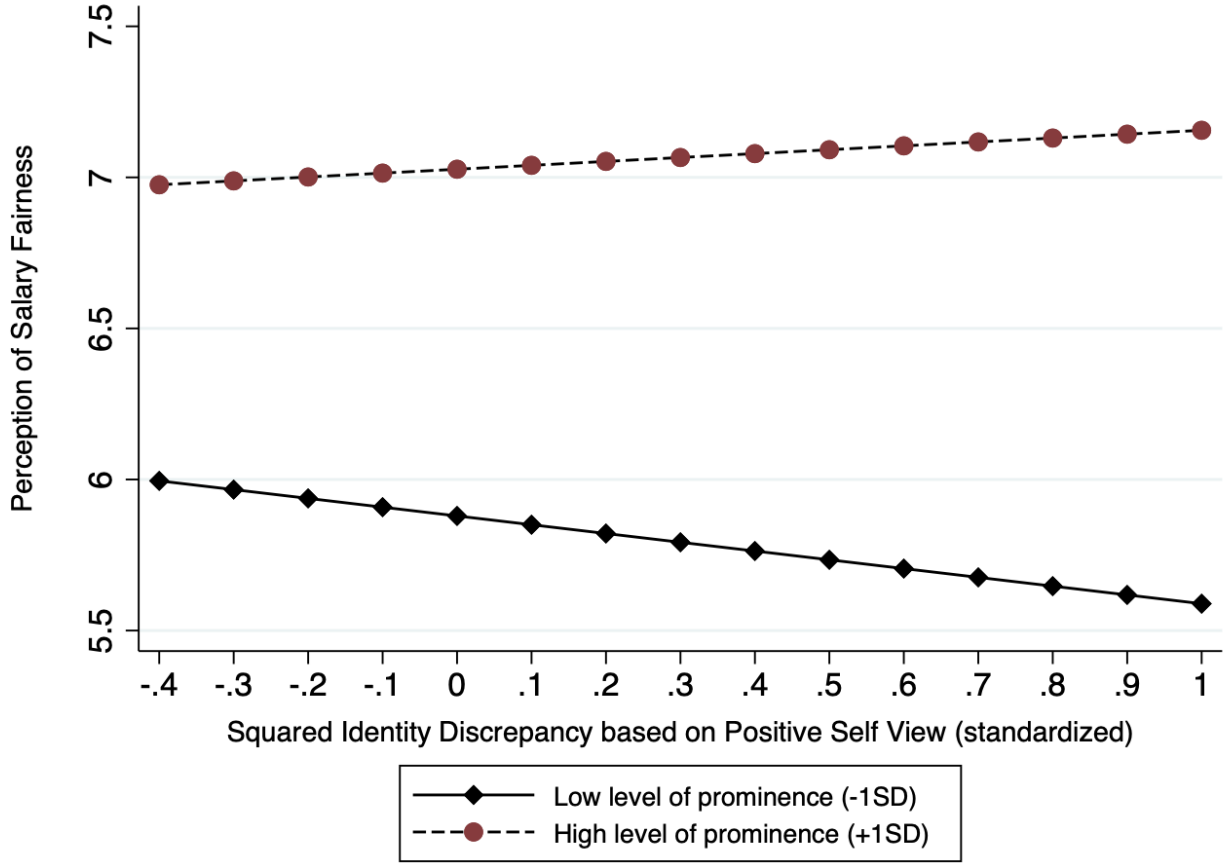


Figure 2.3. The Effect of Positive Identity Discrepancy (over-evaluation) on Perception of Underpayment by Level of Work Identity Prominence

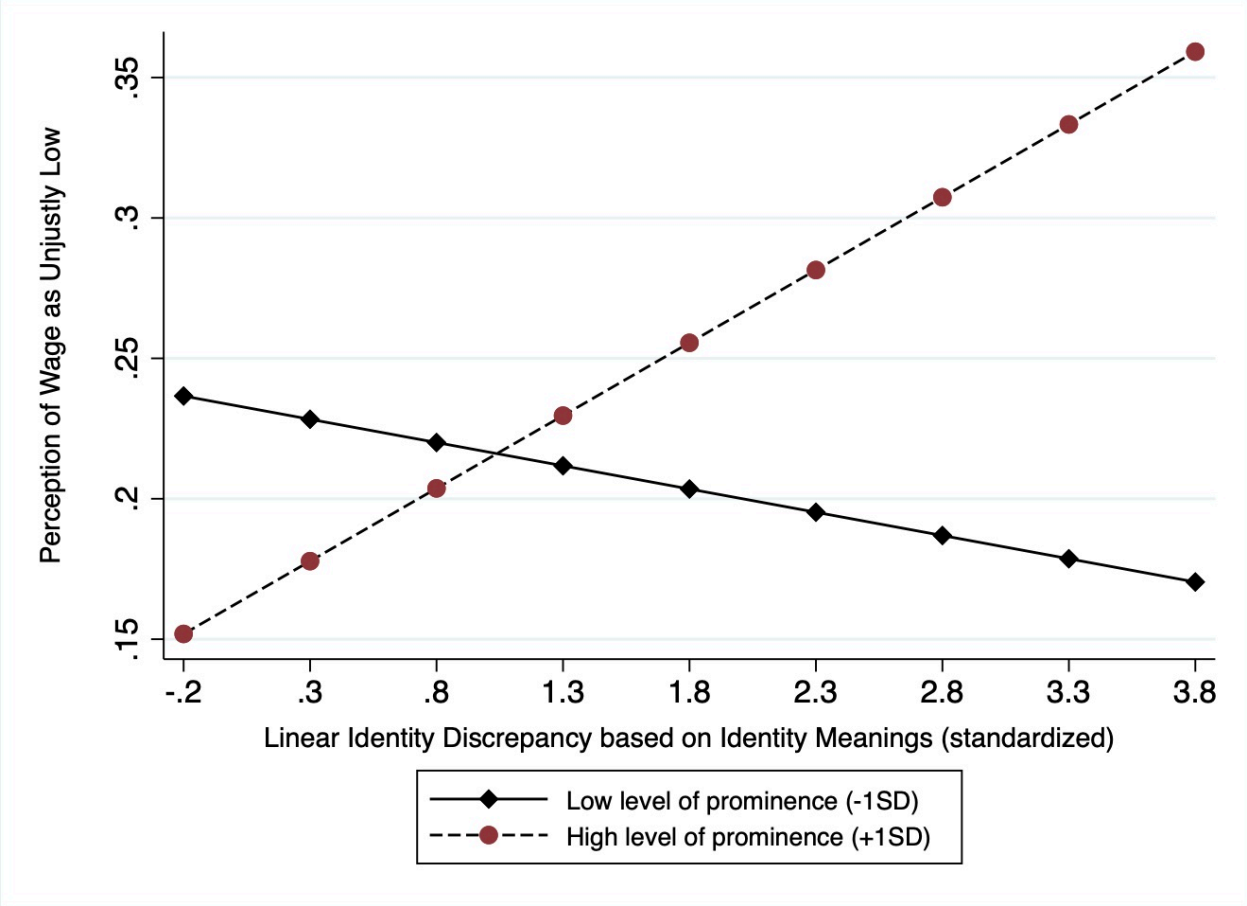
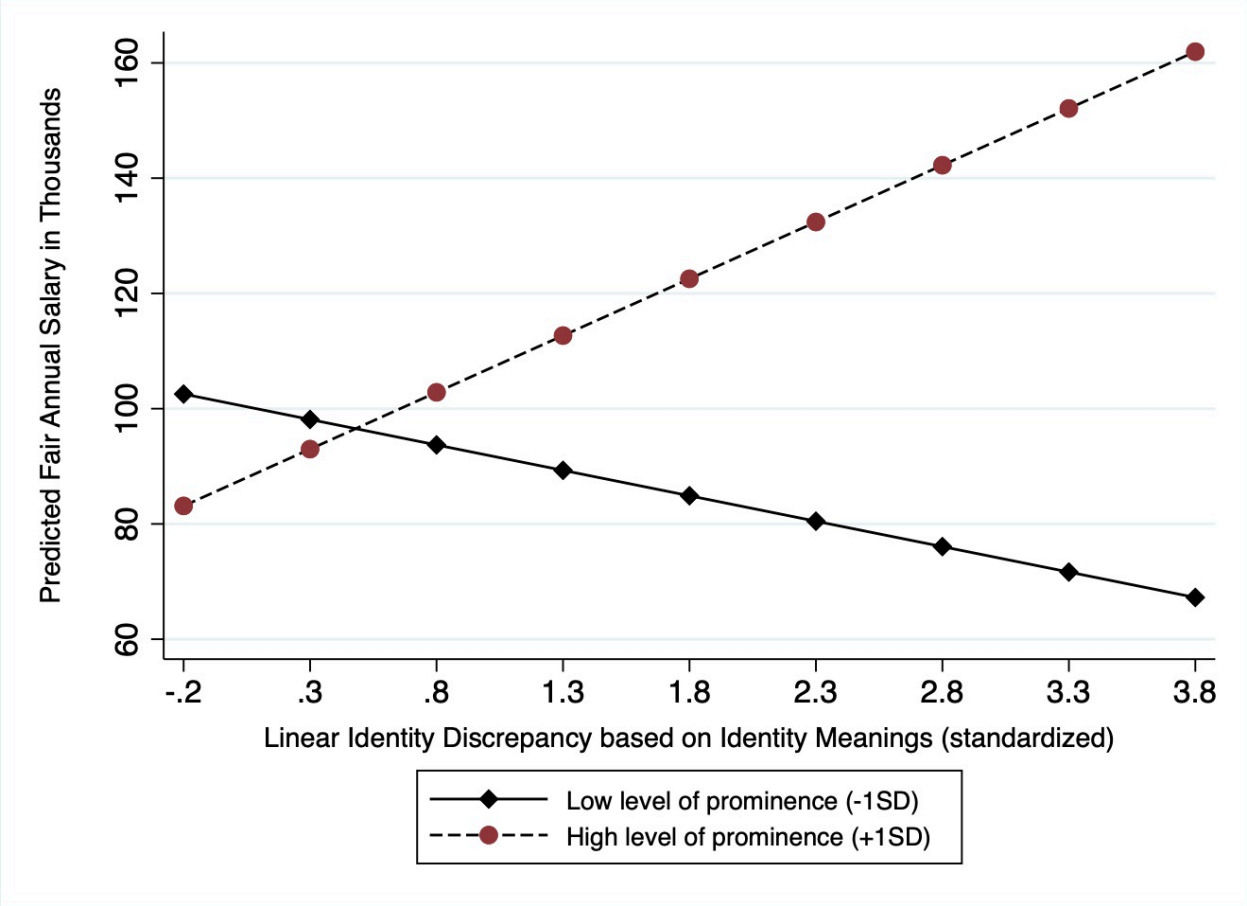


Figure 2.4. Effect of Positive Identity Discrepancy (over-evaluation) on Fair Annual Salary in Thousands by the Level of Identity Prominence



CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF IDENTITY PROMINENCE AND SALIENCE IN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO UNDERPAYMENT[4][5]

[4] Kawashima, Tenshi and Jody Clay-Warner. To be submitted to *Social Forces*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the meaning workers derive from their labor shapes their responses to underpayment. Drawing on insights from research on work value and identity, I test two competing hypotheses: (1) the meaningfulness of the work identity (conceptualized as work identity prominence and salience) amplifies the stress of underpayment, intensifying felt and expressed emotions, and (2) the meaningfulness of the work identity buffers the stress of underpayment, reducing felt and expressed negative emotions. The findings reveal that work identity prominence, but not salience, acts as a psychological resource that mitigates the stress of underpayment on negative felt emotions. However, identity prominence amplifies the association between felt emotions and expressed emotions, as individuals with prominent work identities who feel negative emotions are more likely to express those emotions in interactions with coworkers. These results have implications for the unequal distribution of "meaningful work" in society and contribute to theoretical advancements by integrating identity theory and the distributive justice framework.

In *The Trouble with Passion*, Erin Cech (2021) introduces the term *Passion Principle*, which refers to the belief that self-expression and fulfillment should be prioritized when making career decisions. This perspective has become particularly prevalent among college-educated white-collar workers. Cech's (2021) interviews with college students revealed that those pursuing their passion often viewed prioritizing extrinsic rewards, such as job security and high salaries, as morally wrong. Other studies have found that college graduates are more likely to sacrifice pay for prosocial impact (Wilmers and Zhang 2022) and that personally "meaningful" jobs can lower individuals' standards for acceptable salaries. Workers who find their jobs meaningful are also less likely to accept higher-paying offers elsewhere (Hu and Hirsh 2017). These findings suggest that the intrinsic emotional gratification and satisfaction associated with meaningful work can compensate for lower extrinsic rewards. It has become a widely accepted norm to prioritize passion and job meaningfulness that align with personal values.

Beyond shaping one's career choices, the *Passion Principle* also makes employees vulnerable to exploitation by their employers (Bunderson and Thompson 2009; Cech 2021; Jo et al. 2018). Workers motivated by meaningfulness often accept trade-offs such as long work hours, lower wages, job insecurity, and unfavorable working conditions in exchange for doing work about which they are passionate (Adler 2021; Morgan, Dill, and Kalleberg 2013; Thompson, Parker, and Cox 2016). Meaningfulness-oriented workers are also more likely to work longer hours, experience blurred boundaries between their professional and personal lives, and consequently, suffer from burnout.

Although previous studies suggest that the meaning workers derive from their labor influences how both society and individuals value the extrinsic rewards of a job, there has been limited direct and systematic investigation of how workers with meaningful connection to their

labor respond when they perceive themselves as undercompensated for doing what they are passionate about. As I will discuss later, research on job value (Kalleberg 1977) and identity-relevant stress (Thoits 1991, 2011) suggests two potential patterns: on the one hand, individuals may experience greater damage to their self-concept when they receive insufficient monetary compensation for work that is deeply meaningful to them; on the other hand, their passion and meaningful connection to their labor might buffer the stress of undercompensation.

This study draws on distributive justice theories (Adams 1965; Homans 1974; Jasso 1980) because they provide a valuable framework for understanding how individuals respond to the unfair distribution of rewards. These theories suggest that negative emotions are one of the most common and immediate responses to undercompensation (Hegtvedt 1990; Hegtvedt and Parris 2014). Research further indicates that felt emotions can catalyze behavioral responses (Jasso 2007), serving as a driving force behind actions that may or may not reduce the perceived unfairness of the reward distribution. This framework is particularly useful for addressing the question at hand, as it allows us to examine whether passion-oriented workers (1) do not feel negative emotions when undercompensated or (2) lack behavioral motivation to address underpayment. Either scenario offers valuable insights into how the exploitation of passion-driven workers occurs.

I conceptualize and operationalize the meaningfulness of labor as *work identity salience* and *work identity prominence* (McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000). The meaningfulness of labor extends beyond mere job characteristics; it occupies a significant portion of one's self-concept, particularly in cultures that emphasize alignment between personal values and job characteristics. By conceptualizing meaningfulness as part of the self-concept, we can better theorize its relationship with social structure, as the self is a

reflective entity shaped by society and, in turn, capable of shaping societal structures through catalyzing social action (Owens and Samblanet 2013). This perspective provides a potential explanation for actions taken to address undercompensation.

This approach is also distinct from prior literature on work values. Rather than viewing intrinsic motivation or rewards as separate job characteristics, this framework integrates them into the self-concept, highlighting how they shape the way individuals value extrinsic rewards. This contrasts with previous approaches that conceptualized intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as distinct job characteristics, framing workplace and career decisions as trade-offs between these rewards. By framing intrinsic motivation as a component of self-concept, this approach offers fresh insights into how various forms of rewards derived from labor interact and influence one another.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Structure and Meaningful Work

Identity is comprised of the meanings that individuals attach to themselves. Particularly, role-based identity is formed when individuals internalize social positions and their meanings as part of their self-concept (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010). Therefore, the meanings associated with work roles are shaped by the larger societal environment. Role-based identities also provide a set of behavioral expectations and guidance, and fulfilling these duties can lead to feelings of agency and achievement, thereby increasing efficacy-based self-esteem (Stets 2018). Individuals attach meanings to these roles and communicate these meanings during social interactions to maintain their role identities. This highlights the way in which society shapes the self, which in turn shapes behavior. Even though these identities arise from individuals' structural positions, they still possess a unique, individualized nature. McCall and Simmons

(1978) argue that meanings associated with roles reflect individuals' ideal view of themselves as an occupant of the social position.

Kalleberg's seminal work on work values (1977) provides insights into the relationship between work identity and social structure. He identifies three mechanisms by which society influences "general attitudes regarding the meaning that an individual attaches to the work role" (referred to as "work values" p. 129). One of the notable insights from this line of research is the uneven distribution of "intrinsic value," or the extent to which workers find meaning in the work itself.

First, socialization and life experiences play a role in shaping attitudes and meanings around work. Research on the transmission of work values from parents to children has shown that youth from higher socioeconomic status families tend to develop meanings around the job itself (i.e., intrinsic value), such as expressing one's own interests and abilities and doing work that is meaningful (Johnson and Mortimer 2011; Johnson, Mortimer, and Heckhausen 2020). In contrast, youth from lower socioeconomic families tend to seek rewards extrinsic to the task itself, such as pay, benefits, and job security. Therefore, intrinsic rewards, such as achievement, meaning, and interest are considered luxury goods, as access to them becomes more prevalent with higher levels of income and education (Kalleberg and Marsden 2019; Wilmers and Zhang 2022).

Second, Kalleberg argues that nonwork social roles impose constraints and limit the type of meanings that individuals can seek from the work activity. This is highlighted in research on the work-family trade-off. Studies have found that mothers, due to cultural expectations, may have to prioritize practical considerations such as an easy commute and flexible work hours over intrinsic value in their career choices to effectively manage their responsibilities at work and

home (Blau and Kahn 2013; Carr 2002; Kossek, Perrigino, and Rock 2021). This can lead to a compromise between seeking intrinsic value in their work and fulfilling their nonwork roles and responsibilities.

Lastly, job characteristics that enable workers to pursue intrinsic values are not equally available to all. In a study of European workers, Soffia, Wood, and Burchell (2022) found that workers in blue-collar occupations were more likely to view their work as meaningless. These jobs often lack autonomy, participation, and use of skills, and have a hierarchical work structure. Specifically, they found that the highest percentages of workers who felt their jobs were meaningless were in agricultural forestry, fishery, and manual labor occupations (11-15 percent reported meaninglessness), whereas the lowest percentages were in legal, social, health, and cultural professions and in executive positions (0.2-1 percent reported meaninglessness). Research on the concept of "calling" and professional identity also shows how work experiences shape an individual's professional values around the work itself (Bunderson and Thompson 2009; Dobrow 2013).

Identity Theory

Importance of an identity to an individual is often evaluated across two dimensions: prominence and salience. Identity prominence refers to the subjective and affective value that an individual places on a particular identity (McCall and Simmons 1978). Identity salience, on the other hand, reflects the likelihood that a specific identity will be activated in social interaction and is influenced by an individual's behavioral commitment to that identity (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Identity theory posits that various identities are organized into a hierarchy of prominence and salience, where a role-identity prominence and salience reflect the relative value/commitment it has for individuals' overall conception of one's ideal self.

Therefore, for workers who find intrinsic value in their work role, their work identity is likely placed higher in both prominence and salience hierarchy.

Prominence

Prominence refers to the subjective value an individual places on an identity. When an identity is highly prominent, it becomes a central part of one's self-concept. Prominence acts as a motivator, meaning that the higher the prominence of an identity, the more an individual is motivated to engage with that identity. When activated, individuals work harder to verify a prominent identity, and they experience stronger emotional reactions to its verification or non-verification. This is because prominent identities tend to share meanings with other identities. Therefore, successful verification of prominent identities influences that of other lower-level identities (Burke 2023).

Salience

Salience relates to the likelihood of an identity being activated in a given situation. This likelihood is influenced by perceived identity-relevant meanings across contexts. Thus, salience reflects how frequently the identity manifests in an individual's behaviors and actions. Burke (2023:25) recently suggested that salience is better understood in terms of the duration in which an identity is activated over a period of time. For example, if someone engages in a worker identity for eight hours in a day, the salience of this identity would be approximately 0.33 (8/24). This number represents the probability of activating the worker identity at any point during the day. Thus, salience emphasizes the persistence of identity-related activities in everyday life.

Distributive Justice Framework

Perception of fairness in reward distribution is formed by the comparison between the actual rewards an individual receives and the reward they consider to be fair (Jasso 1980).

According to Jasso's justice evaluation formula, the degree to which individuals perceive their reward as "unfair" can be calculated as a logarithmic ratio of actual reward received and their idea of "just" reward, which is: $\ln(\frac{Actual\ Reward}{Just\ Reward})$. The idea of a just reward is guided by the equity principle (Homans 1974), which suggests that outcome (e.g., salary) should be proportional to individuals' inputs (e.g., contribution to organization) (Adams 1965). When the actual reward, or what individuals are paid, is lower in comparison to their idea of just reward, the perception of underpayment becomes stronger.

Perceived underpayment, or distributive injustice, can trigger negative emotions (Clay-Warner 2006; Hegtvedt and Parris 2014). These emotions may be intensified when individuals value receiving fair compensation for their work (Markovsky 1985; Younts and Mueller 2001), and when they view the source of injustice as being caused by the actions of others (Homans 1974). Once these emotions are experienced, individuals may choose to express negative emotions they feel in the workplace. Expressing emotions allows others to see one's response, which may have consequences (Clay-Warner 2006). Emotions can be used to complain (Markovsky 1985) or try to persuade the decision-maker to change the outcomes or procedures, or to organize colleagues to advocate for change. These approaches directly address the injustice, but they come with costs, such as being punished by authorities (Hegtvedt et al. 2009).

Jasso (1986:258) classified responses to perception of unfair reward into two categories, responsive and purposive behaviors. Purposive behavior is aimed at changing the level of justice evaluation, while responsive behavior does not seek to change the level of justice evaluation. In other words, purposive behavior encompasses actions individuals take to redress perceived injustice, whereas responsive behavior generally refers to emotional responses, which may catalyze purposive behavior.

Seminal work in equity theory by Adams (1965) and Walster, Berscheid, and Walster (1973) offer insights into when and why individuals decide to take actions against perceived unfairness. First, they propose that the degree of perceived inequity shapes an individual's motivation to redress injustice. Empirical studies have shown that the extent of under- or over reward, or the magnitude of inequity, amplifies both emotional (Clay-Warner et al. 2016; Johnson et al. 2016) and behavioral responses to inequity (Markovsky 1985). Second, they posit that individuals prefer less costly strategies to restore justice, in terms of both material and psychological expenses. Therefore, high risk strategies such as self-deprivation or punishment are not adopted frequently. Third, individuals favor strategies that fully restore equity over those that only partially address inequity. Consequently, an individual benefiting from an inequitable exchange might decide not to compensate the disadvantaged and instead turn to justification when they perceive themselves lacking adequate resources to compensate. Fourth, individuals are resistant to justice-restoring strategies that require real or cognitive modifications to input that are central to their self-concept and esteem. Finally, the decision to exit a situation or exchange because of perceived inequity is considered last.

Given empirical studies testing distributive justice processes that found an association between perceptions of underpayment and negative emotional responses, I expect to find a positive effect of underpayment on negative felt emotion, and that negative felt emotion, in turn, will lead to the display of negative emotions. Because these associations are established in previous research, they are not explicitly hypothesized; however, these processes are expected. The hypotheses in this study concern the moderating effect of work identity prominence and salience in distributive justice processes.

Hypotheses

Thus far, I have reviewed literature on how the two dimensions of work identity importance, *prominence* and *salience*, are shaped by social structures, as well as research on distributive justice, which provides insights into how perceptions of underpayment are formed and the conditions under which individuals are likely to respond. These responses may include experiencing negative emotions and expressing those emotions in an effort to restore distributive justice. This section integrates these insights to propose two opposing sets of hypotheses.

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Identity-Relevant Stress

In developing the theory of distributive justice, Adams (1965) implies that when work roles are central to an individual's self-concept and self-esteem, they may attribute the cause of unfairness to external factors rather than their own actions. This suggests that when work identities are salient and prominent, individuals may externalize the cause of unfairness, leading to higher levels of other-directed emotions such as anger and resentment. In addition, Thoits' (1991, 2013) seminal insights on identity-relevant stress suggests that stressors that impact a highly valued identity are seen as more threatening and, therefore, more likely to lead to psychological distress compared to those affecting less valued aspects of the self-concept.

Monetary rewards symbolize the value of work to organizations and indicate the workers' competence in meeting their goals (Grandey, Chi, and Diamond 2013). Therefore, underpayment can act as work identity non-verifying feedback (Stets and Osborn 2008). Research on identity verification processes show that individuals feel psychological distress in response to non-verifying feedback (Stets et al. 2023; Stets and Burke 2014).

Powers' concept of loop gain (Powers 1973) is helpful in examining variation in the degree of negative emotions underpaid individuals' experience. This perspective highlights that

some individuals have a tighter control system compared to others, meaning that for them, even a small deviation in feedback that does not match their identity standard might cause negative emotions. The concept of loop gain is conceptualized as the ratio between the magnitude of emotional and behavioral responses to non-verifying feedback and the degree of discrepancy between the identity standard and feedback. A greater value of loop gain indicates a tighter control system; in this case, even a small degree of underpayment might elicit a high degree of negative emotions.

Recent studies suggest that identity salience and prominence potentially play a role in how tightly identity standards are controlled. They show that identity salience and prominence moderate the effect of identity nonverification on negative emotional responses (Burke and Stets 2024), suggesting that underpayment can elicit stronger emotional reactions for individuals with higher levels of work identity salience and prominence.

Gallagher, Marcussen, and Serpe (2022) found that the impact of identity non-verification on psychological distress is particularly strong for obligatory identities, such as those related to being a spouse, parent, or worker, compared to voluntary identities, like religious identity. As obligatory identities are typically time- and emotion-intensive (Gallagher 2016) and culturally and personally significant (Burke and Stets 2009), it is likely that both salience and prominence of the worker identity are related to stronger emotional response in the face of non-verification, or perceived underpayment. Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1a: Prominence amplifies the effect of underpayment on intensity of negative felt emotion.

Hypothesis 1b: Salience amplifies the effect of underpayment on intensity of negative felt emotion.

Workers may choose to display negative emotions caused by perceived injustice when their work identity is salient and prominent. Stets and Tsushima (2001) compared emotional reactions and coping strategies between role-based identities (work identity) and group-based identities (family identity) in a large-scale national survey. They found that anger experienced in a worker identity lasts longer and is associated with behavioral coping strategies, such as talking to someone about the situation and trying to change it, compared to cognitive coping strategies employed for family identity.

Identity theory suggests that individuals are motivated to create situations in which their identities are validated (McCall and Simmons 1978; Swann and Hill 1982). In response to identity non-verification, individuals may try to change others' perceptions of themselves rather than changing their own identity (Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999). A study by Nuttbrock and Freudiger (1991) found that identity salience is positively associated with accepting challenging role behaviors, even if they involve personal sacrifice. Additionally, Carter (2013) found that individuals behave in ways that align with their identity, even if it contradicts the expectations of their group.

These studies support the robustness of identity theory as a general theory of behavior and have important implications for understanding how individuals maintain agency within social structures. Therefore, I predict that individuals whose worker identities are prominent and salient may be more likely to engage in behavioral responses to restore worker identity in the face of perceived underpayment.

Hypothesis 2a: Prominence amplifies the effect of intensity of negative felt emotion on expression of emotion.

Hypothesis 2b: Salience amplifies the effect of intensity of negative felt emotion on expression of emotion.

Hypotheses 3 and 4: Alternative Compensation

In contrast to the above predictions, another perspective suggests that a cherished work identity can serve as a resource that workers draw upon when experiencing underpayment. The job demands-resource model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) posits that certain job qualities act as "resources" that buffer the negative impacts of work-related stressors. For instance, aspects of a job such as workplace social support, autonomy, and opportunities for career development can mitigate the adverse effects of unfavorable job conditions, including time pressure, role conflict, and emotional demands, on employees' mental and physical health (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2023).

This stress-buffering thesis has also been applied to the experience of underpayment. Narisada and Schieman (2022) examined whether six job qualities, including schedule flexibility, job autonomy, and supervisor support, could buffer the negative effects of perceived underpayment on job dissatisfaction. They found that job qualities derived from organizational or interpersonal contexts, such as supervisor support, schedule flexibility, and advancement opportunities, reduced the negative effects of underpayment. In contrast, job characteristics tied to individual roles, such as job autonomy and job challenges, did not have a buffering effect. These findings suggest that work identity prominence and salience, which often develop in a feedback loop with the workplace environment, might similarly buffer the stress of underpayment.

Research on work values also supports the idea that emotional benefits derived from work identity activation may reduce negative emotional responses to underpayment. Workers'

affective attachment to their jobs can lead to a tolerance of undesirable job characteristics, such as long work hours, lower wages, and job insecurity. This has been observed among healthcare workers (Morgan et al. 2013), aspiring artists (Adler 2021), and game creators (Thompson et al. 2016). As one game creator described in Thompson et al. 's research (2016:327), “Let’s face it—your eyes are sore, you’re tired, you want to go home…but I still love it.”

Research on the job demands-resource model and work values, therefore, suggests a competing set of hypotheses predicting that work identity salience and prominence will have a buffering effect on the relationship between underpayment and negative emotional responses.

Hypothesis 3a: Prominence buffers the effect of underpayment on intensity of negative felt emotion.

Hypothesis 3b: Salience buffers the effect of underpayment on intensity of negative felt emotion.

Hypothesis 4a: Prominence weakens the effect of intensity of negative felt emotion on expression of emotion.

Hypothesis 4b: Salience weakens the effect of intensity of negative felt emotion on expression of emotion.

DATA AND METHODS

I collected original survey data through Prolific from 530 full-time employees residing in the United States during April and May of 2024. As this study focuses on work identity, the sample was restricted to individuals who met the following criteria: (1) employed at the same organization for more than two years, (2) regularly interact with coworkers, (3) aged between 25 and 65, (4) not self-employed, (5) residing in the United States, and (6) not starting a new job within the following month. To ensure data quality, eligibility was further restricted to

respondents who had completed at least 50 surveys on Prolific with an approval rate of over 99%. A gender quota was applied to ensure the sample included an approximately equal number of men and women.

The survey, titled "Work Identity Study," included a range of questions designed to assess respondents' work characteristics and experiences. Respondents provided information about their occupation, which was then used to classify their occupation using the O*NET occupational classification system. The survey also included questions about work identity, perceptions of wage fairness, emotional reactions to wage fairness perceptions, and other job-related experiences and characteristics. On average, the survey took approximately 17 minutes to complete, and participants received $3 as compensation for their time.

Independent Variables

Perception of Underpayment was calculated using Jasso's justice evaluation formula. Following Valet (2018), the extent to which respondents perceive their annual salary as unjustly low was measured by the formula: $(-1) \times \ln(\frac{Actual\ Reward}{Just\ Reward})$. Positive values indicated perceptions of underpayment, while negative values reflected perceptions of overpayment. A score of zero indicates the perception of fairness, where actual and fair rewards align. The actual reward was measured by asking respondents to report their annual salary before taxes or deductions. The fair reward was assessed by asking: "Based on your education, training, experience, position, and effort, what annual salary do you feel would be fair?"

Unjust salary was measured using a single-item question preceded by a definition of "just" pay: "Just pay refers to a salary that matches an employee's contributions to the organization, considering factors such as effort, responsibilities, years of training, and education." Respondents rated how just they perceived their pay on a scale of 0 (unjustly low) to

10 (unjustly high), with 5 representing "just pay" (i.e., contributions matching compensation). This score was also reverse-coded, so higher values indicate perceptions of underpayment.

Distributive injustice scale (α = .95) consisted of nine items, including statements like "I am fairly rewarded for the amount of effort I put in," "I am fairly rewarded considering the responsibilities I have," and "Compared to my coworkers, I am fairly compensated for my work." Additional items assessed fairness in reward distribution at work, such as "The pay distribution where I work is fair" and "Overall, rewards at my workplace are distributed fairly."

Dependent Variables

Negative felt emotion scale measured the extent to which respondents felt negative emotions about their pay, using a mean score of emotions such as anger, resentment, sadness, shame, and guilt. Respondents were asked, "To what extent do you feel [emotion] about your pay?" on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (an extreme amount). The scale has high reliability (α = .86).

Intensity of anger was a single-item measure derived from the above scale, focusing on the intensity of anger. Respondents rated their anger about their pay on the same 1–7 scale.

Expression of anger was assessed by a question: "In the past month, which of the following emotional reactions about your pay did you express to your [coworkers/supervisors]?" (with separate questions for coworkers and supervisors). A list of emotions was provided, including anger, resentment, sadness, shame, guilt, satisfaction, gratitude, and pride. The *expression of anger* was coded as 1 if respondents selected anger in response to this question. In the analyses, I assessed the expression of anger toward coworkers and supervisors separately.

Moderator Variables

Work identity prominence measured the centrality of work identity to respondents' self-concept. This scale consists of eight items, such as "My work is an important part of my self-image" and "I think of myself as a professional in my field of work" (α = .91).

Work identity salience measured how likely respondents were to mention their work and professional activities in hypothetical introductions to five types of people: (1) a woman, (2) a man, (3) a close friend's friend, (4) a family member's friend, and (5) a stranger. Respondents answered, "How likely are you to mention your work and professional activities?" on a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 6 (extremely likely). This approach followed prior studies (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014; Markowski and Serpe 2021; Stryker and Serpe 1994) and showed strong reliability (α = .92).

Control Variables

Various demographic and job characteristics were included as covariates. Demographics included race, gender, age, annual income, education, and marital status. Job characteristics included workplace authority, autonomy, creativity, and weekly work hours.

Job authority was measured as the total number of "yes" responses to four questions (Schieman et al. 2020): "Do you decide how much pay others receive?" "Do you have the authority to hire or fire others?" "Do you supervise or manage anyone as part of your job?" and, if applicable, "Do any of the people you manage supervise others?"

Job autonomy (α = .86) used four items (Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Narisada and Schieman 2022; Schieman et al. 2020), such as "I have the freedom to decide what I do in my job" and "I decide when I start and finish work each day."

Job creativity (α = .78) was based on five items (Mirowsky 2011; Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Schieman and Young 2010), including "How often does your job require creativity?" and "How often do you have the chance to solve problems?"

Analytic Strategy

I conducted separate analyses for two outcome variables: *negative felt emotions* and *expressions of anger* (to coworkers and supervisors). For the *negative felt emotion scale*, I used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to predict the intensity of negative emotions about pay. These models include the four independent variables and their interaction effects with identity salience and prominence.

For *expression of anger* (binary outcomes), I employed binary logistic regression models to predict whether respondents expressed anger to coworkers or supervisors in the past month. Results are reported as average marginal effects (AME), which calculate the marginal effect for each observation in the maximum likelihood estimation and average the effects across predictors. AMEs facilitate intuitive interpretation by presenting results as differences in probabilities rather than odds ratios or logged odds. As Long and Freese (2014) recommend, AMEs are particularly useful for interpreting logistic regression results.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.1 reports the descriptive statistics. On average, respondents were approximately 42 years old and reported an annual income of about $78,000. They worked an average of 42 hours per week. The mean job autonomy score was 3.94 on a 1–6 scale, indicating that respondents on average "slightly agreed" with statements measuring autonomy. The mean creativity score was 4.04 on the same scale, suggesting respondents answered "sometimes" to

questions about creative activity at work, on average. The mean workplace authority score was 1.25, indicating that, on average, respondents reported having responsibilities in either deciding others' pay, hiring or firing others, or supervising others (see the Measurement section for examples of question statements).

Because a gender-representative sampling method was used, approximately half of the sample (48.3 percent) identified as women. Nearly 70 percent of respondents identified as White, 14 percent as Black, and 19 percent as belonging to other racial or ethnic categories. As for education, 46.98 percent of respondents reported a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, followed by some college (21.32 percent), Master's degree (18.87 percent), high school diploma (8 percent), doctoral degree (3.02 percent), professional degree (1.89 percent), and less than high school (0.38 percent).

The average score for perception of underpayment was 0.21, indicating a slight perception of underpayment. This value is comparable to Valet's (2018) study of a representative sample of the German population, which had a score of 0.23. The mean score for unjust salary was approximately 6, indicating that respondents chose one point above the "just salary" (5) toward the "unjustly low" direction. The mean distributive injustice score was 3.16 (range 1-6).

On average, respondents rated the extent to which they felt the five negative emotions about their annual salary as 2 ("slightly"). Additionally, 11.32 percent of respondents reported expressing anger about their pay to coworkers, while only 5 percent expressed anger to supervisors in the past month.

The Effect of Underpayment on Negative Felt Emotion

Table 3.2 presents a series of regression models predicting the intensity of negative felt emotions. The first three models use *unjust salary* as the operationalization of underpayment, the

fourth through sixth models use *perception of underpayment*, the seventh through ninth models use the *distributive injustice* scale. For each set of three models, the first includes only the measure of underpayment, the second adds *work identity prominence* and its interaction with underpayment, and the third includes *work identity salience* and its interaction with underpayment. All models include control variables.

Across all models reported in Table 3.2, any operationalization of underpayment is positively associated with higher levels of negative felt emotions about pay. For example, a one-point increase in the perception of pay injustice (on a scale of 0 to 10) is associated with a 0.322 point increase in negative felt emotion (Model 1, b = 0.322, $p < 0.01$). Similar patterns are observed with other measures of underpayment, including *perception of underpayment* (Model 4, b = 2.123, $p < 0.01$), and *distributive injustice* (Model 7, b = 0.692, $p < 0.01$).

Regarding the competing Hypotheses 1 and 3, only *work identity prominence* significantly moderates the relationship between underpayment and negative felt emotions. Models 2, and 8, respectively, show significant interaction effects between prominence and *unjust salary* (b = -0.043, $p < 0.05$), *perception of underpayment* (b = -0.757, $p < 0.01$), and the *distributive injustice* scale (b = -0.087, $p < 0.01$). Since the main effect of underpayment on negative emotions is positive, the negative coefficient for the interaction term indicates that *identity prominence* buffers the impact of underpayment on negative felt emotions.

Figure 3.1 illustrates this buffering effect of *identity prominence*. The blue line represents the predicted values of negative felt emotions for individuals whose work identity prominence is one standard deviation below the mean, while the red line represents those whose prominence is one standard deviation above the mean. The gray dashed lines show the 95% confidence interval. The steeper slope among individuals with lower identity prominence compared to those with

higher identity prominence indicates that *work identity prominence* serves as a resource that buffers against the stress of underpayment. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a, which predicted that *work identity prominence* buffers the effect of underpayment on the intensity of negative felt emotion is the only hypothesis supported.

The Effect of Intensity of Negative Felt Emotion on Expression of Emotion

To test Hypotheses 2 and 4, I conducted a series of binary logistic regression analyses predicting average marginal effects (AME) of felt emotion and work identity prominence/salience on the expression of anger to colleagues and supervisors (Table 3.3). The first two models predict the AME of expressing anger to colleagues, while the last two models predict the AME of expressing anger to supervisors. The only statistically significant interaction effect at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level was between felt anger and work identity prominence (Model 1, $b = 0.017$, $p < 0.05$).

Figure 3.2 illustrates this interaction effect. As the intensity of felt anger about pay increases, the predicted probability of expressing anger to colleagues also increases, with this trend being more pronounced among individuals whose work identity prominence is one standard deviation above the mean compared to those with lower prominence. Therefore, Hypothesis 2a, which predicted that prominence amplifies the effect of the intensity of negative felt emotion on the expression of emotion, is supported. This moderation effect is evident only for prominence, and salience did not show a significant interaction effect.

DISCUSSION

This project began with a question about what meaningfulness of work means to workers in the modern United States. Should we understand meaningfulness as part of a worker's self-concept, something that makes up a significant portion of who they are? Or should we see it as a

form of alternative compensation that offsets monetary rewards? To answer this question, I drew on previous research on identity theory and work value to hypothesize how underpayment shapes emotional responses. I also used the distributive justice framework to examine worker's responses as a process, considering both felt and expressed emotions.

The results suggest the complexity of the role that work identity prominence plays in distributive justice processes. Identity prominence serves as a psychological resource, which buffers the negative impact of underpayment on negative felt emotions. This finding supports the alternative compensation hypothesis. However, once workers feel negatively about their pay, work identity prominence amplifies the expression of negative emotions, as those with prominent work identities are more likely to voice dissatisfaction to coworkers. This aligns with identity theory, which suggests that motivation to address identity-threatening feedback (i.e., underpayment) is stronger for prominent identities.

These findings offer new perspectives on whether intrinsic and extrinsic rewards can truly compensate for each other. While work value research has traditionally treated them as separate entities that may offset one another, studies have also demonstrated the "limit of intrinsic rewards," or the limited degree to which intrinsic reward can mitigate the impact of low extrinsic rewards. For example, Morgan et al. (2013)'s study of healthcare workers found that intrinsic rewards improve job satisfaction, but they also increase turnover intention. By assessing intrinsic motivation and rewards as part of the self-concept, the current study suggests that the "limit" of intrinsic reward as an alternative form of reward can be reached when workers feel negatively about the extrinsic rewards they receive and view it as a threat to their self-concept. Under these circumstances, they may become motivated to seek change, whether through turnover, negotiating higher wage, or joining advocacy groups.

There are two interpretations of the finding on the stress buffering effect of identity prominence. On one hand, if we focus on the impact of underpayment on workers' well-being, this finding suggests that work identity prominence can be protective, keeping workers from experiencing negative emotions. However, in the context of the exploitation of meaning-driven workers, identity prominence may obscure the reality of underpayment. This insight sheds light on why these workers can be vulnerable– not necessarily because they are hesitant to address underpayment in the workplace, but because they are less likely to feel negatively about it in the first place.

The other side of this dynamic is the experience of workers with low work identity prominence. These workers not only feel the effects of underpayment more acutely than their high-prominence counterparts, but they also lack the resources and motivation to express dissatisfaction over undercompensation. This suggests that disparities in work identity prominence can further reinforce occupation stratification. Additional analyses (see Appendix for details) revealed that work identity prominence is higher among those in occupations that require higher levels of training and education. I further found that sectors such as health care, arts and entertainment, and educational services tended to offer higher levels of work identity prominence while industries such as wholesale trade, management of companies, and government offered the lowest level of work identity prominence.

The finding that workers with less prominent identities experience a greater degree of distress yet do not express anger related to underpayment dovetails with findings from previous research on individuals' class standing and experiences of anger. Collett and Lizardo (2010) examined the association between occupational prestige and the experience of felt anger and found a U-shaped relationship, where those with the lowest and highest occupational prestige

reported the highest levels of anger. My study adds that, despite the increased level of anger experienced by those with lower occupational prestige (which is a likely precursor to lower work identity prominence), they are less likely to express anger about wages. This has implications for class consciousness. The inability to express anger can inhibit solidarity and awareness of shared economic conditions, such as through organizing unions and advocacy groups, further creating and perpetuating class-based inequality.

This project extends our understanding of identity prominence and salience. The buffering effect of identity was only found for prominence but not for salience. This distinction makes sense when we consider what it means to activate worker identity. In the case of worker identity, activation itself involves labor. The nature of activation and the activities associated with identity verification may be key to understanding the moderating effect of identity salience and prominence.

It is possible that, for identity salience, frequent activation of a work identity is perceived as added effort or burden. Regularly activating a worker identity across different social contexts blur the boundaries between work and non-work life (Chesley 2005; Glavin, Schieman, and Bierman 2024). On the other hand, work identity prominence, or the centrality of workers identity to self-concept, may be experienced as an alternative form of compensation that makes underpayment feel less burdensome. These findings contribute to the on-going effort to distinguish the different moderating effects of identity salience and prominence in response to identity nonverification (Burke and Stets 2024).

The finding that identity prominence weakens negative felt emotion in response to underpayment can also be interpreted as work identity prominence loosening the control system. Existing research testing the concept of loop gain (Powers 1973) reports that identity dispersion

is related to a looser control system. Identity dispersion refers to the range of meanings associated with a given identity. When dispersion is higher, there is a wider range of meanings attached to the identity, making the control system looser. When dispersion is lower, meaning there are fewer meanings associated with the identity, the control system tends to be tighter (Burke 2020; Cantwell 2016).

Given these insights, individuals with prominent work identities may have greater identity dispersion, meaning that work is not pursued solely for financial gain but also serves as a source of support, community, and self-actualization. This diversity of meanings associated with work role identity may have been the key to buffer against the non-verifying feedback of underpayment. While financial compensation is a significant part of work identity verification, for those with high work identity dispersion, it represents just one dimension among many meanings attached to their identity. This might especially have been the case for my sample, which consisted of relatively well-paid individuals with the mean annual income of around $78,000.

The absence of a moderating effect for identity salience on negative felt emotion in this study may be attributed to how the concept was measured. Markowski and Serpe (2025) highlight the multidimensional nature of identity salience and demonstrate that it should be conceptualized based on "tell," "do," and "think" dimensions of identity activation. The current study solely measured the "tell" dimension, or how often individuals mention their professional identity across social settings. Had a more holistic measure of identity salience been used, the moderating effect of salience may have been different.

Incorporating identity theory into the distributive justice framework allowed me to examine how the relationship between "input" and an individual's self-concept shapes

distributive justice processes. This connection was suggested by Adams (1965:295) in his discussion of the choices available to individuals facing inequitable resource allocation: “He will resist real and cognitive changes in inputs that are central to his self-concept and to his self-esteem.”

The findings of this study suggest that work identity prominence may be perceived as an “outcome” in the equity equation, and this may be due to the shared meanings associated with work identity and other identities. The results further highlight the role of identity in guiding action, contributing to theorizing the link between responsive and purposive behavior in distributive justice research. This study suggests that threats to prominent identities might strengthen the link between responsive and purposive behavior, motivating individuals to address injustice beyond their immediate emotional reactions, despite the risks involved in expressing dissatisfaction about wages, as documented in previous studies (e.g., Johnson et al. 2016). It is however important to note that identity prominence did not lead to the expression of anger to supervisors, possibly due to the higher risk of doing so compared to expressing anger in front of colleagues (Sloan 2004).

Limitations

A few study limitations should be acknowledged before concluding. First, the cross-national nature of this study makes it challenging to establish causality. Therefore, over time, prolonged unfair treatment at work could erode work identity prominence, a challenge commonly noted in research on identity and distress (Thoits 2013). To capture respondents' emotional responses specifically related to pay, I asked how much emotion they felt about their pay and how often they expressed anger about it in the past month. Moreover, the use of Jasso’s justice evaluation formula, which calculates fairness as the ratio between actual pay and

perceived just pay, reduces the risk of reverse causation, where respondents might infer their sense of fairness from their emotional reactions.

Another potential limitation is that the sample consisted of highly educated and relatively well-paid individuals. Therefore, although the average score of the justice evaluation indicated a slight perception of underpayment, respondents might not have experienced its effects as strongly because their standard of living remained secure. Therefore, the findings that prominence buffered negative emotional reactions to underpayment should be interpreted with caution. Among a more representative sample, particularly those facing more severe financial consequences of underpayment, identity prominence might not have a stress buffering effect.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of how meaningful work influences the way individuals feel about compensation and how they respond when they perceive themselves as underpaid. By conceptualizing the meaningfulness of work as work identity, this study offers new insights into alternative compensation and monetary rewards. It suggests that meaningfulness, when tied to self-concept, can shape perceptions of extrinsic rewards. This approach is distinct from previous research on work values, which has traditionally viewed intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as separate entities.

Integrating core ideas of identity theory into the distributive justice framework extends our understanding of the link between responsive and purposive behavior in the face of inequitable resource allocation. This link was stronger among those with higher work identity prominence. Because prominence also provides a buffering effect, these results indicate that individuals with low prominence, who are more commonly found in occupations that require less

extensive education and training, experience heightened stress from underpayment and are less likely to engage in purposive action to address it.

Since the meaningfulness of work is shaped at multiple levels, including occupational structures, organizational climate, and supervisor leadership style (Martela et al. 2021), those invested in workers' well-being should focus on creating environments that foster meaningfulness. However, it is also important to recognize that while individuals with high work identity prominence may initially take meaningfulness as an alternative form of reward, once they feel dissatisfaction about pay, they are willing to extend their efforts to address the issue. This suggests that meaningfulness should not be treated as a substitute for monetary compensation. Instead, organizations should ensure that meaningful work is fairly matched with monetary rewards to prevent workers from feeling undervalued.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 530)

	Mean/Frequency	SD/%	Min.	Max.
Dependent Variable				
Negative Felt Emotion	2.1	1.2	1	7
Expression of Anger				
to coworkers	60	11.32%		
to supervisors	27	5%		
Independent Variable				
Perception of Underpayment	0.21	0.22	-0.29	2.61
Unjust Salary	5.96	1.88	0	10
Distributive Injustice	3.16	1.16	1	6
Moderators				
Prominence	4.2	1.07	1.12	6
Salience	3.4	1.22	1	6
Control Variables				
Income in thousands	78.13	47.4	5	450
Age	42.13	10.27	25	65
Weekly Work Hour	41.7	5.74	30	80
Job characteristics				
Authority	1.25	1.31	0	4
Autonomy	3.94	1.31	1	6
Creativity	4.04	0.84	1	6
Education				
Less than HS	2	0.38%		
HS graduate	40	8%		
Some college	113	21.32%		
Bachelor's degree	249	46.98%		
Master's degree	100	18.87%		
Professional degree	10	1.89%		
Doctoral degree	16	3.02%		
Gender				
Woman	256	48.30%		
Man	268	50.57%		
Other	6	1.13%		
Race/Ethnicity				
White	359	67.74%		
Black/African American	73	13.77%		
Other	98	18.49%		

Table 3.2. The Role of Identity Prominence and Salience in Moderating the Effect of Underpayment on Negative Felt Emotions

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Unjust Salary	0.322**	0.477**	0.351**						
	(0.024)	(0.083)	(0.061)						
Justice Evaluation				2.123**	5.430**	2.061**			
				(0.219)	(0.775)	(0.596)			
Distributive Injustice							0.692**	1.033**	0.744**
							(0.034)	(0.116)	(0.086)
Prominence		0.093			-0.104+			0.231*	
		(0.132)			(0.062)			(0.100)	
Salience			0.041			-0.031			0.092
			(0.111)			(0.055)			(0.083)
Unfair Salary x Prominence									
Unfair Salary x Salience									
Unjust Salary x Prominence		-0.043*							
		(0.020)							
Unjust Salary x Salience			-0.009						
			(0.017)						
Perception of Underpayment x Prominence					-0.757**				
					(0.167)				
Perception of Underpayment x Salience						0.019			
						(0.179)			

Distributive Justice x Prominence								-0.087**	
								(0.027)	
Distributive Justice x Salience									-0.014
									(0.024)
Income in thousands	-0.003*	-0.003**	-0.003*	-0.002*	-0.003**	-0.003*	-0.002*	-0.002*	-0.002*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Age	-0.009+	-0.007	-0.009+	-0.006	-0.004	-0.007	-0.011**	-0.011**	-0.011**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gender (ref=Man)									
Woman	0.016	0.048	0.016	0.110	0.158+	0.111	-0.041	-0.039	-0.045
	(0.089)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.095)	(0.091)	(0.095)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.077)
Other	0.671+	0.647	0.685+	0.601	0.596	0.591	0.635+	0.644+	0.663+
	(0.399)	(0.394)	(0.402)	(0.427)	(0.409)	(0.429)	(0.346)	(0.343)	(0.347)
Race (ref=White)									
Black	0.154	0.155	0.153	-0.112	-0.107	-0.113	0.136	0.119	0.131
	(0.126)	(0.125)	(0.127)	(0.135)	(0.130)	(0.136)	(0.109)	(0.108)	(0.110)
Other	0.169	0.158	0.173	0.210+	0.186	0.209+	0.150	0.139	0.155
	(0.111)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.119)	(0.114)	(0.120)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.097)
Marital Status (ref= Single)									
Married	0.046	0.034	0.040	-0.045	-0.058	-0.047	0.067	0.059	0.072
	(0.098)	(0.096)	(0.098)	(0.104)	(0.100)	(0.105)	(0.085)	(0.084)	(0.085)
Divorced/Separated	0.119	0.100	0.111	-0.067	-0.037	-0.072	0.133	0.127	0.143
	(0.164)	(0.162)	(0.165)	(0.177)	(0.169)	(0.177)	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.142)
Other	-0.371	-0.329	-0.372	-0.251	-0.263	-0.249	-0.323	-0.255	-0.321

	(0.449)	(0.443)	(0.450)	(0.481)	(0.460)	(0.482)	(0.389)	(0.386)	(0.389)
Education	0.092*	0.115**	0.097*	0.101*	0.138**	0.105*	0.017	0.028	0.008
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Weekly Work Hour	0.010	0.011	0.010	0.016*	0.018*	0.016*	0.007	0.007	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Job Authority	-0.022	-0.010	-0.023	-0.061	-0.045	-0.060	-0.021	-0.019	-0.022
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Job Autonomy	-0.059	-0.048	-0.058	-0.130**	-0.107**	-0.128**	-0.033	-0.035	-0.036
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Job Creativity	-0.187**	-0.092	-0.183**	-0.196**	-0.013	-0.189**	-0.031	-0.006	-0.042
	(0.058)	(0.065)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.050)	(0.056)	(0.051)
Constant	0.894*	0.020	0.718	2.370**	1.648**	2.450**	0.406	-0.695	0.102
	(0.452)	(0.664)	(0.612)	(0.463)	(0.484)	(0.506)	(0.390)	(0.538)	(0.498)
R squared	0.377	0.397	0.377	0.287	0.351	0.288	0.533	0.543	0.535

Table 3.3. Average Marginal Effect of Felt Emotion and Identity Prominence/Salience Predicting Expression of Anger to Colleagues/Supervisors

	Colleague		Supervisor	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Felt Anger	-0.001	0.025	0.034	0.017
	(0.028)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.015)
Prominence	-0.044		0.015	
	(0.030)		(0.023)	
Felt Anger x Prominence	0.017*		-0.001	
	(0.007)		(0.005)	
Salience		-0.044+		-0.015
		(0.024)		(0.017)
Felt Anger x Salience		0.012+		0.004
		(0.006)		(0.004)
Perception of Underpayment	-0.037	-0.032	-0.033	-0.030
	(0.057)	(0.061)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Income in thousands	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Age	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Gender (ref=Man)				
Woman	-0.047+	-0.049+	-0.029	-0.027
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Race (ref=White)				
Black	0.048	0.041	0.013	0.012
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Other	-0.051+	-0.057*	-0.014	-0.017
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.021)

Marital Status (ref= Single)				
Married	-0.047	-0.046	-0.028	-0.026
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Divorced/Separated	0.022	0.018	0.014	0.016
	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.043)	(0.044)
Education	0.025*	0.027*	0.006	0.007
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Weekly Work Hour	-0.000	0.000	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Job Authority	-0.012	-0.010	0.008	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Job Autonomy	-0.004	-0.004	-0.000	0.001
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Job Creativity	-0.031+	-0.023	-0.017	-0.011
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.012)
N	519	519	519	519

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01

Figure 3.1. The Moderating Effect of Identity Prominence on the Association between Perception of Underpayment and Intensity of Negative Emotion

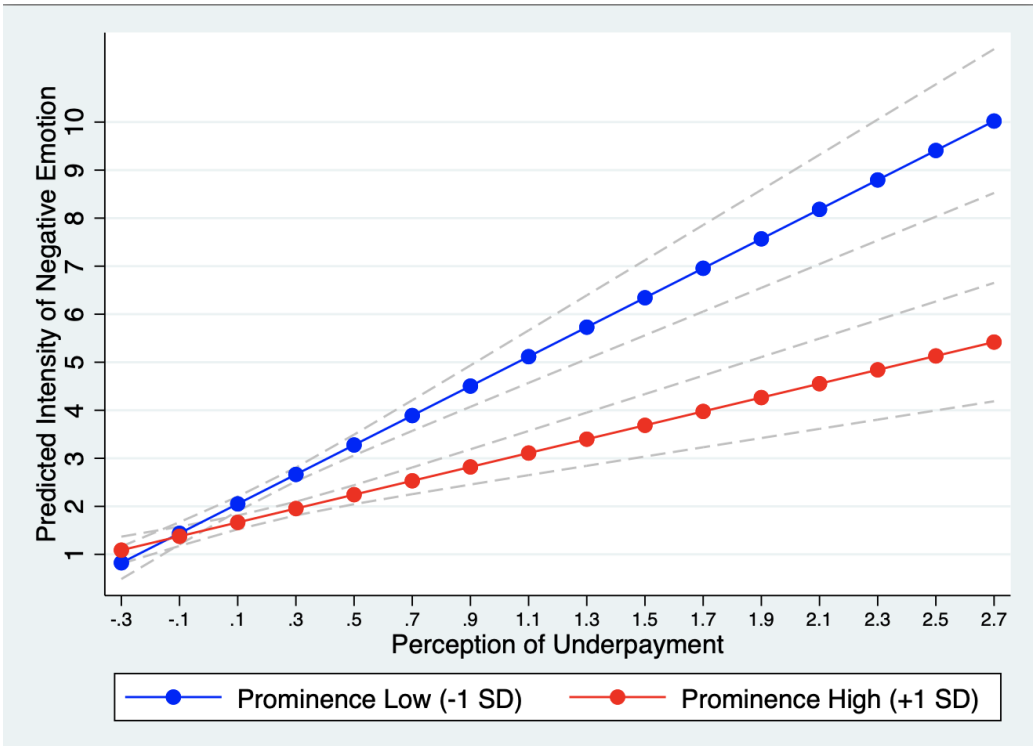
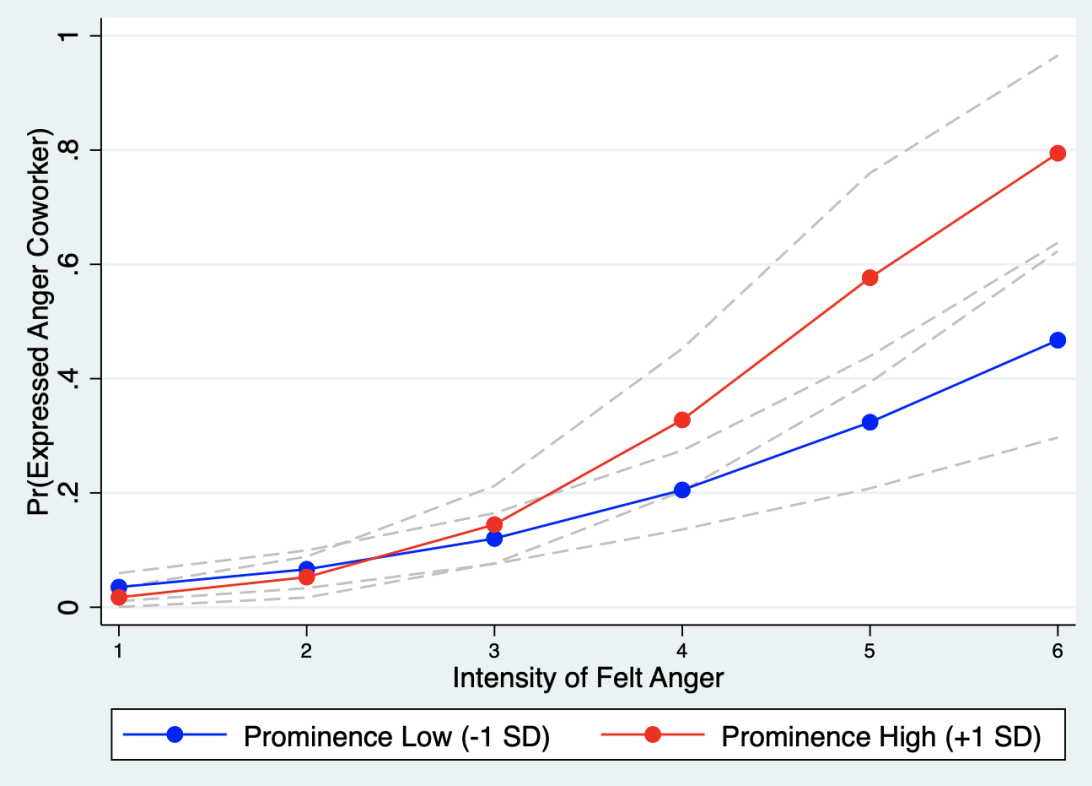


Figure 3.2. Predicted Probability of Expressing Anger to Colleagues by Intensity of Felt Anger and Identity Prominence



APPENDICES

Appendix 3.1. Measurement of Variables

Concept/Citation	Questions	Response Category
Work Identity Standard		
General positive feelings about the role (Gallaghar et al. 2022; Stets and Harrod 2004)	How positively do you view yourself at work?	0 (Not at all positive) <---> 10 (Extremely positive)
	How well do you think you perform your job duties?	0 (Not well at all) <---> 10 (Extremely well)
Meanings associated with work role (Correl 2004; Ridgeway 1998; Trettevik 2016; Simon 1997; Brennan 2009; Burke and Reitzes 1981)	Please rate yourself at work in the following 14 characteristics.	
	Skill	0 (Unskilled) <---> 10 (Skilled)
	Competency	0 (Incompetent) <---> 10 (Competent)
	Capability	0 (Incapable) <---> 10 (Capable)
	Knowledge	0 (Unknowledgeable) <---> 10 (Knowledgeable)
	Adequacy	0 (Inadequate) <---> 10 (Adequate)
	Motivation	0 (Not motivated) <---> 10 (Motivated)
	Dedication	0 (Undedicated) <---> 10 (Dedicated)
	Hardworking	0 (Lazy) <---> 10 (Hardworking)
	Responsibility	0 (Irresponsible) <---> 10 (Responsible)
	Agency	0 (Passive) <---> 10 (Agentic)
	Decision making	0 (Follower) <---> 10 (Decision maker)
	Reliability	0 (Unreliable) <---> 10 (Reliable)
	Dependence	0 (Dependent) <---> 10 (Independent)
	Helpfulness	0 (Unhelpful) <---> 10 (Helpful)

Reflected Appraisal	How do you think people at work would rate you in the following characteristics?	
General positive feelings	How positively are you viewed by others in your workplace?	0 (Not at all positive) <---> 10 (Extremely positive)
	How well do others at your workplace think you perform your job duties?	0 (Not well at all) <---> 10 (Extremely well)
Meanings associated with work role	How do you think others at work would rate you in the following 14 characteristics?	
	Skill	0 (Unskilled) <---> 10 (Skilled)
	Competency	0 (Incompetent) <---> 10 (Competent)
	Capability	0 (Incapable) <---> 10 (Capable)
	Knowledge	0 (Unknowledgeable) <---> 10 (Knowledgeable)
	Adequacy	0 (Inadequate) <---> 10 (Adequate)
	Motivation	0 (Not motivated) <---> 10 (Motivated)
	Dedication	0 (Undedicated) <---> 10 (Dedicated)
	Hardworking	0 (Lazy) <---> 10 (Hardworking)
	Responsibility	0 (Irresponsible) <---> 10 (Responsible)
	Agency	0 (Passive) <---> 10 (Agentic)
	Decision making	0 (Follower) <---> 10 (Decision maker)
	Reliability	0 (Unreliable) <---> 10 (Reliable)
	Dependence	0 (Dependent) <---> 10 (Independent)
	Helpfulness	0 (Unhelpful) <---> 10 (Helpful)
Work identity Salience (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014; Markowski and Serpe 2021; Stryker and Serpe 1994) Items about different social	Imagine introducing yourself to five different types of people. How likely are you to mention your work and professional activities?	
	Someone of the same gender	

situations are my original, following Brenner and colleagues' (Brenner, Serpe, and Reed 2023) recommendation that salience measure should add contextual factors	Someone of the opposite gender	Extremely Unlikely, Unlikely, Somewhat Unlikely, Somewhat Likely, Likely, Extremely Likely
	A close friend's friend	
	A family member's friend	
	A stranger	
	How likely are you to mention your work and professional activities in the following social situations?	
	While at a family gathering	
	When meeting someone new at a social event	
	While traveling or on vacation	
	While volunteering in your community	
	When reconnecting with an old friend whom you haven't seen in several years.	
Work identity Prominence (Brenner et al. 2014; Callero 1985; Markowski and Serpe 2021)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	
	My work is an important part of my self-image	Strongly disagree, disagree, Somewhat disagree, Somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree
	My work is an important reflection of who I am	
	I have come to think of myself as a professional in my field of work	
	I have a strong sense of belonging to the professional community associated with my work	
	Work is something I rarely even think about	
	If I had to give up my work, I would feel like I have lost an important part of myself	
	I really don't have any clear feelings about my work	
	Being a member of my profession means more to me than just having a job	
Jasso's Justice Evaluation Formula	What is your annual salary before any taxes or deductions?	
	Based on your education, training, experience, position, and the effort you put into your work,	
	what annual salary do you feel would be fair (before taxes or deductions)?	
	On a scale of 1 to 10, how fair is the pay you receive in your job?	0 (unfair) to 10 (fair)

Distributive Justice (Clay-Warner, Hegtvedt, and Roman 2005; Clay-Warner, Reynolds, and Roman 2005; Nelson et al. 2019; Younts and Mueller 2001) 4th and 5th items are my original	On a scale of 1 to 10, how just is the pay you receive in your job?	0 (unjust) to 10 (just)
	Fairness in the following questions means the extent to which your contribution to the organization are related to the compensation you receive.	
	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	
	I am fairly rewarded for the amount of effort I put in	Strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree
	I am fairly rewarded considering the responsibilities I have	
	I am fairly rewarded in view of my experience	
	I am fairly rewarded considering the amount of education and training I have	
	Compared to my coworkers, I am fairly compensated for my work	
	I feel that my compensation is in line with industry standards	
	Where I work, the amount of pay employees receive is distributed fairly	
	Where I work, employees receive an amount of fringe benefits that are fair	
	The overall rewards workers receive where I work are fairly distributed	
Procedural Justice (instrumental: Q1-4 and group value: Q5-12) (Clay-Warner, Hegtvedt, et al. 2005; Clay-Warner, Reynolds, et al. 2005; Colquitt 2001)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the procedures used to determine the pay distribution in your current workplace?	
	I have influence over the procedures.	Strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree
	The procedures are free of bias.	
	The procedures are based on accurate information.	
	The procedures uphold ethical and moral standards.	
	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your current workplace?	
	When decisions are being made, people who will be affected are asked for their ideas.	
	Managers make sure that employee's concerns are heard before decisions are made.	

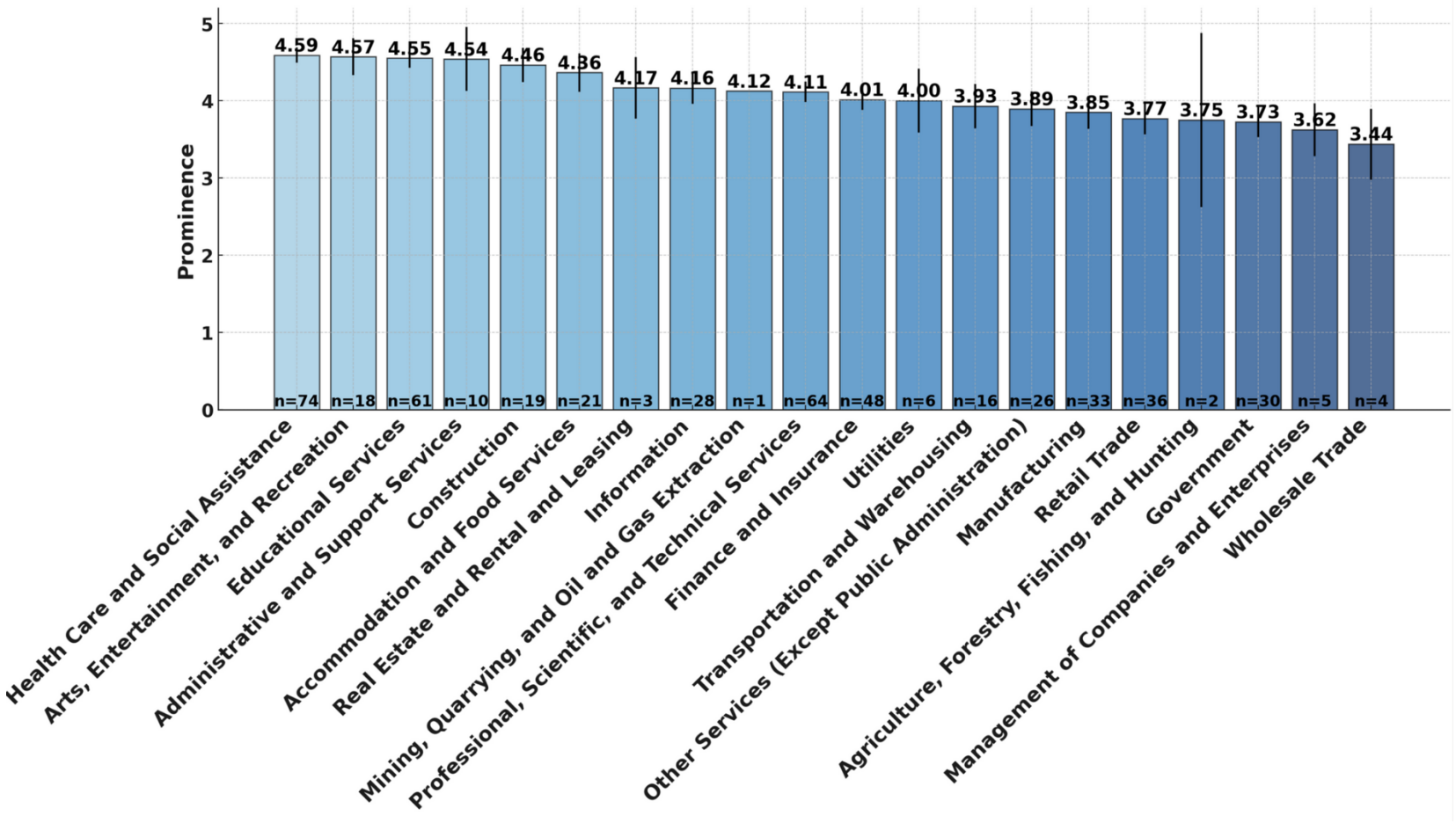
	Managers clarify decisions and provide additional information when requested by employees.	
	Job decisions are applied consistently across affected employees.	
	Employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions that are made by managers.	
	Rank and file employees are involved in making decisions about how the work is done.	
	I trust that my supervisor is completely honest with me.	
	I trust that my supervisor will share important information with me.	
Emotion Reaction to Injustice (Johnson et al. 2016)	To what extent do you experience	
	[anger/frustration/resentment/sadness/worry/helplessness/satisfaction/excitement/gratitude/pride] regarding your annual salary?	Not at all, slightly, somewhat, moderately, quite a bit, very much, an extreme amount
	How likely are you to express	Extremely unlikely, unlikely, slightly unlikely, slightly likely, likely, extremely likely
	[anger/frustration/resentment/sadness/worry/helplessness/satisfaction/excitement/gratitude/pride] about your pay to your coworkers?	
	How likely are you to express	Extremely unlikely, unlikely, slightly unlikely, slightly likely, likely, extremely likely
	[anger/frustration/resentment/sadness/worry/helplessness/satisfaction/excitement/gratitude/pride] about your pay to your supervisors?	
Actual Expression of Emotions (my original)	In the past month, which of the following emotional reactions about your pay did you express to your [coworkers/supervisors]?	(check all that apply) Anger, Frustration, Resentment, Sadness, Worry, Helplessness, Satisfaction, Excitement, Gratitude, Pride, None of the above
	(check all that apply)	
	Anger, Frustration, Resentment, Sadness, Worry, Helplessness, Satisfaction, Excitement, Gratitude, Pride, None of the above	
	follow up question for any emotions that are checked: On how many days in the last month did you express {emotion} to your {coworkers/supervisors} ?	0 to 31 days
Justice restoring behavior (my original)	Which of the following, if any, have you taken in the past month to address underpayment at your workplace? Please select all that apply.	
	Seek out advice from a mentor or trusted colleagues on how to negotiate for a raise	
	Initiate a conversation with a supervisor about the possibility of a salary increase	

	Research the process for filing a complaint about pay inequality	
	Search for alternative job opportunities that offer fairer pay and benefits	
	Participate in a union or employee advocacy group to advocate for fair pay	
	Reduce the time and effort you put into work	
	Other (please describe)	
	None of the above	
Job Value (Kalleberg 1977; Kalleberg and Marsden 2019), also from ISSP and GSS	Below is a list of job characteristics. Please indicate how important each of these characteristics is to you in a job.	
	Job Security	Not important at all, slightly important, somewhat important, moderately important, very important, extremely important
	High Income	
	Good opportunities for advancement	
	A job that allows someone to work independently	
	A job that allow some to help other people	
	A job that is useful to society	
	A job that is interesting	
	A job that allows someone to decide their times or days of work	
Job Value (my job) (I adopted from above)	To what extent do you agree with the following about your primary job?	
	My job provides job security	Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree
	My job offers a high income	
	My job gives ample opportunities for advancement	
	My job allows me the autonomy to work independently.	
	My job enables me to help others	
	My job contributes positively to society	
	I find my job personally interesting	
	My job offers flexibility in choosing work hours or days.	
Creative Work (Mirowsky 2011; Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Schieman	How often does your job require you to be creative?	Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Sometimes, Frequently, Always
	How often do you have the chance to learn new things?	

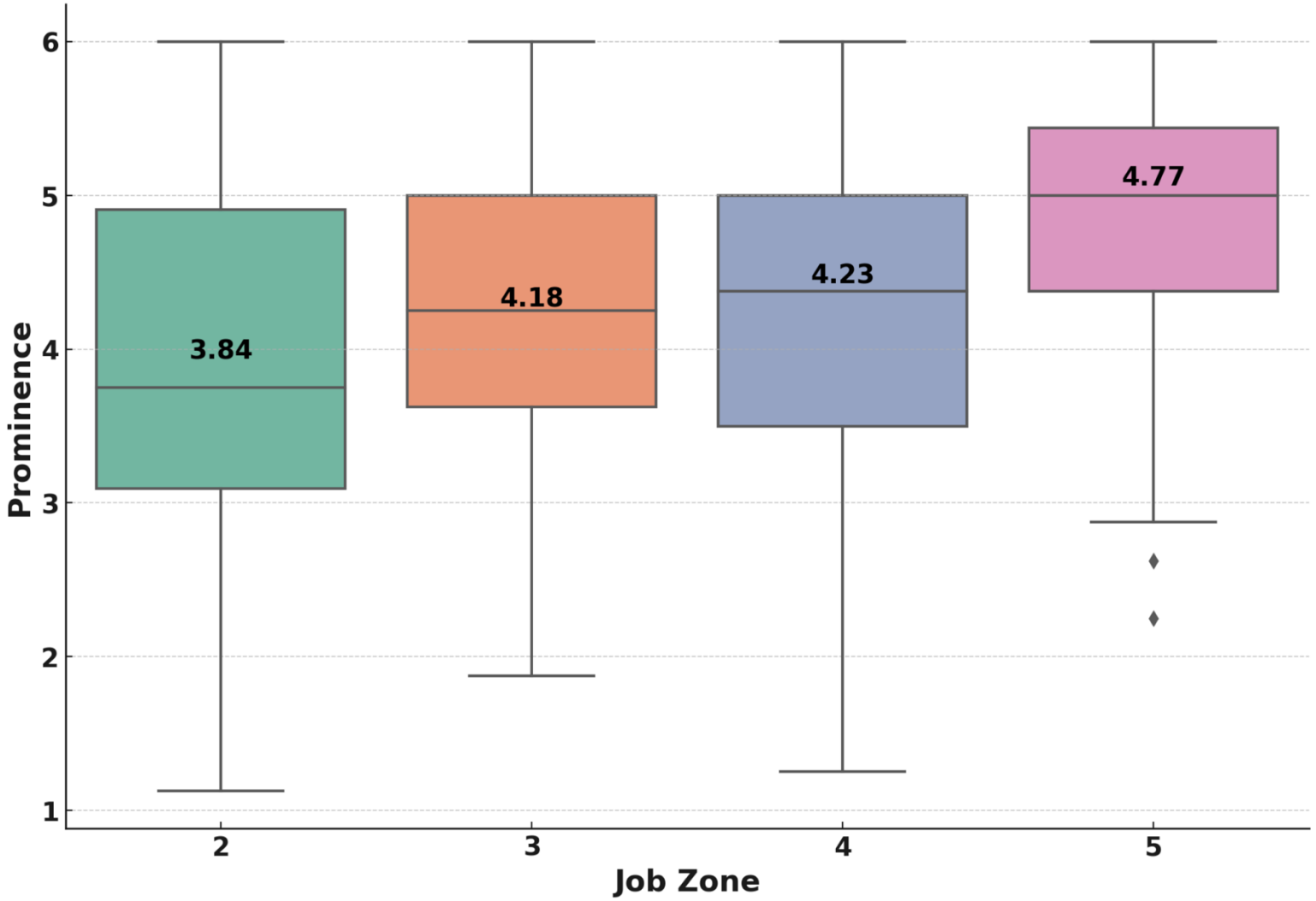
and Young 2010) also some overlap with skill discretion scale (Karasek 1979)	How often do you have the chance to solve problems?	
	How often does your job allow you to develop your skills or abilities?	
	How often does your job involve doing the same thing in the same way repeatedly?	
Job Autonomy (Mirowsky and Ross 2007; Narisada and Schieman 2022; Schieman et al. 2020)	I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.	Strongly disagree, Moderately disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Moderately agree, Strongly agree
	It is my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.	
	I have a lot of say about what happens on my job	
	I decide when I start and finish work each day.	
Job authority (Schieman et al. 2020)	Do you decide how much pay others receive?	Yes, No
	Do you have the authority to hire or fire others?	
	Do you supervise or manage anyone as part of your job?	
Job satisfaction (GSS, Moen et al., 2015 who cites Cammann et al. 1983)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your main job?	
	In general, you like working at your job	Strongly disagree, Moderately disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Moderately agree, Strongly agree
	On the whole, I am satisfied with my job	
Organizational recognition and value (my original)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the value of your labor?	
	My work is noticed and appreciated at my workplace	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
	My contributions are valued at my workplace.	
Societal recognition and value (my original)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the value of your labor?	
	My work is recognized and esteemed by society at large.	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
	Society values the work that I do.	
Burnout (Moen et al. 2015, they took the items from Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter 1986)	How often do you experience the following feelings at work?	Never, a few times a year or less, once a month or less, a few times a month, once a week, a few times a week, every day
	You feel emotionally drained from your work.	
	You feel burned out by your work.	
	You feel used up at the end of the workday.	

Turnover intension (Chen, Hui, and Sego 1998)	To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your main job?	
	I often think of leaving the organization	Strongly disagree, Moderately disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Moderately agree, Strongly agree
	It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year	
	If I may choose again, I will choose to work for the current organization	
Organizational Tenure	How many years have you been in your current job?	
Weekly work Hours	How many hours do you work per week on average?	
Workplace Composition	How would you estimate the demographic distribution in your workplace?	
	What percentage of your workplace do you estimate to be women?	0-100%
	What percentage of your workplace do you estimate to be White?	0-100%

Appendix 3.2. Distribution of Work Identity Prominence by Industry (N = 530)



Appendix 3.3. Distribution of Prominence by O*NET Job Zone Classification



Notes. The higher the job zone number the more occupations require training and education.

CHAPTER 4

EXPLORING BIASES IN 'FAIRNESS': THE IMPACT OF EQUITY PRINCIPLES ON WAGE PENALTIES FOR PARENTS TAKING LEAVES[6][7]

[6] Kawashima, Tenshi and Jody Clay-Warner. To be submitted to *Work and Occupations*

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ABSTRACT

Using a conjoint experimental framework, the current study examines the effect of employee gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior on managers' raise allocation decisions (N = 870). I also examine whether imposing the equity principle in pay allocation moderates the effect of status-based discrimination in pay allocation. The results indicate that employees who took a leave of absence were allocated about $150 less than those who did not take any leave. This penalty is similar in magnitude to the reduction in raises associated with having five fewer years of organizational tenure. Furthermore, I found that this penalty is larger under the equity pay allocation condition, which is often considered the gold standard of fair workplace practice. Together, these findings suggest that the practices deemed "fair" might inadvertently penalize those who take a leave of absence, in a context where childcare is seen as individuals' responsibilities.

The gender wage gap is wider among parents than among non-parents. Research shows evidence of the motherhood wage penalty, where mothers earn five to seven percent less per hour than non-mothers with comparable experience and skills (Budig and England 2001; Cha, Weeden, and Schnabel 2023). On the other hand, men tend to benefit from parenthood, with fathers earning 4-9 percent more than non-fathers, a phenomenon known as the fatherhood premium (Hodges and Budig 2010; Killewald 2013). A recent study by Cha and colleagues (2023) report that 29 percent of the gender wage gap is explained by the wage gap among parents.

One mechanism that explains the gender wage gap among parents is status-based discrimination, which occurs when individuals are evaluated based on stereotypes tied to their social groups rather than their actual qualifications. Motherhood and fatherhood are status characteristics that shape perceptions of performance expectations, or assumed competence and worth of an individual (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). Research shows that mothers are often perceived as less committed and competent, which lowers the perceived value of their contributions to an organization (Albiston and Correll 2023; Benard and Correll 2010; Correll et al. 2007). In contrast, fathers are not only rated as equally competent as non-fathers but are also seen as more committed due to cultural expectations of the breadwinner role.

Although the status of being a parent may confer bonuses to fathers while penalizing mothers, the act of taking a leave of absence to care for children negatively impacts wages for both mothers and fathers. Research indicates that the duration of family-related leave increases the motherhood wage penalty (Budig, Misra, and Boeckmann 2012, 2016; Mari and Cutuli 2021), likely due to loss of human capital and detachment from the labor force. Policies that support short leave durations with job protection and subsidized child care can help mitigate this

penalty by promoting mothers' continuous employment (Budig, Misra, and Boeckmann 2012, 2016). Fathers can also face negative consequences of taking leave, as it is perceived as a violation of the ideal worker norm (Acker 1990). Morosow and Cooke (2022) found that fathers experience penalties when they take parental leave after the mother has returned to work. When fathers take leave concurrently with the mother, this penalty was nonexistent. Their findings suggest that the leave-taking penalty for fathers arises from the signaling of prioritizing family over work, rather than from human capital depreciation. In a similar vein, Weisshaar (2018) found that parents who took breaks to care for their children were perceived as less committed, less reliable, and less deserving of employment compared to those who did not take any leave, or who took leaves for reasons unrelated to family.

The current study examines the effects of gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior on wage penalties. I test this through a conjoint experiment, where participants evaluate fictitious employee profiles with various characteristics and allocate dollars from a finite raise pool between the two workers. This experimental design allows for simultaneous manipulation of multiple independent variables and the inclusion of information not typically found in resumes (Weisshaar 2021). While not reflecting real-world evaluation scenarios, the conjoint experiment simplifies the decision-making process with easily interpretable treatments. Therefore, this design allows me to ask whether status-based wage inequality persists even when employees' qualifications and performance are clearly presented. While previous studies using resume-based factorial designs have shown effects of prior performance (Allen, Russell, and Rush 1994; Benard and Correll 2010), this approach constrains the amount of information that can be presented about an employees' competence. This study includes fictitious employees' education, organizational tenure, and performance evaluations to mitigate informational bias.

This study manipulates pay allocation rules to examine whether emphasizing the need for equitable distributions in raise allocation reduces or exacerbates status-based wage penalties. The equity principle dictates that pay should be allocated based on an employee's contributions, such as effort, productivity, and ability. In real-world workplace contexts, managers often follow equity rules when making salary decisions (Colquitt, Hill, and De Cremer 2023; Graso et al. 2020). While some research suggests that consistent application of this rule can reduce bias in reward distribution (Cugueró-Escofet and Fortin 2022), other studies suggest that perceptions of "fair rewards" may still be influenced by status beliefs (Carlo and Karpinski 2024; Jasso and Webster 1997, 1999). This suggests that emphasizing fairness in reward distributions could have the unintended effect of intensifying status-based wage penalties, warranting examination of the role of the equity principle in shaping such outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenthood as a Status Characteristic

Research on workplace inequalities suggests that gender and parenthood are status characteristics that shape perceptions of workers. In a laboratory experiment, Correll, Benard, and Paik (2007) found that mothers are perceived as less competent and committed than fathers, and these perceptions, in turn, negatively impacted starting salary recommendations. The average starting salary recommendation for mothers was 7.4 percent lower than for non-mothers. These perceptions of commitment and competence can perpetuate workplace inequalities when those deemed more competent are granted more opportunities to contribute and prove their abilities.

Much of the research in this area suggests that the wage penalty reflects status-based discrimination against mothers (Budig and England 2001; Glass 2004). Status discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of individuals based on stereotypes associated with their status,

even with the knowledge of their equal qualification and performance. This is believed to contribute to the motherhood wage penalty, where mothers are paid less than non-mothers and fathers, even after accounting for the effects of human capital, work hours, and commitment to paid work (Anderson, Binder, and Krause 2003). On the other hand, fathers tend to benefit from stereotypes of reliability and commitment, which stem from their socially prescribed role as the household breadwinner (Benard and Correll 2010).

Status beliefs surrounding parenthood can also lead to normative discrimination, or unfair treatment when individuals deviate from prescriptive stereotypes about how men or women should behave. Traditional prescriptive gender roles dictate that mothers prioritize caring for their family over their career, whereas fathers are expected to prioritize paid work to provide economic security for their families (Prentice and Carranza 2002). Previous studies found that mothers with high performance evaluations who do not take leave are perceived as less warm and likable, possibly because of the violation of gender role expectations for mothers (Albiston and Correll 2023; Benard and Correll 2010). Similarly, a recent study by Melin (2023) found that fathers who used career reentry assistance programs face disadvantage in hiring due to their stigmatized status as less competent and respectable. This penalty might also have stemmed from the incompatibility between help-seeking behavior and traditional breadwinner roles.

Leave Taking and Ideal Worker Norms

Parents often experience additional penalties for taking family-related leaves of absence. This is because taking a leave signals a violation of the ideal worker norm, which is a pervasive ideology in the workplace that expects workers to prioritize job responsibilities above all other aspects of their lives (Acker 1990; Williams 2001). Violations of the ideal worker norm can include requests for flexible work arrangements (Munsch 2016; Thébaud and Pedulla 2022), as

well as taking parental leave (Coltrane et al. 2013). Research has shown that the hiring disadvantage of taking leaves is intensified for those who left the labor market to care for their family compared to those who experienced unemployment (Weisshaar 2018). This finding suggests that prioritizing non-work roles can hinder workforce reentry, likely due to the perception of violation of the ideal worker norm.

There is mixed evidence as to whether mothers or fathers are similarly penalized for taking family-related leaves. Albiston and Correll (2023) found that mothers who took leave were recommended for lower raises and seen as less promotable than non-mothers, while fathers who took leave also received lower raises but their promotability was not affected. Another study has shown that mothers are rated as less committed than fathers even when they take the same length of family leave (Petts, Mize, and Kaufman 2022). On the other hand, Weisshaar's (2018) audit study found that there is no significant gender difference in the effect of leave taking. However, Weisshaar's online experiment demonstrates that fathers who took leave were rated lower than mothers on measures of commitment and reliability, suggesting the possibility of normative discrimination, where fathers are more harshly penalized for violating ideal worker norms.

These findings suggest that the motherhood penalty is primarily driven by status discrimination, where biases against mothers' perceived commitment and competence play a central role. In contrast, penalties for fathers who take leave are more likely to stem from normative discrimination because fathers are expected to more strictly follow the ideal worker norm and prioritize paid work. Thus, when fathers deviate from these expectations by taking leave, they may face harsher penalties than mothers, who are already stereotyped as less committed to work (Weisshaar 2018).

When managers make decisions, whether related to hiring, promotions, or raise recommendations, they primarily rely on performance-relevant information, such as evaluations, productivity, and organizational tenure, rather than status characteristics. Previous research has considered the impact of added performance-relevant information on status-based discrimination. Weisshaar (2021) investigates whether additional information that counters the negative stereotypes associated with being a parent who took leave to care for family members can mitigate hiring penalties. She argues that information bias can occur when certain details on each employee are missing, leading managers to make assumptions about performance based on the information available (e.g., parenthood status or leave-taking behavior). Her findings indicate that while providing counter-stereotypical information (such as strong performance, social skills, availability, and commitment) can reduce hiring disadvantages for unemployed applicants, it does not have the same effect for those who left the workforce for family-related reasons. Similarly, Allen and colleagues (1994), using a laboratory experiment with business students, found that high-performing employees who took leave for medical reasons were viewed more favorably than those who took leave for family-related reasons. Benard and Correll (2010) found that high-performing mothers tended to experience normative discrimination by women evaluators, where they are rated less likable and warm for violating gendered expectations of committing to family life. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of presenting performance-relevant information to determine whether status characteristics continue to influence managers' pay allocation decisions and how such information interacts with employees' gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior.

Equity Rule and Resource Allocation

Not only do decision-makers have access to performance-relevant information, they are also trained to adhere to performance-based decisions. The justice enactment literature (Colquitt et al. 2023; Graso et al. 2020) suggests that managers tend to adhere to the equity principle when determining salaries. The equity principle dictates that resources should be allocated in proportion to employees' inputs, such as productivity, effort, and ability. Specifically, equity between two employees is achieved when the ratio of worker A's outcomes to their inputs is equal to that of worker B: $\frac{Outcome\ (A)}{Input\ (A)} = \frac{Outcome\ (B)}{Input\ (B)}$. Thus, if worker A is perceived to contribute more, A should receive higher compensation than B.

'Outcome' in equity theory refers to the benefits employees receive from their employers, after accounting for costs. The literature identifies various outcomes beyond pay, including intrinsic rewards, status symbols, and flexible work schedule (Adams 2005; Narisada and Schieman 2022). Assuming constant input between A and B, if A is perceived to receive a higher level of alternative (i.e., non-monetary) rewards, which are considered part of the outcome, managers might allocate more pay to employee B to equalize their overall outcomes. Consistent application of the equity rule can reduce bias in reward distribution (Cugueró-Escofet and Fortin 2022).

Status Value Theory of Distributive Justice

Although some organizational justice literature emphasizes strategies to encourage managers to adhere more closely to the equity principle, status value theory, a sociological social psychological extension of equity theory, illustrates how "inputs" and "outcomes" are socially constructed concepts. As I discuss below, this body of work suggests that notions of equity and

fairness may reflect broader societal inequalities and therefore, making this equity rule salient may inadvertently perpetuate disadvantages for certain groups.

The status value theory of distributive justice links the value of input in the equity equation to status inequalities in broader social structures (Berger et al. 1968). Individuals with high status characteristics (e.g., white, male) are culturally perceived as more competent. The value associated with such status characteristics extends to the perceived value of the inputs made by high status actors. Therefore, even if two people contribute similarly to an organization (i.e., equal input), pay allocators may allocate more raise to those with higher status value.

Empirical studies drawing on this perspective have demonstrated that people have different standards of "fair" wage for men and women, a phenomenon known as the gender gap in just wages (Jasso and Webster 1997, 1999). In general, these studies show that people believe men deserve higher wages than women, which aligns with the status value argument. Jasso and Webster (1997) re-analyzed a factorial survey dataset collected in the 1970s and found evidence of a just gender pay gap favoring men, even when other characteristics such as education, occupation, and age were held constant in their analyses. Their follow-up study using a student sample, however, found a marginal just gender pay gap that slightly favored women (Jasso and Webster 1999).

More than two decades later, Sauer (2020) examined the gender gap in perceptions of just wages using factorial survey studies with both student- and general-population samples in Germany. The findings indicated no just gender pay gap in the student sample, whereas the population samples revealed a just pay gap with the belief that men are deserving of higher wage. This finding held among both male and female allocators. Sauer further found that this pattern was influenced by the gender pay gap experienced by respondents, such that participants

living in states with higher levels of gender wage inequality were more likely to believe that men deserve higher wages than women. This suggests that structural inequalities shape the effect of status characteristics on perceptions of fair wages. Similarly, Carlo and Karpinski (2024)'s recent vignette study found evidence of a gender just-pay gap in Poland, particularly disadvantaging women in a high-prestige, male-dominated field. Interestingly, however, both male and female characters with multiple children were perceived as deserving a "parenthood wage bonus," which is unexpected given the typical findings on the parenthood wage penalty.

These studies demonstrate that status value plays a significant role in the evaluation of "fair" wages, indicating that the concept of what is considered "fair" or "just" is deeply intertwined with broader social inequalities. Therefore, emphasizing the equity rule in pay allocation might have unintended consequences for status-based wage inequalities, as factors such as gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior can skew perceptions of the value of "input" in the equity formula.

Hypotheses

Building on the discussion in the previous sections, I propose seven hypotheses that predict the effects of gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior on the raises allocated to employees. Table 4.1 summarizes these hypotheses. First, drawing on the literature on the motherhood wage penalty and fatherhood premium (Correll et al. 2007), Hypothesis 1 predicts that parenthood status reduces the raise allocated for women, whereas Hypothesis 2 predicts that parenthood status increases the raise allocated for men. Hypothesis 3 builds on research on the ideal worker norm (Acker 1990; Williams 2001) and the signaling effect of leave-taking behavior as a violation of this norm (Weishaar 2018) to predict that leave-taking behavior reduces the raise allocated to an employee.

Hypothesis 4 predicts status-based discrimination against mothers by testing the interaction effect between gender and parenthood. Specifically, it predicts that the negative effect of parenthood on raise allocation is greater for women than for men. Hypotheses 5 and 6 test the mechanisms for normative discrimination against fathers and mothers. Hypothesis 5 predicts that fathers who have taken leave are penalized more (i.e., receive a smaller raise) than mothers who have taken leaves, as leave-taking contradicts prescriptive gender norms for fathers. Hypothesis 6 predicts that mothers who have not taken leave are penalized more than mothers who have taken leaves, as caregiving responsibilities align with prescriptive stereotypes of mothers as primary caretakers, leading to harsher penalties for those who are perceived violating this stereotype.

Finally, Hypothesis 7 examines the role of equity-based resource allocation in status-based wage penalties. Although some organizational justice research suggests that consistent application of the equity rule can reduce workplace inequality (Cugueró-Escofet and Fortin 2022), research examining the role of merit-based reward systems has shown that meritocratic workplace practices, including contribution-based pay allocation systems, can paradoxically increase the gender wage gap (Castilla and Benard 2010; Mun and Kodama 2022). Furthermore, research drawing on the status value theory of distributive justice indicates that status continues to influence the perceived value of an "input" even within situations under equity considerations. Given this theory and empirical evidence, Hypothesis 7 predicts that the equity rule exacerbates the status-based wage penalty.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from an original conjoint survey experiment conducted using Prolific, an online sampling platform that recruits participants. Following previous studies

(e.g., Melin 2023), I restricted my sample to U.S. residents who are full-time employees with decision-making responsibilities in the areas of either people management or hiring (N = 870).

I presented respondents with two hypothetical employee profiles with multiple attributes, including employees' gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior. Each attribute has multiple levels, which are varied independently and randomly, thus operating as experimental manipulations. This design allows researchers to draw causal inferences and disentangle the effects of multiple factors on participants' judgments (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015; Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014).

The conjoint experimental framework helps overcome the limitations of prior research on status-based wage inequality, which often relied on resume-based experiments or audit studies (Benard and Correll 2010; Correll et al. 2007; Munsch et al. 2023; Linden 2015). Unlike traditional factorial designs that tend to limit the number of attributes manipulated, conjoint experiments are designed to manipulate multiple attributes simultaneously. In this study, I manipulate both parenthood and leave-taking behavior directly, rather than relying on participants to infer leave behavior or intentions, as was the case in some earlier studies on the motherhood wage penalty (Correll et al. 2007; Benard and Correll 2010; Oesch et al. 2017). The simultaneous estimation of multiple attributes also allows me to examine interaction effects. For example, this design can test how the impact of leave-taking behavior varies across different levels of performance evaluation.

Moreover, the conjoint experimental framework facilitates inclusion of a wider range of information, which helps reduce information-based bias (Weisshaar 2021). It also enables the inclusion of seemingly irrelevant information that are typically not included in resumes and facilitates the manipulation of demographic information without relying on gender- or race-

specific names. By presenting participants with multiple factors to consider, the design can also reduce social desirability bias by offering participants justifications for their decisions (Hainmueller et al. 2014). Furthermore, displays of paired profiles simplifies the decision-making process, eliminating the need for participants to sift through multiple documents to access parenthood and leave-taking information, as in past studies that included family leave request forms in employee files (e.g., Albiston and Correll 2023). In this way, the conjoint experimental approach efficiently collects data on decision-making processes and influencing factors.

In my study, participants were first asked to assume that it was time for their team's annual employee evaluation. They were instructed to evaluate each employee and distribute a total of $10,000 between two employees whose information was displayed on the screen and repeated this task five times with different sets of employees. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two resource allocation conditions: the equity condition or the control condition. This between-subjects design allows me to examine the effect of emphasizing equity rules on status-based wage penalties. In the equity condition, participants were shown a paragraph explaining that resources should be allocated equitably, meaning that employees who contribute more to the organization should receive higher raises. In the control condition, participants were instructed to allocate resources at their discretion. More details on this manipulation are provided in the Appendix.

Participants then completed a manipulation check to confirm their understanding of the condition to which they were assigned. If they answered incorrectly, they were shown the correct information. Following the manipulation check, participants proceeded with the resource allocation tasks, where they distributed $10,000 between Employee A and Employee B based on

profiles that included seven attributes: background characteristics (race, gender, and parenthood status), education level, years in the current position, performance evaluation, and leave status. Table 4.2 provides descriptions of these attributes and their levels.

Race/ethnicity had four levels: White, Black, Hispanic, or Asian. There were two gender conditions: man and woman. Gender was indicated in the background information section at the top of the employee profile. Parenthood status was defined as either married with children or unmarried with no children. Education level had three categories, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate. Years in the current position also included three levels, 2, 5, or 7 years. Performance evaluation also had three levels: (1) meets established standards, (2) below established standards, or (3) exceeds established standards. Finally, leave-taking behavior included: (1) took 12 weeks of unpaid leave in the past year, (2) took 12 weeks of paid leave in the past year, and (3) did not take any leave in the past year. The set of attributes was adopted from a previous study with similar design (Park 2024). This factorial design resulted in 4 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 x 3 x 3 = 1,296 unique patterns of fictitious employee profiles. After completing the allocation task five times, participants answered demographic questions. The average time to complete the survey was approximately six minutes, and participants were compensated $0.90 for their participation.

Analytical Strategy

Given that the outcome variable is the proportion of the raise allocated to each fictitious employee, I used the fractional regression model (fracreg) in STATA 17. Due to the hierarchical nature of the data, where (fictitious) employees are nested within respondents, I adjusted for clustered standard errors. To test Hypothesis 7, I used a random intercept model to test the interaction effects between level 2 (between-subject) manipulation of equity rule and level 1 (employee characteristics) variables of gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.3 reports descriptive statistics. The analytical sample of this study consists of 870 individuals[8]. On average, respondents were around 41 years old with a pre-tax annual income of $86,330. Gender representative sampling methodology was used; therefore, both women (52%) and men (48%) are equally represented in the sample. In terms of racial demographics, a majority, 556 (64%) of the respondents identified as White, 164 (19%) of the respondents identified as Black, 41 (5%) as Latinx, 45 (5%) as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 64 (7%) identified as other racial categories. 522 (60%) of the respondents were married, 155 (18%) were single, 83 (10%) divorced or separated, and 110 (13%) were in the other category. The majority of the respondents possess bachelor's degrees or above, with 361 (41.49%) respondents possessing bachelor's degrees, 288 (26.21%) with master's degrees, 21 (2.41%) with professional degrees, and 29 (3.33%) with doctoral degrees. Only one respondent (0.11%) had less than a high school diploma, 53 (6.09%) were high school graduates, and 177 (20.34%) had some college degree.

The Effect of Parenthood on Raise Allocation

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2 (the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium), I ran separate models for the female and male (fictitious) employee subsamples. Table 4.4 presents the Average Marginal Effects predicting the proportion of the raise pool allocated using fractional logistic regression. Models 1 and 2 show the results for the female employee subsample (N = 4,361), while Models 3 and 4 are the results for the male employee subsample (N = 4,339). The

[8] This survey experiment was administered to 1,085 individuals. However, approximately 20% of respondents were excluded from the analytical sample for completing the survey in less than four minutes, where the average time taken by respondents to complete the survey was 7.4 minutes. Based on my own experience of taking the survey, including reading the resource allocation manipulation, completing the allocation task five times, and answering demographic questions, I determined that this survey cannot be completed in under four minutes without skipping information on employee characteristics. As a result, those cases (N=215) were excluded from the analytical sample.

coefficients for parenthood are not statistically significant at the .05 level in any of the models. Thus, there is no significant effect of being a parent in either the female or male employee samples. Therefore, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported.

Among both female and male fictitious employee subsamples, taking paid leave (female sample: AME = -.042, $p < .05$; male sample: AME = -.047, $p < .05$) and unpaid leave (female sample: AME = -.044, $p < .05$; male sample: AME = -.038, $p < .05$) significantly reduced the proportion of the raise pool that was allocated. Not surprisingly, performance evaluation was the strongest positive predictor, where meeting the established standard was associated with about 14 percentage point increase in raises among both the female subsample (AME = .143, $p < .01$) and the male subsample (AME = .139, $p < .01$). Exceeding the established standard was associated with about 21 percentage point increase among the female subsample (AME = .212, $p < .05$) and the male sample (AME = .207, $p < .01$), compared to those whose performance was below the established standards.

Education and organizational tenure also demonstrated significant effects on the proportion of raises allocated. Raise bonuses among those with doctorate degrees, in comparison with those with bachelor's degrees, were about three percentage points among the female sample and two percentage points among the male sample. The effect of a master's degree was only observed among female subsamples; the allocation increased about two percentage points among them compared to the bachelor's degree profile. Employee profiles that included five years of organizational tenure, compared to two years, had a higher proportion allocated by about three to four percentage points, whereas this bonus for the seven years of organizational tenure was about four to five percentage points.

The Effect of Leave-Taking on Raise Allocation

To test the effect of leave-taking, I conducted analyses using the full sample (N = 8,700). Model 5 in Table 4.5 presents the average marginal effects (AMEs) of all manipulated employee attributes on the proportion of raises allocated. After controlling for employee and manager characteristics, parenthood was significantly associated with the proportion of raise pool allocated. Specifically, parents are allocated raises that are 0.8 percentage points higher than the raises allocated to non-parents (AME = .008, $p < .05$).

As predicted by the violation of the ideal worker norm hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), employees who took a 12-week leave of absence in the past year were penalized. Those who took paid leave are allocated raises 4.4 percentage points lower than those who did not take any leave (AME = -.044, $p < .01$), and those who took unpaid leave are allocated 4.1 percentage points less (AME = -.041, $p < .01$). The difference in allocation between paid and unpaid leave was not significant.

Other employee attributes relevant to the "input" side of the equity equation also showed significant effects. For example, employees with a Master's degree are allocated 1.2 percentage points more in raise (AME = .012, $p < .05$), and those with a Doctorate are allocated 2.6 percentage points more (AME = .026, $p < .05$), compared to employees with a Bachelor's degree. Organizational tenure was also significant. Employees with five years of tenure received allocations that were 3.6 percentage points higher (AME = .036, $p < .01$), and those with seven years of tenure received allocations that were 4.5 percentage points more (AME = .045, $p < .01$) than those in the reference category of two years.

Not surprisingly, performance evaluations had the largest effect. Compared to employees rated "below the established standards," those rated as "meeting the established standards" were

allocated 14 percentage points more in raises (AME = .141, $p < .05$), while those rated as "exceeding the standards" were allocated 21 percentage points more (AME = .210, $p < .05$).

A notable advantage of using AMEs is the ability to compare the magnitude of effects across variables (Long and Freese 2014). According to Model 5, the penalty for taking leave is comparable to the difference in raise allocation between employees with two years of organizational tenure and those with seven years.

Status and Normative Discrimination

I further tested whether the effect of parenthood differed by employee gender (Hypothesis 4: status discrimination), whether fathers who took leave were penalized more than mothers who took leave (Hypothesis 5: normative discrimination), and whether mothers who did not take leave were penalized more than mothers who did (Hypothesis 6: normative discrimination). To do this, I included a series of interaction terms: between parenthood and employee gender (Model 6), between employee gender and leave-taking (Model 7), between parenthood and leave-taking (Model 8), and a three-way interaction term between employee gender, parenthood, and leave-taking (Model 9).

None of the interaction terms were statistically significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. At the $\alpha = .1$ level, two interaction terms reached significance: the interaction between parenthood (1 = parent, 0 = non-parent) and unpaid leave (1 = unpaid leave, 0 = other, including no leave or paid leave), and the three-way interaction among female employee (1 = female, 0 = male), parenthood, and unpaid leave.

The average marginal effects of these interactions suggest that parents who took unpaid leave are allocated 1.7 percentage points lower raises compared to non-parents who did not take unpaid leave. This penalty was particularly pronounced for female employees: mothers who took

unpaid leave faced an additional 1.5 percentage points reduction in their raise allocation. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as the p-values for these effects were .065 and .087, respectively, and fall slightly above the conventional threshold for significance.

The Role of the Equity Rule in Resource Allocation

A likelihood ratio test indicated no significant difference between the random intercept model and the random slope model (LR $\chi^2(1) = -0.00$, $p = 1.00$). Therefore, I ran a series of random intercept models to test Hypothesis 7: whether the equity rule shapes status-based inequality based on employees' gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior. Table 4.6 presents the results of hierarchical linear modeling, where the outcome variable is the dollar amount of raises allocated, instead of the proportion as reported in previous tables.

Model 10 includes the cross-level interaction term between the equity rule and employees' leave-taking behavior. The coefficient for the interaction between the equity rule and paid leave ($b = -184.81$, $p < .05$) indicates that the penalty associated with taking paid leave is larger under the equity condition than under the control condition, where respondents were encouraged to allocate raises using their own discretion. Similarly, unpaid leave-takers were penalized more under the equity condition ($b = -185.98$, $p < .05$). Figure 4.1 depicts this interaction effect.

Model 11 examined the interaction effect between the equity rule and employees' gender, and Model 12 included the interaction term between the equity rule and parenthood, but neither showed statistical significance. Model 13 tested the three-way interaction effect between the equity rule, parenthood, and leave-taking status. The coefficient for the interaction between the equity rule, parenthood, and unpaid leave ($b = -473.85$, $p < .01$) suggests that parents who take unpaid leave are penalized more under the equity condition than under the control condition.

Additionally, the three-way interaction between the equity condition, parenthood, and unpaid leave (b = -266.34, $p < .05$) indicates that among non-parents, those who took unpaid leave were allocated $266 less than those who did not take any leave in the past year. Figure 4.2 illustrates the three-way interaction effect between resource allocation condition, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior.

Model 14, which included the interaction effect between the equity rule, parenthood, and employee gender, and Model 15, which included the interaction effect between the equity rule, leave-taking, and employee gender, was not statistically significant.

Summary of Results

To summarize, the findings show support for Hypothesis 3: Violation of the Ideal Worker Norm and partial support for Hypothesis 7: Role of the Resource Allocation Rule. I found that leave takers faced about four percentage point deductions in the proportion of the raise allocated compared to those who did not take leave, and this magnitude of effect was comparable to the difference between employees with two years of organizational tenure and those with seven years of tenure. However, I did not find evidence for the effect of employee parenthood (Hypotheses 1 and 2) or status and normative discrimination based on employees' gender or parenthood (Hypotheses 4-6).

The equity principle, which dictates that pay allocation should be based on employees' contributions to the organization, was found to intensify wage penalties for leave-taking behavior. Regarding Hypothesis 7, the random intercept model reveals that leave-takers face a greater degree of wage penalty under the equity rule, and non-leave-takers experience a greater bonus under this rule. It is worthwhile to note that leave-taking behavior is the only employee characteristic that showed a significant interaction effect with the equity resource allocation rule.

Even more performance-relevant measures, such as performance evaluation, did not show significant difference between allocation rule conditions. This suggests that leave-taking behavior is perceived and considered relevant information when assessing an employee's *input* or overall contribution, and that the perceived value of their input decreases when equity-based allocation is emphasized.

Supplemental Analyses (Manager Gender)

Given previous studies indicating that gender of the rater shapes their perception of employee contribution and performance (Benard and Correll 2010; Shamon and Dulmer 2014), I conducted supplemental analyses to explore whether male and female participants, all of whom were managers, penalized leave-takers differently. Table 4.7 presents separate models for employees evaluated by female managers (N = 4,510) and male managers (N = 4,190). For employees evaluated by female managers, the penalty for taking paid leave was -$412.95, while among male managers, it was -$479.98 (reference category: no leave). The gender difference in penalizing leave-taking was even more pronounced for unpaid leave, with female managers imposing a penalty of -$320.00, compared to -$503.81 among male managers. A Wald test conducted using the full sample indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in how female and male managers penalized unpaid leave-takers ($\chi^2(1) = 4.06$, p = .044). However, there was no statistically significant difference in how they penalized paid leave takers ($\chi^2(1) = 0.63$, p = .427).

In a model that included data from the entire sample, I included an interaction term between manager gender and employee leave-taking status, which was significant (see Model 18, Table 8). Figure 4.3 illustrates this finding, showing that male managers' wage allocation decisions are more strongly influenced by employees' leave-taking status compared to female

managers. Notes under Figure 4.3 report all significant comparisons between the predicted margins for each manager-leave-taking combination. Additionally, Model 19 in Table 4.8 includes a four-way interaction between manager gender, employee gender, parenthood, and leave-taking status, which was also significant. To visualize this, I created a bar chart (Figure 4.4) that depicts the predicted raise allocations for male and female employees by manager gender. The result of pairwise comparisons of predictive margins revealed two combinations of employee attributes that were evaluated differently between male and female managers. First, a nonparent man who did not take a leave, on average, was allocated a bonus of $325 from a male manager, but this bonus was smaller under female manager ($81). Second, a mother who took unpaid leave, on average, was penalized by $245 by a male manager but a female manager on average gave them a $97 bonus.

Equity Rule and Manager Gender

I also found a statistically significant three-way interaction effect between the equity principle, employee leave status, and manager gender. Figure 4.5 illustrates this effect. Notably, under the equity principle, male managers penalized employees who took unpaid leave significantly more than they did under the control condition. The salience of the equity condition appears to make male managers more likely to penalize leave-taking behavior compared to female managers. To illustrate, under the equity condition, workers who took unpaid leave were on average penalized $267 by a male manager, while female managers penalized by $52. This difference in predicted penalty imposed by male and female managers was statistically significant ($z = 2.32$, $p = .021$).

Summary of Supplementary Findings

Additional analyses of participants' (managers') gender revealed two key insights. First, male managers tended to penalize leave-takers to a greater extent compared to female managers. For example, male managers paid unpaid leave-takers $504 less than non-leave-takers, while female managers imposed a smaller penalty of $320 (Models 16 and 17 on Table 4.7). The interaction term between manager gender, employee gender, parenthood, and leave-taking (Figure 4, Model 19 on Table 4.8) revealed that the largest gap in raise allocation between male and female managers was found for non-parent women who took unpaid leave (Contrast in predicted values = $342). Second, male managers' raise allocation tended to be more influenced by the equity principle by female managers. Figure 4.5 illustrates that there was no noticeable difference in female managers' raise allocation to workers who took leaves between conditions. In contrast, among male managers, there was a gap of about $100 between conditions.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of employees' gender, parenthood, and leave-taking behavior on managers' pay allocation decisions. Unlike previous research that often relied on resume-based factorial designs, I employed a conjoint experimental framework to simultaneously manipulate multiple employee attributes, including performance relevant measurements. I also manipulated the resource allocation rule to examine whether it reduces or exacerbates status-based inequality in raise allocation. The findings suggest that the equity principle, often idealized as a workplace standard, may inadvertently amplify inequality for employees who take a leave of absence. These results have important implications for organizational justice studies, which typically emphasize the equity principle as a cornerstone of "fair" workplace practices. By bridging sociological social psychology's status value theory of

distributive justice with organizational justice literature, this study highlights how practices perceived as "fair" can produce unintended consequences in societies where childcare is regarded as an individual responsibility.

Contrary to the hypotheses based on the motherhood wage penalty and fatherhood premium, this study did not find evidence supporting status-based discrimination. Instead, unexpectedly, I found a small yet statistically significant positive effect of being a parent (AME = .008, $p < .01$) and being a woman (AME = .010, $p < .05$) on the proportion of the raise pool allocated to an employee. This indicates that women and parents are allocated a slight raise bonus. While puzzling, this is not the first time research has observed such an unexpected effect.

For example, Carlo and Karpenski (2024), who used vignettes describing fictitious employees with varying characteristics to examine respondents' perceptions of just pay, found evidence of a parenthood bonus. Respondents raised their perceptions of fair pay when an employee was described as having two or more children. The authors suggested that respondents may have used a need-based resource allocation rule when determining just wages, which could have obscured some status-based biases. Similarly, Shamon and Dulmer (2014) conducted a study in which respondents assigned fair wages to a fictitious sales representative and found that respondents in Germany assigned higher salaries to female employees. The authors proposed that this might be respondents' attempt to compensate for gender inequality in the labor market. They also noted that their sample was skewed toward highly educated individuals who might not identify with the traditional breadwinner-homemaker model.

These potential mechanisms identified in prior studies may also explain why the current study found a positive impact of parenthood and gender on raise allocation in this study. In addition, my sample, recruited through Prolific, consists of highly educated and well-paid

individuals with workplace authority. This aligns with Shamon and Dulmer's (2014) explanation that highly educated respondents might attempt to compensate for existing gender inequalities in society.

Although the hypotheses based on status characteristics were not supported, violations of the ideal worker norm indicated by leave-taking behaviors did shape managers' raise allocation decisions. The test of Hypothesis 7, which predicted that emphasizing the equity rule exacerbates the status-based wage penalties, revealed that paid and unpaid leave taking respectively were the only employee attributes moderated by the equity rule. This suggests that leave-taking may serve as a more salient indicator of employee "inputs" than other performance-related attributes, such as performance evaluations, education, or organizational tenure.

Additional analyses examining the breakdown of male and female managers provide two key insights that extend our understanding of "inputs" in equity theory. First, male managers' raise allocations were more strongly influenced by the equity rule compared to those of female managers, as the difference in raise allocation between conditions was larger among male managers. This finding could be understood through the intersection of gender stereotypes and distributive justice norms (Caleo 2018; Kahn et al. 1980). Equity norms, which emphasize productivity and achievement, are more closely associated with prescriptive stereotypes for men, whereas equality-based norms, which prioritize harmony and group cohesion, are more aligned with gender stereotypes for women.

Second, the combination of employee gender and manager gender shaped how managers perceived the significance of leave-taking. The most illustrative example is how male and female managers allocated raises to nonparent employees who did not take leave (Figure 4.4). Male managers tended to give higher raises to male workers, while female managers allocated greater

bonuses to female workers. Figure 4.4 also shows that male managers penalized nonparent women who took unpaid leave by approximately $250, whereas female managers rewarded them with a $100 bonus.

The role of a rater's gender and the gender of the person being evaluated has been studied, yet many studies have found that both male and female raters assign lower fair wages to women (Auspurg et al. 2017; Carlo and Karpinski 2024; Jasso and Webster 1997; Sauer 2020). However, studies demonstrating rater-ratee gender alignment effects have pointed to social identity theory and in-group favoritism as possible explanations (Shamon and Dulmer 2014). This theory suggests that people are motivated to view ingroup members more positively, as doing so enhances their self-esteem. Shamon and Dulmer (2014), for example, found that female raters assigned higher salaries to female employees, which they attributed to in-group favoritism.

Taken together, my result suggests that the effort or "input" of in-group members may carry increased weight in determining fair wages, especially when contextual information (e.g., parenthood and leave-taking status) is available. This could explain why some previous studies did not find a consistent effect of rater-ratee gender alignment. Additionally, the observed gender difference in penalizing or rewarding nonparent women who took unpaid leave suggests that managers' ability to empathize with or rationalize leave-taking needs may influence raise allocation decisions.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations, and these should be acknowledged. First, the presentation of leave-taking attributes was not coupled with the reason for taking a leave of absence in the employee profile manipulations. As a result, the effect of family-related leave-taking was examined through the interaction effect between the employee's parenthood status

and their leave-taking status, rather than as a single factor. If leave-taking status had been directly coupled with its reason (e.g., family-related, medical), the study might have provided a clearer understanding of how employers' empathy or perceived legitimacy of leave-taking influence raise allocation decisions.

Second, the unexpected findings on the small positive effects of gender and parenthood in the employee attribute manipulations may be due to how the employee profiles were presented. The background information, including race, gender, and parenthood status, were displayed in the first row under the category "Background Information" (e.g., "Black man, unmarried with no children"). This formatting may have led respondents to perceive these attributes as simply demographic information that should not be considered for raise allocation. As a result, they may not have given sufficient attention to these characteristics when making their decisions.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of fairness in the workplace, or in contexts where the equity principle shapes perception of fair wages. I used conjoint analysis to manipulate multiple employee characteristics in a clear and structured way while ensuring that performance-relevant information was also available. The findings indicate that it was not status characteristics but rather violations of the ideal worker norm, specifically, leave-taking behavior, that were associated with lower raises. Employees who had taken a leave of absence were allocated raises five percentage points lower than those who had not, a penalty comparable to the impact of five years of organizational tenure. Male managers were more likely than female managers to penalize leave-takers, and paradoxically, this penalty was larger when they were instructed to allocate raises fairly, aligning compensation with employee contributions.

These findings illustrate how seemingly neutral fairness norms can reinforce wage penalties when caregiving responsibilities are perceived as individual choices.

Future research should examine how perceived violations of the ideal worker norm influence managers' perceptions of "input" across different cultural and societal contexts. In the United States, taking a leave of absence, especially family-related leave, is often associated with decreased perceived commitment to the organization. However, in other cultural contexts, leave-taking may align with ideal worker norms rather than violation. For example, one study suggests that in high-status positions in Germany, expectations surrounding the ideal worker norm may be shifting, with leave-taking becoming more accepted (Lott and Klenner 2018). It would be valuable to explore how broader societal norms and structures shape the perceived value of employees' "input" in the employee-employer exchange relationship.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4.1. Summary of Hypotheses

#	Theory/Concept	Predictions	Expectations for Coefficients
1	Motherhood Penalty	Parenthood reduces the proportion of raise allocated for women	β(parent) < 0 (among female sample)
2	Fatherhood Premium	Parenthood increases the proportion of raise allocated for men	β(parent) > 0 (among male sample)
3	Violation of Ideal Worker Norm	Leave-taking reduces the proportion of raise allocated to an employee.	β(paid_leave) < 0 ; β(unpaid_leave) < 0
4	Status Discrimination	The negative effect of parenthood on proportion of raise allocated is larger for women than for men	β(parent x woman) < 0
5	Normative Discrimination	Fathers who have taken leave are penalized more than mothers who have taken leaves	β(woman x parent x paid_leave) > 0 ; β(woman x parent x unpaid_leave) > 0
6	Normative Discrimination	Mothers who have not taken leave are penalized more than mothers who have taken leaves	β(woman x parent x paid_leave) > 0 ; β(woman x parent x unpaid_leave) > 0
7	Role of resource allocation rule	The negative effect of (1) woman (2) parent, and (3) leave taking on raise allocation is amplified under the equity condition, compared to the control condition.	β(equity x woman) < 0; β(equity x parent) < 0; β(equity x paid_leave) < 0; β(equity x unpaid_leave) < 0

Table 4.2. Profile Attributes and Attribute Values

Attributes	Values
Background Information	
Race/Ethnicity	White, Black, Hispanic, Asian
Gender	Woman, Man
Parenthood	Unmarried with no children; Married with children
Educational Level	Bachelor, Master, Doctorate
Years of Current Position	2, 5, 7 years
Performance Evaluation	Meets the established standards, Exceeds the established standards, Below the established standards
Leave Status	Have taken unpaid leave of absence for 12-week in the past year; Have taken paid leave of absence for 12-week in the past year; Did not take any leave of absence in the past year.

Table 4.3. Sample Descriptive Statistics (N = 870)

Variable	Mean (SD) or Frequency (%)
Age (years)	41.39 (10.26)
Annual Income (in 1000)	86.33 (55.81)
Gender	
Woman	451 (51.84%)
Man	419 (48.16%)
Race	
White	556 (63.9%)
Black	164 (18.85%)
Latinx	41 (4.71%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	45 (5.17%)
Other	64 (7.36%)
Marital Status	
Single, never married	155 (17.82%)
Married	522 (60%)
Divorced, Separated	83 (9.54%)
Other	110 (12.64%)
Education	
Less than HS	1 (.11%)
HS graduate	53 (6.09%)
Some college	177 (20.34%)
Bachelor's degree	361 (41.49%)
Master's degree	288 (26.21%)
Professional degree	21 (2.41%)
Doctoral degree	29 (3.33%)

Table 4.4. Average Marginal Effects of Employee Characteristics Predicting Proportion of Raise Allocated by Gender Specific Subsamples

	Employee Woman		Employee Man	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parent	0.011+	0.009+	0.005	0.006
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Leave-taking in the past year (ref = did not take leave)				
Paid Leave		-0.042**		-0.047**
		(0.007)		(0.007)
Unpaid Leave		-0.044**		-0.038**
		(0.007)		(0.007)
Education (ref = Bachelor)				
Doctorate		0.032**		0.020**
		(0.007)		(0.006)
Master		0.018**		0.005
		(0.006)		(0.006)
Organizational Tenure (ref = 2 years)				
5 years		0.037**		0.034**
		(0.006)		(0.007)
7 years		0.043**		0.048**
		(0.007)		(0.006)
Performance Evaluation (ref = Below the established standards)				
Exceeds the established standards		0.212**		0.207**
		(0.008)		(0.008)
Meets the established standards		0.143**		0.139**
		(0.008)		(0.007)
Race (ref = Asian)				
Black		-0.006		0.004
		(0.008)		(0.008)
Hispanic		-0.011		0.003
		(0.007)		(0.007)
White		-0.015*		-0.001
		(0.007)		(0.007)
N	4361	4361	4339	4339

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01

Note: Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by respondent. The model also controls for respondents' demographic variables (age, gender, race, education attainment, annual salary, marital status.

Table 4.5. Average Marginal Effects of Employee Characteristics Predicting Proportion of Raise Allocated

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
	No interaction	Woman x Parent	Woman x Leave-taking	Parent x Leave-taking	Woman x Parent x Leave-taking
Parent	0.008*	0.006	0.008*	0.013+	0.009*
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Woman	0.010**	0.008	0.010	0.010**	0.011*
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Leave-taking in the past year (ref = no leave)					
Paid Leave	-0.044**	-0.044**	-0.047**	-0.045**	-0.047**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Unpaid Leave	-0.041**	-0.041**	-0.038**	-0.032**	-0.037**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Education (ref = Bachelor)					
Doctorate	0.026**	0.026**	0.026**	0.026**	0.026**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Master	0.012**	0.012**	0.012**	0.012*	0.012**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Organizational Tenure (ref = 2 years)					
5 years	0.036**	0.036**	0.036**	0.036**	0.036**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
7 years	0.045**	0.045**	0.045**	0.045**	0.045**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Performance Evaluation (ref = Below the established standards)					

Exceeds the established standards	0.210**	0.210**	0.210**	0.210**	0.210**
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Meets the established standards	0.141**	0.141**	0.141**	0.141**	0.141**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Race (ref = Asian)					
Black	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Hispanic	-0.004	-0.004	-0.004	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
White	-0.009+	-0.009+	-0.009+	-0.009+	-0.009+
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Interaction Effect					
Parent x Woman		0.004			
		(0.008)			
Woman x Paid Leave			0.005		
			(0.009)		
Woman x Unpaid Leave			-0.005		
			(0.009)		
Parent x Paid Leave				0.002	
				(0.009)	
Parent x Unpaid Leave				-0.017+	
				(0.009)	

Woman x Parent x Paid Leave					0.009
					(0.009)
Woman x Parent x Unpaid Leave					-0.015+
					(0.009)
N	8700	8700	8700	8700	8700

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01

Note: Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by respondent. The model also controls for respondents' demographic variables (age, gender, race, education attainment, annual salary, marital status.)

Table 4.6. Random Intercept Model Predicting the Effect of Equity Rule on Status-Based Wage Penalty

	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Woman	98.075**	65.307	98.333**	98.645**	7.351	54.353
	(37.095)	(51.654)	(37.101)	(37.076)	(73.062)	(88.711)
Parent	77.184*	76.621*	128.511*	183.057*	69.943	77.335*
	(37.135)	(37.142)	(51.684)	(88.731)	(73.141)	(37.131)
Leave-taking (ref = no leave)						
Paid Leave	-357.600***	-446.199***	-445.316***	-399.229***	-445.135***	-416.229***
	(63.483)	(45.629)	(45.628)	(89.580)	(45.624)	(89.567)
Unpaid Leave	-322.220***	-410.087***	-410.477***	-197.974*	-410.365***	-280.369**
	(62.839)	(45.506)	(45.502)	(89.482)	(45.499)	(88.994)
Education (ref = Bachelor)						
Doctorate	261.499***	259.428***	260.146***	259.917***	260.057***	260.282***
	(45.153)	(45.155)	(45.151)	(45.145)	(45.148)	(45.149)
Master	115.334*	117.260*	117.006*	113.322*	117.556*	114.643*
	(45.711)	(45.712)	(45.709)	(45.692)	(45.705)	(45.707)
Organizational Tenure (ref = 2 years)						
5 years	357.278***	356.070***	356.458***	358.323***	356.980***	357.535***
	(45.628)	(45.637)	(45.635)	(45.642)	(45.632)	(45.624)
7 years	451.377***	452.036***	452.886***	452.278***	453.534***	452.382***

	(45.257)	(45.272)	(45.275)	(45.250)	(45.274)	(45.259)
Performance Evaluation (ref = Below the established standards)						
Exceeds the established standards	2097.355***	2096.940***	2097.383***	2097.597***	2098.356***	2097.564***
	(45.350)	(45.359)	(45.356)	(45.332)	(45.362)	(45.362)
Meets the established standards	1407.800***	1407.955***	1407.771***	1405.391***	1408.833***	1408.271***
	(45.621)	(45.634)	(45.630)	(45.604)	(45.636)	(45.620)
Race (ref = Asian)						
Black	-18.318	-16.631	-16.550	-16.546	-16.603	-18.074
	(52.311)	(52.311)	(52.307)	(52.290)	(52.302)	(52.306)
Hispanic	-43.042	-41.875	-42.475	-43.469	-41.878	-43.368
	(52.114)	(52.126)	(52.123)	(52.094)	(52.120)	(52.111)
White	-86.557	-87.476	-87.570	-87.741	-89.036	-87.609
	(52.379)	(52.395)	(52.390)	(52.356)	(52.393)	(52.387)
Equity Condition	136.491*	-22.051	65.764	197.595*	-7.402	87.757
	(65.117)	(52.803)	(53.058)	(93.172)	(74.931)	(91.623)
Interaction between Equity Rule and Employee Leave						
Equity Rule x Paid Leave	-184.806*					
	(91.261)					
Equity Rule x Unpaid Leave	-185.973*					

	(91.065)					
Interaction between Equity Rule and Employee Gender						
Equity Rule x Woman		67.793				
		(74.265)				
Interaction between Equity Rule and Employee Parenthood						
Equity Rule x Parent			-106.875			
			(74.271)			
Three-way Interaction between Equity Rule, Employee Parenthood and Leave-taking						
Control x Parent x Paid Leave (ref = control x parent x no leave)				92.509		
				(126.888)		
Control x Parent x Unpaid Leave (ref = control x parent x no leave)				-245.090		
				(125.516)		
Equity x Parent x x No leave (ref = Control x Non-Parent x No leave)				-118.878		
				(129.694)		

Equity x Parent x x Paid Leave (ref = Control x Non-Parent x Paid Leave)				-281.302		
				(180.595)		
Equity x Parent x Unpaid Leave (ref = Control x Non-Parent x Unpaid Leave)				-473.846**		
				(181.117)		
Equity x Non-parent x Paid Leave (ref = Equity x Non-Parent x No Leave)				-123.269		
				(129.799)		
Equity x Non-parent x Unpaid Leave (ref = Equity x Non-Parent x No Leave)				-266.341*		
				(129.702)		
Three-way interaction between Equity Rule, Employee Parenthood, and Gender						

Control x Parent x Woman (ref = Control x Parent x Man)					116.432	
					(103.295)	
Equity x Parent x Man (ref = Control x Non-parent x man)					-29.032	
					(105.106)	
Equity x Parent x Woman (ref = Control x Non-parent x Woman)					77.820	
					(147.480)	
Equity x Non-Parent x Woman (ref = Equity x Non-Parent x Man)					145.580	
					(105.481)	
Three-way Interaction between Equity Rule, Employee Leave-taking, and Gender						
Control x Paid Leave x Woman (ref = Control x Paid Leave x Man)						117.495
						(126.847)
Control x Unpaid Leave x Woman (ref = Control x Unpaid Leave x Man)						-81.833
						(125.605)

Equity x No leave x Woman (ref = Equity x No Leave x Man)						98.262
						(129.634)
Equity x Paid Leave x Man (ref = Equity x No Leave x Man)						-114.485
						(129.209)
Equity x Paid Leave x Woman (ref = Equity x No Leave x Man)						-40.554
						(179.407)
Equity x Unpaid Leave x Man (ref = Equity x No Leave x Man)						-212.068
						(128.610)
Equity x Unpaid Leave x Woman (ref = Equity x No Leave x Man)						-145.440
						(179.786)
Constant	3659.331***	3738.211***	3695.748***	3608.110***	3744.305***	3683.017***

	(137.288)	(136.255)	(135.902)	(143.120)	(140.023)	(143.324)
var(Residual)						
Constant	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
lnsig_e						
Constant	2987157.095***	2988756.026***	2988331.046***	2983645.459***	2987564.765***	2985988.126***
	(22645.580)	(22657.702)	(22654.480)	(22618.959)	(22648.671)	(22636.719)
Observations	8700	8700	8700	8700	8700	8700
ll	-77202.5	-77204.9	-77204.2	-77197.4	-77203.1	-77200.8
df_m	28	27	27	33	30	33

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: The model also controls for respondents' demographic variables (age, gender, race, education attainment, annual salary, marital status) as well as the result of attention check.

Table 4.7. The Effect of Employee Gender, Parenthood, and Leave-taking on Raise Allocation by Manager's Gender

	Model 16	Model 17
	Female Manager	Male Manager
Woman	160.365**	34.983
	(51.348)	(53.654)
Parent	42.429	113.919*
	(51.427)	(53.676)
Leave Taking (ref = no leave)		
Paid Leave	-412.948***	-479.977***
	(63.234)	(65.848)
Unpaid Leave	-319.999***	-503.805***
	(62.978)	(65.814)
Education (ref = Bachelor)		
Doctorate	335.585***	179.072**
	(62.400)	(65.402)
Master	126.426*	102.610
	(63.385)	(65.959)
Organizational Tenure (ref = 2 years)	0.000	0.000
	(.)	(.)
5 years	349.787***	367.780***
	(62.930)	(66.403)
7 years	477.520***	431.765***
	(62.646)	(65.549)
Performance Evaluation (ref = Below the established standards)		
Exceeds the established standards	2105.288***	2096.862***
	(63.181)	(65.209)
Meets the established standards	1334.812***	1492.636***
	(62.699)	(66.505)
Race (ref = Asian)		
Black	66.217	-96.233
	(72.360)	(75.714)
Hispanic	-86.027	4.956
	(71.651)	(75.873)
White	-66.811	-108.371
	(72.388)	(75.942)

Observations	4510	4190
ll	-39998.8	-37192.9
df_m	25	25

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: The model also controls for respondents' demographic variables (age, gender, race, education attainment, annual salary, marital status) as well as the result of attention check.

Table 4.8. Significant Interaction Term including Managers' Gender

	Model 18	Model 19
Woman	98.649**	220.437
	(37.097)	(129.935)
Parent	77.334*	104.695
	(37.136)	(129.016)
Leave-taking (ref = no leave)		
Paid Leave	-410.655***	-330.054*
	(63.485)	(130.583)
Unpaid Leave	-322.018***	-182.959
	(63.188)	(127.683)
Education (ref = Bachelor)	0.000	0.000
	(.)	(.)
Doctorate	260.005***	255.673***
	(45.145)	(45.156)
Master	117.206*	115.416*
	(45.703)	(45.692)
Organizational Tenure (ref = 2 years)	0.000	0.000
	(.)	(.)
5 years	354.412***	359.151***
	(45.632)	(45.630)
7 years	449.690***	452.874***
	(45.268)	(45.259)
Performance Evaluation (ref = Below the established standards)		
Exceeds the established standards	2097.103***	2100.245***

	(45.354)	(45.339)
Meets the established standards	1407.366***	1403.857***
	(45.626)	(45.615)
Race (ref = Asian)		
Black	-14.744	-12.967
	(52.311)	(52.284)
Hispanic	-40.429	-43.566
	(52.124)	(52.109)
White	-84.970	-86.901
	(52.391)	(52.381)
Equity Condition	11.526	10.745
	(37.551)	(37.545)
Manager Male	62.328	243.820
	(65.179)	(130.697)
Interaction Effects between Manager Gender and Employee Leave-taking		
Male Manager x Employee Paid Leave	-72.546	
	(91.193)	
Male Manager x Employee Unpaid Leave	-183.440*	
	(91.033)	
Interaction Effects between Manager Gender, Employee Gender, Parenthood, and Leave-taking		
Female Manager x Employee Male x Employee Parent x Paid Leave		-35.489
		(181.470)
Female Manager x Employee Male x Employee Parent x Unpaid Leave		-153.308

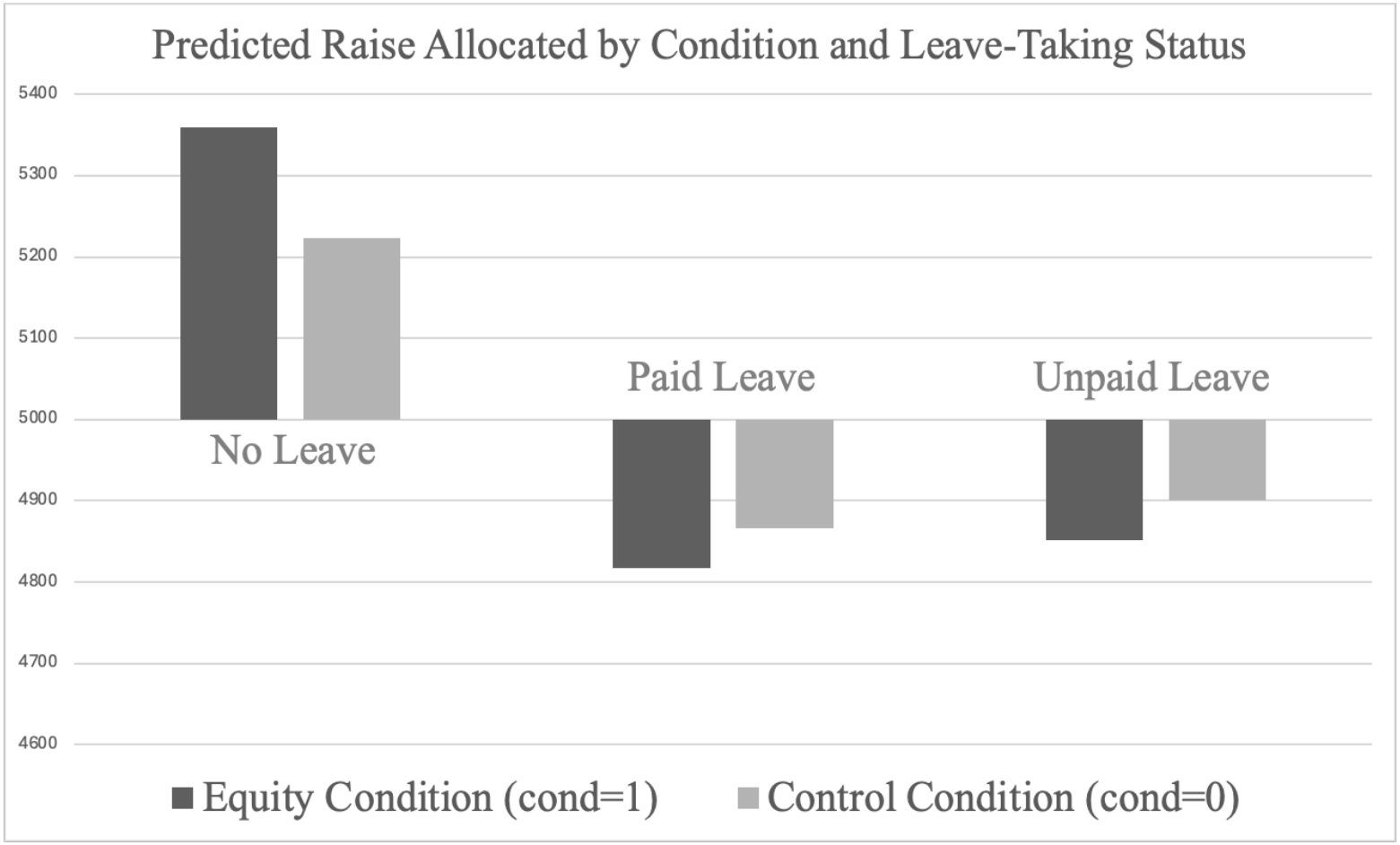
		(179.870)
Female Manager x Employee Female x Non-Parent x Paid Leave		-161.130
		(181.574)
Female Manager x Employee Female x Non-Parent x Unpaid Leave		-20.825
		(179.921)
Female Manager x Employee Female x Parent x No leave		41.986
		(180.658)
Female Manager x Employee Female x Parent x Paid Leave		-73.530
		(258.933)
Female Manager x Employee Female x Parent x Unpaid Leave		-332.913
		(257.122)
Male Manager x Employee Male x Non-Parent x Paid Leave		-336.742
		(183.582)
Male Manager x Employee Male x Non-Parent x Unpaid Leave		-318.574
		(183.050)
Male Manager x Employee Male x Parent x No Leave		-76.650
		(182.394)
Male Manager x Employee Male x Parent x Paid Leave		-264.247
		(260.938)
Male Manager x Employee Male x Parent x Unpaid Leave		-406.111
		(258.359)
Male Manager x Employee Female x Non-Parent x No Leave		**-375.943***
		(185.653)
Male Manager x Employee Female x Non-Parent x Paid Leave		-366.612
		(260.688)

Male Manager x Employee Female x Non-Parent x Unpaid Leave		**-606.962***
		(259.336)
Male Manager x Employee Female x Parent x No Leave		-236.608
		(260.230)
Male Manager x Employee Female x Parent x Paid Leave		-315.916
		(345.098)
Male Manager x Employee Female x Parent x Unpaid Leave		-634.331
		(344.276)
Constant	3683.113***	3603.825***
	(136.815)	(156.695)
var(Residual)		
Constant	0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)
lnsig_e		
Constant	2987624.887***	2981367.358***
	(22649.126)	(22601.689)
Observations	8700	8700
ll	-77203.2	-77194.1
df_m	28	44

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

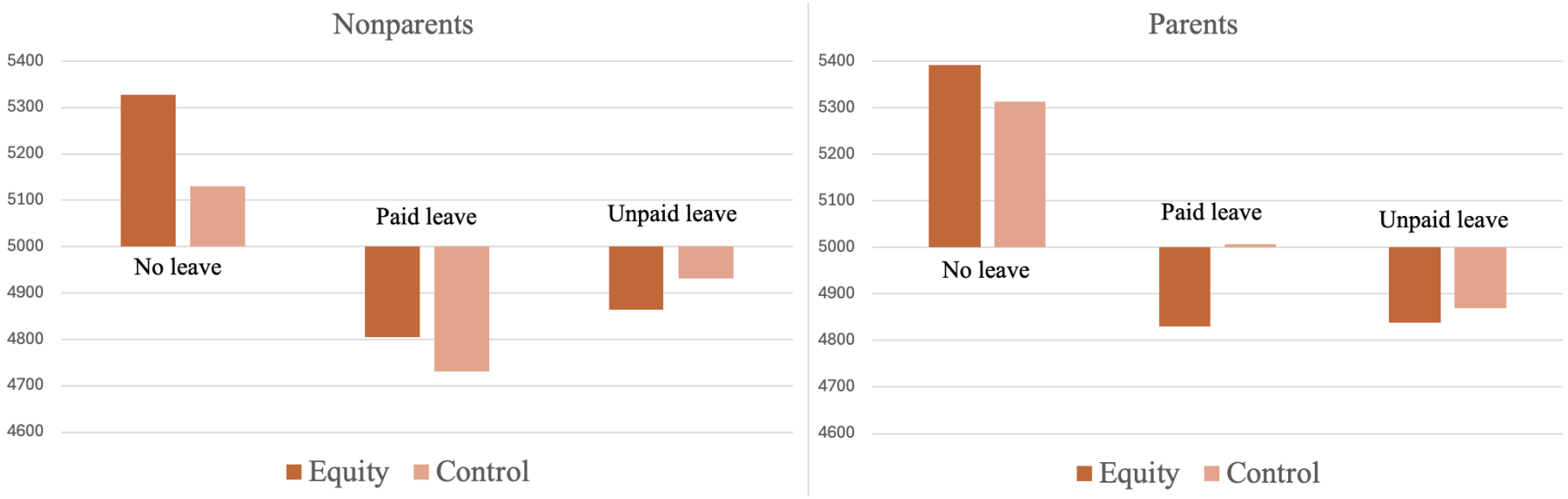
Note: The model also controls for respondents' demographic variables (age, gender, race, education attainment, annual salary, marital status) as well as the result of attention check.

Figure 4.1. Predicted Raise Allocated by Resource Allocation Condition and Employee Leave-Taking Status



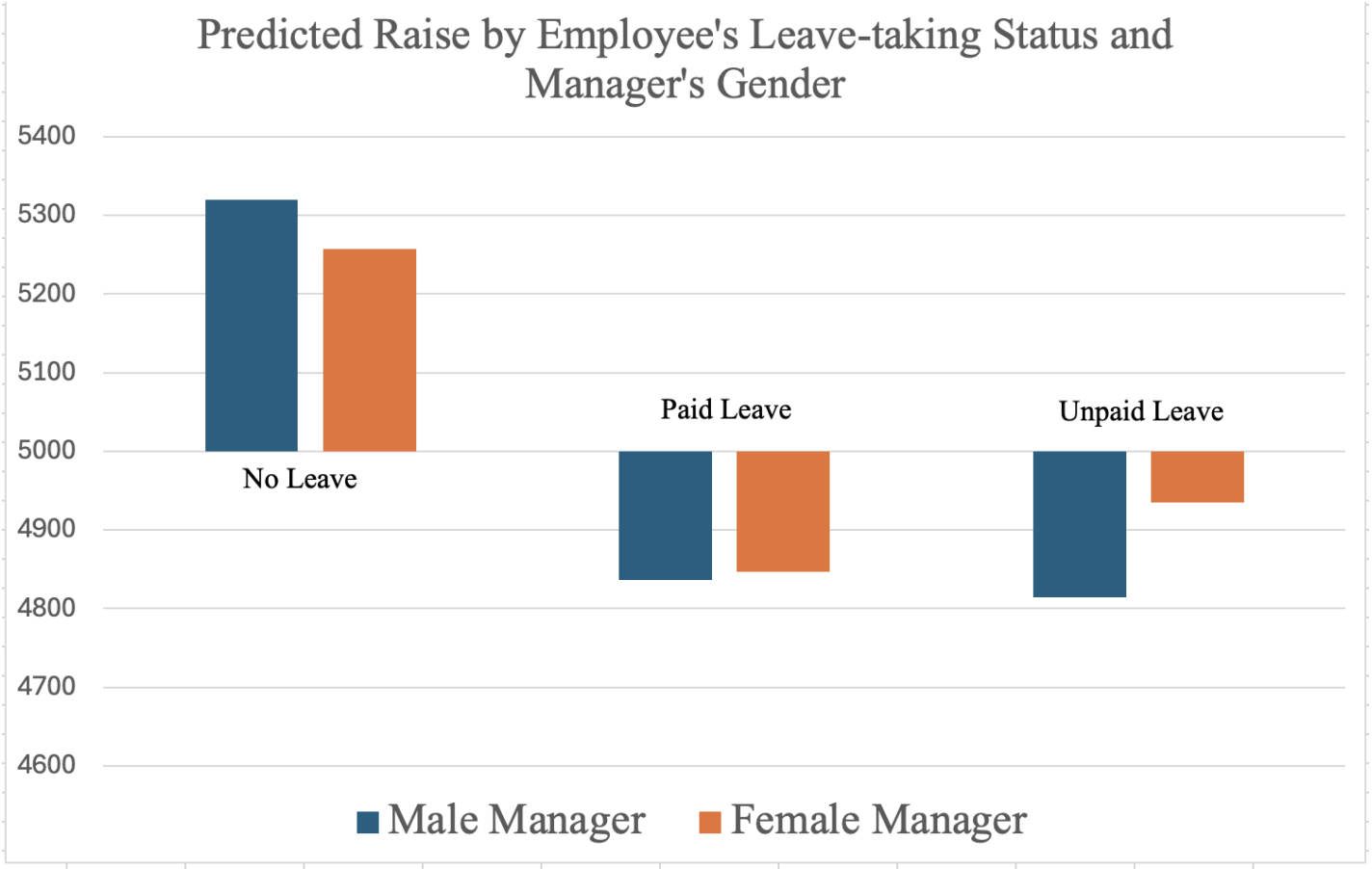
Note. Pairwise comparisons of predictive margins indicate the comparison between no leave from control and equity conditions are statistically significant (contrast = 136.49 95% CI [8.86, 264.12]) comparison between conditions for among leave-takers were not significant.

Figure 4.2. Predicted Raise Allocated by Resource Allocation Condition, Employee Parenthood, and Leave-Taking Status



Note. Pairwise comparison of predictive margins indicates that the comparison between equity and control condition of parents who took paid leave is marginally significant (Contrast = -176.2154, 95% CI [-354.7165, 2.285734]).

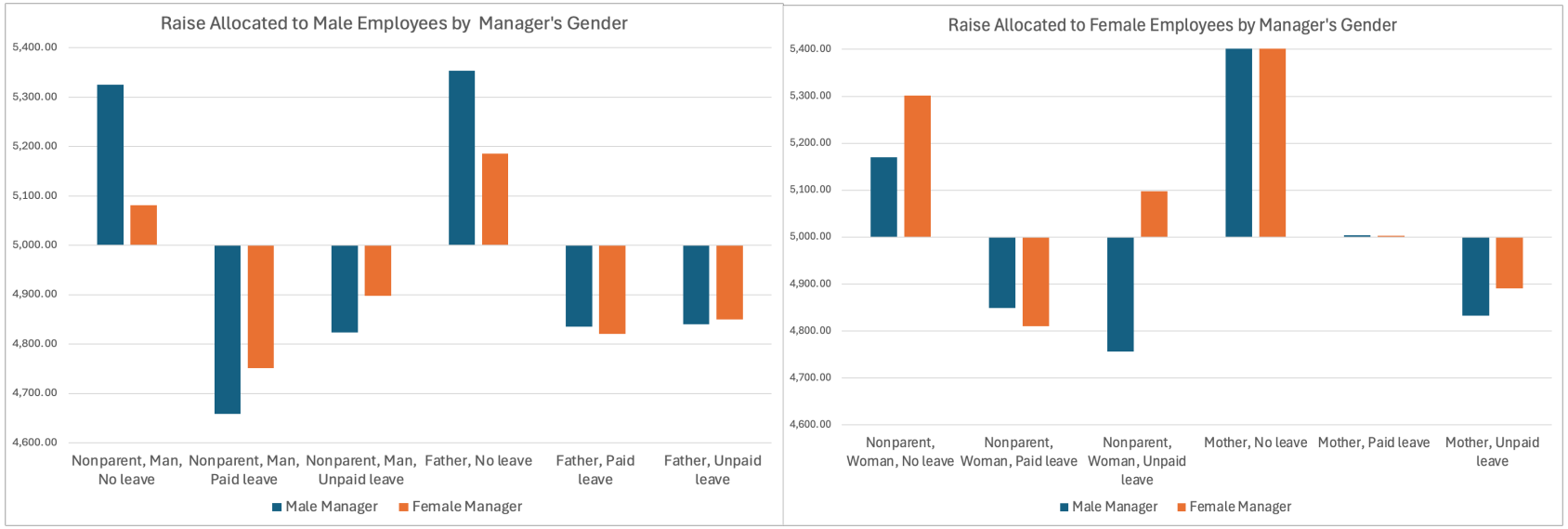
Figure 4.3. Predicted Raise Allocated by Employee's Leave Taking Status and Manager's Gender



Note. Pairwise comparison of predictive margins indicated the following comparisons of the predicted amount of raise allocated are statistically significant. Female manager paid leave vs. Female manager no leave (Contrast = -410.65, 95% CI: -535.08, -286.23) **Female manager unpaid leave vs. Female manager no leave (Contrast = -322.02, 95% CI: -445.86, -198.17)** Male manager paid leave vs. Female manager no leave (Contrast = -420.87, 95% CI: -548.68, -293.14) Male manager unpaid leave vs. Female manager

no leave (Contrast = -443.13, 95% CI: -570.99, -315.27) Male manager no leave vs. Female manager paid leave (Contrast = 472.98, 95% CI: 345.95, 600.01) Male manager no leave vs. Female manager unpaid leave (Contrast = 384.35, 95% CI: 257.95, 510.74) **Male manager paid leave vs. Male manager no leave (Contrast = -483.20, 95% CI: -611.64, -354.76) Male manager unpaid leave vs. Male manager no leave (Contrast = -505.46, 95% CI: -633.93, -376.99).**

Figure 4.4. Predicted Raise Allocated to Male Employee vs Female Employee, by Manager Gender



Note. Comparisons of predicted raises that seemed substantial are calculated and reported below.

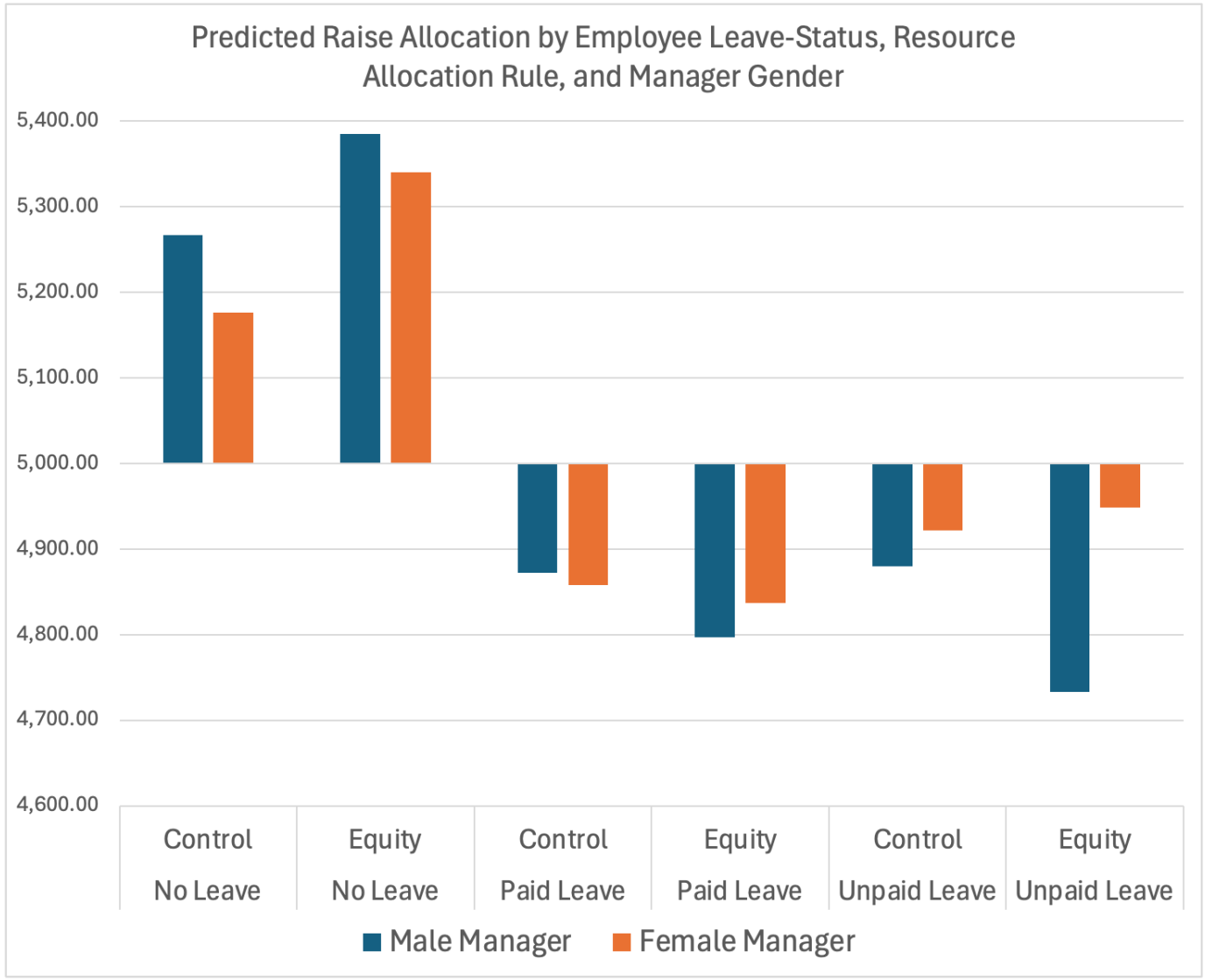
A nonparent man with no leave evaluated by a male manager is predicted to be allocated $5,325 (SE = 91.69, 95% CI [5,145.38, 5,504.78]).

A nonparent man with no leave evaluated by a female manager is predicted to be allocated $5,081 (SE = 92.83, 95% CI [4,899.29, 5,263.22]). The difference between these two estimates is marginally significant (Z = 1.87, p = .06).

A mother taking unpaid leave evaluated by a male manager is predicted to be allocated $4,755 (SE = 92.11, 95% CI [4,574.05, 4,936.13]).

A mother taking unpaid leave evaluated by a female manager is predicted to be allocated $5,097 (SE = 88.14, 95% CI [4,925.15, 5,270.67]). This difference is statistically significant (Z = 2.69, p = .0073).

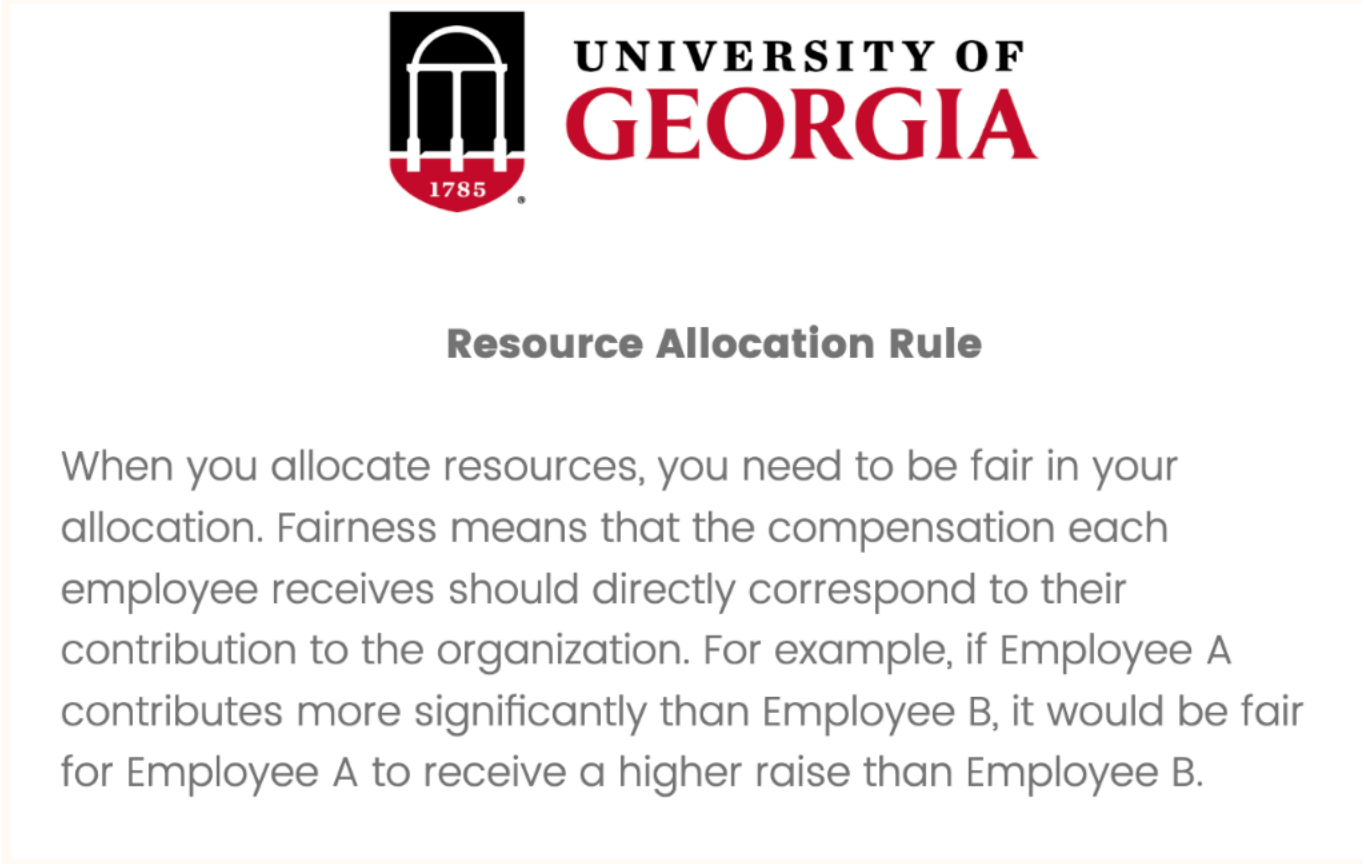
Figure 4.5. Predicted Raise Allocated by Employee Leave-taking Status, Resource Allocation Rule, and Manager Gender



Note. Under equity condition, workers who took unpaid leave, the predicted raise under a female manager is 4,948 (SE = 61.82, 95% CI = [4826.79, 5069.12]), while under a male manager, it is 4,733 (SE = 69.11, 95% CI = [4597.78, 4868.69]). The difference is statistically significant (Z=2.32, p = .021).

APPENDICES

Appendix 4.1. Equity Resource Allocation Condition



Appendix 4.2. Discretion Resource Allocation Condition (Control Condition)

Resource Allocation Rule

When you allocate resources, you need to use your judgment to determine the appropriate compensation for each employee. This means that you rely on your discretion and personal assessment to carefully evaluate each employee. For example, if, in your personal assessment, Employee A should receive a larger raise, then Employee A should receive more than Employee B.

Appendix 4.3. Sample Pair of Employee Profiles

Question 1

Please carefully review the employee profiles below. Given a budget of $10,000 for raises, how would you distribute this amount between the two employees? Type numeric values in the fields below. Your total allocation must equal $10,000.

	Employee A	**Employee B**
Background Information	Hispanic, Man, Unmarried with no children	Hispanic, Woman, Unmarried with no children
Educational Level	Master	Doctorate
Years of current position	2 years	5 years
Performance Evaluation	Exceeds the established standards	Exceeds the established standards
Leave Status	Have taken unpaid leave of absence for 12 weeks in the past year.	Have taken unpaid leave of absence for 12 weeks in the past year.

Employee A	$ 0
Employee B	$ 0
Total	$ 0

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, I posed two key questions that this dissertation aimed to answer: (1) What counts as an employee's contribution to an organization, and what factors shape its perceived value? (2) How do employees respond to underpayment, and what motivates them to address wage injustice?

Regarding the first question, my survey study found that individuals' relationship to their labor, as well as identity verification in everyday workplace settings, plays an important role in how employees value their own contributions. I found that over-evaluation at work or, more simply, the individuals' perception that others in general view them more positively in terms of competence, raises employees' subjective valuation of their work. This, in turn, increases their reward expectations and lowers their perceptions of distributive justice.

From the employer's perspective, the perceived value of contributions tends to decrease for those who are seen as less dedicated to work (i.e., those who violate the ideal worker norm, as conceptualized by taking a leave of absence). This manifests as a raise penalty of about five percentage points. Interestingly, this penalty was stronger when managers allocated resources based on the equity principle, which emphasizes fairness by linking an individual's contributions to the rewards they receive.

An important implication of this finding is that what increases the perceived value of work for employees may simultaneously decrease its value in the eyes of employers. For example, when employees experience a more intense form of work-family conflict, they may

feel that their contributions are more valuable because they are sacrificing family time to focus on work (Narisada 2020). However, from the employer's perspective, these same employees may be perceived as less committed due to their family responsibilities, which could reduce the value assigned to their contributions.

A similar dynamic may occur with over-evaluation and symbolic rewards in the workplace. While my findings suggest that over-evaluation increases employees' perceived value of their own work, perhaps by adjusting their identity and justice standards upward (i.e., *I am a highly competent worker who deserves higher pay*), pay allocators may view this recognition as a non-monetary, alternative form of reward. This means that symbolic recognition could be factored into the outcome side of the equity formula when determining what constitutes a fair wage for their employees, potentially lowering the perceived need for higher pay.

As for the second question, I found that work identity prominence influences emotional responses to underpayment in complex ways. Identity prominence acts as a buffer against the stress of underpayment. In other words, individuals with a more prominent work identity felt weaker negative emotions in response to underpayment. This buffering effect can be interpreted positively in terms of worker well-being. However, it may also suggest that a highly central work identity obscures underpayment by suppressing negative emotional responses.

Regarding the connection between felt and expressed emotions, work identity prominence intensified this relationship. Once negative emotions were felt, those with a highly prominent work identity were more likely to express dissatisfaction. This effect remained significant even after controlling for workplace factors known to influence emotional expression, including authority, autonomy, and organizational tenure. It should be noted, individuals with

low work identity prominence, in contrast, experienced the stress of underpayment more intensely but were less likely to express dissatisfaction compared to those with high prominence.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One major objective of this dissertation was to propose a justice-identity model (Figure 1.1). The integration of two theoretical frameworks in sociological social psychology—identity theory and the justice framework—has long been called for (Hegtvedt 2018; Stets 2005) but has not been extensively pursued, with the exception of Stets (2005) and Stets and Asencio (2008). By incorporating key concepts from identity theory, such as identity verification, work identity salience, and prominence into distributive justice processes, this dissertation offers several insights.

Identity verification of work identity, such as competency-related meanings, shape reward expectations and their understanding of just rewards. This adds to existing sociological social psychological approaches that emphasize the socially constructed nature of 'input' and 'outcome' in determining just rewards. For example, status value theory (Berger et al. 1968; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972) suggests that status characteristics influence the perceived value of input, and the legitimacy approach (Hegtvedt and Johnson 2000; Johnson et al. 2016) posits that endorsed distribution of rewards (i.e., outcome) affect how people respond to underpayment. This dissertation adds another mechanism, reflected appraisal, as a key process in shaping reward expectations.

This process also operates at the intersection of identity and justice. When individuals experience identity nonverification, they may cognitively adjust their justice standards by aligning their reward expectations with reflected appraisals. Furthermore, the upward adjustment of justice and identity standards were more evident among individuals with higher level of work

identity prominence. This provides insight into how different types of appraisals, reflected appraisals, self-appraisals, and actual appraisals, interact with one another. Future research should further test this cognitive adjustment mechanism in response to identity discrepancies using longitudinal designs.

This project also extends our understanding of identity prominence and salience. The buffering effect of identity was observed for prominence but not for salience. This distinction is understandable if we consider what it means to activate a worker identity. In the case of work, activation itself requires labor, and the nature of this activation may be key to understanding the moderating effects of identity salience and prominence. For identity salience, frequent activation of a work identity may be perceived as an added effort or burden. When a worker identity is activated across multiple social contexts, it can blur the boundaries between work and non-work life (Badawy and Schieman 2021; Glavin, Schieman, and Bierman 2024). In contrast, work identity prominence, or the centrality of work identity to the self-concept, may function as an alternative form of compensation, making underpayment feel less burdensome.

Another explanation is based on the idea of identity dispersion and tightness of the control system (Burke 2020; Cantwell 2016; Powers 1973). The buffering effect of prominence implies the loosening of the control system, potentially because highly prominent work identity comprises a wider range of meanings associated with work. These findings contribute to the ongoing effort to differentiate the moderating effects of identity salience and prominence in response to identity nonverification (Burke and Stets 2024) as well as understanding the correlates of tightness and looseness of one's control system.

Identity theory, as a theory of action, helps explain the link between responsive and purposive behavior (Jasso 1986) or, more simply, what motivates individuals to act against

perceived injustice, beyond immediate emotional reactions, despite structural limitations. This area has received less scholarly attention. The results that individuals with high work identity prominence are more likely to express dissatisfaction (which I argue is the first step toward purposive behavior) aligns with identity theory's prediction that individuals seek to verify identity meanings when those meanings are shared with other identities in their self-concept. This suggests that when work and labor are central to one's self-concept, individuals are more likely to take action to redress injustice. This also reflects Adams' (1965) early argument regarding the centrality of *input* to one's self-concept and how individuals respond to unfair reward distributions.

This dissertation also contributes to the sociology of work more broadly by offering insights into long-standing sociological debates on alienation and false consciousness. My findings suggest that labor alienation, conceptualized through identity prominence plays an important role in how workers experience underpayment. The results of Chapter 3 indicate that false consciousness, or in this context, *failing to* feel anger when faced with underpayment, was more common among individuals with high work identity prominence. This suggests that the more meaningful labor is to an individual's self-concept, the less likely they are to link underpayment with anger.

This finding speaks to a mechanism through which dedicated workers may fail to perceive labor exploitation. Those with more alienated work identities experienced greater anger in response to underpayment yet lacked both the means and motivation to address it. Given that meaningful work is not evenly distributed across occupations and is more concentrated in higher-status jobs (Soffia, Wood, and Burchell 2022), work identity prominence may be considered as a resource that buffers stress of underpayment. At the same time, workers who are objectively

underpaid are more likely to lack these resources, thereby uneven distribution of meaningful work reinforces income inequality.

Finally, this dissertation's conceptualization of meaningful work through identity theory extends our understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, which are discussed extensively in work value research. Rather than treating intrinsic motivation and rewards as separate job characteristics, this framework integrates them into the self-concept, offering a new way to theorize how individuals interpret the material rewards they receive. The findings from Chapter 3 suggest that meaningful work identity may function as an alternative reward, which makes underpayment feel less harmful. However, when individuals begin to perceive lack of extrinsic rewards as a threat to their self-concept, as indicated by negative feelings, they may become motivated to seek change.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation holds several practical implications for those who are invested in creating a flatter and fairer workplace. First, organizations should recognize that non-monetary symbolic rewards, which are often believed to be effective in fostering intrinsic motivations in workplaces (Frey and Gallus 2017), might not be sufficient to maintain workers' motivation over time. Cognitive adjustment mechanism proposed in this research suggests that symbolic rewards may increase the expectation of monetary reward. Therefore, it is essential to match salaries to recognition, rather than treating symbolic rewards as substitutes for financial compensation.

Second, fostering stronger connections between workers and their labor is crucial, and this can be achieved by increasing meaningfulness and reducing alienation. Meaningfulness of work identity can be fostered at multiple levels, from the nature of the occupation itself to organizational climates and supervisors' leadership styles (Martela et al. 2021). The finding that

employees with a stronger connection to their work are more likely to challenge underpayment than those with alienated work identities suggest that meaningful work identity creates a flatter workplace.

Third, Chapter 4 implies that even well-intended workplace norms such as equity based pay allocation can inadvertently reinforce status-based inequalities. Leaders need to consider broader cultural and societal contexts that may shape their perceptions of employee contributions. This finding also underscores the importance of stronger enforcement and awareness of federal policies like the Family and Medical Leave Act to normalize family-related leave and reduce associated penalties.

Finally, the results of supplemental analyses regarding the gender of manager (Chapter 4) reveals in-group favoritism in evaluating employee contributions. Managers were more likely to give bonuses to same-sex employees, especially male managers favoring male employees who did not take leave of absence. This reinforces the importance of increasing diversity in managerial positions to reduce the penalties faced by women and parents, who are often underrepresented in leadership roles.

FUTURE RESEARCH

I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of future research directions. I propose four distinct projects which build on the insights gained through my dissertation research.

Job Creativity and Responses to Underpayment

First, I will test the causal relationship between meaningfulness and responses to underpayment by conceptualizing meaningful labor in terms of job quality, specifically creativity. Previous research identifies creativity as a key predictor of meaningfulness (e.g., Mirowsky and Ross 2007). I propose a 2x2 factorial experiment where compensation (fair vs.

underpaid) and task creativity (high vs. low) are manipulated. Participants will complete a problem-solving task with simulated teammates. In the high-creativity condition, they will propose original solutions, while in the low-creativity condition, solutions will be pre-determined. Participants will be told they earned either an equal share ($15) or an under-rewarded amount ($7 compared to $14 and $9). This study examines whether creative tasks buffer negative responses to underpayment or encourage workers to voice dissatisfaction, which would be consistent with my dissertation findings.

Workplace Network and Gendered Perceptions of Wage Fairness

I will also explore how different dimensions of work identity and social networks shape wage fairness perceptions. While my dissertation focused on attachment to one's labor, this proposed study will examine attachment to workplace communities and how awareness of coworkers' wages influences perceptions of fairness. Using name generators (Walker and Lynn 2013), I will measure workplace social ties, asking respondents to list invitees to a hypothetical award celebration. This method assesses work identity commitment, which is emotional attachment to role-based others. Prior research shows men more often compare wages externally with others, which in turn heightens sensitivity to inequity (Khoreva and Tenhiälä 2016). I will investigate how these differences, along with workplace embeddedness, affect gendered perceptions of wage fairness.

Occupational Identity and Distributive Justice

I will also build on finding that meanings associated with work-self and its recognition in the workplace (i.e., work identity verification) influence wage perceptions. I will examine how meanings tied to different occupational identities impact distributive justice processes, specifically, perceptions of wage fairness, emotional reactions to unfair wages, and expressions

of wage dissatisfaction. Prior research suggests that meanings tied to female-typed labor, such as "nurturing" and "caring," can discourage workers from advocating for higher wages due to feelings of guilt, known as the "prisoner of love" effect (Folbre 2001). Using the Burke-Tully method (Burke and Tully 1977), I will identify these identity meanings and explore how their validation in daily work interactions influences women's perceptions of pay fairness and their intention to address injustice.

Invisible Labor and Workplace Equity

Finally, I will examine how perceptions of recognition for contributions influence distributive justice processes. Building on the literature on invisible labor (Crain, Poster, and Cherry 2016; Daniels 1987), I will investigate how acknowledgment, or its absence, affects workplace equity. Specifically, I will explore whether the lack of validation for "invisible" labor heightens negative emotions like anger in response to underpayment. Workers who feel their efforts are invisiblized may hesitate to voice dissatisfaction, while those whose contributions are recognized might negotiate more assertively. This research aims to extend our understanding of how recognition shapes perceptions of justice and workplace behaviors.

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