University of Trento & Tilburg University

Unequal but Fair?

About the Perceived Legitimacy of the Standing Economic Order

Ondrej Buchel

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As it happens, I am writing this on a plane filled with people in surgical masks due to an outbreak of a deadly virus. What better time to remember all those who I am thankful for meeting in the past few of my, oh, has it already been 33 years?

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Chapter One
Introduction

After a long time of existing as a piece of intuitive knowledge, Meltzer and Richards (1981) formalized the idea of the median voter stating that, were people to be rational, those at the bottom half of the income and wealth pyramid should be challenging the standing order and demand redistribution of economic resources from those at the top. At least in democracies, the consequence of actors' structural positions influencing their political preferences in the said manner were supposed to deliver policies that would disperse the surplus value generated within the economy among the population, thus increasing the wellbeing of the masses. However, these predictions run contrary to the evidence of rising income and wealth inequalities over the past decades (Lindert & Williamson, 2016; Piketty & Saez, 2014; Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2017). Indeed, as van der Weide and Milanovic (2018) show in their analysis of over 50 years' worth of individual-level data representative at the level of US states, existing levels of income inequality are related positively with growth of incomes among the very rich and negatively with growth of incomes among the poor. While such relationship is often interpreted as both predictable and rather problematic in terms of its association with, among others, reduced intergenerational mobility and economic growth and poor health and psychological outcomes (Corak, 2013; Lynch, Smith, Kaplan, & House, 2000; Oishi & Kesebir, 2015; Stiglitz, 2016), people around the world tend to underestimate the existing levels of income inequalities (Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014), adjust their attitudes towards the legitimate amounts differences in incomes of the top and bottom earners (Trump, 2018), and stress the importance of meritocratic factors while downplaying the influence of non-meritocratic factors on people's success and earnings (Mijs, 2019). It is therefore questionable whether the issue of rising inequalities may ever be solved in a way hoped for by the likes of Piketty and Saez (2014), who suggested that reduction in economic inequalities might have to be preceded by changes in social norms.

Addressing the lack of widespread backlash against their predicament, this dissertation aims to contribute to the understanding of the paradoxical legitimization of the existing structural and institutional conditions among many of the poor who will only ever see their good faith be interpreted as naiveté. Ultimately, then, we seek to help answer the question of *how and why are economic inequalities reproduced in societies where people are allowed and encouraged to have their say in the management of public affairs.* While there are structural and cultural explanations that attempt to answer this puzzle, focusing directly

on how people perceive the system and its legitimacy could complement and provide for a better understanding of why economic inequalities continue to persist and grow over time as well as the continued acceptance thereof. In this manuscript, we therefore take primarily a social psychological approach and utilize the framework of political conservatism as motivated social cognition (CMSC), which states that adoption of politically conservative attitudes of resistance to change and tolerance of inequality is psychologically motivated (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a).[1] In particular, we test hypotheses related to the conditions that are theorized to heighten the psychological needs to manage threat and uncertainty which, in turn, should increase the likelihood of adoption of beliefs and attitudes legitimizing the (often) unequal status quo. In four empirical chapters, we will address two broader issues connected with the CMSC framework. First, we will assess whether conditions that could be associated with greater amounts of dissonance may lead the worse-off to legitimize the status quo. Specifically, we will look at the interplay between the individual's structural status and subjective self-positioning on the one hand, and distinguish between their perceptions of the specific dissonance-inducing hierarchies on the other. Second, we will extend the research suggesting that ideological differences in the tendency to engage in social projection, that is assuming others having similar characteristics or attitudes to the perceiver, are sometimes motivated by the same underlying psychological needs that CMSC theorizes to be associated with politically conservative and system-legitimizing attitudes. *In sum, in four chapters, we are exploring how the conditions theorized to motivate system-legitimizing attitudes affect system-legitimizing attitudes and the perception of normativeness of these attitudes.*

In the next part of this introductory chapter, we will first take a step back and explain the rationale for why the focus is mainly on (perceptions of) income inequality and its legitimization among the voters. In the next two parts, we will briefly introduce some of the findings exploring the origins of attitudes towards economic issues and tie it to the theoretical framework utilized in empirical part of this research. In the fourth and the fith parts, we will expand on the research questions addressed in the dissertation and in the sixth part outline the structure of the dissertation.

[1] In this dissertation, the 'conservative' attitudes are to be interpreted with having the American political context in mind, meaning mostly right-wing economic attitudes of supporting generally low taxation, spending, and redistribution on the one hand, and right-wing attitudes towards cultural and social issues, such as being supportive of stricter regulations regarding immigration or reproductive rights on the other. Brief discussions of political ideologies and associated labels of liberal, conservative, left, right, and of their often-observed divisions in regard to cultural and eocnomic issues are offered in chapters 4 and 5.

Social Consequences of Economic Inequality

Issues of distributions of economic resources on a societal scale have recently gained in salience after the market earthquakes starting in 2008 and a sudden realization that wealth and incomes were divided in ways not entirely in sync with what would be seen as just by most people (Norton & Ariely, 2011; Trump 2018). This comes as little surprise since political and economic power tend to reinforce each other (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), institutions and institutionalized relations tend to be sticky and affect actors' actions (Denzau & North, 1994; Granovetter, 1985), and ideologies serve not only as powerful tools for explaining and legitimizing power relations without needing to resort to force (Rytina, Form & Pease, 1970), but also play a role in shaping justice beliefs of the society (Wegener & Liebeg, 1995) - thus potentially moderating the strength of moral outrage following observations of inequality. However, the consequences of economic inequality are linked with issues such as its negative impact on social capital, social trust, and social cohesion (Delhey & Newton, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Uslaner & Brown, 2005; You, 2012), economic growth (Cingano, 2014; Halter, Oechslin, & Zweimüller, 2014), and political stability (Glyn & Miliband, 1994; Posner, 1997). Indeed, Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch (2011) show that it is the top and the bottom groups in the highly unequal societies which are most likely to engage in conflicts.

In the discussions on political preferences and behavior, economic inequalities are also being linked to outcomes in political participation, engagement and, importantly, representation (Bartels, 2002), with increased political influence among the most affluent (Gilens, 2012). Lancee and Werfhorst (2012) show, in a study of 24 European countries, that both the individual resources and the wider context of inequality influence social, cultural, and civic participation. In another study, Solt (2010) found that people living in more unequal states were less likely to vote, while participation was skewed such that those with low incomes would not vote in gubernatorial elections. In view of such findings, even more alarming are those of Page, Bartels, and Seawright (2013), who present a picture of the top one-percenters being very politically active while holding considerably more conservative economic attitudes than that of the majority of Americans, and that this is even more pronounced among the top one percent of the top one percent. Even more, Gilens and Page (2014) show that economic elites and organized business groups have large influence on governmental policies and Broockman and Skovron (2018) present findings indicating that elected politicians and candidates have their ideas about preferences of voters considerably skewed in the conservative direction. Taken together, economic inequality seems to be affecting both people's willingness and ability to influence their fortunes via legislative channels.

Furthermore, at the level of peoples' rudimentary everyday experiences, higher levels of economic inequality are associated with lower aggregate willingness to contribute to welfare of others (Paskov & Dewilde, 2012), worse health outcomes and less healthy lifestyles in general (Dorling, 2015; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015), and more experiences of stressful social

comparisons (Kawachi & Kennedy, 1999). Indeed, if wealth is concentrated at the top, more people have to compete for the remaining resources and this may generate anxiety, stress (Wilkinson, 2006), and perceptions and experiences of social divisions, which may lower tendencies to cooperate with perceived out-groups, especially when consumption is related to status and available reference frames press on the individuals to strive to meet often unachievable standards (Frank, 2013). However, while differences in distribution of wealth and resources may cause social unrest (Alesina and Perotti, 1996; Justino, 2004), a high rate of inequality does not necessarily mean that the given population will get overly upset or even aggressive towards the government. Indeed, there are differences in how societies actually evaluate what is a legitimate and acceptable level of inequality (Kreidl, 2000; Lambert, Millimet, & Slottje, 2003; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000), and Loveless and Whitefield (2011) suggest that actual problems only arise when inequality is perceived as unfair and disproportionate by the citizens and as a consequence of the social system in place. Indeed, many of the cited authors stress that it is the perceived and experienced which causes stress and anxiety and feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness, and that as long as we believe something to be true, it is true in (some of) its consequences.

In sum, acknowledged as the defining challenge of our time (Dabla-Norris, Kochhar, Suphaphiphat, Ricka, & Tsounta, 2015), economic inequality has far reaching individual, societal, and relational consequences (Ariely, Gneezy, Loewenstein, & Mazar; 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). It negatively affects productivity, decision-making, and health outcomes on one hand (Cohn, Fehr, & Goette, 2014; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015; Shah, Mullainathan, & Shafir, 2012), and political stability and economic growth on the other (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Roe & Siegel, 2011). Increased competition for resources not allocated at the top skews available reference frames and leads to adoption of unachievable standards (Frank, 2013), generates stressful social comparisons and anxiety (Delhey & Dragolov, 2013; Layte & Whelan, 2014), and may intensify inter-group conflicts (Stewart, 2005). Among others (e.g., Cingano, 2014), in their study showing that economic inequalities in Europe and the United States have been increasing since the 1970s, Piketty and Saez (2014) suggest that, in democracies, any policies and regulations curbing economic differences will ultimately need to follow the views of the electorate and social norms, thus circling back to the age-old question of people being seemingly unaware of their own (and, as we have seen also societal) interest in tackling the growth of economic disparities.

Explanations for economic attitudes

Indeed, there have been many attempts at solving the puzzle, with researchers often finding the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of people adjusting their expectations (and perhaps even their ideals) to the observed and experienced rather than speaking up and asking for more a equitable system (Trump, 2018), with many even bolstering their beliefs in the fairness and equitableness of the system in place with loss of opportunities for social mobility and rising inequality in view (Mijs, 2019; Wiederspan, 2017). In answering the question of how are such attitudes formed, traditional structural and cultural approaches

assume that individuals internalize the attitudes, skillsets, and values depending on their structural positions or groups in which they are embedded (e.g., Kohn, 1989; Luster, Rhoades, & Haas, 1989). In this perspective, people belonging in the lower classes tend to value conformity and it would therefore be hard for a person coming from a lower stratum to acquire the skills, attitudes, and, in general, 'habitus' required to advance in the society, and much less to imagine the possibilities for larger systemic changes. Other approaches emphasize the relative power of groups and individuals in a struggle to define and impose one's version of the definition of social reality (e.g., Gramsci, 2000; Lukács, 1971). In this view, the lower classes would be exposed to ideologies that are in line with the interests of the upper classes through consumption of cultural goods. More functionalist explanations focus on the overall benefit that the society can derive from existence of differences in wealth and incomes. The most productive and important members of the society are to be rewarded more handsomely in comparison to those with less important and simpler jobs, and existence of economic inequalities should therefore be accepted as necessary and useful for the whole society (Cullen & Novick, 1979). A common feature of these approaches is adoption and internalization of prevalent group or society-level norms and values.

More recent research, focused more on the individual level, has mainly considered combined effects of rational behavior related to one's structural position, one's history and imagined future chances within the existing structure (Cojocaru, 2014; Dallinger, 2010; Meltzer & Richards, 1981; Piketty, 1995), the power of formal and informal institutional norms and ideologies that influence the worldviews and ideologies of individuals through learning and socialization (Bénabou & Tirole, 2006; Castillo, 2007; Fong, 2001; Kiecolt, 1988; Luttmer & Singhal, 2011, Svallfors, 2012), or individual perceptions of existing economic inequalities (Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Trump, 2018). Alongside explanations suggesting that opposition to redistribution among low-earners may be due to their skewed perceptions of possibilities for upward mobility (Cojocaru, 2014; Jaime-Castillo & Marqués-Perales, 2014) or that economic attitudes may be less relevant for their identities and so get ‘tacked on’ in the process of identity protection (Kahan, 2013; Malka & Soto, 2015), the research tradition within the CMSC perspective proposes that next to subjectively rational calculations and group-identity concerns, people may be choosing to adopt inequality-legitimizing ideologies because these may fit their psychological profiles, and in particular their needs to manage feelings of uncertainty and threat (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Indeed, such proposition is broadly consistent with findings that perceptions of social conflicts and contextual risks predict attitudes toward redistribution (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Tóth & Keller, 2011). In the next section, then, we will provide a brief overview of research addressing a possibility that people may be psychologically motivated to defend and support existing social arrangements (even if these generate, reproduce, and increase inequalities which are not to their benefit) in order to manage feelings of uncertainty and threat, and that such motivation may increase when exposed to uncertainty and threat eliciting environmental stimuli.

Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition & System Justification Theory

The seminal piece on conservatism as motivated social cognition by Jost and colleagues (2003a) provided a meta-analysis of almost 88 samples from 12 countries and totaling almost 23 000 cases, with the idea under scrutiny being that psychological scales used to study conservatism, dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism are systematically associated with dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity (Fibert & Ressler, 1998; Sidanius, 1978), preference for reduction or avoidance of uncertainty (McGregor, Zanna, Homes, & Spencer, 2001; Sorrentino & Roney, 1986), preference for structure (Altemeyer, 1988), resistance to change (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008b), and (given the unequal environment of most of the countries in which studies have been conducted) preference for, or heightened tolerance of, inequality (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003b). Furthermore, cognitive ability and rigidity, as well as psychological needs for structure and cognitive closure were found to be correlated with various scales traditionally used to measure politically conservative attitudes (Everett, 2013; Jost et al., 2007; Kelemen, Szabo, Meszaros, Laszlo, & Forgas, 2014; Onraet et al., 2015). Crucially, while measures of self-esteem are not correlated with ideological scales, measures estimating perceptions of the social world as a dangerous place and perceptions of economic and societal threats to the society do substantively contribute to explained variance (Duckitt, 2001; Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Onraet et al., 2013). Such evidence supports a possibility that adoption of particular political, social, and economic attitudes could be in part facilitated by the degree to which the available ideologies align with active psychological needs of particular individuals. It was then proposed that, broadly speaking, right-wing and conservative ideologies are psychologically a good fit for people seeking certainty, order, and safety (Jost et al., 2007; Jost, et al., 2009). Even more, argue proponets of system justification theory, people are more likely adopt ideologies that present the existing social arrangements as just, fair, and legitimate because being able to consider the social system in which one lives in a positive light is psychologically rewarding.

In general, System Justification Theory proposes that while people may strive to have consistent and favorable beliefs about themselves and their perceived in-group, they also prefer to have favorable beliefs about the social system in which they live in and to consider it (the system) just, legitimate, and preferably not to be changed (Jost et al. 2004; Jost, Wakslak, & Tyler, 2008c; Kay et al., 2009a). This is theorized to be motivated mainly by existential needs to feel safe, epistemic needs to feel in control of own future, and relational needs to achieve sense shared reality with with those who share the same social system (Jost, 2019). System justifying tendencies are predicted to be stronger among those who are in disadvantaged (or low status) positions as these people have stronger motivation to explain the state of affairs (Jost et al., 2003b), and those who perceive the system as durable and stable (Laurin, Gaucher, & Kay, 2013). Furthermore, system justification tendencies were found to be elicited and heightened in certain circumstances: when system was perceived to be under threat, when people saw themselves as dependent on the system and see the system

as inescapable, and when people (implicitly) feel to have little control over their lives (Kay & Friesen, 2011, van der Toorn et al., 2015). Apart from general increased support for the political and economic system, among other documented effects of system justification are implicit devaluation of in-group and implicit preference for the high-status out-group among those with lower status (Jost et al., 2004), ascribing competence on basis of perceived status (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007), justifying the system on basis of system justifying stereotypes (Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009b; Kay & Jost, 2003), and legitimizing the authority on basis of its power (van der Toorn, Tyler, & Jost, 2011). A consistent correlate of heightened system justifying tendencies is political conservatism (Jost et al., 2007).

In effect, in regard to adoption of inequality-legitimizing attitudes among the lower strata, research centered on CMSC and SJT indicates that when feeling uncertain or threatened, people may be motivated to rely on and endorse perceived social arrangements and norms while having good reasons to expect that others experiencing similar emotion would do the same. A competing prediction which could be derived from a number of so-called worldview defense (WVD) approaches is that people experiencing such aversive emotional states are more likely to go with the path of least resistance and affirm beliefs that they already personally hold and assume others to do the same (e.g., Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Hogg, 2007; McGregor et al., 2001; Proulx & Major, 2013; Van den Bos, 2009). We will not focus on particular theories that broadly belong within the worldview defense approach in this introduction but will explore some of these in individual chapters. Suffice to say that the major distinction between the worldview defense approaches and the framework of conservatism as a motivated cognition is the expected affirmation of one's already held ideological worldview following the experience of uncertainty or threat, with WVD approaches essentially predicting symmetrical and CMSC asymmetrical reactions depending on one's prior ideological leanings. In the next two parts, we will expand on the research questions and hypotheses inspired by the debates around these two competing approches.

Legitimization of the status quo among the disadvantaged

Our adoption of the CMSC perspective as the starting point of this research was motivated mainly due to its propositions directly addressing the issues of adoption of counterintuitive attitudes by people exposed to hardships and injustice. One of such counterintuitive attitudes is the justification and legitimization of the standing social order by those who are among the most disadvantaged within the existing status quo. While those at the top should have little reason to doubt the legitimacy and fairness of the standing system because such idea is not in conflict with them maintaining positive image of the self and of their in-groups, those who are experiencing hardships within the standing order, or are at the bottom of the hierarchy, have a contradiction to resolve: *is the system within which I am put in a disadvantage unfair or is it I who simply does not merit a better life*?

Among the ways CMSC offers to explain the cases when the disadvantaged decide to side with the system, one that seemingly fits like a glove is offered by system justification theory, which postulates that people in general are motivated to defend and justify the status quo (SJT, van der Toorn & Jost, 2014). By positing existence of a psychological motivation to defend the existing system, SJT offers a unique twist on the question of those classified among the lower strata accepting their predicament. Within the SJT's framework, endorsement of the unequal and supposedly unfair status quo would become psychologically satisfying even for those not profiting from the standing arrangements. In particular, the claim of the originally labeled 'hybrid theory of ideological dissonance reduction' (Jost et al., 2003b), later dubbed status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013), is that the disadvantaged are the most likely to endorse the unequal status quo over their apparent (to the researcher) self-interest under the conditions resembling the classic dissonance experiments – that is of the perceived responsibility for the state of the affairs (e.g., having the right to vote and thus change the system), low salience of obvious self-interest and group-interest motivations (e.g., thinking not within the explicit role of a member of a disadvantaged class), and presence of possible explanations for one's apparent lack of success within the unequal status quo (e.g., living in a country or working for a company where dominant norms are those of meritocracy and protestant work ethic). Furthermore, if the perceived ways out of the predicament seem unachievable, then the reduction of ideological dissonance by supporting the system should become a rather reasonable strategy to follow (van der Toorn et al., 2015).

While a considerable amount of research has been inspired by the SJT's approach, there are still open questions and limitations of the perspective. For instance, researchers utilizing representative data instead of relying on laboratory and online experiments have repeatedly failed to find support for its key predictions, as the attempts to use SJT to forecast people's attitudes towards economic inequalities have only provided mixed results (e.g., Caricati, 2017; Trump & White, 2015). The most notable empirical work challenging the SJT's central claims has been presented in Brandt's (2013) analysis of survey data from more than 150 thousand respondents, which concluded with the rejection of the very need for an explanation of the phenomenon of the lower classes legitimizing the system more than the upper classes, due to this not occurring systematically among the surveyed respondents. Extant attempts to explain these mixed findings have focused on different aspects of the theoretical argument and of the design of the prior studies. Sengupta, Osborne, and Sibley (2015) stressed the need for a more specific focus on the type of hierarchies we expect to be legitimized by the disadvantaged and theorized that what matters is whether the particular hierarchy is responsible for the disadvantage of the low-status group. Others have rather focused on the quality of the instruments used as proxies for the concept of 'status' and, more importantly, the related sense of powerlessness and dependency on the system which should drive the hypothesized enhanced legitimization of the status quo among the disadvantaged (van der Toorn et al., 2015).

Based on the original proposition of the status-legitimacy hypothesis, the corresponding criticisms leveled against it, and the clarification proposed in order to defend it, we have identified three questions related to the different perspectives on how the status-legitimacy hypothesis should be viewed and analyzed:

1. Is it one's subjectively assessed or objectively occupied structural position, or even mismatch between the two, which drives the disadvantaged to legitimize the system?

2. Is it one's subjective view of, or their objective exposure to, the dissonance-inducing context that enhances the tendency to legitimize the status quo among the disadvantaged?

3. Are there differences between the types of hierarchies or parts of the system in regard to the extent to which the disadvantaged are motivated to legitimize these?

We will address these issues in the first two empirical chapters. In Chapter 2, we address the questions of whether it is people with lower structural or subjective status who tend to legitimize income inequalities in context of greater subjectively perceived or objectively experienced inequality. In Chapter 3, we address the questions of whether it is discordant class positioning (i.e., a person considering themselves to belong to a lower or a higher class than into which they would be classified by the researcher) which motivates enhanced legitimization of the system, and whether such tendencies are amplified for parts of the system, legitimization of which may generate greater cognitive conflict.

Perceived threats to the system and increased social projection among the supporters the system

Another proposition derived from the CMSC framework and largely supported by extant research is greater projection of one's attitudes and interpretations of the situation on their in-group members among those who are politically conservative or right-wing compared to political liberals and left-wingers (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Stern & West, 2016). Heightened social projection tendencies were shown to be related to the same relational and epistemological psychological needs for shared reality (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2014a) and reaching of epistemic closure (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017), which have been theorized by the CMSC model to underpin adoption of status-quo protective and inequality defending attitudes (Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008a). On the other hand, those usually critical of the status quo and economic inequalities displayed a tendency to underestimate the attitudinal similarity they share with their co-ideologues (Rabinowitz, Latella, Stern, & Jost, 2016). In a related strain of scholarship, research into self-presentation indicates that people expect others to hold and attitudes that the world is generally a just place, and that this holds even when they themselve do not subscribe to such beliefs (Alves & Correia, 2010; Alves, Gangloff, & Umlauft, 2018). Furthermore, the level of perceived consensus with one's political ingroup was observed to be positively related with perceived collective political

efficacy, which could in turn affect voting intentions or other forms of political participation, and therefore a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomena could help explain why some political movements or efforts succeed where other fail (Stern et al., 2014a; Jost, Becker, Osborne, & Badaan, 2017a). As Andrighetto, Grieco, and Tummolini (2015) shows that potential for costly behavioral changes may be conditioned by a belief that others hold similar change-oriented attitudes, the lack of belief that others share one's values among those disillusioned with status quo may be critical for their lower perceived political efficacy (Stern et al., 2014a).

However, there are also questions to be addressed in regard to differences in social projection among political ideologues. First, the standing research into ideological correlates of tendencies to perceive attitudinal similarity with others has so far not directly addressed the context of legitimization of economic inequalities and economic attitudes in general. Second, while questions of perceived consensus within people's political in-groups and perceptions of attitudinal gaps with members of out-groups have received deserved scrutiny (e.g., Mullen, Dovidio, Johnson, & Copper, 1992; Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995; Westfall, Van Boven, Chabers, & Judd, 2015), the research into perceived consensus or attitudinal similarity with the society in general is rather sparse (e.g., Fields & Schuman, 1976). Finally, many of the manipulations and outcome variables used to experimentally test these relationships focused rather on the underlying psychological needs than on the stimuli commonly used to affect reasoning about such issues in both private and public debates. For instance, some of the manipulations aimed directly at elevating the needs to share reality with others or to feel unique and the perceptions of consensus with others were measured with questions on a likelihood that a person on a presented picture was born in a particular month (e.g., Stern et al., 2014a; Stern, West, & Schmitt, 2014b). Indeed, such materials are quite different from political campaigns, or even neutral debates and reports about likely consequences of proposed policies or current market developments, which are often framed as affecting and, sometimes, even threatening the stability, sustainability, or shape of the system (MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, & Keele, 2007). Since public perceptions of issues related to the state of the economy or of existing conflicts within the society may influence public attitudes and voting intentions (Loveless & Whitefield, 2011; Soroka, Stecula, & Wleizen, 2015), we focused our attention on people's reactions to messages addressing the state of the economy of the respective countries in which we have conducted our studies (the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

The CMSC framework and, specifically, system justification theory (which is the adopted theoretical perspectives motivating questions explored within this dissertation), source the endorsement of (sometimes) counterintuitive conservative and right-wing attitudes among the disadvantaged to be partially a consequence of the palliative effect of adoption of the status-quo and inequality-legitimizing attitudes on the psychological distress following the observed injustices – an issue we have attempted to address in the first two empirical chapters (van der Toorn & Jost, 2014). However, the CMSC model proposes the sources of

aversive feelings of threat and uncertainty to have a far broader base and suggest that, for instance, threats to the perceived stability or desirability of the system should motivate adoption of attitudes and behaviors that reflect the underlying preferences for maintenance of the status-quo, order, clarity, and predictability that political conservatives are known for (Jost et al., 2003a; Jost, 2017a). On the other hand, there is a number of theoretical perspectives positing a different relationship between various forms of threatening stimuli and people's attitudes. To be more specific, notwithstanding the theorized mechanisms and psychological needs assumed to underpin the observed resulting behavior, the proposition of the so-called worldview defense (WVD) school of thought is that exposure to aversive stimuli leads to affirmation, bolstering, or greater commitment to one's already held beliefs and attitudes regardless of one's ideological leanings (e.g., Crawford, 2017; Onraet, Van Hiel, Dhont, & Pattyn, 2013). We have derived our research questions from these two competing perspectives to assess the effect of perceived threat on the respondents' perceptions of shared attitudes and beliefs concerning the state of economic inequality in the country and related economic attitudes. In particular, in the latter two empirical chapters of this manuscript, we aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Are perceptions of attitudinal similarity with the society in general associated with political ideology?

2. Does perceived threat to the system increase perceived attitudinal similarity with the society in general in regard to economic attitudes?

3. Are the effects of perceived threat to the system on perceived attitudinal similarity with the society in general moderated by people's prior ideological commitments?

4. Are the effects of perceived threat to the system on perceived attitudinal similarity with the society in general affected by pre-election uncertainty, and does this differ among people with different prior ideological commitments?

We address these questions in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. In Chapter 4, data for which were gathered from students from a Dutch university, we were asking whether people with different ideological opinions about the legitimacy and performance of the Dutch socio-political system would perceive their attitudinal similarity with the society in general differently, and whether such different similarity perceptions would change under conditions system threat. In Chapter 5, we presented participants recruited through online marketplaces (Amazon mTurk for US participants, Prolific for UK participants) with a message critical of the economic performance and outlook of their respective countries both before and after the 2016 US Presidential election and 2017 UK General election and gathered responses on their perceived attitudinal similarity with co-national regarding what they considered, and expected most others to consider just levels of incomes for different occupations.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the first pair of studies, we utilize publicly available data addressing a broad range of questions, among them the respondents' estimates and suggestions of salary levels of various high- and low-status occupations, their agreement with the general bent of policies addressing economic inequality, and finally their confidence in various political and market institutions. This part of the dissertation deals predominantly with the discrepancies between the actors' actual positions and the positions they believe they occupy within the social structure. In this manner, we indirectly address the timeless question of the disadvantaged holding attitudes that are seemingly against their interests.[2] The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows:

In the second chapter, *Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis and Acceptance of Economic Inequality*, we focused on status-legitimacy hypothesis, an idea derived from system justification theory that, in some cases, it could be the people facing the greatest disadvantage who would be the most ardent supporters of the system within which they stay in a disadvantaged position. Our motivation in this chapter was to assess whether it is the objective or subjective status that might be related to the oft-commented on tendencies of the worst-off to believe in the justness of the market institutions and the general institutional setup of the societies they live in, and, whether it is the objective or subjectively perceived level of the contextual inequality that strengthens such motivated legitimization of the economic system among the objectively or subjectively disadvantaged. Indeed, if there were to be such a tendency, we could expect that the perpetuation of increases in income inequalities would not not be challenged by those worse-off.

In the third chapter, *Market Legitimacy, Political Legitimacy*, we took a closer look at the idea that it is the amount of experienced dissonance originating in the mismatch between one's expectations and experiences that drives those in low-status positions to attempts at legitimization of the social systems in which their fortunes are limited. Given that subjective status is often misestimated by survey participants, we sought to assess the hypothesis that misconstruing one's socio-economic status, in a form of over- or under-estimating one's class, may lead to other than expected experiences and thus dissonance, which could then be related to heightened support for the social system. Secondly, following the reasoning that while market institutions may generate greater inequalities, political institutions could be seen as being more responsible for the state of affairs and thus generate more dissonance, we distinguished between confidence in market and political institutions. Should the misperception of one's position within the society one's or expectations about performance of various parts of the system motivate legitimization of particular institutions, the results would speak to such sources of dissonance as partially explaining why people would maintain support of the standing system.

[2] Although, as Bénabou and Tirole (2006) showed, having beliefs and attitudes oriented towards redistribution may be sub-optimal for individuals living in countries where redistribution is low.

In sum, the first two empirical chapters addressed questions related to system justification theory's most defining and controversial prediction - that it may be the people for whom it should be the hardest to believe in the fairness of the system who could, ironically, feel the strongest motivation to defend the said system as just and legitimate. In the latter two chapters, we looked into how the respondents view the society they live in. In particular, we were interested whether they think that their personal answers could be considered socially normative or, conversely, whether they considered themselves to be outliers in their views.

In the fourth chapter, *Reactions to System Threat and Perceived Attitudinal Similarity of Low and High System Justifiers*, we used experimental design in the laboratory setting at Tilburg University to assess competing predictions about the effects of stimuli presenting threats to the social system. Rather than looking only at what the respondents would state as their personal attitudes, we were more interested in a how they imagine attitudes of others in relation to those of their own. In particular, we wanted to know if messages indicating threats to their country would motivate the participants to perceive others as attitudinally more similar, or different, to themselves. We were interested in this question because misperception of public's attitudes may have many consequences, such as misguided attempts at tactical voting or disengagement from the political process, which can result in suboptimal responsiveness among the political elites and ultimately to erosion of confidence in the institutional system in place.

In the fifth chapter, *Perceived Legitimacy of Inequality Norms: Evidence from the US and the UK Elections*, we extended the design utilized in Chapter 4. We asked whether and how do contextual factors influence perception of social norms, and whether and how are these reactions moderated by ideological differences at the individual level. The chapter was therefore also mainly focused on the perceived distance between personal ideals (how things should be) and what the respondents considered to be socially normative attitudes (what they estimated would be likely answer of the general population). Once again, we reasoned that perception of social norms and attitudes of others in general is an important element conditioning people's behaviors and thus deserves attention. Such reasoning was especially salient because we were able to take advantage of the upcoming elections in the United States and the United Kingdom and incorporate these events into our design. In this way we could test our hypotheses in a close proximity to a major relevant event, which would presumably increase the salience of people's ideologies and identities on the one hand, and give us access to a naturally occurring source of uncertainty and worldview threats on the other. In particular, we collected the data both before and after the elections (2016 US Presidential and Congressional Elections and 2017 UK General Election), utilizing both a within-subjects design and a between-subjects design. In addition to answering questions similar to ones asked in Chapter 4, we were able to estimate whether the effects of system threat on perceived attitudinal similarity would differ between groups answering before and after the election. Finally, we were also able to assess how electoral loss influences perceived

legitimacy of the country's economic system among winners and losers.

The last chapter summarizes the key results, identifies the limitations of the dissertation and outlines possible future research trajectories. In sum, we have explored some ways in which people may be motivated to perceive the social systems in which they live in as legitimate. We based our research questions and hypotheses on the CMSC framework which states that adoption of generally conservative, system-legitimizing attitudes, resistance to change, and acceptance of inequality is partially motivated by psychological needs to manage threat and uncertainty. In the first two chapters, we have then addressed the sometimes puzzling phenomenon of those in low socio-economic positions legitimizing the standing social order. In the two latter chapters, we have explored how people subscribing to different ideologies react to threat and uncertainty by imagining their attitudes as more or less likely to be socially normative.

Abstract

System justification theory proposes that people are motivated to perceive the existing social system as fair, legitimate, and desirable. However, status-legitimacy effect, understood as the most disadvantaged living in the most unequal contexts experiencing this need most strongly, has only found mixed support in empirical works. This paper presents a comprehensive test of the original reading of status-legitimacy hypothesis (Jost et al., 2003b) which implied that those with lower objective status are the most motivated to system-justify, and of the re-specified version (van der Toorn et al., 2015) that posits subjective powerlessness to be the driver of undue system legitimization. Multilevel mixed-effects linear regression analysis of ISSP modules on social inequality, covering almost 50,000 respondents from 28 countries, show that mean effects of both subjective and objective status are in line with predictions of bounded rationality, an idea that people pursue their interests based on imperfect information. To model effects of contextual inequality that should be related to experiences of dissonance among the disadvantaged, we distinguish between an objective measure, Gini, and perceived amounts of income differences as reported by respondents. The results from analysis testing contextual moderation lends more support for the original reading of status-legitimacy hypothesis - that it is the objectively disadvantaged who may experience greater motivation to defend the system.

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Chapter Two

Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis and Acceptance of Economic Inequality

General introduction

Attainment of coveted cultural products such as material wealth and status may become a tasking endeavor for those coming from lower strata. This is because social systems commonly reproduce institutional and structural relationships that predict, to a great degree, the likely paths of their constituent parts (e.g., Causa & Johansson, 2009; Corak, 2013). It is then paradoxical when people in lower social or economic status support the very social arrangements which offer them only questionable utility; whether by embracing ideologies that defend the status quo, rejecting suggestions of change, or by citing justifications for existing inequalities that place themselves and their groups in further disadvantage (e.g., Hochshild, 1981; Lane, 1959).

Offering a solution to this apparent puzzle, System Justification Theory (SJT; Jost et al., 2004) proposes that people are motivated to perceive the standing social and economic arrangements as fair and legitimate − and that this motivation should be especially strong among those facing the greatest disadvantages (Jost et al., 2003b). However, evidence for a robust negative relationship between socio-economic position and active psychological legitimization of the system - dubbed status-legitimacy hypothesis by Brandt (2013) - is mixed (e.g., Brandt & Reyna, 2012; Caricati, 2017; Henry & Saul, 2006). In particular, Brandt's 2013 analysis called the very existence of the supposed anomaly into question after failing to find the expected negative association in over a hundred of representative surveys across time and cultures. Review of related research highlights two possible reasons for the divergent findings. Firstly, conceptualizations and measures of perceived system legitimacy vary across extant studies. While some authors theorize that heightened motivation to legitimize experienced inequality should be tied to the specific dissonance generating hierarchies (Sengupta et al., 2015; Trump & White, 2015), others assert or assume that motivation to defend the system may be satiated by legitimizing multiple system-justifying beliefs or symbols (Brandt, 2013; Jost et al., 2011; van der Toorn et al., 2015). Secondly, neither the original formulation of the status-legitimacy hypothesis, nor any of its subsequent tests do explicitly and systematically distinguish between actual and subjective status.

Indeed, psychologists and social justice researchers from related disciplines stress the importance of distinguishing between actual and subjective status and individuals' beliefs about their situation (Brown-Iannuzzi, Lundberg, Kay, & Payne, 2015; Loveless & Whitefield, 2011; Sosnaud, Brady, & Frenk, 2013). Partially addressing the challenge of Brandt (2013), van der Toorn et al., (2015) specified subjective sense of powerlessness as the

probable cause motivating the adoption of system justifying attitudes among the disadvantaged. Nevertheless, this account still did not clarify whether it is the measures of objective situation or of its subjective interpretation by the individual (or even a combination thereof) which the future research should focus on in order to explore society-wide manifestations of the motivation to system justify.

In this article, we present a comprehensive test of the original and re-specified versions of status-legitimacy hypothesis using representative cross-cultural data gathered from three rounds of Social Inequality modules of International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) which provide a unique opportunity to distinguish between judgments and beliefs about actual levels of earnings inequalities and the values the respondents would find legitimate. Assessing whether subjective feeling of powerlessness could explain paradoxical behaviors among members of lower strata, we put emphasis on the differences between the likely subjective and objective experiences, and on differences between measures of subjectively perceived and objective contextual inequality. Thus, the present research examines whether people with lower actual or subjective status react counterintuitively within contexts which are objectively or subjectively experienced as unequal. In addition, we also open a question of whether it is overall high-levels of or medium-term changes in contextual inequality that are associated with increased acceptance of earnings inequalities among the disadvantaged.

Theoretical Background

Irrational actors

The issue of conformism to the authority of the status quo among the economically disadvantaged has long riddled social scientists. In contemporary setting, it can be best understood as the enigma of lower-class voters supporting right wing economic policies (Hochshild, 1981), thus diverging from expected behavior of an economically rational voter. A standard model of economically rational political behavior can be summed up by 'median voter theorem' as: if my income moves up, my preference for equality lowers, and vice versa, which results in positive relationship between contextual levels of income inequality and public demand for redistribution at the aggregate level (Meltzer & Richards, 1981). In general, empirical research shows people with higher reported economic status expressing less egalitarian views compared to those with lower incomes and lower self-reported social positions but reported relationships are far from sufficient to cast people as omniscient utility monsters (Gijsberts, 2002; Kuhn, 2011). Likewise, contextual levels of income inequality measured with Gini index were linked to both more (Jæger, 2013) and less support for egalitarian policies (Kenworthy & McCall, 2007; Luttig, 2013).

Painting a more complex picture, studies including perceptions of life-long and contextual risks show that prospects of upward mobility lead members of lower classes to

reject redistribution (Bénabou & Ok, 2001; Cojocaru, 2014). Furthermore, individuals may operate with inaccurate data, whether in regard to estimates of actual differences in wealth and incomes (Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Norton & Ariely, 2011), potential for social mobility (Jaime-Castillo & Marqués-Perales, 2014; Kraus & Tan, 2015), or performance of the welfare state (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012). Next, given their salient reference groups (Merton & Kitt, 1950), people may also have skewed perceptions of both the actual structure and of realistically attainable and desirable alternatives (e.g., relative deprivation; Evans & Kelley, 2017; Runciman, 1966). In this perspective, subjective beliefs about one's situation, rather than objective economic conditions, were proposed as drivers of economic attitudes (Fong, 2001; Kreidl, 2000; Loveless & Whitefield, 2011) - a notion described as subjective beliefs about subjective beliefs by Arthur (1994). Gigerenzer & Goldstein (1996) and Dequech (2001) define such behavior and cognition on imperfect information as bounded rationality. In the domain of attitudes toward economic redistribution, Brown-Iannuzzi et al. (2015) provided both correlational and experimental evidence that manipulating actual and subjective status affects redistribution attitudes differently. In particular, experimentally manipulated subjective status was negatively related to attitudes towards redistribution even in cases when participants could not profit from holding such attitude in the particular experimental game.

Moreover, actors may also value goals other than personal material self-interest (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005). For instance, dominant ideology thesis suggests that people adopt ideologies (and thus goals and values) that are pervasive in their particular contexts (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). As Castillo (2007) explains, dominant ideologies usually provide justifications and explanations for the structure and power relations that are observable within the given society, reduce the need to use force in order to maintain the standing group hierarchies (Rytina et al., 1970), and instill the 'right' values and beliefs among the members of the public (Wegener & Liebig, 1995). Indeed, one may consider unequal distribution of resources as justified even while being discriminated against (Houge & Yoder, 2003). It is then the question of adoption of the 'right' values instead of 'challenging beliefs' among the lower strata that social scientists are puzzled with (Sennett & Cobb, 1973). In this regard, the rest of the paper focuses on a proposition derived from System Justification Theory that people are psychologically motivated to perceive their social surroundings as just and fair, and thus have a tendency to adopt justifications and explanations for the structure and power relations observable within the given society and, sometimes, even when adoption of such explanations does not conform to expectations of economic rationality (Jost et al., 2004). This motivation is then theorized to facilitate the adoption of dominant ideologies as a bottom-up mechanism - complementing the top-down mechanism of dissemination of ideology (e.g., Gramsci, 2000; Lukács, 1971).

System Justification: Motivation to see the social world as fair

The concepts of people being motivated to defend their ego (e.g., Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989) and their group (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986) have long been accepted in social psychological literature. People are expected to utilize stereotypes (e.g., Lippmann, 2017; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) and heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) to organize and simplify their internal representations of complex and uncertain world, and maintain positive image of one's self and their group. SJT attempts to explain an apparent puzzle within the above-described picture - an often seen tendency of some people to conform to status quo which does not seem to provide fair utility for themselves or their groups (Jost, et al., 2004).

In general, SJT proposes that people are psychologically motivated have favorable beliefs about the system in which they live in and to consider this system to be just, legitimate, and desirable (Jost, et al., 2011; van der Toorn & Jost, 2014). This is motivated mainly by existential needs to feel safe, epistemological needs to reduce uncertainty and gain control of own future, and relational needs of interacting with those who share the same social system (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2008a). System justifying tendencies are predicted to be stronger among those in disadvantaged (or low status) positions (Jost et al., 2004), and those who perceive the system as durable and stable (Laurin et al., 2013). Furthermore, system justification tendencies can be elicited and heightened in certain circumstances: a) when system is perceived to be under threat; b) when people see themselves as dependent on the system and see the system as inescapable; and c) when people (implicitly) feel to have little control over their lives (Kay & Friesen, 2011). Apart from general increased support for the system, among other documented effects of system justification are implicit devaluation of low-status in-group and implicit preference for the high-status out-group (Jost et al., 2004), ascribing competence on basis of perceived status (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007), justifying the system on basis of system legitimizing stereotypes (Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay et al., 2009b), and legitimizing the authority on basis of its power (van der Toorn et al., 2011).

Status and Support of the System: The Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis

Building on previous work and engaging with the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), Jost et al. (2003b) derived further predictions inspired by SJT. The originally proposed status-legitimacy hypothesis posits that those facing the greatest disadvantages may be among the most ardent supporters of the system in place since they experience the greatest dissonance. According to SJT, members of high and low-status groups experience different levels of cognitive dissonance. While members of high-status groups have their motivations to defend their ego, group, and the system in concordance, members of low-status groups have to reconcile whether they deserve to be in a disadvantaged position and whether to continue supporting the system which put them in such position in the first place. In order to reduce cognitive dissonance resulting from holding multiple inconsistent believes, may opt to cede positive self(group)-image and bolster the legitimacy of the system. As SJT

does not dispute presence and strength of other motivations, status-legitimacy effect should manifest only when a) self-interest and group membership of the individual are not made salient and obvious; b) the individual has a reason to believe that they are at least partially responsible for the perpetuation of the system; and c) the dominant system-justifying ideology and stereotypes are (similar to) meritocratic and Protestant work ethic ideas. Since more unequal systems should present members of low-status with more dissonance to reconcile, status-legitimacy effect was predicted to be stronger in societies with higher levels of contextual inequality. This prediction, named status-legitimacy hypothesis by Brandt (2013), distinguishes SJT from competing theories of Social Identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Social Dominance (Siddanius & Pratto, 2001), which also expect people to utilize legitimizing stereotypes for explanations of unequal group hierarchies but, nevertheless, predict that the low-status individuals should be rejecting the unfavorable system.

The original paper of Jost et al. (2003b) supported the status-legitimacy hypothesis with five different studies using various indicators of actual status and support of the system. Further corroboration came from Henry & Saul (2006) who studied system justifying attitudes among disadvantaged children in Bolivia. However, other studies failed to find conclusive evidence for status-legitimacy effect (e.g., Brandt & Reyna, 2012; Trump & White, 2015). The most comprehensive empirical critique of the proposed status-legitimacy hypothesis was brought forward by Brandt (2013) in an analysis of samples from over 50 countries in World Values Survey data and additional 40 years worth of samples from General Social Survey and American National Election Study. In particular, the tested interpretation of status-legitimacy hypothesis was that measures of both actual (age, gender, income, level education, race) and subjective status (self-assessed social class) should be in negative relationship with perceived legitimacy of the system (operationalized akin to institutional trust), and that these relationships would be stronger in more unequal countries. The study concludes mostly null and negative results for individual indicators of status and puts the very existence of the supposed anomaly into question.

Two explanations were put forward to order reconcile the divergent findings. Focusing on the dependent variable, Sengupta et al. (2015) proposed that it is only the particular social hierarchy responsible for the experienced dissonance which the disadvantaged are motivated to defend most strongly. In a study based on data from New Zealand, they found that Maori reported lower trust in government but perceived ethnic relationships within the society as more fair compared to ethnic Europeans. In a similar vein, addressing the substantive quality of measures used for system justification attitudes, Trump & White (2015) suggest that social and political institutions utilized in Brandt's (2013) analysis do not sufficiently capture the concept which is usually operationalized via meritocratic beliefs. In their own study, they test the hypothesis that it is perception of inequality that elevates motivation to system justify. After experimentally manipulating perceived levels of (economic and gender) inequality, they fail to observe significant differences in subjects' subsequent answers on measures of general system justification and economic system justification.

However, it needs to be noted that SJT does not predict motivated defense of all perceived inequalities, but only of inequalities that the individual should initially consider unjust.

On the other hand, van der Toorn et al. (2015) suggest that a possible reason behind mixed findings could be the usage of objective rather than subjective status in previous studies. Indeed, distinguishing between the roles of objective and subjective status in predicting support for the system-justifying beliefs seems justified since there is evidence that people tend to misperceive (or misreport) their socio-economic status, and that objective and subjective SES are even distinctly related to health and mental health outcomes (Adler, Espel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Demakakos, Nazroo, Breeze & Marmot, 2008; Evans & Kelley, 2004). It could also be that a certain level of understanding, or on the other hand a certain level of misunderstanding, of one's disadvantaged situation would be necessary for status-legitimacy effect to manifest more strongly. Van der Toorn and colleagues (including the author of the original hypothesis) thus proposed that the motivation to defend the standing group hierarchy should be elevated among those who experience subjective sense of powerlessness and implicitly consider themselves not in control of changing their fortunes within a system they are dependent on. They further speculate that using group membership to infer feelings of powerlessness might confound the relationship between disadvantage, status, and power. In other words, the claim moved from a rather broad 'people in low-status positions tend to defend the system the more the system disadvantages them' to a more specific 'people experiencing lack of control and increased dependency on the system tend to defend the given system'. Van der Toorn and colleagues then support this interpretation with results from five studies, three of them experimental, which directly demonstrate the relationship between experience of powerlessness and various measures of political and economic system justification. Indeed, the idea that subjective feelings of lack of control are associoted with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes akin to system-justification is supported in literature on compensatory control - a mechanism theorized to translate implicit feelings of low control into a need to seek order and structure. This can be done, for instance, via bolstering beliefs in higher-level background constructs such as state, God, but also order-offering conspiracy beliefs (Kay, Whitson, Gaucher, & Galinsky, 2009c).

Present Research

The question arising from the discussion above is whether the presumed experienced powerlessness of the disadvantaged manifesting as 'status-legitimacy effect' appears systematically across populations and, therefore, whether SJT and status-legitimacy hypothesis can be useful tool for making predictions at the aggregate level. Our objective is to assess the conditions in which experience of powerlessness emerge and translate into adoption of system defending attitudes. While there is ample experimental evidence for association between sense of powerlessness and system-justifying attitudes, corroborating evidence based on representative data is limited. We therefore assess the theorized

relationship utilizing various operationalizations of both the conditions that should lead to experiences of powerlessness and of the attitudes through which the elevated motivation to defend the system should manifest. Following Brown-Iannuzzi et al. (2015) and suggestions of van der Toorn et al. (2015), we explore potentially different roles of subjective and actual status in formation of system-legitimizing attitudes. The original formulation of status-legitimacy hypothesis focused on likely experiences of members of objectively disadvantaged groups (e.g., the low-income respondents in general, the Blacks in American South, or low-income Latinos in the U.S.). We can then hypothesize that the expected relationship in representative data should be that those from low income backgrounds should be more likely to legitimize existing inequality. The 'revised' version of the hypothesis by van der Toorn et al. (2015) specifies subjective feeling of powerlessness as the source of motivation to system justify. From this we can theorize that it should be those who self-identify as occupying low-status positions would turn to system-legitimizing attitudes.

Reflecting on the findings of Sengupta et al. (2015) and Trump and White (2015), the focus is on legitimization of income inequality as a part of the system that should generate the most dissonance among the economically disadvantaged. We consider both the explicit statements and indirect measures in order to mitigate the role of self and group interest in the answers. Finally, we also distinguish between objective and self reported measures of contextual inequality and explore the circumstances which motivate the disadvantaged to defend the status quo. We assume that greater objective inequality should be associated with lack of possibilities for social mobility and economic resources for members of low-status groups, thus generating feelings of dependency and powerlessness. Perceived amount of inequality should mobilize material self-interest in ways consistent with median-voter theorem, thus generating cognitive dissonance among those comparing their own outcomes with those at the top. At the same time, perceived level of inequality should also affect personal baselines of inequality ideals via multiple cognitive biases such as anchoring or status quo bias (e.g., Trump & White, 2015).

Additionally, in order to examine the core hypothesized consequences of motivation to system-justify, resistance to change and acceptance of inequality, we also test whether change in contextual inequality correlates with acceptance of income inequality among the low-status participants.

We can then derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: (**H1**) people with low objective status are more likely to accept higher levels of economic inequality in contexts that generate greater dissonance, i.e. both objectively and subjectively more unequal contexts (original version of the status-legitimacy hypothesis)

Hypothesis 2: (**H2**) people with low subjective status are more likely to accept higher levels of economic inequality in contexts that generate greater feelings of powerlessness, i.e. objectively more unequal contexts (revised status-legitimacy hypothesis)

Conversely, if we expect the disadvantaged to behave rationally, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: (**H3**) people with high objective status are more likely to accept economic inequality and contextual level of inequality should be negatively related to acceptance of economic inequality (median voter theorem)

Hypothesis 4: (**H4**) people with high subjective status are more likely accept economic inequality and this relationship should be stronger in contexts which are perceived as more unequal (bounded rationality hypothesis)

Data

The analysis explores representative survey data of 46448 respondents from 28 countries over 2 decades in 3 different years (62 country/year combinations) gathered as a part of Social Inequality module within the framework of International Social Survey Programme project. Only respondents without missing answers were included in the analysis. The operationalization of the utilized concepts is consistent with previous research on the topic of economic justice and system justification (e.g., Gijsberts, 2002; Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Kuhn, 2011; Trump, 2013). Note that since the questionnaire is openly addressing issues of deservingness, economic justice, and income inequality, it is possible that motivations of material self-interest may bias the answers in favor of rational choice based models. ISSP also uniquely offers not only questions on general judgments about inequalities, but also questions asking for respondent's estimates of actual salaries earned in certain occupations, as well as for respondent's suggestions for legitimate salaries for people in these occupations.[3]

Measures of legitimacy of economic inequality

Indirect acceptance of inequality is operationalized as (log of) a ratio of a mean of earnings suggested as ideal for high-status occupations (ministers and CEOs) to those of unskilled workers and shop assistants.[4] Similar operationalization was utilized and extensively discussed in previous research (Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Jasso, 2007; Trump, 2013). Unstandardized coefficients represent percentage changes calculated as $e^{(nx*b)}$ = difference in ideal inequality for 'n' units of variable x in percentages. We also distinguish between ministers and CEOs to explore the possible distinction in justifying incomes of representatives of economic and political systems. In this way, we aim to indentify the

[3] The actual posed question s in case of unskilled workers are: How much do you think an unskilled worker in a factory earns/should earn?

[4] ln[(mean legitimate earnings(ministers, CEOs)) / mean legitimate earnings(unskilled workers, shop assistants)]

hierarchy that is more likely to be legitimized, thus conceptually following Sengupta et al. (2015).

Explicit acceptance of inequality is measured with two separate items: Income differences in (R's country) are too high and Large differences in incomes are necessary for country's prosperity (rescaled from a 5-point scale into a 0-1 scale, where 1 suggests strong agreement). These questions are meant to tap into explicit judgments on presence of undue income inequality and acceptance of its necessity.

Measures of status and controls

Of the status set that should describe the total position of the individual, we will only consider objective and subjective economic positions (Merton, 1957). A drawback is that master status may not be aligned with economic status but with other factors, such as political identity. Main measure of objective socio-economic status of the respondent is captured as family income expressed as a (log of) the ratio of reported family income of the household in relation to mean family income within each country/year. To measure subjective status, we use self-positioning on a ladder of relative income positions ranging from 1 - 10 (rescaled as a continuous measure on a 0-1 scale). We utilized this measure of subjective status instead of self-reported class because it provides more valid observations, better resolution (10 compared to 5 categories), and the very word class potentially introduces ideology-based biases.

Additionally, we control for years of education (a continuous measure as opposed to categorical variable denoting highest achieved education) and gender (0 - male; 1 - female). To measure potential influence of personal ideological attitudes and predispositions, we utilize preference for use of equity (working hard and doing job well) vs. need (having a family or children) as allocation principles for determining salaries. Averages of both dimensions (rescaled to 0-1) were subtracted from each other (equity - need), thus creating a variable informing us about the preferred allocation principle of the given individual, with scores above 0 meaning preference for equity and scores below 0 indicating a preference for need.

Measures of context

To measure perceived contextual inequality, we use (natural logarithm of) perceived ratios of two top earning occupations (ministers and CEOs) to earnings of unskilled workers and shop assistants.[5] We also control for mean perceived level of inequality within a given sub-sample (country-year). Objective level of contextual inequality is measured with year-relevant Gini coefficient (Solt, 2015). To capture other time-related unobserved effects, we include year dummies. Additionally, recognizing structural, institutional, and ideological legacies of state-socialism, we use a dummy variable denoting Eastern European countries.

[5] ln[(mean perceived earnings(ministers, CEOs)) / mean perceived earnings(unskilled workers, shop assistants)]

Analysis

We test the hypotheses in a three-level multilevel mixed-effects model recognizing the structure of the data in which individuals are nested within country-years, which are nested within countries. All continuous individual-level independent variables were group-mean-centered and contextual level variables (including aggregate means of individual-level variables) grand-mean-centered. However, this modeling technique still provides only one common estimate for effects of between and within influences of contextual variables (see Schmidt-Catran & Fairbrother, 2015, for a comparison of viable random effects specifications in multilevel models). In addition, to explore potentially differing influences of changes and stability in contextual inequality, we decompose the total effect of the Gini index for each country into an over-time mean and within-country-change (Fairbrother, 2014). Using this operationalization, we obtain a 'within-countries' 'fixed' effect of change in Gini and a 'between' effect described by mean level of inequality in given countries over time. The data were analyzed with mixed command in Stata 13. Finally, the question of large income differences being necessary for country's prosperity was only posed in two waves of the survey. A two-level model considering each country-year combination as a unique context was used in an analysis with this question as the DV. It should be noted that since the questionnaire is openly addressing issues of deservingness, economic justice, and income inequality, it is possible that motivations of material self-interest may bias the answers in favor of rational choice-based models.

Results

The results are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3. In addition to the full model (Table 1, M3B), Table 1 presents selected intermediate models with computed legitimate ratios of income differences as the DV. Table 2 present tests of the full model with different explicit statements as DVs, models assessing perceptions and legitimization of incomes separately for ministers and CEOs, two models asseessed separately for countries with high and low Gini coefficients (above and below the overall sample mean), and finally a model using healthcare spending as and alternative country-level indicator for the contextual level of uncertainty instead of the Gini coefficient, Table 3 presents models that use decomposition of contextual inequality into temporal and spatial. Compared to the simplest model utilizing only measures of objective status and inequality (Table 1, M0), in which family income is in an overall positive relationship with acceptance of greater income differences but less so in more unequal contexts, models including subjective status and perceptions of income inequality highlight the central role of subjective perceptions for attitudes towards inequality (Table 1, M1 & M2A). For one, the effect of the level of objective inequality (Gini index) does not explain a significant portion of variance in inequality attitudes after inclusion of perceived amounts of inequality. In terms of distiguishing between the effects of objective and subjective SES on inequality ideals, subjective interpretation of one's position seems to not only mediate parts of the relationship between the indicators of the objective SES and the

DV, but it also seems to affect people's inequality ideals in other ways. This result thus supports the idea that people's subjective SES may not always fully reflect just their current objective SES, but also other considerations and beliefs, and that this may further shape their attitudes theorized to be related to one's objective SES.[6] The main effects in the full model that includes all the covariates are largely in expected and intuitive directions (Table 1, M3B). The key measures of objective status (family income) and subjective status (self-positioning) are positively related to the acceptance of income inequality, as are ideological preference for equity over need, age of the respondents, being male, length of education, and the perceived amount of income inequality. As mentioned, the coefficient should be interpreted as percentages. For example, men, compared to women, suggested, on average, about 8 percent greater income inequality as ideal, and of two people with age difference of 20 years, the older one would, on average, report accepting about 10 percent higher inequality as justified. Of the two indicators of objective and subjective social status, respondents from families moving by one unit suggested about 5 percent greater inequality as justified. Family income being represented as natural log of the ratio between one's family income and mean nation family income, this means about 2.7 times the mean family income in the country. For a more intuitive value, respondents from families with income twice as large as an average family income would suggest about 3.7 percent greater income inequality as ideal. Considering subjective status, moving from the perceived bottom to the perceived top of the hierarchy means accepting about 30 percent greater income ineuqality as ideal. As tested hypotheses focus primarily on contextual moderation, we turn to their assessment in the following part.

The first tested hypothesis (**H1**) was that people in low objective status will be more likely to accept inequality in contexts that may generate more dissonance. In the model testing indirect attitudes (ideal income inequality ratios), it is only the amount of perceived inequality and not the objective amount of contextual inequality that moderates the relationship between inequality ideals and objective status (Table 1, M3B). Importantly, the relationship is present for incomes of ministers and not for CEOs, which, according to the underlying logic of the hypthesis (H1), would also suggest that inequalities within 'economic system' generate less internal conflict and thus less dissonance to resolve than inequalities within political system (Table 2, M4A-B). Further supporting the hypothesis is that the negative interaction effect between the family income and perceived inequality on ideal inequality is only present in countries with above-average (sample-wise) Gini coefficient (Table 2, M5A-B). Similarly, when explicit statements judging presence and usefulness of

[6] Removing the constraints on the random part of the model by allowing for slopes of the key predictors to vary between countries and years and including the covariates (Table 1, M2B & M2C) negatively affected the strength of the association between the measure of objective inequality and objective status, the Gini coefficient and family income respectively, and to a lesser extent also the relationship between the objective country-level inequality and subjective status. The same pattern of results was also observed in the last intermediate model that allows for covariance between slopes and intercepts (Table 1, M3A). The results are sensitive to specifications of the random part of the model, suggesting that there are further contextual differences unadressed by our model.

income differences are considered (i.e., questions on whether the differences incomes in the country are too large and whether large differences in incomes are necessary for the country to prosper), the expected effect only manifested in more unequal contexts (Table 2, M6-M7). Overall, the data indicate that both higher objective and perceived inequality may lead to acceptance of the unequal status quo among those presumably experiencing the greatest dissonance (people in low objective status). However, the results suggest that there is a difference between justifying compensation of economic and political representatives.[7]

The powerlessness hypothesis (**H2**) stated that people who consider themselves to be in low-status positions may accept the unequal arrangements when they feel greater feelings of dependency on the system. Such emotions should be elicited more often in objectively unequal contexts that don't offer many avenues for alternative mobility paths. People with lower reported social status were more likely to accept higher income differences in objectively more unequal contexts, but this relationship has weakened, and even disapperead as more controls were added in subsequent models, indicating that it is not very robust (Table 1, M1-M3B). Closer examination of the association showed that it was only statistically significant for ministers and not for CEOs, although the difference between the slopes was not as pronounced as was the case for the association between the objective status and justification of incomes for these two occupations across countries with different level of inequality (Table 2, M4A-B). Such difference would then support the notion that subjective status shapes attitudes differently than simply as a mediator of one's objective position. Similarly to (**H1**), (**H2**) is only supported in highly-unequal countries (Table 1, M5B). It is therefore possible that a certain level of inequality is necessary to generate amounts of dissonance not reconcilable without engaging in disproportionate system justification. Similar result was found when examining economic attitudes measured with explicit judgments as DVs (Table 2, M6-M7). In sum, the proposition that it is the subjective experience of powerlessness that leads people to perceive the status quo as fair is supported only in more unequal contexts, and even less so when judging the necessity of income inequality (**H2**).

As hypothesized in median voter theorem (**H3**), objective status, measured as family income, correlates positively with attitudes supporting greater inequality or less redistribution. Median voter hypothesis, however, receives support only at the micro-level as

[7] As the goal of the present paper was to disentangle the objective and subjective (or perceived) socio-economic status and objective and perceived inequality vis-a-vis status legitimacy effect, we leave closer assessment of this relationship to further study. In the model estimated in this chapter, Sengupta et al.'s (2015) idea about different hierarchies being justified differently by the disadvantaged was explicitly considered only to the degree that we focused on economic inequality and measures of economic positions. The implied logic of their argument, also echoed by Trump & White (2015), that economic, compared to political, hiearchy should generate greater dissonance among the economically disadvantaged and is therefore be more likely to be justified by the economically disadvantaged, would not be supported by this outcome. However, the original hypothesis also states that the distadvantaged should feel at least partially responsible for the state of the system, which could generate additional dissonance among the economically disadvantagedand motivate their willingness to legitimize high incomes of their elected representatives but not of businessmen. The next chapter (3) explores differences in justification of these two different in hierarchies (political and economic) more directly.

the overall level of inequality within a country is not negatively related to support for inequality for neither indirectly nor explicitly measured ideals (Table 1, M3). In comparison to the better off, the disadvantaged in more unequal countries are less likely to agree with a statement that income differences in a country are too large (Table 2, M7). There is also no main effect of family income on the statement that large differences in income are necessary for country's prosperity.

A toned-down version of median voter hypothesis, the bounded rationality hypothesis (**H4**), was that those who believe they are the overall winners within the status quo are more likely to oppose redistribution and justify inequality. Overall, the hypothesis is supported with the main effect of subjective status being strongly significant across all models. When contextual moderation is taken into consideration, the data support the hypothesis when indirect attitudes are considered as the DV (Table 1, M3B). On the other hand, greater perceived inequality does not lead to perceived necessity of large income differences, nor to denial of their excessive presence among those who place themselves as higher on the income ladder (Table 2, M6-M7).

Finally, we introduced a model testing the effects of both the 'changes' and of the 'overall differences' in levels of contextual inequality (Table 3, M9-M10). The model shows that both the overall and an increase in inequality reduce differences in assessment of whether 'income differences are too large' between those in objectively higher and lower status, thus support hypothesis (**H1**). This suggests that the effect originally proposed in status-legitimacy hypothesis (judgment that the society is fair - or rather not excessively unfair) holds in objectively more unequal contexts as well as in societies experiencing increases in inequality. The disadvantaged seem to adjust to high levels of inequality over time (Table 3, M10). Conversely, people with low subjective status seem to only accept relatively 'long-term' levels of inequality as indicated by positive interaction between change in Gini and subjective status in Table 3 (M9).

Our findings thus corroborate wealth of empirical evidence in which the subjective potential victims of change rally in order to protect their interests at first and accepting the novel status quo only with the passing of time.

Discussion

The question of members of low-status groups supporting unequal social arrangements presents a puzzle that is challenging to explain within the intuitive frameworks of people behaving according to economic rationality. The SJT offers an explanation that people are motivated to have positive attitudes towards existing social systems - and even more so if such systems are putting them in a disadvantage (the status-legitimacy hypothesis). Various interpretations of this proposition posit powerlessness and experiences of being disadvantaged as immediate drivers of the sometimes counter-intuitive motivation to system-justify

(Sengupta et al. 2015; van der Toorn et al., 2015). Experimental research shows that there are multiple ways to increase the said motivation (van der Toorn & Jost, 2014) but most findings from comparative national samples provide only mixed support for the hypothesis (Brandt, 2013; Trump & White, 2015; but see Milojev, Greaves, Osborne, & Sibley, 2015).

The goal of this paper was to examine the conditions under which the paradoxical effect of the disadvantaged justifying the status quo manifests and assess whether such conditions are consistent with the predictions originally proposed by Jost et al. (2003b) and clarified in van der Toorn et al. (2015). Focusing on economic dimension of social systems, consistent with the findings of Brandt (2013), this study failed to find overall cross-contextual negative relationships between measures of objective or subjective status and measures of support for the unequal status quo. Instead, the results indicate that people hold attitudes that are reasonably in line with expectations of (bounded) rationality hypotheses and that both objective and subjective status are positively related to acceptance of inequality. The greater the perceived inequality, the greater the attitudinal gap between those who consider themselves the winners and losers within the standing status quo. At the same time, however, both objective and perceived amount of inequality moderate the relationship between objective (and to some degree also subjective) status and support for unequal status quo. In the most unequal contexts, people in objectively lower socioeconomic positions were more likely than those from more affluent households to agree with a statement that large differences in incomes are necessary for country's prosperity (Figure 1), and least likely to agree with a statement that income differences in the country are too large (Figure 2).

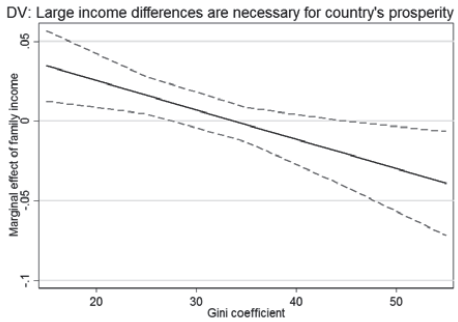

Figure 1 Marginal effects of family income depending on contextual inequality (Gini) on agreement with the statement that large incomes differences are necessary for the country's prosperity

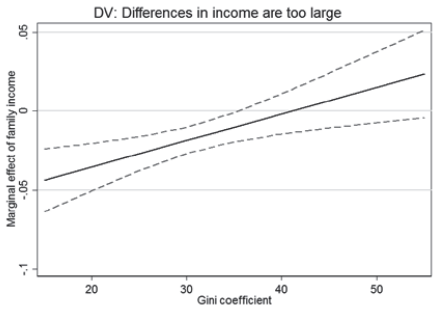

Figure 2 Marginal effects of family income depending on contextual inequality (Gini) on agreement with the statement that income differences in the respondent's country are too large

Such form of contextual moderation is consistent with predictions of the original formulation of status-legitimacy hypothesis. This indicates that objective status is a better predictor of feelings of powerlessness than subjective status. The proposed intermediate mechanism of experiences of powerlessness and dependency may serve as a fitting explanation for obtained results. People in less unequal countries, in which levels of redistribution are presumably higher, may feel less pressured to have positive attitudes towards economic inequality simply due to redistribution already being the dominant norm in the given society. Likewise, people in countries where redistribution is greater may feel less dependent on their current low paying jobs, thus experiencing less dependency and powerlessness vis-à-vis considerations of following alternative options. This interpretation is further supported in a model in which healthcare expenditures are used as a proxy for institutionalized level of redistribution (Table 2, M8).8 Our findings are also consistent with those of Li, Yang, We and Kou (2020), who recently proposed their own explanation for why objective and subjective SES should relate differently to justification of the standing system. In their view, one's objective position may be related to individual-level differentiation in having access to different kind of information and one's subjective position should be related to one's interest in the maintenace of the system. From this perspective, those at the bottom of the hierarchy might not be aware of the extent of existing inequalities or opportunities for either their own personal advancement or for societal change. On the other hand, those at the top of the hierarchy should not only be aware of the above but, given that objective SES is positively related to one's education, they should also have the necessary tools to doubt the utility of the perceived inequalities for the society and criticize their forms or origins. Such line of reasoning, supported also by our findings, offers a partial explanation for why subjective SES has not been a successful predictor of status-legitimacy effect and underlines the importance of taking into account people's beliefs about the structure of the society within which they position themselves.

[8] Expenditures healthcare expressed as percentage of GDP; taken from Quality of Government databases from University of Gothenburg.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our approach also has its limitations. The utilized data are not a true panel, thus limiting our ability to infer conclusions about effects of changes in (perceived) inequality on attitudes of particular individuals. Also, the measures of system-justifying attitudes and subjective experience of powerlessness (which was proposed to be increasing the motivation to endorse the status quo) are not without problems. Firstly, the questionnaire openly addressed issues of fairness and inequality, something which should make self and group interest salient and thus compete with motivation to defend the system. Secondly, using objective or subjective status is not an ideal way of approximating likelihood of experiences of powerlessness and dissonance. Questions about perceived ability to reach one's goals could be devised and tested to measure powerlessness in cross-cultural surveys.

Further research could then focus on ascertaining whether endorsement of unequal arrangements and inequality justifying attitudes are direct consequences of limited amount of perceived general availability of options to reach one's goals (dependency), or of perceived inability to utilize those said options (powerlessness).

Similarly, while there was some unexpected support of inequality among those with low subjective status in more unequal contexts, objective status seemed to be more clearly related to the theorized phenomenon. Subsequent theoretical and experimental work on status-legitimacy hypothesis should address why experiences of powerlessness - presumed to be eliciting motivation to system-justify among the disadvantaged - do not translate into lower self-reported status.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, we found stronger support for a notion that experiences tied to objective, rather than subjective low status may motivate people to defend experienced unequal economic arrangements. This presents support for the original claim of Jost et al. (2003b) and its reading by Sengupta et al. (2015). However, Sengupta et al.'s reading, that it is the particular hierarchy responsible for one's disadvantaged position that will be justified, is not supported by positive effect of interaction between perceived inequality and objective status on assessment of differences in incomes being too large. Neither it is supported by objectively low-status respondents defending incomes of ministers, rather than CEOs, in more unequal contexts. Such results point to people selectively defending the unequal hierarchies and institutional arrangements, but not those that might be seen as exacerbating or profiting from their disadvantaged positions.

On the other hand, van der Toorn et al. (2015), based on demonstrations that feelings of powerlessness heighten motivation to system-justify, theorized that subjective status might be a better predictor of system-justifying attitudes. This interpretation of status-legitimacy hypothesis received only a limited support in data covering 28 countries over two decades.

To assess the conditions in which status-legitimacy effect manifests, we have differentiated between objective and subjective status, and between objective and perceived inequality in incomes. We have explored the relationships of relevant constructs utilizing cross-cultural representative survey data. Our design has multiple advantages over previous research. First, by explicitly distinguishing between subjective and objective status, we are able to address the confusion stemming from usage of the elusive concept (van der Toorn et al., 2015). We show that objective disadvantage, and less so subjective disadvantage, translate into heightened motivation to defend the system in highly unequal contexts. Secondly, we utilize both indirect and explicit attitudes towards income inequality in order to assess the likely extent of acceptance of status quo among the participants. The results point to different mechanisms motivating acceptance of inequality indirectly defined via ratios of earnings of particular occupations and agreements with explicit statements judging presence and usefulness of differences in incomes. In addition, we clearly show that earnings for top market and political occupational positions are justified differently, presumably due to generating different amounts of dissonance. Thirdly, we model temporal changes in contextual inequality. Thus, while we can conclude that high income inequality is related to increased likelihood of injuctification among the disadvantaged, we are also able to show that the opposite is the case among the subjectively low-status when income inequality increases in the medium term.

The explicit attention of this study on the objective and subjective allows us to address the possible consequences of rising economic inequality for how people perceive the legitimacy of economic and political arrangements and institutions. While the puzzling tendency of some of the members of the lower strata (and recently of the shrinking middle-class) to protect the status quo through support of economically right-wing parties may remain unanswered for the time being, our results bring forward the possible role of the perceived lack of options or ability to act on these (i.e. powerlessness). On the other hand, the general mechanism that is proposed to drive system-justifying attitudes may shed light on a seemingly opposite phenomenon, an increasing rise in popularity of populist movements across the globe.

One of the often-cited sources of support for current populist and authoritarian movements is economic anxiety coupled with loss of faith and confidence in the system or in "politics as usual" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The recent surge of populist and authoritarian movements culminated, among others, in, first, a decisive victory of the Conservative Party in the 2015 UK general election, and a subsequent positive vote to leave the European Union and take back control despite the Conservative leader's opposition to the proposition only a year later. Similarly, in the case of the 2016 US Presidential election, populist candidates gathered considerable support on both left and right sides of the political spectrum, while the politicians labeled as 'establishment candidates' did not fare well, especially among Republicans. In France, we have seen a collapse of the support for the incumbent left-leaning politicians and parties in both the presidential and legislative elections of 2017.

Taken together, there are indications of a decline of the belief in the capability of the government to reign in the consequences of globalization and fairly regulate and redistribute the accrued surplus. In countries where inequalities are (at least subjectively) felt the most, those who do not see or no longer believe in possible alternatives may be motivated to seek certainty by affirmation of existing or already-known orders rather than by risking an approach oriented towards further change. Indeed, the results of this study point to a decisive importance of subjective beliefs about both the state of the world and one's own position in it in regard to formation of attitudes towards the prevailing socio-economic order.

Table 1 Suggested legitimate earnings for high-earning occupations (compared to suggested earnings for low-earning occupations) - nested model

		EM	M0	M1	M2A	*M2B*	*M2C*	*M3A*	*M3B*
structural variables	**Family Income**		**.116(.005)**	**.093(.005)**	**.063(.004)**	**.061(.01)**	**.052(.01)**	**.061(.01)**	**.052(.01)**
	Education						**.01(.001)**		**.01(.001)**
	Gender						**-.08(.005)**		**-.081(.005)**
	Age						**.005(.000)**		**.005(.000)**
'subjective variables'	**Subjective status**			**.245(.019)**	**.335(.016)**	**.332(.032)**	**.268(.029)**	**.332(.033)**	**.267(.029)**
	Perceived Inequality (individual)				**.487(.003)**	**.486(.003)**	**.468(.003)**	**.486(.003)**	**.486(.003)**
	Equity/Need						**.211(.01)**		**.21(.01)**
Context level-	*Perceived inequality (national mean)*				**.413(.035)**	**.413(.035)**	**.444(.044)**	**.481(.032)**	**.508(.04)**
variables	Gini index		**2.59(.677)**	**2.48(.667)**	.705(.409)+	.705(.409)+	.899(.505)+	.59(.381)	.72(.469)
	Eastern Europe						-.059(.073)		-.02(.061)
	1999						.007(.038)		-.015(.036)
1992 (reference)	**2009**						-.051(.055)		-.085(.048)
	Family Income		.304(.215)	.344(.212)	.086(.119)	.086(.119)	.105(.114)	.101(.113)	.127(.036)
	Education						-.005(.016)		-.001(.013)
	Gender						-342(.384)		-.419(.362)
	Age						-.000(.008)		.006(.007)
	Subjective status			-.845(.504)	.043(.296)	.043(.296)	-.078(.384)	.268(.245)	.124(.333)
	Equity/Need						**.577(.277)**		.288(.224)
Interaction effects									
Gini index x	**Family Income**		**-.177(.065)**	-.047(.069)	**-.141(.058)**	-.097(.144)	-.137(.138)	-.046(.146)	-.065(.139)
	Subjective status			**-1.22(.276)**	**-1.2(.23)**	-.859(.472)+	-743(.409)+	-.843(.47)+	-.649(.411)
Perceived Inequality x	**Family Income**				**-.014(.005)**	**-.014(.005)**	**-.015(.005)**	**-.014(.005)**	**-.015(.005)**
	Subjective status				**.175(.019)**	**.175(.019)**	**.166(.018)**	**.175(.019)**	**.165(.018)**
	constant	1.466(.051)	1.46(.046)	1.455(.045)	1.468(.026)	1.468(.026)	1.507(.05)	1.47(.024)	1.518(.044)
	Family Income					.000(.000)	.001(.000)	.001(.000)	.001(.000)
variance parameters	Subjective status					.01(.007)	.008(.007)	.01(.008)	.008(.007)
(country/year)	constant	.034(.008)	.028(.007)	.027(.007)	.008(.002)	.008(.002)	.006(.002)	.01(.003)	.008(.003)
	Family Income x Subjective Status							-.001(.001)	-.002(.001)
covariance parameters	Family Income x constant							-.001(.001)	-.001(.001)
(country/year)	Subjective Status x constant							-.005(.003)	-.002(.003)
	Family Income					.002(.001)	.002(.001)	.002(.001)	.002(.001)
variance parameters	Subjective status					.017(.008)	.011(.007)	.017(.008)	.011(.007)
(country)	constant	.057(.02)	.045(.017)	.043(.016)	.015(.005)	.015(.005)	.014(.006)	.012(.005)	.011(.005)
	Family Income x Subjective Status							.001(.002)	.002(.002)
covariance parameters	Family Income x constant							-.004(.002)	-.004(.002)
(country)	Subjective Status x constant							-.001(.005)	-.005(.004)
	Residual	.534(.003)	.528(.003)	.526(.003)	.370(.002)	.368(.002)	.358(.002)	.368(.002)	.358(.002)
	Level 1 n	48802	48802	48802	48802	48802	48802	48802	48802
	Level 2 n	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64
	Level 3 n	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
	AIC	107576.9	107575.6	107408.8	90282.15	90119.9	88796.78	90116.58	88793.19
	BIC	107647.2	107637.2	107505.5	90414.08	90287.02	89060.64	90336.47	89109.83
	ICC country	.075(.026)	.074(.026)	.073(.026)	.037(.013)	.037(.014)	.036(.015)	.03(.012)	.03(.013)
	ICC wave/country	.122(.024)	.122(.024)	.118(.024)	.057(.13)	.058(.012)	.053(.013)	.055(.011)	.052(.011)

Note. Presented are unstandardized coefficient; numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Dependent variable is legitimate level of income inequality calculated as log of ratio of suggested incomes for ministers and CEOs to suggested incomes for unskilled workers and shop assistants; Perceived inequality is expressed as a log of a ratio constructed analogical to legitimate inequality; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .05 are bolded; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .1 are denoted with +; data: ISSP 1992, 1999, and 2009

Table 2 Agreement with a statement that large income differences are necessary for country's prosperity (M6) - 2-level model; and that income differences in the country are too large - nested model (M7)

		M4A	M4B	M5A	M5B	M6	M7	M8
structural variables	**Family Income**	**.058(.011)**	**.049(.011)**	**.061(.018)**	**.049(.021)**	.005(.005)	**-.017(.004)**	**.054(.011)**
	Education	**.009(.001)**	**.014(.001)**	**.011(.001)**	**.008(.001)**	**-.004(.001)**	**-.002(.000)**	**.008(.001)**
	Gender	**-.075(.006)**	**-.058(.006)**	**-.075(.006)**	**-.087(.01)**	**-.019(.003)**	**.024(.002)**	**-.088(.007)**
	Age	**.004(.000)**	**.006(.000)**	**.005(.000)**	**.005(.000)**	**.001(.000)**	**.0003(.000)**	**.004(.000)**
'subjective variables'	**Subjective status**	**.262(.034)**	**.27(.026)**	**.302(.074)**	**.396(.056)**	**.142(.013)**	**-.151(.014)**	**.286(.031)**
Perceived Inequality (individual) / CEOs M4A / ministers M4B		**.463(.005)**	**.472(.005)**	**.463(.005)**	**.463(.005)**	**.486(.003)**	**-.024(.002)**	**.024(.001)**
	Equity/Need	**.237(.012)**	**.186(.012)**	**.207(.011)**	**.216(.018)**	.01(.006)+	**-.077(.004)**	**.198(.012)**
Context level-variables	*Perceived inequality (national mean)*	**.432(.036)**	**.574(.063)**	**.572(.062)**	**.364(.056)**	-.055(.032)+	**.043(.014)**	**. 509(.046)**
	Gini / Healthcare spending (M8)	**1.28(.532)**	.007(.532)	.468(1.001)	1.54(.952)	**.798(.275)**	**.439(.184)**	-.008(.012)
	Eastern Europe	-.002(.079)	-105(.08)	-.119(.095)	**-.224(.087)**	.069(.047)	**.103(.027)**	**-.138(.066)**
1992 (reference)	**1999**	.018(.037)	.034(.047)	.007(.047)	-.059(.058)	-.041(.022)	-.014(.012)	
	2009	-.074(.055)	-.035(.064)	-.066(.075)	-.093(.069)		-.049(.019)	-.043(.037)
	Family Income	.127(.036)	.1(.113)	.158(.108)	.127(.036)	-.032(.075)	**.166(.034)**	-.138(.205)
	Education	-.001(.013)	-.004(.024)	.017(.017)	-.001(.013)	-.01(.009)	-.002(.006)	-.026(.017)
	Gender	-.419(.362)	-.499(.467)	-.314(.385)	-.419(.362)	-.266(.26)	-.069(.123)	-.376(.455)
	Age	.006(.007)	.002(.008)	.002(.008)	.006(.007)	.002(.004)	**.007(.002)**	.002(.009)
	Subjective status	.124(.333)	-.404(.52)	-.01(.386)	.124(.333)	**.568(.276)**	.041(.132)	.016(.415)
	Equity/Need	.524(.29)+	**.655(.3)**	.39(.305)	**1.336(.38)**	-.163(.142)	-.093(.099)	.41(.276)
Interaction effects								
Gini / Healthcare spending (M8) x	**Family Income**	.052(.15)	**-.303(.149)**	.046(.325)	-.075(.261)	**-.185(.066)**	**.168(.057)**	.004(.004)
	Subjective status	-.781(.483)	**-.736(.366)**	.959(1.26)	**-2.46(.637)**	-.449(.286)+	**.672(.196)**	**.037(.011)**
Perceived Inequality x	**Family Income**	-.001(.004)	**-.034(.006)**	.008(.007)	**-.023(.006)**	.004(.003)	-.003(.002)+	**-.018(.005)**
	Subjective status	**.158(.018)**	**.192(.023)**	**.189(.026)**	**.145(.027)**	.008(.012)	.004(.007)	**.173(.021)**
	constant	1.597(.052)	1.342(.055)	1.568(.071)	1.518(.062)	.374(.027)	.786(.018)	1.533(.036)
variance parameters (country/year)	Family Income	.001(.001)	.001(.001)	.001(.001)	.000(.001)	.001(.000)	.000(.000)	.000(.000)
	Subjective status	.01(.008)	.009(.007)	.007(.009)	.000(.000)	.003(.001)	.001(.001)	.007(.009)
	constant	.005(.002)	.012(.003)	.005(.002)	.009(.003)	.004(.001)	.001(.000)	.008(.003)
covariance parameters (country/year)	Family Income x Subjective Status					.000(.000)	.000(.000)	
	Family Income x constant					-.001(.000)	.000(.000)	
	Subjective Status x constant					.0019.001)	.000(.000)	
variance parameters (country)	Family Income	.002(.001)	.002(.001)	.001(.001)	.002(.001)		.000(.000)	.002(.001)
	Subjective status	.016(.009)	.004(.006)	.023(.017)	.007(.007)		.004(.002)	.01(.008)
	constant	.02(.008)	.01(.006)	.006(.004)	.000(.000)		.003(.001)	.01(.003)
covariance parameters (country)	Family Income x Subjective Status						.001(.000)	
	Family Income x constant						.000(.000)	
	Subjective Status x constant						.001(.001)	
	Residual	.478(.003)	.47(.003)	.261(.002)	.48(.005)	.074(.001)	.046(.000)	.389(.003)
	Level 1 n	48802	48802	27170	21632	28328	48255	36931
	Level 2 n	64	64	35	29	38	64	51
	Level 3 n	28	28	16	16		28	28
	AIC	102791.2	102028.1	40884.23	45678.41	6920.925	-11211.56	70242.29
	BIC	103055	102291.9	41130.53	45917.87	7160.222	-10895.33	70489.28
	ICC country	.04(.015)	.02(.011)				.056(.022)	.026(.012)
	ICC wave/country	.05(.014)	.044(.009)			.05(.012)	.073(.02)	.44(.01)

Note. Presented are unstandardized coefficient; numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Samples for M5A and M5B are restricted to country-year clusters with Gini below and above the sample mean, respectively. Dependent variables for M4A and M4B are analogical tothe main DV, but only restricted to suggested ratios of earnings for CEOs (M4A) and ministers (M4B) to those of unskilled workers. Dependent variable for M6 is an agreement with a statement that Large differences in incomes are necessary for country's prosperity (0-1; strongly (dis)agree); Dependent variable for M7 is an agreement with a statement that income differences within the country are too large (0-1; strongly (dis)agree); Dependent variable for M8 is individual's ideal level of income inequality as in models EM - M4; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .05 are bolded; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .1 are denoted with +; data: ISSP 1992, 1999, and 2009

Table 3 Models M3 & M7 with disentangled Gini

		M9	M10
main effects		*Suggested Legitimate Inequality*	*Differences in Incomes too Large*
structural variables	**Family Income**	**.052(.001)**	**-.017(.004)**
	Education	**.01(.001)**	**-.002(.000)**
	Gender	**-.08(.005)**	**.024(.002)**
	Age	**.005(.000)**	**.0003(.000)**
'subjective variables'	**Subjective status**	**.268(.028)**	**-.152(.015)**
	Perceived Inequality (individual)	**.468(.003)**	**.024(.001)**
	Equity/Need	**.21(.01)**	**-.077(.004)**
Context level-variables	*Perceived inequality (national mean)*	**.446(.044)**	**.045(.015)**
	Gini (between)	.01(.006)+	-.001(.002)
	Gini(within)	.003(.01)	**.012(.004)**
	Eastern Europe	-.034(.082)	.055(.029)
	1999	.014(.039)	-.0156(.014)
1992 (reference)	**2009**	-.041(.057)	-.039(.02)+
	Family Income	.094(.115)	**.162(.04)**
	Education	-.006(.016)	-.003(.006)
	Gender	-.395(.39)	.085(.136)
	Age	.001(.008)	.004(.003)+
	Subjective status	.058(.431)	**-.329(.151)**
	Equity/Need	**.61(.28)**	-.166(.099)+
Interaction effects			
Gini (between)	**Family Income**	-.002(.001)	**.002(.001)**
	Subjective status	**-.011(.004)**	**.008(.002)**
Gini (within)	**Family Income**	-001(.004)	**.005(.002)**
	Subjective status	**.03(.013)**	-.003(.005)
Perceived Inequality	**Family Income**	**-.015(.004)**	-.003(.002)+
	Subjective status	**.165(.018)**	.004(.007)
	constant	1.493(.054)	.796(.019)
Random Parameters			
Wave		σ^2	σ^2
Family Income		.001(.000)	.000(.000)
Subjective status		.004(.005)	.001(.001)
constant		.014(.006)	.001(.000)
Country			
Family Income		.002(.001)	.000(.000)
Subjective status		.012(.006)	.005(.002)
constant		.014(.006)	.002(.001)
	Residual	.358(.002)	.046(.000)
	Level 1 n	48802	48255
	Level 2 n	64	64
	Level 3 n	28	28
AIC		88793.6	-11203.34
BIC		89083.85	-10913.46
ICC country		.036(.015)	.037(.014)
ICC wave/country		.053(.013)	.052(.013)

Note. Presented are unstandardized coefficient; numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Dependent variable is legitimate level of income inequality calculated as log of ratio of suggested incomes for ministers and CEOs to suggested incomes for unskilled workers and shop assistants; Perceived inequality is expressed as a log of a ratio constructed analogical to legitimate inequality; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .05 are bolded; Effects significantly different from zero at p < .1 are denoted with +; data: ISSP 1992, 1999, and 2009

Abstract

System justification theory aims to address the puzzle of lower classes supporting the system from which they only extract limited utility by positing that people are motivated to see the social arrangements in which they live as fair, desirable, and legitimate. Combined with insights from the theory of cognitive dissonance, the so-called status-legitimacy hypothesis states that it may paradoxically be those who have to endure the most hardship who would be the most motivated to defend and support the system which puts them in disadvantage. As the hypothesis has only mixed support in the empirical literature, an explanation was put forward that it is only the part of the system that creates the most dissonance for the individual which will be over-legitimized. In this paper, we identify two possible sources of dissonance that could motivate the members of the lower classes to legitimize the system. First, we adopt Lane's (1986) perspective explaining that political institutions create more dissonance than market institutions, and hypothesize that while political institutions will be perceived as legitimate by the members of the lower classes, market institutions will be seen as less legitimate. Second, we hypothesize that those over and under-estimating their class should report higher or lower perceived legitimacy of the system. We utilize data from General Social Survey (2010-2016; total n = 4151) and show that those in lower classes report higher confidence in political, but not market institutions compared to those members of the upper classes. Similarly, relative to those under- or correctly estimating their class, those over-estimating their class positioning reported higher confidence in political compared to market institutions. The results support the idea that dissonance generated by particular hierarchy may motivate legitimization of said hierarchy among the disadvantaged.

Chapter Three

Market Legitimacy, Political Legitimacy

Motivational account of legitimization

While expected to reduce uncertainty and costs, social systems also tend to generate systemic mechanisms that distribute power and resources in patterned and asymmetric ways, thus, over time, institutionalizing inequalities on a group basis and forming what is in sociology known as social stratification (Brinkerhoff, Ortega, & Weitz, 2013; Piketty & Saez, 2014). Since people perceive and usually have opinions regarding the aforementioned (however formed and ill-informed), the big question across social sciences remains: why do we often see deviance from the Meltzer and Richard's (1981) model of a rational voter who asks the government to redistribute when earning less than median income? Why not ask for a change and instead choose more of the same?

Illuminating the rationalizations that may stand in the way of formation of class consciousness and effective engagement in class struggle, interview-based works highlight how those at the top and the bottom provide similarly sounding accounts of a pervasive notion that personal qualities and output determine one's fortunes in a system that is essentially fair and makes sense. For instance, members of the lower strata talk of appreciation for hard work, and consider poverty as something people bring unto themselves by being lazy and of a weak character (Durrheim, Jacobs, & Dixon, 2014; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). At the same time, many of the top earners also seem to engage in processes of legitimization of the rules and distributions of status quo (within the scope of their own references groups), and explain how if you are really good and passionate, you can get £100 million, a large, but not ridiculous amount of money, within 20 years (Hecht, 2017).

Indeed, existence of tendencies for injunctification of status quo is well documented (Hussak & Cimpian, 2015; Kay et al., 2009a; Salomon & Cimpian, 2014), as is people accepting and coming up with hardly convincing, yet popular, complementary stereotypes and explanations for ending up with the short end of the stick - e.g., poor but happy; where there's a will, there's a way (Hochschild, 1981; Kay & Jost, 2003; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Wiederkehr, Bonnot, Krauth-Gruber, & Darnon, 2015).[9] Offering a motivational account of the phenomenon, System Justification Theory (SJT) suggests that legitimization of the standing social, economic, and political order helps in attempts to satisfy epistemological, existential, and relational psychological needs that give us sense of agency, safety, and

[9] In general, as Elster (1982) suggests, the lower classes, in attempts to reduce dissonance and understand their inferior status, come up with or adopt explanations which are ultimately contrary to their interest due to a 'tendency to overshoot'.

belongingness (Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Jost et al., 2008a; Kay et al., 2009c; Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007).[10]

Crucially, according to SJT, these tendencies are expected to play out differently between the members of the high-status and low-status groups (Harding & Sibley, 2013; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2008c). For members of high-status groups, it is psychologically consistent to simultaneously hold positive images of themselves, their groups, and the social system their well-being is dependent on. In this way, the (at least nominally) successful may believe that it was their efforts, rather than ascribed attributes, that lead to them occupying their stations.[11] On the other hand, those of lower status are likely to repeatedly encounter situations in which concurrently believing in their personal positive qualities and the fairness of the system becomes untenable.

In such cases, people may experience cognitive dissonance, a psychologically unpleasant state characterized by physiological arousal indicating inconsistencies between thoughts, emotions, sensations, or actions (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995; Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Harmon-Jones, 2009).[12] Particularly salient for our context of legitimization of the system by those in low-status positions, the counter-intuitive predictions of dissonance theory were demonstrated in studies where people would stick with and justify previously chosen course of action in spite of evidence of its failings (Staw, 1981), or in studies showing increased group commitment following abuse and suffering (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Wicklund & Brehm, 2013).

Building on the framework of cognitive dissonance and working under the assumption that there is a distinct psychological motivation to view the system as legitimate, SJT theorists proposed a hypothesis that, under conditions of choice (e.g., possibility to change jobs or vote in election), low self and group-interest saliency (e.g., absence of protest movements or of awareness of a possibility of change), and availability of system legitimizing myths highlighting personal responsibility and value of effort (e.g., American Dream or Protestant work ethic), those in low-status positions may choose to reduce the experienced dissonance between expected fairness and observed unfairness of the system in favor of the said system instead of their material or group interests (Jost et al., 2003b). In other words, status-legitimacy hypothesis (SLH) states that, at least sometimes, it should be those

[10] Although similar effects can be, in practice, achieved by heightened commitment to any set of preexisting beliefs or other forms of psychological compensation (e.g., Proulx, Inzlicht, & Harmon-Jones, 2012), compared to system-challenging beliefs, ideologies legitimizing the standing system should be readily available to most of its members and allowing for psychological comfort of knowing that the world is generally a fair and orderly place (e.g., Landau, Kay, & Whitson, 2015; Lerner, 1980), and of shared reality with important others (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Stern et al., 2014a).

[11] Indeed, this would be different for people from societies with different value-systems.

[12] In experimental paradigms aimed at elicitation of dissonance, subjects often come to believe that the choice they have made between two equal options was better than the alternative (Brehm, 1956), that a boring and meaningless task was more enjoyable when not compensated (Weick, 1964), and that overvaluation of the outcome may justify additional exerted effort (Wan & Chiou, 2010).

profiting the least from the current system who should be the most motivated to legitimize the status quo.

Extant debate

Prior research assessed the SLH's predictions in multiple, though often distinct ways, with support for the hypothesis coming, for instance, from studies done among Bolivian and French school children (Henry & Saul, 2006; Wiederkehr et al., 2015), and New Zealand's minorities (Sengupta et al., 2015) and working-class (Milojev et al., 2015). Further experimental evidence came with a refinement of the conditions under which SLH manifests, and a test of a potential mediating mechanism motivating heightened support of the system - feelings of powerlessness and dependency (Laurin, Kay & Shepherd, 2011; van der Toorn et al., 2015). On the other hand, the robustness of the effect was called into question by studies which failed to detect the expected relationships using cross-cultural survey-based data (Brandt, 2013; Caricati, 2017; Lee, Pratto, & Johnson, 2011; Trump & White, 2015).

Based on these findings, proposed explanations for the diverging support of the hypothesis can be classified into two groups. First one, which we may dub 'the dissonance thesis', put forward by Sengupta et al. (2015), and partially echoed by Trump and White (2015), states that the status-legitimacy effect only manifests in relation to the particular dimension of the system, or the hierarchy, that generates the most dissonance in experiences of the individual. In other words, repeatedly experiencing political injustice should lead to psychological defense of the political system and not to legitimization of the economic system, and vice versa. The second offered explanation, which we may call 'the powerlessness thesis', points instead at the subjective nature of feelings of powerlessness which lead to legitimization (van der Toorn et al., 2015). In this view, it is the subjective assessment of one's powerlessness and dependency on the system which leads to its legitimization. Thus, the first proposition suggests differentiating between possible targets of legitimization, while the second recommends increased attention to indicators and sources of powerlessness and dependency on the system.

In what follows, we address the abovementioned discussion in two ways. First, echoing the call for a more narrow target of legitimization, we disentangle an already utilized measure of perceived system legitimacy - confidence in a set of institutions (Brandt, 2013) - and take inspiration from Lane's (1986) analysis of market and political institutions in order to identify which parts of the institutional system should generate greater dissonance among the public. Secondly, we specify the ways in which differences between subjective (S-SES) and objective (O-SES) socio-economic status may generate experiences of dissonance and powerlessness. In doing so, we will consider two sources of dissonance, the first one coming from the observed discrepancies in internal logic and performance of public and private institutions, the second from differences between expectations and experiences regarding one's socio-economic status. We analyze data from General Social Survey, thus conforming to

the boundary conditions of the original formulation of the hypothesis by utilizing data from a country with a traditionally meritocratic culture and a history of strong democratic institutions. Furthermore, we will limit our sample to the data gathered during two terms of one president representing one major political party in order to limit the variance in attitudes that could be related to constructs such as party identity.

Legitimacy and Institutional Trust

Both theoretical and empirical accounts point to multiple related dimensions of institutional trust and legitimacy, with scholars most often distinguishing between public and private institutions (Lipset & Schneider, 1983; Newton & Norris, 1999; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Already trust and legitimacy differ in that trust is more of a property of predictability and legitimacy a property of possessing rightful power to demand deference (e.g., Jackson & Gau, 2016; Tyler, 2006). The perceived institutional legitimacy is then derived from institution and their representatives following through with values and goals for pursuit of which these (institutions) have been established. For instance, among public institutions, representational (or political) institutions (e.g., parliaments) provide a public space for conflict management and discussions about competing visions for the future of a given society, and implementational (or order) institutions (e.g., police) attempt and implement the selected vision and maintain order. While political institutions and representatives are expected to be ideologically biased and act in (good faith) in line with their ideological convictions (which is perhaps a reason why we so often see ideological opponents accuse each other of hypocrisy), implementational institutions are expected to stay unbiased and simply carry out previously agreed on tasks (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Crucially, political and, to a degree, order institutions are informed about the factors determining their legitimacy from the voters. On the other hand, private institutions (e.g., companies) often define their own goals and thus can only generate dissonance regarding their legitimacy if they fail in achieving these (Katz, 2000; Lane, 1986).

From the perspective of cognitive dissonance theory, given that it is only the political institutions that fulfill the criterion of partial responsibility (e.g., voters vote and may feel partially responsible for how the representational institutions perform), we expect these to generate the most dissonance. In particular, since political institutions may be deemed responsible for living conditions in a given society, it should be representatives of political institutions that would be held responsible for undue disadvantages of the lower strata in the most unequal societies (Anderson & Singer, 2008).[13] Our argument is then that with political institutions, people experience dissonance between expectations in regard to role and perceived performance of the institutions in question and officials holding the positions. This may be further affected by factors such as partisanship, ideology, or other personal preferences governing one's interpretation of the current state of affairs and of its appropriateness. While public institutions are often expected to equalize outcomes, at least to

[13] It could also be that people might desire change of institutions rather than of representatives.

some degree, the very idea of political equality is at odds not only with personal experience of many individuals, but also with how power and influence of political outcomes are actually distributed. For instance, the most well-off have substantially greater political influence compared to the rest of the society (Gilens, 2005; Gilens & Page, 2014), sense of which should serve as a further source of dissonance for those with less influence - the lower strata.

Private and market institutions, on the other hand, represented by major companies and banks in our data, are generally considered independent actors which are expected to follow their goals - mostly of generating profit (McClosky & Zaller, 1984). With market institutions, two important elements for generation of dissonance are missing. First, market justice dictates that outcomes are determined by inputs of participants in the economic system, and thus it is unclear what shape or form should the outcomes take (Lane, 1986). In other words, other than due to ideological preference (if we consider any 'knowledge' an ideology), there is little reason to be surprised by outcomes within the economic system because the logics of the market focuses on distributional criteria instead of outcomes (Brickman, 1977). Therefore, one only learns about the worth of their input when they see what they get (Lane, 1986). Such unfalsifiability of the appropriateness of resulting distribution may only be challenged after abandoning the focus on the criteria and establishing the ideal outcome (given inputs). Second, market institutions are usually private in a sense that their representatives are not elected and beholden to the general public, and thus do not need to follow the norms and public consensus from which public institutions derive their legitimacy (Katz, 2000). This means that members of general public have few reasons to feel responsible for having to put up with the way markets and private institutions in general work and, consequently, less questions about their own acquiescence to answer. In particular, one does not need to trust or be confident in that major companies would act in their favor. Indeed, the measure of ‘confidence’ in these institutions may be ill-fitting for the purpose of the study, given that one can judge the profit motive as a legitimate raison d'être of major companies and, at the same time, expect to be taken advantage of by these. Such perspective is also consistent with the view of the world as a 'competitive jungle', which was shown to be associated with conservative and economically right-wing attitudes (Duckitt, 2001).

In sum, we can expect that the status-legitimacy effect will manifest more strongly with political institutions as a target of legitimization and, conversely, economic institutions will not be excessively legitimized by those belonging in the lower strata.

Status

The second source of dissonance which we will explore comes from the respondents’ personal experience vis-à-vis their own socio-economic position within the particular structure. We differentiate between objective and subjective class, and we will utilize the concept of class rather than that of income, occupational status or prestige, in order to denote socio-economic status. We do this following the logic that it is class membership

which is construed with an idea that members of particular strata enjoy similar experiences and possess similar capacities, especially in economic dimension vs. the differentiation in cultural dimension which is related more closely with occupational status (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007). Importantly, social psychological literature addressing SLH speaks of experiences of people in certain (working-class or low power) positions, rather than of desirability or prestige of such positions (Jost, 2017b). Furthermore, in this way, we echo and build on the research of Sosnaud et al. (2013), who studied effects of discordant class identity on presidential vote (with a conclusion that there is none), and thus extend the discussion about class discordance in relation to people's attitudes towards public issues.

While the researcher may use respondent's type of occupation or reported income relative to the rest of the sample (or a known societal value) to assign objective or structural status, respondents are usually left guesstimating their own position and relating it to that of perceived structure of society and their understanding of the concept of class. Affected by tendencies such as positioning oneself into the middle of presented hierarchies (Evans & Kelley, 2004) and to anticipate future mobility (Bénabou & Tirole, 2006; Cojocaru, 2014), respondent's attempt to estimate their social status may be conflated by a number of additional motivations, considerations, and a heuristic lens through which a given respondent interprets the world. These and more factors influencing self-positioning may contribute to dissonance-generating encounters and experiences. In contrast to Sosnaud et al. (2013), we want to highlight that discordant reported class identities and positions are not conscious misrepresentations. Thus, we dub those with higher reported subjective class identity and lower objective class membership (based on occupation) over-estimators (and vice-versa for under-estimators) to emphasize the presence of errors in positioning oneself in the class structure as guesstimates rather than of intentional inflation or deflation of one's perceived position. We stress this in order to keep with the assumption that data we use are usable for analysis of underlying psychological processes.[14]

Indeed, for the individual to experience dissonance, their experiences should not match their expectations (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999; Sengupta et al., 2015). In the context of socio-economic status, the focus of this study, this means that the individual should enjoy experiences which are different from what befits their subjectively assessed class identity. In other words, people with misaligned class identity, particularly those who expect and interpret their life to be better than that commonly enjoyed by others belonging in their particular socio-economic category, should experience dissonance that may give rise to

[14] Furthermore, if subjective status represents an internal interpretation of the individual's structural status, we can consider it a mediating mechanism which translates the enjoyed status-related experiences into attitudes (in approximation, this interpretation could represent bounded rationality view). On the other hand, if said internal interpretation is further biased by competing psychological motivations (in addition to 'mere' effects of lack of information or ideological heuristics), over- or under-estimation of one's position may be a result, or a by-product of an internal attempt to maintain consistency among one's needs, cognitions and ideas rather than to achieve accuracy of judgment (this would represent motivated cognition view).

system-justifying cognition. On the other hand, image of the self as belonging to a higher class than is the case might also be considered a defensive reaction in itself. In this case, one would protect their self-image as a successful person (or at least not a failure), which should then lend support to a reasonable amount of perceived legitimacy of the system.[15]

The second discordant category are those who believe themselves to be lower than is their actual position. These are the people who should have access to all the opportunities of the middle or upper classes but believe this either not to be the case, or not to be sufficient, based on their prior expectations or demands. For instance, such people may experience either spatial or temporal relative deprivation but, at the same time, should still be in positions in which they do not experience actual deprivation in terms of options for mobility, and thus actual feelings of dependency and powerlessness, which were shown to foster legitimization of relevant hierarchies (van der Toorn et al., 2015). Instead of legitimizing the standing order, people underestimating their current socio-economic standing in this way are candidates for the strongest opposition to the system.

Conversely, those accurately estimating their SES should encounter less dissonance in regard to differences between their expectations and experiences. Nevertheless, such people may still experience dissonance based on assessment of the legitimacy and functioning of political institutions. Therefore, given that those in higher structural positions should have their motivations to view self, their groups, and the system in concordance, those in high concordance position should always experience low dissonance. On the other hand, those who correctly perceive themselves to be in the lower strata should still experience dissonance with political institutions but not market institutions.

		Subjective Position	
		Low	***High***
Structural Position	***Low***	+ (Concordant low)	++ (Over-estimators)
	High	− − (Under-estimators)	**0** (Concordant high)

Figure 3 Amount of dissonance generated by difference between structural and subjective SES in regard to Political Institutions

[15] If this was so, we would not be able to distinguish whether such behavior is motivated by defense of the ego or of the system - or, for instance, whether the person in question is simply mistaken due to, for instance, only comparing their experience to those of immediate surroundings, relatively to which they fare rather well (Evans & Kelley, 2004). However, status-legitimacy effect is supposed to manifest more strongly in contexts generating greater dissonance, meaning that such 'over-estimators' should perceived greater legitimacy of political institutions contexts with greater inequality, or in cases when in a position of ideological minority (i.e., the 'other side' is in power).

		Subjective Position	
		Low	***High***
Structural Position	***Low***	**0** (Concordant low)	**+** (Over-estimators)
	High	**0** (Under-estimators)	**0** (Concordant high)

Figure 4 Amount of dissonance generated by difference between structural and subjective SES in regard to Market Institutions

Present Study

Theoretical accounts (e.g., Lane 1986) suggest that (at least superficial) thinking about different hierarchies generates different amounts of cognitive conflict. Sengupta et al. (2015) use similar proposition to explain why status-legitimacy effect does not manifest for all disadvantaged in relation to all hierarchies. In this study, we will consider two sources of dissonance, the first one coming from the observed discrepancies in performance of public and private institutions, the second from differences between expectations and experiences regarding one's socio-economic status. In addition, we will explore how Protestantism moderates the tendency to reduce experienced dissonance in favor of the system. We utilize data from four recent waves General Social Survey (years 2010 - 2016), thus from a context for which SJT was originally formulated.

We propose the following hypotheses addressing the ways in which SLH should manifest:

The baseline prediction repeated across literature addressing SLH states that a support for the strong version of SLH would be manifested as those belonging to the lower strata reporting higher perceived confidence in the system compared to those who belong to the higher strata (**H1**); qualified by the dissonance thesis drawing on differences between political and market institutions, (**H1a**) states that **H1** should manifest more strongly for political than for market institutions.

(**H2**) draws on presence of dissonance based in misconstruing one's expectations due to discordant self-positioning on the class ladder and states, that those who incorrectly overestimate (or underestimate) their socio-economic status should manifest greater (or lower) tendency to legitimize the current status quo. (**H2a**) This relationship should be stronger in regard to political institutions, given that dissonance is generated from both the

difference in objective and subjective class positioning as well as from the logic and perceived performance of political institutions.

Data & Measures

We utilized the data from General Social Survey (GSS; waves 2010, 201, 2014, 2016; total n (after listwise deletion) = 4151). The GSS was chosen as it directly addresses the context in which SLH was first formulated, thus removing potential issues with culturally specific influences. Furthermore, we limited the sample to four waves gathered during the same presidency in order to limit the impact of an obvious reason of people's political and party identities affecting the results differently between waves (presidencies).

Confidence in institutions

We first distinguished between confidence in market institutions (banks and financial institutions, and major companies; $\alpha = .52$) and political institutions (congress and executive branch; $\alpha = .6$). The question posed was: "I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?" In the further analyses, the used indices were reverted from a 3-point scale for each question and recoded into a 0-1 scale for easier interpretation; a higher score means higher confidence in the given set of institutions.

Structural (Objective) vs. Subjective Class position operationalization

Objective class was derived from a question on respondents' occupations, recoded into EGP 11 class scheme from ISCO88 codes, and then recoded into 2-class scheme differentiating the salariat classes I and II from the rest (Lambert et al., 2013). Subjective class was derived from a question on subjective class identification with four levels - lower, working, middle, and upper and, in order to compare subjective and 'objective' measures (EGP2), we combined two lower and two higher self-reported classes together. Over-estimators were dubbed those whose EGP2 score was low (0) and subjective class score high (1). Under-estimators are those whose EGP2 scores are high (1) and subjective class scores low (0). Concordant-low are those whose EGP2 and subjective class scores are low. Concordant-high are those whose scores on both measures are high.

Other measures

We also control for the wave of the survey (dummy variable for each wave other than 2010) respondent's level of education (1 college, 0 below college), sex (0 male, 1 female), race (0 white, 1 minority), party affiliation (0 (leaning) republican, 1 (leaning) democrat; 'independent' and 'other party' answers were removed), religious denomination due to SLH being theorized to manifest more strongly among those exposed to norms of protestant work ethics (1 protestant, 0 other), and reported family income in constant dollars (rescaled to 0-1).

Results

The results of multiple regression analyses show a rather clear relationship between subjective class and confidence in both Political and Market institutions. Assessing control variable, political self-identification measured through party affiliation reveals that while Democrats, compared to Republicans, reported higher confidence in political institutions, perhaps due to the data being gathered while a Democrat was in the White House, they also reported lower confidence in market institutions. Conversely, Protestants were less confident in political institutions but reported higher confidence in market institutions in comparison to non-Protestants.

Table 4 Confidence in Political and Market Institutions

	P1	P2	M1	M2
Objective class	**-.02(.01)***		**-.00(.01)**	
Subjective class	.06(.01)***		.06(.01)***	
Over-estimators		**.03(.01)***		**.01(.01)**
Under-estimators		**-.05(.01)*****		**-.06(.01)*****
Concordant Low		-.03(.01)**		-.06(.01)***
Protestant (non-protestant reference)	-.03(.01)**	-.03(.01)**	.03(.01)***	.03(.01)***
Democrat (republican reference)	.11(.01)***	.11(.01)***	-.08(.01)***	-.08(.01)***
Minority (white reference)	.09(.01)***	.09(.01)***	.04(.01)***	.04(.01)***
College (no college reference)	.03(.01)**	.03(.01)**	-.01(.01)	-.01(.01)
Female (Male reference)	.01(.01)	.01(.01)	.01(.01)	.01(.01)
Family income	-.05(.02)**	-.04(.02)*	-.00(.02)	-.00(.02)
Year (2010 reference)				
2012	-.05(.01)***	-.05(.01)***	.03(.01)**	.03(.01)**
2014	-.08(.01)***	-.08(.01)***	.06(.01))***	.06(.01))***
2016	-.07(.01)***	-.07(.01)***	.06(.01))***	.06(.01))***
intercept	.28(.01)	.31(.02)	.39(.01)	.45(.02)
n	4151	4151	4151	4151
adjusted R-Squared	.1	.1	.05	.05

*Note. Bolded are predictors associated with hypotheses tested in individual models; Presented are unstandardized coefficient; numbers in parentheses are standard errors; Reference category for P2 and M2 is Concordant-high; Dependent variable in models P1 and P2 is confidence in Political Institutions (Congress and Executive Branch; 0-1 with higher numbers representing higher confidence); Dependent variable in models M1 and M2 is confidence in Market Institutions (Banks and Financial Institutions, Major Companies; 0-1 with higher numbers representing higher confidence); + p< .1; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p <.001 (two-tailed tests); data: GSS 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016*

While gender had no effect on confidence in either type of institutions, having at least some college education was positively related to confidence in political, but not market institutions. Perhaps surprisingly, although in line with general expectations of SLH,

members of racial minorities reported higher confidence in both political and market institutions in comparison to whites. Finally, also in general agreement with SLH, family income was negatively related to confidence in political institutions, but not related to confidence in market institutions.

In support of **H1a**, comparing models P1 and M1 shows that those with lower, compared to higher, objective class position reported slightly more confidence only in political institutions. **H1** was thus not supported in regard to market institutions. **H2** was only partially supported in models P2 and M2. While over-estimators did report higher confidence in political institutions compared to those with correct upper class positioning (but not market institutions, as predicted by **H2a**), under-estimators did not differ from concordant-low group (p-values for under-estimators for P2 and M2 with concordant-low as reference category were $p = .29$ and $p = .99$, respectively).

Discussion

Taken together, the results support the notion of objective and subjective status-based differences in evaluations of market and political institutions. While there is some evidence that lower classes could engage in motivated legitimization of the political system, especially in cases when their members mistakenly consider themselves higher in the hierarchy than they actually are, no such relationship was observed for market institutions. Indeed, over-estimators did not differ from correctly self-positioning high status respondents in their confidence in market institutions, and neither did other traditional indicators of objective status, family income and level of education, predict perceived legitimacy of market institutions, with positive association of minorities being weaker for market than political institutions. These findings thus provide partial support for the reading of SLH by Sengupta et al. (2015), in which the disadvantaged legitimize only particular hierarchies which create the most dissonance from the point of view of the individual. As in the previous chapter (2), we did not find the worse-off to over-legitimize economic, or market, but rather political institutions. Therefore, while we can support Sengupta and colleagues' contention that dissonance may motivate system-justification, we need to stress that identification of which hierarchy would be generating the most dissonance for a given person might be not as simple as selecting the hierarchy at the bottom of which the individual could (objectively or subjectively) find themselves. A reading of the results more charitable to the original, and stronger, version of the SLH, would be that thinking about market institutions makes people consider their relation and position in regard to the given system, and their self and group interests become salient and override the motivation to legitimize the status quo.

The results also show that subjective interpretations have strong bearing on people's judgments of the state of the affairs. Party affiliation and subjective positioning seem to be stronger predictors of perceived legitimacy of particular institutions than structural variables.

Our results echo prior research which shows that, at least in economic issues, people are unlikely to stray far from predictions of bounded rationality (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Trump & White, 2015). Therefore, while van der Toorn and colleagues (2015) proposed, and experimentally supported, greater focus on feelings of powerlessness (instead of dissonance) and subjective assessment of one's position in elicitation of system justification motive, this analysis suggests otherwise. Albeit powerlessness may play an important role in fostering system-justifying attitudes, subjective assessment of status remains associated with the same attitudes in a predictable way. On the other hand, conditions that could generate feelings of powerlessness could also be creating feelings of depedence. It would then be usfeul to further examine the conditions that could be producing powerlessness or dependence in order to assess the hypothesis outside the laboratory setting. A candidate question for such proxy could be expected future mobility or being a recipient of government assistance, such as conditional cash transfer, unemployment benefits, or even pension.

Our results also raise a question of whether the observed negative relationships between measures of objective status and confidence in political institutions represent an evidence supporting the existence of a genuine system justification motivation or rather a form of subjective rationality among citizens who are simply misguided about their current situation, or who consider stability of the political system a necessary condition for future improvement of their lot in accordance to the POUM (prospects of upward mobility) model of Bénabou and Ok (2001), or the social identity model of system attitudes recently proposed by Owuamalam et al. (2018). In this interpretation of the data, legitimized would be those parts of the system which the individual considers relevant to their needs and position, and not necessarily those which generate the most dissonance. In other words, defense of the system could be motivated by seeing the particular part of the system as more likely to be the source of individual's wellbeing in the future.

In sum, we tested two hypotheses derived from the System Justification Theory. We corroborated the hypothesis that there is a difference in how the disadvantaged legitimize the parts of the system which generate greater dissonance (Sengupta et al., 2015). We can also conclude that powerlessness following correct (or incorrect) subjective interpretation of one's social standing is an unlikely candidate for a source of motivation to over-legitimize the standing institutions, but we cannot rule out that powerlessness per-se drives system-justifying attitudes. The broader consequences of our findings suggest that class consciousness is a necessary condition for any possibility of pushback against systemic inequalities. On the other hand, if it is the case, as our results suggest, that performance of market institutions does not create dissonance among the disadvantaged, this could have a paradoxical consequence of people being content about being discontent with the state of the economic system and the way market institutions work, even after correctly positioning themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy

Abstract

External threats to the system are often expected to motivate conservative and authoritarian attitudes. For instance, economic downturn following the worldwide recession was said to motivate rise of far-right anti-immigration parties across Europe. However, such claims are contradicted by research demonstrating people bolstering their prior attitudes following stimuli than may be interpreted as threatening their goals and worldviews. Furthermore, prior research provided evidence that self-identified conservatives are likely to overestimate and liberals are likely to underestimate the popularity of their positions among their ideological in-groups. In two experiments, we test, on a sample of 201 students, how indirect threat to the country's culture and a direct criticism of the country's economic performance influence people's perceptions of attitudinal similarity with their society in general depending on their prior ideological views. The results suggest that those with views critical of the standing socio-political system imagine their co-nationals as more attitudinally different compared to those who consider the standing system to be fair and desirable. In particular, exposure to economic threat, but not cultural threat, increased the perceived ideological distance from the presumed attitudes of the rest of the society among those critical of the system, but not among those who considered the system to be fair and desirable as it is. The results point to ideological asymmetry in reactions to information threatening or criticizing the society.

Chapter Four

Reactions to System Threat and Perceived Attitudinal Similarity of Low and High System Justifiers

Background of the study

In June 2015, Hungary started a construction of a 175 kilometers long fence along its border with Croatia and Serbia to signal a firm opposition to the influx and transit of refugees and migrants coming through the Balkans and heading to Western Europe. Later that summer, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany was prepared to accommodate people fleeing the war in Syria, and process asylum requests even from the applicants whose point of entry into the Schengen Area was in different countries (Koranyi, 2015).

In reactions to this prototypical external threat to the system, the difference was not only in the responses of the countries' top politicians, but also in the way these were framed in public discourse. The decision of the Hungarian government was both defended as standing up for Christianity and the European model of welfare state, and described as an example of right-wing, nativistic populism and not only giving into, but also fanning the flames of public fears about the threats supposedly being brought by the refugees (Adam & Bozoki, 2016; Bocskor, 2018; Nagy, 2016). At the same time, Angela Merkel's response was framed as traitorous, naive, but also as a necessary pill to swallow and a rallying call for defense of European Union and European values (Mushaben, 2017).

Accompanying the whole process and public debate was the assumption, also reflected in prior research, that a likely reaction to such an external threat among the public would be in the direction of the solution enacted by the Hungarian government (Greenhill, 2016; Steinmayr, 2016). That is, increased focus on the preservation of the established way of life of the native ingroup, negative attitudes towards the outgroup, lower support for immigration and redistributive measures based on principles of need and equality, and a relative homogeneity in the consensus within the ingroup (Barone, D'Ignazio, de Blasio, & Naticchioni, 2016; Dahlberg, Edmark, & Lundqvist, 2012; Ennser-Jedenastik, 2018; Zhang & Reid, 2013). In other words, an assumption that people would turn more conservative when faced with an external threat (Craig & Richeson, 2014).

In 2016, in spite of hundreds of thousands of arrivals and highly reported instances of sexual assaults during New Year's celebrations ("Germany shocked," 2016), the majority of the German public (even among those who perceived potential threats as outweighing benefits) supported the decision to let the asylum seekers to be admitted in the country and granted temporary residence for the duration of the conflict from which they were fleeing (Gerhards, Hans, & Schupp, 2016). Similarly, Austrian experience showed that the support

for the populist right-wing FPÖ (Freedom Party for Austria) party has actually decreased in the communities where the refugees were hosted (Steinmayr, 2016). It would seem, as Hatton (2016) points out in an article suggesting that the Europe-wide rise of far-right populist parties after the recent economic crisis was related more to an overall drop in trust in institutions, European ones in particular, and less to public opinions on immigration or immigration policies, that political debates are often driven more by *media-driven rhetoric than the results of actual research.*[16]

In this paper, we explore one of the potential sources of this discrepancy between the assumed demand for the so-called right-wing populist policies and solutions on the side of the public, and the mixed evidence for such demand. Given that the assumption appears to be supported by the school of thought suggesting that right-wing and conservative policies are popular as a result of perceived or experienced threat (e.g., Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Hibbing et al., 2014; Jost et al., 2003a), we explore the competing hypotheses derived from two dominant approaches in political psychology addressing the effects threatening messages and experience on political attitudes – the so called 'conservative shift' hypothesis, which predicts political liberals reacting to system instability and threat by adopting conservative attitudes (e.g., Jost et al., 2008b; Milojev et al.; 2015; Onraet et al., 2013), and the 'worldview defense', which expects such threats to motivate people to bolster the beliefs and attitudes they have already held (e.g., Bassett, Van Tongeren, Green, Sonntag, & Kulpatrick, 2015; Crawford, 2017; Rutjens & Loseman, 2010).

In particular, following the findings suggesting that political conservatives are more likely to perceive greater consensus among their ingroup (e.g., Rabinowitz et al., 2016; Stern & West, 2016) and greater support for stereotypical beliefs (Strube & Rahimi, 2006), we are interested in assessing whether the general tendency to legitimize the country's standing socio-political system is associated with greater perception of attitudinal similarity with the general public, and whether this association is strengthened or weakened by perceptions of the society facing a threat to its culture or economic decline. We focus on perceived attitudinal distance between individuals and their assessment of the general population because, if inaccurate, misperceptions of public attitudes may lead to support of inefficient, or even outright unpopular policies among the political elites (Broockman & Skovron, 2018), which can subsequently endanger the perceived responsiveness, performance and legitimacy of the government or parts of the institutional system in place (Dalton, 2005; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Loveless & Whitefield, 2011; Roth, 2009), and ultimately result in disengagement or suboptimal voting strategies among misinformed and disillusioned voters (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, and Mebane, 2009; Kang, 2004; Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996; Myatt, 2007).

[16] In particular, Hatton analyzed 6 waves of European Social Survey, covering data from 20 countries in waves from 2002 to 2012 and found that, on average, support of far-right parties was not related to relatively small changes in opinions about immigration, which was theorized to be a consequence of the recent worldwide recession, but rather to a rise in Euro-scepticism.

In the rest of the chapter, we will first discuss particular political ideologies and their underlying worldviews to illustrate how liberals and conservatives differ in their perspectives and approaches to the social world. Second, we will elaborate on competing views on whether and how do political ideologies and their possible psychological underpinnings moderate people's reactions to various sources of threats, such as threats to the accuracy of one's worldview or threats to the stability of the society one lives in. Third, we will discuss the phenomenon of social projection, a tendency to overestimate the popularity of one's attitudes, and discuss the literature suggesting this tendency to be more prevalent among those with conservative attitudes. In the fourth section of the paper, we will provide a rationale of our hypotheses based on previously discussed research and fifth and sixth parts of the paper will present results of two experimental studies testing these hypotheses. In particular, the first study will look on the effect of an indirect threat to a country's culture on the liberals' and conservatives' perceptions of how they differ from the general population in regard to their attitudes towards the welfare state. The second study will assess the influence of a threat to the country's economic system on the respondents' perceived attitudinal differences with the society regarding attitudes towards the value of work in general. Finally, a discussion section will conclude with a summary of the results and outline possible improvements on the design and future avenues of the research.

Political Attitudes, Ideologies and Worldviews

A large portion of research exploring and theorizing about political attitudes relies on a simple liberal-conservative or left-right differentiation, self-placement into which is usually a good predictor of people's voting intentions and represents their views on the need for change or preservation of the status quo, or differences in tolerance of various social and economic inequalities and hierarchies (Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009; Carmines & D'Amico, 2015; Carmines, Ensley, & Wagner, 2012; Jost et al., 2003a). Among traditional example of issues contested in the political arena alongside these divisions are class-based stances on redistribution of wealth, level of taxation or deregulation of labor markets, and legislation regarding immigration or reproductive rights (e.g., Bobbio, 1996; Giddens, 1994; 1998). Although the exact content of policies and attitudes associated with the mentioned differentiations depends on the local context and may be very top-down driven, liberals and the left usually perceive persistence of unjust hierarchies and oppression of the lower classes and minorities while conservatives and the right see a relatively well-working system that allows its members to find their roles within the society and enjoy the fruits of their efforts (Bobbio, 1996; Heywood, 2003).

A further distinction is often made between economic and socio-cultural dimensions of political ideologies, which may be traced to associated differences in worldviews (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, & Ha, 2010).

Indeed, there is a difference between a political worldview, which describes what is the case, and a political ideology that identifies an ideal endpoint and policies which should help reach it (Martin, 2014; Wallerstein, 2006). Ideological positions towards economic inequalities and rigid stratification (e.g., support of policies regulating minimum wage, taxation, or affirmative action measures) are related to the perception of the social world as a 'competitive jungle' (Perry, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2013),[17] functionalistic perspectives positing the existence of large differences in incomes as necessary for the society to be able to continuously motivate candidates for the most difficult and crucial jobs (Davis & Moore, 1945; Hadler, 2005), and beliefs about the extent to which institutions, structural relations and individual differences are responsible for existing inequalities between the haves and have-nots (Bobbio, 1996). In the social and cultural dimension, deference to authority and endorsement of cultural norms and traditions are more prevalent among those who view the social world as a dangerous and unpredictable place where moral people need to stay on the lookout (Perry et al., 2013),[18] and society as a complex organism, all parts of which have their functions (Burke, 1986; Durkheim & Lukes, 2013). Thus, while conservatives are not categorically opposed to social change, they tend to perceive existing hierarchies as a result of choices and developments which allowed the society to survive to the current state, and therefore often deem prospective and proposed changes to social institutions as rather radical interventions that could potential upset the equilibrium which sustains the slow, but steady progress that stood the test of time and allows individuals to find security in predictable order (Müller, 2006; Rossiter, 1968). On the other hand, liberals tend to view society as arising from contractual agreements between self-interested individuals and seek its controlled and deliberate change and improvement through application of reason and science in order to reach a state in which these individuals have opportunities to pursue their interests (Heywood, 2003; Rawls, 1971; Stern & West, 2016).

However, if people perceive the society to be threatened (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007) or the change too rapid and its consequences as causing instability and decline (Eibach & Libby, 2009), even liberals may turn to conservative (and authoritarian) attitudes and defend the institutions and structures they might otherwise be critical of (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Kay et al., 2009a; Tetlock et al., 2007). The studies reported on in this chapter will be concerned primarily with how people perceive economic attitudes of others following stimuli which, as already indicated, could be assumed to motivate a rather conservative outlook. In the next section, we will thus provide an overview of the research assessing the proposition that conservatism is motivated by the perceptions of

[17] e.g., agreeing with statements such as '*It's a dog eats dog world where you have to be ruthless at times*' or '*There is really no such thing as ''right'' and ''wrong.'' It all boils down to what you can get away with*' (Perry et al., 2012)

[18] e.g., agreeing with statements such as '*It seems that every year there are fewer and fewer truly respectable people, and more and more persons with no morals at all who threaten everyone else*' or '*My knowledge and experience tells me that the social world we live in is basically a dangerous and unpredictable place, in which good, decent and moral people's values and way of life are threatened and disrupted by bad people*' (Perry et al., 2012)

danger and chaos and needs for safety, clarity, and certainty. In particular, we will focus on research addressing the differences and similarities in reactions of political liberals and conservatives to threatening stimuli, which could in turn bias their perceptions of public attitudes (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Strube & Rahimi, 2006).

Political ideology and reaction to threats

One of the lasting debates within political psychology addresses the variance in reactions to threatening stimuli between people subscribing to different ideologies (Crawford, 2017; Jost Stern, Rule, & Sterling, 2017b). First, political conservatism as motivated social cognition model (Jost et al., 2003a; CMSC) proposes that chronically and situationally heightened feelings of being threatened motivate adoption of more conservative (that is culturally and economically right-wing) attitudes. In this view, political conservatives are most of the time on the lookout for safety, clarity, structure and certainty, as indicated by conservative self-identification and beliefs consistently, albeit modestly, correlating with scales measuring cognitive conservatism, such as need for closure and structure (Chirumbolo, Areni, & Sensales, 2004; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Hennes, Nam, Stern, & Jost, 2012; Jost et al., 2007). Furthermore, a 'conservative shift' towards more rigid thinking styles or endorsement of, for instance, traditional morality has been observed in many studies utilizing various sources of threat and measures of cognitive or political conservatism (e.g., Jost et al., 2017b; Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011). For instance, Duckitt and Fisher (2003) let the participants of their study read three scenarios about hypothetical future of their country - New Zealand; a future more secure and prosperous than the present, a future more or less the same as the present, and a future of economic decline and rising crime rates. Compared to those in the first two conditions, participants reading about New Zealand's economic decline and rising crime rates reported significantly higher perceptions of the world being a dangerous place, which were then related to more conservative and authoritarian attitudes.

Among the ways in which CMSC proposes that people can manage such distressing images of decline and instability is justification of the perceived legitimacy and desirability of the social systems they are members of and on successful functioning of which they depend (Jost et al., 2003a). In particular, similar to motivations to maintain positive self-image and view of one's ingroup, system justification theory (SJT) posits that people are also motivated preserve positive beliefs about the sociopolitical systems they live in, and to consider these just, legitimate, and preferably not to be changed (Friesen, Laurin, Shepherd, Gaucher, & Kay, 2018; Jost et al., 2004). SJT further suggests that imbuing the ''overarching institutions, organizations, and social norms within which they live and the rules that they, to at least some extent, are required to abide'' (Kay & Zanna, 2009, p. 158) with perceived legitimacy helps people to satisfy epistemic needs to reduce uncertainty, existential needs to manage threat, and relational needs to achieve shared reality with important others (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2008a). The strength of the motivation to view the system as legitimate and fair varies across individuals and is positively associated with Belief in a Just World and facets of political conservatism (e.g., Jost et al., 2017c; Kelemen et al., 2014), but

also depends on situational factors (Kay & Jost, 2003). Among these are perceived dependence on the system, lack of personal control, system inescapability and, crucially to our study, system threat - i.e. an indication that the system may not be legitimate, just, fair, or otherwise desirable, durable, or stable (Jost, Gaucher, & Stern, 2014; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kay et al., 2009a; Stern, Balcetis, Cole, West, & Caruso, 2016). An everyday way of affirming or restoring one's belief in system's legitimacy might be via internalization of traditional social norms, values, and practices (Cichocka & Jost, 2014) but, indeed, there are many ways of bolstering the perceived legitimacy of the status quo (e.g., by trying harder when exposed to a threat to a meritocratic nature of one's society; Ledgerwood, Mandisodza, Jost, & Pohl, 2011).

More specifically, echoing the adage that "a conservative is a liberal who's been mugged", the CMSC-derived 'reactive-liberal hypothesis' predicts political liberals (who are less likely, compared to conservatives, to perceive the system as fair) to become more like conservatives when exposed to a stimulus threatening the system - for instance by reacting in ways that would protect the view of the system as just, legitimate, and stable (Friesen et al., 2018; Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009). In particular, the hypothesis extends and clarifies the CMSC model, and states that political and dispositional liberals, for instance people with low Preference for Consistency[19] are expected to become psychologically (temporarily increasing their preference for consistency), and subsequently politically, more conservative after being exposed to a threatening stimulus (e.g., mortality salience brought about with questions on what the participants think will physically happen to them when they die). Depending on active primes and constraints, the observed defensive reaction would then manifest in liberals adjusting their positions either in content or in intensity of their already held beliefs. Conservatives, on the other hand, may not react to such threatening stimuli at all, since their psychological and attitudinal profile is already more conservative (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007).

Worldview-specific bolstering

Importantly, however, prior research also shows that the form of legitimization of the social system depends on the individual's political ideology. For instance, reading about the decline of the country or increasing perceived dependence on the government reduced the gap between conservatives and liberals in reported patriotism, in that liberals became as patriotic as conservatives, but the reported levels of nationalism were not affected due to, as the authors theorized, nationalism being at odds with liberal ideology focused on universalism and benevolence (van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, and Jost, 2014, study 3). Such result is consistent with multiple worldview defense (WVD) approaches which suggest that, when faced with various forms of threat, people will likely react by increased dogmatism about their already held beliefs and values, many of which may coincide with dominant values of a

[19] Measured by Cialdini et al. (1995), in which respondents are presented with statements such as "I typically prefer to do things the same way" or " I want my close friends to be predictable"

given society (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Rokeach, 1960). In this view, when feeling threatened or uncertain, people (whether politically conservative or liberal) do not simply forget their attitudes and become Thatcherites, but rather turn to what they already believe in (Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012), or to what they believe their relevant ingroup would believe (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Kahan, Peters, Dawson, & Slovic, 2017a). For instance, Terror Management Theory proposes that reminding people of their mortality arouses potentially paralyzing anxiety and motivates them to attempts at restoring self-esteem and sense of symbolic immortality by clinging to their cultural worldviews (Anson, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2009). Such affirmations can then differ between people subscribing to different ideologies and can be observed as either a greater support of the values and policies usually associated with said values or as a stronger rejection of the values and policies not consistent with one's ideological beliefs. In two studies demonstrating such behavior, the politically liberal participants reported greater tolerance towards their ideological opponents and lower valuation of ingroup loyalty or teaching children to respect authority in the 'mortality salience' (vs. control) condition, while the conservative participants reacted by greater reported animosity towards their ideological opponent and lower support for statements regarding government's role in alleviation of suffering or achieving equality being and important requirement for the society (Bassett et al., 2015; Castano et al., 2011)

In other approaches predicting worldview defense rather than conservative shift (e.g., Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007; Townsend, Major, Sawyer, & Mendes, 2010), affirmations of already held worldviews are seen as providing general epistemic stability and protection of ego or identity. Exploring the role of one's worldview for interpretation and consequences of perceived discrimination, multiple studies addressing the worldview-verification theory found that even perceived discrimination may enhance participants' self-esteem if this is consistent with their prior belief that they would be discriminated against.[20] In other cases, research using a wide range of different sources of threats to people's worldviews or motivational goals[21] suggest that reactions to such stimuli will be oriented towards increased commitments towards the presumed values of their relevant cultural groups in order to protect access to valuable social resources (Kahan, Braman, Gastil, Slovic, & Mertz, 2007), or simply towards bolstering of their prior goals or attitudes (McGregor, Nash, Mann, & Phillips, 2010; Proulx and Major, 2013), sometimes regardless of whether the source of the stimulus was related to the particular bolstered belief or not (Randles, Inzlicht, Proulx, Tullet, & Heine, 2015; Sleegers, Proulx, & van Beest, 2015; Van den Bos & Lind,

[20] In this case, the resulting impact of worldview violation or verification on self-esteem does not seem to be tied to affirmation of a belief structure that, at least subjectively, increases the valuation of the given individual, but rather to having successfully identified and predicted the patterns recurring within the social world. Going back to Weber (1981) and description of instrumentally rational action as oriented towards expectations, being able to rely on one's predictions may be more valuable to successful functioning within the society than not being discriminated against at ad-hoc basis.

[21] e.g., asking people to solve a simple task of comparing two ratios, correct solutions of which contradicts their worldview (Kahan et al., 2017a)

2012). Finally, experiences of adversity such as illness or serious financial difficulties was found to be related to increase commitment to one's ideological positions (e.g., "The U.S. is justified in using torture to protect national security") but not self-reported liberal-conservative identification in a nationally representative longitudinal study (Randles, Heine, Poulin, & Silver, 2017). In sum, WVD approaches would expect political liberals and conservatives exposed to a message representing a potential threat to the system to maintain and even strengthen their respective prior attitudes, for instance by committing more strongly to their beliefs about the system's legitimacy and fairness.

The disagreements about predicted directions of the reactions to threat suggest that different forms or sources of threat lead to contrasting outcomes. For instance, Crawford (2017) classified types of threats based on emotional responses with which these were associated - physical threats[22] associated with fear and threats to meaning[23] associated with anxious uncertainty and concluded that while people mostly bolster their prior attitudes, physical threats motivate social liberals to adopt more conservative positions. Categorizing studies based on a source of the stimulus, rather than on its emotional consequences, Onraet et al. (2013) distinguished between internal threats[24] that have their sources within people's private lives and affect only the particular individual and external threats[25] that have their origins in and affect the whole society and showed a rather consistent support ($r = .35$) for 'conservative shift' following external threats. In any case, though, following perceived threats, political conservatives are usually expected to hold onto (or strengthen) their political attitudes in both the CMSC and the WVD perspectives, while political liberals are theorized to either measurably bolster (WVD) or shift their attitudes towards those of conservatives (CMSC). On the societal level, then, the two approaches predict that, based on people's prior ideologies, the reaction to societal threat would be either symmetric (overall, the society would become more polarized, with conservatives and liberals defending strongly opposing views with little space for attitudinal overlap, and possibly either more liberal or conservative, depending on prior distribution of attitudes) or asymmetric (overall, the society would become more politically conservative).

Whatever the attitudinal reactions to threats by individual actors, as discussed in the introduction, many (political) decisions are made under conditions of incomplete information about others' opinions and their likely reactions to the unfolding, potentially threatening events. In these cases, the actor's perception of the distribution of attitudes matters more for their social behavior than others' actual but unknown positions (Bicchieri & Xiao, 2009; Lee & Andrade, 2011), a behavior summed up in ''If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'' (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). And although people can usually guess

[22] e.g., concrete concerns regarding personal safety or well-being due to physical harm

[23] e.g., abstract concerns following exposure to belief inconsistent information regarding senses of identity, purpose, or certainty

[24] e.g., death anxiety or anxiety because of an upcoming test

[25] e.g., threat of terrorism, perceived threat to social cohesion of the country, symbolic threat in a form of a perception of immigrants having different values and norms, or economic threat implying a potential loss of a job

with relative ease that political opponents greatly differ in their positions towards highly politicized issues, such guesstimates are often inaccurate and overstated (Fields & Schuman, 1976; Westfall et al., 2015), and yet still insufficient to accurately capture the underlying attitudes of the general population (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Lelkes, 2016; Wenzel, 2005). Furthermore, given that threatening stimuli affect people's worldviews and shape their attitudes (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003), the same stimuli might make perceptions of attitudes of others even more skewed. In the subsequent section, then, we will briefly introduce the phenomenon of social projection and focus not on people's attitudes as such, political or otherwise, but rather on how they view attitudes of others in relation to those of their own.

Social inferences and projection

Beliefs about beliefs of others allow people to act strategically and even beyond the mere mechanistic expectations of the raw game-theoretical rationality (Bernheim, 1984; Bicchieri, 1989) but are often biased, for instance in cases of wishful thinking about the popularity of one's preferred political candidate (Granberg & Brent, 1983; Krizan, Miller, & Johar, 2010) or due to believing that it is others, even members of one's ideological ingroup, who are biased or misinformed in cases of naive realism (Robinson et al., 1995; Rogers, Moore, & Norton, 2017; Ross & Ward, 1996). In any case, people arrive at beliefs about beliefs of others in various ways (e.g., using various stereotypes or merely asking), one of which is projection of own attitudes unto others. Social projection has been theorized to be a consequence of multiple factors, among which are availability of own ideas and greater exposure to attitudes of like-minded others (Marks & Miller, 1987; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Social projection tends to be stronger when one considers their ingroup rather than a neutral group, and people even exaggerate differences when considering an outgroup (Clement & Krueger, 2002; Cho & Knowles, 2013; Krueger, 1998). Social projection is more prevalent among people with high need for closure (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017), greater relational needs (Stern et al., 2014a), as well as among those who are highly committed to their preferences, beliefs, or goals (Naju Ahn, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2015). In addition, social projection was shown to increase under various situational factors, such as time pressure (Epley, Keysar, van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004), high cognitive load (Krueger & Stanke, 2001), receiving negative feedback (Sherman, Presson, & Chassin, 1984), or expectation of future interaction (Miller & Marks, 1982).

In terms of association of social projection with political attitudes, when considering political outgroups, conservatives as well as liberals seem to engage in 'reverse projection' and overestimate the differences with their political counterparts (Dittmar & Dickinson, 1993; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012; Robinson et al., 1995; Westfall et al., 2015). This is theorized to be due to people not projecting only their attitudes but also their attitudinal processes, which leads the most committed ideologues perceived others as similarly extreme in their views (Van Boven, Judd, & Sherman, 2012). In addition, political liberals were shown to experience false uniqueness effect in which they underestimate their similarity with both

other liberals (Stern et al., 2014b) and the society in general (Fields & Schuman, 1976), while political conservatives tend to presume greater similarity with other conservatives in their attitudes, regardless of whether these are highly politicized issues such as claims about vaccinations (Rabinowitz et al., 2016), a mixture of political and apolitical attitudes (e.g., I enjoy coffee; Stern & West, 2016) or essentially random guesses such as guessing a moth of birth of person on the picture (Stern et al., 2014a). Besides explicit conservative self-identification in political life being associated with more positive attitudes towards co-nationals and national symbols (Jost et al., 2008b), holding conservative values and authoritarian attitudes (measured with right-wing authoritarianism scale) is also associated with greater social projection of conservative values, political positions and beliefs in stereotypes (Amit, Roccas, & Meidan, 2010; Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015, study 2; Strube & Rahimi, 2006). Furthermore, attitudes associated with right-wing and conservative ideologies, such as belief in the just world[26] or internal locus of control[27] are often perceived as socially sanctioned and associated with expectations of being judged (and actually being judged) more positively even among those who do not endorse such beliefs themselves, with liberals potentially inferring that others do not share their views even on related social issues (Alves & Correia, 2010; Alves & Correia, 2013; Jellison & Green, 1981). Indeed, considering such expectations could indicate to liberals and conservatives alike that holding or expecting attitudes of individual responsibility and agency from others is common sense. For instance, when asked to fill out a survey in a way that would please versus displease their parents and teachers, French schoolchildren indicated more, respectively less internal motives for their hypothetical behavior - such as helping others with homework out of a desire to help instead of due to being asked (Dubois, 1988). Furthermore, in an experimental study topically related to the manipulation we use in Study 1, a hypothetical newcomer from North Africa was rated as having a greater chance to successfully integrate into the society by nationals of the receiving country (France) in a condition where he was described as having internal (vs. external) locus of control and strongly believing (vs. not believing) in that the world is a just place (Testé, Maisonneuve, Assilaméhou, and Perrin, 2012). Finally, and even more strikingly, a similar pattern of perceptions of public attitudes was observed among the political elites who should have ample opportunities and motivation to stay informed about public opinions, with both liberal and conservative candidates overestimating the popularity of conservative positions on same-sex marriage and universal healthcare in their own constituencies even after participating in electoral campaigns and learning about the results of elections they themselves were competing in (Broockman & Skovron, 2018).

Experimental work focusing on the theorized underlying psychological mechanisms of social projection and attitude inference in the context of political ideology shows the relationship between political ideology (or identification) and projection of own beliefs to be

[26] i.e., beliefs centered around the idea that ''the world is a just and orderly place, where everybody usually get what they deserve'' (Lerner & Miller, 1978)

[27] i.e., providing more internal than external causal explanations for one's behaviour, such as attributing misfortune to mistakes rather than bad luck (Rotter, 1966)

driven, at least partially, by higher relational needs among conservatives, and a need to be unique among liberals (Stern & West, 2016; Stern et al, 2014a). For instance, attenuation or elicitation of relational needs eliminated differences between liberals and conservatives in perceived consensus with their respective ingroups (Stern et al., 2014a). Examining the effect of threat in a form of one's ideological group being in a minority, Dvir-Gvirsman (2015, study 3) found increased social projection regarding the compromise solution between Israel and Palestine on a society-wide consensus among Israeli conservatives, but no effect was found among liberals, who underestimated the public support for their position in both the majority and the minority position. Furthermore, a similar result was found in a correlational study in which defenders of the challenged status quo, in this case English professors defending traditional curriculum, overestimated their numbers and perceived their side's attitudes to be negatively correlated with those desiring changes, while the professors supporting the change in the curriculum underestimated the number of those who would agree with them and assumed no correlation between attitudes of their ideological side and the defenders of traditional curriculum (Keltner & Robinson, 1997). Albeit not an experimental study, a clear threat to the established ways was present, which makes these results relevant for our research on potential differences in reactions to threats to the system among those who consider the status quo fair and legitimate and those who do not.

In sum, political conservatism, as opposed to political liberalism, was shown to be associated with greater perceived consensus with political ingroup concerning both political and non-political judgments (Rabinowitz, et al., 2016; Stern, et al., 2014a) and more positive attitudes towards co-nationals (Jost, et al., 2008). Perceptions of attitudes of others may become even more skewed if people react to threatening stimuli by either perceiving even greater differences between their, presumably rational and correct view of the world and those of biased others (Keltner & Robinson, 1997; Ross & Ward, 1996), or by imagining others as likely agreeing with and validating their definition of the situation (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Lee & Andrade, 2011; Sherman et al., 1984). For instance, different experimental manipulations lead to either smaller differences in reported consensus with ideological ingroup (relational needs; Stern et al., 2014a) or larger differences in reported consensus with the general population (being told one's group is in a minority; Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015).

In the following sections, we build on and extend this prior research by utilizing two system-level threat manipulations, an implied threat to the country's culture and a threat to the country's (economic) status and performance in order to gauge the reactions of respondents differing in their assessments of the standing sociopolitical system as fair and legitimate and their desire to preserve status quo. With prior research indicating asymmetry in perceptions of ingroup consensus and popular support alongside the ideological spectrum, it is plausible that not only would political conservatives customarily perceive greater similarity in attitudes with the general population than liberals, but also that political liberals would likewise overestimate, or even more strongly underestimate the similarity of their own attitudes with the presumed attitudes of the majority in situations motivating

conservative cognitive style and attitudes, such as the social world being perceived as unsafe and unstable (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Nail et al., 2009).

Present Study

In the current research program, we explore how exposure to system threatening information influences perceptions of attitudinal similarity with the general population among those with differing reported confidence in the legitimacy of the standing system. We utilize a Dutch version of the General System Justification scale, a measure of confidence in the system constructed to capture the underlying dimension of political conservatism, resistance to (radical) change (GSJ, Kay & Jost, 2003). This scale, developed to measure perceptions of the fairness, legitimacy, and justifiability of the prevailing social system (e.g., "The Dutch society needs to be radically restructured", "Most policies serve the greater good"), is usually associated with right-wing and conservative attitudes and assesses people's general agreement with and perception of the legitimacy of the societal and political status quo on one hand and agreement with the need for radical changes on the other (Kay & Jost, 2003; Jost et al., 2017c). For the sake of simplicity, we label those with low GSJ scores as political liberals or low system justifiers (i.e., people who generally believe that the social system is unfair and should be changed) and those with high GSJ scores as political conservatives or high system justifiers (i.e., people who generally believe that the system is fair and should remain as it is now).

To explore the question of whether the perceived legitimacy of the system predicts people's perceived attitudinal similarity with the society in general, we utilize the person x situation paradigm, in which situational stimuli temporarily heighten people's motivations to reach the violated goals. For instance, Banfield, Kay, Cutright, Wu, and Fitzsimons (2011) first measured the research participants scores on the measure of general system justification (GSJ) and then exposed them to conditions which elicited perceptions of low personal control[28] and system threat.[29] Compared to the control conditions, and based on the participants' prior scores on the measure of system justification (GSJ), the researchers observed lower reported support for change in educational policies and greater proclivity to choose domestically over internationally produced products among those with low GSJ scores and no changes among those with high GSJ scores. In other words, experimentally elicited perception of threat to the system motivated those with low GSJ scores to answer in a fashion similar to those with high GSJ scores.

For the purposes of this paper, we follow Onraet et al. (2013) and distinguish between internal threats that have their sources within people's private lives and affect only particular

[28] remembering a situation over which they had no control vs. remembering a similar situation over which they had control

[29] reading an article critical of the country vs. an article praising the country or being asked to recall many vs. only a few reasons why their country is the best

individuals (e.g., death anxiety or anxiety because of an upcoming test) and external threats that have its origins in and affect the whole society (e.g., threat of terrorism, perceived threat to social cohesion of the country, symbolic threat in a form of a perception of immigrants having different values and norms, or economic threat implying a potential for job losses), and which was shown to motivate liberals to adopt more conservative attitudes (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Eibach & Libby, 2009; Onreat et al., 2013). The experimental manipulations used in the subsequent studies then represent external threats, in particular a threat to one's country's culture and changing norms tied to immigration (Study 1) and a threat to one's country's (economic) status suggesting its decline in terms of economic performance and standards of living (Study 2). Thus, using experimental design, we attempt to (temporarily) influence the participants' worldview – the perception of *what is the situation of the country*, and make it seem changing and in decline, with cultural norms in flux and poor economic performance.

To construct the dependent measure, we employ the assumed similarity paradigm in which the participants are presented with two sets of questions, one asking about their position regarding an issue and one asking for their judgment of the likely answers of others (e.g., Cronbach, 1955; Marks & Miller, 1987; Robinson et al., 1995). In both presented studies, we computed the absolute perceived ideological distance (APID) as the mean absolute difference between the answers of the participants regarding their own positions towards the presented issues (beliefs about welfare state and welfare recipients in Study 1 and attitudes towards work and value of working in Study 2; further described in greater detail in sections devoted to each study) and the answers they assumed would represent the opinion of the society in general (although we cannot say whether the particular respondent's interpretation of the 'society in general' represents an estimated average of various, even polarized attitudes or an attitude of an imagined average individual). We also computed an average difference score between one's reported attitudes and expected attitudes of the general public to infer the direction of the (directional) perceived ideological distance between the self and the generalized other (DPID) in order to assess where the respondents positions themselves in regard to attitudes of the society in general (e.g., whether the respondent perceives most others to have more or less positive attitudes towards the welfare state). Indeed, neither of these measures addresses the actual accuracy of one's perception of the population's attitudes, nor the over or underestimation of perceived consensus (e.g., what percentage of the members of the target group would agree with the respondent on a set of particular issues), but rather a measure of the perceived distance of one's attitudes from those that would, in the respondent's interpretation, represent a normative standard that is accepted and expected by the general public (or an estimate of a ''middle ground'' between different normative standards accepted and expected by different groups).

Given the experimental design, distinguishing between APID and DPID allows for inference about the direction of observed change (should there be any) in the perceived relation between one's attitudes and those of others. That is, a hypothetical individual

reading about the country's economy doing well may believe that most of the society has more negative attitudes towards the welfare state compared to their own (e.g., a difference of -2 on DPID measure) and a similar hypothetical individual reading about the economic decline of the society may view most others to have attitudes more liberal compared to their own (e.g., a score of +2 on DPID measure). In this example, both respondents would perceive the overall gap between their attitudes and those of the society in general to be of similar magnitude but in different directions. In terms of real world outcomes, such shift could mean difference in voting behavior, intensity, or mode of political participation due to, for instance, perceived (dis)agreement with the most others about how to address salient issues (e.g., which social groups should pay lower or higher income tax) or by affecting one's perceived political efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009; Stern et al., 2014a).

After establishing the key concepts and measures, we address our research question of reactions to perceived society-wide threat. As an outcome, we are interested in perceived attitudinal similarity (or difference) with the general population among those who have low, respectively high confidence in the legitimacy and fairness of the standing socio-political system of their country. Building on two broad perspectives on the effect of threat on political attitudes (threat motivating more conservative attitudes and cognition on one hand or a content-free worldview defense on the other), we present hypotheses aimed at testing whether political conservatives, compared to political liberals (who are usually less confident in the fairness of the system), are more likely to perceive their attitudes to be similar with the general population and whether exposure to messages threatening the legitimacy of the system they live in will eliminate or widen any such existing differences (should there be any).

Tested hypotheses

Prior research done within the framework of the CMSC approach suggests that, compared to political liberals, political conservatives tend to perceive greater consensus with their ideological in-group (e.g., Stern et al., 2014a), report more favourable views towards co-nationals (Jost et al., 2008b), and assume greater support for their positions among general public when threatened with minority status (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015). Furthermore, political conservatism, compared to liberalism, was associated with higher need to achieve epistemic closure (Jost & Krochik, 2014) which itself is associated with increased social projection on ingroups and incidental groups (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017). Conversely, the worldview defense approaches do not predict political ideology to be associated with differences in the magnitude of social projection, but rather to moderate its direction following threat. Therefore, measuring political conservatism as a general view that the standing socio-political system is fair and legitimate (General System Justification), we first test the hypothesis that politically conservative respondents (higher GSJ scores) should report greater overall perceived attitudinal similarity to the society in general (that is, lower APID score) (**H1**).

Furthermore, perceptions of cultural and economic decline have been associated with conservative attitudes and one of the core tenets of political conservatism, resistance to rapid social change (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Eibach & Libby, 2009). In line with this strand of research, and specifically the 'reactive liberal' hypothesis (Nail et al., 2009), we expect that exposure to information presenting a possible threat to the country's culture and traditions (or economic performance) should temporarily heighten the system justification motive among those generally critical or skeptical of the system's legitimacy (lower GSJ scores; Banfield et al., 2011) and lead to compensatory behavior manifesting in heightened social projection, thus making liberals become more like conservatives in their answers and therefore eliminating the difference in the amount of total projection (APID) between low and high system justifiers (**H2a**). In particular, given that this hypothesis builds on the CMSC framework expecting conservatives to be chronically motivated to perceive others' attitudes as more similar to themselves, a support for (**H2a**) and the underlying CMSC framework would represent a pattern of results in which conservatives, compared to liberals, would report greater overall perceived similarity with the general population (APID) in the control condition, while liberals in the system threat condition would report smaller APID compared to liberals in the control condition.

On the other hand, the worldview defense perspectives theorize symmetrical reactions to threatening stimuli among liberals and conservatives, and affirmation of their respective worldviews and ideologies (e.g., Bassett et al., 2015; Randles et al., 2017). However, given that we are assessing the perceived difference between one's attitudes and those of most others, there are multiple beliefs and ideals that the respondents may affirm depending on their values, but also on their prior perceptions of where they ideologically stand relative to the likely average attitudes of their co-nationals in general.

Firstly, according to the naive realism thesis, people overestimate ideological differences between opposing groups and tend to view themselves as rational and objective while, at the same time, they consider others, even members of their ingroups, as likely misinformed or ideologically biased (Graham et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996; Westfall et al., 2015). Affirmation of the perspective that most others, especially one's ideological opponents, are simply biased should then result in a 'reverse projection' of own attitudes on others and an increase in the overall perceived ideological distance from the society among both liberal and conservatives. In the analyses below, this should be represented as an overall positive effect of condition on APID and a significant interaction effect on DPID making the reverse projection (if there indeed is any) more pronounced (**H2b**). For instance, if liberals would generally perceive the society to have more negative views of the welfare state and welfare recipients compared to themselves (and the reverse was the case for conservatives), they should exaggerate this view even more in the

system threat condition (while the conservatives would react by imagining the society as even more favorable towards the welfare state and welfare recipients).[30]

Alternatively, assuming that conservatives are more likely than liberals to perceive greater attitudinal similarity with others (and thus (**H1**) being supported), either to begin with or when threatened, our respondents may react to the presented system threat by bolstering the beliefs, values, and motivations underlying or exposing (following threat) this asymmetry - e.g., liberals tend to believe there are many persisting and unjust inequalities and value tolerance and uniqueness, whereas conservatives generally have a worldview of a dangerous, but ultimately fair world and value loyalty and consensus within ingroup (Duckitt, 2001; Jost et al., 2009; Stern, et al., 2014a). Some support for this hypothesis comes from research on threat in a form of mortality reminders and violations of expectations, following which liberals and conservatives temporarily commit more strongly to their already held values and beliefs (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Randles et al., 2015). For instance, liberals reported being more tolerant and conservatives less tolerant of opinions of an author of an essay criticizing their country when reminded of their own mortality (Castano et al., 2011). It can also be that the same stimulus is interpreted differently by those perceiving it with different expectations and thus leading to divergent reactions - as in the case of women (not) endorsing meritocratic beliefs reacting with greater physiological distress to indications that the system is (un)fair following an unexpected (non-)discrimination against their ingroup (Major et al., 2007). In our case, a threat to the system might be perceived as validating conservatives' worldview of the world being a dangerous place in which one needs to stick with their ingroup and follow its traditions (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003), while liberals would have their worldview violated react by bolstering their need of uniqueness and tolerance of different opinions and values. A symmetrical reaction of affirmation of different beliefs or values among conservatives and liberals would then predict liberals reporting a greater, and conservatives a smaller overall gap in the perceived ideological distance from the attitudes of the majority (APID) in the system threat compared to system affirmation condition. In the analyses below, we would then expect a significant interaction between ideology (in our case measured with the general system justification scale) and system threat condition, with liberals reporting higher and conservatives lower APID in the system threat, compared to respective liberals and conservatives in the control condition (**H2c**).

Finally, a symmetrical reaction to the system threat could also manifest as an increased commitment to one's values (e.g., Bassett et al., 2015; Kahan et al., 2017a), and by increased projection of these values on the society among both liberal and conservatives in order to protect the perceived legitimacy and normalcy of one's worldview by imagining it

[30] It is also possible that one would commit to their perceived position as one of the few 'objective' people by simultaneously perceiving both their ideological ingroup and outgroup as more biased. However, our design does not ask about estimated opinions of particular groups and we therefore cannot assess this option and treats those answering as if their views were 'the middle of the road' as perceiving the general population being in agreement with them.

being shared with the general population (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Sherman et al., 1984). That is, in the previous hypothesis we theorized liberals and conservatives to affirm their ideals and temporarily become, for instance, more tolerant or more patriotic and loyal, and this to manifest in greater perceived differences from the rest of the population. Here, however, we expect both liberals and conservatives to project these underlying values and motivations on others (Krueger, 2008; Van Boven et al., 2012), which should result in a lower overall perceived ideological distance (APID) in the treatment group among both liberals and conservatives. At the same time, in the analysis assessing the directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) as an outcome, there should be a significant interaction effect between ideology and the manipulation in a direction signifying a reduction in the reverse projection among the respective ideologues (**H2d**).

In sum, hypotheses (**H1- CMSC**), (**H2a - 'reactive liberals'**), and (**H2c - different beliefs affirmation**) assume that political conservatives are more likely to project their attitudes on others and thus perceive a smaller overall difference between their attitudes and those of the majority compared to liberals (in case of (**H2c**), this may be only present in the system threat condition), while hypotheses (**H2b - naive realism**) and (**H2d - symmetric projection**) expect both political liberals and conservatives to perceive their differences with others to be of similar magnitudes. Following a system threat manipulation, (**H2a**) predicts liberals to close the gap in the amount of projection between themselves and conservatives and perceive the gap between their own attitudes and those of the general population to be of a magnitude similar to that perceived by conservatives. Conversely, (**H2c**) predicts system threat to motivate political liberals to perceive (even) greater distance between their views and those of the population, while the opposite should happen among conservatives. On the other hand, (**H2b**) and (**H2d**) predict the already existing (if any) differences in perceived ideological distance between the respective ideologues and the assumed attitudes of the society in general to either increase (**H2b**) or decrease (**H2d**) symmetrically among both liberals and conservatives in the system threat compared to system affirmation or control condition.

Study 1

In the first study, we were interested if a threat directed at the cultural system of the country would affect how people view their similarity with opinions of the majority on issues about the welfare state and welfare recipients. In particular, we experimentally tested whether prior ideological position regarding the fairness and legitimacy of the standing social system would moderate the impact of information potentially threatening the cultural makeup and traditions of the country. Based on the reasoning provided by the CMSC framework and prior work on ideological differences in engaging in motivated social projection (Stern et al., 2014b; Stern & West, 2016), we expected that the participants reporting greater belief that the Dutch social system is fair and legitimate would also report

perceiving greater similarity between their attitudes and those of the Dutch population on the measure of absolute, or total, perceived ideological distance, APID (**H1**). Furthermore, in line with the same strand of research, we expected that exposure to information presenting a possible threat to the country's culture and traditions should temporarily heighten the system justification motive among those generally critical, or skeptical of the system's legitimacy, and lead to compensatory behavior manifesting as heightened social projection, thus eliminating the difference in the amount of total projection (APID) between low and high system justifiers (**H2a**). The competing worldview defense hypotheses would then predict compensatory behavior among both liberals and conservatives, with the result being either a greater (**H2b**) or a smaller (**H2d**) overall perceived ideological distance (APID) accompanied with an increase (**H2b**) or a reduction (**H2d**) in 'reverse projection' in the direction of the perceived ideological differences (DPID) on the one hand, or an increase, respectively reduction in overall perceived attitudinal similarity with the general population (APID) among conservatives and liberals (**H2c**) on the other.

Sample

201 participants (134 women, $M_{age} = 21.4$, $SD_{age} = 2.3$) were recruited using the pool of Tilburg University students during March and April 2016. 22 additional participants were excluded since they indicated to be one year old.[31] All participants received either course credit or financial compensation (5 Euros). Upon arriving at the location, participants were seated in illuminated, soundproofed cubicles.

Materials

All of the used materials were in Dutch, thus eliminating concerns about the respondents answering to questions posed in forms they would not normally encounter in their political life in the Netherlands (Costa, Foucart, Arnon, Aparici, Apesteguia, 2014; Keysar, Hayakawa, & An, 2012). All materials were presented and all answers were collected through the Qualtrics platform. In the first phase, participants filled out a background questionnaire, surveying both their demographic and ideological background. In particular, the respondents were asked about their general left-right orientation, their favored political party, and a set of questions from the Dutch version of General System Justification scale (GSJ; Kay & Jost, 2003; 8 - item version (e.g., The Netherlands is the best country in the world to live in; In general, you find society to be fair; Most policies serve the greater good; Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve); measured on a 9 point Likert scale, rescaled to 0-1; higher values indicate higher tendency to justify the prevailing social system; $M = .52$, $SD = .14$; $\alpha = .78$). Multiple studies were done on the same sample in succession, however, none of the participants was able to guess the goal of any of the experiments.[32]

[31] The results do not substantively change if the 22 removed participants are included in the analysis.

[32] At the social psychology lab at Tilburg University, students get compensated for participating in an hour or half an hour-long sessions during which they may be participating in multiple studies in a row. There is no pressure to

Manipulation - Cultural Threat

The participants were then randomly selected into either an experimental (cultural threat) or a control (neutral) condition. There were two sets of scenarios which were meant to highlight the potential for cultural changes and disagreements in the Netherlands.

In both conditions, participants first read and then answered questions based on Cultural Tolerance Scale (Gasser & Tan, 1999). This exercise consisted of tasks in which the participants were first asked to imagine themselves encountering a number of culturally-specific behaviors or customs in a different country (e.g., smoking during a meeting without asking for permission or learning about a co-worker's reluctant acceptance that their marriage will have been arranged by their parents) and then to indicate their attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding these (e.g., telling the co-worker to (not) marry someone they did not love). The participants were then asked to estimate whether most people in a given country would support the given custom and, for those in the experimental condition, to also estimate the likely support for the custom in the Netherlands. We included this additional question in order for the participants to gauge their likely agreement with the general population before engaging with the manipulation scenarios. Indeed, this difference between the control and experimental conditions should not be considered as a part of the 'cultural threat' manipulation but rather as an attempt to elicit participants' thinking about attitudes of the general population (e.g., Krupka & Weber, 2009; Smith & Mackie, 2014).[33]

The second set of scenarios consisted of three stories common for both the control and the experimental group. After reading these scenarios, participants were then asked to rate the fairness of described situations (e.g., Is it fair for a restaurant to reject '100% discount' coupons if these were printed due to a typo?). In the experimental condition, the latter part of the task asked for similar judgments regarding four stories hinting at potential threats to the local culture (e.g., a suggestion that a traditional character, 'Zwarte Piet', helps perpetuate negative racial stereotypes, or a story about a couple in which the bride to be had to convert to Islam for the groom's parents to condone the marriage). In the control condition, the four parallel stories contained no, or only limited threats to cultural values (e.g., the bride was asked to convert to Catholicism, which could be viewed with suspicion in

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complete any of the studies. There were no other control, system dependency, system inescapability, threat or system-threat manipulations that should heightened system-justification motivation used during the sessions in which the data reported on here were gathered.

[33] We also measured the responses on a 7-point scale and constructed a simple measure of absolute perceived similarity between the respondents, members of the target country, and people in the Netherlands and averaged the mean differences for the set of questions. The perceived attitudinal distance was significantly smaller for difference between attitudes of participants and those presumed to be held by the Dutch people in general compared to those presumed to be held by people in the countries from respective scenarios ($M_1 = 1.77$, $SE_1 = .11$; $M_2 = 2.56$, $SE_2 = .1$; $t(93) = -7.07$; $p < .001$) and system justification scores were weakly associated with lower perceived attitudinal distance between the respondents and their co-nationals ($b = -.2$, $SE = .11$, $t(92) = -1.88$, $p = .063$) but not with the nationals of other countries ($b = .02$, $SE = .06$, $t(92) = .21$, $p = .834$), a result consistent with social projection being stronger on groups closer to the observer (Robbins & Krueger, 2005) and associated with conservative attitudes (Stern & West, 2016).

a historically Protestant country with a large population of atheists, but should not present a novel phenomenon or a large shift in the established local cultural norms).

Perceived Ideological Distance (Beliefs about welfare state and welfare recipients)

Following the manipulation and control scenarios, all respondents answered a battery of questions asking about their opinions and their estimates of opinions of the Dutch in general regarding statements about welfare state and welfare recipients. Selected were eight questions from Furnham's (1982) Attitudes to Social Security Scale (e.g., ''There are too many people receiving social security who should be working'' or "Generally, we are spending too little money on social security"; measured on a 10-point Likert scale; higher values indicate more negative beliefs and attitudes regarding the state of the Dutch welfare state). We constructed a difference score for each participant between their own reported attitudes (M = 4.59, SD = 1.1; α = .71) and answers which they indicated as representing the likely attitudes of the general population (M = 4.97, SD = .87; α = .55). In the resulting scale of perceived ideological distance (DPID, possible range from -9 to 9; $M = -.38$, $SD = 1.34$), the values above zero indicate that the participant perceived the general population to hold attitudes more favorable towards the welfare state and welfare recipients compared to their personal attitudes (and vice versa). Finally, we also computed absolute perceived ideological distance (APID, possible range from 0 to 9; M = 1.52, SD = .9), in which higher numbers indicate greater perceived distance from the general population in either direction.

Results and Discussion

We conducted two multiple regression analyses for each APID and DPID as alternative ways to measure the perceived ideological distance. In the analyses, we entered the measure of general system justification attitudes (GSJ; grand-mean centered), a system-threat vs. control (neutral message) condition (effect coded so that system-threat was 1 and neutral message was -1), and the interaction of the two. For APID, that is the absolute perceived ideological distance, as the outcome variable, the main effect of GSJ was significant and negative, b = -.14, SE = .06, $t(197)$ = -2.29, p = .023, sr^2 = .02, CI [-.25, -.02], indicating that those generally perceiving the system as just and legitimate tended to perceive a smaller total distance between their views on welfare state and welfare recipients and those they assumed to be held by the general (Dutch) population. While the result supports (**H1**), both low, b= 1.67, SE =.09, $t(197)$ = 18.52, p <.001, and high system justifiers, b = 1.37, SE =.09, $t(197)$ = 15.13, p <.001, reported APID scores significantly different from zero, which suggests that even if a greater amount of social projection did take place among the high, compared to low system justifiers, members of neither group considered themselves representative of the society in general.

Contrary to the expectation that a message threatening the established cultural system of the country should increase (**H2b**) or decrease (**H2d**) the total perceived ideological distance, there was no overall significant effect of condition, b = -.07, SE = .06,

$t(197) = -1.08$, $p = .282$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.19, -.06]. There was also no significant interaction effect, $b = .04$, $SE = .06$, $t(197) = .65$, $p = .518$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.08, .15], which is contrary to prediction that liberals would answer more like conservatives and perceive smaller difference in attitudes compared to most others in the system threat compared to control condition (**H2a)** or that exposure to system threat (vs. control) would motivate both liberals and conservatives to strengthen their previous tendencies to assume similarity with the general population **(H2c**). Decomposing the interaction, we found that while GSJ was negatively related to APID in the control condition, $b = -.17$, $SE = .07$, $t(197) = -2.33$, $p = .021$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [-.32, -.02], the relationship was not significant in the treatment condition, $b = -.09$, $SE = .09$, $t(197) = -1.06$, $p = .293$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.28, .08], and the responses of neither low ($p = .22$) nor high system justifiers ($p = .77$) differed between conditions, a result in the direction predicted by the 'reactive liberal' hypothesis (**H2a**) and in the direction opposite to that predicted by (**H2c**).

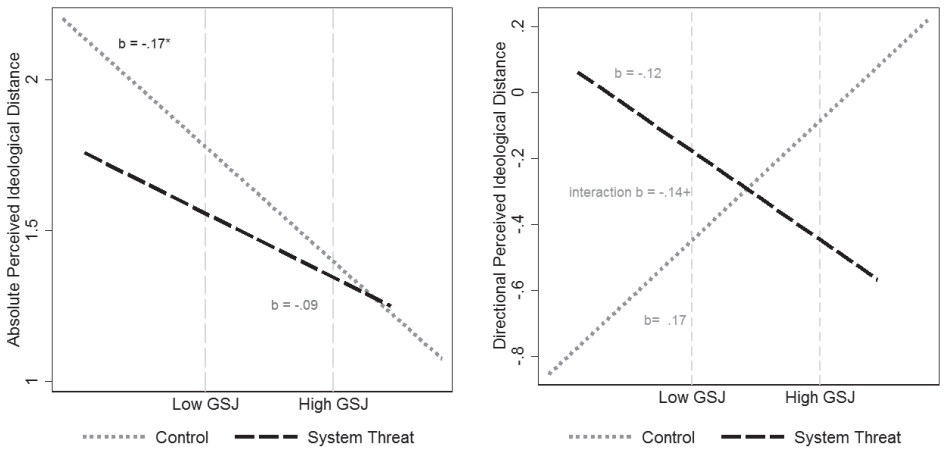

Figure 5 Perceived Ideological Distance in regard to attitudes towards welfare and welfare recipients among Low and High System Justifiers

Note: *Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on APID and DPID in control and system threat conditions; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

Exploring DPID, (directional) perceived ideological distance, as the outcome, we found no significant main effect of GSJ, $b = -.07$, $SE = .09$, $t(197) = .84$, $p = .4$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.1, .25], nor of condition ($b = -.14$, $SE = .09$, $t(197) = -1.48$, $p = .139$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.32, .05]. Similarly to the APID measure, both low ($b = -.46$, $SE = .13$, $t(197) = -3.46$, $p = .001$) and high system justifiers ($b = -.3$, $SE = .13$, $t(197) = -2.24$, $p = .026$) reported their attitudes to be significantly different from the perceived norm. Given the selected outcome measure, we can see that, regardless of their GSJ score, most of the respondents viewed

themselves as being more favorable towards the welfare system and the unemployed compared to the Dutch in general.

Decomposing the significant interaction effect, $b = .2$, $SE = .09$, $t(197) = 2.27$, $p = .024$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [.03, .37], we found that the relationship between the reported tendency to system justify and the DPID was negative and not statistically significant in the neutral condition, $b = -.13$, $SE = .11$, $t(197) = -1.13$, $p = .258$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.34, .1], but significant and positive in the system threat condition ($b = .27$, $SE = .14$, $t(197) = 2.00$, $p = .047$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [.0, .54]. Partially supporting the assumption of the 'reactive liberal' thesis (**H2a**), it was only the low system justifiers (1 SD below the GSJ mean) who reacted to the treatment message, $b = -.36$, $SE = .13$, $t(197) = 2.67$, $p = .008$, $sr^2 = .03$, CI [-.62, -.09], while those with high GSJ scores did not, $b = .08$, $SE = .13$, $t(197) = .58$, $p = .561$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.19, .34].

In sum, we tested whether exposing our respondents to hypothetical scenarios (and) inviting them to think about potential cultural changes in the Netherlands (e.g., parents of the fiancé asking the bride to convert to Islam) would affect the ways in which they perceive their personal attitudes to be similar to the attitudes they believe the majority of the society would presumably espouse. We utilized two measures of perceived attitudinal similarity, one assessing the overall magnitude of the perceived difference in attitudes (APID) and one assessing the overall direction of the perceived differences and its magnitude (DPID). The results show that political liberals (i.e., those scoring lower on general system justification scale) did not differ in their reported overall perceived ideological distance from the society in general (APID) between the system threat and the control conditions, but reported to perceive the society as having significantly more negative attitudes towards the welfare state and welfare recipients compared to their own attitudes in the system threat condition (vs. control) (DPID). On the other hand, there was no difference among conservatives between conditions on neither DPID nor APID measure. Together with conservatives reporting lower overall APID than liberals, the observed pattern of results provides evidence for the thesis that conservatives perceive the general population as attitudinally closer to them than do liberals (**H1**) and that it is liberals who are likely to alter their thinking when exposed to system threat (**H2a**). However, while the 'reactive liberals' thesis predicts liberals becoming more like conservatives following exposure to threatening stimuli, what we observed was liberals perceiving the society to be a lot more conservative than them, and not 'balanced' or similar to their attitudes, which was the pattern found among conservatives. The results are thus open to debate, since while the reaction to the stimulus was limited to low system justifiers, thus supporting a rather broad version of (**H2a**), it was in a direction of affirmation of their presumed worldview - being significantly more positive towards the welfare state and the unemployed compared to the Dutch people in general. This can be interpreted as increase in reverse projection of their attitudes on the majority of the society

(and perhaps increased perceived agreement with other liberals), a result partially in line with the prediction of the naive realism inspired hypothesis of increased perceived ideological isolation from most others and perceiving them as more ideologically biased (**H2b**). Alternatively, the results are also possible to be interpreted as somewhat supportive of the hypothesis predicting affirmations of different underlying values and beliefs among conservatives and liberals (**H2c**). In this view, liberals might have reacted to the system threat by perceiving themselves as more tolerant and inclusive and thus more positive towards the welfare state and welfare recipients compared to the rest of the society (which is viewed as more negative towards welfare state), in what would be an affirmation of their self-perceived uniqueness and moral values oriented towards tolerance of others and assisting the needy, or of the belief that the social world is generally unfair but legitimate in the eyes of the majority. Furthermore, both hypotheses - reactive liberals and affirmation of different underlying beliefs, are capable of incorporating the observed lack of reaction by conservatives who are supposed to either have already heightened feelings of being threatened (**H2a**) or whose worldview of the social world being a dangerous place would render our system threat manipulation simply an expected piece of information and a confirmation of their prior worldview. Overall, however, the pattern of results provides support for the hypothesis (**H1**) and leaves the question of how do liberals and conservatives differ in reactions to system threat without clearly supporting any of the tested hypotheses.

In the first study, we utilized prospects of changes in the local culture as a threat to the cultural system of a country and observed reactions measured via reported perceptions of ideological distance from the general population among those who believe that the country's socio-political system should either substantively change or largely remain as it is now. Compared to those who deem the system as unfair and would advocate its change, we observed those who wish the system to stay in place as perceiving smaller differences between their own attitudes and those of the rest of the society. However, the materials in the study essentially tested whether a threat to country's culture affects differences between political liberals and conservatives in perceived attitudinal similarity on a topic of beliefs and attitudes towards welfare state and welfare recipients. While the literature on welfare chauvinism and right-wing populism certainly backs the connection and warrants the study's relevance (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014; De Koster, Achterberg, & van der Waal, 2013; Mewes & Mau, 2013; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012), the effect of the system threat manipulation provided mixed outcomes, which could be due to a mismatch between the threat being directed at the dimension of culture and the outcome being more in a domain of economic attitudes. Furthermore, the employed manipulation did not spell out that the local culture is in decline, being threatened, or changing. Indeed, it is possible that respondents with different ideological views would perceive the messages indicating changes in cultural norms differently and might welcome these as signs of progress. Therefore, in the second study, both the manipulation and the outcome will pertain to the economic dimension of

political ideology and the range for possible interpretations of the manipulation will be less ambiguous. In particular, we will assess whether a threat to the country's economic performance will affect the respondents' perceived ideological distance from the presumed ideals of the Dutch society on a topic of the value of working and attitudes towards work in general.

Study 2

In the second study, we explored effects of exposure to a different manipulation, a threat to the economic performance and status of the system on the respondents' perceived similarity with the general population in attitudes toward work in general. Specifically, we experimentally assessed how personal views concerning the legitimacy of the country's socio-political system would moderate the effect of a message suggesting a poor performance of the country's institutions on the perceived ideological difference between one's attitudes and attitudes the respondents' considered to be held by the Dutch population in general. Similarly to Study 1, we derived our hypotheses from the competing perspectives on association of experienced threat and uncertainty with political attitudes, the CMSC model and the worldview defense model. Following the suggestions of the CMSC framework that conservative attitudes are motivated by heightened psychological needs to manage threat and uncertainty and that perception of shared reality with others helps in coping with subjectively experienced threat and uncertainty, the CMSC model also expects that situational uncertainty and threat should increase the propensity of such projection among those who do not have these needs chronically elevated (in our case presumably those who scored low in the measure of general system justification). Furthermore, external threats, such as threats to the economic performance of the country, have been associated with increase in endorsement of politically conservative attitudes and ingroup favoritism (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Nail et al., 2009; Onraet et al., 2013). Therefore, we expected those with greater confidence in the system's legitimacy to perceive greater similarity in attitudes with the Dutch people in general (**H1**), and for those who report their confidence in the system to be lower to perceive smaller attitudinal distance from the society in general in the system threat, compared to control condition (**H2a - reactive liberals**). We also predicted alternative patterns of responses based on the worldview defense literature, in which experiencing threat and uncertainty does not necessarily motivate political conservatism but rather one's increased commitment to their prior beliefs. As in Study 1, then, the tested predictions were increased or decreased projection of own attitudes on most others among both low and high system justifiers, resulting either in smaller (**H2d - symmetric projection**) or greater (**H2b - naive realism**) overall perceived attitudinal distance from the majority (APID), accompanied with decreased (**H2d**), respectively increased tendency to assign most others the opposite of their own attitudes (**H2b**). Finally, if both the liberals and the conservatives react by affirming their different underlying beliefs and values, hypothesis (**H2c - different beliefs affirmation**) predicts liberals reporting greater and conservatives

smaller overall respective ideological distance from the majority in the threat compared to the control condition (APID).

Sample

The same 201 students from the Study 1 participated also in Study 2 (134 women, M_{age} = 21.4, SD_{age} = 2.3).

Materials

As in the previous study, all materials were in Dutch. Ideology measure used was again the Dutch version of General System Justification scale (GSJ; Kay & Jost, 2003; 8 - item version; measured on a 9-points Likert scale, rescaled to 0-1; higher values indicate higher tendency to justify the prevailing social system; M = .52, SD = .14; α = .78).

Manipulation – (Economic) Status Threat to the System

The participants were randomly selected into either the experimental (system threat) or the control condition (system affirmation). In the experimental condition, the participant read a short, about 100 words long mock article describing the Netherlands as stagnating economically, failing its youth who can't find jobs they desire, and falling out of the Economist's top 15 of 'Where to be Born Index'. In the control condition, the Netherlands were described as steadily growing¸ with young people being able to work in the jobs they aimed for and retaining a position within the top 10 of the same ranking. Therefore, it was rather clearly indicated that the Netherlands is in relative decline both in terms of its economic performance and the general standards of living. To assess the effect of the manipulation on the perceived performance of the system, we asked the participants about their opinions about how the Netherlands was faring at the moment (answered on a 7-point scale; in the analysis, the possible values range from 0 to 6, with higher values representing a more positive view of the Netherland's performance). Those in the system threat condition rated the Netherlands as doing significantly worse compared to the respondents in control condition, $M_{control}$ = 4.2, $SE_{control}$ = .11; M_{threat} = 3.51, SE_{threat} = .11; $t(199)$ = 4.54; p <.001, d = .64. As a part of the task related to the manipulation, the participants were then asked to guess the actual ranking by arranging the top 15 countries, with the Netherlands ostentatiously missing in the treatment condition, followed by a question on how they thought the Netherlands would perform in 10 years (answered on a 7-point scale; in the analysis, the possible values range from 0 to 6, with higher values representing a more positive view of the Netherland's performance). In the assessment of the expected future performance of the country, there was no difference between the conditions, $M_{control}$ = 3.34, $SE_{control}$ = .1; M_{threat} = 3.41, SE_{threat} = .12; $t(199)$ = -.49; p = .62, d = .07. Together, this indicates that the manipulation suggesting the country's decline in the recent past made the participants judge the status quo as temporarily less desirable but that, at the same time, the perceived future outlook of the country was not affected. In other words, the students in our sample answered as if they processed the claim about the drop in the standards of living and threatened economic prospects of the Dutch youth at face value in regard to their perception

of the status quo, but did seem to not interpret this as impacting the perceivable future of the Netherlands (and presumably their future personal well-being). The manipulation thus only affected the perceived state of the affairs and not the beliefs about the future performance of the country. We then asked the participants to rate which factors were important for a person to become successful in the contemporary Netherlands. The participants rated four potential factors for success, namely hard work, skills and ability, personal connections, and successful parents of family (7-point scale). We combined the answers and created difference score with resulting values potentially ranging from -6 to 6, with higher numbers indicating people suggesting that hard work and skills and ability were more important for success than personal connections and successful parents or family. There were no differences between the overall assessment of those in control and treatment conditions, $M_{control} = 1.11$, $SE_{control} = .23$; $M_{threat} = 1$, $SE_{threat} = .22$; $t(199) = .34$; $p = .74$, $d = .05$, and the perception of the Netherlands rewarding hard work and ability, rather than one's network or background was stronger among high system-justifiers, $b = .44$, $SE = .141$, $t(197) = 3.12$, $p = .002$, $sr^2 = .04$, CI [.16, .73], regardless of the experimental condition, $b = .012$, $SE = .16$, $t(197) = .08$, $p = .937$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.29, .32]. However, an item-by-item analysis showed that it was only the perceived importance of one's family being already successful that differed between the low and high system-justifiers, $b = -.3$, $SE = .1$, $t(197) = -3.13$, $p = .002$, $sr^2 = .04$, CI [-.49, -.11], with the importance of hard work ($p = .474$), ability ($p = .565$), and personal connections ($p = .294$) not being predicted by one's view of the country's social and political system as fair and legitimate. Leading up to the next part of the study, the assessment of the perceived ideological similarity between the participants and the majority, this result suggests that our manipulation did not affect people's perceptions of how the society rewards hard work and ability (relative to person's connections and background).

Perceived Ideological Distance (Attitudes towards work)

On the next screen, the participants were asked to answer a set of seven questions asking about their attitudes and their estimates of attitudes of the Dutch in general related to the value of work and working. The questions were adapted from a similar battery used in World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2014) and supplemented by original items aimed at assessing the participants' attitudes toward the value of work itself (or working) in general (e.g., People who don't work turn lazy; Work is a duty towards society; There are no jobs that are useless or meaningless; It is preferable to be unhappy at a job than not working at all; measured on a 10-point 0 to 9 Likert scale; higher values indicate stronger agreement). We constructed an average difference score for each participant between their own mean reported attitudes ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.06$; $\alpha = .61$) and the mean of the answers which they indicated as representing the likely attitudes of the general population ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.03$; $\alpha = .67$). In the resulting scale of perceived ideological distance (DPID, possible range from -9 to 9; $M = -.27$, $SD = .18$), the values above zero indicate that the participant assumed the general population to hold attitudes less oriented towards valuing work and working in itself

compared to their personal attitudes (and vice versa). We also computed absolute perceived ideological distance (APID, possible range from 0 to 9; $M = 1.33$, $SD = .85$), in which lower values mean smaller assumed difference from the general population.

Results and Discussion

First, we examined the relationships between the measure of the general system legitimizing attitudes and the perception of overall ideological distance, APID, as the outcome measure. In the analyses, we entered the participants reported ideological position (GSJ), a system-threat vs. control condition (effect coded so that system-threat was 1 and control condition was -1), and the interaction between the two. As predicted by the CMSC model (**H1**), the main effect of system justifying attitudes was significant and negative, $b = -.12$, $SE = .05$, $t(197) = -2.13$, $p = .034$ $sr^2 = .02$, CI [-.22, -.01]. The treatment effect of being exposed to a system criticizing message went in the opposite of the negative direction predicted by the CMSC inspired 'reactive liberal' hypothesis, or the prediction that exposure to system threatening message would lead to increased projection among both liberals or conservatives (**H2a**, **H2d**), $b = .13$, $SE = .06$, $t(197) = 2.12$, $p = .036$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [.01, .24], and rather provided a support for the naive realism inspired hypothesis of increased 'reverse projection' on others in the threat condition (**H2b**). The interaction effect between the GSJ and condition did not reach the conventional threshold for statistical significance, $b = -.1$, $SE = .05$, $t(197) = -1.78$, $p = .076$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.2, .01], although the negative direction of the effect would be in line with and partially supporting the prediction of the worldview affirmation perspective in which liberals become more liberal in their outlook (and conservatives more conservative) following the exposure to system threat (**H2c**).

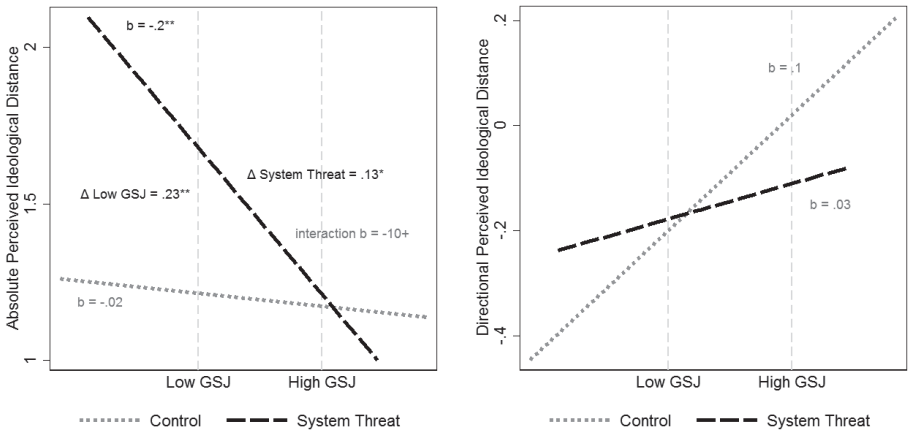

Figure 6 Perceived Ideological Distance in regard to attitudes towards the value of work and working in general among Low and High System Justifiers

Note: *Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on APID and DPID in control and system threat conditions; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

Looking at the results for each of the conditions, contrary to the expectations of hypotheses derived from the CMSC model (**H1**, **H2a**), the relationship between GSJ and APID was not significant in the control condition, b = -.02, SE = .07, t(197) = -.26, p = .798, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.17, .13], but was only significant and negative in the system threat condition, b = -.21, SE = .08, t(197) = -2.66, p = .008, sr^2 = .03, CI [-.37, -.06]. Thus, the prediction that exposure to a threat to the system would motivate liberals to perceive greater similarity between their attitudes and those of the majority was not supported. Instead, liberal respondents perceived greater difference between their attitudes and those of the majority in the treatment condition, b = .23, SE = .08, t(197) = 2.78, p = .006, sr^2 = .03, CI [.07, .4], thus providing a partial support to the hypothesis that liberals would increase their perceived distance from most others in the threat condition (**H2c**). On the other hand, conservatives did not differ in their total perceived distance in attitudes with the majority between the system threatening and neutral conditions, b = -.02, SE = .08, t(197) = .23, p = .82, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.15, .19], which runs contrary to the expectations of hypotheses predicting either affirmation of differing beliefs by both liberals and conservatives (**H2c**), or overall decrease (**H2d**) or increase in perceived ideological distance from the society (**H2b**).

With directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) as the outcome, neither the main effect of system justifying attitudes, b = .02, SE = .08, t(197) = .28, p = .779, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.13, .17], nor the effect of condition, b = -.02, SE = .08, t(197) = -.27, p = .788, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.19, .14], were related to the perceived ideological distance. The interaction between the two was only marginally significant, b = -.14, SE = .08, t(197) = -1.88, p = .062, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.3, .01], and in a direction counter to the expected increase in 'reverse projection' predicted by (**H2b**). Examining the results further shows that there was no significant relationship between the outcome measure of ideological distance and GSJ in either the control, b = .17, SE = .10, t(197) = 1.59, p = .113, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.04, .37], or the treatment condition, b = -.12, SE = .11, t(197) = -1.09, p = .279, sr^2 = .0, CI [-35., .1], nor was there a significant effect of condition among either the low, b = .14, SE = .12, t(197) = 1.15, p = .252, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.1, .37] or high system-justifiers, b = -.18, SE = .12, t(197) = -1.51, p = .133, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.42, .06]. Furthermore, both liberals (GSJ scores 1 SD below the ideology mean) and conservatives (GSJ scores 1SD above the ideology mean) viewed others as generally valuing work and working more compared to their personal attitudes. In particular, liberals reported the distance from the population being significantly different from zero in the control condition, b = -.45, SE = .17, t(197) = -2.59, p = .01, and not in the system threat condition, b = -.18, SE = .16, t(197) = -1.11, p = .268, whereas conservatives responded with answers indicating a significant perceived attitudinal difference from the society in the system threat condition, b = -.45, SE = .19, t(197) = -2.42, p = .017, but not in the control condition, b = -.09, SE = .15, t(197) = -.56, p = .577.

Given that there were multiple studies in one session, we also conducted analyses in which we added an effect for the condition from Study 1 (-1 control condition, 1 system-threat), and its interaction with other variables used in the main model of Study 2, in order

to see whether the treatment from the prior study might have affected participants' later answers. The distribution between the four possible combinations of these conditions was near equal (58,53,54,58). For APID as the outcome, including the condition from Study 1 and all interactions affected the strength of the results but not the direction of observed associations. The confidence interval of the main effect of ideology included zero, b = -.1, SE = .06, $t(193)$ = -1.84, p = .067, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.21, .01], which somewhat weakens the support for (**H1**) that the level of conservatism is associated with increased perceived similarity with others. Similarly, confidence intervals of the main effect of treatment, b = .11, SE = .06, $t(193)$ = 1.95, p = .053, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.001, .23], and of the interaction between GSJ and condition, b = -.1, SE = .06, $t(193)$ = -1.76, p = .08, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.21, .01], also include zero, thus also weakening the support for hypothesis (**H2b**) that system threat would motivate greater overall perceived attitudinal distance from the population among the participants. The effect of condition from Study 1 (threat to the system culture) was also only marginally significant, b = -.1, SE = .06, $t(193)$ = -1.7, p = .091, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.22, .02], while the rest of interactions were all not significant (p-values > .35). The effect of treatment (from Study 2) among low GSJ participants retained its size and direction (b = .22, SE = .08, $t(193)$ = 2.65, p = .009, sr^2 = .03, CI [.06, .39]. For DPID as the outcome, the condition from Study 1, nor its interactions with other measures, affected the outcomes of the analyses in Study 2, except for the interaction effect between GSJ and the condition of Study 2 being even in even weaker association with the DV, b = -.12, SE = .08, $t(193)$ = -1.51, p = .132, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.19, .14].

To sum up, as in Study 1, we were interested in whether and how would one's beliefs regarding the justness and legitimacy of the socio-political status quo (measured using general system justification scale; GSJ) moderate the influence of information threatening the legitimacy of this status quo on the respondents' reported perceived attitudinal similarity with the Dutch population in general. There were three differences from Study 1. First, instead of utilizing a rather indirect threat to the country's traditional culture, in Study 2, we utilized a (system threat) manipulation describing the economic performance of the Netherlands as worsening following the crisis and the country as falling out of one of the many quality of life rankings in order for the manipulation being unambiguously presented as either negative or positive and clearly related to economic issues (in the control condition, the country was doing well both economically and in the rankings). Second, instead of asking about the participants' perceived (dis)similarity in attitudes towards the welfare state and welfare recipients with the general population, we asked the respondents about their perceptions of (dis)similarity in attitudes with their co-national vis-à-vis the value of working and work in general. Third, in the session of which the two studies were parts of, Study 2 came chronologically after Study 1 (albeit not immediately).

Together, findings from Study 2 suggest that the level of confidence in the legitimacy of the standing socio-political system (of which one is a member) moderates the effect of receiving negative information about the said system. In particular, compared to

conservatives overall (high GSJ scores) and to liberals (low GSJ scores) who read about the Netherlands handling the economic crisis well, liberals who read about the country not doing well imagined themselves as attitudinally more different from the society in general - in that they either viewed most others to value work and working quite a bit more, or less, relative their own attitudes. In the control condition, liberals viewed the society as slightly more valuing work and working than them but, overall, they reported perceiving as large (or small) differences between their attitudes and those of the society in general as conservatives. In the threat condition, liberals perceived significantly larger overall difference between their attitudes and their estimates of attitudes of the society in general compared to conservatives. Also, while liberals did differ in their perceived attitudinal distance from the majority depending on the experimental manipulation, conservatives' perception of such distance did not differ between conditions. Such results lend support to CMSC inspired hypothesis (**H1**) that conservative attitudes are associated with greater perceived attitudinal similarity with others, but clash with the prediction of the 'reactive liberals' hypothesis (**H2a**) that this asymmetry is driven by chronically heightened perceptions of threat among conservatives and would be eliminated following liberals being exposed to a system threat. Therefore, similarly to Study 1, the underlying logic of the CMSC based reactive liberals hypothesis that it is liberals who are more likely to strongly react to threatening stimuli was supported, but the form of the reaction seems to conform to expectations of the worldview defense approaches in which people bolster their prior beliefs about how the world is and how it should be. In particular, results of Study 2 provide support for the 'naive realism' inspired hypothesis (**H2b**), which predicted overall increase in reported total perceived ideological distance from the society in general across participants, and also a limited support to the hypothesis (**H2c**) predicting liberals bolstering their views of the society as different from their personal positions and conservatives affirming the opposite.

Discussion and Conclusion

In two studies, we explored whether political liberals and conservatives systematically vary in the way they perceive their views as being similar or dissimilar to the general public. Following previous research into underlying psychological differences between political liberals and conservatives being a function of perceived threat and research into estimates of consensus and similarity, we designed a study aimed at gauging the possible differences in the effects of system threat on perceived attitudinal similarity between liberals and conservatives with the general population. We hypothesized that the general ideological tendency to justify the standing socio-political system will be related to perception of greater similarity of own ideals with those of the generalized other compared to those who consider the system as unfair and desire its change – i.e. people who believe that the system is generally fair (conservatives) will expect the social norms to be more similar to their attitudes compared to those who believe the social world to be largely unfair (liberals). Such proposition is based on the idea that conservative and system justifying beliefs may fulfill relational needs for shared reality with others (e.g., Jost et al., 2008a). We reasoned that if perception of shared reality

with others helps in coping with subjectively experienced uncertainty and threat, we can also expect that situationally elicited threat should increase the propensity of social projection among those who do not have these needs chronically elevated. Competing hypotheses were derived from worldview defense approaches, which posit that conservative and system justifying ideologies and attitudes are not better suited for management of chronically or situationally elevated feelings of threat and uncertainty, and that exposure to such stimuli should be followed by bolstering one's previously held beliefs and attitudes.

Our results point to a story in which, as predicted by the CMSC model, conservatives perceive greater attitudinal similarity with the general population compared to liberals but, contrary to the same model, the difference between the groups becomes greater when exposed to a message threatening the perceived stability or desirability of the country's cultural or economic status quo. The interpretation of the results is further complicated by the partial support of the underlying logics of the CMSC inspired 'reactive liberal' hypothesis because, while it were only the liberals (and not conservatives) who reacted to threatening stimuli, the direction of their reaction went in the opposite of the predicted closing of the gap between the two groups, thus supporting the worldview defense approaches in which the content of one's already held worldview is affirmed among both liberals and conservatives. The results provide partial support for two different versions of worldview defense approaches.

First, it is possible that people exposed to stimuli threatening the legitimacy of the system react by imagining others as more biased, thus confirming their self-perception as being uniquely rational and realistic. However, we have only observed the possibility of such reaction among liberals and not conservatives, which suggests that conservatives either did not perceive our manipulations of system threat as particularly threatening (e.g., because they already see the social world as rather dangerous; Duckit & Fisher, 2013) or that they do not react to such stimuli in the same way as liberals do. On the other hand, such reaction could also be consistent with differences in general worldviews of liberals and conservatives other than the 'dangerous world' perspective. In particular, liberals generally believe that many of the world's ills could be eliminated by increased efforts in rational and scientific approach and elimination of various superstitions and biases, while conservatives consider the utility of traditional societal arrangements and institutions as time-tested and beyond the reach of mere descriptive rationality (and thus not irrational), and might perceive these traditional norms (which they share in their view) as the being rather intuitively accepted by others even (or especially) during times of perceived threat to the society.

Secondly, supporting the general direction of the worldview verification theory (Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007), if one believes that the social world is generally unfair but that others do not value such worldview (Alves and Correia, 2010), it would make sense to expect that most others believe that the system is fair as it is (and thus contributing to the unfairness of the system) and vice versa. Therefore, somewhat paradoxically, it would be others not sharing their worldview that would confirm and validate low system justifiers' expectations that the system is generally unfair and (ideologically) not legitimate, possibly even providing liberals with a boost to self-esteem. Such explanation would be also consistent with findings suggesting that political liberals tend to value their self-perception of

uniqueness (Stern, West, & Schmitt, 2014). Nevertheless, while the two studies provided an overall support for the hypothesis that, compared to those who would desire social change, people who are confident in the legitimacy of the standing socio-political system tend to view most others as attitudinally closer to them, and that this relationship might be especially strong during the times when the said system is perceived to be under threat, none of the hypothesized explanations for this phenomenon received a clear support.

In terms of the utilized materials implying potential cultural changes and asking the participants to provide their own and assess the majority's likely attitudes towards welfare state and recipients of welfare, our results indicate a rather predictable picture of political liberals believing that most others have less positive views of these compared to themselves. Interestingly, however, many of the conservative respondents likewise suggested that the society be rather more negative towards the welfare state than themselves and both relationships persisted across conditions, with liberals perceiving the society even more negative towards the welfare state when reading about cultural changes. Such perceptions then suggest that conservatives may consider themselves as 'generous and compassionate enough' compared to the socially accepted attitudes and that liberals may become skeptical of the public's support for their ideals. On the other hand, the same dynamics could then reinforce the respective beliefs of conservatives and liberals about the legitimacy of the standing socio-political system in the eyes of the public, especially during events perceived as threatening the cultural stability of their country, which could further widen the already existing differences in views about the necessity and legitimacy of decisive, even extreme measures and policies aimed at protection or adaption and change of the traditional institutions and structural relations.

The implications of our findings point to a rather challenging future for those seeking a more radical shift, rather than incremental change to the status quo. Assuming attitudinal similarity not only eases everyday interactions (Krueger, 2008), but also increases perceived collective efficacy in political domain (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2014), our results suggest that political liberals could have a harder time organizing a consistent ideologically driven response to a crisis simply due to a perceived gap between their individual visions and expectations of others' reactions to it. For defenders of the standing system, the value of attitudinal projection in political matters in time of societal crisis would be in perceiving shared reality with the relevant ingroup – co-nationals, which would affirm one's identity, sense of belongingness, but also correctness of their worldviews and, lastly, increase a (likely desired) perceived probability that co-nationals would agree on measures necessary to prevent and manage further threats to the (cultural) system. Conversely, if those desiring change consider others more dissimilar to them when the system is under threat, not only their prospects for organizing or engaging in collective action might be diminished, but one might even feel ideologically isolated from the rest of the population.

Indeed, there are limitations to our study. First, a sample of students from a single university can be expected to be less diverse and the students to have more limited and similar experience to one another in comparison to a representative sample. Furthermore, it is likely that students may view the issues such as immigration and economic performance of

the country through a different lens and find these less worrisome or less pressuring compared to the general population. Second, while the used manipulations may have face validity, we did not manage to test these separately and assess the emotional or cognitive consequences of these. Indeed, while usage of manipulation checks may have its own drawbacks (Hauser, Elsworth, & Gonzales, 2018), it would have been helpful to have such additional information in order to better understand the reactions of the participants, especially in cases of asymmetrical responses. Second, our measure of political worldview and ideology, general system justification scale, is not very clear about the desired direction in terms of traditionally used left - right labels. Thus, while we did get a more accurate measure of whether the respondents consider the Dutch system to be requiring change or not, it is less clear in which direction they believe the country should continue in the future. Third, the resulting judgments of the legitimacy of the system may be affected by the local cultural, institutional, and structural context, which could make the ideological tendency to legitimize the system less pronounced (for instance, GSJ questionnaire asks directly about outcomes which are theorized to be influenced by society-wide issues such as economic stratification, impacts of which may be perceived as tempered by the institutional system in the Netherlands). Compared to the United States, for which the GSJ was originally developed, the Netherlands society has developed welfare system and maintains high levels of social mobility (Jerrim & Macmillan, 2015; McAllister et al., 2015). Lastly, the employed experimental design cannot account for repeated exposure to the sort of stimuli we attempted to approximate. Research into attitude change in face of motivated reasoning shows that a certain threshold of information opposing the individual's prior beliefs needs to be crossed before people begin to shift their views (Redlawsk, Civettini, & Emmerson, 2010) and it might be possible that our study shows a result which would not reflect a result of a repeated exposure to the same type of stimulus.

In view of our findings and identified limitations, we propose four areas in which extension of the current study would be possible and desirable. First, in view of recent research into one of the implied consequences of our first treatment (cultural threat brought about by increase in immigration), the possibility of cultural change and subsequent threat to the status of the dominant groups within the native population (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Wetts & Willer, 2018), it might be worthwhile to assess whether increase in welfare chauvinism following group status threat is accompanied or reinforced by perceptions of the general society's desire to cut social spending. Second, while we employed two original treatments, one suggesting cultural change and one suggesting economic decline, we did so by using a small, homogenous sample, and using only one treatment at a time. Given that political campaigns tie together and address many issues at the same time, further research should attempt to replicate these findings with larger, representative sample and attempt to employ the (in kind) manipulations in all of their combinations. Third, future research should also assess the possible changes in attitudes and perceptions of attitudes of others after repeated exposure to similar stimuli. Finally, although prior research (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2014) has demonstrated an increased behavioral intention to vote among conservatives who perceived greater in-group consensus and greater political efficacy, perception of similarity with the general population may have different consequences due to, for instance, a false sense of security.

In sum, in this paper, rather than asking about estimates of agreement or disagreement, we asked for estimates of positions of the general population - i.e. the perceived social norm. We explored the possibility that people think about social norms via prism of their own ideologies and that they may imagine prevailing norms to be different or similar to their ideology-based attitudes depending on the circumstances. We found that compared to liberals, conservatives tend to perceive the society in general as more similar to their attitudes and, in conditions of the country's cultural or economic system being exposed as threatened, both liberals and conservatives leaned towards viewing the general population as rather conservative. Put another way, it could, paradoxically, be the conservatives who would feel 'safe in numbers' in times of crisis as they perceive, the majority on their side, whereas for those desiring change, moments of crisis could make them feel that the society is not ready yet.

As we have seen in the immediate aftermath of the migration crisis of 2015, the reaction of the German Chancellor was not an immediate political suicide and the majority of the German public was ready to 'give it a try'. As the reports of liberal democracy's death were being overestimated, the initial reactions seem to have been shaped by the tendency of political liberals to perceive themselves as ideologically isolated during the time of acute crisis.

Abstract

Subjectively rational behavior is usually oriented towards the expected state of the social world, which is conditioned by estimates of probable actions and interpretations of other actors. However, research shows differences between political conservatives and liberals in the models they use for judgments about the social world, especially under conditions of threat and uncertainty. In two studies conducted before and after the 2016 US Presidential election (mTurk, n = 478), and before and after the 2017 UK general election (Prolific Academic, n = 617), we utilized the same between-subjects experimental design to assess whether ideological differences moderate how threat (economic system threat) and uncertainty (outcome uncertainty about election) influence the perceived similarity between people's personal normative attitudes (how things should be) and their estimates of socially normative attitudes (what they believe others would say should be). Second, in two studies using within-subjects design (US n = 80; UK n = 329), we assessed the effect of the result of the election on beliefs about the legitimacy of the standing economic system among supporters of competing political parties. Our findings support the hypothesis that ideology predicts differences in perception of the generalized other when faced with system threat and bolster their ideological commitments following threats to their worldview in form of electoral defeat. While liberals tend to overestimate the strength of conservative values within the society in general, conservatives view others as both more conservative and liberal compared to themselves. The implications of the asymmetry are discussed.

Chapter Five

Perceived Legitimacy of Inequality Norms: Evidence from the US and the UK Elections

So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be together in it.

(Dostoevsky, 2009, pp. 319)

Introduction

In Weber's interpretive sociology, instrumentally rational action (i.e. action which could be assessed as subjectively rational) is usually oriented towards the expected state of the social world, which is conditioned by estimates of probable actions and interpretations of other actors (Gerlach, 2017; Weber, 1981). Explorations of this phenomenon in research on compliance with social norms indicate that as long as actors consider *normative expectations* (i.e., what they think the actor should do) of others to be *legitimate*, they tend to adjust their behavior to match these expectations even in cases in which this is not materially rational (Battigalli & Dufwenberg, 2007; Bicchieri, 2006; Sugden, 2004). Importantly, this is not the case for others' *empirical expectations* (i.e., of what people probably will do), nor for others' normative expectations if these do not, at least roughly, correspond with actors own normative beliefs about how others should behave in a given situation (Andrighetto et al., 2015; Bicchieri & Sontuoso, 2015). For instance, in an experimental game in which there was no possibility of punishment or of learning about the players' selfish and uncooperative behavior, the players were willing to risk giving up a part of their possible payoff and share with the other party if they believed that a person in their position *should* do so and, irrespective of whether they assumed the other party to be expecting that they *would* share, they also believed the other party to be thinking that they *should* share (Andrighetto et al., 2015). That is, it is the perceived fit between actor's personal ideals and perceived ideals of others that motivates behavioral adjustment in a form of costly cooperation.

Outside of laboratory prisoner dilemmas and dictator games, unwillingness to compromise on own interests may lead to socially inefficient, even catastrophic outcomes. In democracies, successful engagement in political life presumes deliberation by citizens who have a relatively clear idea of likely consequences of their actions (Berelson, Lazarsfel, &

McPhee, 1954; Downs, 1957). Yet, while people generally expect others' to be like them (Fields & Schuman, 1976; Goethals, 1986; Kruger, 2007), many report high levels of perceived disagreements between partisans' ideological positions, and even animosity towards their political outgroups (e.g., Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Levendusky & Malhotra, 2015; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000;). These combination of perceptions diminishes willingness to entertain proposals coming from 'the other side' due to a refusal to recognize the validity of the disagreement (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Miller, 1993) and might eventually lead to further polarization and ideological isolation in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy (Iyengar et al., 2012; Merton, 1948; Sunstein, 2007). Partially exploring the causes of this issue, findings across social sciences suggest that, next to biases stemming from avoidance of, or mere lack of exposure to corrective and dissonance generating information (Dawes, 1989; Frimer, Skitka, & Motyl, 2017), perceiving one's own opinion as socially normative may increase psychological well-being by protecting self-esteem or other psychological needs (Burke, Kosloff, & Landau 2013; Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004; Ross et al., 1977; Sherman et al., 1984; Stern et al., 2014a).

Since social projection is a nearly ubiquitous phenomenon (Krueger, 1998, 2008), we should expect people to assume that most others are like them. However, conservative and liberal ideologies point to different premises when modeling and judging the social world (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Jost et al., 2003a; Wallerstein, 2006). For example, relative to political conservatives, political liberals tend to perceive their social systems as more unequal, less just, and with less possibilities for upward mobility (Hadler, 2005; Chambers, Swan, & Heesacker, 2015; Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014), underestimate consensus within their political in-groups (Rabinowitz et al., 2016; Stern et al., 2014a), and report lower levels of trust in political and social institutions (e.g., Anderson & Singer, 2008; Devos, Spini, Schwartz, & 2002). Furthermore, it has been established that political beliefs and attitudes are partly a function of situational factors and that experiences of threat and uncertainty motivate people to affirm or adjust a wide range of behaviors, judgments, and opinions (Banfield et al. 2011; Holbrook, Sousa, & Hahn-Holbrook, 2011; Randles et al., 2017; Rutjens & Loseman, 2010; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991).

In this study, we ask whether and how do contextual factors influence perception of social norms and whether and how are these reactions moderated by ideological differences at individual level. We focus on the fit between personal normative attitudes (i.e., how things should be) and what respondents consider to be socially normative attitudes (i.e., how the respondents imagine most others would say how things should be). We do so for two reasons: First, comparing one's attitudes to the perceived social norm indicates both the perceived legitimacy of the social norm (and of the standing normative system) in the eyes of the actor and, conversely, perceived social legitimacy and validity of own attitude (Festinger, 1950; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Thus, we explore whether particular circumstances, in this case national economic decline, affect perceived (social) legitimacy of the standing, in our case distributive normative order. Second, in political life, agreement with ingroup and

disagreement with outgroup are often almost guaranteed (e.g., Kahan & Braman, 2006; Nicholson, 2011), but perceived efficacy of one's engagement in political action may well depend on perceived likelihood of agreement with the majority. That is, seeing one's efforts as actually (not) having an impact on bringing about the desired outcome may lead to either an increased or, conversely, diminished involvement in political life, or to attempts at strategic voting and support of candidates that do not accurately represent the voter's preferences (Caprara et al., 2009; Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996; Rogers et al., 2017; Stern et al., 2014a). To explore the fit, or rather ideological distance, between personal ideals and estimated social norms regarding income inequality, we will first establish that political ideology shapes how people imagine the attitudes of those other than themselves. Next, using the same measure of perceived ideological distance, we employ an experimental manipulation of a threat to the country's economic system to test the proposition that personal ideology moderates differences in reactions to system threat between economic liberals and conservatives. In addition, we explore how conditions of high and low uncertainty before and after the 2016 US Presidential election and the 2017 UK general election, in combination with threat to economic system, affected the perceived ideological distance. Finally, we assess the effect of the result of election on beliefs about the legitimacy of the standing economic system.

Political Ideology

Ideology is often understood in two ways: 1) everyone has it (neutral) and 2) others have ideology, while we have facts (negative). As far as this paper is concerned, ideology is understood as a largely coherent system of beliefs, values, opinions, and guiding principles that explain and justify the perceived (or ideated) world. Ideology is often shared by groups and contains both beliefs about how the world is and how it should be (Kerlinger, 1984; Tedin, 1987; Wallerstein, 2006;). We also agree that, in political life, ideology represents more than the conventional (neutral) understanding, and is more than a worldview. Crucially, being born in the wake of French Revolution, in a world in which the general public could suddenly influence policy to an unprecedented degree, political ideologies presume existence of competing groups that hold different ideologies, and thus different goals and ideas about how the society should look like. Political ideology thus also represents an actors' theorization of one’s own position (Martin, 2014), and a "strategy in the social arena from which one can draw quite specific political conclusions" (Wallerstein, 2006). In order to stay consistent with terminology used in the addressed literature, ideologies, worldviews, and belief systems will be referred to as if these terms were easily interchangeable without loss of information, though the general notion is that worldviews merely interpret the world, ideologies also identify how to change it (Heywood, 2003).

In regard to the complexities hidden under labels that are often used to denote particular sets of beliefs, values, and guiding principles, *conservatives* and political *right-wing*

are usually seen as preferring stability, hierarchy, order and authority. Interpreting the social world as generally a dangerous place and a competitive jungle (Duckitt, 2001), conservatives view the standing social system as a successful, time-tested way of organizing the society, hierarchies of which are seen as a result of a complex interplay of naturally existing differences and personal choices, and thus constituting just outcomes in the long run (Bobbio, 1996; Heywood, 2003; Shockley, Rosen, and Rios, 2016). On the other hand, labeled as *liberals* or political *left-wing* tend to be those who see the standing social world as unfair and its various hierarchies as often an outcome of a lottery of birth, enduring customs and social pressures. Following the Enlightment values of liberty, equality and progress through science and reason, liberals propose ideas of change and improvements upon the aspects of the status-quo they perceive as unjust via measures such as affirmative action or progressive taxation (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1988; Giddens, 1998; McClosky & Zaller, 1984). The unidimensional left-right/liberal-conservative conceptualization of ideology has been repeatedly shown as inadequate for accurately capturing full range of existing constellations of voters' ideologies and at least a two-factor model, covering social and economic dimensions, has been proposed as necessary.[34] However, most of the public still understands political ideology as a unidimensional construct made up of both or either of the said dimensions, and usually in the previously described constellation (Baldassarri & Goldberg, 2014; Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Jacoby, 2006).

Political Ideology and Motivated Reasoning

The idea that people's reasoning and ideological leanings are also affected by their psychological goals and personal preferences builds on a long tradition of observations recorded by writers (e.g., Dostoevsky, 2009; Sinclair, 1935) and academics alike (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Festinger, 1957; Kunda, 1990; Solomon et al., 1991). As management of uncertainty and threat belong among core psychological motives (Kagan, 1972), numerous research programs have hypothesized both overlapping and contradicting predictions in regard to associations and interactions between various sources of threat and uncertainty on one side, and political ideologies on the other. While uncertainty and threat are often linked, it is possible to differentiate their sources and emotional and

[34] Despite its historical relevance, public accessibility, and relative accuracy in predicting voting intentions (Carmines & D'Amico, 2015), the traditionally used unidimensional conceptualization of political ideology as a liberal-conservative or left-right continuum has repeatedly came under criticism or has been supplemented by other dyads (e.g., Bobbio, 1997; Giddens, 1994) and empirical research increasingly distinguishes between at least cultural and economic dimensions of political ideology (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Crawford, Brandt, Inbar, Chambers, & Motyl, 2017; Everett, 2013; Malka, Soto, Inzlicht, & Lelkes, 2014; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2004). Indeed, multidimensionality of American political space is becoming increasingly recognized, as evidenced, for instance, by Carmines et al. (2012) identifying liberals, conservatives, moderates, libertarians, and communitarians as distinct ideological groups. The focus of this chapter is on economic attitudes and reactions to economic threat, and therefore the economic dimension of ideology, which we reflected in our research design by operationalizing ideology using a scale measuring "the general ideological tendency to legitimize economic inequality" (Economic System Justification scale, ESJ; Jost & Thompson, 2000, p. 225).

physiological consequences (e.g., Jonas et al., 2014; Steimer, 2002), and we will follow the conceptual understanding of uncertainty as of a state defined by inability to form or select an adequate mental model, and of threat as a self-relevant source of punishment or an obstacle to a desired outcome (Proulx & Brandt, 2017). In general, two contrasting approaches, which we will discuss in the next sections, posit that exposure to threatening or uncertainty generating stimuli leads either to (1) embracing more conservative attitudes and thinking styles ('conservative shift' or ideological asymmetry hypothesis) or (2) to defending and bolstering their already held beliefs, be they conservative or liberal ('worldview-specific bolstering' or ideological symmetry hypothesis).

Conservative shift and reactive liberals

The 'conservative shift' approach is tied with model of political conservatism as motivated social cognition developed by Jost and colleagues (2003, CMSC) after examining decades' worth of studies using various measures of ideology (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism - RWA, Altemeyer, 1981; Social Dominance Orientation - SDO, Sidaniu & Pratto, 2001; F-Scale, Adorno et al., 1950; or C-Scale, Kirton 1978; Wilson & Patterson, 1968). In CMSC perspective, politically conservative (or rather right-wing) ideologies, with their core components of resistance to change and acceptance of inequality, are considered to be particularly well-suited to address the existential, epistemic and relational needs that stem from experiences of uncertainty and threat (Jost et al., 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014; Napier & Jost, 2008).[35] A considerable amount of evidence points to political conservatism being tied to individual differences in personality, cognitive styles and motivational needs. For instance, political conservatism has been associated with greater dogmatism (Everett, 2013; Jost et al., 2007), cognitive and perceptual rigidity (Caparos, Fortier-St-Pierre, Gosselin, Blanchette, & Brisson, 2015), needs for order, structure and cognitive closure (Jost et al., 2007; Kelemen et al., 2014; Onraet, Van Hiel, Roets, & Cornelis, 2011) and cognitive ability (Onraet et al., 2015). In addition to political attitudes, people with chronically elevated needs to avoid uncertainty and threat tend to adopt what the authors identify as conservative lifestyles (Feather, 1979; Jost et al, 2003; Wilson, Ausman, & Mathews, 1973) and preferences (Neiman, 2012), presumably in order limit their exposure to psychologically unpleasant experiences (Hibbing et al., 2014).

Political conservatism was also found to be related to heightened perceptions of and worries about societal threats (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Onraet et al., 2013). For instance, Sales (1972), in his analysis of church conversions during economic hardships of the Great Depression and years of high and low unemployment in 1960s Seattle, showed that it was during times of economic threat that people tended to convert to more authoritarian churches (e.g., Roman Catholic Church). Similarly, examining a panel of New Zealanders,

[35] But see Federico and Malka (2018) arguing for a role of top-down factors in adoption of ideologies to manage needs for security and certainty.

Milojev et al. (2015) found an increase in reported conservative attitudes following the 2008 global financial crisis.

Importantly for experimental research, the CMSC model predicts that people with chronic or situationally elevated needs to reduce uncertainty and threat will be more likely to (at least temporarily) adopt and support politically conservative attitudes and behaviors than people in circumstances that attenuate said needs (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Jost et al. 2007). An alternative version of the conservative shift hypothesis, the 'reactive-liberal hypothesis' (Banfield et al., 2010; Nail et al., 2009) starts with a premise that since conservatives already see the world as dangerous (Duckitt, 2001; Jost et al., 2007) and have chronically heightened feelings of uncertainty and threat, they do not react to situational sources of threat and uncertainty as strongly as liberals do (Amodio et al., 2007; van der Toorn et al., 2014). The reactive-liberal hypothesis thus predicts that it would be mostly political liberals that should adjust their attitudes and that conservatives may not react to aforementioned stimuli at all. Both versions, though, expect political liberals to become measurably more similar to conservatives in their cognitive styles and attitudes following exposure to threatening or uncertainty generating stimuli.

Worldview-specific bolstering as content independent motivated cognition

On the other hand, evidence has grown also for the worldview-specific bolstering thesis (e.g. Burke et al., 2010; Crawford, 2017; Crowson, Thoma, & Hestevold, 2005), the main premise of which is that people generally hold onto their ideologies and, as a result of experienced aversive stimulus, move along 'ideological rigidity' dimension, leading to increased dogmatism on both left and right (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Rokeach, 1960).[36] In this way, both liberal and conservative (or left and right wing) ideologies offer a 'safe haven' of a coherent set of ideas and values providing explanations and guiding principles for the psychologically distressed. This might be because more extreme and in particular ideologically extreme goals tend to be clear, and do away with complications and compromises, and therefore do not generate further internal conflict (McGregor, Prentice, & Nash, 2013). For instance, Randles et al. (2017) found that respondents increased their reported commitment to their previously held attitudes following unexpected adverse life experiences such as parents' divorce, flooding, or serious financial difficulties.

Multiple theoretical approaches addressing reactions to threat and uncertainty (the focus of CMSC inspired research) predict worldview-specific bolstering, or worldview defense (WVD). Often, the main difference is in the proposed source of the aversive stimulus (e.g., see Proulx, Inzlicht, Harmon-Jones, 2012) or underlying target of the affirmation. Conversely to CMSC, the reaction (which is expected to be in a form of affirmation rathaer than a shift) to threat or uncertainty should be determined by an already held worldview. For instance,

[36] For instance, Bobbio (1997) sees the value dimension of left and right as the cause of the moderatism and extremism dimension, because the competition over the core set of values should consequently give birth to competition over acceptable methods of pursuing these.

Terror Management Theory (TMT, Greenberg et al., 1997; Pyszczynski et al., 2004) suggests that adherence to cultural worldviews allows people to maintain self-esteem by believing that they too, like Gilgamesh, can achieve symbolic immortality, and thus reduce the existential terror and death anxiety that accompanies the realization that all of us eventually die. In the TMT perspective, then, cultural worldviews and political values are protected following threat to said worldviews in order to protect the validity of the system of beliefs from which people derive self-esteem that buffers against death anxiety.

Apart from a rather complex notion of anxiety about death, other approaches predicting WVD focus on different sources of the worldview bolstering behavior. Iimportance given to expectations threads through the work on meaning maintenance model (MMM, e.g., Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012), in which affirmation of worldviews is utilized when people need to maintain meaning (i.e., networks of expected relations). MMM proposes that ideological worldview may be affirmed as a form of 'fluid compensation', i.e., as a consequence of violations of expectation in an unrelated domain (Randles et al., 2015). For instance, following an encounter with reversed-colored playing cards (e.g., heart with black color) participants affirmed their previously held worldviews on a subsequent task related to affirmative action, i.e., ideological liberals increased their support (Proulx & Major, 2013). Elsewhere, Van den Bos and Lind (2002; 2009) proposed that experienced uncertainty, and especially of personal uncertainty defined as a sense of doubt in self-views or world-views or of their interrelations, is related to heightened focus on fair treatment and procedural fairness in particular.

Other approaches that address the mismatch between people's expectations and experiences, and differentiate whether reactions to these are related to the predictability of the environment and sense of personal control (Landau et al., 2015), correctness of one's worldview (Major et al., 2007), or motivational conflicts and ability to reach one's goals (McGregor et al., 2010),

Finally, in research on cultural identity-protective cognition (Kahan et al., 2007), worldviews are protected for social and cultural identity related reasons. In this perspective, people risk losing valuable social resources whenever they signal disloyalty by holding an attitude that is not sanctioned by their cultural groups and therefore stray away from blasphemous thoughts such as (dis)agreeing with the proposition of man-made climate change (Kahan, Landrum, Carpenter, Helft, & Jamieson, 2017b). In a telling study on motivated numeracy (Kahan et al., 2017a), committed liberals and conservatives asked to compare two ratios seemed to be unable to choose correctly when asked about gun control and the right answer would contradict their worldview. Similarly, uncertainty-identity theory (e.g., Hogg, 2007; Hogg et al., 2010) proposes that when experiencing uncertainty, people attempt to identify with self-inclusive social groups. As far as ideologies are shared within communities and provide answers to uncertainty-generating questions, uncertainty-identity

approach views any ideological system as suitable for uncertainty reduction through heightened, even extreme, group identification (Hogg, 2007; Hogg & Adelman, 2013).

Importantly, while WVD approaches propose symmetrical reactions to threat and uncertainty among both liberals and conservatives, affirming one's values may have asymmetrical consequences. Demonstrating this possibility is the difference in manifested tolerance between conservatives and liberals when rating out-group targets done within the TMT paradigm. In particular, self-identified liberals rated an author of an essay critical of the United States more positively in the mortality salience than in control condition. On the other hand, conservatives reported slightly more negative views of the outgroup member in the mortality salient condition (Castano et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 1992). Authors of these studies suggested that, since values of tolerance and openness are central to liberal worldview, the research participants would attempt to apply these values when thinking about death. In comparison, the CMSC approaches, and the reactive-liberal hypothesis in particular, would predict liberals becoming as negative as conservatives about the outgroup target (or at least that both conservatives and liberals would become more negative to the outgroup target).

Selective Exposure and Intergroup Perceptions

Since encounters with, or even thinking about dissenting views may be experienced as threatening one's worldview (e.g., Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005), a peculiar issue arises when people need to accurately assess the likely beliefs of others, or when exposed to others espousing information inconsistent with one's ideology. This is because, next to having imperfect information to begin with, thinking about others is notoriously conditioned by phenomena such as social projection, a tendency to expect that most people are similar to the estimator (Krueger, 2008), or naive realism, a belief that one's perception of the world is more objective than that of biased others (Ross & Ward, 1996), and sometimes even by assuming that the opposing views are built on misperceptions, selfishness, denial of reality or lies (Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002; Ross & Ward, 1996; Thomas & Pondy, 1977).

Indeed, growing body of research literature addresses the tendencies to avoid exposure or limit even engaging in attitude-inconstitent thoughts. In this regard, the CMSC and WVS perspectives offer different predictions as to among whom should we expect such tendencies to be stronger. CMSC approach expects political conservatives to be more likely to try and avoid belief-inconsistent information if possible (which should be related to differences between conservatives and liberals in openness to experience, Jost et al., 2003a) and confront these in a form of motivated outgroup derogation when avoidance is not possible (which should manifest as conservatives holding more prejudiced attitudes towards outgroups, Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). On the other hand, WVS approaches would predict symmetrical behavior influenced more by attitudinal extremity rather than its direction.

For instance, in a study supporting the CMSC interpration by Nam, Jost, and van Bavel (2013), conservatives, compared to liberals, were less willing to experience dissonance by writing counter-attitudinal essays praising political opponents (e.g., in study 1, using a classic induced compliance design, not one supporter of George W. Bush was willing to write an essay supporting Barack Obama in a 'high-choice' category). No such one-sided refusal was observed among participants had to back their preferred type of computer (PC or Mac) or beverage (tea or coffee). Furthermore, during the campaign before the 2000 US presidential election, Republicans and conservatives preferred information about George W. Bush, while liberals and democrats had no such preference regarding Al Gore (Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, & Walker, 2008). Conservatives were also found to be less likely to engage with counter-attitudinal content online, in this particular instance measured as willingness to share and re-tweet posts written by members of ideological outgroup (Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, & Bonneau, 2015).[37]

However, other findings suggest that selective exposure to information is a symmetrical phenomenon that cuts across political lines. In another study on ideological homophily of social networks and exposure to cross-ideological content on social media, Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) found that, on Facebook, conservatives are more exposed to, and even click more often on counter-attitudinal content. The authors proposed that this would be because conservatives tend to have more contacts who share liberal content than vice versa. In regard to consumption of more traditional media, Stroud (2008) analyzed data from 2004 election and concluded that both liberals and conservatives prefer to gather news from ideologically friendly sources. Finally, Frimer, and colleagues (2017) examined willingness of both liberals and conservatives to give up payment and avoid ideologically crosscutting information and, in five studies, found support for symmetry in ideologically motivated avoidance of potentially attitude-challenging information.

When it comes to prejudice and intolerance of dissenting opinions and of their holders, two recent contributions (Toner, Leary, Asher, & Jongman-Sereno, 2013; van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017) suggest that both the symmetry and asymmetry hypotheses hold water. In these studies, the right-wing participants manifested greater prejudice and ideological dogmatism. At the same time, it was ideological extremity that predicted perception of belief superiority (Toner et al., 2013), and belief intolerance and support of extreme measures, such as denial of free speech, to those of opposing ideology (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017). Similar findings were echoed by Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, and Wetherell (2014), who proposed the ideological-conflict hypothesis stating that, regardless of the ideology they endorse, people are simply biased against those whose values are

[37] However, as Frimer et al. (2017) suggest, sharing content online is done for variety of reasons, some of which may be attempts to ridicule the ideological opposition or signaling of outrage. Such behavior may also function, knowingly or unknowingly, as an attempt to galvanize internal cohesion within the liberal community by attempting to bring attention to common ideological enemy (Coser, 1998). Indeed, if liberals perceive less ingroup consensus, it would make sense to bring to attention causes that might bind them together (Stern et al., 2104b).

inconsistent with their own. Supporting this notion, Crawford and Pilanski (2014), Chambers, Schlenker, and Collison (2013) and van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, and Eendebak (2015) used targets of possible prejudice that are traditionally aligned with political left and right (e.g., people on welfare, feminists, and people with AIDS on one side and business people, the elderly, and anti-abortionists on the other side) and found that both liberals and conservatives show intolerance to groups aligned with opposing ideology.

We mention exposure to attitude-inconsistent information as it potentially provides an opportunity for correction of individuals' beliefs about the society or even even about the accuracy and correctness of their worldviews and of their prior plans and behaviors. For instance, if voters learn novel information about opinions of a sizeable part of the population (e.g., whether proposed policies of their preferred political candidate do or do not represent the opinions of the majority of voters), they may be able to adapt their mental representations and expectations of the likely behavior of the rest of the elecotrate and make better informed decisions, such as forego or engage in tactical voting due to over or underestimation of popularity of said political candidate (Myatt, 2007). However, instead of updating one's worldview with the new information, a possible reaction to encounters of attitude-challenging beliefs or otherwise psychologically discomforting information could be bolstering and affirmation of the self-assessed validity and legitimacy of own worldviews and ideologies by imagining these to be more prevalent among the current population and overestimation of the likelihood that one will be proven right in the future (Rogers et al., 2017). In this regard, as prior research suggests that people may react to self-esteem or worldview threatening information by inflating their expectations of the normalcy of their conditions, experiences (e.g., receiving negative feedback about their performance; Sherman et al., 1984), or opinions (e.g., being in a minority about a salient issue; Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015), we will explore a possibility that exposure to information threatening the performance of the wider economic system of the country could lead to similar compensations. In the following section, then, we will offer a brief survey of extant research addressing the central part of the present study - the way people imagine beliefs and attitudes of others through the prism of the phenomenon of social projection in the domain of political attitudes.

Social projection and consensus estimates

Social behavior is conditioned by expectations of others' behaviors, interpretations of the situation, and predictions of behavior of other actors (e.g., Bicchieri, 2006; Rimal & Real, 2003; Thomas & Thomas, 1928). For instance, one may invest in a stock believing that others will consider it valuable in the near future, or sell a stock thinking that others plan to sell as well (Lee & Andrade, 2011). In political life, people may engage in strategic voting due to, accurately or not, believing that certain candidates are more or less popular among other voters (Duverger, 1954; Karp, Vowles, Banducci, and Donovan, 2002; Myatt, 2007). In general, such considerations are notoriously conditioned by social projection, an expectation that others are similar to the estimator. The phenomenon seems almost ubiquitous, be it

because people honestly consider themselves suitable reference points for many questions regarding emotional states, tastes, attitudes, and ways of thinking, or because they simply lack additional data and thus use easily accessible information (Krueger, 2008; Ross et al., 1977).[38] An influential anchoring and adjustment model describes the potential mechanism behind social projection as people first gauging their own attitude, mental state, etc., and then adjusting away from this initial estimate to approximate the likely perspectives of others (Epley et al., 2004). In certain cases, though, an opposite phenomenon, self-stereotyping, leads people to estimate their own attributes from knowledge of prototypical qualities of relevant ingroups (Cho & Knowles, 2013; Karniol, 2003; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Although projection is considered highly automatic, i.e., not easily controllable, occurring outside of awareness, and requiring no intention or effort (Bargh, 1994; Krueger, 2008), it is possible to both up and down-regulate its magnitude (Gollwitzer, Schwörer, Stern, Gollwitzer, & Bargh, 2017). For instance, providing time pressure or accuracy motivations increases respectively decreases the perceived self-target similarity (Epley et al., 2004).

Social projection can be useful and functionally rational as far as most people are, by definition, in majority (or at least plurality) most of the time and, by this virtue, smoothens interactions at interpersonal level and reduces uncertainty and necessary effort to gather additional information for the particular individual (Hoch, 1987; Krueger 1998; Lemay, Clark, & Feeney, 2007), thus effectively aiding to achieve epistemic closure (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017; Kosic, Mannetti, & Livi, 2014). Others have theorized that social projection may also help protect emotional well-being, given that it increases after experiencing fearful states (e.g., after watching scences from horror movies; Lee & Andrade, 2011), or encountering information threatening one's self-esteem or group-status (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Sherman et al., 1984). It can also have negative consequences, however, for instance when people expect others to relish smoking (Sherman, Presson, Chassin, Corty, & Olshavsky, 1983) or consider cheating (Katz & Allport, 1931), thus potentially furthering the idea that doing so is socially desirable or situationally reasonable (Gerlach, 2017; Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009). As one would expect, social projection is stronger when ingroup is concerned, and weaker, or even in reverse direction, when people estimate outgroups (Clement & Krueger, 2002). Compared to real-life groups, projection was found to be stronger in laboratory settings - presumably because people have less cues about members of laboratory groups than about real-world ones (Robbins & Krueger, 2005).

There are also many situations in which people tend to not project their attitudes and rather estimate the social norm (and let it guide their public behavior) from previously observed behavior of others (e.g., engaging in drinking behavior among students is affected by own negative attitude towards drinking culture and a desire to 'fit in' or have social life,

[38] In cases when social projection results in overestimation of similarity with the target group, we label it *truly false consensus* and, conversely, we label underestimation of similarity *truly false uniqueness* (Krueger & Zeiger, 1993). A special case in which social projection gives way to other pressures and leaves a majority of people in a state in which they privately disagree with what they perceive as social norm but wrongly believe that this norm is supported by others and therefore act as if they supported the norm is then labeled *pluralistic ignorance* (Kreps & Monin, 2011; Miller, Monin, & Prentice, 2000; Prentice & Miller, 1993).

Prentice & Miller, 1993). However, seeking out information to reduce said uncertainty may become subjectively irrational if the actor believes that the majority would perceive this as a sign of deviance (Katz & Allport, 1931; Taylor, 1982), such as in case Schanck's study of church members who privately drank but publicly shunned alcohol and other vices (Schanck, 1932).

Political attitudes and motivated projection

In the domain of political attitudes, projection of hierarchy-legitimizing attitudes was found to be stronger among those on the political right (Strube & Rahimi, 2006; Tarr & Lorr, 1991), and those with conservative attitudes and values (Amit et al., 2010). Exploring how being in a majority or a minority affects social projection, Dvir-Gvirsman (2015) analyzed more than 10 years' worth of surveys (n = 15 129) on Israeli-Palestine conflict with a finding that right-wing participants tended to overestimate public support for their positions in both situations. Left-wing participants overestimated consensus only when in minority, which the author interpreted as supporting the 'conservative shift' hypothesis - i.e., liberals becoming like conservatives and managing negative emotions resulting from being in minority by overestimating support for their position. Furthermore, in an experimental test of the hypothesized mechanism (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015, study 3), emotional response of right-wing participants was higher both in 'majority' (RW participants felt less threatened) and 'minority' condition (RW participants felt more threatened). Also, right-wing respondents overestimated consensus even more strongly when informed about being in the minority.

In a case of pluralistic ignorance and reverse projection, several studies examined perceptions of public opinions during ongoing social change of the 1950s' desegregation in the American south. As certainty about what was the actual attitude of the majority became blurred, many experienced pluralistic ignorance and imagined the social norm to be more conservative than it actually was (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Fields & Schuman, 1976; O'Gorman, 1975). In these studies, it was mainly political liberals who perceived greater support for continued racial segregation, which lead Fields and Schuman to consider a possibility that liberals imagined others as more prejudiced in order to present themselves as living up to high standards of American egalitarian values - a proposition indirectly supported by liberals also reporting respected political leaders as holding the same attitudes as them. Overall, then, these findings point to conservatives being more likely to view their attitudes as shared by the general population and to liberals being more likely to view 'most others' as more conservative rather than attitudinally similar to themselves, especially in situations when norms are being contested.

Others have explored a possibility that political liberals tend to systematically underestimate and political conservatives to overestimate the degree to which they share attitudes with members of their respective political in-groups even regarding non-political opinions, such as likely date of birth of a person on a picture or their sexual orientation (Stern et al., 2014b; Stern & West, 2016). Indeed, not only did reported estimates supported

the researchers' expectations, perceived ingroup consensus was also positively correlated with perceived collective efficacy, leaving conservatives more optimistic about achieving their political goals (Gibson, Randel, & Earley, 2000; Stern et al., 2014a). The differences in social projection were shown to appear during the 'adjustment' phase of anchoring and adjustment mechanism, in which people estimating others' beliefs first anchor on their own attitudes and then adjust away from this initial position. In addition, the contrast in style appeared to be motivated by desire to share reality and affiliate with likeminded others among conservatives and a motivation to feel unique by liberals (Stern et al., 2014a, 2014b). Stern and West (2016) further speculated that the amount of the adjustment could be also motivated by conservatives' stronger motivations to achieve epistemic closure.[39] This suggestion was indirectly supported in research of De Keersmaecker and Roets (2017) who showed that epistemic needs measured as Need for Cognitive Closure (e.g., Kruglanski, 1989) are positively associated with projection one's own attitudes on others (with the association being stronger for in-groups, weaker for incidental groups, and disappearing for out-groups).[40]

The finding that liberals underestimate and conservatives overestimate ingroup consensus was corroborated also in a correlational study by Rabinovitz et al. (2016) but, at the same time, both liberals and conservatives expected the majority to be on 'their' side in questions about scientific merit of vaccinations and that it was their respective ideological (or rather political) out-groups that were the naive bunch.[41] Indeed, when it comes to political outgroups, both liberals and conservatives seem to demonstrate reverse projection and imagine their political rivals as ideologically more distant than is actually the case (Graham et al., 2012; Mullen et al., 1992; Robinson et al., 1995; Westfall et al., 2015). This may be further compounded by the phenomena of 'naive realism' (Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996), in which people consider themselves to be objective and rational perceivers of the world and those who disagree with them as likely biased or misinformed, and 'polarization projection', a tendency related to projection og not only one's attitudes, but also if one's attitudinal processes, which may lead to an increase in perceived outgroup distance among highly committed ideologues (Van Boven et al., 2012).

[39] The relationship between the Need for Cognitive Closure and politically right-wing or conservative attitudes and voting preferences is rather modest but present across different cultures (e.g., Chirumbolo et al., 2004; Jost et al., 2007; Kemmelmeier, 1997; Roets & Van Hiel, 2006).

[40] De Keersmacker and Roets (2017) showed that political affiliations represent relevant in- and out-groups moderating the relationship between the need to achieve epistemic security and social projection. However, they did not report any testing of the possible differences in the said association between the two used political groups (their groupings were based on a reported vote for either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election), nor was the projected judgment related to the political domain (the participants were asked about their preferences between two chairs or butterflies).

[41] Naive both in a sense that the respondents expected their out-group to have less 'scientific' opinions about vaccinations, and that the majority agreed with the respondents' respective in-groups, thus leaving the out-groups in an isolated position of a minority.

Ideological Tolerance and Potential for Political Compromise under Uncertainty & Threat

Such perception of ideological opponents as biased and irrational caricatures may have detrimental consequences because perceived threats (or ideological conflicts) may lead to outgroup derogation, intolerance, and even aggression (McGregor et al., 1998; Rutjens & Loseman, 2010; Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, Piereson, 1981). However, clear-cut stereotyping may be reduced in unclear and unfamiliar situations, in which people engage in attempts at perspective taking, or when entering a deliberative mindset and trying to come up with and asses multiple conflicting possibilities (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005; Stern & Kleiman, 2015; Todd & Burgmer, 2013).

Indeed, while most of the above-discussed literature treats threat and uncertainty as aversive stimuli that lead to close-minded reactions, uncertainty may also elicit exploratory mindset (Kruglanski, Peri, & Zakai, 1991) even if coupled with a politically charged message, such as suggested expansion or suspension of affirmative action in admission policies, and increase support for compromise (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010). MacKuen and colleagues (2007, 2010) further suggest that people react differently to familiar and unfamiliar negative stimuli, with aversion and close-mindedness following familiar threats, and with anxiety and potentially increased support for compromise following unfamiliar and not well-defined threats. Thus, when encountering familiar negative stimuli, such as familiar criticism of their preferred candidate or arguments favoring opposing ideology, these can be 'brushed-off' via normal processes of motivated reasoning. However, an unexpected negative stimulus would elicit anxiety and motivated search for more information and even a change of party allegiance. Such proposed manifestations are consistent with findings that habituation occurs with repeated and accurately predicted stimuli, but that uncertainty increases response to unexpected stimuli (Epstein, 1973).

Partly addressing this proposition in an attempt to reconcile it with well known attitude-bolstering consequences of motivated reasoning, Redlawsk et al. (2010) demonstrated that consistent exposure to negative information about originally supported candidate led participants to halt motivated processing of further negative stimuli and to more accurate updating of their candidate preferences.[42] The authors suggest that making the participants uncertain about their original choice made them anxious and therefore more receptive to additional information. Such suggestion is consistent with findings of Stern and Kleiman (2015), who found that eliciting conflict mindset led to a significant decrease in

[42] In fact, what was demonstrated was that a small number of negative information (e.g., pro-life participants finds out that the candidate is pro-choice) about a preferred candidate was followed by increase in support for the candidate. However, after about 13% of total received information about the candidate was incongruent with attitudes of the participant, further attitude-incongruent information was followed by no further increase in support, and after about 28% information about the candidate was negative, participants' evaluations of originally supported candidates became more negative than for candidates who were consistently attitude congruent.

overestimation of outgroup dissimilarity between Republicans and Democrats, and further specified that this was because uncertainty (vs. control) has reduced perceived self-outgroup distance.

Given the mixed findings regarding the influence of uncertainty on attitudes, Haas and Cunningham (2014) and Haas (2016) explored potential interactions between uncertainty and positive and negative affect. Uncertainty was previously shown to intensify experienced emotions (Bar-Anan, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2009) and even lead to increase in intrinsic motivation and repeated participation in games with high outcome-uncertainty (Abuhamdeh, Csikszentmihalyi, & Jalal, 2015). Haas and Cunningham thus theorized that, in absence of threat or when coupled with positive affect, uncertainty may motivate people to be more open to new information and alternate viewpoints. Indeed, they demonstrated in 5 studies that presence of threat (both existential and physical threat were used as manipulations) moderates the effect of experienced uncertainty on political tolerance and compromise. When uncertainty was coupled with threat, political tolerance[43] decreased among both liberals and conservatives. In another study conducted by Haas (2016), the combination of uncertainty and threat was associated with conservatives reporting lowered support for political compromise. Conversely, when uncertainty was coupled with positive stimulus, support for political compromise increased among liberals and moderates. These results have relevance in relation to our research design – in particular the possible interaction between the context of outcome uncertainty before and outcome certainty after the election. As anticipation of the electoral results may be considered a context of heightened outcome uncertainty (compared to the time after the results are already known), we will test for the possibility that the effect of our system-threat manipulation on perceived attitudinal similarity would differ between the times of data gathering (before and after the election), and that this may be moderated by the participants political ideology in the manner Haas and Cunningham observed. That is, the difference between the experimental conditions should be greater before, compared to after the elections, especially for economic liberals and moderates. As we have seen, prior reseach offers many different operationalizations of uncertainty and threat and, perhaps not surprisingly, researchers report different behavioral consequences of being exposed to varios combinations and forms of such stimuli. Thus, before turning to the two studies reported on in this chapter, we will provide a short overview of different conceptualizations of uncertainty and threat in order to position our research more clearly.

Distinguishing uncertainty and threat

Uncertainty and threat are often linked, though it is possible to differentiate their sources and emotional and physiological consequences. One of the ways to distinguish stimuli of threat and uncertainty is by responses of the affected individuals. Whereas imminent and clear threat is usually related to emotions of fear and 'fight or flight' behavior, uncertainty

[43] Measured through questions such as *'We need to actively oppose those who disagree with us'*

and distal, unpredictable or undefined threats are associated with anxiety and at least initial behavioral freeze during which attempts at risk assessment take place (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013; Jonas et al., 2014; Lilienfeld & Latzman, 2014; Steimer, 2002). Kagan (1972) refers to uncertainty as incompatibility between cognitive structures, experiences, and behavior on one hand, and associates anger and hostility to identifiable threats to goal pursuit and standards on the other. Finally, Proulx and Brandt (2017), consider uncertainty to be a state defined by inability to form or select an adequate mental model, and threat as a self-relevant stimulus representing a source of punishment or an obstacle to a desired outcome. In short, uncertainty follows lack of information or confidence, while threat signals potential for harm (e.g., harm to personal safety, belongingness within ingroup, or perception of the social system as fair and stable, etc.).

Uncertainty

Uncertainty usually refers to states in which people find themselves unable to assess the situation, its possible future developments, appropriate actions, and their likely consequences. Yu and Dayan (2005) distinguish two types of uncertainty, expected and unexpected. Expected uncertainty is defined by a lack of information to predict outcomes. For instance, a professional poker player knows probabilities of drawing a certain combination of cards. Unexpected uncertainty refers to information which requires amendments to existing mental models - for instance, a poker player drawing fifth ace. Encounters with uncertainty eliciting situations are usually followed by attempts at reduction of uncertainty (e.g., by information seeking) and assessment of potentially threatening or otherwise notable stimuli - a set of procedures which can spiral out of control among highly anxious individuals (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013).[44]

Uncertainty reduction and verification that one's interpretation of the world is correct belong among the core motivating elements of human experience (Festinger, 1954; Hogg, 2006; Kagan, 1972). At the same time, some people prefer to endure uncertainty rather than considering a possibility of being wrong (Thompson, Naccarato, Parker, & Moskowitz, 2001) while others prefer to resolve it quickly, desiring any firm answer rather than facing ambiguity (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; Kruglanski, 2004). Perhaps for this reason is uncertainty often classified alongside negative stimuli and mentioned in one breath with threat (e.g., Hennes et al., 2012). However, uncertainty may also be accompanied with positive outcomes, such as opening gifts on Christmas day. Indeed, uncertainty was previously shown to intensify experienced emotions while watching movie clips (Bar-Anan et al., 2009), extend positive mood following positive stimuli (Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, &

[44] The physiological mechanism behind this is beyond the scope of this study. However, the basic outline is that there are separate mechanisms for error detection and for palliative reduction of aversive arousal that is generated upon this error detection. As an inconsistency is detected, behavioral inhibition system is activated and the actor in question temporarily 'freezes' and seeks resolution of the situation until behavior approach system helps reduce the anxiety that indicates uncertainty about what course of action to take (Jonas et al. 2014).

Gilbert, 2005), and even lead to increase in an intrinsic motivation and repeated participation in games with high outcome-uncertainty (Abuhamdeh et al., 2015).

Multiple theories in social and political psychology acknowledge management of uncertainty as a strong motivational force behind attitude formation, change, and retention. Be it not experiencing the expected end of the world (Festinger, 1957), not being able to imagine what would happen after we die (Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Yavuz & Van den Bos, 2009), or perceiving unaccounted for injustice in a supposedly just world (Lerner, 1980; Major et al., 2007; Van den Bos, 2005), people often detect inconsistencies between what they observe and their predictions and expectations. Importantly, as mentioned, CMSC and WVD approaches expect different reactions to such stimuli, with CMSC positing motivated seeking of epistemic certainty in politically conservative attitudes and WVD predicting heightened commitment to already held beliefs. However, perceived or experienced inconsistencies may be also interpreted as threatening particular aspects of individuals' identities, worldviews or their self-esteem. Thus, a specific category are experiences of uncertainty that follow violations of expected relationships that should represent no possible threats to the perceiver. For instance, seeing poker cards with black colored hearts may even slip ones' conscious attention, and definitely should not pose a threat to self-esteem nor any to commonly embraced identity, but such stimulus produces similar behaviors of value affirmation that often follow reminders of mortality and uncertainty induced by describing feelings of uncertainty (Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989; Sleegers et al., 2015; Yavuz & van den Bos, 2009).

In the following study, the uncertainty experienced by the respondents before the election will be, presumably, expected outcome uncertainty. However, the resolution of the election will almost inevitably present a positive or negative message to the supporters of the elected candidate (or party) and the runner-up candidate (party), respectively. Therefore, thinking about the potential influence of the outcome uncertainty and its resolution in regard to the election, we will need to keep in mind that only the former may be considered to have been present for all of the respondents, while the post-election 'low uncertainty' condition might be interpreted as a 'worldview threat' by the supporters of the runner-up candidate (party).

Threat

In general, threat is understood as an aversive, negatively-valenced, and potentially harming stimulus that impedes goal pursuit (McGregor et al., 2010; Proulx & Brandt, 2017). Thus, depending on a situation, a state of uncertainty defined by frustration of goal pursuit may also be experienced as a threat to one's self-concept, for instance in case when not knowing an answer in a pub quiz may conflict with one's desired self-evaluation as a knowledgeable person. Among consequences of identification of threat seem to be temporary bias in working memory allocation (Stout, Shackman, Pedersen, Miskovich & Larson, 2017),

impaired decision-making (Miu, Heilman, & Houser, 2008; Preston, Buchanan, Stansfield, & Bechara, 2007), and 'narrowing' of attention and cognitive flexibility (Keinan, 1987; Sengupta & Johar, 2001). Importantly for the present research, Thórisdóttir and Jost (2011) found that threat also increased perceived benefits of reaching cognitive closure via heightened motivated close-mindedness, measured as Need for Closure, which has been associated with increased projection on political, non-political, and incidental in-groups (De Keersmeacker & Roets, 2017).

Traditionally, apart from physical harm, threat has been conceptualized rather broadly within political psychology (Crawford, 2017). A consequence of such broad conceptualization is that operationalization of threat varies between studies, even within single publications - from reminders of terrorism (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, study 2) and death anxiety (Nail et al., 2009, studies 2 a 3), through separation threat and failure threats (McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005), to economic decline of the country (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, study 4) and economic injustice (McGregor et al., 2005; Nail et al., 2009, study 1). Onraet and colleagues (2013) distinguish between internal threats that originate in private lives and affect only the given individual (such as susceptibility to experience anxiety or worrying about death) and external threats (which may be ideological or material in nature) that originate and endanger both the individual and the society. Interestingly, in their analysis, it was external sources of threat that lead to conservative and right-wing attitudes (see also Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011), while internal threats only accounted for a small part of the variance in ideology. A different conceptualization of threats is offered by Crawford (2017), who offers a model of compensatory political behavior differentiating between meaning threats associated with anxious uncertainty and ideologically symmetric reactions to threatening stimuli on one hand, and physical threats associated with fear and ideological asymmetry in regard to social (but not economic) dimension on the other. In the two subsequent studies, our experimental manipulation will aim to represent an external threat, in particular in a form of a report describing and predicting further economic decline of the country.

Present Study

At the outset of this paper, we reasoned that people's perceptions of attitudes of others may matter for their everyday behavior, as well as for their decisions pertaining to the political arena (e.g., Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996). Surveying the literature on political ideology, its psychological correlates and situational antecedents, and the phenomenon of social projection, we established the basis for the present study, which will focus on exploration of respondents' reactions to messages addressing the state of the country's economy shortly before and after general election. The discussion above indirectly supports the propositions that ideologies contain ideas about the content of ideologies of competing groups, and that in absence of relevant information (e.g., revealing group identity)

overestimation of similarity to most others is the norm. While people tend to project their own attitudes on outgroup members (albeit to a lesser degree than on ingroup members) when these are relatively undefined (Robbins & Krueger, 2005), projection on political competitors tends to be stronger and in opposite direction (Rabinowitz et al., 2016; Van Boven et al., 2012).We also identified the conditions, namely uncertainty and threat, under which people tend to bolster or shift their preexisting political attitudes, and corroborated that such conditions may also affect how actors imagine and approach attitudes of ingroup and outgroup members (Haas, 2016; Stern & Kleiman, 2105). In the following sections, then, we will report on studies conducted to assess three main questions: 1) whether and how do political ideologies influence perceived ideological distance between individuals and their estimates of the general social norm; 2) whether and how do political ideologies moderate the effects of election outcome uncertainty and threat to economic system on perceptions of ideological distance between their holders and the social norm; and 3) whether and how does the outcome of the election influence beliefs about the legitimacy of the standing economic system.

In particular, we will first assess whether people holding economically conservative, relative to economically liberal attitudes are more likely to perceive themselves as attitudinally similar to the majority regarding their views about how much income inequality should be considered as just and fair. Second, we will address the hypothesis related to the effect of the outcome of the election, which could be interpreted as a worldview threat by the participants supporting the runner-up, on economic attitudes (measured as perceived legitimacy of the standing economic system; ESJ) in the time shortly after the results have become known. Third, we will discuss hypotheses related to our experimental manipulation, a threat to the economic system, effects of which on political attitudes are contested (e.g., Crawford, 2017; Onraet et al., 2013), and effects of which on social projection and similarity estimates have not yet been experimentally scrutinized. Finally, we will address a potential difference between the effects of system threat under conditions of high (before the election) and low (after the election) outcome uncertainty. In order to assess these hypotheses, we employed an experimental research design, in which we utilized a form of system threat ordinarily used in laboratory and online studies, a mock news article about the performance and outlook of the economy, and an ecologically occurring source of uncertainty, variance in levels of uncertainty regarding the outcome of the election (before and after).

Perceived Ideological Distance

To measure the distance between the respondents' attitudes and their estimates of others' socially normative attitudes, we used the assumed similarity paradigm in which participants first provide their own attitudes towards a particular issue and then suggest what they consider the likely answer of others (Marks & Miller, 1987; Robinson et al., 1995). Compared to estimates of consensus which ask for the estimated percentage of a particular group that would agree with respondents' statements, our measure allows for tracking perceived distance

between one's attitude and the presumed social norm. We are thus conceptually closer to Jasso's 'index of justice' (Jasso, 1999), but examining individuals' perceived justness (or legitimacy) of societal opinions instead of the perceived structure of differences in incomes. In other words, we are comparing the respondents' suggested ideal levels of incomes for different occupations to their beliefs about what others would consider to be the ideal levels of incomes for these jobs, instead of comparing it to the perceived levels of incomes of said occupations (the perceived status quo). Similar operationalization (albeit not asking about attitudes of others) was utilized and extensively discussed in research on attitudes and beliefs about inequality (Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Trump, 2013).

We distinguish between 'directional' and 'absolute' perceived ideological distance or dissimilarity. Directional perceived ideological distance or dissimilarity (DPID) allows us to assess participants' estimates of how much more or less inequality do others consider appropriate. Absolute or overall perceived ideological distance or dissimilarity (APID) informs us about the same information but without consideration of the direction (whether it is less or more that others consider appropriate). This means that differences in APID indicate a possibility of greater or smaller amount of projection of the respondents' own attitudes on others (or perhaps adoption of imagined norms, though this is less likely given the order of the questions). Differences along the DPID axis, on the other hand, indicate the differences in respondents' relative self-positioning in regard to the perceived norm. In terms of outcomes, we are then able to distinguish the ways in which the participants may react, and relate this to predictions of the proposed hypotheses.

Ideology and perception of social norms

Based on the previous discussion, we expect highly committed ideologues and partisans to engage in reverse projection when estimating attitudes of outgroups, but less is known about projection regarding the likely attitudes of the general population. While the ideological symmetry hypothesis offers no specific predictions about perceptions of the general social norm (unless, for instance, the society is framed as an ingroup), the asymmetric CMSC approach views conservatives as more likely to seek social legitimization of their own beliefs due to heightened relational (Jost et al., 2008a; Stern et al., 2014a) and epistemic needs (Hennes, et al., 2012; Jost et al., 2003a; Jost & Krochik, 2014). For instance, recent explorations of the role of need for closure, a construct positively related to political conservatism, in social projection also supports the notion that higher need to achieve epistemic closure increases projection of personal beliefs on group norms (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017). We can therefore expect the more conservative participants to imagine the social norm as closer to their personal ideals compared to liberals (**H1**). In the analysis, this should manifest as a negative relationship between the measure of economic conservatism (measured via Economic System Justification scale) and the measure of overall perceived dissimilarity between the respondent and their perception of the societal norm concerning the accepted levels of income inequality (measured as a ratio of incomes suggested as *just* or *fair*

for a range of high-status and low-status occupations; APID, for detailed discussion of the outcome measures, see the corresponding section in Study 1 below).

Economic system threat in the context of general election

Election as contextual outcome uncertainty

Uncertainty surrounding expected events may intensify associated hopes and fears (Bar-Anan et al., 2009; Epstein, 1973). A pivotal event in public space is a general election in which voters choose between competing visions and ideologies and, indeed, mostly expect their favorite candidates to win (Granberg & Brent, 1983). The resolution of election constitutes a rare moment of collective definition of the situation in which, in principle, each voter's beliefs of what ought to be are juxtaposed with everyone else's ideals - albeit in a deferential fashion and offering more of a general ideological position of the median voter rather than a sharply defined set of desired policies. Thus, the time just before and after the election should provide an ideal occasion for respectively estimating and updating personal beliefs regarding the society.

In the studies below, we will consider the event of election as generating outcome uncertainty, since outcome is unknown and it represents only a distal threat to the losing side. The time before the election will be considered a context of high outcome uncertainty and the time after the election a context of low outcome uncertainty. The event of resolution of election is potentially also a threat to the worldview for those on the losing side. Indeed, each person will have their own perception of the events leading up to the result. However, when designing the study, we believed that it would be reasonable to assume that voters and non-voters alike expect the results in anxious (given the outcome uncertainty), but slightly hopeful anticipation, since people tend to believe that their favorite candidate will win (Granberg & Brent, 1983; Krizan et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2012).

In the build-up to and the immediate aftermath of the election, personal and shared political ideologies and identities should be particularly salient. Since both of the elections in this study were predicted to have a potential for upset (e.g., compared to the second round of the 2017 French presidential election), and given that the act of casting the ballot tends to increase confidence in the positive outcome (e.g., Regan & Kilduff, 1988), the uncertainty should be at its highest before casting the vote (we thus chose to collect the responses one week before each election). After some time has passed since publication of the result (we chose one week after the election) we expected that the outcome uncertainty connected to election would disappear (although for ordinary voters, outcome uncertainty may be replaced by uncertainty about the upcoming changes).[45]

[45] For instance, while rather distant from behavior of individual actors not involved in trading on financial markets, in their analysis of the influence of pre-election uncertainty and post-election resolution of uncertainty on

Post election: effect of resolution of uncertainty or effect of a threatening result?

Unfortunately, we cannot disentangle the effect of the resolved outcome uncertainty from the effect of the information about the result itself. The outcome almost inevitably means that one side's worldview is challenged and other side's worldview is affirmed as preferred by the electorate. This means that if people are able to reasonably update their beliefs about the social world, those ideologically closer to the winning side should perceive smaller ideological distance to the majority after the election (**H2**).[46] Indeed, one could argue that partisanship is different from worldviews, but different is still not orthogonal. Therefore, while we will examine the effect of the resolution of the election, we keep in mind that there will probably not be a 'clean' effect of resolved uncertainty. On the other hand, the design allows us to determine what actually happens before and after the general election, and that may be more valuable from the point of view of analysis of how political events affect people's perceptions of social norms.

In addition, we have also gathered a second set of responses from a subset of the participants who answered before the election. If the result of the election indeed functions as a worldview threat to those who lean towards the losing side and as a worldview affirmation for the other side, CMSC and WVD predict very different reactions for the 'threatened' side. While CMSC predicts both liberals and conservatives to express heightened support for the standing economic system following electoral loss (**H2a**), WVD approaches suggest that liberals should react by heightened commitment to their critical view of the economic system and, conversely, conservatives should continue to insist on its legitimacy (**H2b**).

Economic system threat

We used a mock article containing a threat to the economic system in order to observe how commonly presented statements about the economy affect people's perceptions of their ideological distance from what they believe to be socially normative attitudes. The utilized manipulation of economic system threat described the economic situation of the country as having positive or negative outlook in about 150 words and asked the participants to order three potential 'causes' of the situation (e.g., a well-working or a dysfunctional education system). We will dub these condition (system) threat condition and (system) affirmation condition. We did not include a mixed or neutral message since zero or slow economic growth

(abnormal) returns, Pantzalis, Stangeland, and Turtle (2000) showed the returns being abnormal in the period of two weeks before the election and not after the election in a sample of 33 countries from 1974 to 1995. These results indicate that, at least in some domains, abnormal behavioral outcomes tend to decline quickly after the resolution of election outcome uncertainty.

[46] This prediction became more complicated to test in the 2016 US presidential election due to difference in popular vote and how that was projected into Electoral College votes.

are often presented as a negative sign, and presenting 'facts & figures only' might affect subjects differently based on their beliefs about how economies work.

Information about the state of the economy, various prognoses, and analyses are ubiquitous (Soroka et al., 2015), and perceptions of economic performance may influence public attitudes and voting intentions more than the actual state of the economy (Loveless & Whitefield, 2011; Nadeau, Niemi, & Amato, 1994). In research on effects of threat on prejudice, for example, Butz and Yogeeswaran (2011) utilized an editorial describing macro-economic downturn and future job losses. This motivated participants to report more negative attitudes towards Asians, a group that stereotypically represents a threat in a situation of limited job opportunities. Examining the relationship between a similarly worded threat to economic system and issue-based conservatism (e.g., lower taxes on companies, lower taxes on the rich), Thórisdóttir & Jost (2011) found a positive relationship in a sample of Icelanders. Indeed, Onraet and colleagues (2013) listed economic threat as leading to more conservative and right-wing attitudes in their overview of effects of various sources of threat.

Prior results thus support a prediction of the CMSC model and in particular the reactive liberal hypothesis (Nail et al., 2009), that our type of threat manipulation should elicit more conservative responses among (primarily) liberal participants. That is, economic liberals should react to the perceived threat to the country's economic system by accepting higher levels of economic (income) inequality as fair and, more pertinently to this research, by increased projection of their attitudes on others. In turn, economic conservatives should not react to the manipulation due to their epistemic, relational and existential needs being already chronically heightened. Therefore, in the analyses reported below, the results supporting the reactive liberal hypothesis should manifest as economic liberals perceiving lower overall ideological distance from the norm (APID score) in the 'system threat' compared to 'system affirmation' condition (**H3 - reactive liberals**), and economic conservatives reporting greater overall perceived attitudinal similarity with the people in general than liberals.

On the other hand, WVD approaches predict affirmation of one's cultural worldview, and thus economic liberals and conservatives both reacting to the manipulation in a way corresponding to their prior ideological positions. Importantly, since we are looking at the perceived distance between people's own attitudes and attitudes they presume are being held by the majority, we need to distinguish between the various perceptions and beliefs that people may affirm.

If it is the case that both self-assessed economic liberals and conservatives view the society as 'somewhere in the middle' (and each other's respective groups at opposing sides), highly committed ideologues from both groups might imagine the social norm as farther from their views in the 'system threat', compared to the 'system affirmation' condition - in effect reinforcing their perception of where they stand (ideologically) in relation to most others. While this outcome is not directly predicted, nor supported, by any of the previously

discussed experimental research, it would represent a bolstering of the effect of 'naive realism', a tendency to view oneself as uniquely rational compared to biased others that has been observed in correlation studies (Robinson et al., 1995; Ross & Ward, 1996). A naive realist's self-positioning as belonging to one or the other side of the ideological spectrum should correspond with a degree of reverse projection when their ideological opposition, or the population in general, is the target of belief estimation. In terms of the measured outcomes in the forthcoming analyses, the results supporting this reaction would be represented by an overall greater perceived ideological distance in the 'system threat' condition, that is a higher APID score associated with the effect of the treatment, and a significant interaction effect in the same direction as the overall main effect of ideology on the directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) - if there indeed was any in the control condition. For instance, economic liberals viewing most others as accepting more income inequality than them in the control condition should bolster this perception in the threat condition, while economic conservatives perceiving the society as more egalitarian than them in the control condition should strengthen this view in the threat condition (**H4a - naive realism**).

Alternatively, as previous research suggests, people project not only their values and goals, but also other attributes and characteristics, such as attitudinal processes (Krueger, 2008; Van Boven et al., 2012). It is therefore possible that, following a worldview threat, the differences between conservatives and liberals in perceived similarity with the majority might widen due the respective ideologues bolstering different parts of their worldviews or personality characteristics. For instance, presence of threat, in particular in a form of a mortality reminder, was shown to lead to asymmetrical reactions between conservatives and liberals in cases when different values were affirmed - e.g., tolerance among liberals and ingroup loyalty, or patriotism, among conservatives (Castano et al., 2011; Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992). Prior research examining social projection in the domain of political attitudes has repeatedly demonstrated differences between liberals and conservatives in their needs to feel unique, share their respective worldviews with likeminded others and co-nationals, or willingness to engage in political compromise (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Haas, 2016; Rabinowitz et al., 2016; Stern et al., 2014a, 2014b). Bolstering of such different needs (uniqueness vs. shared reality with others) and values (tolerance vs. ingroup loyalty or equality vs. equity) should then result in liberals reporting greater overall perceived distance from the social norm (APID) in the 'system threat' condition compared to 'system affirmation', while the conservatives should imagine the social norm to be closer to their own values in the 'system threat' compared to the 'system affirmation' condition (**H4b - different beliefs affirmation**).

Finally, there is a possibility that both liberals and conservatives would react to our manipulation (economic system threat) by heightened commitment to their values in a

symmetrical manner (e.g., Kahan et al., 2017a),[47] and with increased projection of these ideals on others in an attempt to 'normalize' their worldviews. They would thereby imagine their actions, beliefs and attitudes as more standard (Sherman et al., 1984), their ingroup as more homogenous (Stern & West, 2016), or people in general as agreeing with them, and thus their ingroup being larger and, potentially, their worldviews being more valid (e.g., Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015). This should then narrow or close the gap in absolute perceived differences from the generalized other (APID) and should manifest as a negative effect of 'system threat' condition. At the same time, the interaction effect between ideology (measured as economic system justification score) and condition (system threat vs. system affirmation) should be in the direction opposite to the overall main effect of ideology in the analysis with directional perceived ideological distance as the outcome (DPID), signifying the decrease in the effect of ideology on reverse projection (H4c - symmetric projection).

Effect of system threatening and affirming messages in context of high and low uncertainty

Finally, apart from opportunities to bicker and stereotype, upcoming elections also provide an occasion and reasons to engage in attempts at understanding of political opponents. As has been demonstrated, entering a conflict mindset or engaging in perspective taking may reduce perceived distance, and instead increase perceived self-other overlap (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Stern and Kleiman, 2015). Following the idea that contextual uncertainty might intensify the effects of positive and negative stimuli (Haas & Cunningham, 2014; Haas, 2016), we expect that there would be a greater difference between positive and negative conditions before than after the election. Indeed, since their results show that uncertainty coupled with positive affect increases political tolerance and support for compromise, but that the reverse is the case with both uncertainty and threat present, we will assess a possibility that positive message in uncertainty condition will be associated with lowest overall perceived ideological distance, at least among liberals and moderates on one the hand, and that a combination of threat and uncertainty will increase the overall perceived ideological distance, mainly among conservatives on the other (**H5**).

Study 1: US Election

Context

Throughout the campaign and up until the final results trickled in, the general expectation was that Hillary Clinton of the Democratic Party would win the Presidency. With the election approaching, political commentators were asking if the Republican Party

[47] That is, economic liberals desiring greater income equality, and economic conservatives preferring greater differences in incomes between high and low status occupations in the 'system threat' compared to 'system affirmation' condition.

could salvage at least the votes for the Congressional elections (Frum, 2016). Conversely, coming off the second term of a popular Democratic president (Tani, 2017), and despite the predicted margins of victory not indicating a landslide, polls and projections were nearly unanimous about who was the favorite (Barnes, 2016). Indeed, in the end, predominantly Republican voters have elected a candidate promising foreign policy of non-interventionism, prosecution of his opponent, and withdrawal from multilateral free-trade agreements (BBC, 2017).

It was in this context that our study was conducted. Democrats, and with them aligned ideological liberals (of course, in a rather simplified conception of ideology), were the political majority before the election and became the minority after the vote (although not according to the popular vote). On the other hand, Republicans, and with them aligned ideological conservatives, woke up as the political minority and went to bed having newly elected President and controlling both chambers of the Congress.

Sample

We collected data using the same two-group experimental design in two rounds, a week before the 2016 US Presidential election (n = 335) and a week after the election (n = 342), using the pool of respondents from Amazon mTurk.[48] We offered 70 cents for a complete answer and only allowed participants from the United States (checked both through the mTurk interface and through IP address recorded by Qualtrics) who have had at least 90% of their submissions approved in order to ensure the quality of the data (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). On the first page of the survey, all of the participants were informed about the approximate length of the survey (we put no time pressure requirements on the participants apart from asking them to fill the questionnaire in one sitting and without distractions) and the general topic - job earnings. On the last page of the survey, the participants were informed about them participating in an experimental study in which some of the material was presented in a biased form. Although for this part of the study we have data from before and after the election, participants from before the election were not allowed to take the survey that took place after the election. We did this because we aimed at varying the levels of outcome uncertainty while keeping the rest of the design constant. As we could not guarantee that we would be able to gather enough unique responses after the election, we aimed at collecting a sample large enough to detect a small to medium interaction effect between the experimental manipulation condition and a measure of ideology in each of the rounds ($r \approx .2$, $p = .05$, power $\approx .95$, $n \approx 320$; see Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). We excluded participants who did not answer all of the questions, reported not to have answered in one sitting, incorrectly indicated their year of birth,[49] and those who

[48] Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz (2012) show that samples from mTurk are often more representative than in-person convenience samples.

[49] We interpreted this as participants not paying attention to the instructions. Removing participants based on this question after other filters were used before did not reduce the final sample size further.

sped through or spent too long time on the treatment task, because we reasoned that this might affect the impact of the manipulation.[50] This left a total of 478 participants (255 women; M_{age} = 38 years, range = 18 - 77; 221 in a group before and 257 in a group after the election), resulting in a power ≈ .9 to detect a small to medium effect (r ≈ .2, p = .05) in a full model including data from both waves.

In addition, after the election, we also collected a second round of responses from some of the participants from the group before the election. The participants who signed up for the first round of the study were not informed about a plan for a follow up study, and the introductory message of this second survey was different from the two rounds of above described experiment. We did this to ensure that the participants' answers would not be affected by anticipation of a follow-up study nor by reminders of their previous answers. The materials in the second survey were also different. The only items of interest for the purposes of analysis were the responses for the second half of the previously administered Economic System Justification scale. This is because we could not predict how many repeat participants we could gather for the within-subjects design. In the end, 80 participants (43 women, M_{age} = 40 years, range = 18 - 71) from before the election answered also in the second round. Given that we wanted to be sure that the effect of learning about the result of the election would be interpreted either as a threat or as an affirmation in a predictable way, we excluded additional 25 participants who did not indicate party preference before the election.

Procedure and materials

Background information part

The study was presented as a survey exploring attitudes towards job incomes. Participants first filled answers to basic background information (year of birth, highest attained education, family income, party affiliation, left-right self-positioning, size of the town they lived in, etc.).

Ideology

As the main measure of economic ideology, we used economic system justification scale (8-item version of randomly selected items from the original scale by Jost and Thompson (2000) , e.g., If people work hard, they almost always get what they want, There are many reasons to think that the economic system is unfair, measured on a 9-point Likert scale, rescaled to 0-1, with higher values indicating higher economic conservatism (economic right-wing); M = .44, SD = .18, α = .77). We chose ESJ scale as a measure of ideology because it

[50] Among those who passed the above mentioned exclusion criteria (n = 649), the mean time spent on the 262 word-long treatment paragraph (177 words long 'news article' and three, about 20 words long, answers) was M = 64.1 seconds with SD = 62.4 seconds, which falls between the average speed of 'careful silent reading' and 'skimming' (e.g., Nation, 2009); we decided for a cutoff point of 2 SDs from the mean, that is 189 seconds at the higher end, and a half of the sample mean, that is 32 seconds as a cutoff point at the lower end.

directly addresses ideological acceptance and perceived fairness of large economic differences and leaves out direct questions about redistribution of income or wealth, or about other measures addressing economic inequalities and poverty customarily employed by governments.

Manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to either (economic) system threat or (economic) system affirmation condition - a mock article describing the economic outlook of the country as either positive or negative, after which they were asked to order three likely causes of such developments (e.g., In the system threat condition: *Mismatch of education and new types of jobs. Our schools don't prepare people for a new type of economy.*; In the system affirmation condition: *We have learned from our mistakes. The structure of the economy has changed substantially, and will not be shaken easily.*).

Perceived Ideological Distance

Immediately after the manipulation article, participants were shown three screens with questions from which the main dependent variable was computed. In three sets of questions, the participants were asked to estimate average yearly incomes of four low- and four high-status occupations,[51] then to provide their suggestion of what would be appropriate salaries for the given jobs i.e., we asked what these occupations should earn, and qualified that we mean what they would consider appropriate, correct or ethical for people in given occupations to earn regardless of what they earn now. Finally, we asked participants to estimate what would be the socially normative answer i.e., what would people in general consider correct or ethical.[52] For each set of answers, a within subject inequality measure was computed as a (natural logarithm of) a ratio of a mean of earnings estimated or suggested for high- and low-status occupations.[53]

The dependent measure, (absolute) perceived ideological distance, was constructed as a difference between reported estimated normative answer and suggested appropriate inequality (by the participant). For instance, imagine someone suggesting that everyone should earn the same amount, and it is 1 dollar. In that case, the suggested inequality of the income distribution would be $\ln((1+1+1+1)/(1+1+1+1)) = 0$. If the person believes that others would suggest that people in high compared to low status occupations should earn twice as much, the resulting suggested inequality would be $\ln((2+2+2+2)/(1+1+1+1)) \approx .693$ ($e(.693) \approx 2$). Unstandardized coefficients represent percentage changes calculated as $e(nx*b) =$

[51] A skilled worker in a factory (42), a flight attendant (34), an assistant in a department store (43), an unskilled worker in a warehouse (23), a doctor in general practice (88), a CEO of a large company (70), an airline pilot (69), a Member of The Cabinet in Federal Government (77); numbers in parenthesis are closest ISEI occupational status scores based on Ganzeboom and Treiman, (2003)

[52] Similar paradigm for identifying social norms has been successfully used elsewhere (Krupka & Weber, 2013).

[53] e.g., ln[mean ideal earnings(doctors, CEOs, pilots, ministers) / mean ideal earnings(skilled workers, flight attendants, shop assistants, unskilled workers)]

difference between estimates of others' and personal ideal inequality for 'n' units of variable x in percentages.

For example, in line with **H1** and reasoning that conservatives, compared to liberals, possess greater relational and epistemic needs to achieve shared reality (albeit this may be limited to their perceived in-group; e.g., Stern & West, 2016), we may expect that APID would be lower among those scoring higher on the measure of economic conservatism (ESJ). For DPID scores, we do not need to have a specific prediction in regard to this hypothesis, given that DPID scores closer to 0 may be a result of a two distinct phenomena, a) lower APID, or b) regardless of APID, averaging of scores with opposing signs (e.g., a half of a group believing that others want greater inequality and the other half believing the opposite).

Results and Discussions

Ideology as guiding perceptions of social norms (US sample)

Hypothesis 1 aimed at establishing whether liberals or conservatives perceive greater distance between their personal ideals and those of the majority. We conducted two multiple regression analyses with DPID and APID as alternative ways to measure the perceived ideological distance. In both analyses, we entered grand-mean centered measure of ideology, system-threat and system-affirmation conditions (effect coded so that system-threat was 1 and system affirmation was -1), pre-election and post-election conditions (effect coded so that post-election was 1 and pre-election was -1), and all interactions. Presented effect sizes for particular predictors in regression models are reported as squared semi-partial correlations, indicating the amount of unique explained variance by the predictor, and individual confidence intervals are reported at 95% confidence level for particular unstandardized coefficients. For DPID as the outcome variable, the unstandardized effect of ideology was significant and negative, b = -2.08, SE = .23, $t(470)$ = -9.01, p < .001, sr^2 = .15, CI[-2.54, -1.63], indicating that more conservative respondents perceived others as suggesting lower ideal income differences compared to their own ideals and vice versa. Since zero represents no perceived ideological distance, we see that both liberals, b = .57, SE = .06, $t(470)$. = 9.51, p < .001, CI [.45, .69], and conservatives, b = -.19, SE =.06, $t(470)$ = -3.26, p =.001, CI [-.31, -.08], reported values significantly different from zero (at 1 SD below and above the ideological mean respectively), and the distance from zero was perceived to be greater by liberals than conservatives, b = .38, SE = .06, t = 6.28, p < .001, CI [.26, .5]. On the other hand, with APID as the measure of ideological distance, the main effect of ideology was not present, b = -.08, SE = .2, $t(470)$ = -.39, p = .697, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.47, .31], and both liberals, b = .64, SE = .05, $t(470)$ = 12.46, p <.001, CI [.54, .74], and conservatives, b = .61, SE =.05, $t(470)$ = 12.01, p < .001, CI [.51, .72], reported similar absolute perceived ideological distance from the perceived social norm, b = .03, SE = .05, t = 0.55, p = .581, CI [-.07, .13].

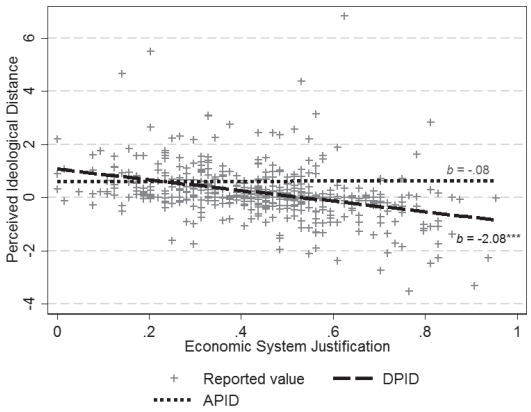

Figure 7. Perceived Ideological Distance and Ideology (US sample)
Note: *Dashed line represents line of best fit between ideology and perceived ideological distance; Dotted line represents line of best fit between ideology and absolute value of ideological distance;*

As it turns out (Figure 7), the conservatives and liberals do not differ in the overall amount of APID between themselves and most others, but do differ in DPID, the manner in which they construe their ideological positions vis-à-vis others. While liberals seem to believe that the majority desires greater inequality, conservatives, as a group, see themselves closer to the middle of the hierarchy.[54] In order to support an intuitive idea that such differences could also manifest in political life, we coded responses that estimated DPID below zero (-1) and responses above zero (+1). A chi-square test using this categorization and party affiliation (among Republicans, 72 reported DPID below and 55 above zero; among Democrats reported 60 reported DPID below and 137 above zero) shows significant difference between expected and observed frequencies (χ^2 (1, n = 324) = 22.02, p <.001).

It seems apparent that most Democrats and liberals perceive the population as more conservative than themselves. On the other hand, many conservatives and republicans tend to position themselves, perhaps unexpectedly, as less conservative than the perceived social norm. In regard to (**H1**) that liberals will report larger perceived ideological differences, we can reject the idea that conservatives would simply anchor on their attitudes and imagine that the rest of the society would share these attitudes. At the same time, however, there is support for the idea that the result of liberals and conservatives applying their ideologies is an asymmetric view of the society. Indeed, such one-sided perceptions on the liberals' side may result in a collective inability to properly assess desirable course of action both at group and individual levels. For instance, supporting the suggestions of Stern and colleagues (2014a), it might be that liberals do not perceive collective political efficacy not only due to

[54] Although this could be an artifact of the sample, substantively equivalent results were obtained when we only included participants who scored in the top and bottom thirds of the ESJ scale.

perceiving their ingroup as less ideologically cohesive, but also due to their collective assessment of the population as not being in line with their causes and propositions.

Moderating role of ideology in reactions to threat to economic system in the context of election (US sample)

The second set of hypotheses pits against each other the CMSC and WVD perspectives in regard to ideologies moderating individuals' reactions to threat and uncertainty. As in the initial test of the previous hypothesis, we conducted two multiple regression analyses with DPID and APID as alternative DVs predicted by ideology (grand-mean centered), threat manipulation (system threat = 1, system affirmation = -1), election effect (before election = -1, after election = 1), and all interactions.

In the full model with DPID (directional perceived ideological distance) as outcome, *adjusted* R^2=.15, $F(7,470) = 12.66$, $p < .001$, main effect of ideology was significant, $b = -2.08$, $SE = .23$, $t(470) = -9.01$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .15$, CI [-2.54, 1.63]. The main effects of threat, $b = .06$, $SE = .04$, $t(470) = 1.37$, $p = .173$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.03, .14], and election, $b = .02$, $SE = .04$, $t(470) = .42$, $p = .672$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.06, .1], were not significant and neither was the interaction between ideology and election, $b = -.02$, $SE = .23$, $t(470) = -.11$, $p = .914$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.48, .43]. However, the interaction between ideology and threat, $b = -.39$, $SE = .23$, $t(470) = -1.68$, $p = .093$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.84, .07], and the interaction between the two conditions were marginally significant, $b = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $t(470) = -1.82$, $p = .069$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.16, .01], and so was the three-way interaction between ideology, threat and election, $b = .41$, $SE = .23$, $t(470) = 1.76$, $p = .079$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.05, .86], suggesting that the amount of contextual outcome uncertainty may affect how people react to messages presenting threats to the economic system, and that this may be moderated by their ideological views.

We then decomposed the three-way interaction and examined separately the two rounds of the experiment - before and after the election. In the condition before the election, perceived ideological distance was predicted by a negative main effect of economic ideology, $b = -2.06$, $SE = .32$, $t(470) = -6.34$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .08$, CI [-2.7, -1.42], a positive effect of economic system threat manipulation, $b = .13$, $SE = .06$, $t(470) = 2.18$, $p = .03$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [.01, .26], and a negative interaction effect between ideology and threat, $b = -.8$, $SE = .32$, $t(470) = -2.45$, $p = .015$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-1.43, -.16]. Further decomposing the interaction, the simple slope in the system affirmation condition was significant and in negative direction, indicating that more liberal participants viewed others as preferring higher income inequality compared to whose with more economically conservative views, $b = -1.26$, $SE = .43$, $t(470) = -2.95$, $p = .003$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [-2.1, -.42]. This trend was even stronger in the system threat condition, $b = -2.86$, $SE = .49$, $t(470) = -5.84$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .07$, CI [-3.81, -1.89]. We then

qualified that the change in slope happened due to economic liberals (1 *SD* below the ideology mean) perceiving greater ideological distance from the social norm in the system threat condition in comparison to system affirmation condition, $b = .56$, $SE = .17$, $t(470) = 3.25$, $p = .001$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [.22, .9]. On the other hand, no effect of condition ($p = .888$) was observed among economic conservatives (1 *SD* above the ideology mean). We repeated the same analysis for the round conducted after the election. DPID was again predicted by a main effect of ideology, $b = -2.11$, $SE = .33$, $t(470) = -6.4$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .08$, CI [-2.75, -1.46], but the threat manipulation was not significant ($p = .737$) for both liberals ($p = .788$) and conservatives ($p = .847$) and neither was the interaction between ideology and threat ($p = .957$).

Since the results indicated a difference between the effects of system affirmation and system threat conditions between the two times (before and after the election), we also conducted additional analyses with ideology and election for each of the manipulation messages (system affirmation and system threat). In the model examining system affirmation condition, DPID was predicted only by the main effect of ideology, $b = -1.69$, $SE = .33$, $t(470) = -5.13$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .05$, CI [-2.34, -1.04], and the effects of election, $b = .09$, $SE = .65$, $t(470) = 1.58$, $p = .114$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [-.02, .21], and the interaction effect between ideology and election condition were not statistically significant, $b = -.43$, $SE = .33$, $t(470) = -1.31$, $p = .192$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-1.08, .21]. However, the simple slope of ideology was steeper after the election, $b = -2.13$, $SE = .5$, $t(470) = -4.22$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .04$, CI [-3.11, -1.13], compared to before the election, $b = -1.26$, $SE = .43$, $t(470) = -2.95$, $p = .003$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [-2.1, -.42], and the change in slope was due to economic liberals (1 *SD* below the ideology mean) reporting greater DPID in the system affirmation condition after the election, $b = .35$, $SE = .17$, t(470) = 2.03, $p = .043$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [.01, .69]. No effect of election was observed among conservatives ($p = .857$). For the system threat condition, DPID was predicted by main effect of ideology, $b = -2.47$, $SE = .32$, $t(470) = -7.63$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .11$, CI [-3.11, -1.83], but the effects of the election ($p = .32$) and of the interaction between ideology and the election were not significant ($p = .239$) among neither liberals ($p = .126$) nor conservatives ($p = .893$).

Indeed, the relationship between (economic) ideology and directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) differed only in system affirmation condition before the election (from other combinations of conditions). In other words, these results suggest that, in the context of high outcome uncertainty, economic liberals reacted to the (economic) system threat and system affirmation differently. In particular, economic liberals reading about the economy doing well before the election, compared to economic liberals in other conditions, imagined most Americans' attitudes regarding occupational income inequalities as either closer to those of their own or being more diverse, with some imagining the social norm to be even more egalitarian than what they themselves would suggest. On the other hand,

economic conservatives did not alter their perceptions of where they stand relative to the rest of the population following the exposure to our manipulation articles regardless of the amount of contextual outcome uncertainty.

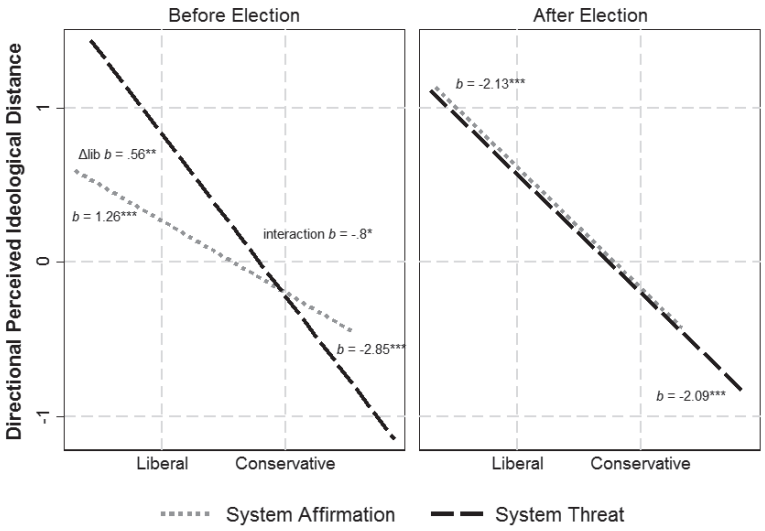

Figure 8. Perceived Ideological Distance Before and After the US 2016 Election
Note: *Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on DPID in system affirmation and system threat conditions before and after the 2016 US Presidential Election; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

In the full model with APID as the outcome, *adjusted* R^2=.02, $F(7,470) = 2.46$, $p = .017$, the main effect of ideology was not significant ($p = .697$), and neither were the main effects of conditions of system threat ($p = .72$) and election ($p = .967$). Similarly, the two-way interactions between ideology and system threat ($p = .718$) and ideology and election ($p = .316$), as well as interaction between the conditions of system threat and election were not significant ($p = .849$). However, the three-way interaction between ideology, system threat and election predicted by (**H5**) was statistically significant, $b = .79$, $SE = .2$, $t(470) = 3.98$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .03$, CI [.4, 1.18].

We decomposed the three-way interaction and analyzed separately the conditions before and after the election. In the condition from before the election, APID was not predicted by ideology ($p = .662$) and neither was the system threat manipulation significant ($p = .708$). However, an interaction effect between ideology and system threat vs. system affirmation conditions was statistically significant, $b = -.86$, $SE = .28$, $t(470) = -3.09$, $p = .002$, $sr^2 = .02$, CI [-1.4, -.31]. The simple slope in system affirmation condition was

significant and in positive direction, meaning that, before the election, more conservative participants perceived larger absolute distance from the social norm, b = .98, SE = .37, t(470) = 2.68, p = .008, sr^2 = .02, CI [.26, 1.7]. The relationship between ideology and absolute perceived ideological distance from the norm was reversed in the system threat condition (although only marginally significant), meaning that in this condition, it was the liberals who would perceive themselves as ideologically farther from the majority, b = -.74, SE = .42, t(470) = -1.76, p = .078, sr^2 = .01, CI [-1.56, .08]. Exploring the effect of system threat vs. affirmation condition among liberals and conservatives (1 *SD* below and above the ideology mean), we see that while liberals came to see larger ideological differences in the system threat condition, b = .36, SE = .15, t(470) = 2.41, p = .017, sr^2 = .01, CI [.07, .65], conservatives tended to see smaller absolute distance between their ideology and perceived social norm in system threat condition, b = -.28, SE = .15, t(470) = -1.89, p = .059, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.56, .01].

In the condition after the election, APID was again predicted neither by ideology (p = .328) nor by simple effect of system threat (p = .901), but interaction term between ideology and threat vs. affirmation condition was significant and in positive direction, b = .72, SE = .28, t(470) = 2.54, p = .011, sr^2 = .01, CI [.16, 1.27]. The simple slope in system affirmation condition was significant and negative, b = .99, SE = .43, t(470) = -2.3, p = .022, sr^2 = .01, CI [-1.84, -.14], and simple slope in system threat condition was not significant, but in positive direction, b = .44, SE = .36, t(470) = 1.21, p = .227, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.28, 1.15]. For both the liberals and conservatives (1 *SD* below and above the ideology mean), the effect of system threat condition was marginally significant, with negative sign and thus reduced perceived ideological distance for liberals, b = -.25, SE = .14, t(470) = -1.75, p = .08, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.53, .03], and the reverse was the case for conservatives, b = .28, SE = .14, t(470) = 1.94, p = .053, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.004, .56].

We also conducted additional analyses for the two manipulation conditions in order to examine the effect of the election on the effect of system affirming and system threatening messages on absolute perceived ideological distance among liberals and conservatives. In system affirmation condition, ideology (p = .984) and the main effect of election (p = .917) did not predict changes in APID, but their interaction was significant, b = -.99, SE = .28, t(470) = -3.49, p = .001, sr^2 = .03, CI [-1.55, -.43]. The effect of the election, at 1 *SD* below and above the ideology mean, was positive among liberals, b = .37, SE = .15, t(470) = 2.54, p = .011, sr^2 = .01, CI [.09, .66], and negative among conservatives, b = -.35, SE = .15, t(470) = -2.43, p = .016, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.64, -.07]. Similarly, in system threat condition, main effect of ideology (p = .592) and of the election (p = .869) were not significant, but their interaction was, b = .59, SE = .28, t(470) = 2.12, p = .034, sr^2 = .01, CI [.04, 1.14]. The effect of the election was not significant among liberals, b = -.23, SE = .14, t(470) = -1.62, p

= .106, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.52, .05], or conservatives, b = .2, SE = .14, $t(470)$ = 1.39, p = .164, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.08, .48]. However, the directions indicate a trend opposite to that found for the system affirmation condition. Taken together, the results for absolute perceived ideological distance show economic liberals and conservatives reacting differently to the presented economic system threat before and after the election. While liberals reacted to threat, compared to affirmation, by imagining themselves as ideologically more isolated from the majority before the election, the reverse was the case a week after the election and mirror-opposite trend was found among economic conservatives.

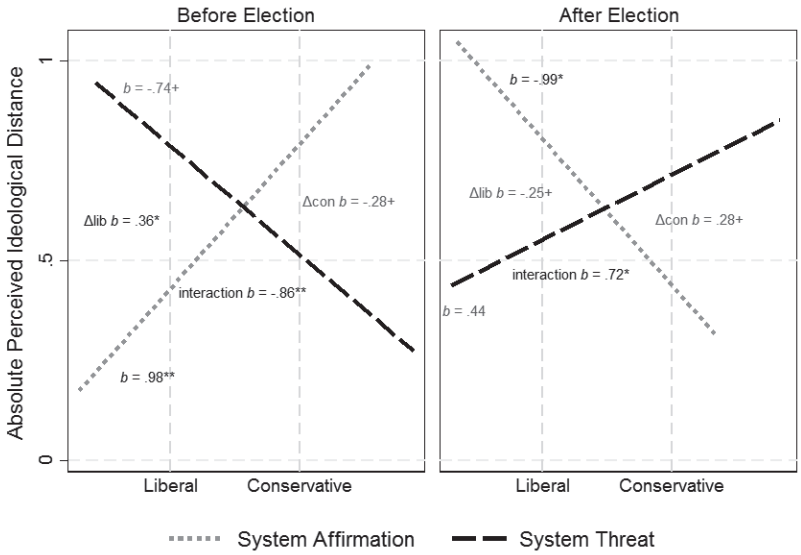

Figure 9. Absolute Perceived Ideological Distance Before and After the US 2016 Election
Note: *Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on APID in system affirmation and system threat conditions before and after the 2016 US Presidential Election; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

The second issue we aimed to address was the relationship between ideology and effects of uncertainty surrounding elections and messages describing the economy as not doing well (vs. doing well) on perceptions of ideological distance from the social norm. Utilizing two measures of perceived ideological distance, we found a more complex picture. First, we expected that the winning side would perceive significantly smaller distance between their attitudes and those of the majority (**H2**). However, no overall effect of election was observed for conservatives nor for liberals. This might be due to confusing nature of the electoral result, in which Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, but Donald Trump won the Electoral College vote, and therefore the Presidency.

The results for directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) as the outcome show liberals having a clear tendency to perceive others as more conservative than them, with a smaller perceived ideological difference being reported in the system affirmation condition before the election. Since the result of the election could be perceived as a very strong threat to the losing side, it is possible that we have simply witnessed two 'threatening' conditions for liberals after the election. In that case, we would claim a partial support for the hypothesis (**H4b - different beliefs affirmation**), which predicts that liberals would affirm their worldview that most others are generally more conservative than them when under threat on the one hand, and that conservatives would strengthen their perception of others as being generally like them on the other (in our results, this latter part was not supported). However, directional perceived ideological distance (DPID) was identified as not sufficiently informative to for determination of support for the hypothesis (**H4b**). On the other hand, the results are also partially supportive of the hypothesis (**H4a - naive realism**), which suggests that any pre-existing perceived differences should be strengthened under conditions of perceived threat to the system (again, perceived difference reported by conservatives did not differ between conditions). Such result would also be consistent with (**H5**) in that uncertainty surrounding the election coupled with a positive message might have motivated liberals to perceive greater potential for political compromise or agreement across the board. Further supporting (**H5**) is that the effect of system threat vs. system affirmation was, at least among liberals, greater in the uncertain condition (prior to election).

Further complicating the picture is that are the results for absolute perceived ideological distance (APID) suggesting that the system threatening and system affirming messages were interpreted differently by liberals and conservatives before and after the election - most likely depending on their presumed status of being in a political majority or minority. Before the election, liberals reported lower APID in the system affirmation condition and higher APID in system threat condition. On the other hand, conservatives reported higher APID in the system affirmation condition and lower APID in system threat condition. These relationships reversed after the election, such that conservatives (now the group in power), reported slightly lower APID in system affirmation condition compared to system threat condition, and liberals (now the group not in power) reported lower APID in system threat condition and higher APID in system affirmation condition. These results corroborate views that political ideology is embedded in the context of political power relations and provides not only a worldview and a set of values and ideals about how to society should look like, but also an estimation of one's position and available strategies within the political arena (Heywood, 2003; Martin, 2014).

It seems very plausible that the system affirmation message functioned as a threat to the 'minority' group within the broader context of what such message might mean for the possibilities of achieving the ideological goals of the given group. Thus, while conservatives might have viewed positive messages about the economy prior to the election as leading to their electoral defeat (or could simply not bring themselves to believe that Democratic

president could deliver positive results), such messages would appear threatening to liberals after learning about the eventual outcome of the election (and it is less likely that they would have suddenly shifted their evaluation of how well was the economy doing). Conversely, a message describing the economy as not doing well might function as an affirmation of the beliefs of the political minority (e.g., that it is them who should be in power), or as a signal of hope that the society will recognize a need for change. Given the result and the working of American political system (in which presidential election and inauguration are months apart), we cannot say that a message describing the economy as (not) doing well over the past few years would suddenly become an affirmation of, or a threat to one's worldview without incorporation of the effect of the electoral result only a week after the election.

Nevertheless, the results do not provide evidence for the 'reactive liberal' thesis nor the 'symmetric projection' hypothesis, but rather for the symmetrical version of the worldview defense hypothesis (**H4a - naive realism**). However, we need to qualify that the data indicates that what is interpreted as a threat to one's worldview seems to be, to a large degree, dependent on concurrent distribution of political power. Taken together with the difference in direction of the adjustment in perceptions of the normative positions between liberals and conservatives, the results suggest symmetry in the reaction (increase in overall perceived distance from the norm following a message representing a threat to one's worldview; **H4a - naive realism**) and asymmetry in the direction of this reaction informed by people's prior ideological positions (**H4b - different beliefs affirmation**). In other words, although both liberals and conservatives tend to imagine themselves as more isolated from others following threat, liberals seem to predictably view the society as being more conservative, while some conservatives may feel that the society is even more conservative than them.

Effect of the election on perceptions of the legitimacy of the economic system - US

For this part of the study, we used a within-subject design and compared responses of respondents who took two different surveys before and after the election. In total, we analyzed responses from 80 participants as described earlier. In the first study, all respondents answered the same 8 randomly chosen items from economic system justification scale (measured on a 0-8 Likert scaled, higher values indicate higher economic system justification; $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.47$; $\alpha = .75$). In the second study, respondents answered 8 more items from the original scalre (e.g., *Social class differences reflect differences in the natural order of things, It is virtually impossible to eliminate poverty*; $M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.9$; $\alpha = .88$), with item 8 of the original scale not being asked in either of the surveys (Poor people are not essentially different from rich people).[55] The procedure of this study also included a

[55] See the Appendix D for the complete list of items used.

few background questions prior to administration of the second part of the ESJ questionnaire.

Since economic system justification was used as the dependent variable, and because we wanted to ensure that we could be reasonably confident in that the effect of the result of the election would be perceived as a threat to the worldview of one group and as an affirmation to the other, we only included participants who previously (in the survey before the election) indicated preference for either the Democratic Party or the the Republican Party.

CMSC and WVD make clearly different predictions about the effect of the election on the losing side. In comparison to perceived legitimacy of the economic system (economic system justification) reported prior to the election, CMSC predicts heightened support for the standing economic system regardless of prior ideology, and WVD commitment to already held worldview, which would mean higher reported ESJ among Republicans and lower ESJ among Democrats.

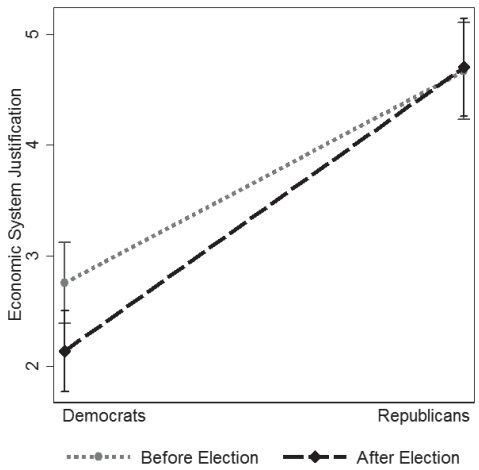

Figure 10. Economic System Justification among Democrats and Conservatives - Before and After the US Election

As expected, Republicans reported higher overall ESJ both before, M_{dem} = 2.75, SE_{dem} = .17, M_{rep} = 4.7, SE_{rep} = .19, $t(78)$ = -7.49, p = <.001, d = -1.7, CI [-2.22, -1.18], but contrary to prediction made by CMSC model, this relationship held even after the election, M_{dem} = 2.13, SE_{dem} = .21; M_{rep} = 4.7, SE_{rep} = .25, $t(78)$ = -7.92, p = <.001, d = -1.8, CI [-2.32, -1.27]. We then used a linear mixed model with random intercepts for repeated measures on individuals in order to estimate the effect of election on Democrats and Republicans. The model was estimated with maximum likelihood. We had two observations for each of the 80 participants (47 Democrats, 33 Republicans). In the fixed part of the

model, we used party affiliation (-1 Republican, 1 Democrat) and time (-1 before the election, 1 - after the election) and their interaction. The interaction effect was significant, $b = .64$, $SE = .24$, $p = .006$, $f^2 = .09$, CI [.19, 1.11] suggesting a difference in the effect of the result of election of the respective partisans. The contrast effect of election was significant for Democrats, $b = -.61$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .2$, CI [-.91, -.32], but not for Republicans, $b = .03$, $SE = .18$, $p = .85$, $f^2 = .0$, CI [-.32, .39].

These results provide a clear support for the WVD prediction (**H2b**) that members of the losing side will interpret the result of the election as a threat to their worldview, and that the consequence of this will be heightened commitment to their ideology. In other words, losing the election lead to a decrease in the perceived legitimacy of the standing economic system among the respondents who self-identified as Democrats. Together with the results of the previous analysis, this result provides a strong support for the worldview-specific bolstering hypothesis and a piece of evidence against the CMSC-inspired conservative shift hypothesis (**H2a**).

Study 2: UK Election

Context

Given Theresa May's decision to clinch her place in history, we had an opportunity to also attempt to replicate the study we conducted during the 2016 US Presidential Election in the United Kingdom. The 2017 UK General Election came as a surprise and, at least initially, the Conservative Party was expected to win in a landslide ("Theresa May to Seek," 2017). However, shortly before the election, the polls indicated that there was a possibility for an upset, or at least a closer race ("UK Election: Polls Give," 2017). In the end, the Conservative Party retained plurality, but not the majority in the House of Commons ("UK Election 2017: Conservatives," 2017).

Sample

We collected data with the same two-group experimental design in two rounds (923 respondents a week before and 361 respondents a week after the 2017 UK General Election) using the pool of respondents from Prolific Academic (e.g., see Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017 for comparison of PA with mTurk). Initially, we aimed at doubling the effective sample size from Study 1, however, the response rate dropped considerably after the 'before election' round and thus we could not reach the desired number of respondents for the round after the election. We applied the same exclusion criteria rules as in Study 1 (excluding those who did not finish the study in one session, did not answer all the questions, provided answers that did not correspond to the wording of the year of birth question and

either spent too short or too long time on the treatment paragraph).[56] Furthermore, given that the UK political landscape is that of a multi-party system, and in order to make the results more comparable to the two-party dynamic of the US context, the analysis includes only the respondents who identified themselves as either Tory or Labour voters.[57] We reasoned that focusing exclusively on the dynamics of the two large traditional parties would eliminate the possible concerns regarding influences of party affiliation, identity and other competing issues on which the votes for the newly established or smaller parties may be based on. For instance, it might be more complicated and less straightforward to predict and interpret reactions of, say, UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) or SNP (Scottish National Party) voters to either economic system threat or the result of the election; i.e., in case of the Labour and the Conservative parties, (not) having the prime minister is a clear indication of their electoral success. The resulting sample size was then 617 respondents (391 women; M_{age} = 38 years, range = 19 - 74) after listwise deletion, with the group before the election consisting of 452 respondents and the group after the election having 165 respondents.

In addition, after the election, we also collected a second round of responses from some of the participants from the group before the election. Similar to the US study, the materials in the second survey were different from the study done before the election. Again, the only items of interest for the purposes of analysis were the responses for the second half of Economic System Justification scale. In total, we recruited 329 participants (198 women, M_{age} = 40 years, range = 19 - 73). Given that we wanted to be sure that participants would react similarly to the outcome, we only recruited from those self-identified as Tory or Labour voters in the first round.

Procedure and materials

The procedure and materials used in Study 2 were the same as in Study 1, with an exception that economic system threat and economic system affirmation messages were adapted to the UK context.

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[56] The average time spent on the manipulation task was $M = 64$ seconds and the standard deviation was $SD = 55.6$ seconds among those who passed other exclusion criteria (including voting for either the Conservative or the Labour party), resulting in cutoff values of 32 seconds at the lower end and 175 seconds at the higher end.

[57] Results for the sample with voters of other parties included are provided in a separate section (in the appendix). Although the results are in directions consistent with those in US sample and the limited UK sample, the observed relationships are statistically significant in pattern similar consistent with results of the US sample, thus suggesting that the role of ideology in perceptions of others' opinions seems to go beyond being a mere proxy for party affiliation. However, given that we did not predict the observed difference, and have instead chosen to limit our predictions to a sample consisting of only Labour and Conservative voters, this result should only serve as an inspiration for further research. (In addition, the overall pooled sample containing both the US and the UK respondents are also presented in the appendix. The results are also consistent with the general findings in the separate analyses discussed in this paper.)

As the main measure of economic ideology, we again used economic system justification scale (8-item version, measured on a 9-point Likert scale, rescaled to 0-1 and grand-mean centered, with higher values indicating higher economic conservatism (economic right-wing); $M = .43$, $SD = .15$; $\alpha = .71$).

Results and Discussions

Ideology as guiding perceptions of social norms (UK sample)

We conducted two multiple regression analyses, again with DPID and APID as alternative ways to measure the perceived ideological distance. The models, predicting perceived ideological distance, included a measure of economic ideology (ESJ, standardized), effect-coded system threat and system affirmation conditions (-1 system affirmation, 1 system threat), time (-1 pre-elections, 1 post-election), and all interactions.

First, we report results for DPID as the outcome variable. The main effect of ideology, $b = -1.16$, $SE = .18$, $t(609) = -6.53$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .06$, CI [-1.51, -.81], shows a negative relationship between economic conservatism and the perceived amount that others would suggest as acceptable level of inequality over the respondents' own suggestion. Similar to the result in the US, liberals, $b = .23$, $SE = .04$, $t(609). = 6.2$, $p < .001$, CI [.15, .3], and conservatives, $b = -.13$, $SE = .04$, $t(609) = -3.82$, $p = .001$, CI [-.21, -.06], reported values significantly different from zero (at 1SD below and above the ideological mean), with liberals perceiving greater distance from zero than conservatives, $b = .09$, $SE = .04$, $t = 2.58$, $p = .01$, CI [.02, .17].

With APID as the measure of perceived ideological distance, echoing findings from the US sample, the main effect of ideology was negative but not statistically significant, $b = -.24$, $SE = .15$, $t(609) = -1.56$, $p = .118$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.54, .06], and both liberals, $b = .37$, $SE = .03$, $t(609) = 11.84$, $p < .001$, CI [.31, .43], and conservatives, $b = .3$, $SE = .03$, $t(609) = 8.92$, $p < .001$, CI [.23, .36], reported APID different from zero.

As in the US sample, the liberal respondents from the UK reported both higher DPID and APID relative to conservatives. Overall, among the Labour party voters (self-reported) 173 perceived the social norm as more egalitarian than themselves and 244 perceived the majority to accept higher levels of inequality than their own reported ideals. Among the Conservative party voters, 151 perceived the majority to desire lower economic inequality and 70 expected the social norm to be even higher than their preferred amount of income inequality, χ^2 (1, n = 560) = 33.59, $p < .001$. As in the US sample, the prediction (**H1**) that economic conservatives will perceive smaller overall ideological differences between themselves and the social norm was not supported by the data, although in both cases, the

direction of the relationship between ideology and overall perceived ideological distance was negative as expected.

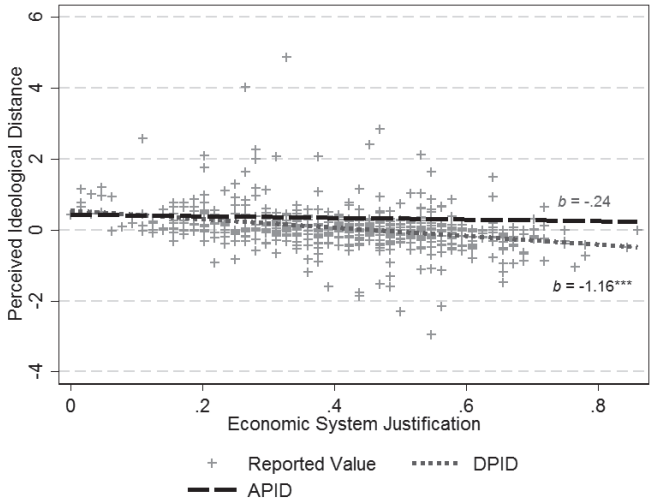

Figure 11. Perceived Ideological Distance and Ideology (UK sample)
Note: *Dashed line represents line of best fit between ideology and perceived ideological distance; Dotted line represents line of best fit between ideology and absolute value of ideological distance;*

Moderating role of ideology in reactions to threat to economic system in the context of election (UK sample)

Addressing the hypotheses of how will economic ideology affect people's reactions (vis-à-vis perceived social norm) to system threat in condition of high outcome uncertainty and low outcome uncertainty, we again analyzed two models with different measures of perceived ideological distance. We conducted two multiple regression analyses with DPID or APID predicted by ideology (grand-mean centered), threat manipulation (system threat = 1, system affirmation = -1), election effect (before election = -1, after election = 1), and all interactions.

In the full model with DPID as outcome, adjusted R^2 = .1, $F(7,609)$ = 10.47, p < .001, the main effect of ideology was significant, b = -1.16, SE = .18, $t(609)$ = -6.53, p < .001, sr^2 = .06, CI [-1.51, -.81]. The interaction effects between ideology and threat (p = .368) and election (p = .505) were not statistically significant, and neither were the main effects of threat (p = .368), election (p = .982), the interaction between the two conditions (p = .116), nor the three-way interaction between ideology, threat, and election (p = .121).

Following the analysis conducted on the US sample, we decomposed the three-way interaction and examined the groups that answered before and after the election separately.

In the group from before the election, DPID was predicted by the main effect of ideology, b = -1.28, SE = .17, $t(609)$ = -7.55, p < .001, sr^2 = .08, CI [-1.61, -.95], and, while the main effect of the system threat was not statistically significant (p = .69), the interaction between ideology and system threat was significant and in negative direction, b = -.36, SE = .17, $t(609)$ = -2.11, p < .035, sr^2 = .01, CI [-.69, -.03]. The simple slope in the positive message condition was significant and negative, suggesting that liberals, compared to conservatives, viewed others as accepting more inequality even in the context of positive message, b = -.92, SE = .23, $t(609)$ = -4.09, p < .001, sr^2 = .03, CI [-1.37, -.48], and the slope of the effect of ideology was even steeper in the system threat condition, b = -1.64, SE = .25, $t(609)$ = -6.46, p < .001, sr^2 = .06, CI [-2.14, -1.14]. Liberals (1 SD below the ideology mean) perceived greater ideological distance from the social norm in the system threat condition, albeit this was only marginally significant, b = .15, SE = .08, $t(609)$ = 1.91, p = .056, sr^2 = .0, CI [-.004, .29]. No effect of condition was observed among conservatives (p = .303). Closer inspection of the group gathered after the election showed significant main effect of ideology, b = -1.04, SE = .31, $t(609)$ = -3.34, p < .001, sr^2 = .02, CI [-1.66, -.43], but not a significant effect of system threat (p = .149), nor of an interaction between system threat and ideology (p = .534).

Exploring more closely the effect of election, there was no overall change in perceived ideological distance among either conservatives (p = .627) or liberals (p = .628). Moving on to the differences in the effect of election within system affirmation and system threat conditions, we found that in the system affirmation condition, perceived ideological distance was significantly predicted only by the negative effect of ideology, b = -1.08, SE = .25, $t(609)$ = -4.27, p < .001, sr^2 = .03, CI [-1.58, -.58]. Neither the slope of the relationship (p = .533) nor the overall direction (or its magnitude) of the perceived ideological distance were affected by the election (p = .265). Similarly, in the system threat condition, DPID was also predicted only by the negative effect of ideology, b = -1.24, SE = .25, $t(609)$ = -4.97, p < .001, sr^2 = .04, CI [-1.74, -.75], and neither the effect of election (p = .266) nor the interaction between ideology and election were significant (p = .115).

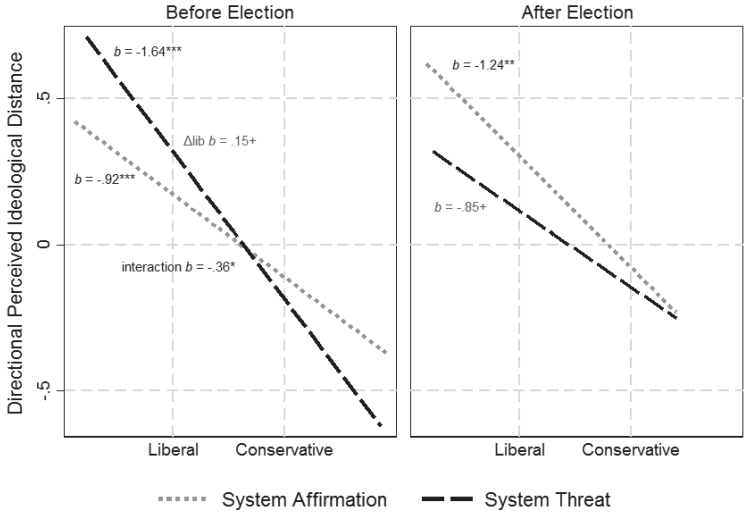

Figure 12. Perceived Ideological Distance Before and After the UK 2017 Election

Note*: Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on DPID in system affirmation and system threat conditions before and after the 2017 UK General Election; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

Next we examined the full model with absolute perceived ideological distance (APID) as the outcome, adjusted $R^2 = .01$, $F(7,609) = 1.76$, $p = .092$. As before, we included ideology (grand-mean centered), and effect-coded conditions for system affirmation (-1) and system threat (1), and before (-1) and after the election (1). The main effects of ideology, $b = -.24$, $SE = .15$, $t(609) = -1.56$, $p = .118$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.54, .06], and election were not statistically significant, $b = -.005$, $SE = .02$, $t(609) = -.21$, $p = .834$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.05, .04]. On the other hand, the main effect of system threat manipulation was in a positive direction and marginally significant, $b = .04$, $SE = .02$, $t(609) = 1.94$, $p = .053$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.001, .09], meaning that people reading about the economy not doing well, compared to those who read a positive message, imagined others to be marginally more different in their views regarding the acceptable levels of income inequality. Interaction effects between system threat and ideology ($p = .215$), election and ideology ($p = .898$), and the two conditions ($p = .428$) were not significant, and neither was the three-way interaction between ideology, election, and system threat ($p = .38$).

Looking at the results before and after the election, the main effect of ideology was marginally significant before the election, $b = -.26$, $SE = .15$, $t(609) = -1.77$, $p = .077$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.55, .03], but did not predict participants' responses after the election, $b = -.22$, $SE = .26$, $t(609) = -.82$, $p = .414$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.75, .31]. Similarly, the threat manipulation significantly increased respondents' overall perceived ideological distance from the majority

before the election, $b = .06$, $SE = .02$, $t(609) = 2.65$, $p = .008$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.75, .31], but not after, $b = .03$, $SE = .04$, $t(609) = .67$, $p = .504$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.05, .1]. Before the election, the positive effect of system threat on the overall magnitude of perceived ideological distance from the norm was slightly more pronounced among conservatives, $b = .13$, $SE = .06$, $t(609) = 2.2$, $p = .028$, $sr^2 = .01$, CI [.01, .13], than among liberals, $b = .1$, $SE = .07$, $t(609) = 1.6$, $p = .110$, $sr^2 = .0$, CI [-.01, .12], but the difference was not statistically significant ($p = .705$). After the election, while neither liberals ($p = .648$) nor conservatives ($p = .201$) reacted strongly to the system threat manipulation, their reactions went in opposite directions, albeit the difference was again not statistically significant ($p = .228$).

In contrast to findings from Study 1, system threat had a similar effect on the perception of ideological distance among both liberals and conservatives prior to the election. While the US results could be interpreted as participants reacting as if economic downturn could pose good news when their (presumed) side was in the minority (conservatives before and liberals after the elections), the UK participants reacted relatively uniformly by adjusting their APID, that is overall perceived ideological distance, away from their personal positions. Similar to the US sample, the results for DPID showed liberals increasing their perceived ideological distance from the social norm in a relatively uniform direction, whilst conservatives seemed to perceive the society as holding both more egalitarian and inegalitarian norms compared to their own attitudes. Taken together, the dominant reaction to economic system threat was to perceive greater gap between one's ideals and the social norm, which supports the symmetry hypothesis (**H4a - naive realism**). Once again, however, the direction of this effect was moderated by the content of one's ideology, thus also partially supporting the logics of hypothesis (**H4b - different beliefs affirmation**). Furthermore, even in the UK case, liberals reported the smallest, albeit not statistically significant differences between their own attitudes and that of majority in the system affirmation condition before the election, and the overall reactions to system threat were also larger in the context of uncertainty before the election. Together with conservatives reporting higher overall perceived difference from the norm in the system threat (compared to system affirmation) condition before the election, but not after the election, results from the UK sample provide additional support for reasoning behind (**H5**) that outcome uncertainty intensifies effects of both positive and negative stimuli.

Finally, given that the overall reactions in the UK sample were in the same directions as in the US, albeit not statistically significant, and considering the differences in likely interpretations of outcomes of these elections (e.g., in the US, the Republicans achieved an unexpected victory and gained control of the Presidency, the Senate, and of the House of Representatives, whereas in the UK, the Conservative Party won the plurality of votes but lost the majority in the House of Commons they held after the previous election in 2015) it is advisable for further studies to incorporate a measure of perceived (ideological or political) group status in order to capture possible differences in interpretations of the meaning of

supposedly threatening or affirming messages from the standpoint of the particular respondent.

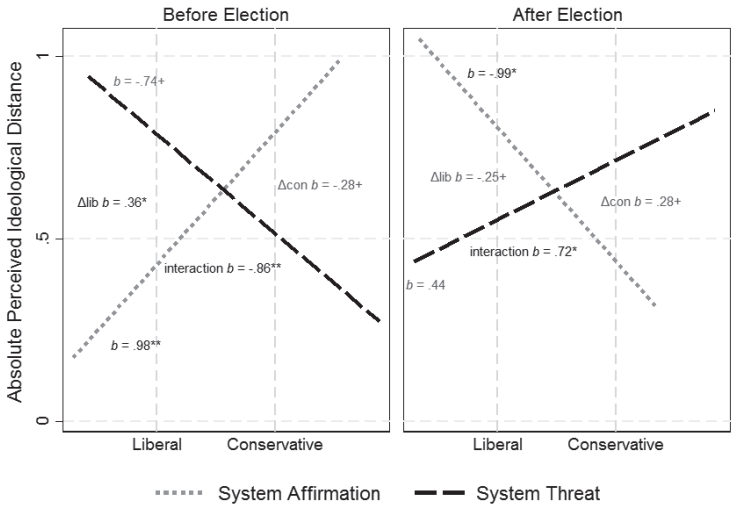

Figure 13. Absolute Perceived Ideological Distance Before and After the UK 2017 Election
Note: *Highlighted are simple slopes of unstandardized effects of ideology on APID in system affirmation and system threat conditions before and after the 2017 UK General Election; vertical lines indicates 1 SD below and above ideology mean*

Effect of the election on perceptions of the legitimacy of the economic system (UK sample)

The final study sought to replicate findings of the within-subjects study from the US sample. Given that result of election should be a clear-cut stimulus for the losing side, the result should replicate more easily than findings based on stimuli that are more open to interpretation.

As in the third study conducted on the US sample, we used a within-subject design and compared responses of respondents who took two different surveys before and after the election. In total, we gathered from 329 participants (197 Labour voters, 132 Conservative voters).

In the first study, all respondents answered the same 8 randomly chosen items from economic system justification scale (measured on a 0-8 Likert scaled, higher values indicate higher economic system justification; $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.2$; $\alpha = .7$). In the second (follow-up) study, respondents answered 8 more items ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.56$; $\alpha = .86$), with item 8 of the original scale not being asked in either of the surveys (Poor people are not essentially

different from rich people). The procedure of this study included a few background questions prior to administration of the second part of the ESJ questionnaire.

Given that we have previously obtained a result of worldview affirmation among Democrats in the aftermath of the 2016 US Presidential Election, we expected the losing side to bolster their beliefs about the legitimacy of the standing economic system.

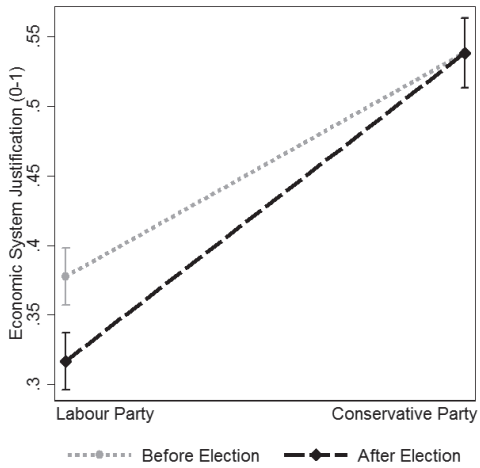

Figure 14. Economic System Justification among Labour and Conservative Party voters (Before and After the UK Election)

Conservatives reported higher ESJ both before, M_{lab} = 3.02, SE_{lab} = .08, M_{con} = 4.3, SE_{con} = .08, $t(327)$ = -11.2, p <.001, d = 1.26, CI [1.02, 1.5], and after the election, M_{lab} = 2.53, SE_{lab} = .1, M_{con} = 4.31, SE_{con} = .1, $t(327)$ = -12.13, p <.001, d = 1.36, CI [1.12, 1.61]. We used a linear mixed model with random intercepts for repeated measures on individuals in order to estimate the effect of election on Labour and Tory voters. The model was estimated with maximum likelihood. We had two observations for each of the 327 participants. In the fixed part of the model, we used party affiliation (-1 Labour, 1 Tory), time (-1 before the election, 1 after the election) and their interaction. The interaction effect between was significant, b = -.48, SE = .1, p < .001, f^2 = .07, CI [-.68, -.29], indicating a difference in the effect of the resolution of the election on the voters of the two rival parties. The contrast effect of the election was significant for Labour voters, b = -.49, SE = .06, p < .001, f^2 = .17, CI [-.61, .36], but not Tory voters, b = -.003, SE = .08, p = .97, f^2 = .0, CI [-.16, .15].

Again, the results provide a clear support for the WVD prediction (**H2b**) that members of the losing side will bolster their preexisting worldviews. Given that we do not have access to data in which conservatives lost election, we cannot judge whether results of either the US election or the UK election support hypotheses (**H4a**) or (**H4b**), although the

data seems consistent with either. However, we can conclude that the losing side did not react by putting on rose-tinted glasses and increased legitimization of the new status quo, but rather by increased its judgment of the economic system as unfair and not legitimate.

Concluding remarks and implications

Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) suggest that people categorize information on which they perceive general consensus within the relevant reference groups as facts, and such 'facts' may serve as a valuable source of empirical expectations and help predict, form and inform behavior of social actors (Bicchieri, 2006; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). However, people's inferences about others' normative preferences are often incorrectly biased towards either the perceived behavioral norms, potentially misleading individuals to believe in their isolation in disagreement with the perceived normative standards and even remaining silent in face of experienced or observed injustice (Bird & Waters, 1989; Miller et al., 2000; O'Gorman, 1975), or towards their own personal tastes and preferences, which can result in overestimation of public's support for one's positions and in low perceived legitimacy of the assumed positions of out-groups (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Krueger, 2008; Rabinowitz et al., 2016). In the domain of political attitudes and issues related to political ideologies that people maintain and use to explain and orientate themselves in the social world, beliefs about what is and what should be differ between members of competing groups (however small or populous these may be), with overestimation of such differences and of their prevalence being the norm rather than an exception (Robinson et al., 1995; Westfall et al., 2015). Misjudging others' normative preferences may then also lead to increase in intolerance or even hostility towards ideological rivals, and reduced support for political compromise (Haas, 2016; Iyengar et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 1981).

In this study, we explored beliefs Americans and Britons have about the normative preferences of their co-nationals regarding the acceptable amounts of income inequalities. We utilized experimental design in the context of two general elections and used a manipulation in a form of a mock article describing the economic outlook of the country in order to assess whether and how ideology predicts people's perceptions of their attitudinal distance from the social norm and their reactions to a system-threatening message in conditions of low and high uncertainty about electoral outcome. Our main findings provide mixed support the hypotheses that political ideology predicts perceptions of social norms and that people engage in defensive perception of the generalized other when faced with information threatening the system of which they are a part of.

In terms of perception of social norms, prior research suggests that conservatives are more motivated to project their views on others (e.g., Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015; Stern & West, 2016), while liberals have a tendency to view themselves as unique in their attitudes and preferences (e.g., O'Gorman, 1975; Stern et al., 2014b). Contrary to this expectation, we

found liberals and conservatives judging their overall distance from the perceived social norm to be of similar magnitude but different in direction, with liberals overwhelmingly perceiving most others to be economically more right-wing and accepting larger differences in incomes, and, on the other hand, conservatives being split more evenly in imagining the rest of the society to be either more or less egalitarian than themselves. Although these results are partly at odds with previous findings, our measure of perceived attitudinal similarity with others was focused on economic and not cultural attitudes, and was different from that of consensus estimates used in earlier research. Indeed, measuring the direction and the magnitude in the perceived difference in attitudes is a trade-off for learning about the estimated proportion of people agreeing with the respondent on a given question. It is also possible that while conservatives do perceive greater attitudinal consensus with other conservatives, they do not consider the society in general to be an in-group, even during politically charged events such as election. However, the expectation that liberals tend to view their attitudes as more unique seems to correspond with the observed pattern of results given that, at least before the election, it was mostly liberals shifting their perceptions away from the norm in a rather uniform fashion in the manipulation condition (viewing others as even more inegalitarian), with conservatives not reacting to either positive or the negative information about the country's economic performance. Our results could then be viewed as complementing the findings from the studies utilizing the consensus estimates paradigm and political in-groups as targets, with liberals potentially perceiving smaller in-group consensus due to positioning themselves at the end of the ideological spectrum.

Exploring the effects of elections and threat on perceived attitudinal similarity of liberals and conservatives, we found little to support the predictions of the 'conservative-shift' and 'reactive liberal' hypotheses, which suggests that political liberals should become cognitively and attitudinally closer to political conservatives when exposed to uncertainty or threatening situations (e.g., Nail et al., 2009). Instead, we observed that although it was mostly the liberals among whom there were differences between the conditions of system affirmation and system threat, the direction in which they changed their views indicated that instead of increased projection, and thus perception of smaller differences between themselves and others, the trend was that of increased perceived ideological distance from the majority in the system threat condition. As stated above, in terms of the direction of the perceived ideological distance from the norm, this reaction was observed in both the US and the UK samples only before the elections which, given the respective negative outcome for the Democrats and the Labour party, could be interpreted as liberals perceiving themselves as more ideologically isolated in conditions they interpreted as threatening the system.

In terms of the overall perceived ideological distance, in the UK sample, system threat led to overall greater perceived differences from the norm before the election. We found a more complex picture in the US sample, where liberals and conservatives reacted to the system threat manipulation in a manner opposite to one another before and after the election. In both cases, though, the message that could be interpreted as strategically

threatening to presumed ideological goals of the individual led to an increase in the overall perceived ideological distance from the majority. That is, a message describing the country's economic outlook positively could potentially be perceived as threatening the electoral chances of the group in political minority. Although we have not incorporated such possibility in our hypotheses, this interpretation is consistent with the underlying notion of political ideology as a vision for how the society ought to be run. From this perspective, it would also be worthwhile to consider a possibility that even the pre-election outcome uncertainty should not be considered uncertainty as such, given that the pattern of results seems more consistent with the participants reading the situation as status quo regarding the distribution of political power, as evidenced by shifts in effects between system affirming and system threatening messages among winners and losers. Providing additional support to the interpretation that the balance of political power may affect interpretations of news about the economy, in both the US and the UK, the participants in the within-subject study who found themselves on the losing side of the election reported lower belief in the legitimacy of the economic system after the election compared to before the election. In that case, encountering a message suggesting that the economy is performing well could be seen as challenging the belief that the system is not legitimate.

Finally, we have also found some support for the prediction that uncertainty regarding the outcome of the election would intensify the reaction to manipulations of system affirmation and system threat. The expected differences in perceived attitudinal similarity among liberals and conservatives between the experimental conditions before and after the elections were in the predicted directions. Liberals in the US sample perceived the lowest ideological distance from the norm in the system affirmation condition before the election and conservatives in the UK sample perceived the largest distance from the norm in the system threat condition after the election. Such result is consistent with findings that, depending on the level of present uncertainty, liberals and conservatives differ in their reactions to positive and negative stimuli (Haas, 2016).

The results therefore corroborate the notion that ideology not only shapes people's interpretations of events and guide them towards striving to attain and uphold cherished values, but also informs the ideologues about possible threats to their goals. The findings also suggest an unfortunate consequence that people may feel ideologically isolated during economically uncertain times. Such ideological isolation could translate to lowered self-esteem and psychological wellbeing at individual level (e.g., Sherman, et al., 1984; Simon et al., 1997) and to lower potential for social cohesion and collective action at the group level (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005).

Translating the results into the realm of politics, it seems that liberals do indeed underestimate the popularity of their positions, and by extension the potential for successful collective action to a greater extent than conservatives (e.g., Stern et al., 2014a). This seems to be mainly due to liberals perceiving most others as simply more conservative than them

and therefore likely opposing their ideological goals. Thus, it could paradoxically be conservatives who are in a better position to act as a catalyst for social change that they generally do not desire. Future research should thus address the conditions under which conservatives consider social change as desirable, both in order to explore possibilities for achieving a world which generates less inequalities threatening its own stability and perceived legitimacy (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Loveless & Whitefield, 2011), but also to explore how social change happened in the past from the perspective of conservatives.

To our knowledge, this is the first study employing the same experimental design before and after election with a specific goal of contrasting the effects of the within-study experimental manipulation and the wider context that is relevant to political life. In particular, the conditions prior to the election (high uncertainty) and after the election (low uncertainty) provided a highly relevant contextual effect to which, presumably, all of the participants were exposed. Secondly, the resolution of the election then provided an additional treatment to which all of the repeat participants were, presumably, exposed. In this way, we observed reactions to naturally occurring and highly salient stimuli. Third, repeating the same experiment at two times and under different conditions allowed us to explore how system threatening and system affirming messages could be interpreted differently by members of the group in power and the minority. Indeed, our design, which entails a strategic timing of data gathering prior to and after the expected public event (i.e., general election) could be employed to also study other, and not only political, social phenomena. For instance, large sporting events involve expectations, hopes and fears experienced by spectators and often members of relevant social groups.

Indeed, our studies had their limitations. First, the utilized measure of economic ideology, economic system justification, may not accurately capture the underlying concepts and people's concerns in this domain. Furthermore, the scale itself addresses issues such as fairness of outcomes generated by the system or the inevitability of the standing economic system existing in its current form. It might be that some of the particular beliefs related to one's economic ideology are directly related to the perceivers' tendency to view themselves and their attitudes as more 'normal' or 'unique', while other beliefs may be unrelated to such tendencies. For instance, those believing that the large differences between people's fortunes are 'natural' may also consider it natural for others to see it in the same way. Secondly, the utilized sample is necessarily conditioned by only containing people self-selecting into participating in online surveys advertised at particular online marketplaces. A more representative sample, particularly one that would address the imbalance in numbers of participating ideological liberals and conservatives, could bring more generalizable results. Third, the utilized dependent variable addresses differences in incomes, attitudes towards which may differ from attitudes towards other economic issues, such as distribution of wealth or progressive taxation. The fourth problematic issue, albeit being a useful part of the design by providing some ecological validity, is that our condition of uncertainty was supposedly generated by upcoming election. While this was a reasonable proxy in our opinion, utilizing a

less (potentially) threatening source of uncertainty would be necessary to assess the very interesting claim that uncertainty moderates effects of threat on perceived attitudinal similarity. In addition, it is likely that not everyone experiences the uncertainty about the election to the same degree, with some being possibly quite sure about the outcome. In future research, it would be helpful to incorporate people's predictions and confidence about their predictions into the model. Fifth, the rather modest effect sizes indicate that our results deserve a closer scrutiny addressing both the replicability of the observed phenomena and whether these have any measurable behavioral consequences, which is the assumption that motivated this research. A related concern, and one relevant also for any replication attemps, is that the used manipulations discussed a rather broad phenomenon of country's economic performance related to an ever more distant economic crisis. It would therefore be helpful to explore whether the robustness of the results with stimuli presenting poor performance of the economy in different ways - perhaps illustrating it with regard to a more timely issue or by describing the impacts of the system's performance in more vivid language. Finally, information about the economic system being either in good or bad shape are nearly constantly discussed or alluded to in the media and on social networks. This leads us to consider that further studies should address the question of repeated exposure to such stimuli on the perceived similarity between one's interpretation of such messages and the likely attitudes of the majority.

Among other directions that we have not explored in these studies are potential personality underpinnings that might drive or moderate differences in perceptions of perceived ideological between liberals and conservatives. For instance, recent research has hinted on a possibility that need to achieve epistemic closure could be related to heightened perceptions of social agreement with one's opinions (De Keersmaecker & Roets, 2017). Other possible improvements on our design would be utilization of cleaner system-threat manipulation with a neutral control condition, and a better differentiation between group membership and ideology. Finally, measures of the perceived status of one's political ideology in terms of who wields the political power at the moment, or the perceived likelihood of the success the supported party could help to refine our understanding of what types of political messages are interpreted as positive or negative by individual participants.

In sum, this article has focused on some of the conditions affecting instrumental rationality, particularly in the context of economic and political attitudes. We have assessed one of the key factors influencing people's willingness to give up on their perceived self-interest and engage in cooperative behavior - perceived legitimacy of others' normative expectations. Focusing on how individual ideological differences moderate reactions to messages threatening the country's economic system before and after major elections, we found that those who generally perceive the economic system to be not working well and producing outcomes which are unfair and too unequal (i.e., economic left) are likely perceive others as having attitudes which are predominantly legitimizing the standing inequalities, whereas those who consider the economic system and its outcomes to be fair (i.e., economic

right) are more split in their expectations of where they stand, attitudinally, relative to the rest of the population. We have further found that reactions to economic threat to the system among those on the economic left were similar in magnitude to those on the economic right, but more uniform in the direction, which resulted in left-wingers imagining most others to be even more right-wing and right-wingers imagining others to be more ideologically different from them in general. Such behaviors were more pronounced under conditions of outcome uncertainty before the election. However, given that the candidates more aligned with the economic left suffered electoral defeats in both of the elections explored in this chapter, there is a possibility that the results gathered after the elections are to be interpreted as a result of the new distribution of political power. Such interpretation is partially supported by the results of a within-subjects part of the study, in which we found the supporters of the losing parties to report lower perceived legitimacy of the economic system following the electoral defeats of their candidates, and also by the results of the between-subjects part of the study, in which the 'system threat' stimulus seemed to motivate side currently not in power to imagine others as attitudinally closer to themselves. In conclusion, our results point to personal economic ideology affecting people's beliefs about normative expectations of others, and furthermore to exaggeration of such perceptions under conditions that could be interpreted as threatening for the perceived legitimacy of the economic system (from the standpoint of the given individual actor). In order to foster cooperation between ideologically committed individuals, the broader context should be framed as not conflicting with their underlying ideological goals.

Chapter Six
Conclusion

This dissertation addressed the broader question of how and why do inequalities persist when people should have the means of altering the rules of the game via voting or other forms of politial action. As inequalities continue being reaffirmed and reproduced, the puzzle remains featuring prominently in both the academic and the public discourse. Apart from explanations attempting to tie attitudes and normative expectations about how the society should be structured to people's (subjective) structural positions and expectations of future upward mobility, their cultural backgrounds and early socialization, or to adoption of narratives and ideologies presenting the perceived hierarchies and differences as natural, deserved, or necessary for the functioning of the society, a rather unique perspective is proposed by social psychological frameworks of political conservatism as motivated social cognition, which relates politically conservative and inequality legitimizing attitudes to feelings and experiences of uncertainty and threat, and by system justification theory, which posits that people are psychologically motivated to perceive the standing social, political, and economic order as fair and legitimate.

In these perspectives, people do not simply internalize ideas that are the most prevalent around them, perhaps even during crucial time of their development, nor do they calmly estimate which structural and institutional arrangements provide the best overall welfare for the society. Instead, they tend adopt explanations for the status quo and ideals about how it could be possibly altered in a biased manner, so that the chosen ideologies fit their psychological profiles. One can easily arrive at a conclusion that such combination of psychological motivations could be effectively quenching the thirst for social change among the lower classes, and other disadvantaged groups, who tend to be overexposed to stimuli that generate feelings of uncertainty and even fears, and who would then become complicit in the perpetuation of the social arrangements which offer them only dubious utility.

Among the theorized consequences of such biased reactions would then be the so-called 'status legitimacy effect', a puzzling tendency of the economically disadvantaged to accept and defend the existing unequal arrangements. Indeed, many would certainly agree that people tend to misconstrue their status (e.g., Evans & Kelley, 2004), and that some of those in low-status positions grossly misjudge their positions and the likelihood of their future success (e.g., Eade, Drinkwater, & Garapich, 2006). However, positing a null or even an inverse relationship between one's socio-economic position and their motivation to see the broader socio-political system as fair and legitimate is rather controversial, if only for challenging the intuitive model of a (subjectively) rational actor. On the other hand, if the

worse-off are rational and critical of the system, why don't we see more demand for change in the direction of greater economic equality?

We sought to shed light on this, but also other related issues in four empirical chapters. In Chapter 2 we aimed to clarify the conditions under which status-legitimacy effect does manifest. We asked whether it is one's objective socioeconomic position or whether it is one's subjective interpretation of their position that is related to legitimization of the economic system among those worst-off. We also looked at whether such tendencies are dependent on the actual extent of inequality in the country or whether it is individual perceptions of inequality that matter more for adoption of such inequality-legitimizing attitudes. n Chapter 3, we assessed the possibility that different parts of the system may generate more dissonance than others, and so be more likely targets of legitimization from people who experience dissonance due to misalignment of their objective socio-economic status and subjective self-positioning. In Chapter 4, we explored a different way of looking at the issue and considered the possibility that people who are critical of the status quo may assume that their beliefs and ideals are not shared by the rest of the population, and that this is especially pronounced when people believe the society they live in is facing threats to its culture or economic decline. In Chapter 5, we further tested the possibility that there are differences in perceived attitudinal similarity with the rest of society among people with different tendencies to legitimize the standing system in the context of general election, thus circling back to the overall question of what could be one of the possible reasons for economic inequality persisting in spite of, in simplified terms, the possibility to vote for its reduction.

The next sections of this concluding chapter present the summary of the key findings and contributions of each empirical chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the dissertation, as well as suggestions for further research.

Summary of Empirical Chapters

In the first pair of studies, we utilized publicly available data addressing a broad range of questions, among them the respondents' estimates and suggestions of salary levels of various high- and low-status occupations, their agreement with the general bent of policies addressing economic inequality, and finally their confidence in various political and market institutions. In the latter two chapters, we looked into how the respondents view the society they live in. In particular we were interested whether they think that their personal answers could be consider socially normative or, conversely, whether they considered themselves to be outliers with their views.

In the second chapter, *Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis and Acceptance of Economic Inequality*, the focus was on status-legitimacy hypothesis, an idea derived from system justification theory and cognitive dissonance theory that the feelings of powerlessness and dependence experienced by people in low-status positions may motivate them to legitimize

the social arrangements in which they live in and on which they believe to be dependent, and that this motivation should be stronger in contexts in which their disadvantage was more pronounced. We found that it was objective, rather than subjective socio-economic status that was tied to higher than expected legitimization of occupational income differences in contexts perceived as more unequal. Furthermore, the results point to differences between answers given for direct statements about the extent of inequality or its utility on the one hand, and the willingness of the low-status respondents to accept income inequality by legitimizing large salaries for those in particular high-status occupations on the other. Finally, we found that it is the long-term levels of objective inequality in the country, as opposed to its recent increases, that are associated with higher legitimization of the system among those who view themselves as the worse-off.

In the third chapter, *Market Legitimacy, Political Legitimacy*, we were motivated by previous works differentiating between the reasoning underlying judgments of market and political justice (Lane, 1986) and the already discussed importance of the difference between subjective and objective assessment of status. Given that subjective status is often misestimated by survey participants, we sought to assess the hypothesis that misconstruing one's socio-economic status, in a form of over- or under-estimating one's class, may lead to other than expected experiences and thus dissonance, which could then be distinctly related to support of market and political institutions. As hypothesized, and further supporting the results from Chapter 2, the respondents with low objective class, compared to the respondents with high objective class, reported higher confidence in political institutions but not market institutions. Similarly, those over-estimating their objective class reported higher confidence in political institutions, but not market institutions, compared those who correctly positioned themselves among the higher classes. On the other hand, under-estimators did not differ in their confidence in system institutions from those who correctly saw themselves as lower class, thus further highlighting the importance of interpretation of one's situation in determination of one's attitudes and the role of misperceptions in maintenance of the status-quo.

In the fourth chapter, *Reactions to System Threat and Perceived Attitudinal Similarity of Low and High System Justifiers*, we assessed competing predictions about the effects of stimuli presenting threats to the social system. We wanted to know if messages indicating threats to their country would motivate the participants to perceive others as attitudinally more similar, or different, to themselves, and whether people's tendencies to be critical about the standing political and economic order moderate such perceptions. Two experimental studies, conducted at the Social Psychology Lab at Tilburg University, provided evidence for the more liberal participants having a tendency to perceive most others as rather more dissimilar to them compared to the more conservative participants, especially after being exposed to a system threatening stimulus. Furthermore, the direction of their reaction to the used manipulations suggests support for the strengthening of their naïve realism tendencies – a notion that one is uniquely able to perceive the world objectively and

reason without bias. The findings thus suggest that the people's estimates of the normative consensus might be ideologically biased and that it is the people desiring change who are more likely to see it as unattainable due to lack of popular support.

In the fifth and last empirical chapter, *Perceived Legitimacy of Inequality Norms: Evidence from the US and the UK Elections*, we extended the design utilized in Chapter 4. We asked whether and how do contextual factors influence perception of social norms, and whether and how are these reactions moderated by ideological differences at the individual level. We collected the data both the week before and the week after the elections (2016 US Presidential and Congressional Elections and 2017 UK General Election). The results, similarly to Chapter 4, suggest that compared to political conservatives, political liberals tend to underestimate the public support for their positions and perceive other as more conservative than them, especially when exposed to system threatening messages. We also found some evidence for uncertainty moderating the effect of positive vs. negative message among liberals and conservatives. However, the pattern of results suggests that the presented message was interpreted as positive or negative depending on the participants' reading of the broader context in which it was presented. Economic conservatives seemed to view the negative description of the performance the country as an indicator of the public sharing their ideological views before the election, but not after the election. The opposite trend was observed among the economic liberals. The results from the UK were in a similar direction. Presumably, this reflected the concurrent distribution of political power. The within-subjects part of the studies further supported this interpretation, given that in both the US and the UK, the voters of the losing side reported lower confidence in the economic system after the election compared to before the election.

In sum, this dissertation explored multiple ways in which people may be motivated to perceive the social systems in which they live in as legitimate or otherwise contribute to the maintenance of the status quo. In two chapters, we addressed the sometimes puzzling phenomenon of those in low socio-economic positions legitimizing the standing social order, finding that they may have an additional motivation to invest their confidence in the political institutions and their representatives, in particular in contexts in which people perceive very large differences between the successful and the rest. The results thus supported the general notion that experiences generating cognitive dissonance may lead to enhanced legitimization of the political system (but not the economic system). In the two latter chapters, we have explored how people subscribing to different ideologies react to threat and uncertainty by imagining their attitudes as more or less likely to be socially normative. We found evidence supporting the notion of ideological asymmetry derived from the CMSC framework, with conservatives, compared to liberals, imagining the general population as more attitudinal similar their own attitudes. On the other hand, we also found that while reactions to threat were not symmetrical between conservatives and liberals, they were in the direction predicted by the competing worldview defense approaches.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions

We started out with a larger question of how and why economic inequalities are being reproduced in societies in which people are allowed, and even encouraged, to have their say in the management of public affairs. We focused on two broader avenues that could illluminate the lack of popular demand and collective action for reduction of differences in distribution of economic resources - the reduction of experienced dissonance in favour of legitimization of the system in place and a tendency to assume one's normative expectations to be in conflict with those of most others. In four empirical chapters, then, we examined how the conditions theorized to motivate system-legitimizing attitudes affect system-legitimizing attitudes and the perception of normativeness of these attitudes.

Legitimization of the status quo among the disadvantaged

There are multiple innovations and extensions in which the research presented in this dissertation contributes and extends the previous work on the public's legitimization of the status quo. In particular, in Chapter 2, we have extended the research on the system justification motive and addressed system justificaton theory's key prediction in the status-legitimacy hypothesis by disentangling the concepts of subjective and objective socio-economic status in regard to the perception of the (economic) system as legitimate. Compared to previous research, we have specified and tested distinct hypothesis predicting the associations of objective and subjective socio-economic status with the respondents' tendencies to legitimize the standing social order. By explicitly distinguishing between subjective and objective status, we clarified that it is the objectivel rather than subjectively disadvantaged who are more likely to legitimize the system in the more unequal contexts.

Furthermore, we have distnguished between and utilized measures roughly capturing both indirect and explicit attitudes about income inequalities, thus further qualifying the conditions and types of beliefs that are likely to be legitimized. The results of Chapter 2 further show that there are differences in people's tendencies to legitimize the political and economic dimensions of the social system, and even differences in how they legitimize and defend different parts of the economic system. Our results thus point out the need to incorporate and distinguish between explicit and indirect measures of attitudes towards inequality. For instance, higher salaries of ministers were more likely to be legitimized compared to higher salaries of CEOs. Interestingly, it may be that believing in the meritocratic nature of the system and, at the same time, rejecting large income differences allows people to believe that the system is generally fair but that there are just some individuals or groups 'gaming the system' for their benefit. Such arrangement of beliefs could allow the people who generally believe in the fairness of the system to want to 'fix' how society or the country works rather than supporting a larger systemic overhaul. The

implications of such beliefs would go beyond the discussions on system justification theory and inform research of topics such as the recent rise in populism and authoritarian regimes.

Finally, we have tested a model disentangling between how temporal changes and overall differences in levels of contextual inequality moderate the associations between the measures of objective and subjective status and legitimization of income differences. We found differences in how overall and changing levels of income inequality affect the relationship between subjective self-positioning and support for inequality, showing that while the subjectively disadvantaged legitimize established levels of inequality, they oppose its medium-term increases.

In Chapter 3, we have further clarified how distinct social hierarchies and institutions may be perceived and judged differently due to the amount of cognitive conflict that they generate for the respondents. In particular, we have highlighted the importance of distinguishing between the market and policital dimensions of the social system in place. We found that direct support for, measured as confidence in, market institutions is an unlikely candidate for the status legitimacy effect to manifest in its strong form. From the perspective of empirical research, the results speak to the need of identifying and distinguishing between different hierarchies that are and are not the likely targets of legitimization. From the perspective of system justification as a theory, this points to a need to specify and explain why there would be such differences in legitimization of political and market institutions by the disadvantaged.

In addition, we also further demonstrated the need to account for differences and misperceptions of one's socioeconomic status. Our approach of differentiating between those who position themselves correctly, and thos who over or underestimate their positions has allowed to specify different prediction tied to distinct theoretical interpretations of SJT and assess which is the most fruitful direction for further research of status-legitimacy hypothesis. As in Chapter 2, our data support the interpretation of status-legitimacy hypothesis in which it is experienced dissonance, and not subjective powerlessness proxied by subjective positioning, that is related to heightened support of the (political) system among the disadvantaged.

We have thus advanced the understanding of when does the status legitimicy effect manifest and demonstrated for future researchers seeking to address the hypothesis that, depending on the context and target of legitimizaton, the two conceptualizations of one's socio-economic position are differently related to system-justifying attitudes. Given that experimental research supports the powerlessness thesis, which claims that adoption of system-justifying attitudes is related to subjective experiences of powerlessness, our results clarified that, at the very least, subjective status or subjective class positioning is not a useful proxy to measure powerlessness. On the other hand, the results support the idea that

dissonance generated by particular hierarchy may motivate legitimization of said hierarchy among the disadvantaged.

Perceived threats to the system and increased social projection among the supporters the system

In Chapters 4 and 5, we contributed to the debate on the role of motivated reasoning in political psychology by exploring how criticism of the standing economic (or cultural) system influences people's perceptions of attitudinal similarity with the general population differently depending on their ideological leanings. In particular, we found that those who are already critical of the existing inequalities and the inequality perpetuating system in place, tend to perceive themselves ideologically isolated when said system is perceived to be criticized or under threat. Consequences of such perceived isolation may lead people to choose to remain silent and perhaps more likely to vote tactically, thus fulfilling their own prophecy and making their political and ideological positions seem supported less than they actually are. For scholars seeking to understand the conditions under which social change, our findings point to a rather interesting direction, that it could be the people who tend to defend the standing system who are better equipped to deliver social change.

In particular, in Chapter 4, we assessed effects of cultural and economic threat on perceived similarity in economic attitudes. We compared predictions derived from two competing approaches, CMSC and WVD, addressing adoption, retention, and change of political attitudes. We explored the phenomenon of social projection in experimental way and manipulated the respondents' perception of existing threat to the system. In comparison to previous research into the phenomenon, we used a more direct manipulation focused directly on one of the motivations theorized to underpin differences in political attitudes, the system justification motive, rather than using a more proximate measures and manipulations.

We showed that it was economic and not cultural threat which led to an adjustment in perceived similarity in attitudes with the population in general among those already critical of the system. These results are further consistent with those presented in Chapters 2 and 3 in that they show that is crucial to distinguish between the dimensions of ideologies and parts of the system that is being evaluated in the eyes of the public. We also extended the prior research by focusing on perceived attitudes of the society in general instead of on one's ingroup or outgroup, thus stressing the importance on focusing on beliefs about the society as a whole when searching for consensus. In addition, instead of focusing on estimates of perceived consensus, we studied a related, but distinct concept of perceived attitudinal similarity. Our results thus complement the findings from the studies utilizing the consensus estimates paradigm and political in-groups as targets.

In Chapter 5, we further contributed to the social and political psychological literature examining the role of personality and situational antecedents of political attitudes

in formation of opinions about the popularity of one's attitudes. In this way, instead of simply looking at the personal attitudes of our participants, we have extended the 'reach' of presenting the system as being under threat or in decline to perceptions of attitudes of others in relation to one's own ideological positions. As in Chapter 4, we have explored this in the context of, and have added to the literature on, the asymmetries in perceptions of others among people holding different ideologies by focusing on perceptions of attitudinal similarity with the population in general rather than by focusing only on one's political in-group or out-group.

Furthermore, designing two of our experiments around the two major elections allowed us to not only hypothesize additional predictions but, more importantly, utilize a manipulation which is ecologically valid, highly visible, and presumably relevant for most of the respondents. Collecting data shortly before and after the election also means that we have tested our hypotheses during the period that is the most interesting from the standpoint of possible future theorizing about voting behavior and its predictors. We have thus extended the understanding of how major events shape people's perceptions of others and their reactions to information about the performance of the economic system. As in Chapter 4, we have shown that it is economic liberals, and not economic conservatives, who are more likely to be adjusting their views of others, thus informing the theorists to explore and identify the underlying reasons for such asymmetry.

From a perspective of a laic reader, exploring the questions on how and why does inequality persist through social psychological lens provides perhaps an opportunity to relate one's own experience with the findings presented in the dissertation. Rather than asking of the reader to imagine the forces of macro-level structures operating outside of everyday experience of the individual, the dissertation highlights the need to understand one's position, their worldview, and how these may affect their beliefs about the society and its members. The dissertation also indirectly speaks to the possibilities and constraints of organizing collective action and social movements, of which a sense of shared reality can be an essential component that could paradoxically be harder to achieve for those who might benefit more from the societal change since they are the ones who are already disenchanted with the system in place. In particular, findings from Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that those who misperceive their disadvantaged position tend to look for reasons for why the social world is fair and, likewise, the results from Chapters 4 and 5 show that it was those desiring greater economic equality who would perceive themselves to be more isolated from the general population when exposed to threat.

Limitations and Future Directions

On the other hand, presented studies also had some limitations which could be addressed in future research into the studied phenomena. Firstly, the experimental studies were not conducted with representative samples, which somewhat limits the generalizability of the findings. While the results were generally not surprising and in line with previous works addressing similar issues, attempts at corroboration of our findings with different, preferably larger and more representative samples are warranted. This is especially salient for the issues about which people receive many conflicting information in public and privates spaces alike, such as cultural threats posed by immigration or economic threats potentially affecting people's current employment or future employment opportunities. For instance, it is likely that students in our sample from Chapter 4 would react differently to economic threats compared to people already in employment or the unemployed. Similarly, while the data for Chapter 5 were gathered in two countries, the sample has a left-leaning bias and we have only explored the results of elections in which it was the political right-wing that has won. Therefore, the conclusions we can derive from our data are limited. Further attempts to replicate our design would allow for more comprehensive view of how people react to threats to the system during politically exciting but uncertain periods. Conversely, while the data used in Chapters 2 and 3 were representative, future research should address and attempt to corroborate the findings experimentally. For instance, the findings from Chapter 3 suggest that the dissonance arising from the lack of clarity on how to evaluate the system may, paradoxically, lead to the defense of the system among those disadvantaged by it. Viewed in the light of recent attempts to explain system justification theory as mostly being addressed within the framework of social identity theory (Owuamalam, Rubin, & Spears, 2018), it would be worthwhile to explore whether, for instance, the disadvantaged within a particular experimental game would report higher endorsement of the rules as a function of their clarity.

Finally, there are questions which should be answered that might be motivated by this research but remained unaddressed. For one, do differences in perceived legitimacy of the system influence people's ability to successfully perform the tasks that they view related to their participation within the system? In words of an illustrative example: are people who do not believe in meritocracy, but believe that others do believe in meritocracy, essentially putting themselves in a disadvantage when it comes performance on a job market or even while attempting to attain necessary qualifications? Second, does perceived popularity of one's ideology affect how people respond to potentially threatening information? For instance, economic liberals reacted differently to the same economic system threat before and after the 2016 US election. Future attempts could address whether this is reaction specifically tied to the political balance of power and therefore issues related to politics, or whether learning about being in the minority in any domain affects people more generally. To end on a high note, instead of looking at messages presenting the economic system as undergoing or heading towards hard times, future research should also address how are people's perceptions

of social norms affected when the communication about social change and it's necessity is done by a high-profile regulatory or political body. In other words, do changes proposed, or even already announced by the government affect how people view the public's support for such measures? Does G7's public commitment to address and reduce inequalities decrease, respectively increase economic liberals' and conservatives perceived ideological distance from the rest of the society? Exploring such questions could add to our understanding of how should the change in social norms, which were suggested to be necessary for change of the formal rules, happen.

To sum up, if anything, our research suggests that it may be that the popular demand for more egalitarian distribution of resources may be sometimes masked by people's expectations that their calls for change will fall on deaf ears. However, as we have shown, this may sometimes be a result of anxieties and fears associated with the prospect of social change among those who desire it. Our research thus not only informs other researchers and the curious members of the general public, but should also serve as a reminder that perceived social norms may sometimes be simply waiting to be changed.

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Appendix A (Chapter 2)

Table 5 Chapter 2: Descriptive statistics

Years = 1992-2009*; n* = 46448	*Mean*	*SD*	*range*
log of Ideal inequality	1.47	0.79	-10.6 - 16.45
log of Perceived inequality	2.29	0.98	-4.89 - 16.44
Female	0.51	0.50	0 - 1
Education (years)	12.07	3.84	0 - 63
Subjective status	5.17	1.79	1 - 10
Age	45.8	15.75	16 - 98
log of Family income (relative to mean)	-0.24	0.71	-7.06 - 14.34
Large differences in incomes are necessary	0.38	0.28	0 - 1
Differences in incomes are too large	0.79	0.24	0 - 1
Gini	30.89	6.68	18.87 - 51.4
Health expenditures (% of GDP)	8.58	2.67	3.23 - 17.71

Source:: ISSP 1992, 1999, and 2009

Table 6 Count of retained participants by country and year

Country/Year	1992	1999	2009	Total
Australia	1 132	824	1 068	3 024
Austria	0	675	631	1 306
Bulgaria	0	629	237	866
Canada	0	694	0	694
Chile	0	624	983	1 607
Cyprus	0	732	694	1 426
Czech Republic	521	1 216	734	2 471
France	0	1 164	1 853	3 017
Germany (East & West)	2 178	694	892	3 764
Hungary	882	576	572	2 030
Israel	0	0	595	595
Italy	803	0	620	1 423
Japan	0	402	357	759
Latvia	0	795	524	1 319
New Zealand	917	776	757	2 450
Norway	1 076	933	1 137	3 146
Philippines	0	964	903	1 867
Poland	1 143	667	683	2 493
Portugal	0	864	0	864
Russia	1 220	545	903	2 668
Slovak Republic	296	856	802	1 954
Slovenia	0	591	434	1 025
Spain	0	574	459	1 033
Sweden	0	715	860	1 575
Switzerland	0	0	659	659
United Kingdom	748	523	654	1 925
United States	955	749	1 138	2 842
Total	11 871	17 782	19 149	48 802

Appendix B (Chapter 3)

Table 7 Chapter 3: Descriptive statistics

Years = 2010-2016*; n* = 4151	*Mean*	*SD*	*range*
Political institutions	.32	.27	0-1
Market institutions	.44	.25	0-1
Female	.55	.50	0-1
Upper class (subjective)	.47	.50	0-1
Upper class (EGP based)	.47	.50	0-1
College degree	.41	.49	0-1
Protestant	.49	.50	0-1
Democrat voter	.60	.49	0-1
Minority member	.25	.43	0-1
Family income (position)	.31	.27	0-1
Overestimating class	.17	.38	0-1
Underestimating class	.18	.38	0-1
Upper class (EGP & subjective)	.29	.45	0-1
Lower class (EGP & subjective)	.36	.48	0-1

Source: GSS 2010 - 2016

Appendix C (Chapter 4)

Instruments for Experimental Studies in Chapter 4

Study 1

General System Justification Scale (Kay & Jost, 2003) English version
In general, the Dutch political system functions as it should.
Dutch society should be thoroughly overhauled.
Dutch is one of the best countries in the world to live in.
Most political decisions serve the interests of everyone.
In general, I think society is fair.
Everyone has a good, fair chance to earn happiness and prosperity.
Our society is getting worse every year.
In our society, everyone gets what he or she deserves.

General System Justification Scale (Kay & Jost, 2003) Dutch version
In het algemeen functioneert het Nederlandse politieke systeem zoals het moet.
De Nederlandse maatschappij zou grondig omgegooid moeten worden.
Nederlands is een van de beste landen ter wereld om in te leven.
De meeste politieke besluiten dienen het belang van iedereen.
In het algemeen vind ik de maatschappij eerlijk.
Iedereen heeft een goede, eerlijke kans om geluk en welvaart te verdienen.
Onze maatschappij wordt elk jaar slechter.
In onze maatschappij krijgt ieder wat hij of zij verdient.

Background Information (EN)
Which year were you born in?
How many years of university level education have you completed?
What is your civil status?
What is your gender?
What is the size of town or city you live in terms of total population?
Do you consider yourself a religious person?
What is your ethnicity?
Which political party do you usually identify with?

People sometimes say they belong to the working class, the middle class, or the upper class.
Where would you place yourself?
In general, where would you place your political beliefs?
What is the total annual income level of your household?
Have you ever considered working abroad?

Background Information (NL)
Welk jaar ben je geboren?
Hoeveel jaar van de universitaire opleiding heb je af te ronden?
Wat is uw burgerlijke staat?
Wat is uw geslacht?
Wat is de omvang van het dorp of de stad je woont in termen van de totale bevolking?
Heeft u zelf een religieus persoon te overwegen?
Wat is uw etniciteit?
Mensen zeggen soms van zichzelf dat ze tot de werkende klasse behoren, of tot de middenklasse, of tot een hogere of lagere klasse. Tot welke klasse zou u zich rekenen: tot de
In het algemeen, waar zou u uw politieke overtuigingen te plaatsen?
Welke politieke partij voel je je het dichtst bij?
Wat is de totale jaarlijkse inkomen van uw huishouden?
Heb je ooit overwogen werken in het buitenland?

Study 1: Cultural Threat - English version

Scenarios: neutral - fairness (everyone saw these)

1.
An Amsterdam restaurant specializing in Indonesian food has recently made headlines after sending out a version of promotion fliers which included a typo. The lucky customers were invited to enjoy meals with a 100% discount instead of a 10% discount. The manager of the restaurant refused to accept the discount fliers, saying that no reasonable person could expect a free dinner. The upset customers, however, claim that they would not have come to the restaurant if the meal wasn't advertised as free.
Do you think it is fair to refuse to accept discount fliers even though these were a result of a typo?

2.
In 2009, Jacob Bos forgot his cellphone in a cafe at Rotterdam. Arjen Visser, a policeman who found the phone tried to contact the owner and accidentally found messages implying that Bos was involved in dealing of cocaine.

While Bos was later arrested, Visser was officially reprimanded and suspended for a month for violating Bos' privacy and utilizing information obtained without a warrant to start an official investigation.
Do you think it is fair that the policeman was suspended for a month?

3.
In 2013, David Capaldi, a doctor from Saint Patrick's hospital in Annapolis, United States, was sued for misdiagnosing his patient, Camille Hayes, twice within a week. First with colorectal cancer and then with inflammatory bowel disease. Although the tests done the subsequent week ruled out both diagnoses, Ms. Hayes felt that having to undergo repeated colonoscopies and live in fear for a week was unacceptable. She claimed that the doctor should not have guessed the diagnosis out loud before running all the tests.
Do you think it is fair that doctor Capaldi was sued for being open about his initial educated guesses?

Scenarios - cultural threat (treatment group saw these)

1.
A recently established minority support center in Nijmegen is currently looking for a community support worker with experience in conflict mediation. The chosen candidate would be responsible for organization and facilitation of workshops and training in conflict mediation for community members, and implementation of the center's diversity projects. 'We are proud of giving opportunities to members of minorities and these will be given priority in application process', the position is therefore open for women who are a member of a minority group.

Do you think it is fair to only accept applications of a certain gender or ethnicity?

2.
While at high school, Amir and Kim got to know each other through a common friend. They have become a couple shortly after and have lived together since they both moved cities to study at the same university.
During Christmas, Amir asked Kim to marry him and Kim happily agreed. To Kim's surprise, Amir's parents insist on her converting to Islam if the marriage is to go through with their blessing.
Do you think it is OK for Amir's parents to ask Kim to convert to their religion?

3.

In past years, there has been a debate about the tradition of 'Zwarte Piet'. Last year, in August, the UN's Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination has stated in clear terms that the tradition of 'Zwarte Piet' has strong racist elements and helps perpetuate negative racial stereotypes. A number of cities and schools have decided to alter the tradition and support Piet of all colors.
However, an overwhelming majority of Dutch citizens supports the tradition and does not want to give it up as part of their cultural heritage. In the official reaction to UN's critique, the Dutch government has admitted that Piet's traditional image can be interpreted as racist and should be changed in the future.
Do you support the government's position?

4.
In 2015, around one million refugees have claimed asylum in European countries. Many of the target countries have been forced to increase their spending to be able to provide proper accommodation and basic services for incoming people. For instance, in November, Norwegian government announced that it will raise taxes on electricity consumption and air fares to help pay for refugees after a record inflow.
In order to help out the governments that are faced with large numbers of asylum seekers, European Commission considers implementation of a Europe-wide 'crisis tax'. Since Netherlands has already accepted a record amount of refugees last year, the government supports the initiative. The tax would bring about 1 billion Euros to be distributed between countries that accepted the most refugees every year.
Would you support a tax increase aimed to help the countries accommodate the refugees?

5.
Last month, QS has released a ranking of top cities to be a student in. Paris and Melbourne have been ranked as the first and second best student cities four years in a row, while the best Dutch student city has been Amsterdam at 27th place.
If you could choose a dream city where to spend your studies in, where would it be?

Scenarios – control (control group saw these)

1.

A recently opened restaurant in Amsterdam is currently looking for staff members. Presenting the finest selection of traditional Dutch cuisine, the task of the staff members is not only to provide excellent service but also an experience of the very best of traditional

Dutch culture. To maintain the authenticity and spirit of the place, only white native Dutch speakers will be considered for hire.

Do you think it is fair to only accept applications of a certain gender or ethnicity?

2.

While at high school, Alex and Kim got to know each other through a common friend. They have become a couple shortly after and have lived together since they both moved cities to study at the same university.

During Christmas, Alex asked Kim to marry him and Kim happily agreed. To Kim's surprise, Alex' parents insist on her converting to Catholicism if the marriage is to go through with their blessing.

Do you think it is OK for Amir's parents to ask Kim to convert to their religion?

3.

In many parts of the world, drinking alcoholic beverages is a common feature of social gatherings. Nevertheless, alcohol use is associated with an increased risk of acute health conditions, such as injuries, including from traffic accidents. The World Health Organization has recently issued a call for governments to reduce drunk driving.

During the last 35 years the Dutch government was very successful in reducing drunk driving. Thanks to a combination of policy measures and information campaigns, there has been a 35% reduction in alcohol-related traffic accidents. Nevertheless, the government proposes a new regulation reducing the legal content of alcohol in blood from .05 to 0.02 milligrams of alcohol in a deciliter.

Do you support the government's position?

4.

The Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The new seven year program has a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to previous spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas. To fund even further extension of the program, aimed to increase quality of life and employability of the elderly, European Commission considers implementation of a Europe-wide 'education tax'. Altogether, the tax would bring about 2 billion Euros every year.

Would you support a tax increase aimed to fund education for the elderly?

5.

Last month, QS has released a ranking of top cities to be a student in. Four years in a row the best student city in the Netherlands has been Amsterdam at the 27th place.
If you could choose a dream city where to spend your studies in, where would it be?

Study 1 Scenarios - Cultural Differences (English version)

You will be asked to imagine yourself in a number of hypothetical scenarios. The presented interactions are centered around a custom or social attitude commonly held by many people from that country. After you have read the interaction, you will be asked to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with statements regarding the custom or social attitude. The statements will focus on feelings and beliefs you may have about the customs and social attitudes and actions it would be possible to take

1.
While in Japan, you met with a Japanese professor, Mr. Morishima, to discuss Phenomenology of Spirit. The meeting took place over lunch break. You met him at a small restaurant near the University. Half-way through lunch, Mr. Morishima took out a cigarette and began smoking. He did not ask for your permission. You remember reading a book on modern Japanese life which discussed the higher rate of smoking in Japan in comparison to Western Europe. The book also said that many Japanese consider smoking personal and may not ask for a companion's permission to smoke before doing so.

A common Japanese custom is to smoke without asking permission.
This custom is rude. This custom is not rude.
I would ask him to stop. I would not say anything about his smoking.
I think most Japanese are OK with this custom. I think most Japanese dislike this custom.

2.
You are working as a flight attendant at a company based in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. While there, you have become friends with a young Saudi woman. One day, she seems very depressed. You ask her what is wrong and she explains that she must soon marry a man that she does not find very attractive. She explains to you that in Saudi Arabia dating is not done and nearly all marriages are arranged by the family.

In Saudi Arabia, marriages are customarily arranged by the family.
This custom is terrible. This custom is fine.
I will tell her she should marry whom she likes. I will tell her she will eventually be happy with the person she is to marry.

I think most Saudi women like this custom. I think most Saudi women dislike this custom.

3.
You are in Honduras studying local political system. Between 1963 and 1982, a very repressive military government was in power. This military rule was not well liked, and many human rights abuses were carried out, but the government was tolerated. As part of your research, you ask a number of Hondurans why nothing was done about the situation. The most common answer is essentially, *"What could we do about it? That was the way it was."*
After returning home to Europe, you are told by a friend from Central America that the attitude of fatalism, a stoic acceptance of whatever misfortune may occur, is common in Honduras.

Fatalism, a stoic acceptance of life's misfortune, is a common attitude is Honduras.
This attitude is foolish. This attitude is reasonable.
People with this attitude make me feel frustrated. People with this attitude make me feel relaxed.
I think most Hondurans are personally happy with this attitude. I think most Hondurans personally find this attitude problematic.

4.
You went to Thailand to teach English at a company specializing in manufacturing computer parts. During a weekly training session you are asked a question regarding the time table. Unsure of the exact time table you say that you do not know, but will find out later.
In the following week you notice that the Thais do not consult you nearly as much as they previously did. You are told by another teacher who has been living in Thailand for five years that the Thais believe a superior "loses face" by admitting a lack of knowledge.

In Thailand a superior "loses face" by admitting a lack of knowledge.
This custom is silly regardless of the culture. This custom makes sense in the Thai culture.
I will not change, the Thais will come to my way of thinking. From now on I will improvise an answer and make corrections later.
I think most Thais are fine with this custom. I think most Thais find this custom problematic.

5.
While in London, you attend a birthday party for one of your colleagues. While at the party, you are introduced to a young man named David. Starting a conversation, you casually ask David what he does. David seems somewhat surprised by your question. He gives you a brief

and fairly neutral answer and then changes the subject. You mention David's reaction to a friend who has lived in London for several years. She tells you that in Britain it is considered forward and overly personal to ask a person what their occupation is at a social gathering.

In Britain asking a person what their occupation is at a social gathering is considered forward and impolite.
This attitude is silly. This attitude is sensible.
In the future, if I wish to know someone's occupation at a social setting I will not hesitate to ask. In the future, I will not ask about a person's occupation in a social setting.
I think most Brits are OK with this attitude. I think most Brits dislike this custom.

Study 1: Cultural Threat - Dutch version

scenario's neutraal - rechtvaardigheid

1.
Een Amsterdams restaurant gespecialiseerd in Indonesische gerechten heeft recentelijk het nieuws gehaald na het versturen van een versie promotieflyers met daarin een typefout. De fortuinlijke klanten werden uitgenodigd om van maaltijden te genieten met 100% korting in plaats van 10% korting. De manager van het restaurant weigerde om de kortingsflyers aan te nemen, zeggende dat een redelijk persoon geen gratis diner kon verwachten. De ontdane klanten claimde echter dat zij niet naar het restaurant zouden zijn gekomen als de maaltijd niet als gratis geadverteerd was.
Denk jij dat het eerlijk is om de kortingsflyers weigeren te accepteren zelfs wanneer deze het resultaat waren van een typefout?

2.
In 2009 vergat Jacob Bos zijn mobiele telefoon in een café in Rotterdam. Arjen Visser, een politieagent die de mobiele telefoon vond poogde contact op te nemen met de eigenaar en vond toevallig berichten die impliceerde dat Bos betrokken was bij het verhandelen van cocaïne. Terwijl Bos later werd gearresteerd, werd Visser officieel terechtgewezen en voor een maand geschorst voor het schenden van Bos' privacy en het gebruiken van informatie verkregen zonder een bevelschrift om een officieel onderzoek te starten.
Denk jij dat het eerlijk is dat de politieagent voor een maand werd geschorst?

3.
In 2013 werd David Capaldi, een dokter van het Saint Patrick's ziekenhuis in Annapolis, Verenigde Staten, aangeklaagd voor het twee keer binnen een week incorrect diagnosticeren van zijn patiënt Camille Hayes. Allereerst met colorectale kanker en vervolgens met opruiende darmziekte. Alhoewel de uitgevoerde testen in de navolgende week beide diagnoses uitsloten, mevrouw Hayes vond dat het moeten ondergaan van herhaaldelijke

darmonderzoeken en voor een week in angst leven onacceptabel was. Ze claimde dat de dokter de diagnose niet hardop had moeten raden alvorens het uitvoeren van alle testen.
Denk jij dat het eerlijk is dat dokter Capaldi werd aangeklaagd voor zijn openheid over zijn initiële, beredeneerde inschattingen?

scenario's – culturele bedreiging

1.
Een recentelijk gevestigd ondersteuningscentrum voor minderheden in Nijmegen is momenteel op zoek naar een maatschappelijk werker met ervaring in conflictbemiddeling. De gekozen kandidaat wordt verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie en facilitatie van workshops en trainingen in conflictbemiddeling voor gemeenschapsleden, en het implementeren van de diversiteitsprojecten van het centrum. "Wij zijn trots om leden van minderheden kansen te geven en zij zullen voorrang krijgen in het sollicitatie proces", de positie staat daarom open voor vrouwen die lid zijn van een minderheidsgroep.
Denk jij dat het eerlijk is om uitsluitend sollicitaties van een bepaald geslacht of etniciteit te accepteren?

2.
Op de middelbare school hebben Amir en Kim elkaar leren kennen door een gemeenschappelijke vriend. Kort daarna zijn zij een koppel geworden en hebben zij samengewoond aangezien zij beide naar de stad verhuisden om aan dezelfde universiteit te studeren. Tijdens Kerstmis vroeg Amir Kim ten huwelijk en Kim stemde daar vol blijdschap mee in. Tot haar verbazing, drongen de ouders van Amir erop aan dat zij moest bekeren tot de Islam zodat de bruiloft door kon gaan met hun zegen.
Denk jij dat het oké is van de ouders van Amir om Kim te vragen te bekeren tot hun religie?

3.
In de afgelopen jaren heeft er een debat plaatsgevonden over de traditie van "Zwarte Piet". Afgelopen jaar, in augustus, heeft het Comité tegen Rassendiscriminatie van de Verenigde Naties in heldere termen bepaald dat de traditie van "Zwarte Piet" sterke racistische elementen heeft en een bijdrage levert aan het bestendigen van negatieve raciale stereotypes. Een aantal steden en scholen hebben besloten om de traditie aan te passen en moedigen Piet in alle kleuren aan. Echter, een overweldigende meerderheid van de Nederlandse bevolking steunt de traditie en wil het niet opgeven als een onderdeel van hun cultureel erfgoed. In de officiële reactie op de kritiek van de Verenigde Naties heeft de Nederlandse overheid toegegeven dat Piet's traditionele imago geïnterpreteerd kan worden als racistisch en aangepast moet worden in de toekomst.
Ondersteun jij het standpunt van de overheid?

4.

In 2015 hebben ongeveer 1 miljoen vluchtelingen asiel aangevraagd in Europese landen. Veel van de doellanden werden gedwongen om hun uitgaven te verhogen om in staat te zijn om gepaste accommodatie en basisdiensten te verschaffen voor inkomende mensen. In november bijvoorbeeld heeft de Noorweegse overheid aangekondigd dat zij belastingen op vliegtickets en het gebruik van elektriciteit gaan verhogen om zo voor vluchtelingen te kunnen betalen na een record toevloed. Om overheden te helpen die geconfronteerd worden met grote aantallen asielzoekers, overweegt de Europese Commissie het implementeren van een Europese "crisis belasting". Aangezien Nederland in het afgelopen jaar al een record aantal vluchtelingen heeft aanvaard, ondersteunt de overheid het initiatief. De belasting zal 1 miljard euro teweegbrengen die verdeelt zal worden onder de landen die elk jaar de meeste vluchtelingen hebben aanvaard.
Zou jij een belasting verhoging steunen met als doel landen te helpen vluchtelingen te accommoderen?

5.
Afgelopen maand heeft QS een ranking vrijgegeven van topstudentensteden. Parijs en Melbourne zijn vier achtereenvolgende jaren uitgewezen als nummer 1 en 2 beste studentensteden terwijl de beste Nederlandse studentenstad Amsterdam was op plaats 27.
Als jij een droomstad zou mogen kiezen om jouw studententijd in door te brengen, waar zou dat dan zijn?

scenario's – controle
1.

Een recentelijk geopend restaurant in Amsterdam is momenteel op zoek naar personeel. Ze presenteren de fijnste selectie van de traditionele Nederlandse keuken. De taak van het personeel is niet alleen om uitstekende service te verschaffen, maar tevens een ervaring van het allerbeste van de traditionele Nederlandse cultuur. Om de authenticiteit en de levenskracht van de plaats te behouden, worden uitsluitend de sollicitaties van blanke, moedertaalsprekende Nederlanders overwogen tot indienstneming.
Denk jij dat het eerlijk is om uitsluitend sollicitaties van een bepaald geslacht of etniciteit te accepteren?

2.
Op de middelbare school hebben Alex en Kim elkaar leren kennen door een gemeenschappelijke vriend. Kort daarna zijn zij een koppel geworden en hebben zij samengewoond aangezien zij beide naar de stad verhuisden om aan dezelfde universiteit te studeren. Tijdens Kerstmis vroeg Alex Kim ten huwelijk en Kim stemde daar vol blijdschap mee in. Tot haar verbazing, drongen de ouders van Alex erop aan dat zij moest bekeren tot het Katholicisme zodat de bruiloft door kon gaan met hun zegen.
Denk jij dat het oké is van de ouders van Alex om Kim te vragen te bekeren tot hun religie?

3.
Op veel plaatsen ter wereld is het drinken van alcoholische dranken een alledaags kenmerk van sociale bijeenkomsten. Desondanks is het consumeren van alcohol geassocieerd met een verhoogd risico op acute gezondheidscondities zoals letsel inclusief van verkeersongevallen. De Wereldgezondheidsorganisatie heeft recentelijk overheden opgeroepen om het rijden onder invloed te verminderen. Dankzij een combinatie van beleidsmaatregelen en informatie campagnes heeft er een 35% afname van alcohol-gerelateerde verkeersongevallen plaatsgevonden. Toch heeft de overheid een nieuwe verordening voorgesteld waarin het wettelijk toegelaten alcoholgehalte wordt verminderd van .05 naar .02 milligram alcohol per deciliter.
Ondersteun jij het standpunt van de overheid?

4.
Het Erasmus+ programma heeft als doelstelling om vaardigheden en inzetbaarheid te bevorderen, evenals het moderniseren van onderwijs, training, en jeugdwerk. Het nieuwe 7 jaar programma heeft een budget van €14.7 miljard; een 40% toename vergeleken met voorgaande uitgavenpatronen, een afspiegeling van de EU's inzet om te investeren in deze gebieden. Om zelfs verdere uitbreiding van het programma te kunnen financieren, met als doelstelling om de kwaliteit van leven en de inzetbaarheid van ouderen te verhogen, overweegt de Europese Commissie het implementeren van een Europese "onderwijs belasting". Tezamen zal de belasting ongeveer 2 miljard euro op jaarbasis teweegbrengen.
Zou jij een belastingverhoging steunen met als doelstelling om de educatie van de ouderen te financieren?

5.
Afgelopen maand heeft QS een ranking vrijgegeven van topstudentensteden. Vier achtereenvolgende jaren is Amsterdam uitgeroepen als beste Nederlandse studentenstad op plaats 27.
Als jij een droomstad zou mogen kiezen om jouw studententijd in door te brengen, waar zou dat dan zijn?

Study 1 Cultural Differences scenarios (Dutch version)
Je wordt gevraagd om jezelf in een aantal hypothetische scenario's voor te stellen. De gepresenteerde interacties zijn gecentreerd rondom een gewoonte of sociale houding waar veel mensen uit dat land aan vasthouden. Nadat je de interactie hebt gelezen, wordt aan jou gevraagd om aan te geven hoe sterk jij het eens of oneens bent met uitspraken die betrekking hebben op de gewoonte of de sociale houding. De uitspraken zullen gericht zijn op gevoelens en overtuigingen die jij mogelijk hebt met betrekking tot de gewoonten en sociale houdingen en acties die mogelijk genomen zouden kunnen worden.

1.
In Japan ontmoette je een Japanse professor, Mr. Morishima, om Fenomenologie van de Geest mee te bespreken. De bijeenkomst vond plaats tijdens de lunchpauze. Je ontmoette hem in een klein restaurant naast de universiteit. Halverwege de lunch pakte Mr. Morishima een sigaret en begon te roken. Hij vroeg niet om jouw toestemming. Je herinnert je een boek over het moderne Japanse leven waarin de hogere mate van roken in Japan vergeleken met West-Europa besproken werd. Het boek vermeldde tevens dat veel Japanners roken persoonlijk beschouwen en vragen mogelijk geen toestemming aan een metgezel alvorens zij beginnen met roken.

Een veel voorkomende Japanse gewoonte is om te roken zonder toestemming te vragen.
Deze gewoonte is onbeleefd. Deze gewoonte is niet onbeleefd.
Ik zou hem vragen te stoppen. Ik zou niets zeggen over zijn rookgedrag.
Ik denk dat de meeste Japanners geen bezwaar hebben met deze gewoonte.
Ik denk dat de meeste Japanners niet van deze gewoonte houden.

2.
Je werkt als een steward(ess) in een bedrijf dat gevestigd is in Riyadh, de hoofdstad van Saudi Arabië. Terwijl je daar bent, ben je vrienden geworden met een jonge Saudische vrouw. Op een dag lijkt ze erg depressief te zijn. Je vraagt aan haar wat er scheelt en ze legt uit dat ze binnenkort moet trouwen met een man die ze niet echt aantrekkelijk vindt. Ze legt aan jou uit dat daten in Saudi Arabië niet aan de orde is en dat bijna alle huwelijken gearrangeerd worden door de familie.

In Saudi Arabië worden huwelijken gewoonlijk gearrangeerd door de familie.
Deze gewoonte is verschrikkelijk. Deze gewoonte is prima.
Ik vertel haar dat ze zou moeten trouwen met diegene die zij leuk vindt.
Ik vertel haar dat ze uiteindelijk gelukkig zal worden met diegene waar ze nu mee gaat trouwen.
Ik denk dat de meeste Saudische vrouwen van deze gewoonte houden.
Ik denk dat de meeste Saudische vrouwen niet van deze gewoonte houden.

3.
Je bent in Honduras het lokale politieke systeem aan het bestuderen. Tussen 1963 en 1982 was er een erg onderdrukkende militaire overheid aan de macht. Dit militaire bewind was niet geliefd, en er vonden veel mensenrechtenschendingen plaats, maar de overheid werd getolereerd. Als onderdeel van jouw onderzoek, vraag je aan een aantal Hondurezen waarom er niets werd gedaan aan de situatie. Het meest gegeven antwoord was in essentie, *"Wat konden we er aan doen? Dat was de manier waarop het ging."* Weer terug in Europa, vertelt

een vriend van je uit Centraal Amerika dat de houding van fatalisme, een stoïcijnse acceptatie van elke tegenslag die zich voordoet, normaal is in Honduras.

Fatalisme, een stoïcijnse acceptatie van de tegenslagen in het leven, is een veelvoorkomende houding in Honduras.
Deze houding is idioot. Deze houding is redelijk.
Mensen met deze houding zorgen ervoor dat ik mij gefrustreerd voel.
Mensen met deze houding zorgen ervoor dat ik mij ontspannen voel.
Ik denk dat de meeste Hondurezen persoonlijk blij zijn met deze houding.
Ik denk dat de meeste Hondurezen deze houding persoonlijk als problematisch ervaren.

4.
Je bent naar Thailand geweest om Engels te doceren aan een bedrijf dat gespecialiseerd is in het vervaardigen van computeronderdelen. Tijdens een wekelijkse trainingssessie wordt aan jou een vraag gesteld met betrekking tot het rooster. Onzeker over het exacte rooster zeg je dat je het niet weet, maar dat je daar later achter komt. In de daaropvolgende week merk je op dat de Thai jou niet meer zo vaak raadplegen dan dat zij voorheen deden. Een andere docent die al 5 jaar in Thailand woont, vertelt je dat de Thai geloven dat een superieur "zijn gezicht verliest" door het toegeven van een gebrek aan kennis.

Een superieur in Thailand "verliest zijn gezicht" door het toegeven van een gebrek aan kennis.
Deze gewoonte is onnozel ongedacht de cultuur. Deze gewoonte is zinvol in de Thaise cultuur.
Ik zal niet veranderen, de Thai zullen zich aan mijn denkwijze aanpassen.
Vanaf nu zal ik een antwoord improviseren en maak ik later correcties.
Ik denk dat de meeste Thai deze gewoonte prima vinden.
Ik denk dat de meeste Thai deze gewoonte als problematisch ervaren.

5.
Je bent in Londen en woont een verjaardagfeestje van een van jouw collega's bij. Tijdens het feestje, wordt je voorgesteld aan een jonge man genaamd David. Je start een conversatie met hem en vraagt toevallig wat hij doet. David lijkt ietwat verrast bij jouw vraag. Hij geeft je een kort en tamelijk neutraal antwoord en verandert dan het onderwerp. Je meldt David's reactie aan een vriend die verscheidene jaren in London heeft gewoond. Zij vertelt je dat het in Brittannië als stoutmoedig en al te persoonlijk wordt beschouwd om tijdens een sociale bijeenkomst aan een persoon te vragen wat zijn of haar beroep is.

In Brittannië wordt het aan een persoon vragen wat zijn of haar beroep is tijdens een sociale bijeenkomst beschouwd als stoutmoedig en onbeleefd.
Deze gewoonte is onnozel. Deze gewoonte is redelijk.
In de toekomst, wanneer ik iemand zijn beroep wens te weten in een sociale setting, dan

twijfel ik niet om dat te vragen.
In de toekomst zal ik niet naar iemand zijn beroep vragen in een sociale setting.
Ik denk dat de meeste Britten deze gewoonte prima vinden.
Ik denk dat de meeste Britten niet van deze gewoonte houden.

Study 1: Beliefs about Welfare State and Welfare Recipients (EN)
Social security is a right, not a privilege.
Having a generous social security system only encourages idleness.
A lot of people are moving to Netherlands just to get the social security here.
Many of the people receiving social security support have little talent or ability.
Generally, we are spending too little money on social security.
Many people receiving social security cannot be trusted.
There are too many people receiving social security who should be working.
Majority of the people who are on social security try to get additional education or a job so they can support themselves.

Study 1: Beliefs about Welfare State and Welfare Recipients (NL)
Sociale zekerheid is een recht, niet een privilege.
Een genereus sociale zekerheidsstelsel moedigt luiheid aan.
Voor veel mensen die naar Nederland verhuizen is het sociale zekerheidsstelsel de reden.
Het tekort aan talent of vermogen om te ondernemen is voor veel mensen de reden dat zij in aanmerking komen voor sociale zekerheidsuitkeringen.
Over het algemeen zijn wordt er te weinig geld besteed aan sociale zekerheid.
Veel mensen die een sociale zekerheidsuitkering ontvangen zijn niet te vertrouwen.
Er zijn te veel mensen die een sociale zekerheidsuitkering ontvangen terwijl zij eigenlijk zouden moeten werken.
De meerderheid van de mensen die een sociale zekerheidsuitkering ontvangen, zijn op zoek naar een baan of opleiding zodat zij zelf kunnen voorzien in hun eigen levensonderhoud.

Study 2
Study 2: System Threat - Economic Threat (English Version)

The world has changed a lot during the past 10 years with one of the most impacted areas being economy. In the following questions we would like to know how you think Netherlands withstood this difficult period.

Positive framing

The past few years have been tough for Europe. Despite this, the Netherlands have fared relatively well. In the past 10 years, the economy has been steadily growing and young people were able to find jobs and follow the careers they have been aiming for. These positive trends

are reflected in a stable top 10 position for the Netherlands in Economist's "Where to be born index".

Negative framing

The past few years have been tough for Europe and for Netherlands in particular. In the past 10 years, the economy has stagnated and the young people across the country are finding it challenging to follow the careers they have been aiming for. These negative trends are reflected in the Netherlands dropping from the top 15 of the Economist's "Where to be born index".

Study 2: System Threat - Economic Threat (Dutch Version)

De wereld is gedurende de afgelopen 10 jaar erg veranderd, waarbij de economie het meest is getroffen. In de volgende vragen zouden we graag willen weten wat uw mening is over de manier waarop nederland deze moeilijke periode is doorgekomen.

Positive framing

De afgelopen jaren zijn moeilijk geweest voor Europa. Desondanks is het Nederland relatief goed vergaan. Gedurende de afgelopen 10 jaar groeide de economie gestaag en jongeren konden werk vinden en de carrière opstarten, die ze voor ogen hadden. Deze positieve trends worden gereflecteerd in een stabiele top 10-positie voor Nederland in de 'Where to be born index' van de Economist.

Negative framing

De afgelopen jaren zijn moeilijk voor Europa geweest en voor Nederland in het bijzonder. Gedurende de afgelopen 10 jaar stagneerde de economie en jongeren vonden het lastig om de carrière op te starten, die ze voor ogen hadden. Deze negatieve trends worden gereflecteerd in het verdwijnen van Nederland uit de top 15 van de 'Where to be born index' in de Economist.

Manipulation Check (English Version)

In your opinion how is the Netherlands doing right now?
In your opinion, how will the Netherlands rank in 10 years from now?

Manipulation Check (Dutch Version)

Hoe goed doet Nederland het nu volgens uw mening?
Op welke positie zal Nederland in de komende 10 jaar volgens u komen?

Perception of Meritocracy in Dutch Society (English Version)

Thinking about the current situation in the Netherlands, which do you think is important for a person to be successful?
Hard work
Skills and ability
Personal connections
Successful parents or family

Perception of Meritocracy in Dutch Society (Dutch Version)

Wat is volgens u, met de huidige situatie in Nederland voor ogen, belangrijk om succesvol te worden?
Hard werken
Vaardigheden en capaciteit
Persoonlijke contacten
Succesvolle ouders of familie

Study 2: Attitudes towards work (English version)

Next, we are interested in your attitudes toward work and working in general. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
People who don't work turn lazy.
Work is a duty towards society.
Work should always come first, even if it means less spare time.
Even if someone really wants, it can be difficult to find a suitable job.
There are no jobs that are useless or meaningless.
It is preferable to be unhappy at a job than not working at all.
If someone feels disadvantaged or discriminated against at the workplace, they should work harder in order to convince others about their worth.

Study 2: Attitudes towards work (Dutch version)

Daarnaast zijn we geïnteresseerd in jouw houdingen ten aanzien van arbeid en werken in het algemeen. Geef alsjeblieft aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de volgende stellingen:

Mensen die niet werken worden lui.

Werken is een plicht naar de maatschappij toe.

Arbeid zou altijd op de eerste plaats moeten staan, zelfs wanneer dat minder vrijetijd betekent.

Zelfs wanneer iemand heel graag wil, kan het moeilijk zijn om een gepaste baan te vinden.

Er zijn geen banen die nutteloos of betekenisloos zijn.

Het is verkieslijk om ongelukkig met een baan te zijn dan helemaal niet te werken.

Als iemand zich op het werk achtergesteld of gediscrimineerd voelt, dan zouden zij harder moeten werken om anderen van hun waarde te overtuigen.

Appendix D (Chapter 5)

Results with voters of all UK parties included

To complement the analysis above, we also provide results with voters of other parties included. In the sample including voters of all UK parties, and not with the limitation to Labour and Tory voters, the analyses were done on 930 respondents (587 women; M_{age} = 38 years, range = 19 - 74; 683 in a group before and 247 in a group after the election). Ideology was again measured with economic system justification scale (M = .42, SD = .15, α = .7).

In the full model with DPID as the dependent variable (adjusted R^2 = .07; F(7,922) = 10.93; p < .001), the direction and magnitude of the respondents' perceived ideological distance from the majority was predicted by significant negative main effect of ideology (b = -.96, SE = .16, t(922) = -6.12, p < .001) meaning that the more economically conservative participants (1SD above the ideology mean) perceived the society as accepting lower amounts of economic inequality compared to their personal ideals (b = -.1, SE = .03, t(922) = -3.11, p = .002), compared to the more economically liberal participants (1SD below the ideology mean) who perceived others to accept greater amounts of income inequalities than they themselves would suggest as fair (b = .18, SE = .03, t(922) = 5.73, p < .001). There was no main effect of system threat condition (p = .49), election condition (p = .636), nor of interaction of the two (p = .559). Furthermore, interaction effects between ideology and threat (.366), ideology and election (p = .051), and a three-way interaction between ideology, threat and election did not significantly predict perceived ideological distance (p = .238).

In the group of respondents before the election, DPID was predicted by the main effect of ideology (b = -1.27, SE = .15, t(922) = -8.21, p < .001) and a significant interaction between ideology and system threat condition (b = -.33, SE = .15, t(922) = -2.12, p = .034). However, while in opposite directions, effects of manipulation, describing differences among liberals (p = .16) and conservatives (p = .115) between the two conditions, were not statistically significant. In the group gathered after the election, perceived ideological distance was predicted by the main effect of ideology (b = -.66, SE = .27, t(922) = -2.39, p = .017) but not by the system threat manipulation (p = .457), nor by the interaction between ideology and the manipulation (p = .873).

Next we assessed the model with APID as the dependent variable (adjusted R^2 = .01; F(7,922) = 2.85; p = .006). In the full model, absolute perceived ideological distance was predicted by negative main effect of ideology (b = -.37, SE = .13, t(922) = -2.81, p = .005), but not main effects of either system threat condition (p = .427) or election (p = .649). The

A

interaction effect between ideology and system threat was significant and in positive direction (b = .28, SE = .13, t(922) = 2.09, p = .037) while the interactions between ideology and election (p = .206) and between the election and system threat were not significant (p = .087). However, a significant three-way interaction between ideology, election and system threat (b = -.28, SE = .13, t(922) = -2.15, p = .032) suggested that effects of system threat on perceived ideological distance among liberals and conservatives may be moderated by the context of upcoming, or resolved, election.

Before the election, APID was not significantly predicted by ideology (p = .117) but there was a significant overall difference between system affirmation and system threatening conditions (b = .1, SE = .04, t(922) = 2.44, p = .015), which did not differ between conservatives and liberals (p = .953). That is, a message describing the country's economic performance and near future as rather bleak presumably motivated participants answering before the 2017 UK General Election to imagine others as more different from them in views regarding ideal levels of occupational income inequality.

The results for the group gathered after the election are, similarly to the US sample, in the opposite direction. Overall perceived ideological distance was significantly predicted by economic ideology (b = -.54, SE = .23, t(922) = -2.34, p = .02), and the effect of system threat condition (p = .593) was moderated by differences in ideology, as suggested by significant interaction (b = .56, SE = .32, t(922) = 2.43, p = .015). In particular, economic liberals (1SD below the ideology mean) in system threat condition perceived others to hold ideals significantly more similar to their own compared to liberals in system affirmation condition (b = -.2, SE = .09, t(922) = 2.18, p = .029). On the other hand, economic conservatives (1SD above the ideology mean) did report slightly higher overall perceived ideological distance in the system threat, compared to the system affirmation condition, but this difference was not statistically significant (p = .173).

Results with US and UK samples joined and all parties included

Together, we sampled 1961 respondents from the US and the UK. After pooling the samples and using the above mention exclusion criteria, the final sample had 1402 respondents, 477 from the US and 925 from the UK (584 women; M_{age} = 38 years, range = 18 - 77; 902 before and 500 after the election). Ideology was measured with economic system justification scale (M = .43, SD = .16).

In the analysis, we entered ideology (grand-mean centered), effect coded system affirmation vs. system threat condition manipulation (-1, 1), effect coded before vs. after election condition (-1, 1), effect coded US vs. UK group (-1, 1) and a dummy variable indicating the country.

In the full model with DPID as the dependent variable (adjusted R^2 = .11; F(8,1393) = 22.21; p < .001), respondents form the US perceived the society to be more conservative compared to their ideals than the respondents from the UK (b = .71, SE = .04, t(1393) = 4.17, p < .001). The main effect of ideology was significant and in negative direction (b = -1.5, SE = .13, t(1393) = -12.06, p < .001) and main effects of system threat manipulation (p = .801) and election (p = .947) were not. An interaction effect between ideology and system threat was negative and marginally significant (b = -.23, SE = .13, t(1393) = -1.85, p < .064), although overall effect of system threat was not significant among liberals (p = .136) nor conservatives (p = .255). Furthermore, the overall effect of system threat on perceived ideological distance did not differ between the times before and after the respective elections (p = .206), nor did the elections affect the overall relationship between ideology and DPID. However, a marginally significant interaction between ideology, system threat and election (b = .21, SE = .13, t(1393) = 1.68, p = .093) indicates that there was a difference in the effect of system threat on liberals and conservatives before and after the election. Before the election, liberals reading about the economy not doing well perceived the distance between their own and normative views on differences in occupational earnings to be significantly greater (b = .21, SE = .07, t(1393) = 3, p < .001) than liberals in the system affirmation condition. No such differences were observed among conservatives in before the election (p = .226), nor among liberals (p = .712) or conservatives after the election (p = .603).

In the model with absolute perceived ideological distance (APID) as the dependent variable (adjusted R^2 = .05; F(8,1393) = 10.4; p < .001), APID was predicted by negative main effect of ideology (b = .23, SE = .11, t(1393) = -2.11, p = .035), main effects of system threat (p = .394) and election (p = .808) were not significant and the respondents from the US perceived overall greater ideological distance from the norm (b = .27, SE = .04, t(1393) = 7.38, p < .001). The interaction effect between ideology and system threat was marginally significant and in positive direction (b = .19, SE = .11, t(1393) = 1.75, p = .081), while the interactions between ideology and election (p = .152) and between the election and system

threat were not significant (p = .158). A significant three-way interaction between ideology, election and system threat (b = .48, SE = .11, t(1393) = 4.47, p < .001) hinted that effects of system threat manipulation on overall perceived ideological distance between economic liberals and are different before and after the election.

Before the election, ideology did not predict APID (p = .568), but there was a marginally significant effect of system threat manipulation (b = .04, SE = .02, t(1393) = 1.89, p = .058) and a significant negative interaction effect between ideology and system threat (b = -.29, SE = .13, t(1393) = -2.29, p = .022). That is, before the respective elections, economic liberals perceived overall greater ideological distance from the population in the system threat, compared to system affirmation condition (b = .17, SE = .06, t(1393) = 2.96, p = .003). There was no effect of condition among conservatives before the election (p = .776).

After the election, APID was in statistically significant negative relationship with economic ideology (b = -.38, SE = .17, t(1393) = -2.2, p = .028). System threat manipulation was not significant overall (p = .728) but its effect was instead moderated by respondents' ideology (b = .67, SE = .17, t(1393) = 3.87, p < .001). While economic liberals tended to view most others as ideologically closer to them after reading a system threatening, compared to a system affirming message (b = -.24, SE = .08, t(1393) = -2.99, p = .003), economic conservatives reacted the other way around and perceived others as ideologically more distance from themselves in the system threat condition (b = .2, SE = .08, t(1393) = 2.51, p = .012).

Table 8 Absolute Perceived Ideological Distance as a function of economic ideology, economic system threat, and election uncertainty

APID	US 2016 Presidential Election						UK 2017 General Election					
	$n = 478$, $R^2 = .02$, $F(7,470) = 2.46$, $p = .017$						$n = 617$, $R^2 = .01$, $F(7,609) = 1.76$, $p = .092$					
	b	SE	t(470)	p	sr^2	95%CI	b	SE	t	p	sr^2	95%CI
ESJ	-.08	.2	-.39	.697	.0	-47., 31	-.24	.15	-1.56	.118	.0	-.54, .06
Threat	.01	.4	.36	.72	.0	-.06, .08	.04	.02	1.94	.053	.01	-.001, .09
Election	-.0	.04	-.04	.967	.0	-46, .32	-.0	.02	-.021	.215	.0	-.05, .04
Threat x Election	-.01	.04	-.19	.849	.0	-.08, .06	-.02	.2	-.79	.428	.0	-.06, .03
ESJ x Threat	-.07	.19	-.36	.718	.0	-.46, .32	.19	.15	1.24	.215	.0	-.11, .49
ESJ x Election	-.2	.2	-1.0	.316	.0	-.59, .19	.02	.15	-.13	.898	.0	-.28, .32
ESJ x Threat x Election	.79	.2	3.98	<.001	.3	.4, 1.18	.14	.15	.88	.38	.0	-.17, .44
Effect of Economic System Threat vs. Affirmation Before and After the Election												
	Before the Election						Before the Election					
ESJ	.12	.28	.44	.662	.0	-.43, .67	-.26	.14	-.177	.077	.01	-.55, .03
Threat	.02	.05	.37	.708	.0	-.08, .12	.06	.02	2.65	.008	.01	.02, .11
ESJ x Threat	-.86	.28	-3.09	.002	.02	-1.41, -.31	.06	.15	.38	.705	.01	-.23, .34
ESJ slope affirmation	.98	.37	2.68	.008	.02	.26, 1.7	-.32	.19	-1.62	.106	.0	-.7, .07
ESJ slope threat	-.74	.42	-1.76	.078	.01	-1.56, .08	-.2	.22	-.93	.351	.0	-.63, .23
	After the Election						After the Election					
ESJ	-.28	.28	-.98	.328	.0	-.83, .28	-.22	.27	-.82	.414	.0	-.75,. 31
Threat	.01	.05	.12	.901	.0	-.09, .1	.03	.04	.67	.504	.0	-.05, .1
ESJ x Threat	.72	.28	2.54	.011	.01	.16, 1.27	.33	.27	1.21	.228	.0	-.02, .86
Simple slope affirmation	-.99	.43	-2.3	.022	.01	-1.84, -.15	-.55	.39	-1.4	.163	.0	-1.31, .22
Simple slope threat	.33	.36	1.21	.227	.0	-.28, 1.15	.11	.37	.28	.778	.0	-.63, .84
Effect of Election in Economic System Affirmation vs. Threat Condition												
	Economic System Affirmation Condition						Economic System Affirmation Condition					
ESJ	-.01	.28	-.02	.984	.0	-.56, .55	-.43	.21	-1.97	.049	.01	-.86, -.002
Election	.01	.05	.01	.917	.0	-.1, .1	.01	.03	.41	.684	.0	-.05, .08
ESJ x Election	-.99	.07	-3.49	.001	.03	-1.55, -.43	-.12	.22	-.53	.597	.0	-.54, .31
Simple slope before	.98	.37	2.68	.008	.02	.26, 1.7	-.32	.19	-1.62	.106	.0	-.7, .07
Simple slope after	-.99	.43	-2.3	.022	.01	-1.84, -.15	-.55	.39	-1.4	.163	.0	-1.31, .22
	Economic System Threat Condition						Economic System Threat Condition					
ESJ	-.15	.28	-.54	.592	.0	-.7, .4	-.05	.22	-.23	.818	.0	-.47, .37
Election	-.01	.05	-.16	.869	.0	-.13, .16	-.02	.03	-.72	.215	.0	-.08, .04
ESJ x Election	.59	.28	2.12	.034	.01	.04, 1.14	.15	.22	.72	.474	.0	-.27, .58
Simple slope before	-.74	.42	-1.76	.078	.01	-1.56, .08	-.2	.22	-.93	.351	.0	-.63, .23
Simple slope after	.33	.36	1.21	.227	.0	-.28, 1.15	.11	.37	.28	.778	.0	-.63, .84

Table 9 Directional Perceived Ideological Distance as a function of economic ideology, economic system threat, and election uncertainty

DPID	US 2016 Presidential Election						UK 2017 General Election					
	$n = 478$, $R^2 = .15$, $F(7,470) = 12.66$, $p < .001$						$n = 617$, $R^2 = .1$, $F(7,609) = 10.47$, $p < .001$					
	b	SE	t(470)	p	sr^2	95%CI	b	SE	t	p	sr^2	95%CI
ESJ	-2.08	.23	-9.01	<.001	.15	-2.54, 1.63	-1.16	18	-6.53	<.001	.06	-1.51, -.81
Threat	.06	.04	1.37	.173	.0	-.03, .14	-.02	.03	-.9	-.368	.0	-.07, .03
Election	.02	.04	.42	.672	.0	-.06, .1	.0	.03	.02	.982	.0	-.05 .05
Threat x Election	-.08	.04	-1.82	.069	.01	-.16, .01	-.04	.03	-1.58	.116	.0	-.09, .01
ESJ x Threat	-.39	.23	-1.68	.093	.01	-.84, .07	-.08	.18	-.046	.645	.0	-.43, .27
ESJ x Election	-.02	.23	-.11	.914	.0	-.48, .43	.12	.18	.67	.505	.0	-.23, .49
ESJ x Threat x Election	.41	.23	1.76	.079	.01	-.05, .86	.28	.18	1.55	.121	.0	-.07, .63
Effect of Economic System Threat vs. Affirmation Before and After the Election												
	Before the Election						Before the Election					
ESJ	-2.06	.32	-6.34	<.001	.08	-2.7, -1.42	-1.28	.17	-7.55	<.001	.08	-1.61, -.95
Threat	.13	.06	2.18	.03	.01	.01, .26	.15	.08	2.18	.029	.1	.02, .32
ESJ x Threat	-.8	.32	-2.45	.015	.01	-1.43, -.16	-.36	.17	-2.11	.035	.01	-.69, -.03
ESJ slope affirmation	-1.26	.43	-2.95	.003	.02	-2.1, -.42	-.92	.23	-4.09	<.001	.03	-1.37, -.48
ESJ slope threat	-2.85	.49	-5.84	<.001	.07	-3.81, -1.89	-1.64	.25	-6.46	<.001	.06	-2.14, 1.14
	After the Election						After the Election					
ESJ	-2.11	.33	-6.4	<.001	.08	-2.75, -1.46	-1.04	.31	-3.34	<.001	.02	-1.66, -.43
Threat	-.02	.06	-.03	.737	.0	-.13, .09	-.15	.14	-1.08	.282	.0	-.41, .12
ESJ x Threat	.02	.33	.05	.957	.0	-.63, .66	.19	.31	.62	.534	.0	-.42, .81
Simple slope affirmation	-2.12	.5	-4.22	<.001	.04	-3.11, -1.14	-1.24	.45	-2.74	.006	.01	-2.13, -.35
Simple slope threat	-2.09	.43	-4.92	<.001	.05	-2.92, -1.25	-.85	.43	-1.97	.05	.01	-1.7, -.001
Effect of Election in Economic System Affirmation vs. Threat Condition												
	Economic System Affirmation Condition						Economic System Affirmation Condition					
ESJ	-1.69	.33	-5.13	<.001	.05	-2.34, -1.04	-1.08	.25	-4.27	<.001	.03	-1.58, -.58
Election	.09	.65	1.58	.114	.01	-.02, 21	.04	.04	1.12	.265	.0	-.03, .11
ESJ x Election	-.43	.33	1.31	.192	.0	-1.08, .21	-.16	.25	-.62	.533	.0	-.65, .34
Simple slope before	-1.26	.43	-2.95	.003	.02	-2.1, -.42	-.92	.23	-4.09	<.001	.03	-1.37, -.48
Simple slope after	-2.12	.5	-4.22	<.001	.04	-3.11, -1.14	-1.24	.45	-2.74	.006	.01	-2.13, -.35
	Economic System Threat Condition						Economic System Threat Condition					
ESJ	-2.47	.32	-7.63	<.001	.11	-3.11, -1.83	-1.24	.25	-4.97	<.001	.04	-1.74, -.75
Election	-.06	.06	-1.00	.32	.0	-.18, .96	-.04	.03	1.11	.266	.0	-.11, .03
ESJ x Election	.38	.32	1.18	.239	.01	-.25 , 1.02	.4	.25	1.58	.115	.0	-.1, .89
Simple slope before	-2.85	.49	-5.84	<.001	.07	-3.81, -1.89	-1.64	.25	-6.46	<.001	.06	-2.14, 1.14
Simple slope after	-2.09	.43	-4.92	<.001	.05	-2.92, -1.25	-.85	.43	-1.97	.05	.01	-1.7, -.001

Instruments used in the online survey experiments in Chapter 5

Economic System Justification Scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000)

Between-subject part

Next, we are interested in your attitudes toward work and working in general. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

If people work hard, they almost always get what they want.

There will always be poor people, because there will never be enough well paying jobs for everybody.

If people wanted to change the economic system to make things equal, they could.

There are no inherent differences between rich and poor; it is purely a matter of the circumstances into which you are born.

Equal distribution of resources is unnatural.

There are many reasons to think that the economic system is unfair.

It is unfair to have an economic system which produces extreme wealth and extreme poverty at the same time.

Most people who don't get ahead in life have only themselves to blame.

Within-subject part

It is virtually impossible to eliminate poverty.

Laws of nature are responsible for differences in wealth in society.

Social class differences reflect differences in the natural order of things.

Equal distribution of resources is a possibility for our society.

There is no point in trying to make incomes more equal.

The existence of widespread economic differences does not mean that they are inevitable.

Economic differences in the society reflect an illegitimate distribution of resources.

Economic positions are legitimate reflections of people's achievements.

Background Information (EN)

Which year were you born in?

Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree achieved.

Which field is your degree from?

What is your civil status?

What is your current employment status?

What is your gender?

What is the size of town or city you live in terms of total population?

Do you consider yourself a religious person?

What is your ethnicity?

Which political party do you usually identify with?

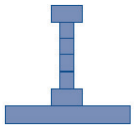
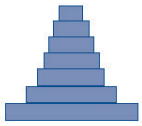
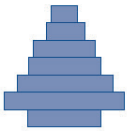
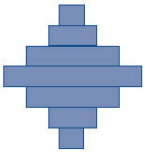
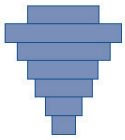
In general, where would you place your political beliefs?

What is the total annual income level of your household?

Have you ever considered working abroad?

Perception of Inequality Structure in the country and self-positioning

Displayed below are five diagrams representing different types of society. Please read the descriptions and look at the diagrams.

Type A: A small elite at the top, very few people in the middle and the great mass of people at the bottom.	
Type B: A society like a pyramid with a small elite at the top, More people in the middle, and most at the bottom	
Type C: A pyramid except that just a few people are at the bottom.	
Type D: A society with most people in the middle	
Type E: Many people near the top, and only a few near the bottom	

Which of the diagrams best describes the United States today?

Could you now indicate on which step do you see yourself in the selected diagram? Which do you think is your position within the society?

Which of these would you prefer the United States to be like?

Which of these you think people in the United States would prefer?

DV Part 1 - perceived inequality
Please write down what you think is the average, annual salary for people in occupations presented below. In a format without commas or periods [e.g. XXXXX].
Many people are not sure about earnings of one or multiple occupations; your best guess is what we are interested in.

A skilled worker in a factory
A doctor in general practice
A CEO of a large company
An airline pilot
A flight attendant
An assistant in a department store
An unskilled worker in a warehouse
A Member of The Cabinet (Federal Government)

DV Part 2 - ideal inequality
Next, we would like to know how much do you think people in these occupations should earn.

Please write down how much do you think would be the appropriate annual salary for people in these occupations, regardless of what they actually earn.
By appropriate we mean the salary that you think is correct or ethical.

A skilled worker in a factory
A doctor in general practice
A CEO of a large company
An airline pilot
A flight attendant
An assistant in a department store
An unskilled worker in a warehouse
A Member of The Cabinet (Federal Government)

DV Part 3 - estimate of normative inequality
We would like to know how much you think society in general believes these occupations should earn in average annual salary (social norm). We mean the salary that you think most people would consider as correct or ethical.

A skilled worker in a factory
A doctor in general practice
A CEO of a large company
An airline pilot
A flight attendant

An assistant in a department store
An unskilled worker in a warehouse
A Member of The Cabinet (Federal Government)

Treatment Scenario: Negative Message (Economic System Threat) - US version
Below is a news excerpt about the most common question asked during job interviews - Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? So how would America answer?

Is the crisis over? Not really, suggests a recent study showing that the economic consequences of the recent crisis will continue to affect Americans' lives. Dr. Michael Plott, an NYU economics professor, says "Trends over the last 5 years show that the labor market continues to be volatile and unpredictable as a direct consequence of the crisis. Investors' trust in the markets remains shaken and it is highly uncertain how we will be doing in 5 years as an economy."

Sociologists agree that the situation on the labor market remains unclear and stress further implications for Americans' everyday lives. A recent survey conducted by the Department of Sociology at Harvard, Cambridge, suggests that many Americans find it difficult to plan ahead and are unable to locate themselves in 5 years.
"Looking forward, I don't know where I will be, it depends on too many factors." said one respondent.

Besides the crisis, what do you think is the main issue to worry about regarding the future of the labor market. Please rank in order of importance.

Mismatch of education and new types of jobs. Our schools don't prepare people for a new type of economy.

Another crisis. While recovering, the structure of the economy has not changed enough, and a new crisis already looms on the horizon.

We have become complacent. Other countries are more bold in implementation of innovative policies, practices and technologies.

Treatment Scenario: Positive Message - US version
Below is a news excerpt about the most common question asked during job interviews - Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? So how would America answer?

Is the crisis over? Yes it is, suggests a recent study showing that the continuing recovery of the economy has positive effects on Americans' lives. Dr. Michael Plott, an NYU economics professor, says
"Trends over the last 5 years show that the labor market has become more stable and predictable as a direct consequence of the improving underlying economic conditions. Investors' trust in the markets is on the rise, and economic forecasts for the next 5 years are clear and optimistic."

Sociologists agree that the situation on the labor market has stabilized and stress further implications for Americans' everyday lives. A recent survey conducted by the Department of Sociology at Harvard, Cambridge, suggests that many Americans are optimistic and confident about their future.
"Looking forward, I know what I want to do and I know how to get there." said one respondent.

Besides the recovering economy, what do you think is the main reason to be optimistic about the future of the labor market. Please rank in order of importance.

We are able to quickly adapt. Education is more responsive to demands of the market than ever.

We have learned from our mistakes. The structure of the economy has changed substantially, and will not be shaken easily.

We are the global leader of innovation. Other countries mostly only follow American innovative policies, practices and technologies.

Treatment Scenario: Negative Message (Economic System Threat) - UK version
Below is a news excerpt about the most common question asked during job interviews - Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? So how would the UK answer?

Is the crisis over? Not really, suggests a recent study showing that the economic consequences of the recent financial crisis will continue to affect Britons' lives. Dr. David Atkinson, an LSE professor of economics, says

"Trends over the last 5 years show that the labor market continues to be volatile and unpredictable as a direct consequence of the crisis. Investors' trust in the markets remains shaken and it is highly uncertain how we will be doing in 5 years as an economy."

Sociologists agree that the situation on the labour market remains unclear and stress further implications for Brits' everyday lives. A recent survey conducted by the Department of Sociology at University of Warwick suggests that many find it difficult to plan ahead and are unable to locate themselves in 5 years.

"Looking forward, I don't know where I will be, it depends on too many factors." said one respondent.

Besides the crisis, what do you think is the main issue to worry about regarding the future of the labor market. Please rank in order of importance.

Mismatch of education and new types of jobs. The education system doesn't prepare people for a new type of economy.

Another crisis. While recovering, the structure of the economy has not changed enough, and a new crisis already looms on the horizon.

Looming Brexit. Uncertainties surrounding the UK's departure from the EU force businesses and investors to be more cautious.

Treatment Scenario: Positive Message - UK version
Below is a news excerpt about the most common question asked during job interviews - Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? So how would America answer?

Is the crisis over? Yes it is, suggests a recent study showing that the continuing recovery of the economy has positive effects on Britons' lives. Dr. David Atkinson, an LSE professor of economics, says

"Trends over the last 5 years show that the labor market has become more stable and predictable as a direct consequence of the improving underlying economic conditions. Investors' trust in the markets is on the rise, and economic forecasts for the next 5 years are clear and optimistic."

Sociologists agree that the situation on the labor market has stabilized and stress further implications for Brits' everyday lives. A recent survey conducted by the Department of Sociology at University of Warwick suggests that many are optimistic and confident about their future.

"Looking forward, I know what I want to do and I know how to get there." said one respondent.

Besides the recovering economy, what do you think is the main reason to be optimistic about the future of the labor market. Please rank in order of importance.

We are able to quickly adapt. Education is more responsive to demands of the market than ever.

We have learned from our mistakes. The structure of the economy has changed substantially, and will not be shaken easily.

We are the global leader of innovation. Other countries mostly only follow our innovative policies, practices, and technologies.