Rage Against the Machine: The Case for System-Level Emotions

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Abstract

Although psychologists have generally conceptualized emotions in light of individual- and group-level approaches, in the current paper we propose that there are also system–level emotional events, including both *system-based emotions* (experienced as a direct or indirect consequence of system-level characteristics) and *system-targeted emotions* (reflecting evaluations that support or oppose the overarching social system). We begin by discussing how emotions are embedded in the social system and what system–level functions they serve. We draw on system justification theory to understand the reciprocal relations between emotional life and ideologies that justify or challenge social systems. We then focus on three empirical propositions concerning the dynamics of system-level emotions: (I) *System-based* emotions reflect one's subjective as well as objective standing in the social order; (II) *System-based* emotions reflect one's subjective appraisal of the social order; and (III) *System-level* emotions affect action tendencies and behaviors, including behaviors that promote system stability versus change. The investigation of system-level emotions promises to deepen our scientific understanding of the motivational dynamics of social stability and social change and to uncover the affective dimension of system justification processes. Extending the social psychological analysis of emotions to include contextual features at the level of social systems builds a much–needed bridge between emotion research in psychology and sociology.

> Social psychologists cannot fully understand emotions without examining ''macro'' structures and processes.
>
> (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001a, p. 16)

Psychologists have hitherto interpreted emotions in light of *individual* and, more recently, *group* experiences, actions, and representations (e.g., Averill, 1997; Frijda, 1986; Iyer & Leach, 2008; Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007; Tiedens, 2000, 2001). Much has been learned about the expressive and communicative functions of emotion in our species as well as the biological substrates that support such functions (e.g., Davidson, Scherer, & Goldsmith, 2003; Oatley, Keltner, & Jenkins, 2006). We wish to capitalize on these scientific advances with respect to the understanding of emotional processes in human social life to breathe new life into an old question (e.g., Brown, 1936; Gerth & Mills, 1953), namely: What is the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social order? Our analysis, which is informed by system justification theory (Jost, 2011; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004), suggests that emotions play a crucial role in justifying or challenging social systems. We build on scholarship concerning ''group-based emotions'' and ''intergroup emotions'' (e.g., Bizman, Yinon, & Krotman, 2001; Mackie, Maitner, &

Smith, 2009; E. R. Smith & Mackie, 2008) to make an analogous case for the scientific and practical significance of attending to *system-level* emotional events. In so doing, we find ourselves reaching the same conclusion as Goodwin et al. (2001a), who wrote that: ''social psychologists cannot fully understand emotions without examining 'macro' structures and processes'' (p. 16).

Emotions are Structurally Embedded in Social Systems

As it turns out, our analysis of system-level emotional events fits well with Clore and Ortony's (2008) characterization of emotions as affective-laden ''reactions to different situational structures'' (p. 632). We take additional inspiration not only from affective scientists working in psychology and neuroscience but also from sociologists and political scientists who remind us that emotions are multifaceted social (as well as individual) phenomena that are deeply embedded in the structure and operation of social systems (Barbalet, 1998; Kemper, 1991, 2006) as well as in political judgments and preferences (Groenendyk, 2011; Marcus, 2003). Gordon (1990) noted that, ''When we think of a social institution, we often think of a particular emotion associated with it'' (p. 167). Goodwin et al. (2001a), too, pointed out that emotions ''permeate large scale units of social organizations, including workplaces, neighborhood and community networks, political parties, movements, and states, as well as interactions of these units with one another'' (p. 16; see also A. R. Hochschild, 1979; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989).

Examples abound. For instance, citizens' attitudes about military authorities and decisions are tied up with anger and aggression (Tagar, Federico, & Halperin, 2011). Patriarchal systems and such institutions as marriage contribute to the perception that the experience of jealousy provides ''evidence'' of love (Clanton, 2006). The meritocratic ideology that characterizes free market capitalism may encourage individuals to feel pride following economic success and frustration and shame in response to failure (Fields, Copp, & Kleinman, 2006; p. 168). Religious institutions and organizations elicit and manage hope, fear, guilt, and a sense of control, among other emotions (Kay, Gaucher, McGregor, & Nash, 2010; Sedikides, 2010). Emotions such as guilt and shame, which are conceived of as impulse–control or self–regulation devices, are often referred to as ''moral'' emotions; in any case, they serve to maintain the stability of the status quo by increasing adherence to prescriptive norms and conventional standards (e.g., Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010).

According to a great many sociological accounts, emotional life is inextricably linked to both ''micro'' and ''macro'' social systems (Barbalet, 1998; Gordon, 1989, 1990; Ridgeway, 2006; Stets & Turner, 2008). But because most psychological theories are restricted in terms of scope to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup levels of analysis (e.g., Iyer & Leach, 2008; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), system-level emotions have received inadequate attention to date. In fact, we would suggest that many of the examples we have mentioned already have been misclassified as purely individual–or group-level emotions. Given that social, cultural, and political psychologists are committed to incorporating societal (or system) levels of analysis (Doise, 1986; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Stangor & Jost, 1997), a sophisticated, interdisciplinary analysis of system-level emotional events strikes us as overdue.

Failing to consider characteristics of social systems or structures (as well as individual and group reactions to them) makes it difficult if not impossible to understand, for instance, why some individuals feel intense anger and distress concerning the unequal distribution of income and wealth in society, whereas others are satisfied with the same unequal arrangements (Jost et al., 2012; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Napier & Jost, 2008).

Similarly, an appreciation of system-level emotions may be necessary to explain why some immigrant groups inspire warmth and admiration, whereas others inspire envy, pity, or contempt (Caprariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2003) and why some members of economically insecure groups experience shame, embarrassment, humiliation, and anxiety in response to poverty, unemployment, and job insecurity, whereas others do not (Adair, 2002; Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Fields et al., 2006; Lane, 1962; Mathew, 2010; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Newman, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009).

Gender disparities in the social system, including double-standards, power asymmetries, and structural inequalities with regard to both domestic and paid opportunities for labor, are met with an especially wide range of emotional reactions that are virtually uninterpretable in the absence of a societal or system-level analysis. These reactions include: ''paradoxical'' forms of contentfreude and depressed feelings of personal worth or entitlement (Jost, 1997; Major, 1994; Napier, Thorisdottir, & Jost, 2010); anxiety and distress concerning one's ability to attain class-based standards of fashionable appearance (Rafferty, 2011); self-objectification, self-surveillance, and body-related shame (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998), all of which are magnified by exposure to sexist, system-justifying stereotypes (Calogero & Jost, 2011); disgust concerning one's own menstrual cycle, which may be related to the internalization of sexual objectification among women (Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000; Roberts, 2004); shame and low self-esteem among victims of domestic violence (Buchbinder & Eisikovits, 2003); as well as fear, anger, and frustration in response to relationship inequity (Lively, Powell, Geist, & Steelman, 2008; Ross & Van Willigen, 1996).

In this article, we seek to develop a system-level analysis of emotions to highlight, among other things, the role of emotional processes in contributing to system-justifying as well as system-challenging behavioral outcomes (i.e., acquiescence and rebellion; see also Goodwin & Jasper, 2006). In other words, we want to understand not only when and why people are reluctant to ''upset the apple cart'' but also when and why they are prone to ''rage against the machine.'' The guiding idea is that emotional experience both affects and is affected by objective, structural characteristics and subjective perceptions of the social order (see also Gerth & Mills, 1953; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001b; Goodwin et al., 2001a; Gordon, 1990). In what follows, we first introduce a taxonomy that may be useful for understanding social psychological phenomena, such as emotions, that may involve interactions among multiple levels of analysis; next, we briefly summarize the key assumptions of system justification theory, which partially motivates our interest in system-based emotions; afterward, we advance three specific propositions concerning the nature of the relationship between the emotions of individuals and groups and the social systems in which they operate.

Taxonomy of Levels of Analysis for the Investigation of Emotion

According to Stangor and Jost (1997), social psychologists—whether they realize it or not—routinely investigate phenomena that involve three distinct levels of analysis, namely individual, group, and system levels of analysis. Adopting an individual level of analysis is to seek explanations (in this case, of emotional events) in terms of unique properties of the individual, such as personal experiences, cognitive appraisals, or physiological states (Davidson et al., 2003; Ortony et al., 1988). A group level of analysis seeks explanations in terms of characteristics of one or more groups to which an individual belongs, as when soccer fans experience *Schadenfreude* (malicious pleasure) when a hated rival team loses

(Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003). A system level of analysis, by contrast, focuses on explanations in terms of characteristics of the overarching social system, which typically involve a multiplicity of individuals and groups, as well as reactions to the system based on ideology and culture.

Prototypical negative, system–level emotions are Kafkaesque; they include anxiety, frustration, guilt, shame, fear or dread elicited by oppressive government, bureaucratic injustice, economic exploitation, massive unemployment, or an unstable political system. More positive, system–level emotions might include satisfaction and contentment associated with stable, just, and fair social institutions, as well as patriotic forms of pride and honor and the kind of joy and elation that accompanies the successful culmination of a political protest, revolution, or military intervention or the collapse of a dictatorship. The general idea is that it is possible to identify emotions that are either *elicited by* or *directed toward* some aspect of the social system. Thus, Goodwin et al. (2001a) cite ''[m]oral outrage over feared practices, [...] the indignation of perceived encroachment on traditional rights, the joy of imagining a new and better society and participating in a movement toward that end.'' They point out that these emotions ''are related to moral institutions, felt obligations and rights, and information about expected effects'' (p. 13).

In addition to serving as the source of social psychological effects, the individual, group, and system levels may also be used to specify objects or targets of emotion. Thus, an individual, group, or social system may give rise to various positive or negative affective reactions that are directed at individuals, groups, and systems. This formulation results in the identification of nine distinct relational paths, which are illustrated in Figure 1 (see Stangor & Jost, 1997). Most research in social psychology addressing the effects of intergroup hierarchies or perceived injustice on emotions is derived from *group-level* perspectives associated with theories of social identification and relative deprivation (e.g., Kessler et al., 2010; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Accordingly, reviews of the research literature on emotions have focused exclusively on individual– and group–level effects, to the exclusion of system–level effects (e.g., see Iyer & Leach, 2008; Kaiser & Major, 2004; Mackie et al., 2008; E. R. Smith & Mackie, 2008; Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009).
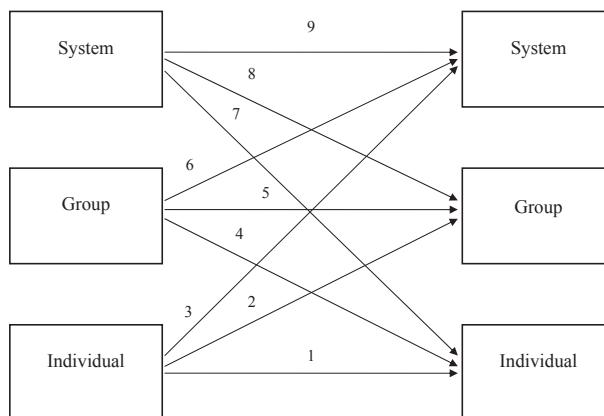
Figure 1   Individual, Group, and System Levels of Analysis (Causes and Effects). *Note*. This illustration is adapted from Stangor and Jost (1997, p. 341).

From our perspective, previous work has mischaracterized certain emotions, such as ''moral outrage'' directed at the system as a path 5 (group to group) rather than path 6 (group to system) phenomenon, effectively treating anger associated with the ingroup (or the outgroup) as identical to anger associated with the system (such as the government). This is a potential problem, given that – as Clore and Huntsinger (2009) point out – ''the nature and impact of affective reactions depends largely on their objects'' (p. 50). To take one example, a study of British university students by Iyer, Schmader, and Lickel (2007) revealed that anger directed at the British government predicted advocacy for the withdrawal of military forces from Iraq, whereas anger directed at the British people and the American government did not.

Previous conceptual schemes and literature reviews have largely ignored system-based reactions seen in paths 7, 8, and 9 – in some cases simply reducing them to path 4 and 5 effects under the overly inclusive category of ''group-based emotions''[1] (e.g., see Iyer & Leach, 2008). Kaiser and Major (2004), for example, classify phenomena such as internalization of inferiority (e.g., African American children preferring White dolls over Black dolls) and Jewish anti-Semitism as examples of ''individual'' and ''collective'' self-directed emotions, respectively. While such categorization is not necessarily inaccurate, neglecting the societal or system-level origins of self- and/or ingroup-derogation (and outgroup favoritism) obscures the fact that such phenomena also reflect a tacit (ideological) acquiescence to the status quo (e.g., see Jost, 2011, pp. 239-243). Indeed, outgroup favoritism exhibited by members of disadvantaged groups, such as African Americans, gay men, and lesbians, increases with the endorsement of system-justifying beliefs (Ashburn–Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Jost et al., 2004). Unless researchers explicitly attend to system-level effects, they will also ignore the possibility that factors such as economic and gender inequality in society affect citizens' social beliefs, levels of happiness, and the relationship between the two (e.g., Napier & Jost, 2008; Napier et al., 2010).

Emotions research in the social identity tradition tends to be predicated on the assumption that salient ingroup identification is a necessary prerequisite for experiencing ''intergroup emotions,'' which are linked to intergroup behavior (e.g., E.R. Smith & Mackie, 2008). We agree that there are many circumstances in which individuals possess certain affective reactions *because* of their group memberships, and knowingly so (e.g., feeling *Schadenfreude* when a rival team loses). At the same time, we believe that many emotions that are derived from or directed at prevailing social systems occur without conscious recognition of any group membership at all. For instance, one need not identify as a ''capitalist'' or ''anti-capitalist'' to feel strong emotions in response to stock market volatility, Wall Street bailouts, or protests at meetings of the World Trade Organization. Such reactions are quite likely moderated by structural characteristics of the political and economic systems as well as by ideological factors that may or may not be accessible to conscious introspection. Focusing exclusively on ''intergroup emotions'' could foster an ''us'' versus ''them'' analysis that misses, among other things, the myriad ways in which members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups collaborate, often unwittingly, in the perpetuation of the status quo (see Jost, 2011). It was precisely to remedy the neglect of system-level processes such as these that Jost and Banaji (1994) proposed system justification theory, to which we now turn.

System Justification Theory: Key Assumptions

Our conception of system-level emotions is derived in part from system justification theory, which offers a social-cognitive analysis of the individual's motivation to defend and

justify extant social systems (Jost et al., 2004, 2010). In the first statement of the theory, Jost and Banaji (1994) distinguished among ego-, group-, and system-justifying motives and discussed their distinctive implications for attitudes and behavior. Whereas ego justification serves to protect and enhance a positive self-image, group justification motivates individuals to develop and maintain a positive group image. The system justification motive, by comparison, serves to defend a positive image of the social system as legitimate and desirable (e.g., Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003b).

System justification theory suggests that, just as individuals are motivated to defend and rationalize their own actions and interests and those of the groups to which they belong, they are also motivated to defend and rationalize the social, economic, and political systems on which they depend. As Parsons (1951) noted, ''Any system of interactive relationships of a plurality of individual actors is a social system'' (p. 26). Thus, for our purposes, social systems exist not only on a large-scale as national, economic, and political institutions or arrangements, but also on a small-scale as dyads, families, and popularity cliques at school and work (Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer, 2011). An important tenet of system justification theory is that many commonly held stereotypes, rationalizations, and ideologies serve the *palliative* function of reducing negative affect (including moral outrage), thereby maintaining one's contentment with the status quo and obviating the demand for social change (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Rankin, Jost, & Wakslak, 2009; Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007).

According to system justification theory, then, members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups alike contribute to system justification by actively embracing and promulgating aspects of the ''dominant ideology,'' which tends to favor the interests of advantaged group members and the preservation of the status quo (Jost, 2011; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). It follows that the three motives (ego, group, and system justification) are generally consistent and complementary to one another for those who are advantaged by the social system, but they are in potential contradiction for those who are disadvantaged (Jost & Thompson, 2000). Thus, despite short-term palliative benefits, members of disadvantaged groups who embrace system-justifying belief systems may experience long-term conflict or ambivalence about themselves and their fellow group members (Jost & Burgess, 2000; O'Brien & Major, 2005). This helps to explain why members of disadvantaged (versus advantaged) groups exhibit less favorable attitudes about themselves and their own groups, especially on indirect, implicit measures (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2003; Dasgupta, 2004; Jost et al., 2004; Rudman, Feinberg, & Fairchild, 2002).

Characteristics of System–Level Emotions

In line with the theoretical distinctions among ego, group, and system justification motives, we propose that individuals can experience emotions not only on the basis of individual and group-level concerns – as noted by E. R. Smith et al. (2007) and Mackie et al. (2009) – but also on the basis of *system*-level processes (cf. Jost, 2011). Drawing on the conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1, we distinguish between two types of system-level emotions, namely *system-based* emotions and *system-targeted* emotions. We define system-based emotions as those emotions that are experienced as a direct or indirect result of subjective or objective system-level characteristics. Such a definition includes but is not restricted to those emotions arising from system justification motivation (as well as motivation to reform or overthrow the system). The emotion, in other words, is triggered by aspects of the social system or structural context (i.e., paths 7, 8, and 9).

System-targeted emotions, on the other hand, may originate on the basis of individual, group-, or system-level events or attributes. What they have in common is the *object* of emotion, namely, the social system (i.e., paths 3, 6, and 9). ''Rage against the machine'' (i.e., moral outrage directed at the government or institutions such as Capitalism or Communism) exemplifies system-targeted emotion. Because a system level of analysis is distinct from and as informative as individual and group levels of analyses (Doise, 1986; Stangor & Jost, 1997), an analysis of system-level emotions promises to sharpen our understanding of reciprocal interactions between the emotional life of the individual, on one hand, and social systems, orders, and ideologies, on the other. Here we focus on three empirical propositions on which to build a scientific analysis of system-level emotional events.

Proposition I: System-based emotions reflect standing in the social order

Sociologists have observed that emotions, like other social resources, are distributed unequally across various social strata (e.g., Barbalet, 1998; Clark, 1990; Collett & Lizardo, 2010; Ridgeway, 2006; Stets & Turner, 2008; Thoits, 1989). As Gordon (1990) put it, ''a person's position in a social structure (class, gender, generational membership, etc.) determines the type, frequency, and intensity of emotions that will be directed to the person or aroused in him or her'' (p. 161). This observation is highly compatible with insights gleaned from psychological studies of status and power differences. Individuals and groups differing in social status or power tend to experience qualitatively different emotional states (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Tiedens, 2000, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2008). For instance, men report that they typically feel more ''dominant'' emotions (such as anger), whereas women report that they typically feel more ''submissive'' emotions (such as sadness and fear; see Fischer, Mosquera, Van Vianen, & Manstead, 2004; Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayni, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998). In addition, individuals who are reminded of a prior experience in which they were high (versus low) in power become less empathic and less accurate in perceiving the emotions of others (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). Thus, our first proposition is that system-based emotions reflect one's subjective as well as objective standing in the social order.[2]

Consistent with this proposition, Jost, Wakslak, and Tyler (2008) described the results of an extremely engaging ''Star Power'' simulation of social interaction and economic exchange in the context of a hierarchical social system in which groups differed simultaneously in status, power, and privilege. Unbeknownst to participants, early (randomly determined) advantages were perpetuated and magnified as a result of the experimenters' machinations. For example, members of the dominant group were secretly allowed to draw trading chips from a bag that was enriched with valuable chips, much as privileged groups in society enjoy better access to educational, professional, and financial opportunities. Some individual mobility – both upward and downward – was allowed to occur in the system. In general, however, the most advantaged group maintained a strong hegemony and introduced rule changes that turned out to be self-, group-, and system-serving.

It was hypothesized that creating a system of relatively arbitrary inequality among peers (in this case, business school students) would lead individual to experience some level of emotional distress – but the forms of distress would differ at least somewhat as a function of standing in the social order. More specifically, the most advantaged group was expected to feel more satisfaction but also more guilt than less advantaged groups,
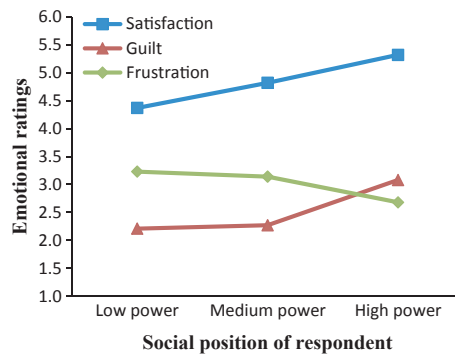
Figure 2 Emotional Ratings Made by Those Occupying Low, Medium, and High Power Positions in the ''Star Power'' Study. *Note.* The data for this figure are taken from Study 1 of Jost et al. (2008). Participants, all of whom possessed a minimum of 3 years professional work experience, were 179 first-year MBA students (two-thirds of whom were male) in a prestigious U.S. business school. Data were pooled from 10 different sessions conducted in business school classrooms.

whereas the most disadvantaged group was expected to feel more frustration and anger than more advantaged groups (e.g., Barbalet, 1998; Branscombe, 1998; Gurr, 1970; J. L. Hochschild, 1981; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973). As can be seen in Figure 2, these predictions were supported by the results of the "Star Power" simulation.

Future research would do well to explore strategies of emotional self-regulation on the part of individuals and groups that differ in terms of status, power, and privilege. Some evidence suggests that members of minority (versus majority) groups are more likely to engage in a "suppression" strategy (Gross & John, 2003). This is an especially suggestive finding, insofar as emotional suppression is negatively associated with self-esteem, self-acceptance, personal growth, environmental mastery, and a sense of autonomy and purpose in life (Gross & John, 2003), and it is positively associated with uncertainty avoidance and power distance at the cultural level (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Emotional suppression is also associated with a decreased desire to participate in collective protest (Gill & Matheson, 2006). Taken in conjunction, the studies summarized in this section indicate that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups not only experience and express different emotions but may feel social pressure to differentially regulate their emotional lives.

Proposition II: System-based emotions reflect appraisals of the social order

The "Star Power" study described by Jost et al. (2008) provided an opportunity to test an additional hypothesis, namely that emotional distress arising from inequality among peers would be attenuated by the endorsement of system–justifying ideologies, including beliefs that the system is fair, legitimate, and meritocratic (e.g., Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003a; Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005; Jost et al., 2003b; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Napier & Jost, 2008). Results revealed that agreement with system–justifying state-ments about the rules and procedures of the game was associated with (a) increased satis-faction for members of all three groups, (b) decreased frustration for members of the medium and low power groups, and (c) decreased guilt for members of the most power-ful group. Furthermore, system justification endorsement was associated with decreased negative affect and increased positive affect (in general) for the most powerful group.

(Similar but weaker patterns emerged for members of the other two groups with respect to general affect.) Although these findings are based on correlational analyses, they are consistent with the notion that system–justifying ideologies serve a palliative function, enabling individuals to cope with the types of emotional distress elicited by a hierarchical social order. They are also consistent with our second proposition, which is that system-based emotions reflect one's subjective (i.e., ideological) appraisal of the social order.

Because some participants in the "Star Power" study answered the system justification items before the emotion items, whereas others completed the questionnaires in the reverse order, it was also possible to test the hypothesis that providing people with an opportunity to engage in system justification would make them feel better about the system. Jost et al. (2008) found that the opportunity to system justify did predict emotional ratings for members of the most powerful group, but not for the low or medium power groups. More specifically, members of the dominant group reported less frustration and (nonsignificantly) less guilt after endorsing the system justification items than before. An experimental study by Wakslak et al. (2007) provided an even more direct test of the hypothesis that system justification alleviates emotional distress. High SES participants were either exposed to a high system justification mindset prime (by reading "rags-to-riches," Horatio Alger-type stories) or not. Results revealed that random assignment to the high (versus low) system justification condition brought about significant reductions in general negative affect and moral outrage (with respect to injustice and inequality in society), consistent with the notion that system justification serves a palliative function.

Jost and Kramer (2003) pointed out that emotionally relevant reactions to social, economic, and political systems can range from extreme paranoia to more moderate forms of suspicion or distrust and feelings of support and legitimacy to extreme forms of idealization – such as Dr. Pangloss' immortal incantation that we are living "in this best of all possible worlds" (Voltaire, 1758/1947, p. 144). Individual variability within this range from paranoia to idealization (which are not themselves emotions, but nevertheless clearly do possess emotional aspects and implications) can be predicted on the basis of chronic and temporary levels of system justification motivation. For instance, Crocker, Luhtanen, Broadnax, and Blaine (1999) found that African Americans who endorsed a strong "system–blame" ideology were far more likely than those who did not to subscribe to various conspiracy theories about the U.S. government's role in perpetuating racial inequality (see also Goertzel, 1994). At the other end of the spectrum, individuals who engage in system justification (and self-deception) are more likely than others to believe that economic exchanges in capitalist markets are not only efficient but also fair and just; individuals who subscribe to "fair market ideology" also tend to downplay the significance of ethical scandals involving business corporations (Jost et al., 2003a). This brings us to our third proposition.

*Proposition III: System-level emotions affect action tendencies and behaviors*

Sociological theories of protest and rebellion, especially those influenced by relative deprivation theory, stress the role of emotions such as frustration, anger, and moral outrage in motivating participation in social movements (e.g., Barbalet, 1998; Goodwin et al., 2001b; Gurr, 1970; Jasper, 1998). Indeed, such emotions are among the strongest predictors of support for collective action in social psychological research (Jost & Kay, 2010; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Van Zomeren et al., 2004). There is, in fact, a good deal of evidence to support the proposition that system–based emotions affect system-relevant action tendencies and behaviors, including behaviors that promote system change versus stability (e.g., Becker, Tausch, & Wagner, 2011; Brown & Pickerill, 2009;

Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Nepstad & Smith, 2001; Smith, Cronin, & Kessler, 2008; Thomas et al., 2009; Tiedens, 2000). To take just one example, Wakslak et al. (2007) not only found that inducing a system justification mind-set reduced negative affect and moral outrage, as mentioned above, but also that the reduction in moral outrage was associated with a withdrawal of support for redistributive policies (e.g., willingness to donate money to or volunteer assistance to a soup kitchen, job training program, or after-school tutoring for disadvantaged children).

Jost et al. (2012) conducted a series of experiments to investigate the role of system justification processes (and system-level emotions) in sapping commitment to collective forms of protest, even among political activists. For example, consider Greek opponents of a national pension bill that sought to increase the age at which Greek citizens would have the right to draw a state pension. A study of May Day protestors revealed that those who were primed with a system-justifying, complementary ("poor but happy") stereotype exemplar exhibited less anger at the government and less willingness to protest in comparison with those who were primed with a noncomplementary ("poor but unhappy") stereotype exemplar. Conversely, a study involving members of a British teachers' union revealed that those who were primed with a "system-rejecting" mindset exhibited decreased anger at the government, decreased system justification, increased identification with the union, and increased willingness to protest. The effect of system justification on support for nondisruptive forms of protest was mediated by anger at the government, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Concluding Remarks

To date psychologists have refrained from explicitly analyzing the reciprocal linkages between social structural processes and emotional experiences, restricting their attention instead to individual- and group-level conceptions of emotions (e.g., Iyer & Leach, 2008;
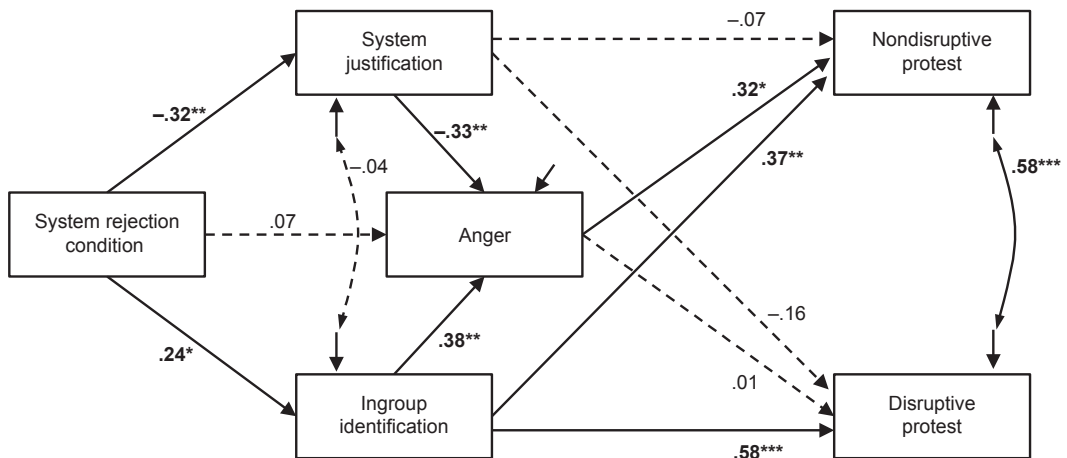
Figure 3 Path Model Illustrating the Effects of Assignment to the System Rejection (versus Control) Condition on System Justification, Ingroup Identification, Anger at the Government, and Willingness to Protest. *Note.* Data for this figure are taken from Study 3 of Jost et al. (2012), Figure 1. Numerical entries are standardized regression weights for the full model. Broken lines indicate nonsignificant paths ($p > .10$). Bootstrapping analyses revealed that system justification and ingroup identification mediated the effect of assignment to the system rejection condition on anger at the government. In addition, anger at the government mediated the effects of system justification and ingroup identification on nondisruptive protest. $*p \leq .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Smith & Mackie, 2008). Emboldened by recent sociological contributions (e.g., Goodwin & Jasper, 2006), we have made the case in this article that social psychologists would be well-served to address *system-based* emotions, which are experienced by individuals as a consequence of subjective and objective system-level characteristics, as well as *system-targeted* emotions, which include positive or negative affective responses toward the social system as a whole. Drawing on empirical highlights from a variety of research traditions and approaches, we have proposed that individuals not only experience emotions arising from individual and group processes, but also those connected to system-level processes, including ideological tendencies to justify or criticize the social order (e.g., Jost et al., 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012). In the long run, our hope is that the concept of system–level emotions may build a much-needed bridge between emotion research in psychology that largely ignores the effects of social structural variables on emotional experience on one hand, and sociological research on emotions that identifies connections between social structures and emotions without adequately integrating cognitive, motivational, and physiological processes, on the other.

The notion that emotions are embedded in social systems has important ramifications for research on emotion regulation. For one thing, individuals may adopt qualitatively different strategies to regulate their emotions on the basis of system- (versus individual- and group-) level affective concerns. For another, past research suggests that cognitive reappraisal is an especially healthy strategy for regulating one's emotions (see John & Gross, 2004 for a review), but investigators have not adequately considered the possibility that some forms of reappraisal (e.g., justification or rationalization of inequality) may have detrimental effects for those who are disadvantaged by the status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Thus, analyzing emotions in light of system- (as well as individual- and group-) level concerns will not only inform the study of intergroup relations and political psychology, but also theory and research on emotion and emotion regulation.

We have focused on three empirical propositions concerning the dynamics of system-based emotions, namely: (I) *System-based* emotions reflect one's standing in the social order; (II) *System-based* emotions reflect one's subjective appraisal of the social order; and (III) *System-level* emotions affect system–relevant action tendencies and behaviors. If we are correct, system-level emotions not only reflect subjective and objective characteristics of social systems but also contribute in important ways to psychological and ideological processes of either idealizing and justifying or rejecting and challenging the status quo. By extending the social psychological analysis of emotions to include contextual features of social, economic, and political systems, it will be possible to deepen our scientific understanding of the motivational dynamics that contribute to social stability and social change. It may be that no other issue at the intersection of sociology and psychology is as timely and societally relevant as this one: From the ''Arab spring'' to the surprisingly rapid spread of the ''Occupy Wall Street'' movement, 2011 was a banner year for insurgency and the expression of ''rage against the machine.'' *Time* magazine, for instance, identified ''the protestor'' as its ''person of the year'' in 2011. Armed with a more fine-grained analysis of system–based and system-targeted emotions, social scientists may be in a better position to see the next round of rebellion before it comes.

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Short Biographies

Nevin Solak is a Ph.D. student in social psychology at Middle East Technical University, Turkey and a visiting TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) scholar at New York University. Her research interests focus on how the system justification motive affects system–level emotions and emotion regulation processes, and how these emotions contribute to either system–justifying or system–challenging responses. Furthermore, she is interested in the social psychological dynamics and societal implications of poverty and unemployment.

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Endnotes

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[1] In addition to distinguishing group-level emotions from system-level emotions, we think that it would be useful to distinguish group-based emotions (paths 4–6) from group-*targeted* emotions (paths 2, 5, and 8). Presently, these are all treated simply as ''group-based emotions'' in the social psychological literature.

[2] There is evidence that lay theories of emotion and social structure include some awareness of this proposition (e.g., see Conway, Di Fazio, & Mayman, 1999). For instance, Tiedens, Ellsworth, and Mesquita (2000) showed that when participants read about an angry individual they assume that he or she occupies high status and when they read about a sad individual they assume that he or she is low in social status. Similarly, Mondillion et al. (2005) found that participants believe that powerful persons are more likely to experience ''dominant'' emotions (such as anger, contempt, and pride) and less likely to experience ''submissive'' emotions (such as sadness, fear, and embarrassment). Most disturbingly, Tiedens (2001) reported that an individual who exhibits anger is thought to *deserve* more status than one who exhibits sadness.

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