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# From Social Inequality to Personal Entitlement: the Role of Social Comparisons, Legitimacy Appraisals, and Group Membership

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### Publisher Summary

This chapter highlights the role that social comparison processes and attributions of responsibility play in translating social inequality into beliefs about personal and collective entitlement. The chapter illustrates the importance of entitlement as an explanatory construct in understanding the ways in which members of different social groups react to their socially distributed outcomes. This chapter organizes into a systematic framework current knowledge about the psychological antecedents and consequences of beliefs about entitlement. The chapter addresses the ways in which social comparison processes and attributions contribute to the development of a lesser sense of personal entitlement among members of objectively disadvantaged groups. Social comparison biases tend to prevent awareness of disadvantage, and attribution biases tend to legitimize disadvantage. As a result, what "is" has a marked tendency to become

what “ought” to be. These processes are illustrated through a program of research on the origins of gender differences in personal entitlement to pay. Gender differences in entitlement are proposed to underlie the finding that women and men typically do not differ in their life, job, or marital satisfaction, despite situations at work and at home that are disadvantageous for women compared to the situations of men. The chapter considers the reason for members of other disadvantaged groups; for example, African-Americans; expressing discontent with their objectively unjust situations. The situational and personal factors that prompt people to compare with advantaged outgroups and that lead them to question the legitimacy of outcome distributions result in elevated entitlement among the disadvantaged and correspondingly higher levels of discontent.



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