

# Setting the record straight: System justification and rigidity-of-the-right in contemporary Hungarian politics

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Despite international concern about the resurgence of right-wing authoritarianism and xenophobic prejudice throughout Central and Eastern Europe, researchers have argued recently that rightists may be less cognitively rigid and system-justifying than liberals and leftists in the context of Hungary (Kelemen, Szabó, Mészáros, László, & Forgas, 2014; Lönnqvist, Szabó, & Kelemen, 2019). We identify shortcomings of the research on which these claims are based and provide evidence that “rigidity-of-the-right” does indeed characterise contemporary Hungarian politics. Specifically, we hired professional survey firms to administer measures of personal needs for order and structure, system justification and political orientation to two large, nationally representative samples in Hungary. Results revealed that self-identified rightists scored higher than leftists on needs for order and structure and system justification (Study 1,  $N = 1005$ ) and that supporters of right-wing parties (Fidesz and Jobbik) scored higher on both general and economic system justification than supporters of liberal and leftist parties (Study 2,  $N = 886$ ). In exploratory analyses, we also observed that rightists expressed more intolerance than leftists toward groups that are commonly mistreated in Eastern Europe, including the Roma, religious minorities and sexual minorities.

**Keywords:** Political psychology; Cognitive rigidity; System justification; Ideology far right.

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, one of the most influential and widely debated works in the history of social science, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Stanford (1950) proposed a psychodynamic theory of prejudice and ideology that was intended to explain why economic frustration brought on by World War I and the Great Depression contributed to the mass popularity of fascist movements in Europe from the 1920s to the 1940s. As intellectual descendants of the Frankfurt School in Germany, which explicitly combined Marxist perspectives on culture and social conflict with Freudian accounts of personality and motivation, Adorno and his co-authors (often referred to as “the Berkeley group”) sought to understand the mass appeal of fascism as a product of individual and social forces. The gist of their argument

was that “status anxiety produces authoritarian discipline which produces repression of faults and shortcomings and of aggression against authority” which is then “projected onto minorities and outsiders” (Brown, 1965/2004, p. 53).

One of the central insights of this theoretical perspective—which has received a great deal of empirical support (Altemeyer, 2006; Cunningham, Nezlek, & Banaji, 2004; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Whitley Jr. & Kite, 2009)—is that “a man who is hostile toward one minority group is very likely to be hostile against a wide variety of others” (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 9). In other words, the authoritarian is an individual for whom generalised prejudice has become a structured aspect of his or her personality. Presumably,

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this psychological make-up is part of what led millions of Europeans to join extreme right-wing movements led by the likes of Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco while displacing their hostility toward authority figures onto socially sanctioned scapegoats such as Jews, Roma (also called “Gypsies”), Communists, and gay men and lesbians.

However, the work of Adorno et al. (1950) came under intense criticism for (a) methodological flaws, especially the problem of confounding authoritarianism with acquiescent response styles, and (b) its unapologetic focus on *right-wing* authoritarianism (Brown, 2004). With respect to the first issue, Altemeyer, 2004, 2006 reinvigorated the study of authoritarianism by developing new, psychometrically improved scales for measuring right-wing authoritarianism and more thoroughly exploring its personality correlates and political implications. With regard to the second issue, the original work by Adorno et al. (1950) documented strong correlations between authoritarianism and political-economic conservatism. Nevertheless, critics of *The Authoritarian Personality* have long claimed that liberals and leftists are every bit as dogmatic and rigid as conservatives and rightists. Evidence for this claim has been hard to come by. An extensive review of the early research literature led Brown, 2004 to conclude that: “No one thus far has shown that there is an authoritarian of the left. Still the impression persists that such a type exists and that some [leftists] belong to it” (p. 66). In recent years, a few scholars have argued that rigidity-of-the-left may be as common as—or perhaps even more common than—rigidity-of-the-right, especially in Communist and post-Communist societies (Conway III, Houck, Gornick, & Repke, 2018; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Lönnqvist, Szabó, & Kelemen, 2019; Malka, Soto, Inzlicht, & Lelkes, 2014). This is an important, albeit controversial empirical issue that should be of widespread interest to social, personality and political psychologists, and so we address it here.

## HISTORY OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE

In 1990, the people of Hungary—like many of their Central and Eastern European neighbours—moved quickly and decisively to shed their authoritarian past and embrace the tenets of liberal democracy as practiced in the West. Free and fair elections were held, genuine political competition took place, citizens gained new civil liberties that had been denied them for decades, and journalists were able to cover national and international news events without fear of censorship or reprisal. In recent years, however, Hungary has come to resemble

an authoritarian state once again under the leadership of right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who frequently describes his country as an “illiberal democracy.” Members of his ruling Fidesz party have stoked anti-immigrant sentiment and rewritten the national constitution in an effort to maintain right-wing hegemony for years to come. Similar political developments of a right-wing authoritarian nature have emerged in Austria, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

In early 2019, the political status of Hungary was downgraded by Freedom House, a think tank that monitors the state of democratic freedoms around the world, from “free” to “partly free,” placing it in the same category as Pakistan, Singapore and Zimbabwe. This bestows upon Hungary the dubious distinction of making it the first European Union nation to lose its democratic status. According to Freedom House: “Hungary’s status declined from Free to Partly Free due to sustained attacks on the country’s democratic institutions by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party, which has used its parliamentary supermajority to impose restrictions on or assert control over the opposition, the media, religious groups, academia, NGOs, the courts, asylum seekers and the private sector since 2010.”<sup>1</sup> The political scientist R. Daniel Kelemen (2019) noted that “the Orbán regime has managed to consolidate control over the judiciary and nearly all the media, eliminate effective checks on its power, rig the electoral system to its advantage, stifle civil society organizations and even expel the country’s top independent university—the Central European University.”

Around the same period of time, a new far-right political party named Jobbik was launched in 2003 to compete with Fidesz. In its early years, Jobbik politicians often employed rhetoric of a blatantly racist and anti-Semitic nature, although party leaders appear to have settled more recently on a “moderate” agenda that they characterise as Christian, conservative and nationalistic. In the parliamentary elections of 2018, Jobbik took 19% of the national vote, making them the second largest party (after Fidesz) to be represented in the National Assembly. Like supporters of the Fidesz party, Jobbik supporters express hostility toward Hungary’s Roma population and take a hard line against the acceptance of immigrants and refugees. Following a political crisis in 2006, members of Jobbik began repositioning themselves as an upstart, anti-establishment party. Subsequently, they have mobilised millions of citizens who were angry and disappointed with the political situation in Hungary (Lantos & Kende, 2015). Jobbik has attracted a large number of young people, including university students—especially first-generation university students who came from smaller towns and rural villages (Szabó, 2015). Other Hungarian parties in opposition to Fidesz—including liberal-democrats, socialists and

<sup>1</sup>See <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/hungary>.

Green activists—are widely regarded as weak, disorganised, and ineffective.<sup>2</sup> Their role in Hungarian political life is largely confined to the nation’s capital, Budapest, and is therefore rather minimal at the present time, although left–right polarisation throughout the country is very high by European standards (Vegetti, 2019).

The resurgence of right-wing authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe raises a number of important questions of a political psychological nature (Jost, 2017). Given Hungary’s alliance with Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s and its forced submission to the authoritarian regime of the Soviet Union for over 40 years subsequently, it is puzzling (and disturbing) to learn that so many citizens appear to have embraced right-wing authoritarianism less than 30 years after becoming a democracy. We may ask: What are the beliefs, opinions and values that are associated with left–right ideological commitments in post-Communist societies? What are the psychological characteristics that accompany them? Are there meaningful individual differences that can help to explain the rise of ideological conflict in Central and Eastern Europe as well as variability in the degree of support vs. opposition to the status quo?

## POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AS MOTIVATED SOCIAL COGNITION

These are the kinds of questions that the theory of political ideology as motivated social cognition—which holds that there are reciprocal influences or “elective affinities” between psychological needs and ideological preferences—is especially well-poised to answer (e.g., Jost, 2006, 2017; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, 2003b). This theory proceeds from the assumption that, as Adorno et al. (1950) put it, “The individual’s pattern of thought, whatever its content, reflects his personality and is not merely an aggregate of opinions picked up helter-skelter from the ideological environment” (p. 176).

More than a half-century of social scientific research suggests that there is a relatively close connection between feelings of threat and aversion to uncertainty or ambiguity, on one hand, and politically conservative, authoritarian, and xenophobic reactions, on the other hand (e.g., Altemeyer, 2004, 2006; Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Hofstadter, 1965; Jost, Stern, Rule, & Sterling, 2017; Sales, 1973; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Wilson, 1973). Because most of this research has been conducted in Western societies, relatively little is known about the psychological

underpinnings of left–right ideology in post-Communist countries (but see Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007, for one attempt to address the question).

The observation that, on average, people who identify more with the political right than left tend to exhibit higher levels of fear and cognitive and perceptual rigidity, dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity and epistemic needs for order, simplicity, structure and closure is sometimes referred to as the “rigidity-of-the-right” phenomenon. As noted above, rigidity-of-the-right has been observed consistently throughout North America and Western Europe (e.g., Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Kimmelmeier, 2007; Rokeach, 1960; Tetlock, 1984, 2007; Tetlock, Bernzweig, & Gallant, 1985), but studies conducted in Central and Eastern Europe have been few and far between.

In terms of other elective affinities, many studies conducted in the West indicate that (a) the desire to believe in a just world in which “people deserve what they get and get what they deserve” and (b) the motivational tendency to defend and justify the legitimacy of existing social, economic, and political institutions and arrangements (i.e., system justification) help to explain the psychological appeal of conservative and rightist ideas, opinions, and leaders (e.g., Furnham, 2003; Jost, 2019; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975). System justification shares some features in common with authoritarianism, including “an attachment to ‘things as they are,’ a resistance to social change,” and an ideological commitment to “the *status quo*, religion, and tradition” (Brown, 2004, p. 43). The endorsement of system-justifying beliefs is typically associated with high levels of trust in governmental and other societal institutions, including Big Business, and this has been observed in both Eastern and Western contexts (e.g., Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Hunyady, 2018; Intawan & Nicholson, 2018; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). Recent research also suggests that system justification is generally associated with support for mainstream (or establishment) political parties and candidates rather than ideologically extreme parties and candidates (Langer, Vasilopoulos, & Jost, 2019).

## PRIOR RESEARCH ON POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN HUNGARY

The question of whether leftists or rightists in Hungary were more cognitively rigid and authoritarian immediately following the transition from Communism (or socialism) to a capitalist-democratic system was taken up

<sup>2</sup>For instance, the late Ágnes Heller wrote in 2017: “The oppositional parties are weak. All of them. Not just the Socialist party, split in two, sitting as impotent opposition in the Parliament, as well as the Green Party (LMP) and the four small liberal parties. The attempt of some parties to join forces in 2014 failed miserably. At present all of them are aware of the impending danger—the possible demise of them all in 2018. Yet they still are unable to make up their mind whether they want to win the next elections, or want rather to sit in the parliament as lame ducks” (Heller, 2017, p. 543).

by Todosijević and Enyedi (2008) in a ground-breaking study that compared data from 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2002. A number of useful conclusions were reached. First, the results revealed that there was a statistically significant positive association between rightist identification and authoritarianism, providing modest support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. Furthermore, people who described themselves as Christian, nationalist and populist tended to score higher on authoritarianism, whereas those who described themselves as liberal, democratic and socialist tended to score lower on authoritarianism. Second, there was also a significant positive association between ideological extremity (whether left or right) and authoritarianism, consistent with observations taken in the West. The conjoint effects of these two patterns were nearly identical to what has been observed in North American and Western European contexts, namely that extreme leftists were more authoritarian than centre-leftists, but extreme rightists were more authoritarian than extreme leftists, and centre-rightists were more authoritarian than centre-leftists (see Jost et al., 2003b). In other words, there was no evidence—during these years, at least—that leftists were more cognitively rigid than rightists in the Eastern European context, as argued by Greenberg and Jonas (2003), Malka et al. (2014), and Lönnqvist et al. (2019).

Another useful (and prescient) observation that comes from the analysis by Todosijević and Enyedi (2008) is that between 1994 and 2002 supporters of the Fidesz party not only moved to the right in terms of their ideological identification but also increased substantially in terms of their levels of authoritarianism. Supporters of liberal and socialist parties, by contrast, did not change in terms of ideological identification or authoritarianism during this period. These findings, too, are consistent with the notion that—as the Communist legacy recedes further into the past—citizens of Eastern Europe come to increasingly resemble citizens of Western Europe in terms of their political psychology: we see that ideological rigidity-of-the-right eclipses rigidity-of-the-left (contrary to the suggestion of Greenberg & Jonas, 2003).

Since the emergence of the right-wing Jobbik party in 2003, political psychologists in Hungary have sought to understand the basis of their appeal. Studies show that Jobbik supporters are disproportionately male, young and distrusting of democratic institutions, and they tend to reside in the poorest regions of the country, although they are not themselves among the very poorest (Bernát, Juhász, Krekó, & Molnár, 2013; Hunyady, 2018; Krekó, Juhász, & Molnár, 2011). Rightists in Hungary, including Jobbik supporters, express higher levels of ethnocentrism, intolerance, and prejudice, especially directed at Jews and the Roma population, and they tend to see political violence as more justified than other citizens do (Bartlett, Birdwell, Krekó, Benfield, & Gyori, 2012; Bernát et al., 2013; Faragó, Kende, & Krekó, 2019; Krekó et al., 2011).

Taken in conjunction, these findings are not only at odds with the notion that leftists in Eastern Europe are more rigid, authoritarian, and anti-democratic than their rightist counterparts. They are also at odds with the notion that liberals and leftists are equally prejudiced, intolerant and ethnocentric, in comparison with conservatives and rightists, as a number of scholars have argued recently (e.g., Brandt, 2017; Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Crawford, 2012; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; Wetherell, Brandt, & Reyna, 2013).

### THE NEW CASE FOR RIGIDITY-OF-THE-LEFT IN THE HUNGARIAN CONTEXT

Despite the fact that numerous studies conducted in the 21st century have supported the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, there have been two articles published recently that have sought to resurrect the rigidity-of-the-left argument in the case of Hungary. Both articles seem to be based on the same survey of 1000 Hungarian adults that was conducted in April 2010. An article by Lönnqvist et al. (2019) reported analyses based on need for cognition, authoritarianism, just world beliefs, system justification and political party affiliation. The authors concluded on the basis of these analyses that supporters of the far-right Jobbik Party in their sample ( $n = 124$ ) were more open-minded than supporters of all other political parties in Hungary and that the results of their study therefore contradicted the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, which has received so much support in other countries (e.g., Jost, 2017; Tetlock, 2007). However, there are several good reasons to doubt the conclusions drawn on the basis of these analyses.

To begin with, Lönnqvist et al. (2019) present findings that are based on the analysis of individual items rather than complete scales, apparently after dropping some items following factor analyses conducted on the same data set (see Kelemen et al., 2014, p. 203). For instance, with respect to authoritarianism the researchers report results based on a mean of four items, including two items drawn from Adorno et al.'s (1950) Fascism (or *F-*) scale (which originally contained 30 items) plus 2 new items apparently constructed by Kelemen et al. (2014). Aggregating across these four items, Lönnqvist et al. report that supporters of Jobbik had the highest overall mean score with respect to authoritarianism ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), and supporters of Jobbik scored very slightly (but significantly) higher than supporters of Fidesz ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ,  $n = 334$ ) but not supporters of the Socialist (MSZP) Party ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ,  $n = 95$ ). These findings, which reveal that supporters of all three parties scored slightly above the scale mid-point on four authoritarianism items—do not provide a solid empirical justification for rejecting the notion that rightists are more cognitively rigid than leftists. Nevertheless, the authors



conclude that their “results contradict the ‘rigidity of the right’ hypothesis” (p. 1).

Lönnqvist et al. (2019) also summarise the results of analyses based on (a) four items used to measure the General Belief in a Just World drawn from an abridged version of Dalbert’s (1999) subscale, and (b) five items modified from Kay and Jost’s (2003) eight-item general system justification scale. They find that supporters of Fidesz and the Socialist Party scored slightly higher than supporters of Jobbik on just world beliefs, whereas supporters of the Socialist Party (the most longstanding party) scored slightly higher on general system justification than supporters of Fidesz (the second most longstanding party of the three), who scored slightly higher than supporters of Jobbik (the newest party). On the basis of these results, Lönnqvist et al. (2019) concluded that “JOBBIK voters were the least satisfied with the system” and “least inclined to believe in a globally just world” (p. 295).

Likewise, Kelemen et al. (2014) argued that—in alleged contradiction to system justification theory—“Hungarian people, unlike people in Western democracies, did not justify the existing establishment” (p. 197) and that they predominantly engaged in “system derogation” by asserting that “the social and political system is inherently unfair, unjust and corrupt” (p. 212). Although other studies indicate that citizens of post-Communist countries (including Hungary) do indeed score lower on measures of system justification than citizens of Western countries (Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Hunyady, 2018), the strong conclusions reached by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019) about widespread “system derogation” tendencies in Hungary appear to be overstated, given the small and inconsistent ideological differences recorded in a survey that was conducted only a few years after the Jobbik Party was created.

To gauge ideological differences in cognitive rigidity, Lönnqvist et al. (2019) present the results of analyses based on five items selected from Cacioppo and Petty’s (1982) Need for Cognition scale, which contains a total of 34 items. Lönnqvist et al. report that supporters of Jobbik scored slightly but significantly higher on these five items ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ) than supporters of Fidesz ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) and the Socialist Party ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ), who did not differ from one another. This finding is broadly consistent with Sidanius and Lau’s (1989) deviance-sophistication hypothesis, which suggests that (under some circumstances at least) ideological extremists may be more intellectually sophisticated than supporters of mainstream political parties and ideas, in seeming contrast to the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis.

The data analysed by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019) were collected during the 2 months prior to the April 2010 parliamentary election. This means that the incumbent party at the time of the survey was the

Socialist Party, which had been in power since 2002 and had lost much of its popularity following a highly publicised incident in which the Prime Minister was caught admitting that he had misled the public about the state of the economy. These facts—that Fidesz had been out of power, at least in terms of the executive office, for 8 years, and that Jobbik had never been in office and had only been in existence for 7 years—could account for the observations in previous research that supporters of these two parties scored lower on a subset of system justification items than one would expect given their right-wing orientation. Other studies conducted in Hungary suggest that the correlation between system justification and right-wing orientation is positive and significant, ranging from .235 to .369 (Jost, 2019, Table 2; see also Caricati, 2019).

Another methodological concern is that supporters of Jobbik, which was founded as recently as 2003, are known to be younger than supporters of Fidesz, which was founded in 1988 (also as a youth party), and supporters of the Socialist Party, which was founded in 1989 when the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party was dissolved (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2012; Bernát et al., 2013). It is therefore important to take into account the effects of age on cognitive rigidity, system justification, and right-wing orientation, all of which are generally understood to be positive and significant (e.g., see Napier & Jost, 2008). For all of the reasons listed above—and in light of ongoing political developments in Hungary associated with rigidity-of-the-right that are drawing international attention—we felt that it was important to revisit the question of whether and, if so, how right-wing supporters of Fidesz and Jobbik differ not only from supporters of the Socialist Party but also supporters of the liberal-democratic coalition and the Green Party in terms of their psychology. The fruits of our research, in turn, speak to much broader controversies in the research literature on political psychology, including the questions of (a) whether or not rightists are more rigid and authoritarian than leftists (Conway III et al., 2018; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b; Kimmelmeier, 2007; Lönnqvist et al., 2019; Malka et al., 2014; Rokeach, 1960; Tetlock, 2007), and (b) whether or not rightists tend to be more prejudiced, intolerant, and ethnocentric than leftists in general (Brandt, 2017; Brandt et al., 2014; Crawford, 2012; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014; Jost, 2017; Wetherell et al., 2013).

## OVERVIEW OF PRESENT RESEARCH

In two studies, we hired professional survey firms to administer complete instruments (rather than individual items) to measure cognitive rigidity, political orientation, system justification and out-group attitudes along with several demographic variables, including age and education, to large, nationally representative samples of

Hungarian adults. Specifically, in Study 1, respondents completed a brief version of the need for cognitive closure scale, an ideological self-placement scale, and a Hungarian translation of the general system justification scale. This enabled us to investigate patterns of association among cognitive rigidity, left–right ideology, and system justification. Respondents in Study 1 also completed feeling thermometer and social distance measures with respect to eight target groups; this enabled us to conduct exploratory analyses pertaining to the question of whether generalised prejudice among leftists and rightists is or is not comparable.

In Study 2, respondents completed measures of ideological self-placement and preferences for specific political parties as well as scales of general and economic system justification. This enabled us to investigate, in even greater detail, the nature of the relationship between political orientation and system justification. Respondents were also asked to indicate their “least liked group” in the context of Hungarian society. Again, we conducted exploratory analyses to determine whether leftists and rightists would be equally intolerant of out-groups that are commonly mistreated in Eastern Europe, including the Roma, religious minorities, and sexual minorities.

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Study 1 was carried out with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University, and Study 2 with the IRB approval of New York University. Informed consent was obtained from all individual adult participants included in the study.

## STUDY 1

### Method

#### Procedure

Data for Study 1 were collected in 2014 by the survey company SoliData Ltd. using the online survey platform “kerdoivem.hu.” The target sample size was  $N = 1000$ , as in most other representative surveys of public opinion in Hungary (see Poll of Polls, 2018). We relied on a proportionally stratified, probabilistic sampling method to produce a sample that was demographically similar to the Hungarian population in terms of age, gender, level of education and settlement type. The questionnaire was administered in Hungarian. We used published Hungarian translations of measurement instruments to the extent that they were available; other scales were translated into Hungarian and back-translated to English by an independent translator. Responses were required for all items, so there was no missing data.

### Participants

The final sample size was  $N = 1005$ , all of whom finished the questionnaire. Fifty-one percent of the respondents were women and 49% were men; the mean age of participants was 41.6 years ( $SD = 13.3$ ), 17.7% were from Budapest, 21.2% from large cities, 32.2% from smaller towns and 28.9% from villages. In terms of education, 25% had received a university degree, 30% more had completed their secondary education, 25% VET and 19.8% had primary education or lower.

### Measures

To measure *personal needs for order and structure* we administered a Hungarian translation of the 10-item subscale from the need for cognitive closure scale ( $\alpha = .78$ ) used by Kruglanski, Atash, De Grada, Mannetti, and Pierro (1997). To measure *system justification* we administered Berkics’ (2009) translation of the eight-item general system justification scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ) developed by Jost et al. (2003). Responses to both instruments were provided on a scale ranging from 1 (“completely disagree”) to 5 (“completely agree”). We measured *political orientation* with a single ideological left–right self-placement item (on a 7-point scale), as in previous research on political psychology (e.g., Jost, 2006).

We measured subjective (or perceived) socio-economic status (SES) using a 3-point self-placement measure pertaining to one’s own financial situation (1 = “below average,” 2 = “average,” 3 = “above average”). The survey also included a number of questions about *out-group attitudes*, including “feeling thermometer” items on which respondents indicated how likable on a scale from 1 (“not likable at all”) to 9 (“very likable”) they regarded eight different target groups to be (see list of target groups in Table 3). For the same eight groups, respondents completed a version of Bogardus’ (1925) instrument for measuring social distance on a scale that ranged from 1 to 6 with the following labels: 1 = “would accept as a “family member,” 2 = “roommate,” 3 = “colleague,” 4 = “neighbour,” 5 = “resident of my town,” 6 = “would not accept as a resident of my country.”

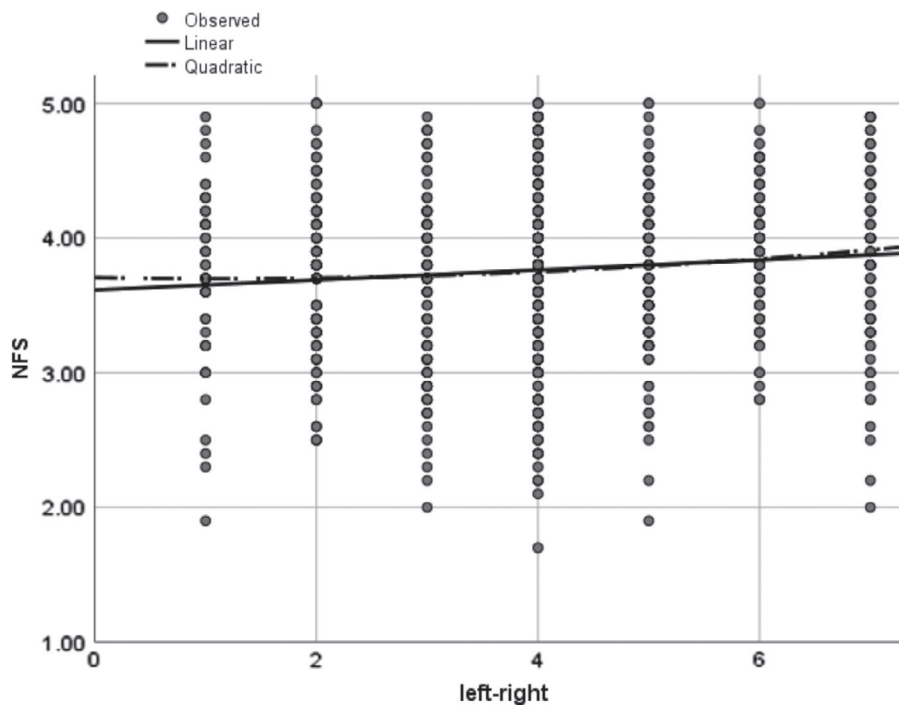
### Results

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among major study variables are shown in Table 1. Overall, respondents scored slightly above the scale midpoint on personal needs for order and structure and slightly below the scale midpoint in terms of general system justification. Individuals who scored higher on needs for order and structure tended to be older ( $r = .079$ ,  $p = .012$ ), more rightist ( $r = .093$ ,  $p = .003$ ), and to score higher on general system justification ( $r = .122$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those who

**TABLE 1**  
Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among major variables in Study 1

	Scale	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1 Needs for order and structure	1–5	3.77 (0.60)	.122***	.093*	.079*	.000	–.028
2 General system justification	1–5	2.24 (0.80)	—	.369***	.016	.055	.138***
3 Political orientation (left to right)	1–7	4.06 (1.50)		—	–.167***	–.006	–.002
4 Age	Years	41.6 (13.3)			—	.047	–.009
5 Education	1–4	2.60 (1.07)				—	.265***
6 Subjective SES	1–3	1.83 (0.61)					—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



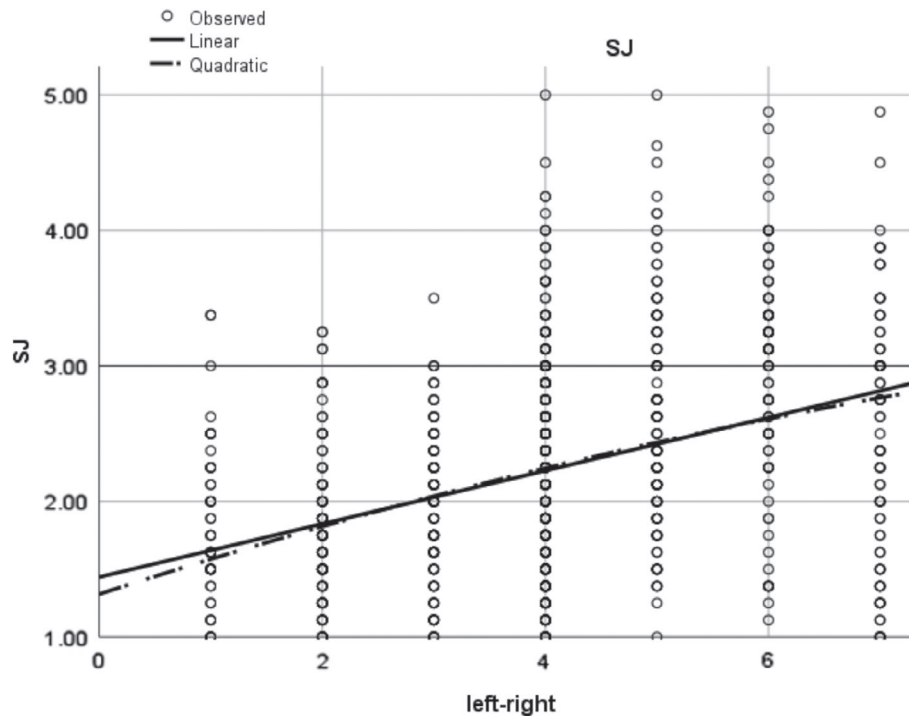
**Figure 1.** Scatter plot with linear and quadratic associations between left–right ideological self-placement and personal need for order and structure in Study 1.

scored higher on system justification tended to be slightly higher on subjective SES ( $r = .093$ ,  $p = .003$ ) and to be more rightist in terms of political orientation ( $r = .369$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Rightists were younger than leftists in this sample ( $r = -.167$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

There is prior evidence suggesting that, in addition to a linear association between rightist orientation and cognitive rigidity, there may also be a curvilinear association due to the effects of ideological extremity in general. That is, it has been observed that extreme leftists are sometimes more rigid (and authoritarian) than centre-leftists (e.g., Jost et al., 2003b; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008; but see Jost et al., 2007). We considered this possibility as well. As shown in Figure 1, there was a very slight uptick in the personal need for order and structure at the ideological extremes. However, adding a quadratic term ( $R^2 = .010$ )

explained very little additional variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ), above and beyond the linear term ( $R^2 = .009$ ).

Because Caricati (2019) observed that in several European countries there is a curvilinear association between political orientation and system justification, we considered this possibility as well. Specifically, the research program by Caricati suggested that there is often a drop in system justification at the extreme right-wing end of the ideological self-placement scale. In terms of Central and Eastern European contexts, this pattern was observed in the Czech Republic but not in Poland or Hungary. As shown in Figure 2, we did obtain very slight evidence of a curvilinear relationship. Although rightists tended to score higher on general system justification than leftists, extreme-rightists scored slightly lower than centre-rightists. Nevertheless, the overall association



**Figure 2.** Scatter plot with linear and quadratic associations between left–right ideological self-placement and general system justification in Study 1.

should still be considered to be linear, because adding the quadratic term ( $R^2 = .137$ ) explained very little additional variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ) after taking into account the linear term ( $R^2 = .136$ ).

To further investigate the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis in the Hungarian context, we conducted a multiple hierarchical regression analysis in which left–right political orientation was used to predict (a) personal needs for order and structure and (b) system justification after (c) adjusting for the effects of age, education, and subjective SES. With respect to the demographic variables entered in the first step of the first model, only age was associated with personal needs for order and structure. Older people, as expected, scored slightly higher than younger people ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t = 2.50$ ,  $p = .012$ ). Overall, the three demographic variables accounted for a negligible amount of variance in needs for order and structure ( $R^2 = 0.004$ ,  $F(3, 1001) = 2.38$ ,  $p = .069$ ). Adding left–right political orientation in the second step of the model significantly increased the amount of variance explained ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(1, 1001) = 11.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but the total amount of variance explained was low in absolute terms ( $R^2 = 0.015$ ,  $F(4, 1001) = 4.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the combined model, both age ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $t = 3.06$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and right-wing orientation ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $t = 3.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were positively associated with needs for order and structure, after adjusting for other variables (see Table 2, top two panels).

With respect to system justification, the only demographic variable that was a significant predictor in the

first step of the model was subjective SES, although the model explained only 2% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $F(3, 1001) = 6.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Respondents who perceived their financial situation in relatively favourable (vs. unfavourable) terms were more likely to regard the social system as legitimate and desirable ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $t = 4.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Adding political orientation in the second step of the model significantly increased the amount of variance explained ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.14$ ,  $F(1, 1000) = 169.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the combined model, age ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t = 2.74$ ,  $p = .006$ ), subjective SES ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $t = 4.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and right-wing orientation ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $t = 13.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were all positively associated with general system justification, after adjusting for other variables (see Table 2, bottom two panels). Overall, this model explained a significant amount of variance in system justification ( $R^2 = 0.16$ ,  $F(4, 1001) = 48.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

To address the question of whether leftists and rightists in Hungary are comparable or not in terms of ethnocentric intolerance and prejudice, we conducted an exploratory analysis focused on out-group attitudes. In Table 3, we display correlations between cognitive and ideological variables, on one hand, and attitudes toward various social groups, on the other. Individuals who scored higher on the personal needs for order and structure subscale tended to have more negative attitudes toward Roma and gay/lesbian people and to prefer more social distance with respect to those groups as well as Jews and homeless people. They expressed more positive attitudes toward Transylvanians (ethnic Hungarians living in a region of



**TABLE 2**  
Results of a hierarchical regression model investigating the effect of left–right political orientation on personal needs for order and structure (top panels) and general system justification beliefs (bottom panels) in Study 1

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	$\beta$	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 1 Outcome variable: Personal needs for order and structure							
Intercept	3.66	.09	41.08	<.001			
Age	.00	.00	2.50	.012	0.08	.02	.14
Education	.00	.02	0.13	.895	.00	–.06	.07
SES	–.03	.03	–0.87	.383	–.03	–.09	.04
Step 2							
Intercept	3.45	.11	31.95	<.001			
Age	.00	.00	3.06	.002	.10	.03	.16
Education	.00	.02	.12	.902	.00	–.06	.07
SES	–.03	.03	–0.86	.388	–0.03	–.09	.04
Political Orientation (left to right)	.04	.01	3.45	<.001	.11	.05	.17
Step 1 Outcome variable: System justification							
Intercept	1.84	.12	15.63	<.001			
Age	.01	.00	0.53	.598	.02	–.04	.08
Education	.01	.02	0.59	.553	.02	–.04	.08
SES	.17	.04	4.09	<.001	.13	.07	.20
Step 2							
Intercept	.86	.13	6.44	<.001			
Age	.01	.00	2.74	.006	.08	.02	.14
Education	.01	.02	0.61	.544	.02	–.04	.08
SES	.18	.04	4.47	<.001	.13	.08	.19
Political orientation (left to right)	.20	.02	13.03	<.001	.38	.33	.44

**TABLE 3**  
Correlations between cognitive/ideological variables and out-group attitudes

	Means (SDs)	Needs for order and structure	Political orientation (left to right)	General system justification
Roma				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	3.69 (1.97)	–.083**	–.215**	.084**
Social distance (1–6)	4.00 (1.76)	.152**	.223**	.050
Jews				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	5.21 (1.72)	–.019	–.267**	.016
Social distance (1–6)	2.94 (1.75)	.065*	.263**	.003
Gays and lesbians				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	4.73 (2.00)	–.110**	–.281**	–.086**
Social distance (1–6)	3.33 (1.68)	.120**	.247**	.106**
Homeless people				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	4.39 (1.80)	–.028	–.162**	–.054
Social distance (1–6)	4.22 (1.30)	.096**	.154**	.096**
Disabled people				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	6.37 (1.64)	.087**	.005	.032
Social distance (1–6)	2.39 (1.34)	.007	.072**	.044
Transylvanians				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	5.86 (1.90)	.062*	.329**	.300**
Social distance (1–6)	2.62 (1.63)	.017	–.148**	–.151**
Obese people				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	5.35 (1.51)	.013	–.020	–.001
Social distance (1–6)	2.46 (1.39)	.059	.060	.052
Emigrants from Hungary (to other countries)				
Feeling thermometer (1–9)	5.91 (1.61)	.036	–.031	.050
Social distance (1–6)	2.37 (1.52)	.029	–.024	–.004

Romania that was once part of Hungary) and, more surprisingly, disabled people. Individuals who scored higher on the general system justification scale expressed more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, but they expressed more positive attitudes toward Transylvanians and, also surprisingly, Roma. In terms of political orientation, rightists expressed consistently more negative attitudes (and preferred more social distance) with respect to Roma, Jews, sexual minorities and homeless people, in comparison with leftists. At the same time, rightists expressed more positive attitudes toward Transylvanians than did leftists. These results suggest that there are ideological differences in generalised prejudice in the context of Hungary that resemble those observed in the West.

## Discussion

In Study 1, we obtained very different results from those reported in previous studies of political psychology in Hungary. Unlike Lönnqvist et al. (2019), we found clear support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. Rightists scored significantly higher than leftists on personal needs for order and structure, even after adjusting for demographic factors such as age, education and SES. Moreover, we saw no evidence that Hungarian respondents were extremely “system-derogating,” as Kelemen et al. (2014) argued. Mean levels on general system justification were slightly below the scale midpoint but well within the range typically observed around the world (Cichocka & Jost, 2014; see also Caricati, 2019). Importantly, rightists scored significantly higher than leftists on a Hungarian translation of the complete general system justification scale, even after adjusting for demographic factors such as age, education and SES. This, too, is consistent with the results of prior research (Jost, 2019). Finally, an exploratory analysis revealed that rightists expressed more negative attitudes and preferred to maintain greater social distance with respect to Roma, Jews, sexual minorities and homeless people.

All of these findings are at odds with suggestions made in previous articles that the popularity of right-wing ideology in contemporary Hungary is compatible with increased openness, flexibility and system-challenging motivation. On the contrary, in terms of cognitive rigidity and prejudice, Hungarian rightists appear to closely resemble rightists in nearly every other country that has been studied to date (e.g., Jost, 2006, 2017, 2019; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b, 2008, 2009, 2017). In Study 2, we focused more specifically on political party affiliations, which enabled us to compare supporters of the two most popular right-wing parties, Fidesz and Jobbik, to supporters of other parties in Hungary.

## STUDY 2

### Method

#### Procedure

For Study 2, we hired a polling firm named Medián Opinion & Market Research Ltd. to conduct an online survey in 2017 using the Qualtrics platform. Once again, we targeted a sample size of approximately  $N = 1000$ , using a proportionally stratified, probabilistic sampling method, with the goal of obtaining a sample that would be demographically similar to the Hungarian population in terms of gender, age, level of education and type of settlement. However, the sample we obtained was higher in terms of age and education than the population as a whole.

Data were collected as part of an omnibus survey,<sup>3</sup> and measures for the current research were preceded by demographic items and a number of questions about emotion regulation strategies (not reported here). A total of 1144 respondents began the survey, but only 886 completed the entire survey. Missing data analysis using the Little MCAR test suggested that data were missing completely at random ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.36, p = .186$ ). The language of the questionnaire was Hungarian, and the same method of translation and back-translation was used for unpublished scales, as in Study 1.

#### Participants

Fifty-six per cent of the respondents were women and 41% men; nearly 3% declined to indicate their gender or responded as “Other.” The mean age of participants was 49.4 years ( $SD = 17.87$ ), 24% were from Budapest, 51.7% from other cities, and 19.1% from villages, while 5% selected the “other” option to describe their settlement (most frequently county capitals were mentioned here). 43.4% completed a university degree, 44.1% more had secondary education, 10.6% VET, and 1.9% had only primary education or less.

#### Measures

As in Study 1, we administered Berkics’ (2009) Hungarian translation of the Jost et al. (2003) eight-item *general system justification* scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ) as well as a new translation of the Jost and Thompson (2000) 17-item *economic system justification* scale ( $\alpha = .62$ ). Responses were provided in both cases on a scale ranging from 1 (“completely disagree”) to 9 (“completely agree”). We also asked respondents to indicate their *subjective*

<sup>3</sup>Study 2 was conducted as part of a broader project in collaboration with Ruthie Pliskin and Eran Halperin on “Ideological Differences in Emotion Regulation Processes in Interpersonal and Intergroup Contexts,” which was supported by National Science Foundation (NSF/SBE-BSF) Award # BCS-1627691.

**TABLE 4**  
Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among major variables in Study 2

	Scale	M (SD)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1 General system justification	1–9	3.40 (1.72)	-	.517**	.312***	-.023	.043	.141***
2 Economic system justification	1–9	4.15 (1.01)		-	.235***	-.085*	.049	.134***
3 Political orientation (left to right)	1–7	4.17 (1.11)			-	-.160***	-.029	.020
4 Age	Years	49.5 (14.9)				-	.079*	-.150***
5 Level of education	1–4	3.29 (0.73)					-	.295***
6 SES	1–5	2.30 (1.12)						-

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

*socio-economic status* on a scale ranging from 1 (“much below the average”) to 5 (“much above the average”).

Respondents indicated their *political orientation* using a left–right ideological self-placement scale that ranged from 1 (“extreme left”) to 7 (“extreme right”). We also asked respondents which *political party* they would vote for if elections were to be held on the upcoming Sunday. We listed the name of nine parties that were eligible for parliamentary elections at the time of the data collection (see Appendix), along with the response options of “other” and “I would not vote”.

For the purposes of quantitative analyses (and to maximise statistical power), we compared three groups: (a) supporters of Fidesz and their coalition partner, the Christian Democratic Party (coded as a dummy variable: 1 = Fidesz or Christian Democratic Party, 0 = all other parties; 21.4% of the sample), (b) supporters of Jobbik (coded as 1 = Jobbik, 0 = all other parties; 11.9% of the sample), and (c) supporters of liberal and leftist parties (including liberal, centrist, Socialist and Green parties, coded as 1 = all liberal and leftist parties, 0 = Fidesz, Christian Democratic Party and Jobbik; 34.3% of the sample).<sup>4</sup>

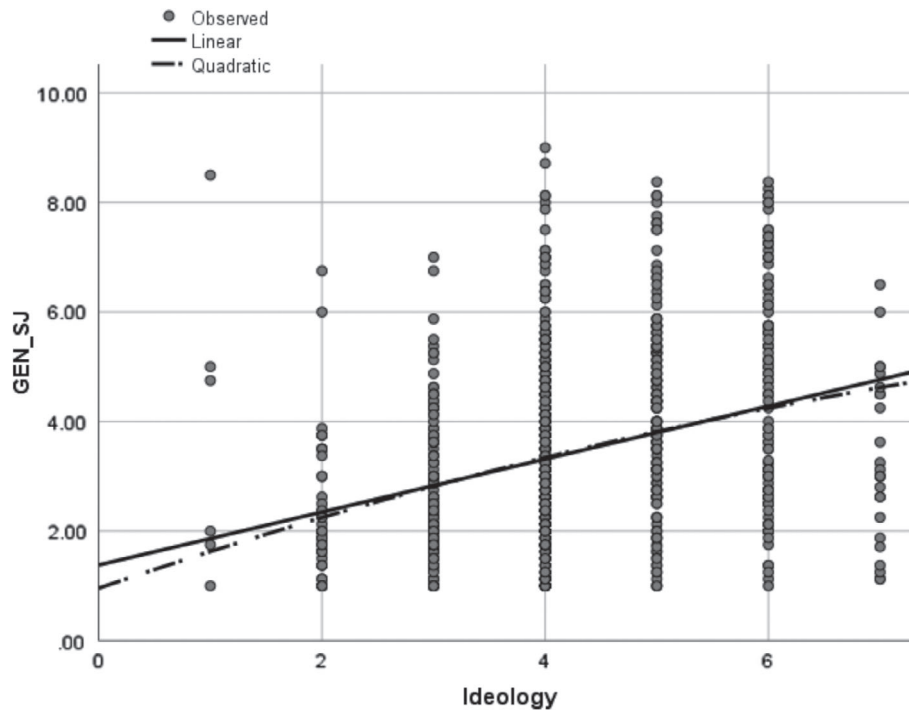
Respondents were also asked to indicate their “*least liked group*” in response to the following prompt: “Below is a list of various groups in Hungarian society that some people find objectionable. Which of these groups do you like the least?” Eight groups were listed that were deemed relevant to the Hungarian political context at the time of data collection (see list in Table 6).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among major study variables are shown in Table 4. Overall, respondents scored slightly below the scale midpoint in terms of both general and economic system justification, hinting at a general sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo. They also scored slightly above the scale midpoint in terms of left–right orientation. As hypothesized, rightists tended to score higher than leftists on both general ( $r = .312$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and economic ( $r = .235$ ,  $p < .001$ ) forms of system justification. Subjective SES was positively associated with both forms of system justification ( $r_s = .141$  and  $.134$ , respectively, both  $ps < .001$ ). Once again, rightists were slightly younger than leftists ( $r = -.150$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

As in Study 1, we considered the possibility that there would be a curvilinear association between left–right ideology and system justification. As shown in Figure 3, we observed a very slight drop in general system justification at the extreme right-wing end of the ideological self-placement scale. This pattern is consistent with results obtained by Caricati (2019) in several European countries (but not in Hungary or Poland). However, the quadratic model ( $R^2 = .098$ ) explained very little additional variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ), in comparison with the linear model ( $R^2 = .098$ ). Although Figure 3 hints at the possible existence of a rise in general system justification among extreme leftists, this observation should not be taken too seriously, because it is based on data from only three (of six) respondents who identified themselves as extreme leftists.

<sup>4</sup>The data for Study 2 were collected 1 year before the 2018 election, in which Fidesz received 49% of the votes, Jobbik received 19%, and the left-green-liberal opposition received 22%. Clearly, the percentages we obtained were quite discrepant from the actual election results. There may be several explanations for this, including the fact that an entire year elapsed between the time of data collection and the election. In addition, we included support for parties that failed to receive at least 5% of the vote, which are not tallied in official results. Finally, as we noted above, our sample was higher in terms of age and education than the population as a whole.



**Figure 3.** Scatter plot with linear and quadratic associations between left–right ideological self-placement and general system justification in Study 2.

For the sake of completeness, we also considered the possibility that there would be a curvilinear association between left–right ideology and economic system justification. As shown in Figure 4, the association was generally a monotonic one. However, there was a very small quadratic effect suggesting that the association between ideology and economic system justification flattened out at the extreme values of right-wing orientation ( $R^2 = .060$ ), resulting in a slight increase in explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .005$ ) when compared to a linear association ( $R^2 = .055$ ).

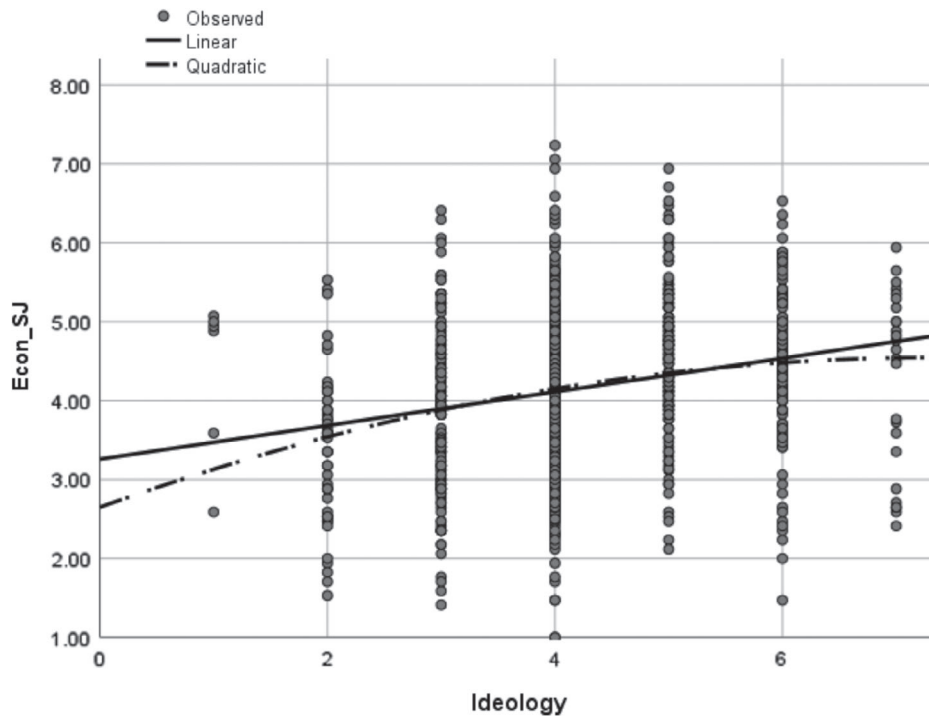
For purely descriptive purposes, we have also illustrated the relationship between political party support and ideological variables in Figure 5. As expected, supporters of Fidesz and Jobbik identified themselves as more right-wing than supporters of the Socialist Party, Green Party and the liberal-democratic coalition. Supporters of Fidesz and Jobbik also scored higher on both general and economic system justification than the other three groups, and Fidesz supporters scored higher on both forms of system justification than Jobbik supporters. Fidesz supporters scored especially high on general system justification, relative to supporters of other parties. The two most religious groups were Fidesz supporters and, somewhat surprisingly, Socialist supporters. Results of post hoc Tukey tests of multiple comparisons are presented in Table 10.

As in Study 1, we conducted a multiple hierarchical regression analysis in which left–right ideological orientation was used to predict system justification after adjusting for the effects of age, education and subjective SES.

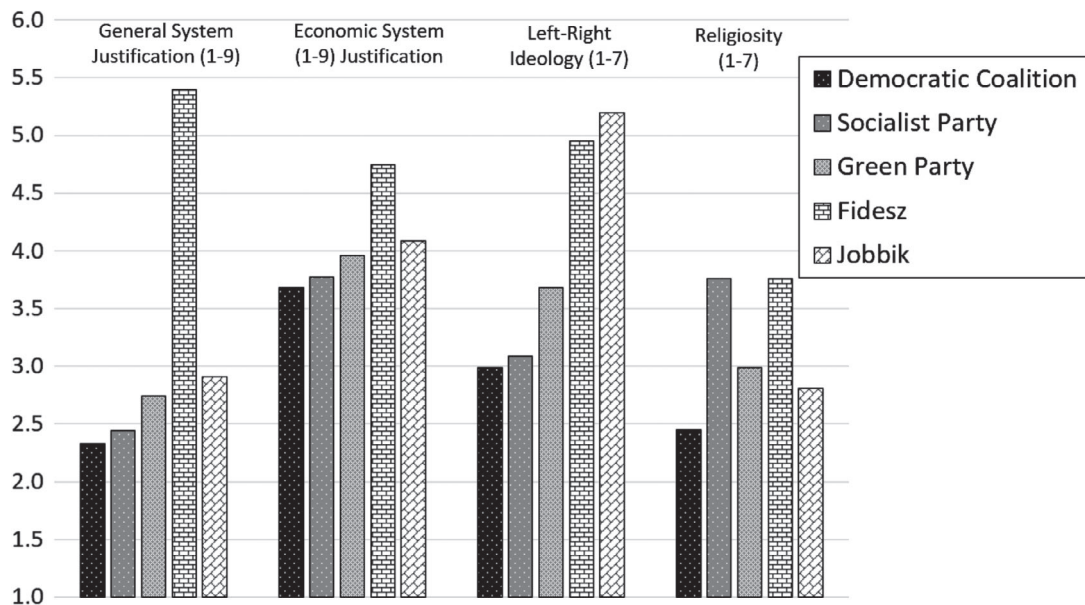
With respect to general system justification, we observed that respondents who were higher in terms of subjective SES scored higher than respondents who were lower in subjective SES ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $t = 4.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Overall, the three demographic variables accounted for only 1.9% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $F(3, 881) = 6.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Adding left–right political orientation in the second step of the model significantly increased the amount of variance explained ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.10$ ,  $F(1, 880) = 97.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the combined model, both subjective SES ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $t = 4.39$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and right-wing orientation ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 9.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were positively associated with general system justification, after adjusting for other variables (see Table 5, top two panels). Total explained variance was 11.6%,  $F(4, 880) = 29.89$ ,  $p < .001$ .

With respect to economic system justification, subjective SES was again the only significant predictor in the first step of the model ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 3.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 2.6% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.03$ ,  $F(3, 881) = 8.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Adding political orientation in the second step of the model increased the amount of variance explained by 5% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.05$ ,  $F(1, 880) = 48.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the combined model, subjective SES ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 4.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and right-wing orientation ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 6.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both positively associated with economic system justification, after adjusting for other variables (see Table 5, bottom two panels). Overall, this model explained a modest amount of variance in economic system justification ( $R^2 = 0.08$ ,  $F(4, 880) = 19.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ).





**Figure 4.** Scatter plot with linear and quadratic associations between left–right ideological self-placement and economic system justification in Study 2.



**Figure 5.** Mean levels of system justification, ideological self-placement, and religiosity as a function of political party preferences in Study 2

In Table 6, we present the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) in which we compare supporters of Fidesz, Jobbik, and liberal/leftist parties (see Appendix for additional information pertaining to *post-hoc* comparisons of means). Supporters of Jobbik were younger and less educated than the other two groups, but there were no differences in subjective SES among the three groups.

Supporters of Fidesz and Jobbik did indeed identify themselves as more right-wing than supporters of the other parties, but they did not differ significantly from one another. Supporters of Fidesz scored significantly higher in terms of general and economic forms of system justification, in comparison with the other two groups. Supporters of Jobbik scored significantly higher than supporters of liberal

TABLE 5

Results of a hierarchical regression model investigating the effect of left–right political orientation on general system justification beliefs (top panels) and economic system justification beliefs (bottom panels) in Study 2

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	$\beta$	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 1 Outcome variable: General system justification							
Intercept	2.87	.34	8.57	<.001			
Age	.00	.00	.02	.988	.00	–.01	.01
Education	–.01	.09	–.06	.953	.00	–.18	.17
SES	.23	.05	4.26	<.001	.15	.13	.34
Step 2							
Intercept	.49	.40	1.22	.223			
Age	.01	.00	1.53	.126	.05	.00	.01
Education	.01	.08	.16	.872	.01	–.15	.18
SES	.23	.05	4.39	<.001	.15	.13	.33
Political Orientation (left to right)	.49	.05	9.85	<.001	.32	.39	.59
Step 1 Outcome variable: Economic system justification							
Intercept	3.96	.19	20.62	<.001			
Age	.00	.00	–1.94	.053	–.07	–.01	.00
Education	.03	.05	.69	.489	.02	–.06	.13
SES	.12	.03	3.97	<.001	.14	.06	.19
Step 2							
Intercept	2.97	.24	12.63	<.001			
Age	.00	.00	–.89	.372	–.03	–.01	.00
Education	.04	.05	.87	.386	.03	–.05	.14
SES	.12	.03	4.01	<.001	.14	.06	.18
Political orientation (left to right)	.20	.03	6.97	<.001	.23	.15	.26

TABLE 6

Comparison of demographic and psychological variables among supporters of different parties

	Liberal/left parties <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		Fidesz <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		Jobbik <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		<i>F</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta_p^2$
Age (years)	51.48 <sub>a</sub>	(15.16)	48.85 <sub>a</sub>	(13.59)	43.85 <sub>b</sub>	(13.15)	10.28	2563	<.001	.35
Education	3.45 <sub>a</sub>	(0.66)	3.38 <sub>a</sub>	(.68)	3.00 <sub>b</sub>	(.70)	18.00	2595	<.001	.06
SES	2.39	(1.12)	2.45	(1.10)	2.16	(1.12)	2.37	2595	.095	.01
Political orientation (left to right)	3.45 <sub>a</sub>	(0.84)	4.97 <sub>b</sub>	(0.93)	5.20 <sub>b</sub>	(1.26)	214.22	2595	<.001	.42
General system justification	2.54 <sub>a</sub>	(1.15)	5.40 <sub>b</sub>	(1.59)	2.91 <sub>c</sub>	(1.28)	280.67	2595	<.001	.49
Economic system justification	3.86 <sub>a</sub>	(1.02)	4.74 <sub>b</sub>	(0.86)	4.09 <sub>a</sub>	(0.96)	51.52	2595	<.001	.15

Note. Different subscripts indicate significant differences between the groups.

and leftist parties on general system justification but not economic system justification. Thus, supporters of liberal and leftist parties scored lowest on both forms of system justification, but the difference between their scores and those of Jobbik supporters was statistically significant only with respect to general system justification.

We also conducted a multiple regression analysis in which political party preferences (rather than left–right political orientation per se) were used to predict (a) general system justification and (b) economic system justification after (c) adjusting for the effects of age, education and subjective SES (see Table 7). Respondents who were higher in subjective SES again scored higher in terms of general system justification, although the three demographic variables only explained 2.1% of the variance,  $F(3, 874) = 6.12, p < .001$ . Adding party preferences to the second step of the model greatly

increased the amount of variance explained ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.38, F(3, 869) = 181.05, p < .001$ ). Supporters of Fidesz scored significantly higher than the other two groups in terms of general system justification ( $\beta = .52, t = 17.25, p < .001$ ), whereas supporters of liberal and leftist parties scored significantly lower than the other two groups ( $\beta = -.18, t = 5.91, p < .001$ ). Support for Jobbik was unrelated to general system justification in this model, which explained a significant amount of variance overall ( $R^2 = 0.39, F(6, 869) = 95.48, p < .001$ ).

With respect to economic system justification, people who were high in subjective SES tended to score higher than those who were low in subjective SES, although the amount of variance explained by demographic variables was small ( $R^2 = 0.026, F(3, 874) = 8.70, p < .001$ ). Adding party preferences to the second step of the model significantly increased the amount of variance

TABLE 7

Results of a hierarchical regression model investigating the effects of political party preferences on general (top panels) and economic (bottom panels) system justification in Study 2

Predictor	B	SE	T	p	$\beta$	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 1 Outcome variable: General system justification							
Intercept	2.93	.33	8.77	<.001			
Age	.01	.00	-.42	.967	-.01	-.01	.01
Education	-.02	.09	-.19	.847	-.01	-.19	.15
SES	.22	.06	4.07	<.001	.15	.12	.33
Step 2							
Intercept	2.67	0.28	9.69	<.001			
Age	.01	.00	.63	.529	.08	-.01	.01
Education	.01	.07	-.01	.999	.00	-.14	.14
SES	.18	.04	4.15	<.001	.13	.09	.26
Fidesz	2.19	.18	17.25	<.001	.52	1.94	2.43
Jobbik	-.25	.15	-1.65	.100	-.05	-.56	.05
Liberal/left parties	-.66	.11	-5.91	<.001	-.18	-.87	-.44
Step 1 Outcome variable: Economic system justification							
Intercept	3.98	.19	20.58	<.001			
Age	-.01	.00	1.99	.047	-.07	-.00	.00
Education	.03	.05	.64	.516	.02	-.06	.13
SES	.12	.03	3.94	<.001	.14	.06	.19
Step 2							
Intercept	3.87	.19	20.17	<.001			
Age	-.01	.00	-1.65	.099	-.05	-.01	.00
Education	.05	.05	0.93	.351	.32	-.05	.14
SES	.11	.03	3.75	<.001	.13	.05	.17
Fidesz	.64	.88	7.23	<.001	.26	.46	.81
Jobbik	-.20	.11	-0.19	.851	-.07	-.23	.19
Liberal/left parties	-.24	.77	-3.14	.002	-.12	-.40	-.09

TABLE 8

Selection of "least liked groups" as a function of political party support

	Liberal/left parties				Fidesz				Jobbik				Total	
	Count	%	$\chi^2$	p	Count	%	$\chi^2$	p	Count	%	$\chi^2$	p	Count	%
Refugees	18	6.25	16.00	<.001	37	20.1	19.10	<.001	12	11.32	.01	.920	67	11.59
Roma	69	23.96	4.33	.038	38	20.7	6.97	.008	54	50.94	34.46	<.001	161	27.85
Economic immigrants	15	5.21	5.29	.021	22	12.0	6.55	.010	8	7.55	.01	.920	45	7.79
Muslims	10	3.47	26.32	<.001	31	16.8	14.82	<.001	16	15.09	4.00	.046	57	9.86
Gays, lesbians	7	2.43	11.49	.001	20	10.9	13.32	<.001	6	5.66	.00	.984	33	5.71
Football hooligans	169	58.68	113.42	<.001	36	19.6	35.88	<.001	10	9.43	42.77	<.001	215	37.20
Total	288	100			184	100			106	100			578	100

explained ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.103$ ,  $F(3, 869) = 34.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Supporters of Fidesz scored significantly higher than the other two groups in terms of economic system justification ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $t = 7.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas supporters of liberal and leftist parties scored significantly lower than the other two groups ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t = -3.14$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Support for Jobbik was unrelated to economic system justification in the combined model, which explained a significant amount of variance overall ( $R^2 = 0.126$ ,  $F(6, 865) = 22.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

We conducted an exploratory analysis of responses to the question about "least liked groups" to determine whether leftists and rightists in Hungary were equally likely to display ethnocentric intolerance and prejudice. Supporters of Fidesz were most likely to cite the Roma, refugees and football hooligans as their least liked groups (see Table 8). To a lesser extent, they also disliked economic immigrants and gay men and lesbians. Supporters of Jobbik overwhelmingly cited the Roma as their least liked group, followed by Muslims, refugees and

football hooligans (in much smaller numbers). Supporters of liberal and leftist parties were most likely to select football hooligans as their least liked group, followed by the Roma.

To compare the frequency of choices by party preferences, we analysed the least liked groups that were chosen by at least 10 respondents from one of the three groups of respondents. This left us with six outgroups: refugees, Roma, economic immigrants, Muslims, gays/lesbians and football hooligans. According to a Pearson's chi-square analysis, choices of least liked groups were not identical for different groups of respondents ( $\chi^2(1, 10) = 161.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). We therefore conducted a contingency table analysis to determine whether the choice of specific out-groups was higher than expected following a procedure recommended by Beasley and Schumacker (1995). The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 8.

Fidesz supporters were significantly more likely than would be expected by chance (given the choices of all three respondent groups) to identify refugees, Muslims and gay men and lesbians, and they were less likely to identify football hooligans as their least liked group (using the Bonferroni corrected  $p$  value of .003). Jobbik supporters were significantly more likely than would be expected by chance to identify the Roma as their least liked group, and they were less likely to identify football hooligans. Supporters of liberal and leftist parties were more likely than would be expected by chance to identify football hooligans as their least liked group, and they were less likely to identify refugees, Muslims and gays and lesbians. (The directions of these differences were established by inspecting the signs of the adjusted residuals from the chi-square analysis).

## Discussion

In Study 2, we again obtained results consistent with the notion that the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis does indeed hold in the contemporary Hungarian context. Although respondents did, on average, score below the scale midpoint on both general and economic system justification measures, it would be an exaggeration to conclude that Hungarians today are “system-derogating,” as Kelemen et al. (2014) argued. Furthermore, individuals who identified themselves as rightist (vs. leftist) in political terms and supporters of the two major right-wing parties, Fidesz and Jobbik, scored significantly higher in terms of general and economic system justification—in contrast to the strong conclusions reached by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019). Rightists also expressed more negative attitudes than leftists with respect to the Roma, religious minorities (especially Muslims) and sexual minorities.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Results obtained in the two studies we conducted yield substantive conclusions that are very different from those reached by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019). Consistent with research conducted in other settings (e.g., Jost, 2017, 2019; Jost et al., 2003a, 2003b, 2008, 2009), we observed that rightists in Hungary scored higher than leftists on personal needs for order and structure and that supporters of the two major right-wing parties, Fidesz and Jobbik, scored significantly higher in terms of both general and economic forms of system justification, in comparison with supporters of the liberal-democratic coalition, the Socialist Party and the Green Party. Furthermore, these differences in terms of political psychology held even after adjusting for partisan and ideological differences in terms of age, education, and SES.

One clear explanation for the differences between our results and those reported in previous studies of political psychology in Hungary is that the political context shifted in important ways between 2010—when the survey data analysed by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019) were in fact collected—and 2014 (when the data from our first study was collected) and 2017 (when the data from our second study was collected). By 2014, Fidesz had clearly solidified its power, beginning its second term in government in possession of two-thirds of all seats in Parliament. At this point, Fidesz aggressively attacked independent media organisations and eroded democratic institutions in a number of ways. Thus, their party was firmly in power, and their motivation to defend and justify the status quo would have been very high for reasons of collective self-interest (or group justification).

At that point in time, Jobbik remained an opposition party but it managed to maintain a relatively high level of support, especially given that it was still a very new party. In response to the public's concerns about increasing authoritarianism and the right-wing populism of Fidesz, Jobbik leaders attempted to move their party to the centre, dropping its openly hostile rhetoric toward Roma people (Krekó & Juhász, 2018). According to results from the European Social Survey, by 2016 there were no differences in terms of left–right ideological self-placement between supporters of Fidesz and Jobbik (ESS, 2016), although Jobbik had originally sought to challenge Fidesz from the right.

During this same period, liberal, leftist and Green parties struggled to construct a unified opposition; their support waned throughout the country. In 2017, at the time of our second data collection, Viktor Orbán's self-described “illiberal democracy” was fully established and backed by authoritarian and right-wing populist leaders around the world, but there were no significant changes in terms of support for the opposition (see Krekó & Enyedi, 2018).



To recap, in 2010—the year of the survey analysed by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019)—both of the right-wing parties were in opposition to the socialist government. By 2017, however, one of the right-wing parties was firmly in power, and the other had become the second most popular party in the country.

Another difference between our research program and earlier work by Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019) is that we administered complete system justification scales and a complete subscale used to measure personal needs for order and structure, whereas they presented results based on composites of a relatively few selected items after dropping some items based on the results of factor analyses. In light of growing methodological concerns associated with the use of ad hoc measures and individual items (Flake & Fried, 2019; Flake, Pek, & Hehman, 2017; Hussey & Hughes, 2018; Pietryka & Macintosh, 2017), we believe that it is preferable to administer and analyse data based on complete scales. In this sense, conclusions based on our analyses may be more solid than those reached in previous research on political psychology in Hungary.

At the same time, there are clear limitations of our research. For one thing, we administered only one measure of cognitive rigidity and no direct measures of authoritarianism. For another, we were not able to distinguish between social and economic dimensions of ideology (Azevedo, Jost, Rothmund, & Sterling, 2019), nor did we investigate other psychological differences between leftists and rightists in terms of personality and other characteristics, such as existential motivation (Jost, 2017). Future research would do well to incorporate multiple instruments to more systematically catalogue the nature of ideological symmetries and asymmetries in the context of Central and Eastern Europe.

With respect to out-group attitudes, exploratory analyses provided no evidence that liberals and leftists in Hungary were equally prejudiced and intolerant, in comparison with rightists—as several authors have claimed in the context of Western politics (e.g., Brandt, 2017; Brandt et al., 2014; Crawford, 2012; Crawford & Pilianski, 2014; Wetherell et al., 2013). On the contrary, rightists consistently expressed more hostility than leftists toward out-group members who are often mistreated in the Hungarian context, including the Roma people, religious minorities (especially Muslims but also Jews), and sexual minorities (gay men and lesbians). When liberals and leftists were asked to identify their “least liked group,” they overwhelmingly chose football hooligans, which is not a group that suffers a great deal of intolerance or persecution in Hungarian society. There was indeed evidence that some leftists also disliked the Roma, but they did not dislike them as intensely as rightists did. The relative dearth of intolerance and prejudice expressed by leftists in contemporary Hungary may be surprising to

some readers, given the nation’s Communist legacy. Nevertheless, our findings are in line with previous research, which shows that right-wing authoritarianism is a strong predictor of the tendency to justify the use of violence against the Roma, Jews and sexual minorities (as well as banks, politicians and multinational companies) in the contemporary Hungarian context (Bartlett et al., 2012; Bernát et al., 2013; Faragó et al., 2019; Krekó et al., 2011).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In our view, Kelemen et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2019) deserve credit for drawing attention to the fact that upstart right-wing parties (like Jobbik) can sometimes appeal to young, even highly educated people by presenting themselves as anti-elitist and anti-establishment. Similar dynamics may be at work in Italy and the U.K., with the sudden rise of right-wing populists such as Matteo Salvini and Nigel Farage, respectively. In the aftermath of the refugee crisis of 2015, a number of European leaders have managed to gain power and influence by attacking establishment parties for failing to tighten the borders. However, none of this should be confused with open-mindedness or a desire to rectify past injustices. Rightists in Hungary—as in Italy and the U.K. and many other countries—are indeed more cognitively rigid, more prejudiced and intolerant, and more system-justifying both in general and with respect to the current economic system than are their counterparts on the left (Jost, 2017, 2019). Rumours of the death of the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis (e.g., Brandt et al., 2014; Conway III et al., 2018; Lönnqvist et al., 2019; Malka & Soto, 2015), in other words, have been greatly exaggerated. One can only hope that research programs such as this one will not only deepen our understanding of why some people—but not others—appear to be captivated by the image of an “illiberal democracy,” as in the case of Hungary, but will also point the way to an alternative, more just, more tolerant, and more truly democratic state of affairs in Central and Eastern Europe.

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## APPENDIX

### TABLE A1

Party preferences in Study 2

### TABLE A2

Post-hoc comparison of the main variables of Study 2 by political party support