A Quarter Century of System Justification Theory: Questions, Answers, Criticisms, and Societal Applications

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Invited Submission, *British Journal of Social Psychology*.

Acknowledgements: This article is dedicated to the memory of Morton Deutsch (1920-2017), who was an inspiration, a mentor of sorts, and—thanks to Madeline Heilman and Harvey Hornstein—a family friend. It is based loosely on presentations given at meetings of the American Psychological Association (APA), Eastern Psychological Association (EPA), and the Social Psychology Section of the German Society for Psychology. Some of the ideas contained herein were also presented at Yale University, the University of Missouri at Columbia, Saint Joseph's University, the University of Nevada at Reno, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am grateful for the constructive feedback and engagement I received on each of those occasions. I also wish to thank Flávio Azevedo, Aleksandra Cichocka, Anna Kende, Artur Nilsson, Danny Osborne, Tobias Rothmund, and Pavlos Vasilopoulos for sharing their data with me; Dominic Abrams, Flávio Azevedo, Vivienne Badaan, Dean Baltiansky, David Caicedo, Aleksandra Cichocka, Shahrzad Goudarzi, György Hunyady, P.J. Henry, Lawrence J. Jost, Benjamin Saunders, Robbie Sutton, and Jussi Valtonen for providing extremely helpful comments on an earlier draft; and Dean Baltiansky for compiling the reference section. I was supported in part by National Science Foundation Award # BCS-1627691 during the writing of this article.

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Abstract

A theory of system justification was proposed 25 years ago by Jost and Banaji (1994) in the *British Journal of Social Psychology* to explain "the participation by disadvantaged individuals and groups in negative stereotypes of

themselves" and the phenomenon of outgroup favoritism. The scope of the theory was subsequently expanded to account for a much wider range of outcomes, including appraisals of fairness, justice, legitimacy, deservingness, and entitlement; spontaneous and deliberate social judgments about individuals, groups, and events; and full-fledged political and religious ideologies. According to system justification theory, people are motivated (to varying degrees, depending upon situational and dispositional factors) to defend, bolster, and justify aspects of existing social, economic, and political systems. Engaging in system justification serves the palliative function of increasing satisfaction with the status quo and addresses underlying epistemic, existential, and relational needs to reduce uncertainty, threat, and social discord. This article summarizes the major tenets of system justification theory, reviews some of the empirical evidence supporting it, answers new (and old) questions and criticisms, and highlights areas of societal relevance and directions for future research.

Keywords: system justification theory, political ideology, intergroup relations, legitimacy, social justice

Keep you doped with religion and sex and TV,
And you think you're so clever and classless and free....
(John Lennon, "Working Class Hero")

1. Learning to Love the Questions

A theory of system justification was proposed by Jost and Banaji (1994) in a special issue of the *British Journal of Social Psychology* (*BJSP*) devoted to the structure and functions of social stereotyping. In that article, which is now "celebrating" its 25th anniversary, we conjectured that in addition to ego-justifying and group-justifying tendencies to defend and rationalize the interests and esteem of the self and the in-group, respectively people exhibit *system*-justifying tendencies to defend and rationalize existing social, economic, and political arrangements—sometimes even at the expense of individual and collective self-interest. Specifically, we felt that existing theories in social psychology did not provide an entirely satisfying account of "the participation by disadvantaged individuals and groups in negative stereotypes of themselves" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 1) and the related phenomenon of outgroup favoritism, whereby "[s]ubordinate groups like black Americans, South African Bantus, the Mayans of Guatemala, and the lower castes of India either do, or until recently did, derogate or look down on the in-group and show positive attitudes toward the depriving out-group" (Brown, 1986, p. 558).

In proposing system justification theory, we took seriously—perhaps more seriously than the authors themselves—two critiques of social identity theory wielded by Hewstone and Ward (1985) and Hinkle and Brown (1990). Both argued that existing approaches to intergroup relations—including that of Tajfel and Turner (1979)—failed to provide an adequate account of outgroup favoritism (see Jost & Banaji, 1994, for details). To help fill the void, we turned to socialist-feminist analyses of the concepts of "false consciousness," which was defined by Cunningham (1987) as the holding of "false beliefs that sustain one's own oppression" (p. 255). To me,

these ideas offered a promising and heretofore unexplored direction in the empirical social psychological literature (see also Jost, 1995; Jost et al., 2018).

From the very start, the research goal was to synthesize and unify two distinct theoretical traditions—one coming from philosophy and social theory in the intellectual heritage of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, György Lukács, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Catharine MacKinnon, and Jon Elster and the other coming from social psychologists such as Kurt Lewin, Gordon Allport, Henri Tajfel, Morton Deutsch, Leon Festinger, Melvin Lerner, Serge Moscovici, William J. McGuire, Alice Eagly, John Turner, Susan Fiske, and many others (see Figure 1). The term "system justification" was inspired by a single line from a book by James Kluegel and Eliot Smith (1986), who made reference to "certain Marxist theories that assume working-class people will come to recognize the *contradictions between their self-interests and their system- justifying beliefs*" (p. 15, emphasis added).

The *BJSP* article grew out of a term paper that I submitted for a doctoral seminar at Yale University on stereotyping and prejudice taught by Mahzarin Banaji (see Jost & van der Toorn, 2012). Mahzarin's familiarity with the caste system in India may have led her to sympathize with the basic argument, despite her misgivings about the Marxian origins of the concept of false consciousness—a concept that struck me (then as now) as an indispensable one for the social and behavioral sciences (Jost, 1995; see also Lukes, 2011).[1] One of the guiding notions was that the *contents* of many familiar social stereotypes could be explained better by an ideological process of legitimizing inequality and exploitation than by the then-dominant "cognitive miser" theory of stereotypes as heuristic energy-saving devices (see also Jost & Hamilton, 2005).

----------Insert Figure 1 here----------

The most distinctive aspect of our argument, which was not clearly expressed in the writings of any of the theory's many influential predecessors, was the proposal that even members of disadvantaged groups would—for psychological reasons—*want* to believe that the existing social system is legitimate and justified. Perhaps Gramsci (1917) came closest when he wrote that: "the great mass of people hesitate and lose heart when they think of what a radical change might bring . . . . They can only imagine the present being torn to pieces, and fail to perceive the new order which is possible" (quoted in Fiori, 1970, pp. 106-107). System justification theory seeks to explain not only resistance to change, which was also a primary goal of Lewin's (1947) field theory (see Jost, 2015), but also the occurrence of false consciousness from a social, cognitive, motivational perspective—to investigate it empirically as a psychological process and not merely as a sociological product or tool of literary criticism (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Like a great many other social critics, John Lennon observed that many cultural institutions are set up to persuade us that—as a society—we are "clever and classless and free." In addition, I believe that there are psychological factors that render us more persuadable than would be the case if we were (or could be) ideologically neutral about the social system. In other words, "top-down" processes of elite communication (the "discursive superstructure") necessarily meet up—or interact—with "bottom-up" psychological needs and interests (the "motivational substructure"), so that system-justifying messages find their audiences and vice versa

[1] I share Lovibond's (1989) sense that the epistemological stakes are high: "To reject [the concept of] 'false consciousness' is to take a large step towards abandoning the politics of Enlightenment modernism. For it means rejecting the view that personal autonomy is to be reached by way of a progressive transcendence of earlier, less adequate cognitive structures" (p. 26).

(see Jost et al., 2009).

Initially, system justification theory focused specifically on stereotyping, prejudice, and outgroup favoritism (Jost, 2001), but it was subsequently expanded to account for a much wider range of outcomes, including: appraisals of fairness, justice, legitimacy, deservingness, and entitlement (Brandt & Reyna, 2017; Jost, 1997; Jost & Major, 2001; O'Brien et al., 2012; van der Toorn et al., 2011); attributions and explanations for poverty and inequality (Ali et al., 2018; Durrheim et al., 2014; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016); spontaneous and deliberate social inferences and judgments about individuals and groups (Jost et al., 2005; Kay et al., 2005; Monteith et al., 2016); attitudes and opinions about social, economic, and political issues (Jost et al., 2003a; Kay et al., 2009; Mallett et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2017; van der Toorn et al., 2017b); rationalizations for certain sociopolitical outcomes or events (Kay et al., 2002; Laurin, 2018); and full-fledged political and religious ideologies (Jost et al., 2003b, 2004, 2009, 2014).

Looking back, I find that the whole enterprise started with a set of questions that came to me as I took courses and attended talks not only in social psychology, but also in clinical, cognitive, and developmental psychology, as well as neighboring disciplines such as philosophy and political science: Why do some women feel they are entitled to lower salaries than men, why do people stay in harmful relationships, and why do some African-American children come to believe that white dolls are more attractive and desirable than black dolls? Why do people blame victims of injustice and why do victims of injustice sometimes blame themselves? Why do poor people often oppose the redistribution of wealth? Why do we tolerate political and economic corruption? Why is it so difficult to get people to stand up for themselves and each other, and why do we find personal and social change to be so challenging, even painful? Is there a common denominator here—a hidden factor that connects these seemingly unrelated phenomena? These questions have been with me for over 25 years, and although I am not entirely satisfied with the answers I can provide today, my students, collaborators, colleagues, and I have made significant progress in addressing them. I can only hope that the answers will become clearer and more definitive over the next 25 years. In the meantime, as Rilke (1929/1993) said, you "have to try to love the questions themselves" (p. 35).

II. Major Tenets of System Justification Theory

I have already alluded to the first major tenet of system justification theory, namely that people are motivated (often implicitly rather than explicitly) to defend, justify, and bolster aspects of the societal status quo, including existing social, economic, and political systems, institutions, and arrangements (Jost et al., 2004). This is an important issue because some accept that system-justifying beliefs and ideologies may be internalized through a passive process of social learning but doubt that people are *motivated* to engage in system justification (Huddy, 2004; Mitchell & Tetlock, 2009; Owuamalam et al., 2018; Reicher, 2004; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Spears et al., 2001). Initial skepticism was understandable, because we did not directly investigate the motivational basis of system justification processes until several years after the theory was first proposed (Jost et al., 2010; Kay et al., 2009; Liviatan & Jost, 2014). The evidence is by now rather strong, it seems to me.

Motivational Basis of System Justification Processes

There are at least five lines of evidence supporting the idea that system justification is a motivated, goal-

directed process (Jost et al., 2010): (1) The endorsement of system-justifying beliefs, including beliefs associated with political conservatism, is linked to individual differences in self-deception and motivated social cognition (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b, 2010; Wojcik et al., 2015); (2) People often respond defensively to threats, criticisms, and challenges directed at the overarching social system (Jost et al., 2005; Kay et al., 2005; Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007)—unless they have the opportunity to affirm the goodness of the system (Brescoll et al., 2013; Cutright et al., 2011; Liviatan & Jost, 2014); (3) System-justifying processes exhibit several "classic" properties of goal pursuit (Jost et al., 2007, 2010); (4) People engage in selective, biased information processing to reach system-supporting conclusions (Haines & Jost, 2000; Hennes et al., 2016; Ledgerwood et al., 2011; van der Toorn et al., 2011); and (5) People are willing to expend behavioral effort in order to maintain the legitimacy of the socio-economic system (Ledgerwood et al., 2011). Drawing on several of these ideas, Aaron Kay and his colleagues (2009) conducted an elegant series of experiments documenting a motivated preference to "see the way things are as the way they should be" (p. 421).

However, this does not mean that people *always* or *invariably* perceive the societal status quo as fair and just, as critics of system justification theory have sometimes alleged (Désert & Leyens, 2006; Huddy, 2004; Reicher, 2004; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Sidanius et al., 2004). As with all other motives in psychology, the strength of system justification motivation is expected to vary according to situational and dispositional factors. Through empirical investigations, social psychologists have discovered a number of contextual or situational moderators—we might think of these as "triggers" of system justification processes (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay & Zanna, 2009). One trigger, already alluded to above, is exposure to system criticism, challenge, and threat. At least 38 experiments published between 2005 and 2017 demonstrate that exposure to system criticism or threat can increase system-justifying responses in a variety of ways (see Table 1). These include complementary stereotypic differentiation of advantaged groups as agentic (but not communal) and disadvantaged groups as communal (but not agentic); backlash against feminists and women who defy gender stereotypes; preferences for domestic over foreign consumer products; and tolerance for civilian casualties during war and decreased support for hate crimes policies among chronically high system-justifiers. In the long term, it stands to reason that critiques of the system are useful and effective in delegitimizing the way things are and bringing about a desire for social change, but in the short term they often elicit defensiveness and resistance.[2]

----------Insert Table 1 here----------

There are other moderators of system justification as well. People are more accepting of unwelcome social and political outcomes—such as restrictions on their freedoms and various forms of disadvantageous inequality—when these are perceived as *inevitable* or *inescapable* (Kay et al., 2002; Laurin et al., 2010, 2012, 2013). For instance, Kristin Laurin (2018) demonstrated that U.S. citizens—Democrats and Republicans alike—evaluated Donald Trump's election more favorably one week after his inauguration, compared to just one week before. Another moderator of system justification is perceived longevity. Blanchar and Eidelman (2013) found that people

[2] A timely example is that of the American quarterback, Colin Kaepernick, who is unemployed by the National Football League because of a decision he made to protest police brutality, "taking a knee" rather than standing with his hand on his heart during the playing of the national anthem, declaring that "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." Consistent with the notion that people respond defensively to criticisms of the social system, Kaepernick faced massive backlash—strongly *motivated*, widespread, passionate, public, and private forms of attack and derision.

were more supportive of the caste system in India—and the capitalist system in the U.S. and the U.K.—when they were made to feel that these systems were traditional and longstanding, rather than fairly recent in history.

Several studies indicate that people are also more likely to justify social, economic, and political systems to the extent that they feel especially powerless or dependent on those systems. Jojanneke Van der Toorn and her colleagues (2011), for instance, observed that perceived dependence on educational authorities, government, and the police predicted high levels of institutional trust, confidence, and deference. Van der Toorn et al. (2015) demonstrated that thinking intently about feelings of powerlessness increased the tendency to legitimize racial disparities in criminal sentencing, the unequal distribution of wealth in society, and the gender wage gap—even when system-challenging explanations for inequality, such as discrimination, were made cognitively available.

The Palliative Function of System Justification

Another major tenet of the theory is that system justification serves the palliative function of making people feel better about the societal status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; see also Hammond & Sibley, 2011; Napier et al., 2010; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018a). The idea is somewhat reminiscent of Karl Marx's famous quip that religious ideology is the "opiate of the masses"—that it placates and palliates. Indeed, a large-scale internet survey conducted by Jost et al. (2014) demonstrated that religious people, especially Catholics and Protestants, tend to score higher than Agnostics and Atheists on a measure of general system justification, which includes items such as "My country is the best country in the world to live in," and "Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness," as shown in Figure 2 (see also van der Toorn et al., 2017b). Furthermore, religious people and those who justify the socio-economic system generally report feeling more positive affect and less negative affect and profess more satisfaction with their own life situations (e.g., Jost et al., 2003c, 2008b; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Rankin et al., 2009).

----------Insert Figure 2 here----------

At the same time, the emotional "benefits" of system justification come with a cost in terms of decreased potential for social change and the remediation of inequality. Wakslak et al. (2007) observed that system-justifying ideologies—whether measured or manipulated through a mindset-priming technique—were associated with lowered emotional distress. Random assignment to a high system justification condition in which participants were primed with "rags-to-riches," "anyone can succeed if they try hard enough" stories (vs. a control condition) led to reductions in negative affect and moral outrage, which made people less enthusiastic about volunteering or donating money to help the disadvantaged.

Jaime Napier and I hypothesized that—insofar as political conservatism is a system-justifying ideology—conservatives should report being happier than liberals, on average. Using data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), we confirmed that—even after adjusting for income, age, marital status, religiosity, and other demographic characteristics—conservatives scored significantly higher than liberals on measures of subjective well-being, including self-reported happiness and life satisfaction. This ideological gap in subjective well-being was mediated by the belief that inequality in society is fair and justified. We replicated these results in 9 Western European countries using data from the World Values Survey, so this is by no means a purely American phenomenon. We also hypothesized that—if conservatives legitimize economic inequality to a greater

degree than liberals do—their subjective well-being should be less affected by the steep increase in income inequality in the U.S. over the preceding 30 years. After plotting the self-reported happiness levels of liberals and conservatives against scores on the gini index (a macro-economic indicator of income inequality), we discovered that increasing inequality was associated with decreased happiness in general, adjusting for demographic factors, but that the decrease was significantly steeper for liberals, apparently because they lack conservatives' "ideological buffer" against the negative hedonic effects of inequality (Napier & Jost, 2008).

Wojcik et al. (2015) subsequently challenged the notion that conservatives are "happier" than liberals and presented evidence based on language use and smiling in photographs to conclude that liberals were in fact happier than conservatives. The problem with their critique is that it misses entirely the distinction between *subjective* and *objective* well-being. We did not claim on the basis of system justification theory that conservatives were thriving in any objective sense (as in Aristotle's concept of *Eudaimonia*) or that conservative societies make people *genuinely* happier than liberal, social-democratic societies (they do not; see Okulicz-Kozaryn et al., 2014). On the contrary, we argued that because of social psychological processes such as rationalization of inequality, conservatives are less *subjectively* affected by social injustices and therefore *report* being happier. Thus, the findings of Wojcik and colleagues are interesting, but they do not provide evidence against the hypothesis that system justification serves a palliative function. In any case, it is quite possible that liberals and leftists—because they are more sensitive to social injustices—are more prone to "depressive realism" than conservatives and rightists (see Alloy & Abramson, 1988), and in some cases sensitivity and exposure to injustice may contribute to objective as well as subjective distress (e.g., Suppes et al., 2018).

System justification not only decreases negative affect and increases satisfaction with the status quo, it diminishes support for system-challenging protest activity (Jost et al., 2012, 2017a) and the "will to power" among members of disadvantaged groups (Hässler et al., in press). For instance, an experiment conducted in Germany revealed that when young women were exposed to relatively subtle, "benevolent" justifications for sexism, they subsequently expressed more positive affect, scored higher on gender-specific system justification, and were less willing to participate in collective action on behalf of women (Becker & Wright, 2011). A nationally representative study of New Zealanders indicated that system justification was associated with reduced distress as well as an attenuation of the relationship between relative deprivation and willingness to protest on behalf of one's group (Osborne & Sibley, 2013; see also Osborne et al., this issue).

Epistemic, Existential, and Relational Needs Underlying System Justification Motivation

Given the social and psychological costs of system justification, it is important to ask *why* people would engage in system justification. Jost and Hunyady (2002) initially offered an explanation in terms of the "palliative function" of system justification (see also Kluegel & Smith, 1986), but this was problematic, because, as Elster (1982) pointed out, "the beneficial consequences of . . . illusions" cannot necessarily "serve to *explain* them" (p. 136).[3] Subsequently, we proposed that system justification addresses—at least subjectively, if not objectively—underlying epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity; existential motives to assuage threat and insecurity; and relational motives to coordinate social relationships and achieve a sense of shared reality (Jost &

[3] I thank Melvin Lerner for first bringing this issue to my attention in the context of system justification theory.

Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2008a). The point may be easier to grasp in its negative form: to truly challenge the status quo, to engage in sustained and profound forms of protest, one must be willing and able to tolerate a great deal of uncertainty, potential threats to one's safety and security, and the risk of being alienated or cut off from friends, family members, and others in mainstream society (Jost et al., 2017a). It is no wonder that stress and burnout rates among political activists are notoriously high (e.g., Chen & Gorski, 2015).

There is indeed evidence that situational and dispositional variability in needs to reduce uncertainty, threat, and social discord affects the strength of system justification tendencies. For example, laboratory manipulations of cognitive load, time pressure, distraction, and alcohol intoxication promote an affinity for conservative, system-justifying attitudes (Eidelman et al., 2012; Friesen et al., 2014; Hansson et al., 1974; Lammers & Proulx, 2013; Rock & Janoff-Bulman, 2010; Rutjens & Loseman, 2010; Skitka et al., 2002; Van Berkel et al., 2015). Hussak and Cimpian (2015) argue that system justification reflects a heuristic cognitive process, such that a "sociopolitical arrangement that is explained in inherent [i.e., simplistic, intrinsic, or essentialistic] terms is also likely to be seen as reasonable and fair" (p. 741). Likewise, a number of experimental and archival studies demonstrate that objectively threatening circumstances, such as death reminders and terrorist attacks, tend to increase support for conservative, system-justifying positions (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Echebarria-Echabe, & Fernández-Guede, 2006; Economou & Kollias, 2015; Gailliot et al., 2006; Nail et al., 2009; Schüller, 2015; Thorisdottir & Jost, 2011; Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007; Van de Vyver et al., 2016). Finally, some experiments suggest that relational threats, such as social exclusion, increase system justification tendencies (Hess & Ledgerwood, 2014)–especially when one is motivated to share reality with high system-justifiers (Cheung et al., 2011; Jost et al., 2008a).

In terms of dispositional variability, Hennes et al. (2012) administered a survey containing items from individual difference scales of epistemic, existential, and relational motives and observed that respondents who scored lower on the personal need for cognition and higher on death anxiety and the need to share reality were more politically conservative and endorsed both general and economic forms of system justification to a higher degree. These respondents were also more likely to endorse conservative positions on issues of climate change, health care reform, and immigration policy—and in all cases these effects were mediated by economic system justification. Finally, they were more supportive of the politically conservative Tea Party movement and less supportive of the progressive Occupy Wall Street movement—and these effects, too, were mediated by economic system justification.

Very similar effects were observed in a study conducted in Argentina (Jost, Langer, Badaan, Azevedo, Etchezahar, Ungaretti, & Hennes, 2017). People who scored higher on the need for cognitive closure, the need to share reality, and death anxiety scored higher on economic system justification and right-wing (vs. left-wing) orientation. Furthermore, system justification mediated the effects of epistemic, existential, and relational motives on right-wing orientation and support for President Mauricio Macri in the preceding election (as well as rejection of the center-left opposition party). These relationships are depicted in Figure 3.

----------**Insert Figure 3 here**----------

Implications for the Study of Intergroup Relations

We know—from more than a century of writings on ethnocentrism—that people frequently favor their

own groups over others (Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Sumner, 1906; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and there is some indication that this favoritism may enhance self-esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Fein & Spencer, 1997). We also know that it can contribute to subtle (or not so subtle) forms of prejudice, hostility, and discrimination (Allport, 1954; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Tajfel, 1981). These are important facts about intergroup relations, but they are facts that apply more broadly to members of advantaged groups than to disadvantaged groups.

From the perspective of system justification theory, this is because—for members of advantaged groups—system justification is consistent with ego and group justification motives to maintain or enhance personal and collective self-esteem, respectively. For members of advantaged groups, therefore, it appears that system justification is positively associated with self-esteem, ingroup favoritism, and psychological well-being (Jost & Thompson, 2000). For members of disadvantaged groups, however, system justification conflicts with ego and group justification motives (Jost et al., 2001; Pratto et al., 2006; Zimmerman & Reyna, 2013). Therefore, it does not follow from the logic of system justification theory that the disadvantaged are *usually* or *typically* more likely than the advantaged to support the overarching social system, which is a view that has been repeatedly misattributed to us (Brandt, 2013; Caricati, 2017; Owuamalam et al., 2016b, 2018; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018b). On the contrary, system justification on the part of the disadvantaged is typically attenuated by countervailing motives for ego and group justification, as Jost et al. (2001) pointed out long ago. What is remarkable to me is that disadvantaged groups—such as members of the working class—subscribe to the legitimacy of the status quo as much as they do (Jost, 2017; see also Manstead, 2018). This is what needs to be understood and overcome —if one hopes for an end to unnecessary social and economic suffering, as I do.

For those who are disadvantaged by the status quo, system justification comes with social and psychological costs. It tends to be negatively associated with self-esteem, ingroup favoritism, and long-term psychological well-being—measured in terms of depression, neuroticism, ambivalence, stigma internalization (Godfrey et al., 2017; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Pacilli et al., 2011). A study of gay men in Chile found that system justification was associated with internalized homonegativity, which was associated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. At the same time, after adjusting for these deleterious effects, system justification also served the palliative function of reducing anxiety and depression (Bahamondes-Correa, 2016). These findings were replicated and extended in several studies conducted in the U.S. in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals who minimized discrimination against their own groups exhibited more internalized homonegativity but also benefitted in terms of mental and physical health (Suppes et al., in press). Thus, system justification is both a threat to the well-being of members of disadvantaged groups and a way of coping with that threat.

Indeed, as noted at the outset of this article, system justification theory was initially developed to explain why members of disadvantaged groups often (but not always) exhibit outgroup favoritism, that is, expressing more positive attitudes about other groups that are higher in status or power than their own group. Although Spears et al. (2001) argued, on the basis of social identity theory, that it is very rare for the disadvantaged to internalize a sense of inferiority, studies using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and other implicit methods that mitigate social desirability concerns to at least some degree reveal that sizeable proportions of members of disadvantaged groups—often 40% or 50% or even more—exhibit implicit (or indirect) biases against their own

group and in favor of more advantaged outgroup members.[4] For instance, poor people and obese people implicitly evaluate rich people and normal weight people more favorably than their own groups (Horwitz & Dovidio, 2015; Rudman et al., 2002); many gay men and lesbians implicitly evaluate straight people more favorably than their own groups (Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2004); in Chile Hispanics and dark-skinned Morenos implicitly evaluate Caucasians and light-skinned Blancos more favorably than their own groups (Uhlmann, et al., 2002); Black and Coloured Children favor Whites in South Africa (Newheiser, Dunham, et al., 2014); in the U.S. minority college students implicitly evaluate White students more favorably than their own groups (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2002, 2004). Several studies find that the magnitude of implicit outgroup bias on the part of the disadvantaged is positively correlated with individuals' scores on measures of system justification and conservatism, as predicted by system justification theory (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2003; Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2004).

III. Additional Questions, Criticisms, and Answers

When I contemplate the various critiques of system justification theory that have been expressed over the years, I take solace in T.S. Eliot's observation that "criticism is as inevitable as breathing." It is difficult to know, as an author, how and when to respond to one's critics; too little responsiveness may be taken as aloofness or dismissiveness, and too much is sure to come off as defensive. After a quarter century of research on system justification theory, this may be an appropriate time to take stock of questions and criticisms that have accumulated over the years and to answer them in some way.

I have already addressed two major objections, namely that (a) although people may adopt system-justifying beliefs through social learning mechanisms, there is no evidence that they are motivated to engage in system justification, and (b) the theory fails to specify situational and dispositional moderators of system justification. In response to the first, I summarized five types of evidence suggesting that system justification is a goal-directed process linked to self-deception, defensive motivation, biased information processing, behavioral effort, and other properties of goal pursuit (Jost et al., 2010). In response to the second criticism, I mentioned a number of situational moderators, including exposure to system criticism or threat, perceptions of system inevitability or inescapability, perceptions of historical longevity, and feelings of powerlessness or dependence (Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; see also Kay et al., this issue). I have also described work on dispositional moderators of system justification, such as epistemic, existential, and relational motives to reduce uncertainty, threat, and social discord (Hennes et al., 2012; Jost et al., 2017b).

There are more recent objections to system justification theory that I have yet to respond to here—and I would like to take the opportunity to do so. Let us begin with a multi-pronged critique by Owuamalam et al. (2018), who argued that system justification on the part of disadvantaged group members may be explained (on

[4] For reasons that are mysterious to me, Brown (2010) strenuously resists the notion that implicit measures of attitudes can provide evidence of out-group bias (pp. 239-241), but in the same book he spends several pages describing studies leading to the same conclusion, namely that there is a "consistent tendency for children from (dominant) majority groups to show strong ingroup identification and preference, whilst the identification of children from (subordinate) minority groups with their ingroup was much weaker and often paralleled by evaluative preferences for stimuli symbolic of the majority group" (p. 116). Perhaps he believes that members of disadvantaged groups exhibit out-group bias regularly as children but never as adults?

the basis of social identity theory rather than system justification theory) in terms of (a) "a passive reflection of social reality," (b) "a form of in-group bias (at the superordinate level)", and (c) "the hope that in-group advancement is possible in the future within the prevailing system" (p. 91). In addition to these three proposals, I will address several other critiques of system justification theory—nearly all of which have been framed as defenses of social identity theory (Brewer, 2007; Caricati, 2017; Caricati & Sollami, 2017; Désert & Leyens, 2006; Haslam et al., 2002; Jetten et al., 2012; Reicher, 2004; Reynolds et al., 2013; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Spears et al., 2001).

Does System Justification Merely Reflect the Passive Reflection of "Social Reality"?

The concept of "social reality constraints" has played a central role in several critiques of system justification theory (Brewer, 2007; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Spears et al., 2001), which were addressed in detail by Jost (2011). Nevertheless, Owuamalam et al. (2018) argued once again that "people may reflect the reality of social hierarchies by acknowledging that, on specific status-related dimensions, high-status outgroups are better than low-status in-groups" (p. 93) and that system justification motivation is not required to explain this phenomenon. Fifteen years ago, Rubin and Hewstone (2004) compared the plight of those who are disadvantaged in society to a losing football team that must "admit that they lost the game and that the other team won" and argued that "this response is simply the passive reflection of the current status quo, as specified in a socially shared reality" (p. 831).

To my mind, this drastically misrepresents the psychology of system justification; poor people, women, and sexual minorities, among others, do not feel as if they "played" and "lost." The position taken by Rubin and Hewstone (2004)—and echoed by Owuamalam et al. (2018)—trivializes (and therefore seriously mischaracterizes) problems of social and economic inequality—and ignores the many ways in which inequality is legitimated in society (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013). I do agree that some cases of system justification are passive (and nonconscious) rather than active (and conscious). As Hochschild (1981) pointed out, "Some people enthusiastically endorse the status quo; some passively acquiesce in it; some strongly oppose it; and some are simply indifferent to it" (pp. 262-263). Nevertheless, I disagree with several other assumptions made by Rubin and Hewstone (2004) and Owuamalam et al. (2018).

We know from extensive sociological research that contemporary societies fail to provide a "level playing field" for rich and poor, men and women, racial and ethnic majorities and minorities, and so on. In such contexts the act of "admitting defeat"—or "acknowledging objective differences," as Marilynn Brewer (2007, p. 733), put it—does reflect an ideological process of taking for granted (consciously or nonconsciously) the legitimacy of the status quo, even if it involves nothing more than "complicitous silence" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 188; see also Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Zelditch, 2001). Likewise, in a football game, "admitting defeat" assumes the legitimacy of the league, rules of competition, the referees' authority and conduct, and the other team's behavior (Jost, 2011). Otherwise, the "losing team" would not say "we lost"; they would say, "We were cheated!" When the disadvantaged assume that they are not as *smart* or *hard-working* or *competent* or *deserving* as members of advantaged groups, they are indeed granting legitimacy to (and reinforcing) status and power differences in society. Van Knippenberg (1984) made this point 35 years ago, when he wrote that, "The perceptions and

evaluations of the higher status group can thus be seen as containing the implicit claim that the distribution of outcomes is legitimate" (p. 573).

Social psychologists ought to perceive a world of difference between "admitting defeat" and exhibiting what Lewin (1941/1948) referred to as "group self-hatred." The fact that members of disadvantaged groups often harbor implicit associations linking their own kind to words and images that are unpleasant and even disgusting tells us something important about the effects of hierarchical social systems on our conscious and unconscious minds (Jost et al., 2004). So, too, does the fact that moral outrage and protest activity are surprisingly rare among society's "losers" (Jost et al., 2017a). Even during periods of widespread discontent, a very small minority of citizens takes to the streets, and they face tremendous backlash for doing so (e.g., see Langer et al., 2018).

Does System Justification Merely Reflect (Unrealistic) Optimism?

If Owuamalam et al.'s (2018) first criticism is that system justification on the part of the disadvantaged simply reflects an incontrovertible "social reality," their second criticism seems to be that it reflects optimism that "in-group advancement is possible. . . within the prevailing system" (p. 91), however unrealistic that optimism may be. This is a surprisingly popular explanation on the right (e.g., David Brooks, Marco Rubio) and left (e.g., Michael Moore, Bill Maher, and Stephen Colbert) for why poor people oppose wealth redistribution, namely that they keep the faith that under capitalism they will become rich one day. This could indeed be one of many reasons why people engage in system justification, so I do not regard it as a sound criticism of the theory.[5]

Nevertheless, Jost and colleagues (2017b) re-analyzed data from a small but nationally representative sample of low-income Americans surveyed by Rankin et al. (2009) and found little evidence that most expected to become rich. Only 24 percent agreed that, "I believe that one day I may become rich," whereas 47 percent disagreed and 29 percent were unsure. Most importantly, those who were financially optimistic scored no higher on general system justification, nor did they identify as more conservative or more supportive of the Republican Party, in comparison with those who were not so optimistic (see Jost et al., 2017b). Thus, contrary to Owuamalam and colleagues' supposition, the perceived likelihood of future success—however realistic or unrealistic—does not seem to account for system justification in the economic sphere.

Is System Justification Merely a Form of In-Group Bias (at the Superordinate Level)?

Owuamalam et al. (2018, p. 91) also claimed that system justification should be regarded as "a form of in-group bias (at the superordinate level)"—perhaps something akin to nationalism or patriotism, which we have addressed from a system justification perspective (see van der Toorn et al., 2014). Owuamalam and colleagues' criticism is essentially the same one raised by Reynolds et al. (2013), namely that people are merely motivated by self-interest considerations at whichever level of identification is most salient, so that "the question . . . isn't so much 'why do low status groups act against their self-interest?' but 'when and why do members of low status

[5] Another possibility, which is consistent with the emphasis in social identity theory on beliefs about social mobility (Hogg & Abrams, 1988), is that people perceive the social system as more legitimate to the extent that it allows for (some) people to improve upon their situation. This idea strikes me as perfectly compatible with system justification theory (see also Day & Fiske, 2017; García-Sánchez et al., in press), especially if one is willing to grant that people might be motivated to exaggerate the degree of social mobility in capitalist society, so this cannot provide the basis for a sound criticism of the theory either. As Hogg and Abrams (1988) pointed out, "it may be to the advantage of high-status groups to foster social mobility belief systems (or 'false consciousness,' in Marxist terms) among low-status groups as this inhibits the perception of conflict of interests and weakens the cohesiveness and ability to act collectively of those groups" (p. 56).

groups define themselves at the level of the system?'" (p. 241). There are really two issues here: (1) whether system justification is based on self-categorization processes at a higher level of group identification, such as the nation-state, and (2) whether system justification therefore reflects self-interested (and group-interested) behavior at this higher level of identification. These are both interesting questions, but I see several major problems with the overall argument when it is wielded as a critique of system justification theory.[6]

For one thing—as in the case of the "football" analogy, it seriously mischaracterizes the plight of the working class to state that a poor person's decision, for instance, to enlist in the military—which may be explained by the fact that other educational or economic opportunities are unavailable—merely reflects "self-interest" exercised at the level of national identification. According to the *New York Times*, "since the draft was abolished in 1973, the [U.S.] has begun developing what could be called a warrior . . . caste" that depends almost exclusively upon the sacrifices of the working class (Halbfinger & Holmes, 2003). Needless to say, many thousands have died in action since then. But this only scratches the surface of the myriad ways in which the circumstances of poor people are exploited by those who benefit from the status quo (e.g., Durrheim et al., 2014)—and the ways in which ideological manipulation can lead members of the working class to develop false and self-defeating beliefs about both political and economic matters (e.g., Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 1999; Graetz & Shapiro, 2006; Lukes, 2011).

In addition, there are psychological costs that Reynolds et al. (2013) and Owuamalam et al. (2018), among others, continue to ignore. Members of racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities who "buy into" the legitimacy of the status quo often suffer in terms of self-esteem, depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and other mental health problems (Bahamondes-Correa, 2016; Godfrey et al., 2017; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Suppes et al., 2018). Thus, to suggest that system justification on the part of the disadvantaged serves rational self-interest is, at best, incomplete and, at worst, completely misleading.

Furthermore, any "explanation" in terms of social identification alone is question-begging: to understand working class conservatism in these terms, we would need to know why poor people would "identify with" rich people (like Country Club Republicans) in the first place. System justification theory highlights the fact that "outgroup favoritism" in situations such as this reflects an ideological process that is akin to false consciousness and the internalization of inferiority (Jost et al., 2004). This is not to say that that there is no relationship between levels of group identification and ideological processes such as system justification. As Shayo (2009) demonstrated, poor people around the world identify more strongly with their nation (and less strongly with their

[6] Robbie Sutton has astutely identified other serious problems with the Owuamalam et al. (2018) critique, writing that "the claim that social systems can be a superordinate level of identification is conceptually suspect": "One can be a member or exemplar of a group (individuals are related to social groups taxonomically), but only part of, or affected by, a system (individuals are related to social systems partonomically). . . it is coherent to say in some cases, a collective (e.g., the US) can be viewed either as a system or as a group [but this] does not logically entail that any given system can be seen as a collective, or therefore as a group. To highlight this issue, the 'system' at issue in a paper published by Owuamalam et al. (2016a) is a university-ranking system. This cannot meaningfully be seen as any kind of collective, let alone a group to which one might belong. Rather, it is a social institution or practice that is exogenous to the groups affected by it, yet in which they (are forced to) participate, and upon which they depend. Owuamalam et al.'s conception of a social system is a shape-shifter: to make some points, they conceptualize systems as groups, but to make others, they conceptualize them as social practices. (I'm also not sure that this rating system can properly be described as a social system: it seems rather to be a metric that is used within a system for various purposes)."

social class) in comparison with rich people, and those who identify more strongly with the nation are less supportive of economic redistribution than those who do not. These are important discoveries that, to my mind, highlight the ways in which processes of social identification and system justification are intertwined.

Does Working Class Conservatism Reflect a Process of Dissonance-Reduction?

In an ambitious effort to ground the Marxian analysis of false consciousness in research on cognitive dissonance, the social theorist Jon Elster (1982) proposed that the "interest of the upper class is better served by the lower classes spontaneously inventing an ideology justifying their inferior status" that may serve "the interest of the lower classes in the sense of leading to dissonance reduction" although it "is contrary to their interest" in the sense that it could produce "excessive meekness" (p. 142). This formulation struck me as fascinating—and supportive of Robert E. Lane's (1959/2004) conclusions from interviews conducted with blue collar workers who found "it less punishing to think of themselves as correctly placed by a just society than to think of themselves as exploited, or victimized by an unjust society" (p. 227). It also fit with classic demonstrations of cognitive dissonance theory, including cases of fraternity pledges who were badly "hazed" becoming fanatical supporters of the Greek system (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Gerard & Mathewson, 1966).

Inspired by these examples, Jost et al. (2003c) explored the hypothesis—which was a hybrid of cognitive dissonance and system justification perspectives—that people who were most disadvantaged by the status quo would have the strongest need to justify existing social systems, authorities, and outcomes. They obtained some evidence from public opinion surveys suggesting that low income European Americans, African Americans, and Latinos were more likely than others to trust the government, support restrictions on criticizing it, and believe that society is meritocratic and that economic inequality is legitimate and necessary. These findings were broadly consistent with the notion derived from dissonance theory that those who suffer most intensely from a given state of affairs would be especially motivated to justify it (see also Henry & Saul, 2006; Sengupta et al., 2015). A few studies have recently picked up on this idea, suggesting that the palliative effects of system justification may be stronger for the disadvantaged than the advantaged, at least under some circumstances (Sengupta et al., 2017; Vargas-Salfate, 2017).

It is important to keep in mind, however, that Jost et al. (2003c) explicitly pointed out that "economic and other theories of material and symbolic self-interest may be said to account for the 'baseline'" (p. 14) and emphasized that: "To be clear, we are not arguing that members of disadvantaged groups are always (or even ordinarily) the most likely ones to provide ideological support for the system. In fact, to the extent that system justification conflicts with motives for self-enhancement, self-interest, and ingroup favoritism among members of disadvantaged groups . . . it should often be tempered by these other motives" (p. 17). Thus, we never regarded dissonance reduction as the "engine" of system justification, as an increasing number of scholars appear to have mistakenly assumed (Brandt, 2013; Caricati, 2017; Caricati & Sollami, 2017; Owuamalam et al., 2016b, 2018, this issue; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018b).

Brandt (2013) went so far as to rename the strong, dissonance-based hypothesis the "status-legitimacy hypothesis" and apply it to other domains—such as gender and education —that were not part of the original research program. His analyses revealed few differences in terms of group status with respect to trust in

government and other institutions and concluded that the phenomenon "may be a random event without need of a theoretical explanation" (p. 2). Brandt found scant evidence of *enhanced* system justification among the disadvantaged—but he also found little or no consistent evidence of group-based self-interest. His null results are therefore equally at odds with theories of realistic group conflict, social identification, and social dominance (see Caricati & Sollami, 2017; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018b). As I have argued elsewhere (Jost, 2017b), we must still confront a fundamental question in social science: Why is it that members of the working class are just as likely—or, in other cases, almost as likely—as the middle and upper classes to defend and justify the societal status quo?[7]

Working class conservatism may indeed have little or nothing to do with cognitive dissonance reduction, as Owuamalam et al. (2016b, 2018) have argued. However, their conceptual analysis is deeply confused. They conflate "self-interest" with "self-relevance" when they suggest that there is an incompatibility between cognitive dissonance theory and the hypothesis that system justification motivation among members of disadvantaged groups "should be apparent only when their personal and group interests are relatively weak," because "dissonance should be greatest when dissonance-arousing cognitions are self-relevant and important" (p. 92). I agree that people are only motivated to justify the status quo when it is personally relevant (see Kay et al., 2002), but it is naïve to assume that the only people who defend and justify the capitalist system, for instance, are those who benefit from the system or are otherwise motivated by self-interest (or, for that matter, only those who *identify* with the group of "capitalists").

Furthermore, Owuamalam et al. (2018) confuse social stability—which is known to increase system justification tendencies (Laurin et al., 2013)—with a lack of choice when they write: "If the system is perceived to be stable, then the potential for uncertainty and associated dissonance will be low, and so the motive for system justification should be weak and relatively ineffective," but "if the system is perceived to be unstable, then the potential for uncertainty and thus cognitive dissonance is high, and the system-justification motive should be strong and more effective" (p. 95). I see no reason from a cognitive dissonance perspective why a highly stable social system—such as capitalism—would fail to inspire motives for justification, as long as citizens feel that they are *choosing* to participate in it—as opposed to being coerced (as in a totalitarian system).[8]

An anonymous reviewer, who later identified himself as Robbie Sutton, listed a number of other problems with Owuamalam et al.'s (2018) argument that "'contrary' to SJT, when social arrangements are stable in the short term but not long term, people justify them more, because they have greater hope for improved status." Problems with this argumentation include the following: (a) it is incoherent to "to talk about stability through time as anything other than stability in the long term, because 'stable, but only in the short term' seems oxymoronic"; (b) Owuamalam et al. make a strong distinction between short-term and long-term stability, but "the cited study

[7] Zhang and Zhong (in press) provide evidence from China that adults who are lower (vs. higher) in income and education tend to have more children at an earlier age, and this renders them more dependent on governmental support and therefore more likely to defend and justify the authority of the Chinese government.

[8] Owuamalam et al. (2018) also claim it is inconsistent with system justification theory to propose that "a rejection [of the social system] is likely to be regarded as being unrealistic because it implies a revolution and anarchy that could invoke much greater uncertainty and threat" (p. 94), but it is not. This is precisely why I argue that challenging the system—and pushing for social change—*aggravates* feelings of uncertainty and threat and triggers backlash (Hennes et al., 2012; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2008a, 2017b).

operationalizes stability as stability per se: the stability factor has two levels, high (university rankings don't fluctuate year to year) and low (they go up and down year to year). It doesn't have an orthogonal manipulation of short vs. long-term stability"; (c) "the manipulation refers to more or less stochastic fluctuations through time and not about the likelihood of progress: for one group to systematically improve its position, of the kind that interested Tajfel"; (d) "the manipulation does not refer to any change in the system. It just refers to the hierarchical position of groups within the system"; and (e) Owuamalam et al. "also describe the university system ranking system as 'legitimate,' which they describe as a precondition for [system justification] effects, but no effort is made to manipulate the legitimacy of the university ranking system: the legitimacy of the ranking system is rather a DV." I, for one, find these criticisms of Owuamalam et al.'s (2018) work to be rather compelling, and I hope they will address them.

No, Seriously, Why Are Conservatives Happier Than Liberals?

As noted above, Napier and Jost (2008) found that, in comparison with liberals, political conservatives report greater happiness and personal satisfaction and that this "happiness gap" is mediated, in part, by the justification of inequality. This pattern of results has been replicated many times over (Bixter, 2015; Burton et al., 2015; Butz et al., 2017; Choma et al., 2009; Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Newman et al., 2018; Okulicz-Kozaryn et al., 2014; Onraet et al., 2016; Schlenker et al., 2012; Wojcik et al., 2015). These replications have not, however, prevented critics from disputing the basic notion that system justification serves a palliative function. Jetten et al. (2012), for instance, claim that the happiness gap between liberals and conservatives is attributable to the fact that conservatives are wealthier and this "gives them access to more group memberships," and this, in turn makes them happier. These authors conclude that "what makes conservatives happy is not conservative ideology but rather material advantage" (p. 7).

Jetten et al.'s (2012) alternative explanation simply cannot account for the findings of Napier and Jost (2008), because we adjusted statistically for personal income in all of our analyses, and the happiness gap remained significant. To delve deeper into the issue, Butz et al. (2017) analyzed data from a nationally representative sample in Germany and found that the justification of social and economic inequality mediated the relationship between conservatism and life satisfaction, providing clear support for system justification theory, whereas other variables that were proposed as alternative explanations—such as number of group memberships (Jetten et al., 2012) and general optimism (Schlenker et al., 2012)—did not.

Can System Justification Theory Account for the Occurrence of Social Change?

Some critics allege that system justification theory—by seeking to understand the motivation to preserve the status quo—is incapable of explaining protest and social change (Désert & Leyens, 2006; Haslam et al., 2002; Reicher, 2004; Spears et al., 2001; Sidanius et al., 2004). But system justification theory does not suggest that social change is impossible, only that it is *difficult*—for psychological as well as other reasons (Jost, 2015). As Bruno Bettelheim observed, "Most people want to make sure that tomorrow is just like yesterday."

Reicher (2004) claimed that "revolt," "resistance," and "countermobilization" are "equally" present in human society, in comparison with social stasis (p. 941), but this is unrealistic. According to public opinion data from the World Values Survey, less than one in five citizens of North America, Western Europe, Australia, and

New Zealand have ever participated in a political demonstration—and more than a third say that they would *never* do so (Jost et al., 2017a, p. 100). I suppose that Reicher may have been channeling Foucault, who wrote: "As soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy" and "The struggle is everywhere . . . at every moment, we move from rebellion to domination, from domination to rebellion" (Fontana & Bertani, 2003, p. 280).

I agree that there is indeed always the *possibility* of resistance, but this is very different from suggesting that, in practice, defenders and challengers of the societal status quo are on equal footing; they are not, for social and psychological as well as historical, economic, and institutional reasons. To my mind, Gramsci was much closer to the mark than Foucault when he observed that the "great mass of people hesitate and lose heart when they think of what a radical change might bring . . . . [and] only imagine the present being torn to pieces." And so was Simone de Beauvoir, who unlike Foucault recognized that a "real repression—or oppression—of the self is always possible" (Kruks, 2006, p. 58). Research programs on self-objectification and body shame among women show that Beauvoir was right (e.g., Calogero, 2013; Calogero & Jost, 2011; Frederickson et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, there are several ways of accounting for social change from the perspective of system justification theory (Gaucher & Jost, 2011). To begin with, there are other motives identified by the theory—such as ego and group justification (as well as motives for accuracy, justice, and system improvement)—that may very well trump system justification motives in some situations (Day & Fiske, 2017; Johnson & Fujita, 2012; McCall et al., 2017). And, although I share Lewin's (1947) conviction that resistance to change is all too common in human affairs, when regime change is perceived as extremely likely (or inevitable), many people will begin to justify the newly emerging status quo (Kay et al., 2002; Laurin, 2018; Laurin et al., 2012). Thus, Kuran (1991) describes "revolutionary bandwagons," in which Eastern Europeans, among others, "displayed a remarkable tolerance for tyranny and inefficiency," remaining "docile, submissive, and even outwardly supportive of the status quo" for decades before the seeming "invulnerability of the status quo" was finally shattered in 1989 (pp. 25-26).

In addition, it follows from system justification theory that people will be less defensive and more open to new possibilities when potential changes to the status quo are described as "system-sanctioned," that is, congruent rather than incongruent with the preservation of the overarching system, as we have found in the case of pro-environmental initiatives (Feygina et al., 2010). Another possibility is suggested by the work of Fernando et al. (2018), which suggests that the act of engaging in utopian thinking (and mentally contrasting the actual vs. ideal state of society) may decrease system justification and increase the motivation for social change. When John Lennon implored us to, "Imagine no possessions . . . no need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man, imagine all the people sharing all the world," he knew full well that the exercise would inspire a more critical perspective on the status quo. He may also have anticipated that the song would provoke system-justifying backlash: "It's a vision of heaven for liberals, but conservatives believe it would quickly descend into hell. I think conservatives are on to something" (Haidt, 2012, p. 311).

Jost et al. (2017a) explicitly incorporated system justification motivation in a model of collective action, pointing out that the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) ignores explicitly ideological and system-

level factors, because it conceptualizes protest exclusively in terms of in-group/out-group dynamics (van Zomeren et al., 2008). As a result, it overlooks important political and psychological differences between system-challenging and system-supporting collective action. Abrams and Grant (2012) proposed a more comprehensive model in which preferences for social change mediated the effects of group identification and feelings of relative deprivation on support for Scottish nationalism. This makes it clearer that social identity and system justification approaches to collective action are complementary and mutually informative. In studies conducted in New Zealand and the U.S., Osborne et al. (2018) tested an integrative model that also incorporated variables from both theories. Among other things, they found that for members of low-status and high-status groups alike (a) system justification was negatively associated with system-challenging collective action (e.g., support for the "Black Lives Matter" movement) and positively associated with system-supporting collective action (e.g., support for the "All Lives Matter" movement), and (b) group identification, perceptions of injustice, and anger mediated the effects of system justification on collective action intentions.

IV. Additional Applications to the Study of Social and Political Behavior

System justification theory, as I conceive of it, is highly "practical" or "relevant" in the Lewinian sense that it is useful for diagnosing and addressing social problems, including many problems that apologists for the status quo would prefer to ignore. These include racism, colorism, sexism, classism, self-objectification, tolerance of corruption, legitimation of social and economic inequality, hostility toward immigrants, skepticism about climate change, and acceptance of environmentally harmful food distribution systems, among many other things (e.g., Brescoll et al., 2013; Calogero & Jost, 2011; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Choma & Prusaczyk, 2018; Feygina et al., 2010; García-Sánchez et al., in press; Hässler et al., in press; Hennes et al., 2016; Intawan & Nicholson, 2018; Jost & Kay, 2005; Jost, 2015; Kay & Jost, 2003; Napier & Jost, 2008; Napier et al., 2010; Pacilli et al., 2011; Shepherd & Kay, 2012; Tan et al., 2016; Vainio et al., 2014; van der Toorn et al., 2011, 2015). Throughout this article I have sought to provide examples of the ways in which system justification theory can be applied to better understand societal phenomena. Before closing, I would like to say a bit more about applications to the study of political behavior in particular.

————Insert Table 2 here————

There are many consequences of system justification motivation for political behavior, including participation (and lack of participation) in collective action (Jost et al., 2017a; Langer et al., 2018) and support for vs. opposition to specific political candidates (Azevedo et al., 2017), parties (Jost et al., 2017b), and movements (Hennes et al., 2012). Studies conducted all over the world reveal that system justification is almost always positively associated with the endorsement of politically conservative or right-wing ideologies. This is consistent with the notion that conservatism is an ideology that seeks to maintain the status quo and that rightists, more than leftists, perceive existing social and economic inequalities as legitimate and desirable (Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2009, 2017b). As shown in Table 2, there are rather strong positive correlations (often .4 or higher) between system justification and right-wing conservatism in Argentina, Finland, Hungary, Lebanon, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The correlations are somewhat weaker in Germany, Poland, and Latvia although they remain positive and statistically significant in nearly all cases.

Thus far, the only country in which we have observed a significant *negative* correlation between system justification and conservatism is France, where we see that general system justification is associated with liberal-socialist (rather than conservative) attitudes—and low rather than high levels of authoritarianism and hostility toward immigrants. Thus, it would appear that the Enlightenment ideals of "liberté, egalité, fraternité" are very well-entrenched in France, to the point that they represent the societal status quo. We have not been able to collect data in Cuba or other longstanding socialist countries, but in those contexts we would expect a strong correlation between system justification and *left*-wing orientation.

————Insert Figures 4-6 here————

Shortly before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Azevedo et al. (2017) conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,500 Americans, administering general, economic, and gender-specific system justification scales. A number of observations follow from an inspection of the major correlates of these three forms of system justification, as shown in Figures 4-6. To begin with, general, economic, and gender-specific system justification scores were strongly and positively inter-correlated (with *r*s ranging from .33 to .58). Furthermore, all three were modestly and positively correlated with right-wing authoritarianism ($.08 \leq r \leq .43$), social dominance orientation ($.15 \leq r \leq .57$), national identification ($.21 \leq r \leq .35$), and a wide variety of symbolic and operational measures of social and economic conservatism ($.13 \leq r \leq .65$). Income and education were positively correlated with all three types of system justification, but only weakly so (with *r*s ranging from .17 to .21 and .05 to .12, respectively).

We found that economic and gender-specific (but not general) system justification predicted resistance to system-challenging social movements such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, feminism, environmentalism, and even the 1960's civil rights movement (with *r*s ranging from .27 to .47). All three types of system justification were negatively correlated with justice sensitivity from the perspectives of victims, observers, beneficiaries, and perpetrators ($-.47 \leq r \leq -.12$). This finding is important because it speaks to a major difference between just world and system justification theories (Jost & van der Toorn, 2012). Whereas Lerner (1980) argued that genuine concerns for justice (inspired by the "justice motive") should be positively associated with the belief in a just world and victim-blaming tendencies, it follows from system justification theory that there would be a negative association between the motivation to justify the societal status quo and sensitivity to potential injustices. This is indeed what we see in Figures 4-6.

Azevedo et al. (2017) observed that general system justification was unrelated to candidate liking in 2016, but economic and gender-specific system justification were positively associated with liking for Donald Trump ($.39 \leq r \leq .40$) and negatively associated with liking for Hillary Clinton ($-.40 \leq r \leq -.32$). At every level of income and education, economic and gender-specific system justification were positively associated with support for Trump and negatively associated with support for Clinton (see Figures 7 and 8). However, this was not the case for general system justification (see Figure 9). When the three types of system justification were entered into a multiple regression, general system justification was actually associated with a preference for Clinton (the more "mainstream" candidate) over Trump (the more disruptive and less traditional candidate). Thus, Trump supporters clearly did reject the "status quo" of Democratic governance under President Obama (and Secretary of State Clinton), but— like conservatives in general — they strongly justified existing economic and gender-based

disparities. Trump voters may have been frustrated by the consequences of global competition under capitalism, but there was no evidence that they blamed the economic system itself for their frustration.

----------Insert Figures 7-9 here----------

V. Concluding Remarks

Social psychologists under the sweeping influence of social identity theory have long assumed that "dominant group members are motivated to maintain the status quo and so to perceive it as legitimate, whereas subordinate group members are motivated to enhance their social identity and act toward change, perceiving the status quo as illegitimate" (DeMoulin et al., 2009, p. 13). As a first pass at conceiving of the relationship between motivated social cognition and political ideology, this strikes me as a reasonable enough approximation of reality. But it hardly tells the whole story. When we look back at social history, we see a great many cases of "liberal" or "progressive" members of advantaged groups fighting to change the status quo so as to increase social, economic, and political equality, and a great many cases of "conservative" members of disadvantaged groups defending the legitimacy of the status quo. Anything like a complete account of social and political psychology must account for these phenomena as well. This is why I believe that we need a theory of system justification as well as a theory of social identification.

I would like to close with a specific example. On September 11, 1964 the Beatles—led by 23 year-old John Lennon—refused to obey the tenets of racial segregation at a concert in Florida (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eWECN9-sY4). We should ask how four very young White men achieved such a high degree of moral clarity on racial issues more than 50 years ago, when most Americans accepted the status quo of segregation. It would be too crude to suggest that, because the Beatles were British rather than American, it was purely a matter of ingroup favoritism (or outgroup derogation) at the level of nation-states, because the Beatles loved many things about the U.S. and criticized many things about the U.K. They were hardly known as high system-justifiers in any context. Lennon, for instance, returned his MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) to the Queen of England in 1969 to protest the Vietnam War. At the same time, I would suggest that in 1964 it must have helped *to see the American system from the outside*, rather than from within it, where one depends upon—and is therefore tempted to defend and justify (or at least tolerate) the status quo and to downplay its shortcomings. Perhaps it is this critical perspicacity that we should actively cultivate, both individually and collectively, lest we remain complicit—silently or otherwise—in the various social injustices that afflict the institutions and arrangements that provide the setting for our few moments in history.

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Life History and System

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Zimmerman, J.L., & Reyna, C. (2013). The meaning and role of ideology in system justification and resistance for high- and low-status people. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 105,* 1–23.

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Table 1: Experimental Evidence of Motivated System-Defensiveness

(38 studies published between 2005 and 2017)

Citation	Operationalization of System Threat	Observed Effect(s) of System Threat
Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso (2005, Study 3)	Reading about the deterioration of Israeli society (vs. functioning well)	Complementary stereotypic differentiation of high-status (Ashkenazi) and low-status (Sephardic) Jews; Ashkenazi were judged as more intelligent, ambitious, and agentic, whereas Sephardim were judged as more friendly, traditional, and communal (by both groups)
Kay, Jost, & Young (2005, Study 1a)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Powerful people judged as more intelligent and independent but less happy (i.e., enhancement on traits seen as causally related to power, downgrading on status-irrelevant traits)
Kay, Jost, & Young (2005, Study 1b)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Obese people judged as lazier but more sociable (i.e., derogation on traits seen as causally related to obesity, enhancement on status-irrelevant traits)
Ullrich & Cohrs (2007, Study 1)	Reminder of terror attacks in Madrid (vs. dangers unrelated to terrorism or the system)	Increased legitimacy of the existing sociopolitical system in Germany (general system justification)
Ullrich & Cohrs (2007, Study 2)	Reminder of 9/11 or Madrid terror attacks (vs. issues related to the internet)	Increased legitimacy of the existing sociopolitical system in Germany (general system justification)
Ullrich & Cohrs (2007, Study 3)	Reminder of 9/11 or Madrid terror attacks (vs. issues related to the	Increased legitimacy of the existing sociopolitical system in Germany

	internet)	(general system justification)
Lau, Kay, & Spencer (2008)	Reading an essay describing Canadian society as deteriorating (vs. functioning well)	Men expressed more romantic interest in women adhering to stereotypical norms associated with benevolent sexism (but not other women)
Kay, Gaucher, Peach, Laurin, Friesen, Zanna, & Spencer (2009, Study 4)	Reading about the deterioration of Canadian society (vs. functioning well)	Greater "injunctification" (i.e., going from "is" to "ought," judging the current representation of women in politics as desirable)
Banfield, Kay, Cutright, Wu, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 2)	Reading a paragraph derogating the "American way of life" (vs. essay about U.S. geography)	Increased preference for domestic over foreign consumer products, especially among chronically low system-justifiers
Banfield, Kay, Cutright, Wu, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 3)	Experimental instruction to recall many (vs. few) reasons for why the U.S. has "the best way of life."	Increased preference for domestic over foreign consumer products, especially among chronically low system-justifiers
Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Increased preference for domestic over foreign consumer products, especially among chronically low system-justifiers
Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 2)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. mortality salience and dental pain priming conditions)	Increased preference for domestic over foreign consumer products, especially among chronically low system-justifiers
Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 4)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. an essay about U.S. geography)	Derogation of the author among chronically high system-justifiers; increased preference for domestic over foreign consumer products among chronically low system-justifiers
Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons (2011, Study 5)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. an essay about U.S. geography)	Increased preference for products with American symbols among chronically high system-justifiers; increased

		preference for domestic over foreign consumer products among chronically low system-justifiers
Day, Kay, Holmes, & Napier (2011, Study 1)	Reading an essay alleging systematic discrimination (vs. no discrimination) against Arab Canadians	Increased endorsement of monogamous ideology among men
Day, Kay, Holmes, & Napier (2011, Study 2)	Reading about the deterioration of Canadian society (vs. functioning well)	Increased endorsement of monogamous ideology among men
Day, Kay, Holmes, & Napier (2011, Study 3)	Reading an essay describing the institution of committed relationships as unstable, fragile (vs. stable, strong)	Increased endorsement of the existing sociopolitical system in Canada (general system justification)
Laurin, Kay, & Shepherd (2011, Study 1)	Reading an essay alleging pervasive gender discrimination in Canada (vs. a new water system in Hungary)	Women stereotyped women as more communal; men stereotyped men as more agentic
Ledgerwood, Mandisodza, Jost, & Pohl (2011, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Scientific evidence was judged as stronger when it established (vs. undermined) a perceived (meritocratic) connection between hard work and economic success
Mallet, Huntsinger, & Swim (2011, Study 4)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Decreased support for hate crimes policies among high (but not low) system-justifiers
Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer (2011, Study 1)	Reading an essay describing (a) American society as deteriorating, or (b) the high school hierarchy as unfair (vs. no essay control condition)	Increased support of small-scale (high school) and large-scale (national) systems in both system threat conditions
Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer (2011, Study 2)	Reading an essay describing (a) American society as deteriorating, or (b) the nuclear family as unstable	Increased support of small-scale (nuclear family) and large-scale (national) systems, in both system

	(vs. no essay control condition)	threat conditions
Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts (2012, Study 4)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well or a writing control condition)	Backlash against women who defy stereotypes; an agentic woman (but not an agentic man) was judged as more dominant but less likable and less employable
Brescoll, Uhlmann, & Newman (2013, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well, a memory control condition, or a "no essay" control condition)	Men and women endorsed biological essentialism about gender more strongly and were more likely to state that gender differences are immutable
Brescoll, Uhlmann, & Newman (2013, Study 3)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well and a "counter-arguing" control condition)	Men and women endorsed essentialist explanations for gender differences more strongly
Brescoll, Uhlmann, & Newman (2013, Study 4a)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Men and women endorsed sociocultural and biological explanations for gender differences more strongly when they were framed as immutable (vs. mutable)
Friedman & Sutton (2013)	Newspaper articles concerning civilian deaths arising from the Afghanistan war flanked by luxury advertisements (priming conspicuous consumption and, by extension, inequality) vs. no advertisements	Increased tolerance of civilian casualties as a result of war among political conservatives (but not liberals)
Liviatan & Jost (2014, Study 1a)	Reading speech transcript criticizing the economic and political system in the United States (vs. the economic and political system in Star Trek and the system of research in geology)	Response facilitation of legitimacy-related (vs. unrelated) words in the context of a computerized lexical decision task

Liviatan & Jost (2014, Study 1b)	Reading speech transcript criticizing the economic and political system in the United States (vs. the lack of creativity among Americans as a group and the system of research in geology)	Response facilitation of legitimacy-related (vs. unrelated) words in the context of a computerized lexical decision task
Liviatan & Jost (2014, Study 2)	Reading speech transcript criticizing the economic and political system in the United States (vs. the system of research in geology)	Response facilitation of legitimacy-related (vs. unrelated) words in the context of a computerized lexical decision task before but not after having the opportunity to affirm the goodness of the U.S. system
Liviatan & Jost (2014, Study 3)	Reading speech transcript criticizing the economic and political system in the United States (vs. the system of research in geology)	Response facilitation of positive (vs. negative) adjectives in the context of a sequential evaluation priming task following exposure to system-relevant (vs. irrelevant) images
van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, & Jost (2014, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. functioning well)	Reduction of ideological gap in national attachment; liberals expressed stronger national identification
van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, & Jost (2014, Study 2)	Reading about a failure of U.S. justice system in which a white-collar criminal was to be released because of a technicality (vs. prosecuted)	Reduction of ideological gap in national attachment; liberals expressed stronger identification with America (but not the arts)
Yeung, Kay & Peach (2014, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of Canadian society (vs. functioning well)	Increased ideological disagreement with identical statements made by a woman who was described as a "feminist" (vs. not)
Jolley, Douglas, & Sutton (2017, Study 1)	Reading about the deterioration of U.K. society (vs. functioning well)	Increased endorsement of real-world conspiracy theories and general notions of conspiracy

Jolley, Douglas, & Sutton (2017, Study 2)	Reading about the deterioration of U.K. society (vs. functioning well)	Increased general system justification—but only for participants who were exposed to conspiracy theories
Jolley, Douglas, & Sutton (2017, Study 3)	Reading about the deterioration of U.K. society (vs. functioning well)	Increased tendency to blame societal problems on individuals and small groups rather than institutional and system causes and increased general system justification—but only for participants who were exposed to conspiracy theories
van der Toorn, Jost, & Loffredo (2017a)	Reading about the deterioration of American society (vs. health threats associated with cell phone use or a control passage about house plants)	Increased general system justification among adolescents and self-identification as more politically conservative (and less liberal)

Note: This table is adapted from Jost, Gaucher, & Stern (2015, Table 12.2); it has been updated and expanded to include a number of more recent studies.

Table 2: Correlations between System Justification and Political Orientation in 12 Different Countries

Sample description	System justification measure	Political orientation measure	Correlation (*r*)	Sample size (N)	Citation/source
Argentina: Convenience sample of adults in Buenos Aires	Spanish translation of economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)	Left-right self-placement	.416***	328	Badaan et al. (2018)
Argentina: Students from the University of Buenos Aires			.412***	373	
Finland: Students from universities in Helsinki and Tampere	Finnish translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.440***	350	Vainio et al. (2014)
France: Nationally representative sample (2017 French Election Study)	French translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		*-0.170***	22,277	Pavlos Vasilopoulos (personal correspondence)
Germany: Nationally representative sample (YouGov online panel)	German translation of general system justification scale (Kay &		0.086*	757	

	Jost, 2003)				
Hungary: National sample (demographically similar to the adult population)	Hungarian translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.312***	931	Anna Kende (personal correspondence)
	Hungarian translation of economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		.235***		
National sample (demographically similar to the adult population)	Hungarian translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.369***	1005	
		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.303***		
Latvia: Convenience sample of adults	General system justification (6-item scale)	Left-right self-placement	.228***	251	Dimdins et al. (2016)
Lebanon: Nationally representative sample	Lebanese translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.231***	500	Badaan et al. (2018)
		Self-reported social conservatism (liberal-conservative)	.305***		
		Self-reported economic	.417***		

		conservatism (liberal-conservative)			
New Zealand: NZAVS (2011-2012)	General system justification (4-item scale)	Liberal-conservative self-placement	.243***	6,476	Danny Osborne (personal correspondence)
		Left-right self-placement	.362***	6,555	
NZAVS (2012-2013)		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.222***	11,121	
		Left-right self-placement	.351***	11,163	
NZAVS (2013-2014)		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.259***	16,133	
		Left-right self-placement	.421***	16,048	
NZAVS (2014-2015)		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.291***	14,562	
		Left-right self-placement	.468***	14,612	
NZAVS (2015-2016)		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.321***	12,764	
		Left-right self-placement	.495***	12,749	
NZAVS (2016-2017)		Liberal-conservative	.326***	20,396	

	Ethnic system justification (2-item scale)	self-placement	.324***	20,761	
	Gender system justification (2-item scale)		.316***	20,751	
	Economic system justification (1-item scale)		.324***	20,235	
	General system justification (4-item scale)	Left-right self-placement	.455***	20,048	
	Ethnic system justification (2-item scale)		.410***	20,400	
	Gender system justification (2-item scale)		.487***	20,391	
	Economic system justification (1-item scale)		.391***	19,899	
Poland: Nationally representative sample of internet users	Polish translation of general system justification scale (Kay &	Self-reported social, economic, and overall political	.108*	501	Cichocka & Jost (2014)

Nationally representative sample of Polish adults	Jost, 2003)	conservatism	.099**	1,038	Aleksandra Cichocka (personal correspondence)
		Left-right self-placement	.068*	1,108	
Sweden: Lund University Students	Swedish translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.712***	332	Nilsson & Jost (under review)
	Swedish translation of economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		.748***		
Convenience sample of adults	Swedish translation of general system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.518***	398	Artur Nilsson (personal correspondence)
		Liberal-conservative self-placement	.114*	383	
Convenience sample of adults		Left-right self-placement	.194***	418	
Convenience sample of adults	General system justification (6-item scale)		.525***	320	Dimdins et al. (2016)
United Kingdom: YouGov panel of social media users (SoMA)	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)	Left-right self-placement	0.372***	1,853	SMaPP
Prolific Academic Survey	General system justification scale (Kay &	Political party affiliation	.369***	332	Zmigrod et al. (2018)

	Jost, 2003) adapted to British context				
United States: Mechanical Turk workers	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)	Liberal-conservative self-placement	.358***	181	Hennes et al. (2012)
	Economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		.594***		
NYU students (2004-2016)	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.335***	9,487	Jost et al. (2017b)
	Economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		.429***	9,761	
Nationally representative panel survey (YouGov 2016 US Elections)	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		0.237***	3,329	SMaPP
Nationally representative sample (SSI)	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		0.152***	1,500	Azevedo et al. (2017)
	Economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		0.532***		

	Gender-specific system justification scale (Jost & Kay, 2005)		0.455***		
Non-representative replication sample (SSI)	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		0.166***	2,119	Azevedo & Rothmund (2018)
	Economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		0.612***		
	Gender-specific system justification scale (Jost & Kay, 2005)		0.478***		
NYU students	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.266***	218	Nilsson & Jost (under review)
	Economic system justification scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)		.445***	385	
Online survey of adults	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)		.256***	352	
		Issue-based conservatism	.307***		
	Economic system justification scale (Jost &	Liberal-conservative self-placement	.497***		

	Thompson, 2000)				
		Issue-based conservatism	.590***		
MTurk Sample 2017	General system justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003)	Liberal/left-wing vs. conservative/right-wing self-placement	.402***	1,511	Danny Osborne (personal correspondence)

Note: NZAVS = New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey (nationally representative panel survey); SSI = Survey Sampling International; SMaPP = Social Media and Political Participation Laboratory at New York University

* $p < .05$** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Figure 1: An intellectual genealogy of system justification theory (adapted from Jost & Van der Toorn, 2012, Figure 42.1)

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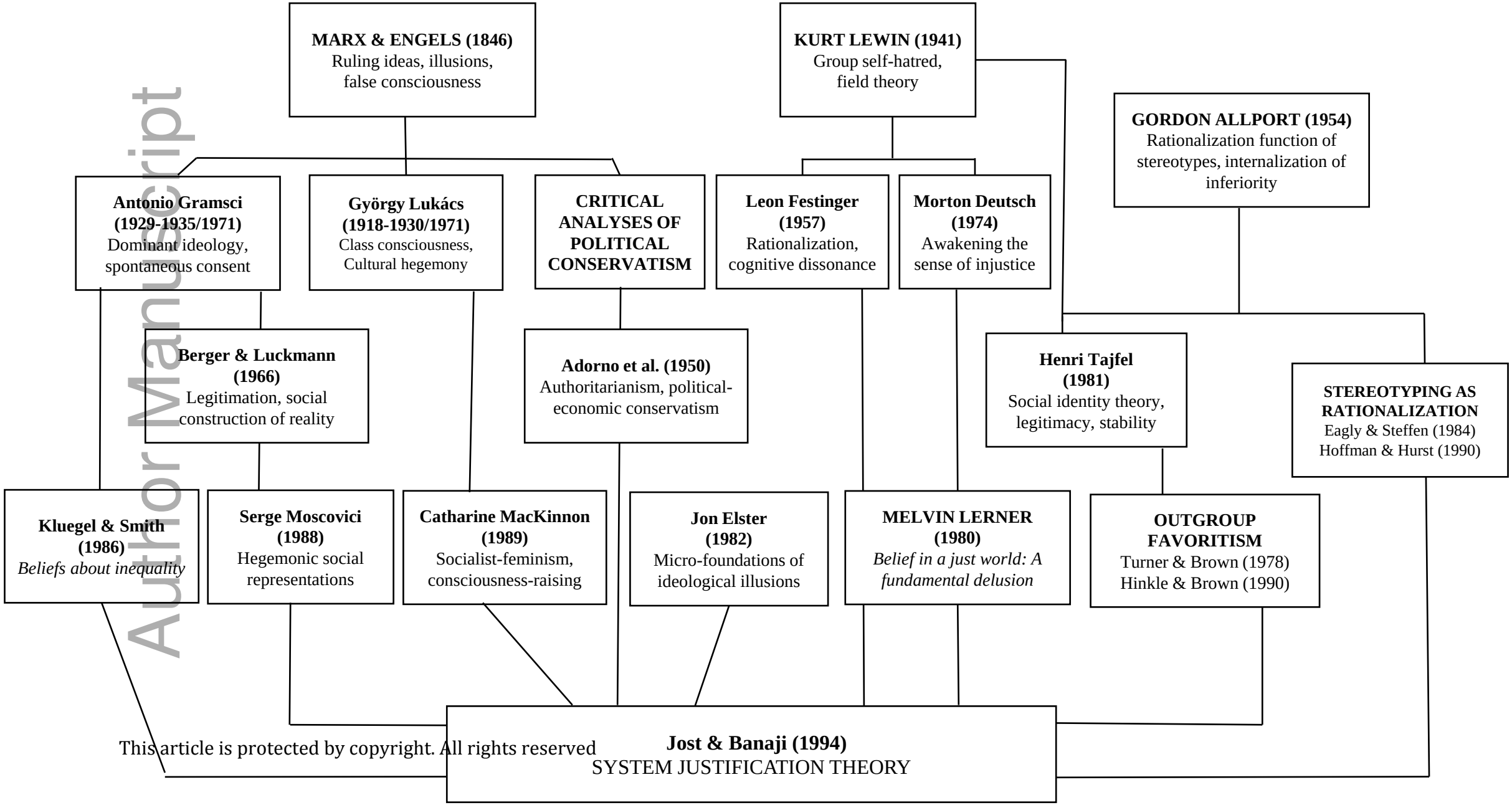
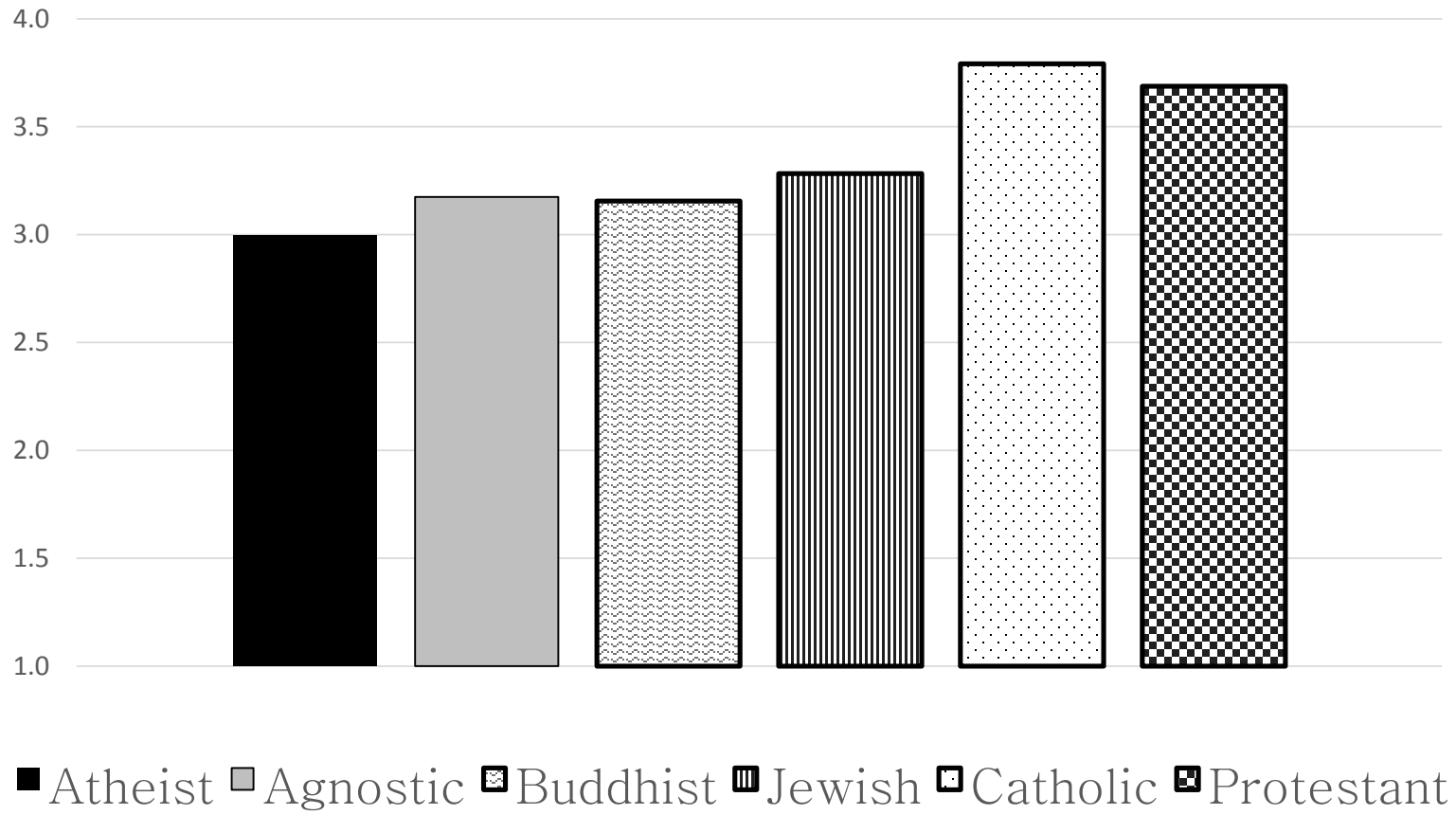
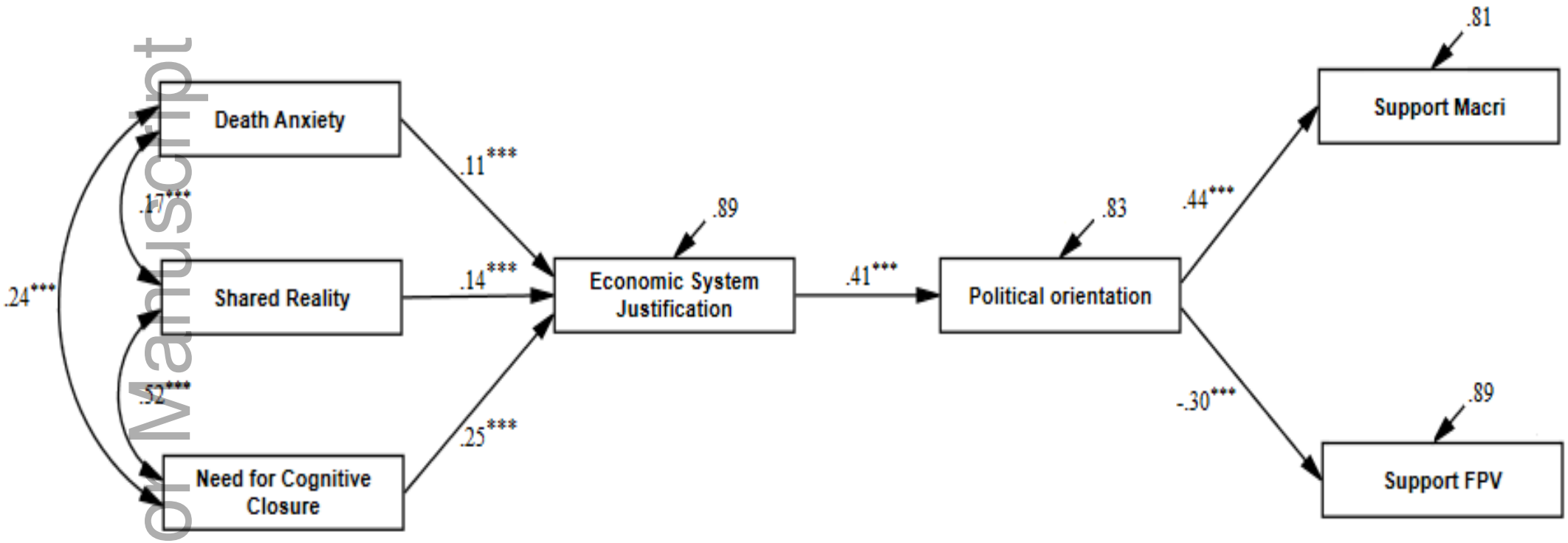


Figure 2: General system justification scores as a function of religious denomination



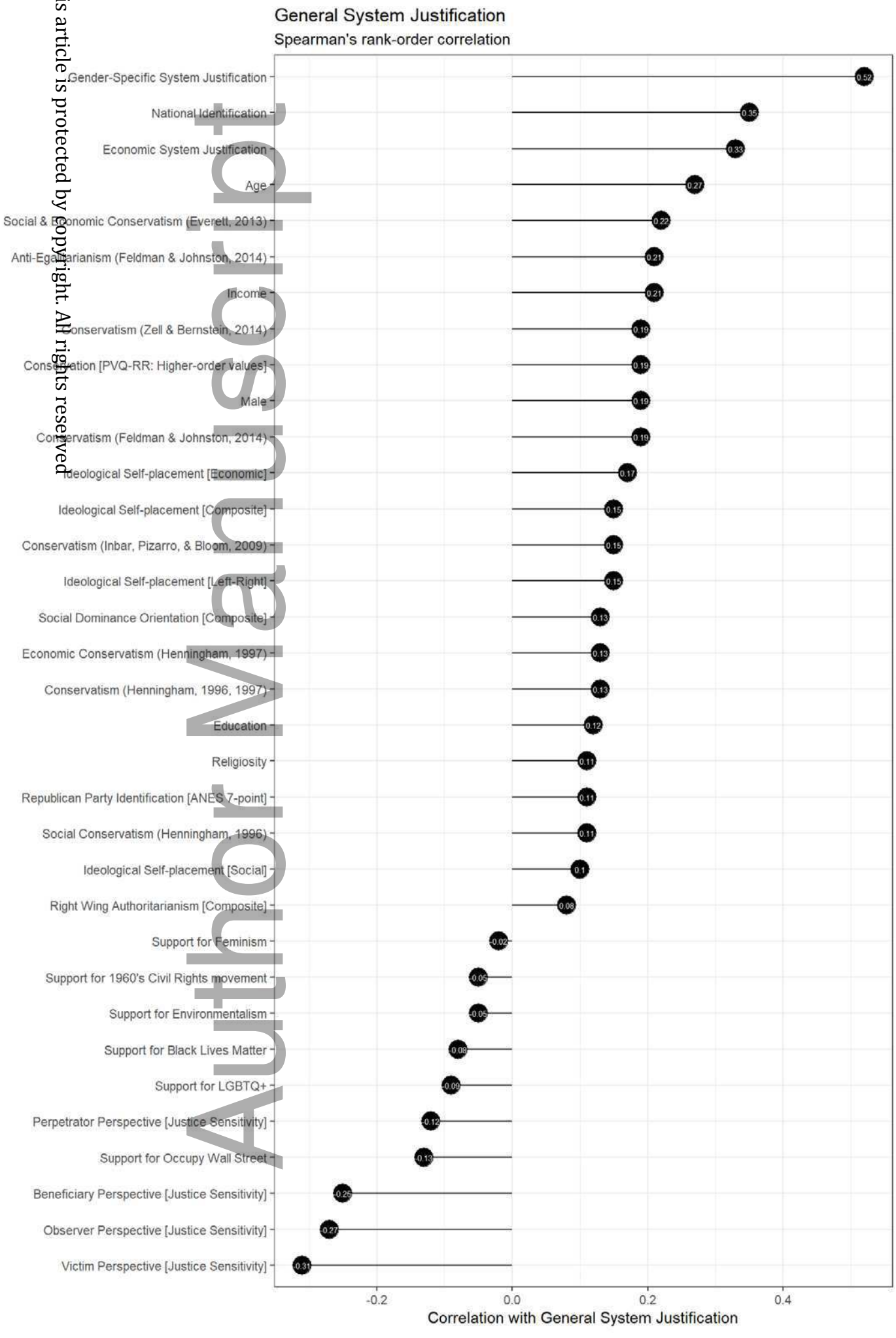
Note: This figure is based on data from Jost et al. (2014, Table 9). Religious people were more likely than non-religious people to agree that "Our society is getting worse every year," but they scored higher on the other 7 items included in Kay and Jost's (2003) General System Justification Scale. Means shown here are a composite of those 7 items, aggregating across participants from the same religious group who answered different items. Approximately 7,000 people (total) responded to each item.

Figure 3: Evidence that economic system justification mediated the effects of epistemic, existential, and relational needs on right-wing orientation and political preferences in Argentina



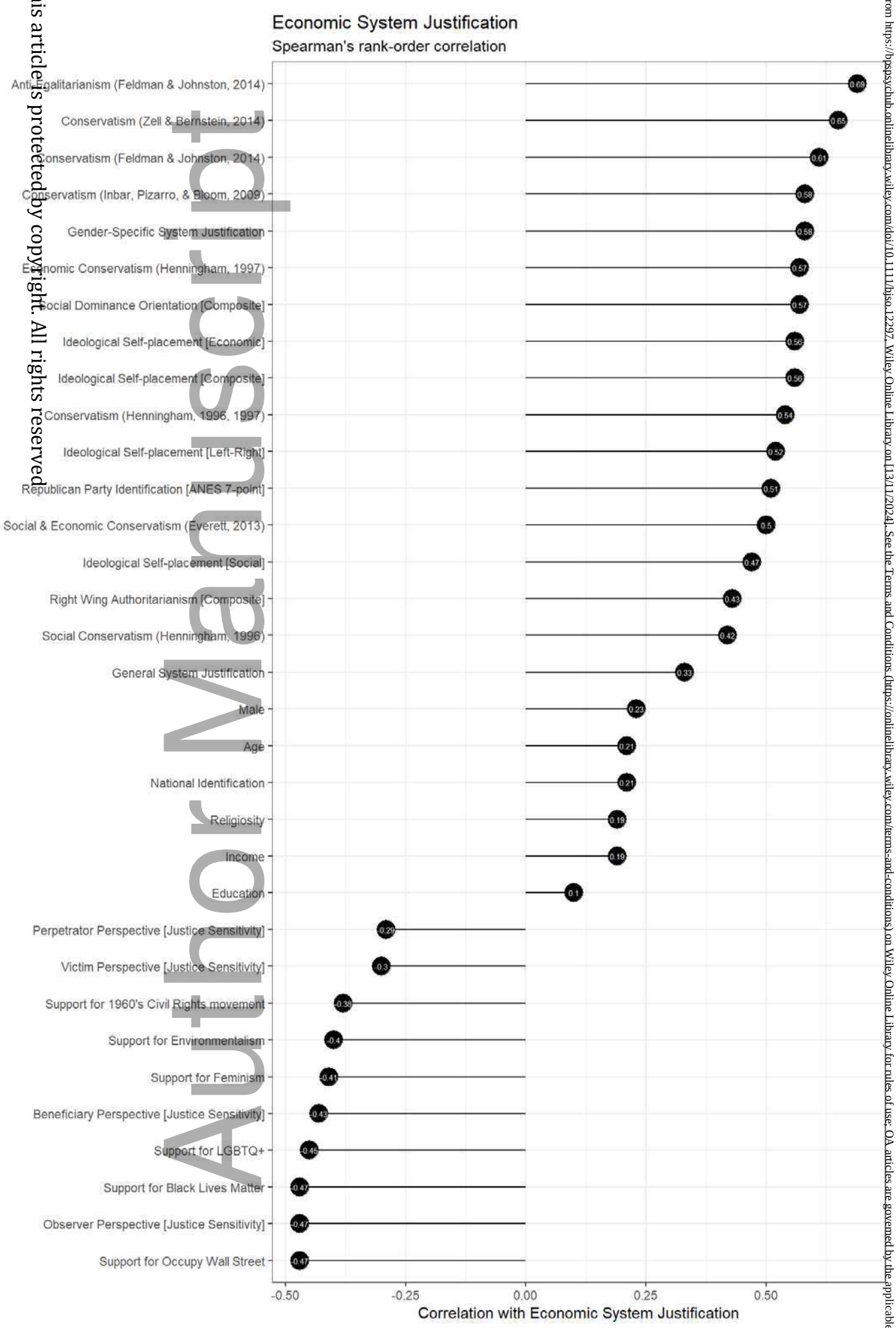
Note: This figure was prepared by Edgardo Etchezahar and is adapted from Jost, Langer, et al. (2017b, Figure 1). Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Political orientation is scored so that higher numbers indicate stronger right-wing (vs. left-wing) orientation. The two outcome variables are continuous measures of support for center-right President Macri and the center-left opposition party (FPV). Nonsignificant paths (not shown) were fixed to zero. The model provided an adequate fit to the data: AGFI = .949, CFI = .963, IFI = .964, RMSEA = .062 (.032 - .092), X^2 = 26,721; *df* = 11; *p* = .005; X^2/df = 2,429. We tested indirect effects (with 95% confidence intervals) using a bootstrapping analysis and found that economic system justification mediated the effects of death anxiety, shared reality, and need for cognitive closure on political orientation. Political orientation mediated the effects of economic system justification on support for Macri and FPV.

Figure 4: Correlates of General System Justification in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500)



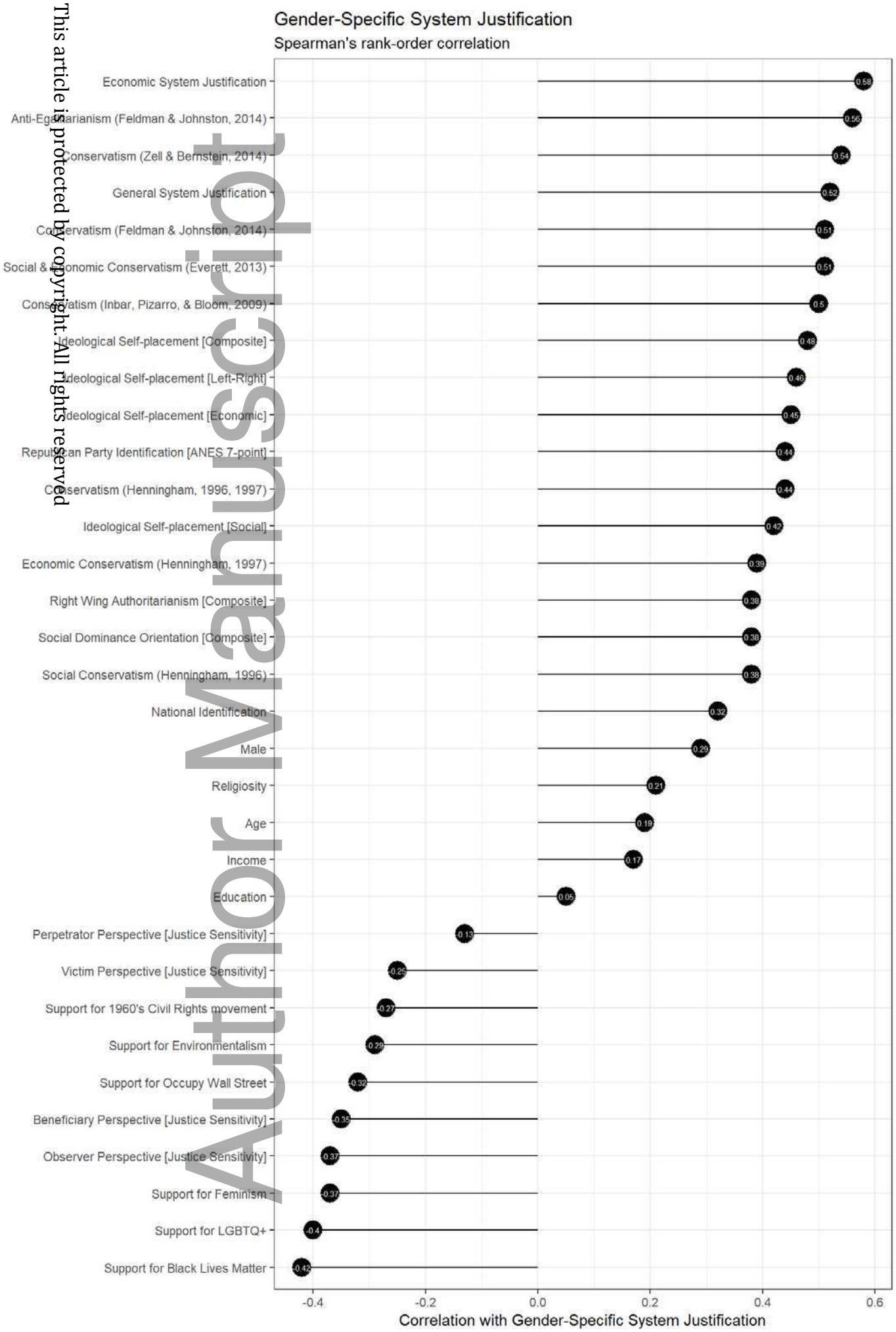
Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).

Figure 5: Correlates of Economic System Justification in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500)



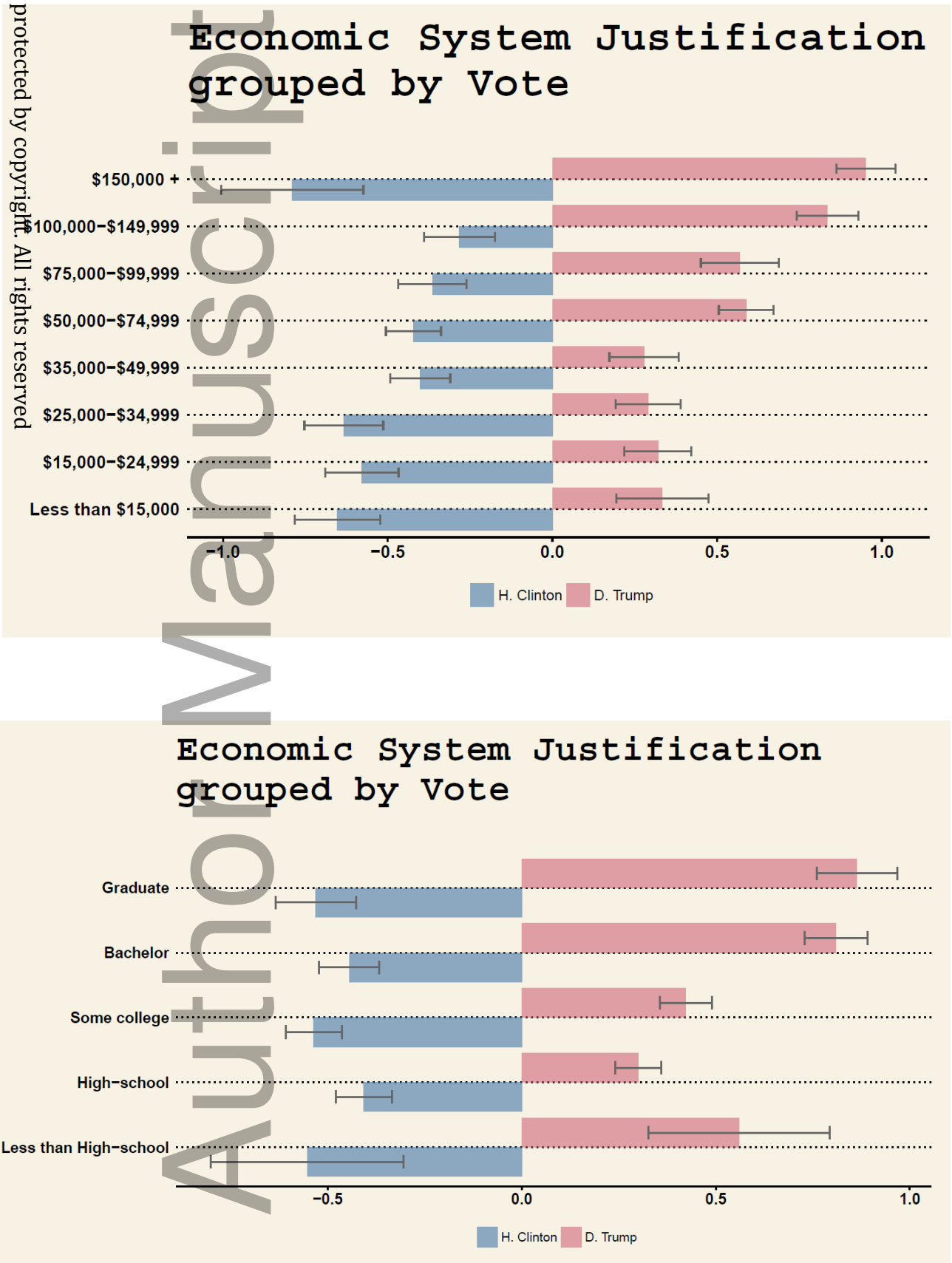
Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).

Figure 6: Correlates of Gender-Specific System Justification in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500)



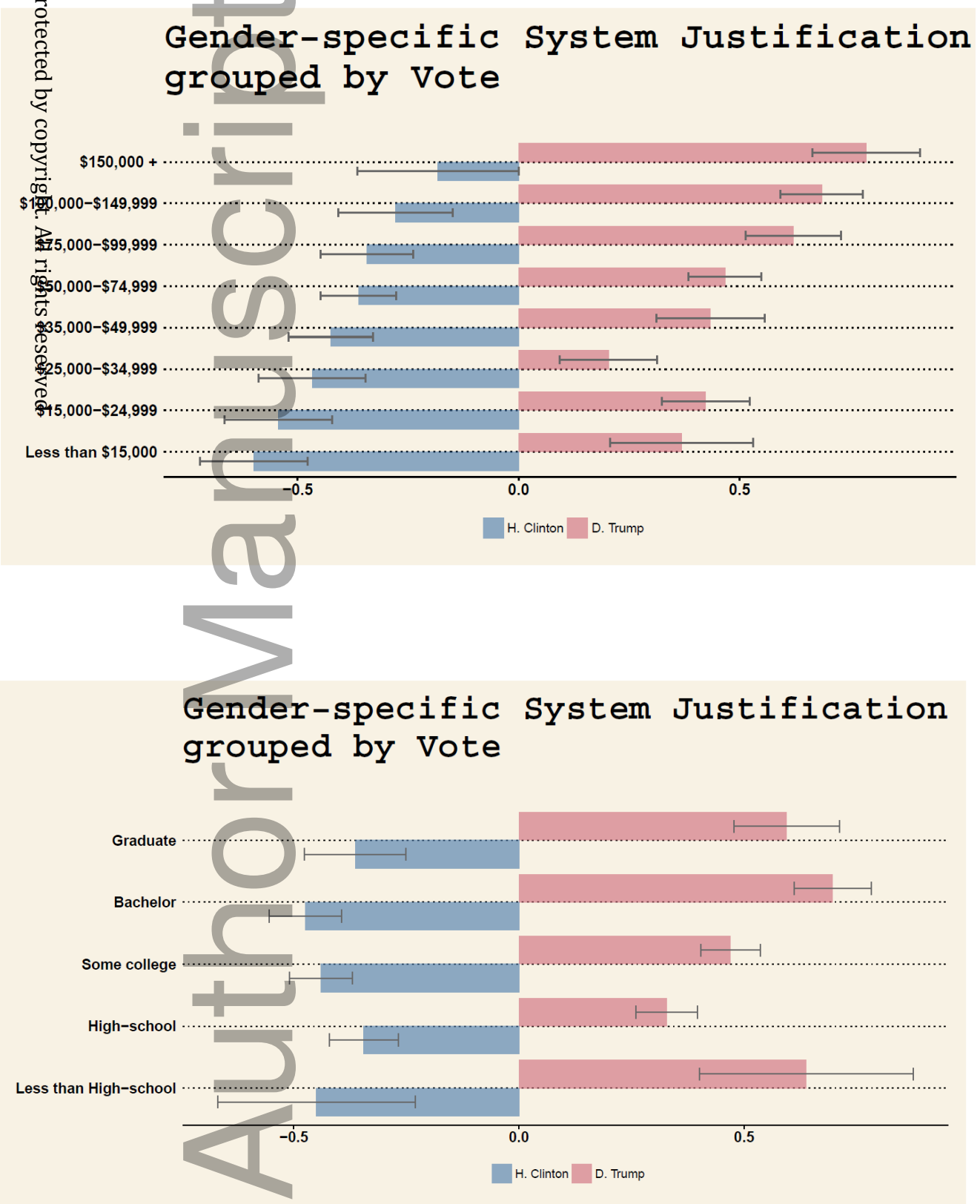
Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).

Figure 7: Correlations Between Economic System Justification and Voting Preferences in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500) at Various Levels of Income (Top) and Education (Bottom)



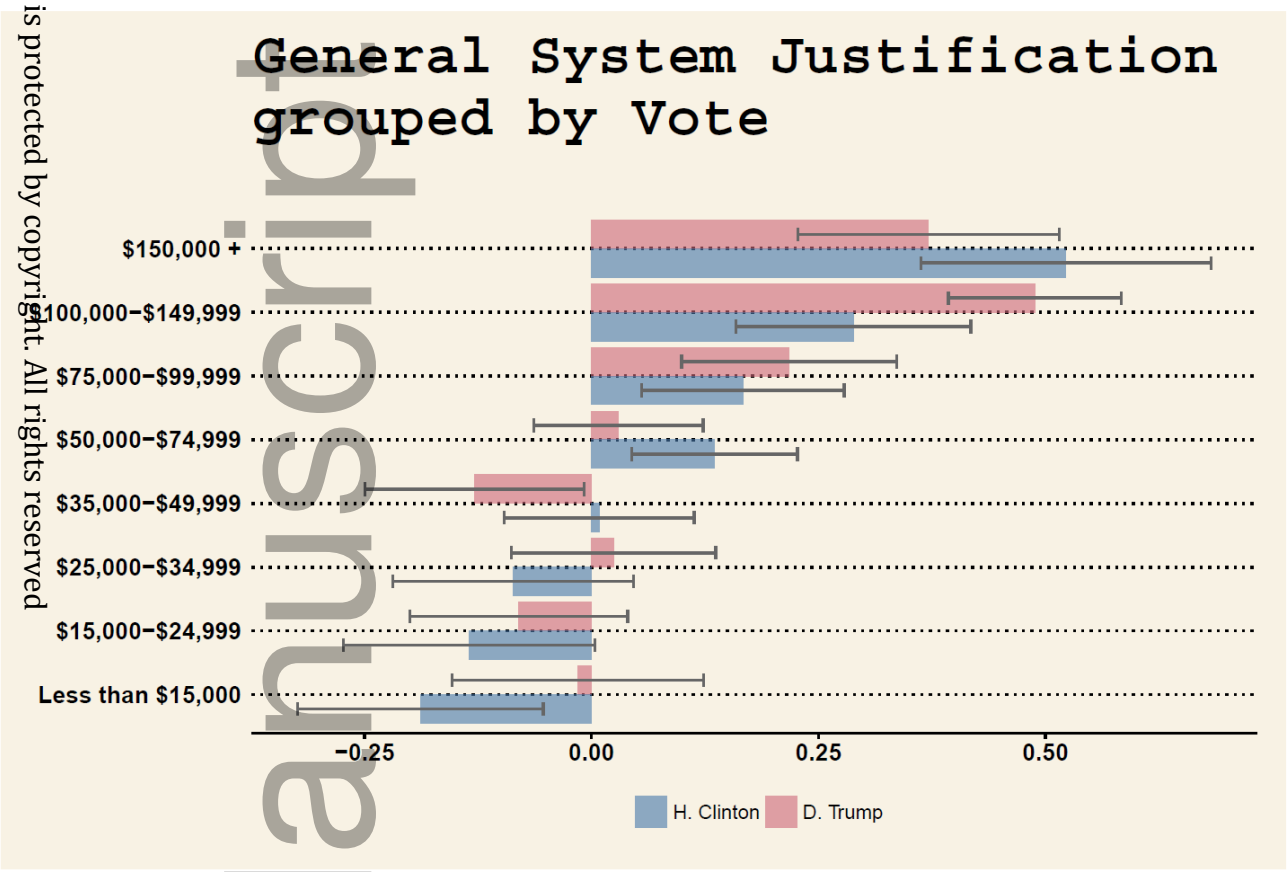
Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).

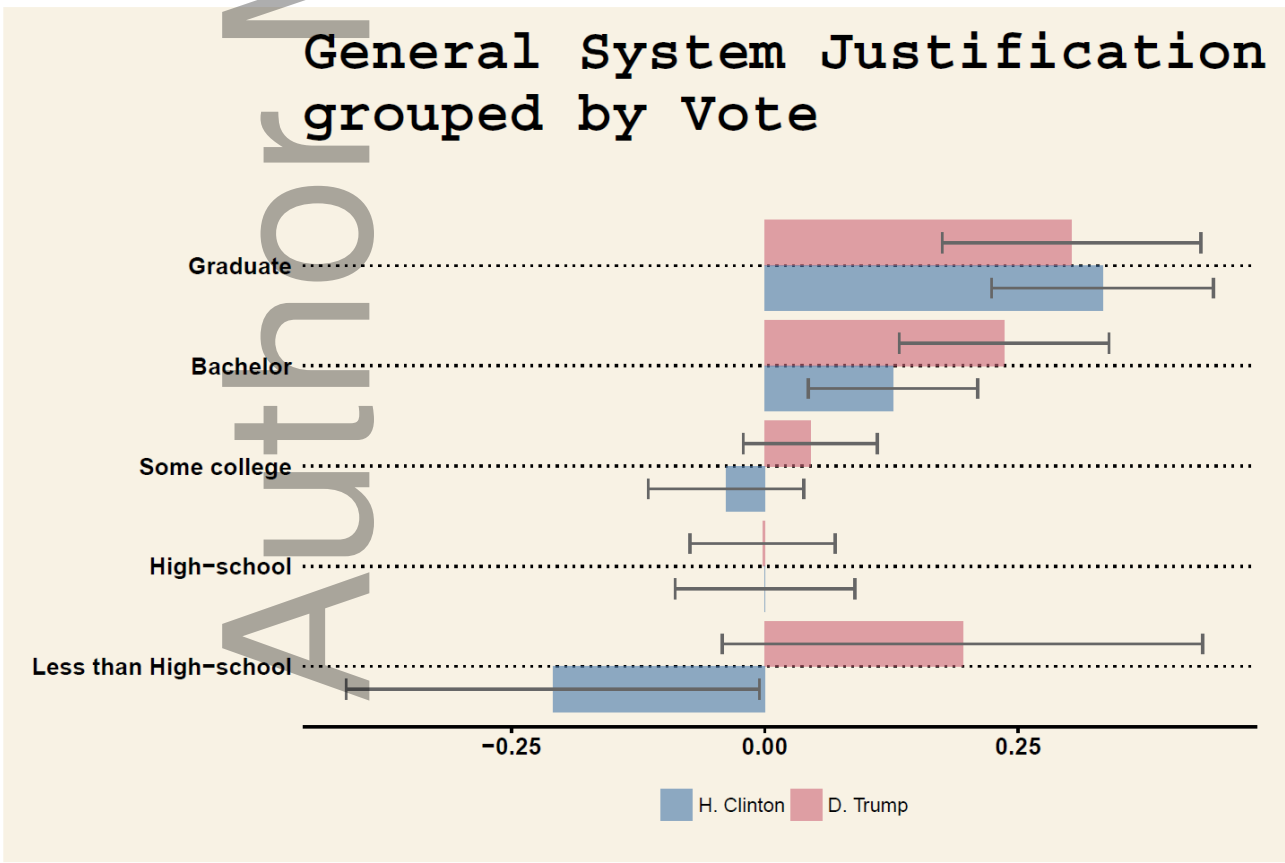
Figure 8: Correlations Between Gender-Specific System Justification and Voting Preferences in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500) at Various Levels of Income (Top) and Education (Bottom)



Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).

Figure 9: Correlations Between General System Justification and Voting Preferences in a Nationally Representative Sample of Americans Shortly Before the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (N = 1,500) at Various Levels of Income (Top) and Education (Bottom)





Source: This figure was prepared by Flávio Azevedo and is based on data from Azevedo et al. (2017).