People hold different worldviews about social order. Some people believe that the world is an orderly, predictable, just place, while others perceive the world as random, unpredictable, and undependable. These different views of social order are found to be related to corporate behavior and organization control, because people who hold different views of social order have different probability of adopting opportunistic behaviors (e.g. Li, 2007; Singhepakdi et al., 2000).

I am interested in the effect of people’s beliefs about social order on their thoughts and behaviors regarding organizational outcomes. Specifically, my research explores two broad areas: the effect of belief in a just world on an individual’s attribution for others’ success and the effect of belief in luck on an individual’s motivations. In pursuit of my interests, I am presently involved in several research projects that examine the effects of beliefs about social order on attributions and the need for achievement. Recently I expanded my research to the field of negotiation aiming to understand the way that searching for initially uncertain information affects first offers in negotiations.

BELIEF IN JUST WORLD AND ATTRIBUTIONS FOR SUCCESS

The belief in a just world (BJW) refers to a belief that the world is a fair place, one where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. Previous research has found that BJW is associated with making stronger internal attributions, e.g., ability or effort, and weaker external attributions, e.g., luck, about the misfortunes of others. I am interested in understanding the effect of BJW on people’s attributions for positive outcomes. The results of my research will shed light on the way that people identify and understand winners and losers in an organization and the way that they perceive the existing incentive system or performance management system of the organization.

My dissertation examines how BJW affects a person’s attributions for the success of others in an organization. Research has shown that believing in an orderly, predictable, and just world is a fundamental need. In situations where the need is threatened by injustice in the world, individuals tend to restore justice by making more internal attributions of outcomes. They blame the victims and show the victims less empathy, but they tend to help or compensate victims when they have the chance. However, individuals are likely to have different emotional and behavioral reactions to others when the need to believe in a just world becomes threatened by their own undeserving experience. I hypothesized that the reactions result from a threat to the individual’s self-deservingness. In other words, when individuals receive undeserved, negative outcomes, they focus on their own plight, and therefore feel less motivated to restore justice by reacting to others’ outcomes.

Results from three studies confirmed that when recalling one’s own undeserving experience threatened the need to believe in a just world, individuals made fewer internal attributions for others’ positive outcomes, e.g., winning a lottery or getting promoted. The pattern held true for those with weak BJW, and importantly, it did not hold for those with strong
In other words, after recalling an unfair experience, people with strong just-world beliefs make equally high internal attributions for others’ success. For those who have low BJW, recalling their own unjust experiences threatens their self-deservingness; consumed by their own plight, they are less likely to feel motivated to restore justice for others by making internal attributions for others’ outcomes. In contrast, for those who have high BJW, recalling their own undeserved experience does not threaten their self-deservingness because they often downplay unfairness and avoid self-reflection. Therefore, those who have high BJW still feel motivated to justify the status quo by making internal attributions for others’ outcomes.

In a related project with Maia Young, we explore the way that implicitly or explicitly threatening the need to believe in a just world influences attributions for others’ positive outcomes. We hypothesize that when the need to believe in a just world is implicitly activated, people restore perceptions of justice by lionizing the winner, but when the need is explicitly activated, they do not. We found that when potential nepotism implicitly threatened the need to believe in a just world, individuals who hold strong just-world beliefs made more internal attributions for an employee’s promotion. In contrast, when recalling unjust experiences explicitly threatened the justice motive, individuals holding weak just-world beliefs made fewer internal attributions for a promotion. We presented the results at the 2008 International Society of Justice Research Conference.

The line of research enriches our understanding of just-world theory and takes steps toward understanding people’s perceptions of positive outcomes. In today’s world, organizations keep changing. In the process of organizational change, some people enjoy the benefit while others suffer the loss of their competitive advantage. The findings of this research enable us to understand the way that suffering employees will respond to a new system and who benefits from the new system. I expect to defend my dissertation in May, 2009.

BELIEF IN LUCK: STABLE LUCK VS. FLEETING LUCK

Luck may be seen as stable across situations, or as changing in a fluctuating pattern. In two projects, my coauthors, Maia Young and Michael W. Morris, and I investigate the belief in stable luck and the belief in fleeting luck. Stable luck is like a personal trait and internal to a person, while fleeting luck keeps changing and exists externally to a person. Believers in stable luck tend to be more optimistic, confident, and feel more control, whereas believers in fleeting luck are not optimistic, but more hopeful, and try to find a way to get more control. As a result, we propose that the two types of belief in luck have different relationships with achievement motivation and superstitious tendencies. We have conducted several studies testing our proposals.

Agency beliefs: the bridge through which belief in luck affects achievement motivation

In trying to understand the driving force behind achievement motivation, researchers long focused on the internal vs. the external locus of control. The research community has known for years that belief in luck negatively relates to achievement motivation, however, a recent study showed that belief in luck correlates positively with achievement motivation. In addition, in research conducted across the countries of the world, objective measures of academic achievement in high school correlated positively with the degree to which there is cultural belief in Fate Control, the belief that there are supernatural agencies with which one can work to
control outcomes. Are the findings a coincidence, or might belief in luck, a type of fate control, foster agency belief and thus achievement motivation? In a research project collaborating with Maia Young and Michael W. Morris, we argue that the term luck describes several folk conceptions. We differentiate luck beliefs into belief in stable luck and belief in fleeting luck, and we believe that the differentiation may help to clarify the seemingly contradictory results on the correlation on luck beliefs with achievement motivation.

In support of the differentiation of the belief in luck into two categories, we found evidence that belief in stable luck but not belief in fleeting luck positively relates to achievement motivation. Furthermore, we showed that belief in stable luck affects achievement motivation via agency beliefs. This paper has been accepted for publication in *Personality and Individual Differences*.

**Cultural differences in luck beliefs and superstition propensity**

I am also interested in understanding the relationship between stable and fleeting luck beliefs and superstition. Several notable executives have reportedly adopted superstitious behaviors as a mean to cope with the uncertainty present in organizational operations and decision-making (Tsang, 2004; Clendaniel, 2000). I explore the role of cultural differences in the relationship.

Together with Maia Young, I found that people with strong luck beliefs, either stable or fleeting, are more likely resort to superstitious practices than people with weak luck beliefs. Importantly, the correlation between belief in fleeting luck and superstitious tendencies was stronger than the correlation between belief in stable luck and superstitious tendencies because people believing in stable luck tend to be optimistic and confident and thus less likely to resort to superstition. In contrast, people who hold a belief in fleeting luck have lower generalized expectations about the future but have more enthusiasm in planning to bring about potential good outcomes. Finally, we found that culture plays an important role in moderating the relationship; the correlation between belief in stable luck and superstitious tendencies is stronger in the Eastern culture than in the Western culture, but we found no cultural difference in the association between belief in fleeting luck and superstitious tendencies. We presented the results at the *Academy of Management 2007*.

**INFORMATION SEARCH IN NEGOTIATIONS**

In addition to my main interest in belief in a just world and belief in luck, I am also interested in how individuals’ belief in uncertainty affects information processing in negotiations. In a project collaborating with Maia Young and Anthony V. Bastardi, we investigated the way that the pursuit of initially-uncertain information affects initial offers in negotiation. We hypothesized that seeking initially-uncertain information leads negotiators to inflate their initial offers. We found support for the hypothesis in four experimental studies of negotiation. In addition, our data showed that the need to justify having sought information rather than anchoring drives the effect. We are currently revising the paper for resubmission to *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**
I intend to extend my dissertation research by examining the relationship between the justice motive and attributions for positive outcomes in different cultures. According to social axiom theory, people of different cultures differ in five dimensions: social cynicism, social complexity, reward for application, religiosity, and fate control. I hypothesize that the relationship between the justice motive and attributions for positive outcomes differ between two cultures if the two cultures differ in the social cynicism dimension or the reward for application dimension, but the relationship remains unchanged if the two cultures differ in only the other dimensions. I plan to test my hypotheses with samples from different countries.

Along the line of luck beliefs and achievement motivation, I will examine the relationships between the two types of belief in luck and organizational outcomes. Specifically, I plan to do a field study to investigate the relationship of employees’ beliefs in luck to their performance, promotion speed, and pay. My research has shown that the belief in stable luck positively relates to achievement motivation, so I predict that employees’ belief in stable luck should correlate positively with higher performance, faster promotion, and higher pay.

Finally, I shall continue my research in information processing in negotiations. Specifically, I would like to know if the need for self-justification is always an individual’s dominant motive for negotiating for a higher initial offer. Could other social or biological motives, e.g., the need for control, exceed the need for self-justification under certain circumstances? Results from the study will help to explain the strategies adopted by individuals in negotiations.