Psychological Science

Moral Outrage Mediates the Dampening Effect of System Justification on Support for Redistributive Social Policies

Cheryl J. Wakslak, John T. Jost, Tom R. Tyler and Emmeline S. Chen

The online version of this article can be found at:

Published by:

$SAGE

http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

ɑps
ASSOCIATION FOR
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Association for Psychological Science

Additional services and information for *Psychological Science* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://pss.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://pss.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

Research Article

Moral Outrage Mediates the Dampening Effect of System Justification on Support for Redistributive Social Policies

Cheryl J. Wakslak, John T. Jost, Tom R. Tyler, and Emmeline S. Chen

New York University

ABSTRACT—*To understand how and why people tolerate ongoing social and economic inequality, we conducted two studies investigating the hypothesis that system justification is associated with reduced emotional distress and a lack of support for helping the disadvantaged. In Study 1, we found that the endorsement of a system-justifying ideology was negatively associated with moral outrage, existential guilt, and support for helping the disadvantaged. In Study 2, the induction of a system-justification mind-set through exposure to "rags-to-riches" narratives decreased moral outrage, negative affect, and therefore intentions to help the disadvantaged. In both studies, moral outrage (outward-focused distress) was found to mediate the dampening effect of system justification on support for redistribution, whereas existential guilt (Study 1) or negative affect in general (Study 2; inward-focused distress) did not. Thus, system-justifying ideology appears to undercut the redistribution of social and economic resources by alleviating moral outrage.*

Modern society is characterized by new and dramatic forms of social and economic inequality. One eighth of Americans, for example, live below the poverty line, while the combined net worth of the 400 wealthiest Americans exceeds $1 trillion. A CEO now earns in a day and a half what the typical employee takes home in a year (Mishel, Bernstein, & Allegretta, 2005). Although some countries are more egalitarian than the United

Address correspondence to John T. Jost, Department of Psychology, New York University, 6 Washington Pl., Room 578, New York, NY 10003-6634, e-mail: john.jost@nyu.edu.

States, the distribution of wealth is skewed everywhere, with a small percentage of the population controlling most of the wealth (Wolff, 1996). These economic facts raise an important social psychological question: Why do so many people tolerate—and even celebrate—a system that benefits relatively few at the expense of the majority?

Social-justice research indicates that people are psychologically distressed by the presence of unjustified inequality, whether the inequality is advantageous or disadvantageous to them personally (Boll, Ferring, & Filipp, 2005; Loewenstein, Thompson, & Bazerman, 1989; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973). We (Chen & Tyler, 2001) have suggested that being privileged in a system that is seen as potentially unjust produces a nagging worry that one's outcomes may be undeserved, which can lead to feelings of guilt and negative affect (see also Hoffman, 1976). Thus, although possessing a disproportionate share of wealth and privilege generates obvious benefits for the advantaged, it also brings the cost of increased psychological discomfort. How do the privileged minority find ways of relieving their consciences and seeing their privileges as fully legitimate?

According to system-justification theory, people adopt ideologies and belief systems that serve as excuses and justifications for existing social, economic, and political arrangements at least in part to make themselves feel better about the status quo (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Kay & Jost, 2003). System-justifying ideologies—including belief systems that rationalize inequality and emphasize "rags-to-riches" themes—fulfill a palliative function (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Members of advantaged groups are generally more likely than members of disadvantaged groups to endorse ideologies that justify social and economic inequality (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Sidanius &

Pratto, 1999), although there are circumstances in which members of disadvantaged groups are especially enthusiastic supporters of the status quo, as when the salience of self-interest is low (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).

Given that most people do little to alter existing inequalities, what is it that motivates some people to press for the redistribution of income and other valued resources? Research by Montada, Schmitt, and Dalbert (1986; see also Montada & Schneider, 1989) suggests that the emotional reactions individuals have when confronted with inequality are strong predictors of whether or not they will commit to helping the disadvantaged. Certain forms of distress, most especially moral outrage, are important motivators of action designed to help the underprivileged. To the extent that system-justifying ideologies reduce emotional distress, people who either actively endorse or are passively exposed to such ideologies should be less likely to take steps to eliminate the source of that distress, that is, to directly redress the inequality (e.g., Lerner, 1980; Walster et al., 1973). As a result, the palliative effects of ideology may well lead to acquiescence and a withdrawal of support for social change and the redistribution of resources (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

In the current research program, we investigated the structure of relations among social position, ideological justification of the system, emotional distress, and support for redistributive social policies. We predicted that the endorsement of system-justifying ideologies would be associated with (a) reduced emotional distress and (b) a withdrawal of attitudinal support for redistributive social policies. In addition, we expected that the dampening effect of ideology on support for social change would be mediated by level of emotional distress. We hypothesized that system justification makes people feel better, and that because it fulfills this palliative function, it reduces the likelihood that people will provide assistance to those in need.

We investigated these hypotheses in two studies, using different methodologies and measures of emotional distress. The first study examined the association between endorsement of a system-justifying ideology and two forms of emotional distress that should be relevant to support for redistribution and social change, namely, moral outrage and existential guilt. In the second study, we examined the impact of experimentally induced system justification on negative affect and moral outrage and the effects of these forms of distress on subsequent support for redistributive social policies.

STUDY 1

In our first study, we measured socioeconomic status, ideology, emotional distress, and support for policies that benefit people disadvantaged by the system. We included two measures of emotional distress: moral outrage and existential guilt. Given earlier findings, we expected (a) socioeconomic status to be associated with the endorsement of system justification (i.e., opposition to equality) and (b) the endorsement of system justification to be associated with reduced emotional distress. We also hypothesized that emotional distress would be positively associated with support for policies that seek to redress social inequality.

Method

Subjects and Procedure
One-hundred eight undergraduates (82 women, 26 men) participated in Study 1. They completed questionnaires concerning (a) ideology, (b) emotional distress, (c) support for policies aimed at redesigning job-hiring or college admissions practices to help the disadvantaged, and (d) demographic information.

Measures
Income. Socioeconomic status was measured in terms of self-reported annual family income. Subjects were asked to indicate which of 12 categories ranging from "under $20,000" to "over $220,000" described their family income.

Endorsement of System-Justifying Ideology. We measured subjects' endorsement of a system-justifying ideology with the 8-item Opposition to Equality subscale ($\alpha = .91$) of Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle's (1994) Social Dominance Orientation scale (see Jost & Thompson, 2000).

Emotional Distress. We employed two measures of emotional distress: (1) the moral-outrage scale of Montada et al. (1986), which included 10 items tapping feelings of distress over injustice and inequality (e.g., "I feel really angry when I learn about people who are suffering from injustice"; $\alpha = .90$), and (2) Hoffman's (1976) existential-guilt scale, which included 12 items gauging feelings of guilt concerning privilege (e.g., "It really bothers me when I learn that someone has made a special exception for me"; $\alpha = .82$).

Support for Redistribution of Resources. We assessed attitudinal support for policies of redistribution by asking subjects how much they favored introducing changes designed to help members of underrepresented groups gain jobs or university admission (e.g., "Private universities should send recruiters to poor neighborhoods to give people who are less advantaged an opportunity to apply for higher education"). Subjects indicated on a 6-point scale how strongly they disagreed (1) or agreed (6) with each item. Ten items each addressed employment in the federal government ($\alpha = .82$), nongovernmental employment opportunities ($\alpha = .82$), educational opportunities at private universities ($\alpha = .86$), and educational opportunities at public universities ($\alpha = .82$).

TABLE 1

Correlation Matrix of the Variables in Study 1, With Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Income	—							
2. Opposition to equality	.25*	—						
3. Guilt	.08	−.40**	—					
4. Moral outrage	−.17	−.68**	.51**	—				
5. RFED	−.23*	−.46**	.25**	.52**	—			
6. RBUS	−.14	−.43**	.26**	.49**	.87**	—		
7. RPRIV	−.24*	−.44**	.16	.50**	.85**	.84**	—	
8. RPUB	−.20*	−.36**	.15	.39**	.78**	.77**	.82**	—
Mean	5.23	2.14	3.75	4.94	3.70	3.41	3.77	3.84
SD	3.62	1.03	0.98	0.80	0.88	0.95	1.00	0.90

Note. RFED = support for redistributive social policy for federal-government employment; RBUS = support for redistributive social policy for private-company employment; RPRIV = support for redistributive social policy for private university education; RPUB = support for redistributive social policy for public university education.
*$p < .05$, $p_{rep} > .87$. **$p < .01$, $p_{rep} > .95$.

Results

Intercorrelations among the variables, as well as their means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 1. We used structural equation modeling to examine relations among socioeconomic status, system-justification strength, emotional distress, and support for redistributive social policies, which was a latent construct measured in four ways: support for redistribution in government and nongovernment jobs and in private and public university education.[1] We assessed our hypotheses using a model that specified paths from income to ideology, emotional distress, and support for redistribution; paths from ideology to emotional distress and support for redistribution; and paths from emotional distress to support for redistribution (see Fig. 1). According to generally accepted criteria (see Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 1998), a good fit can be claimed if the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom is less than 3, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .06 or below, and the comparative fit index (CFI), the nonnormed fit index (NNFI), and Bollen's (1989) incremental fit index (IFI) are .95 or higher. By all of these criteria, our model provided an excellent fit for the data, $\chi^2/df = 10.65/12$, CFI = 1.0, NNFI = 1.0, IFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .00.

Examination of individual paths revealed that endorsement of a system-justifying ideology was consistent with self-interest; that is, higher income predicted increased endorsement of a system-justifying ideology ($B = 0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $\beta = .25$, $p < .01$, $p_{rep} = .971$). Higher income also predicted increased feelings of existential guilt ($B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.025$, $\beta = .18$, $p = .05$, $p_{rep} = .915$). Results supported the palliative hypothesis: Endorsement of system justification was strongly associated with

a dampening of moral outrage ($B = −0.53$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = −.68$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} \sim 1.0$) and existential guilt ($B = −0.42$, $SE = 0.09$, $\beta = −.44$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} \sim 1.0$). Moral outrage was positively and substantially associated with support for redistribution ($B = 0.47$, $SE = 0.14$, $\beta = .41$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} = .991$), but existential guilt was not ($B = −0.03$, $SE = 0.09$, n.s.).

Furthermore, the effect of system justification on support for redistribution was mediated by moral outrage (Sobel test statistic = −3.15, $p < .01$, $p_{rep} = .987$; see Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). After adjusting for moral outrage, the direct effect of system justification on support for redistribution was not significant ($B = −0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .11$, $p_{rep} = .871$). When moral outrage was omitted from the model, system justification was significantly associated with a reduction in support for redistributive social policies ($B = −0.35$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} = .997$).

Discussion

In our first study, we found that one form of distress, moral outrage, was linked to support for redistributive measures. Endorsement of system justification was associated with reduced moral outrage and reduced existential guilt, but the latter was unrelated to support for redistributive policies. This result is consistent with research by Iyer, Leach, and Crosby (2003), who found that White guilt failed to predict support for affirmative action. These authors distinguished between emotions that are inward focused (e.g., sadness, guilt) and those that are outward focused (e.g., sympathy, anger), concluding that it is only those emotions that are outward focused that are predictive of support for redistributive policies.

The correlational nature of findings from Study 1 limits our ability to draw causal inferences about the diminishing effects of system justification on emotional distress and support for redistributive social policies. In our second study, we used

---

[1]Because of similar wording, errors from the scales measuring support for redistribution in employment opportunities were allowed to covary, as were errors from the scales pertaining to educational institutions. Additionally, we allowed the errors of our two measures of emotional distress, existential guilt and moral outrage, to covary with one another.
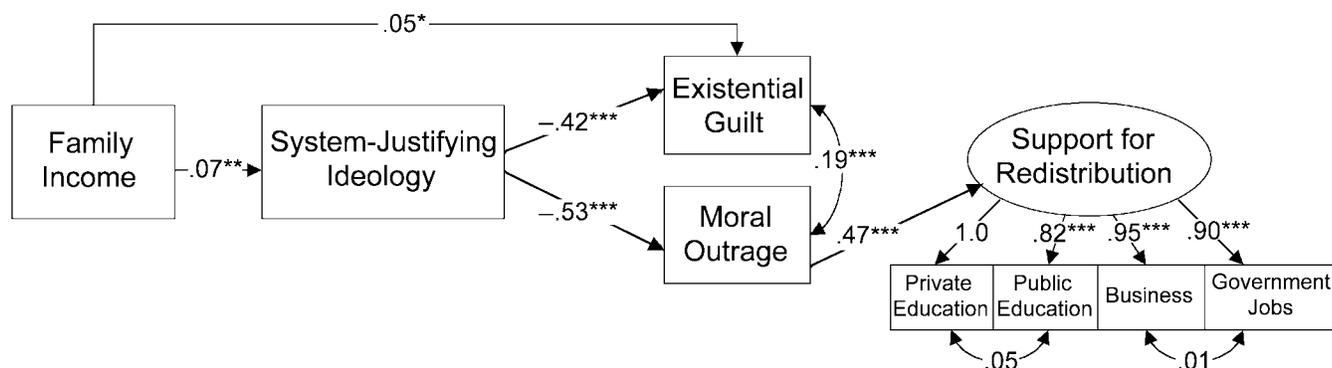
Fig. 1. Path model illustrating the effects of income and ideology on existential guilt and moral outrage and their consequences for support of redistributive social policies (Study 1). All direct effects were included in the model, but only those with significant effects are illustrated. Latent variables were created by setting the indicator with the highest loading to have a weight of 1. Path coefficients are unstandardized. Asterisks indicate significant coefficients as follows: $*p \leq .05$, $p_{rep} > .87$; $**p < .01$, $p_{rep} > .95$; $***p < .001$, $p_{rep} > .985$.

mind-set priming, randomly assigning members of an advantaged group to conditions of high versus low system justification, and then observed subsequent effects on negative emotions, as well as on policy support. We focused on the attitudes of advantaged (high-income) group members because they showed stronger system justification than low-income group members in Study 1 and because their willingness to help the disadvantaged is especially important, given their obvious ability to do so.

STUDY 2

To further investigate the ways in which system justification reduces emotional distress among the privileged, thereby undermining their motivation to help other people, we conducted an experimental study. Drawing on the work of Ho, Sanbonmatsu, and Akimoto (2002), which demonstrated that exposure to "rags-to-riches," Horatio Alger–type stories serves to increase system-justifying stereotypes and beliefs, we exposed subjects to essays that contained either rags-to-riches stories of heroic individual achievement (high system justification) or stories of innocent victims (low system justification). Afterward, subjects completed measures of affect, moral outrage, and support for community-service programs.

We hypothesized that subjects primed with a high-system-justification mind-set would report less emotional distress, in terms of both affect and moral outrage, than those primed with low system justification, controlling for baseline levels of mood and moral outrage. Whereas moral outrage should predict increased helping, we expected that inward-focused negative affect would not have this effect (Carlson & Miller, 1987; Thompson & Hoffman, 1980). In fact, negative affect could result in a reduction in prosocial activity and depressed support for programs designed to help the disadvantaged because of mood-congruency and related effects (Moore, Underwood, & Rosenhan, 1973). In the current study, we examined both forms

of emotional distress and their consequences for helping the disadvantaged.

Method

Subjects and Procedure

For preselection purposes, questions concerning family income were administered to 458 New York University students. Only those students ($n = 185$) who reported family incomes of \$100,000 or higher (above the median and mode) were invited to participate. Of these, 120 (79 women, 41 men) were successfully recruited.

Students were asked to participate in two purportedly separate studies: (a) a study concerning college admissions decisions and (b) a study of community-service attitudes. They were told that the purpose of the first study was to determine whether undergraduates would make admissions decisions similar to those of administrators and to examine whether subjects' mood would influence their admissions decisions. Before beginning the task, subjects completed an initial mood questionnaire. They were then asked to read three different personal statements that had ostensibly been written by applicants to New York University. To ensure careful reading of the essays, we asked subjects to write summaries of the essays, list strengths and weaknesses of each, and render an admissions decision. Afterward, they completed the mood questionnaire again.

Subjects were informed that the purpose of the second study was to gauge students' attitudes toward community service. Embedded in the questionnaire packet were measures of moral outrage and support for community-service programs. After completing this packet, subjects were thanked and debriefed.

Experimental Manipulation of System-Justification Condition

Subjects assigned to the high-system-justification condition read three personal statements describing instances of extraordinary personal achievement in which hard work led to success.

270

The essays were allegedly written by someone who had worked very hard to win a concerto competition, a person who had become editor of a high school newspaper against difficult odds, and a person who had become a successful business entrepreneur. In one way or another, each essay described a rags-to-riches story designed to prime a high-system-justification mindset.

Subjects assigned to the low-system-justification condition read essays recounting cases of suffering and victimization. One applicant organized a bone-marrow drive for a friend with cancer, another assisted doctors on a medical trip to a South American shantytown, and a third volunteered at a homeless shelter after having almost experienced homelessness. Thus, whereas the high-system-justification condition underscored the belief that success is a function of effort and ability, the low-system-justification condition reminded subjects that many people are unfairly disadvantaged and that being impoverished does not mean that one lacks merit or deserves to suffer.

Independent Check on the Manipulation of System Justification
To check on the manipulation of system justification without arousing suspicion or biasing experimental subjects' responses, we asked a separate sample of 44 New York University students to read either the high- or the low-system-justification essays. Afterward, they indicated the extent to which the essays supported the following statements: (a) "Hard work is rewarded by success"; (b) "People succeed when they put in a lot of effort"; (c) "Attaining success is sometimes a result of receiving help from others" (reverse-scored); and (d) "Bad things can happen to people through no fault of their own" (reverse-scored). Responses were averaged across these four items ($\alpha = .72$). As expected, students who read high-system-justification essays scored higher on the manipulation check ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.34$) than did those who read low-system-justification essays ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.64$), $t(28.22) = 3.04$ (equal variances not assumed), $p < .01$, $p_{\text{rep}} = .976$.

Measures
Affect. We assessed subjects' mood both before and after the essay manipulation using Elliot and Devine's (1994) scale for measuring unease and discomfort. Subjects responded to each of 24 emotions on scales ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all right now*) to 7 (*applies very much right now*).

An exploratory factor analysis of the 24 emotion ratings (using maximum likelihood extraction and oblique rotation) yielded four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 71.8% of the total variance.[2] The first factor comprised 6 items (*angry at self*, *disgusted with self*, *annoyed at self*, *disappointed with self*, *self-critical*, and *regretful*) that Elliot and Devine (1994) labeled NegSelf ($\alpha = .95$). The second factor contained 6

items (*content*, *friendly*, *optimistic*, *happy*, *energetic*, and *good*) that captured feelings of Satisfaction ($\alpha = .89$). The third factor included the items *guilty*, *uncomfortable*, *shame*, *uneasy*, and *embarrassed* and was labeled Guilt ($\alpha = .89$).[3] The fourth and final factor comprised 7 items (*negative*, *concerned*, *bothered*, *frustrated*, *tense*, *anxious*, and *distressed*) tapping Anxiety ($\alpha = .90$).

Moral Outrage. We administered the same scale used in Study 1 on two occasions. A baseline measure ($\alpha = .89$) was taken during the preselection phase, several weeks before the experiment. Items were administered again on the first page of the "community service questionnaire" subjects completed as part of the so-called second study ($\alpha = .85$). Subjects responded on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*), but responses were recoded so that higher scores reflected higher moral outrage.

Support for Social Programs Helping the Disadvantaged. We assessed the degree of support for six different community-service programs: an after-school tutoring program for disadvantaged children, a soup kitchen, a job training program, a crisis hotline, an adopt-a-grandparent program, and a big-brother/big-sister program. Subjects were asked how much they would support the creation of each program, volunteer for it, vote for government funding of it, and donate money to it ($\alpha = .91$).

Results
Intercorrelations among the variables, as well as their means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 2. Structural equation modeling was used to examine relations among experimentally manipulated system justification (low vs. high, coded as 0 and 1, respectively), negative affect and moral outrage (measured before and during the experiment), and willingness to support community-service programs. The four emotion factors were indicators of a latent variable of negative affect; each individual premanipulation emotion factor was allowed to covary with its corresponding postmanipulation factor. In addition, to adjust for baseline differences in general affect or moral outrage between the high- and low-system-justification conditions, the initial affect and moral-outrage variables were allowed to covary with the dummy system-justification-condition variable.

We first assessed a measurement model in which the two latent affect variables, the two moral-outrage variables, the experimental dummy variable, and the willingness-to-support-community-service-programs variable were allowed to covary. This model fit the data well, $\chi^2/df = 56.685/39$, $CFI = .982$, $IFI = .982$, $NNFI = .963$, $RMSEA = .063$.

---

[2]Inspection of the scree plot also indicated that a four-factor solution provided the best fit of the data.

[3]Five subjects had extreme scores on Guilt, NegSelf, or both. Because these subjects were outliers (± 3 interquartile-range units), they were excluded from the path model reported for this study. Analyses in which these 5 subjects were included yielded results that were similar to those reported here.

TABLE 2

Correlation Matrix of the Variables in Study 2, With Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Moral outrage (T1)	—											
2. Moral outrage (T2)	.73**	—										
3. NegSelf (T1)	.02	.01	—									
4. Guilt (T1)	−.05	−.10	.67**	—								
5. Satisfaction (T1)	.14	.22*	−.11	−.29**	—							
6. Anxiety (T1)	.04	−.08	.57**	.55**	−.31**	—						
7. NegSelf (T2)	−.00	.00	.91**	.65**	−.15	.52**	—					
8. Guilt (T2)	−.14	−.18	.62**	.86**	−.22*	.51**	.69**	—				
9. Satisfaction (T2)	.14	−.22*	−.13	−.27**	.92**	−.30**	−.17**	−.29**	—			
10. Anxiety (T2)	−.02	−.07	.58**	.50**	−.15	.83**	.58**	.56**	−.20*	—		
11. Help	.33**	.44**	−.12	−.19*	.12	−.11	.08	−.23*	.18	−.16	—	
12. SJ condition	.16	−.02	.08	.15	−.07	.06	−.00	.03	−.08	.02	−.03	—
Mean	4.83	4.46	1.79	1.57	4.60	2.36	1.70	1.51	4.49	2.21	4.95	0.50
SD	0.78	0.72	1.03	0.71	1.18	1.14	0.98	0.64	1.15	1.08	0.63	0.50

Note. Variables followed by ''(T1)'' represent baseline measures collected before the experimental manipulation; variables followed by ''(T2)'' represent measures collected after the experimental manipulation. NegSelf = negative self-directed affect; Help = support for programs helping the disadvantaged; SJ condition = system-justification condition (0 = low system justification, 1 = high system justification).
*$p < .05$, $p_{rep} > .87$. **$p < .01$, $p_{rep} > .95$.

Next, we assessed a hybrid model in which system-justification condition and the baseline measures of emotional distress (negative affect and moral outrage) were allowed to predict postmanipulation emotional distress, which was then used to predict willingness to help the disadvantaged (see Fig. 2).

Overall fit indices indicated that the model fit the data very well, $\chi^2/df = 59.380/46$, $CFI = .986$, $IFI = .987$, $NNFI = .976$, $RMSEA = .051$. A chi-square difference test between the hybrid and measurement models revealed that the more parsimonious hybrid model fit the data as well as the measurement model,
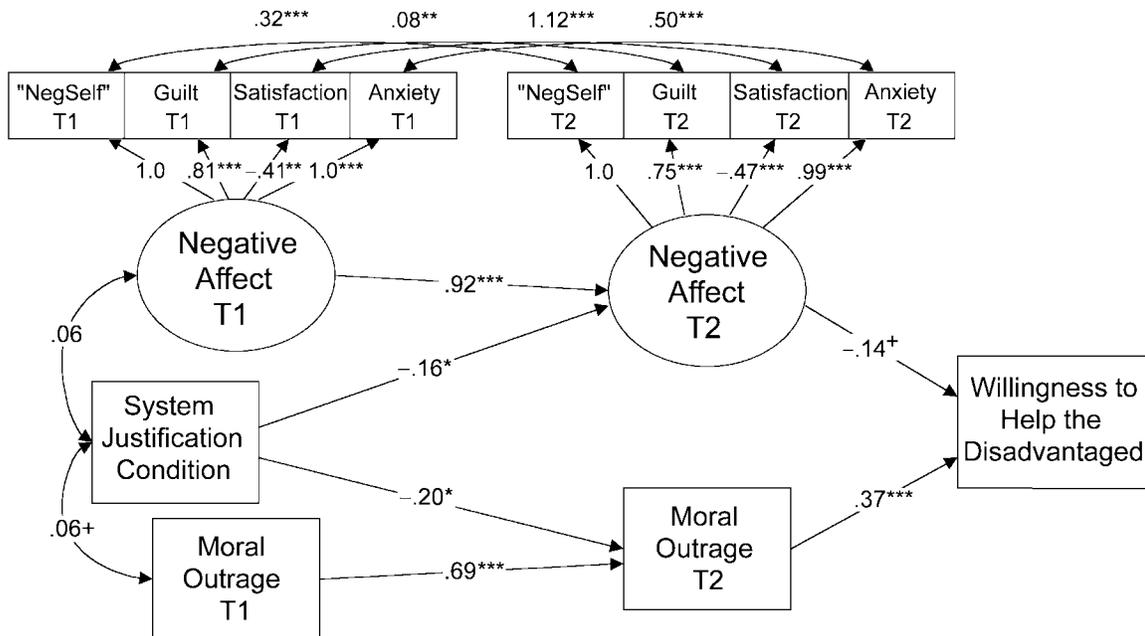

Fig. 2. Path model illustrating the effects of randomly assigned system-justification condition (high vs. low) on negative affect and moral outrage and their consequences for willingness to help the disadvantaged (Study 2). A higher score on the experimental variable (system-justification condition) reflects assignment to the high-system-justification (vs. low-system-justification) condition; higher scores on affect variables indicate higher self-reported levels of each specific affect type, including moral outrage. Latent affect variables were created by setting the indicator with the highest loading (NegSelf) to have a weight of 1. ''T1'' refers to variables measured at Time 1, and ''T2'' refers to variables measured at Time 2. Path coefficients are unstandardized, [+]$p < .10$, $p_{rep} > .81$; *$p < .05$, $p_{rep} > .87$; **$p < .01$, $p_{rep} > .95$; ***$p < .001$, $p_{rep} > .985$.

$\Delta\chi^2(7) = 2.695$, n.s. Incorporating additional structural paths, that is, allowing initial measures of emotional distress and system-justification condition to predict all subsequent variables in the model, did not improve model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 0.276$, n.s., nor were any of these additional paths significantly different from zero. Thus, the model illustrated in Figure 2 summarizes the pattern of results very well.

The model's path coefficients support our predictions. The experimental manipulation of system justification significantly decreased both negative affect ($B = -0.016$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$, $p_{rep} = .955$) and moral outrage ($B = -0.20$, $SE = 0.09$, $\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$, $p_{rep} = .942$), adjusting for baseline levels. The two types of emotional distress exerted opposite effects on support for redistribution. As before, moral outrage was positively associated with support for programs to help the disadvantaged ($B = 0.37$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = .43$, $p < .001$, $p_{rep} \sim 1.0$). By contrast, general negative affect was marginally but negatively associated with helping behavior ($B = -0.14$, $SE = 0.08$, $\beta = -.16$, $p < .10$, $p_{rep} = .891$).

Sobel tests (Kenny et al., 1998) indicated that the indirect path from system justification to helping through moral outrage was negative and significantly different from zero (Sobel test = -2.07, $p < .05$, $p_{rep} = .928$). The indirect path from system justification to helping through negative affect was positive but not significant (Sobel = 1.50). These results indicate that although system justification alleviates both forms of emotional distress, its diminishing impact on support for policies of redistribution comes through its effect on moral outrage.

Discussion

Results from the second study show that passive exposure to system justification is associated with reduced feelings of emotional distress in the form of negative affect and moral outrage. Although both were assuaged following exposure to system-justifying essays, the two types of emotion were differentially related to willingness to help the disadvantaged. As suggested in the literature (Carlson & Miller, 1987; Iyer et al., 2003; Thompson & Hoffman, 1980), when negative emotions were specifically focused on the person or group in need of aid (as in the case of moral outrage), distress was associated with increased support for helping activities. By contrast, when negative emotions were inward focused rather than outward focused, these emotions were associated with decreased support for helping activities.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The synchronous accumulation of wealth and poverty poses the biggest challenge to the legitimacy of capitalism (Habermas, 1976), and yet most people finds ways of justifying the system (see Jost et al., 2004). A key to understanding how and why people tolerate inequality comes from work on the palliative function of system-justifying ideologies such as opposition to equality and meritocratic belief systems (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Study 1 demonstrated that endorsement of opposition to equality is associated with diminished moral outrage and existential guilt, but that only moral outrage is associated with support for the redistribution of resources. Results extended the ideas of Montada et al. (1986), showing that moral outrage (an outward-focused type of emotional distress) predicted support for education and employment policies aimed at helping members of underprivileged groups, whereas existential guilt (an inward-focused emotion) did not. Thus, the dampening effect of system justification on support for helping the disadvantaged was mediated by moral outrage, but not by guilt.

In Study 2, we used measures of both inward-focused negative affect and outward-focused moral outrage to further examine the effects of ideology and emotional distress on advantaged individuals' support for redistribution. Using mind-set priming, we manipulated system justification by presenting half of the subjects with Horatio Alger, rags-to-riches stories. Results indicated that subjects exposed to high-system-justification essays reported less negative affect and less moral outrage than subjects exposed to essays that were low in system justification themes. Moral outrage again mediated the effect of system justification on support for redistribution, but general negative affect did not.

These results demonstrate both the existence of palliative consequences of ideology and their impact, supporting our previous theorizing (Chen & Tyler, 2001; Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005). We assume that people care about justice, at least to some degree, and are bothered by potential departures from fairness. In order to maintain their perceptions of the world as just, however, people do not necessarily strive to make changes that will increase the overall amount of fairness and equality in the system. Rather, they often engage in cognitive adjustments that preserve a distorted image of reality in which the world is a fair and just place (Lerner, 1980; Walster et al., 1973). Ideology, it appears, is a bountiful source of both rationalization and reassurance. It rises to meet needs that are social psychological in nature, and it provides some measure of relief. As former political dissident and eventual president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel (1991) put it, ideology creates "a bridge of excuses between the system and the individual" (p. 135). More specifically, it allows people to feel better about inequality and the myriad consequences it brings.

REFERENCES

Boll, T., Ferring, D., & Filipp, S.-H. (2005). Effects of parental differential treatment on relationship quality with siblings and parents: Justice evaluations as mediators. *Social Justice Research*, *18*, 155–182.

Bollen, K.A. (1989). A new incremental fit index for general structural equation models. *Sociological Methods and Research*, *17*, 303–316.

Carlson, M., & Miller, N. (1987). Explanation of the relation between negative mood and helping. *Psychological Bulletin*, *102*, 91–108.

Chen, E.S., & Tyler, T.R. (2001). Cloaking power: Legitimizing myths and the psychology of the advantaged. In A.Y. Lee-Chai & J. Bargh (Eds.), *The use and abuse of power: Multiple perspectives on the causes of corruption* (pp. 241–261). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Elliot, A.J., & Devine, P.G. (1994). On the motivational nature of cognitive dissonance: Dissonance as psychological discomfort. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 382–394.

Habermas, J. (1976). *Legitimation crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Havel, V. (1991). The power of the powerless. In V. Havel (Ed.), *Open letters* (pp. 125–214). London: Faber & Faber.

Ho, E.A., Sanbonmatsu, D.M., & Akimoto S.A. (2002). The effects of comparative status on social stereotypes: How the perceived success of some persons affects the stereotypes of others. *Social Cognition*, *20*, 36–57.

Hoffman, M.L. (1976). Empathy, role-taking, guilt, and development of altruistic motives. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral development: Current theory and research* (pp. 124–143). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Hu, L., & Bentler, P.M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *6*, 1–55.

Iyer, A., Leach, C.W., & Crosby, F. (2003). White guilt and racial compensation: The benefits and limits of self-focus. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *29*, 117–129.

Jost, J.T., Banaji, M.R., & Nosek, B.A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, *25*, 881–919.

Jost, J.T., & Hunyady, O. (2002). The psychology of system justification and the palliative function of ideology. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *13*, 111–153.

Jost, J.T., & Hunyady, O. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of system-justifying ideologies. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *14*, 260–265.

Jost, J.T., Pelham, B.W., Sheldon, O., & Sullivan, B. (2003). Social inequality and the reduction of ideological dissonance on behalf of the system: Evidence of enhanced system justification among the disadvantaged. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *33*, 13–36.

Jost, J.T., & Thompson, E.P. (2000). Group-based dominance and opposition to equality as independent predictors of self-esteem, ethnocentrism, and social policy attitudes among African Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *36*, 209–232.

Kay, A.C., & Jost, J.T. (2003). Complementary justice: Effects of "poor but happy" and "poor but honest" stereotype exemplars on system justification and implicit activation of the justice motive. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*, 823–837.

Kenny, D.A., Kashy, D.A., & Bolger, N. (1998). Data analysis in social psychology. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 233–265). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kline, R.B. (1998). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. New York: Guilford Press.

Lerner, M.J. (1980). *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. New York: Plenum.

Loewenstein, G.F., Thompson, L., & Bazerman, M.H. (1989). Social utility and decision making in interpersonal contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*, 426–441.

Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Allegretta, S. (2005). *The state of working America 2004/2005*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Montada, L., Schmitt, M., & Dalbert, C. (1986). Thinking about justice and dealing with one's own privileges: A study of existential guilt. In H.W. Bierhoff, R.L. Cohen, & J. Greenberg (Eds.), *Justice in social relations* (pp. 125–143). New York: Plenum Press.

Montada, L., & Schneider, A. (1989). Justice and emotional reactions to the disadvantaged. *Social Justice Research*, *3*, 313–344.

Moore, B.S., Underwood, B., & Rosenhan, D.L. (1973). Affect and altruism. *Developmental Psychology*, *8*, 99–104.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L.M., & Malle, B.F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 741–763.

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, R.A., & Hoffman, M.L. (1980). Empathy and the development of guilt in children. *Developmental Psychology*, *16*, 155–156.

Walster, E., Berscheid, E., & Walster, G.W. (1973). New directions in equity research. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *25*, 151–176.

Wolff, E.N. (1996). *Top heavy: The increasing inequality of wealth in America and what can be done about it*. New York: The New Press.