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Chapter 10
Difficulties Awakening the Sense of Injustice and Overcoming Oppression: On the Soporific Effects of System Justification

Danielle Gaucher and John T. Jost

The most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.
(Steven Biko, 1978)

Injustice fares poorly in the spotlight.
(Morton Deutsch, 1985)

Statistics suggest that injustice is rife not only in the United States, but around the world. For example, women are significantly more likely to live in poverty than are men (Christopher, England, Phillips, & Smeeding, 2002), Blacks still lack equal access to quality education (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, pp. 182–188), and the poor are frequently unable to receive adequate health care (Isaacs, Stephen, & Schroeder, 2004). Despite these and many other lamentable disparities, the term *oppression*—defined loosely and somewhat liberally as the perpetration of "repeated, widespread, systemic injustice" (Deutsch, 2006, p. 10)—is seldom applied to Western societies by social scientists or laypersons. The language of oppression has either fallen from public discourse entirely or is confined to relatively small circles of social activists, who are themselves frequently marginalized by society because of their activism (e.g., see Diekman & Goodfriend, 2007). From the perspective of system justification theory (SJT), which suggests that most people are motivated, at least to some degree, to defend and justify their own social systems (e.g., Jost & Van der Toorn, 2011), it is not surprising that most citizens are reluctant to see their own society as *oppressive*.

Morton Deutsch's theorizing (1974, 1985, 2006) offers a bold, comprehensive framework for addressing oppression as a system of social arrangements and practices. He stresses the roles and mindsets adopted by members of oppressive societies, in addition to the influences of cultural, political, and economic institutions

This chapter is dedicated to one of our intellectual heroes, Morton Deutsch, who remains a strong role model for any social psychologist who is interested in the study and practice of social justice. For extremely useful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter, we thank Rachel Arnett, Aleksandra Cichocka, Erin Hennes, Anesu Mandisodza, Natasza Marrouch, Andrew Shipley, Caroline Wilmuth, and Jesse Wynhausen. Funding was provided in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and New York University.

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such as the mass media, organized religion, government, business, and educational systems. Deutsch makes clear that oppression is not simply the result of a few powerful groups consciously conspiring to monopolize power, nor is it primarily the product or activities of individual bigots. Rather, oppression typically operates more broadly and much more subtly. Indeed, it may even be considered "civilized," in that it is experienced as fairly normal in the context of everyday interactions and is woven into the very fabric of their social institutions (cf. Deutsch, 2006; Elias, 1939/1994; Harvey, 1999). For example, Deutsch (1985) argues that social systems act in self-perpetuating ways, so that competitively structured systems elicit selfish, competitive behavior, whereas cooperatively structured systems elicit trusting, cooperative behavior, and so on. This is his so-called "crude law of social relations" (see also Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1133).

In addition to diagnosing the structural mechanics of oppression, Deutsch (2006) offers several recommendations for creating more just social arrangements. These are perhaps most fully expressed in his writings about *awakening the sense of injustice* (Deutsch, 1974, 1985, 2006; see also Deutsch & Steil, 1988; Fine, 1979). We fully concur that cultivating a sense of injustice and even moral outrage is a necessary precursor of collective action and social change (e.g., see Jost & Kay, 2010; Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007). At the same time, rousing people from their slumbers can be especially difficult because of the presence of *system justification motivation* (e.g., Jost et al., 2010; Jost, Pietrzak et al., 2008; Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009).

In the remainder of this chapter, we begin by highlighting the main tenets of Deutsch's account of how to awaken the sense of injustice. Next, we summarize some recent research findings illustrating the soporific effects of system justification motivation, that is, the ways in which it inhibits the awakening of a sense of injustice. By integrating Deutsch's work with insights garnered from SJT and the broader social psychological literature, we conclude by identifying several ways of encouraging social change without cueing system-defensiveness. In the spirit of Lewin (1944/1951), Deutsch (1999), and their many students and admirers, we can only hope that these ideas move us closer to the creation and implementation of better and more just societies. The idea is that increasing awareness of the social psychological dynamics whereby members of *both* advantaged and disadvantaged groups contribute to the legitimacy and stability of the status quo, often unwittingly, may help to promote the goals of overcoming oppression and bringing about meaningful social change.

Deutsch's Framework for Understanding Oppression and Social Change

No doubt, feelings of relative deprivation—i.e., perceiving a discrepancy between what individuals or groups believe they are entitled to and what they actually obtain—are critical to awakening the sense of injustice (see also Tyler &

Smith, 1998). Deutsch (2006) observes that, "the greater the magnitude of relative deprivation, the greater the sense of injustice that will be experienced by the oppressed" (p. 24). For protest to occur, the experience of fraternal deprivation (the individual's sense that his or her group is disadvantaged relative to other groups) must be present (Crosby, 1976; Runciman, 1966; Walker & Smith, 2002).

Gurr (1970) famously assumed that, "men are quick to aspire beyond their social means and quick to anger when those means prove inadequate, but slow to accept their limitations" (p. 58). However, the social psychological literature suggests that the matter is far more complicated than this, in part because of social, cognitive, and motivational processes that lead individuals to *tolerate* deprivation and injustice (e.g., Crosby, 1984; Fine, 1979; Major, 1994; see also Jost & Kay, 2010, pp. 1135–1136). Deutsch (1985) wrote poignantly about the problem of self-blame in cases of extreme deprivation:

> Although the need to maintain a positive self-regard is common, it is not universal. The victim of injustice, if he views himself favorably, may be outraged by his experience and attempt to undo it; in the process of so doing, he may have to challenge the victimizer. If the victimizer is more powerful than he and has the support of the legal and other institutions of the society, he will realize that it would be dangerous to act on his outrage or even to express it. Under such circumstances, in a process that Anna Freud (1937) labeled 'identification with the aggressor,' the victim may control his dangerous feelings of injustice and outrage by denying them and by internalizing the derogatory attitudes of the victimizer toward himself . . . . Thus, he will become in Lewin's terms (1935) a 'self-hater' who attributes blame for his victimization upon himself or his group.

Deutsch's observation that there is a potential for conflict between the needs of the self and the demands of the system provided considerable inspiration for SJT. Specifically, it is a postulate of the theory that for those who are disadvantaged (but not advantaged), system justification motives are in conflict or contradiction with ego and group justification motives (Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). Indeed, studies show that for members of disadvantaged groups, system justification tendencies are negatively associated with self-esteem, ingroup favoritism, and long-term psychological well-being (e.g., Jost & Thompson, 2000; O'Brien & Major, 2005).

Deutsch (2006) theorizes that the process whereby members of advantaged groups become sensitized to injustice in the social system is similar to the awakening process involving members of disadvantaged groups. That is, he assumes that the consciences of would-be oppressors will be pricked when they are made aware of the extent to which others are relatively deprived, i.e., obtaining outcomes that are worse than those to which they are entitled (see also Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002). Of course, perceptions of entitlement (with regard to the self and others) are influenced by several factors (e.g., Jost & Kay, 2010; Major, 1994), two of which we highlight here.

First, and foremost, Deutsch (2006) writes that "official" ideologies and myths serve to perpetuate certain beliefs about entitlement—a point that is echoed by SJT. System-justifying ideologies, such as the Protestant Work Ethic and other meritocratic belief systems, perpetuate the assumption that people generally get what they deserve and deserve what they get, while deflecting blame away from the system

(Jost & Hunyady, 2005). It is only by discrediting these ideologies, Deutsch writes, that expectations about what people deserve in life can change, and a sense of injustice may develop. According to Deutsch, belief systems such as these are vulnerable to attack during times of rapid social change, when there is a breakdown of consensual norms, and the elite are unable to quickly and effectively restore them. Under these circumstances, people may be exposed to alternative ideologies and new types of social arrangements that gain rapid acceptance. These proposals comport well with sociological theories of revolution (e.g., Johnson, 1966; Skocpol, 1994) and the transition from socialist to capitalist regimes in Eastern bloc countries (see Kluegel, Mason, & Wegener, 1995).

The ratio of satisfaction to dissatisfaction that people experience in their daily lives, according to Deutsch, is another factor that can modify their sense of entitlement and therefore the likelihood that they will protest against injustice. When aspirations rise more quickly than actual outcomes, people may experience relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970). Thus, improvement in one area of an individual's life may increase sensitivity to injustices experienced in other areas of his or her life. Moreover, Deutsch (2006) proposes that "a potent way of arousing the sense of injustice is to make the victim more aware that comparable others are being treated better or to increase her feeling that it is appropriate to compare herself with others whom she previously considered to be incomparable to herself" (Deutsch, 2006, p. 27). Such interventions might indeed help to mitigate the effects of "social comparison biases [that] tend to prevent awareness of disadvantage" and "attribution biases [that] tend to legitimize disadvantage" (Major, 1994, p. 294; see also Jost & Kay, 2010).

Awakening the sense of injustice, as we have said, is almost surely a necessary precursor to social change. Feelings of deprivation and injustice tend to incite moral outrage, which motivates collective action aimed at redress (e.g., Boll, Ferring, & Filipp, 2005; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Tyler & Smith, 1998; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Wakslak et al., 2007). However, a growing body of work suggests that the *acknowledgement* of injustice and the feelings of relative deprivation and moral outrage that follow it are sometimes very difficult to arouse. One reason for this is that system justification motivation puts members of advantaged *and* disadvantaged groups "to sleep" in an ideological sense. In the next section we outline some of the basic tenets and findings of SJT, highlighting ways in which system justification undermines prospects for social change and the attainment of social justice (see also Jost & Kay, 2010, pp. 1148–1150).

System Justification Theory

SJT holds that all individuals, to varying degrees according to situational and dispositional factors, are consciously or unconsciously motivated to rationalize away the moral and other failures of their social, economic, and political systems (e.g., Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Van der Toorn, 2011). Typically, members

of advantaged groups are more likely than members of disadvantaged groups to endorse system-justifying beliefs, presumably because such beliefs are also consistent with ego and group justification motives (e.g., Jost & Thompson, 2000). However, there are cases in which members of disadvantaged groups profess the legitimacy of the status quo even more strenuously than do members of advantaged groups (e.g., Henry & Saul, 2006). For instance, those who are very poor are more likely than those who are not to believe that "large differences in income are important" and legitimate (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003, Study 3).

The motivation to defend the legitimacy of one's social system is hypothesized to satisfy a broad constellation of *epistemic* needs to attain certainty and create a stable, orderly worldview; *existential* needs to assuage threat and perceive a safe, secure environment; and *relational* needs to affiliate and share common ground with important others, including friends and family members who are motivated by system justification needs of their own (Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008). According to SJT, all members of society, at least to some degree, are motivated to justify their socio-political systems; even those who are oppressed will sometimes hold beliefs and act in ways that support the very system that keeps them in a state of deprivation. Thus, it is not only "the oppressors" who wield ideologies and "the social institutions of society to legitimize their superiority and to ignore or minimize the identity of the oppressed" (Deutsch, 2006, p. 18). This makes it especially difficult to "awaken" the sense of injustice. This last point is frequently overlooked but is an essential piece of the puzzle when it comes to understanding how exploitative and oppressive situations are maintained (see also Hochschild, 1981; Jost, 1995, 2011; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Lane, 1962).

Internalization of Inferiority

System justification theorists emphasize that both the oppressor and oppressed contribute to a system in which oppressive relationships are maintained. Whereas Deutsch (2006) focuses on the *fear* that the oppressed have of their own rage and the *guilt* they carry from having participated in oppressive relationships, SJT focuses on their need to justify their socio-political systems in order to satisfy the same underlying epistemic, existential, and relational needs that would-be oppressors also possess. In this way, both Deutsch and system justification theorists propose that the oppressed have *internalized a sense of inferiority* at the personal and/or group level of analysis—but the internalization is hypothesized by the two theories to arise from different psychological processes.

Depressed entitlement among women. As Deutsch (2006) notes, "many who experience oppression in some aspects of their life do not necessarily experience it in other aspects" (p. 21). Thus, it is not necessary to assume that women as a group are always or necessarily "oppressed" in order to learn something valuable about the perpetuation of inequality from studies of gender dynamics. Indeed, one of the most common examples of internalized inferiority concerns the phenomenon

of *depressed entitlement* among women (Major, 1994) and other low-income earners (Pelham & Hetts, 2001). In numerous studies, when they are asked to determine an appropriate salary for themselves, women consistently pay themselves less money than men do for the same quantity and quality of work—at least in the absence of clear-cut standards of comparison (e.g., see Jost, 1997; Major, 1994; Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984).

O'Brien and Major (2009, p. 234) found that stronger endorsement of system-justifying beliefs was associated with (a) a greater sense of entitlement among men, and (b) a lesser sense of entitlement among women, just as SJT would predict. Furthermore, they conducted an experiment in which incidental exposure to meritocratic ideology (i.e., mindset priming) caused men to report that they deserved more pay and women to report that they deserved less pay, although the difference between conditions for women did not attain conventional levels of statistical significance (see O'Brien & Major, 2009, pp. 434–436).

Self-objectification. Depressed entitlement is but one example of how the disadvantaged play a role in their own subjugation. Calogero and Jost (2011) have suggested that self-objectification among women, whereby women see themselves as sexual objects for the use of men, is yet another way in which gender disparities are unwittingly perpetuated (e.g., see Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998). A series of experiments, shows that incidental exposure to certain types of gender stereotypes not only leads women to show more ideological support for the status quo, including the existing division of labor between men and women in society (Jost & Kay, 2005), but it also leads women (but not men) to objectify their own bodies more, engage in self-surveillance, and experience more body shame (Calogero & Jost, 2011). Consistent with the notion that system justification is linked to epistemic motivation, stereotype exposure resulted in greater self-objectification for women who scored high on the need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996).

Implicit and explicit outgroup favoritism. Of course, the internalization of inferiority is by no means confined to women as a group. Members of disadvantaged groups frequently evaluate advantaged groups more favorably than they evaluate themselves, both in terms of explicit stereotypes about intelligence, industriousness, and competence and also in terms of more general implicit associations (for reviews, see Dasgupta, 2004; Jost et al., 2004). Implicit outgroup favoritism is more pronounced when the perceived status gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups is larger (Rudman, Feinberg, & Fairchild, 2002; Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002) and for members of disadvantaged groups who endorse system-justifying belief systems (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003), including political conservatism (Jost et al., 2004). Variables, such as system threat, that activate system justification motivation also tend to increase stereotypic outgroup favoritism on dimensions that serve to rationalize the status quo. For instance, exposure to a system-threatening passage led Sephardic Jews in Israel to state that Ashkenazi Jews were more intelligent, ambitious, responsible, hard-working, and educated, in comparison with their own group (e.g., Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005, Study 3).

The Process of Injunctification

According to SJT, people are motivated to justify the status quo—regardless of whether it is good for them or not. In a series of experimental studies, Kay, Gaucher, and their colleagues (2009) demonstrated the existence of *injunctification*, a motivational process whereby individuals rationalize the way things "are" as the way they "should be" in a wide range of domains. These experiments included manipulations that were designed to activate system justification motivation, namely: (a) increased dependence on their system (i.e., stressing that important life outcomes are contingent on the system that affects participants), (b) system inescapability (i.e., suggesting that it is difficult or impossible to leave the system), and (c) system threat (i.e., challenging the legitimacy or stability of the status quo). These manipulations have been found to increase subtle, indirect forms of system justification without affecting participants' subjective identification with the system per se (see Kay et al., 2009).

The results were striking. When system justification motivation was activated, individuals were significantly more likely to injunctify the status quo, even if the status quo flouted egalitarian values. In a study of attitudes concerning gender diversity within the Canadian parliament, for instance, female participants whose system justification motivation had been activated rated women as less "desirable" and less "ideal" as Members of Parliament when they were led to believe that there were very few women in politics, in comparison with female participants who were led to believe that there were many female Members of Parliament (Kay et al., 2009, Study 3).

Similar results were observed in a study of attitudes concerning women in business. When system justification motivation had been activated (i.e., under conditions of system threat), people rated female CEOs as less desirable when they were led to believe that the status quo engendered relatively little (vs. more) gender diversity within top fortune 500 businesses (Kay et al., 2009, Study 4). Importantly, participants negatively rated others who behaved in a manner that was inconsistent with an injunctified status quo. That is, female participants who were told that there were few female CEOs not only stated that there *should be* fewer female CEOs when system justification motivation was high (vs. low), but they also judged a specific female business student to be less likable, competent, and professional.

System Justification as Implicit Goal Pursuit

Other laboratory work has revealed that the motivation to justify the system can operate on an implicit level of awareness, through goal-pursuit principles. For example, exposure to a system-threatening passage led participants to show heightened accessibility of justice-related concepts on an implicit measure, but only as long as the goal to justify the system remained active (Liviatan & Jost, 2010, Study 1; see also Kay & Jost, 2003). When the individual's need to justify the system was

fulfilled through a system affirmation task (designed to affirm rather than threaten the legitimacy of one's system), participants no longer displayed heightened accessibility of justice-related concepts (Liviatan & Jost, 2010, Study 2). Thus, system justification motivation manifests itself not only in terms of explicit processes such as stereotyping and injunctification of the status quo. It also operates implicitly, and automatically, without conscious awareness of the fact that the desire to perceive a legitimate status quo is a goal-directed mechanism (see also Jost, Pietrzak, et al., 2008).

System Justification Inhibits Justice-Promoting Behaviors

It is conceivable that despite implicit and explicit motivational processes that contribute to a general preference for the status quo, people are still highly receptive to cues of injustice and actions aimed at correcting injustice. In fact, Lerner (1980) suggested that the belief in a just world (a general, all-purpose system-justifying belief) emerges out of the "justice motive" (a genuinely altruistic concern that justice is achieved). Unfortunately, however, we find a negative relationship between system justification and justice-seeking behavior.

For example, Wakslak et al. (2007) conducted an experiment in which half of the participants were primed with a high system-justifying mindset by reading a series of "rags-to-riches" essays emphasizing how hard work leads to great success, whereas the other half were not. In an ostensibly separate study on "community service attitudes," these participants were asked how much negative affect and moral outrage they felt over injustice and inequality generally (e.g. "I feel really angry when I learn about people who are suffering from injustice"), as well as how supportive they were of various redistributive policies. Individuals assigned to the high system justification condition reported less negative affect in general and less moral outrage in particular, in comparison with those assigned to the low system justification condition. Furthermore, moral outrage mediated the dampening effect of system justification on support for helping and redistribution, which is consistent with other work suggesting that moral outrage is required to take action (e.g., Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002; Van Zomeren et al., 2008).

A study conducted by Gaucher, Chua, and Kay (2008) similarly found that system justification tendencies (as measured in terms of scores on the Kay and Jost [2003] scale) were negatively associated with activist behavior in response to a putative injustice ascribed to the Canadian health care system. More specifically, Canadians who scored higher (vs. lower) on the system justification scale wrote fewer protest postcards when given the opportunity, and they were less likely to feel that Canadians "should be concerned" that people with lower socio-economic status (SES) receive poorer quality health care than those with higher SES. On the issue of access to health care and many others, system justification appears to exert a soporific effect, making it more difficult to awaken the sense of injustice.

Social Costs of Challenging the System

As Deutsch (1985) points out, some people are sensitized to injustice and do indeed speak out against it. At the same time, there are often stiff social costs for individuals who oppose mainstream ideologies, attempt to espouse new ones, or claim that current social arrangements are unjust. For example, Kaiser and Miller (2001) showed that African Americans who attribute their poor test performance to discrimination, rather than to internal factors, are more likely to be viewed by European Americans as complainers and trouble-makers. Importantly, these effects emerge only when African Americans make system-threatening attributions for their poor performance. When they make external attributions for their poor performance that are *unrelated* to discrimination, there are no apparent social costs. Moreover, individuals who endorse system-justifying beliefs, such as social dominance orientation and just world beliefs (see Jost & Hunyady, 2005), are especially likely to disparage African Americans who claim discrimination (Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006). Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt (2009, Study 6) found that Whites expressed more favorable attitudes toward a Black individual who was low (vs. high) in ethnic group identification—unless he was described as endorsing system-justifying beliefs.

Acting in a manner that contradicts widely held prescriptive norms and stereotypes can also elicit social sanctions. For instance, women who behave in counter-stereotypical ways often experience *backlash* and are punished both socially and economically for their counter-normative behavior (see Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). In one experiment, people disagreed more with, and wanted to be less close to, someone who called herself a "feminist" (vs. someone who did not use this term) and these effects were more pronounced when system justification motivation was activated (Yeung & Kay, 2007). Experiences of marginalization and backlash almost surely encourage those who challenge the status quo to conceal their behavior and adhere to prescriptive norms and expectations, thereby serving to perpetuate them.

Summary

System justification theory reminds us that it is far more difficult to get people to acknowledge and speak out against injustice than is commonly assumed. In the service of broader epistemic, existential, and relational needs, people tend to favor the status quo and justify the legitimacy of the socio-political systems that affect them. People tend to *injunctify* prevailing social arrangements—judging them to be "most desirable," regardless of how unfair they might seem to others (Kay et al., 2009). Consistent with Deutsch's (1985, 2006) observations, exposure to system-justifying myths reduces individuals' sense of moral outrage, thereby undermining their degree of support for policies aimed at redressing injustice and inequality (Wakslak et al., 2007). Because the motive to justify the status quo frequently operates implicitly and automatically (Liviatan & Jost, 2010), it is not easy to avoid

or override. Furthermore, those who are sensitized to injustice and voice system criticisms often face negative social repercussions that almost certainly reduce the likelihood that they (or others) will speak out against the system in the future (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2006). Because system justification motivation exerts soporific effects such as these, it is often extremely difficult to "awaken the sense of injustice," as Deutsch (1974) put it. In the next section we explore ways of encouraging social change that do not depend upon ideological "alarm clocks" but rather seek to circumvent system justification motivation and to minimize resistance to change and defensiveness on behalf of the status quo.

System-Sanctioned Change: Harnessing the Power of System Justification Motivation to Bring About Social Change

Because SJT emphasizes social, cognitive, and motivational processes that lead people to justify and rationalize their socio-political systems, it is sometimes suggested that the theory cannot account for the phenomenon of social change (e.g., Reicher, 2004; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004). There are several reasons why this is not the case. First, SJT highlights the motivational significance of ego and group justification motives, both of which can override system justification motives to produce a motivation for change in a given situation (e.g., Jost et al., 2001). For another, SJT suggests that most (but not all) individuals will tend to resist changes to the status quo, but once it appears highly likely that a new regime will take its place, these same individuals will engage in anticipatory rationalization of the new status quo (Kay, Jimenez, & Jost, 2002), thereby hastening its arrival.

Moreover, a new line of system justification research has begun to investigate ways in which the system justification motive can be co-opted, or harnessed, in the service of constructive social change. Here we follow Deutsch's (2006) example in seeking to identify "nonviolent strategies and tactics for overcoming oppression" (p. 8). The idea is that potential changes to the status quo will be regarded as more palatable to the extent that they are "system-sanctioned," that is, seen as arising from, or having strong connections with, the overarching social system. Although this tactic is probably more commonly exercised on the political right than the left, our research suggests that a wide variety of proposals for social change may gain support and legitimacy through their association with the status quo.

For instance, Feygina, Jost, and Goldsmith (2010) found that people (especially political conservatives and those who score high on system justification) are likely to deny environmental problems associated with global climate change and to resist efforts to change personal and public policies when it comes to the environment. However, when pro-environmental initiatives were described as "patriotic" and congruent with the goal of preserving the "American way of life," resistance to change was curtailed, and high system-justifiers were significantly more likely to express pro-environmental intentions, such as using only recyclable products, cutting down on electricity, and providing financial support to pro-environmental groups, as well

as increased willingness to sign a pro-environmental petition. In the optimistic spirit of Deutsch (1985, 2006), we discuss several other potential ways of bringing about social betterment by working with rather than against system justification motivation. We note, however, that some of these ideas are speculative and have yet to be tested empirically.

Appealing to System Ideals

A close variant of Feygina et al.'s (2010) technique of framing potential changes as congruent with rather than upsetting to the status quo is the technique of appealing to presently unmet *ideals* of the overarching social system. Perhaps no one in U.S. history was as skilled as Martin Luther King, Jr. in implementing this rhetorical device. In one famous speech, King exclaimed that:

> [W]hen the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the *Constitution* and the *Declaration of Independence*, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . I have a dream that *one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:* "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." (August 28, 1963)

King's extraordinary success in building broad-based support for the civil rights movement might well have derived in part from his remarkable ability to frame demands for social justice as congruent with ethical imperatives that were officially enshrined in the founding documents of American society. To the extent that King's remarks increased what Deutsch (1985) referred to as "identification with the underdog," they probably heightened "the awareness of injustice among the oppressors by the increased political and intellectual attention paid to it" (p. 48). The strategy was successful because, as Deutsch wrote, "injustice fares poorly in the spotlight."

Martin Luther King Jr.'s approach is frequently contrasted with that of Malcolm X, who more directly attacked the American social system as illegitimate, at least in some speeches, such as this one.

> No I'm not an American, I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy . . . . I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of a victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare. (April 3, 1964)

Such claims almost surely elicited strong, reflexive ideological defensiveness on behalf of the system, in large part because of system justification motivation. Of course, Malcolm X's goal in these and other speeches was not to broker compromise with Whites but rather to unify and inspire Blacks so that they would take action. As he put it, "Usually when people are sad, they don't do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change." In other words, Malcolm X's rhetoric was aimed at increasing group justification and system

criticism among Blacks; that it stirred up defensive, group- and system-justifying motivation on the part of most Whites was probably inevitable.

Malcolm X did not believe in "the American Dream," but millions of Americans clearly do. Some may even believe in it more than they realize. For example, Ledgerwood, Mandisodza, Jost, and Pohl (2011, Study 1) demonstrated that even people who explicitly reject the notion that the U.S. is currently a meritocratic society exhibit a pro-meritocracy bias: evaluating the quality of scientific evidence more favorably when the data support rather than challenge the notion that hard work leads to success in American society. As in many other studies, this system-serving bias is exacerbated by exposure to system threat. Additional experiments by Ledgerwood et al. (2011) showed that when participants are confronted with a threat to meritocratic ideals (that is, when they are told that luck rather than effort predicts success on anagram problem-solving tasks) they work harder on an anagram task in an apparent attempt to restore faith in meritocratic ideology—but only when they were led to believe that they were participating in a study about the relationship between effort and doing well in "American Society."

Appeals Made by System-Sanctioned Leaders

Potential changes that are attributed to or associated with system-sanctioned leaders and authorities may have the best chance of earning widespread support, especially when system justification needs are activated. Along these lines, Gaucher, Peach, and Kay (2010) conducted an experiment in which students learned that one of two groups on campus (either a system-sanctioned university administration group or a non-sanctioned student group) was calling for pro-environmental changes to university food, student, and plant operation policies. To investigate the role of system justification motivation, half of the participants were first exposed to a system dependence manipulation in which they were reminded of how their outcomes in life were greatly dependent on their university; this manipulation has been shown in several studies to increase system justification tendencies (see also Van der Toorn, Tyler, & Jost, 2011). As hypothesized, under conditions of system dependence, participants were more likely to support pro-environmental policy changes when they were endorsed by the university administration than by fellow students. Increased support for pro-environmental change in the system dependence condition was partially driven by students' perceptions of the legitimacy and benevolence of the pro-environmental university administration group (Gaucher et al., 2010).

Reframing the Status Quo

Research on *injunctification,* which we have summarized above, indicates that because individuals are motivated to justify their socio-political systems, they tend to construe the status quo (what "is") as normatively desirable (what "should" or

"ought to be"; see Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009). Work by Moshinsky and Bar-Hillel (2010) similarly suggests that there is a "status quo labeling bias," so that people judge the same policy as more attractive when it is described as part of the current status quo than when it is not. Eidelman, Crandall, and Pattershall (2009), too, have identified what they refer to as an "existence bias," whereby existing (and highly anticipated) states of affairs are evaluated more favorably than alternatives. All of these results, which strike us readily interpretable within a system justification framework, suggest that it may be possible to win support for social change by reframing how individuals think about the status quo.

For example, Friesen, Gaucher, and Kay (2010) demonstrated that it is possible to increase women's interest in political participation (including voting) by (a) activating system justification motivation, and (b) exposing women to information suggesting that female representation in the Canadian Parliament was likely to be quite high in the immediate future. Under these conditions, women injunctified the anticipatory status quo, assuming that women's increased role in politics was desirable. In an additional experiment, only the *perception* of the number of women in national politics was varied by presenting participants with graphs that were either stretched or compressed to suggest that women were either highly represented or not. Here, too, people's subjective impressions of the number of women in politics affected their judgments of whether women *should be* in politics.

That some ways of reframing the status quo (e.g., shortening the Y-axis on a graph of women in government) do not require outright deception is important to note for those interested in instituting public interventions. Status quo labeling and reframing could be employed outside of the laboratory to usher in more equitable arrangements in society simply by changing individuals' perceptions of what is or what will be and therefore what should be. An additional advantage is that such techniques should minimize system-justifying forms of backlash. Thus, to the extent that members of society view women's role in politics as more substantial and therefore more desirable, they should be more likely to embrace rather than criticize those women who enter into the political arena.

Satisfying Underlying Epistemic, Existential, and Relational Needs

Finally, changes to the system may also be more palatable when they appeal directly to underlying epistemic, existential, and relational needs, such as needs for order, predictability, security, and affiliation. Consistent with the foregoing, changes that are framed as "maintaining" and "preserving" the current system are more likely to be embraced—especially by conservatives and others who harbor special affinities for order, stability, and structure (see Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008)—than are changes that imply upheaval. The satisfaction of underlying motives need not be overt or explicit in order to be effective. For instance, Stapel and Noordewier (2011) found that simply allowing participants to solve a jigsaw puzzle (thereby satisfying their need for order) eliminated the deleterious effects of system threat

on stereotyping. Dissertation research by Thorisdottir and Jost (2011) demonstrated that threat increases psychological needs for certainty and closure, which generally favor conservative ideology. However, describing a liberal policy initiative using certainty-oriented language made that policy more appealing to participants who had been shown a frightening film (but not an amusing one). These findings suggest that it may be possible to increase support for social change and justice initiatives by proactively satisfying rather than triggering epistemic, existential, and relational motives that give rise to system-justifying preferences and outcomes.

Concluding Remarks

Although Deutsch (1985) is surely right that "injustice fares poorly in the spotlight," it is also true that awakening the *sense* of injustice can be surprisingly difficult. In part because of system justification motivation, members of disadvantaged and oppressed groups frequently internalize a sense of inferiority and a depressed sense of entitlement. This is why, as Deutsch (1985) observes, "consciousness-raising tactics are necessary precursors to the developing of group cohesion and social organization" (p. 58).

As a general rule, however, people are not especially receptive to messages that challenge the legitimacy of the status quo. Rather, they often respond defensively to such challenges and resist changes that might bring about a better, more just state of affairs. This is because many people—and not just the "oppressors" (if they could be identified and singled out)—have "developed a vested interest in preserving the status quo," which means that it is necessary that "their rationalizations [be] exposed as false before their sense of justice will be activated" (Deutsch, 1985, p. 60). From the perspective of a social activist, these results are troubling, even depressing. There are numerous soporific consequences of system justification motivation, all of which probably hamper well-intentioned efforts to awaken a sense of injustice. Furthermore, ideological "alarm clocks" are often bound to fail, insofar as they put people on the defensive.

But perhaps the situation is not quite as dire as these observations would suggest. Recent work suggests that it may be possible to harness the motivation to justify the social system in order to usher in new and better social arrangements. Specifically, by framing potential innovations as "system-sanctioned," that is, congruent with rather than threatening to the goals and traditions of the establishment, it is possible to minimize ideological defensiveness and resistance to change. At the end of the day, it may be that carefully crafted appeals to ideals of the system, such as egalitarianism, may be most effective in dismantling oppression and eliminating social injustice, because they are able to circumvent knee-jerk reactions to defend and protect the status quo. The genius of Martin Luther King, Jr. consisted, at least in part, in his ability to do this. Of course, the demands of social justice sometimes require one to fight against oppressive systems without softening the message or appealing to traditional authorities, symbols, or customs for legitimacy. This was

clearly Malcolm X's approach. Although Deutsch (2006) clearly favors nonviolent methods of bringing about social change, he recognizes that there are circumstances in which sabotage and other direct forms of action may produce positive results (p. 37). The perennial problem faced by scholars and practitioners of social justice, however, is that it may be impossible to know for sure whether a flawed system can be patiently reformed or whether the only reasonable option is to foment conflict prior to seeking reconciliation.

Morton Deutsch's Comments

Chapter by Danielle Gaucher and John T. Jost

I am delighted by the chapter. It deals with an important issue that has puzzled me and many others. Why do many people who are subjected to injustice seem insensitive to it? Why do many vote for candidates who support policies that contribute to the injustices to which they are subjected? System Justification Theory (SJT), explained in this chapter, goes a long way to provide an answer to this puzzle.

SJT has given rise to many interesting research studies which clearly support the theory. The theory and research suggest that people have a conservative bias which supports the status-quo. This bias arises from "the motivation to defend the legitimacy of one's social system" because doing so satisfies epistemic, existential, and relational needs. This is an important contribution in providing another reason why basic social change is often so difficult to achieve.

Yet I do have some questions about SJT. What are its limits? I don't think SJT theorists believe it applies to: revolutionists who seek to overthrow the existing social system (such as the Russian communists who overthrew the Tsarist government); or to dissenters (such as Liu Xiaobo, the Chinese Nobel Prize winner who is kept in jail by the Chinese government); or to refugees who flee an oppressive system; or to the swindlers who exploit the weaknesses of a social system to systematically use the vulnerabilities of others for their own prophet (such as sex traffickers, Madoff). The chapter does highlight "the motivational significance of ego and group justification motives, both of which can override system justification motives." The conditions which can lead to the overriding of SJT are not yet well specified in the theory. However, I believe that SJT is easily applicable to explain the emergence of many movements for social change: including both conservative and liberal movements. These movements profess that they are defending the basic values of the social system by opposing violations of these values. Thus, the Tea Party movement presents itself as defenders of individual freedom by trying to reduce the government's power to control individual lives through taxation and various forms of regulation. Liberal groups appeal to basic values

of equality and seek to have the government act to foster equal opportunity for good education, accessible medical care, safe food, etc., and to prevent discrimination against members of ethnic, racial, religious, gender, gay and lesbian groups. My impression is that, currently, conservative political groups are more active in appealing to basic values in the system to support their cause than are liberal groups. SJT theory would, I believe, indicate that if liberal groups want more success in bringing about social change, they should frame their programs as reinforcing basic values of our system.

One final point. SJT recognizes that other needs than the epistemic, existential, and relational needs can lead to the acceptance of an unjust system or unjust treatment by those who are subjected to systemic oppression or an unfair treatment. However, I think they do not consider the role of fear sufficiently. In segments of democratic societies, as well as in totalitarian societies, it is not uncommon to employ physical and psychological violence against underdogs, deviants, dissidents, or others who appear to challenge existing social norms. This is why it takes great courage for an economically dependent wife to directly challenge her abusive husband, for a citizen in China to actively oppose governmental policies, and for a subordinate who needs the job to challenge her humiliating superior. Discontent and the sense of injustice may be latent rather than manifest because of fear. It is likely that a positive consciousness of one's disadvantaged identity is more aroused when one sees someone, who is similar to oneself, attacked or disadvantaged and sees her resist successfully to overcome the attack; her resistance reveals simultaneously the wound and its cure.

I feel deeply honored by the note at the beginning of this fine chapter. I have great admiration and respect for the important work that John Jost, his colleagues, and students are doing.

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