The Psychology of Legitimacy

Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations

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1   Emerging Perspectives on the Psychology of Legitimacy

John T. Jost and Brenda Major

With this book, we are proud to present what we see as the best research currently being conducted in a rapidly emerging interdisciplinary field seeking to understand processes of legitimation in social relations. The contributors are leading researchers in relatively diverse fields and sub-fields of sociology, psychology, political science, and organizational behavior, but the themes they cover are overlapping and mutually informative. The book is constructed primarily around the authors and their theories, and there is an uncommon degree of dialogue among the authors. The chapters converge on key questions concerning the ways in which people construct ideological rationalizations for their own actions and for the actions of others taken on behalf of valued groups and systems. The result is a general approach to the psychological basis of social inequality, which may be applied to distinctions of race, gender, social class, occupational status, and many other forms of inequality.

In this introductory chapter we wish to accomplish three main things. The first is to articulate briefly the conceptual relevance of legitimacy for social, organizational, and political psychology. We argue that the concept applies extremely well to key questions in each of these fields, although psychologists have generally not addressed it systematically. Second, we provide a rational reconstruction of recent history leading up to serious interest in the psychology of legitimacy in the mid-1990s. Specifically, we highlight sociological and social psychological influences from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and show how they led to a spate of papers that were published in 1993 and 1994 linking ideology, justice, and intergroup relations and prompting our interest in putting this book together. Our third and final goal in this chapter is to introduce the specific contributions to this volume, placing them in a common context. The chapters address multiple levels of analysis, from individual cognitions and motivations

that shape the self-concept, to the role of social identification and conflict between groups, to organizational and political systems that reinforce differences in status, power, and prestige. We hope you will agree that a number of focused and generalizeable principles concerning the legitimation of social arrangements emerge from this unique compilation of interdisciplinary collaborators.

The Concept of Legitimacy in Social, Organizational, and Political Psychology

Although the concept of legitimacy may be relatively new to empirical psychology, it has played an extremely prominent role in social and political philosophy for well over 2,000 years, as Zelditch recounts in the next chapter. Only very recently has legitimacy found its way into the study of psychology, largely because of the cumulative efforts of the researchers who are brought together in this volume across disciplinary boundaries. What this book represents is a convergence of interest in the notion that attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes serve to legitimize social arrangements and to provide ideological support for social and political systems (see also Ellemers, 1993; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Major, 1994; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, 1993; Tyler, 1990). The starting assumption of this chapter and this book is that issues of legitimacy have far-reaching implications for a great many core topics in social, organizational, and political psychology.

In the domain of politics, Machiavelli is well known for having argued that power depends upon legitimacy and social influence. Several centuries later, it is now a well-established fact in sociology and political science that leaders and authorities are effective to the extent that they are perceived as having legitimate authority and acting in accordance with prevailing norms of appropriate conduct (e.g., Berger & Zelditch, 1998; Parsons, 1937; Useem & Useem, 1979; Weatherford, 1992; Worchel, Hester, & Kopala, 1974; Zelditch & Walker, 1984). The converse also seems to be true: when systems and leaders are perceived to be illegitimate, their power begins to erode very quickly in the absence of physical force (e.g., Gurr, 1970; Martin, Scully, & Levitt, 1990; Moore, 1978). Legitimacy is, quite literally, the key to politics, and it therefore deserves a central place in any theory of political psychology (e.g., Flacks, 1969; Kelman, 1969; Tyler, 1990).

But issues of legitimacy and justification enter into ordinary as well as overtly political forms of social interaction, and they are therefore integral to the concerns of social psychology more generally (e.g., Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost & Banaji,

1994; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Major, 1994; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Legitimacy is crucial to impression management as well as to developing a meaningful sense of the self as a worthwhile and valid individual. People are required by others to justify their attitudes and behaviors and to demonstrate that they are acting in a legitimate manner (e.g., Anderson, Krull, & Weiner, 1996; McLaughlin, Cody, & Read, 1992; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Staw, 1976). Even privately, we seek to develop rationalizations for our own thoughts, feelings, and actions, and we hope to attain legitimacy in our own eyes as well as the eyes of others (e.g., Aronson, 1973/1989; Festinger, 1957; Jost, 2001; Weick, 1993). The concept of legitimacy, therefore, has importance not only for political life but for everyday social interaction as well (Ridgeway, this volume). In part, this is because people are intuitive politicians who are trying to balance various constituencies (Tetlock, 1991), and in part this is because people genuinely value integrity, fairness, rationality, and other characteristics that are strongly associated with perceptions of legitimacy (Bierhoff, Cohen, & Greenberg, 1986; Folger, 1984; Greenberg & Cohen, 1982; Lerner & Lerner, 1981).

Achieving legitimacy is an important practical matter for both public institutions and private organizations (e.g., Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Hannan & Carroll, 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1990), especially when controversial events force them to defend their legitimacy in response to actual or anticipated criticism from external sources (e.g., Bettman & Weitz, 1983; Bies & Sitkin, 1992; Elsbach, 1994). Here again, we see a blend of impression management and justice motives, and this blend is integral to the enterprise of legitimation (e.g., Elsbach & Sutton, 1992; Greenberg, Bies, & Eskew, 1991). In institutional and organizational contexts, there is a bright side and a dark side to issues of legitimacy. Organizations can build loyalty and create positive work environments by fostering legitimacy (e.g., Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Tyler, this volume). At the same time, however, the carrying out of extreme acts of exploitation, violence, and evil is socially and psychologically feasible only to the extent that perpetrators are able to make their actions seem legitimate (e.g., Darley, 1992; Jackman, this volume; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Lerner, 1996; Milgram, 1974). Thus, the concept of legitimacy is central to the operation of institutional norms and organizational behavior in ways that are both heartening and disheartening.

As the extreme example of violence in social relations makes clear (e.g., Jackman, this volume), the act of legitimation becomes even more significant when people must justify beliefs or behaviors that are unpopular or counternormative. Thus, discriminatory or prejudicial treatment of outgroups must be justified and made to seem legitimate (e.g., Allport, 1954;

Hunyady, 1998; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius, 1993; Tajfel, 1981). Even more basically, social inequality is the kind of thing that requires legitimation in order for it to be accepted (e.g., Della Fave, 1980; Jost, 2001; Lane, 1962; Olson & Hafer, this volume). The primary function of ideological thought, in general, is to legitimate ideas and actions that might otherwise be objectionable (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). Thus, "dominant ideologies" serve to rationalize social and economic forms of inequality and to preserve the sense that such inequality is fair and legitimate (e.g., Jackman & Senter, 1983; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). This is the essence of Marxist theories of legitimation, which are addressed in several chapters in this book with special regard to consequences for intergroup relations (e.g., Jackman; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje; Zelditch).

Despite compelling calls for research attention over the years (e.g., Della Fave, 1980; Flacks, 1969; Kelman, 1969), the concept of legitimacy has not been the focus of much systematic thought in social psychological circles. This omission is especially surprising given the extremely broad applicability of the concept of legitimacy to nearly every dimension of social life, and given the clear ideological role played by legitimating beliefs in the maintenance of authority as well as the perpetuation of inequality and injustice. Thus, while the concept of legitimacy has been central to the disciplines of sociology and political science for decades and to social and political philosophy for many centuries, it has never occupied center stage among psychologists – that is, until very recently. What the book you are now holding attempts to do is to capture an emergent focus on the social psychology of legitimacy, a focus that came into view for a somewhat loose aggregate of researchers in the mid-1990s.

A Rational Reconstruction of Research Programs on the Psychology of Legitimacy

In what hindsight could scarcely allow us to see as coincidence, a relatively large number of social psychological articles and book chapters published in 1993 and 1994 addressed, in different but compatible ways, the theme of legitimacy as it applies to the study of ideology, justice, and intergroup relations. These writings were motivated primarily by social identity theory (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994), social dominance theory (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), and theories of system justification or system legitimation (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Major, 1994; Martin, 1993), all of which are covered in this book. Although these three perspectives differ in

important ways, they converge on the notion that people use ideas and beliefs to reinforce the legitimacy of the status quo, at least under some circumstances. Outside of the theoretical boundaries of social identity, social dominance, and system justification perspectives, other researchers were simultaneously exploring the role of ideological justifications and their consequences for stigma, prejudice, and the self-concept (e.g., Crandall, 1994; Crocker & Major, 1994; Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Fiske, 1993; Tomaka & Blascovich, 1994). At the same time, issues of legitimation were being revisited by sociologists and organizational theorists (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Elsbach, 1994; Jackman, 1994), who seemed to be influenced by progress in theoretical and experimental social psychology. Social psychologists had largely borrowed the concept of legitimation from organizational sociology, and by the mid-1990s they finally appeared to be ready to give something back.

Probably none of the contributions of 1993 or 1994 would have taken the forms they did, were it not for a number of important books and papers that had already appeared in the 1980s and early 1990s and which built upon earlier sociological works. Some of the most influential of these addressed phenomena such as the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975), obedience to authority (Darley, 1992; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Tyler, 1990), the tolerance of injustice (Crosby, 1984; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Martin, 1986), dominant ideology (Billig, 1982; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Moscovici, 1988), and false consciousness (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & McGraw, 1986). Still others focused on issues of legitimation in intergroup relations (Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), including social stereotyping (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jackman & Senter, 1983; Ridgeway, 1991; Spears & Manstead, 1989), group consciousness raising (Gurin, 1985), and collective protest (Martin, Brickman, & Murray, 1984; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Although these publications represented the fruits of relatively autonomous research programs, their commonalities may be appreciated in historical setting. Specifically, we can now see that a relatively clear consensus emerged concerning the pivotal role played by attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes in the ideological perpetuation of the status quo through social and psychological processes of justification, rationalization, and legitimation.

Very recently, then, a number of social psychologists on both sides of the Atlantic have incorporated political dimensions into their theorizing about persons and social groups, and so the concept of legitimacy has found its way, somewhat independently, into discussions of selfhood, entitlement, ideology, justice, stereotyping, and intergroup relations (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Hunyady, 1998; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Major, 1994; Martin,

1993; Ridgeway, 1991; Sidanius, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tyler, 1990, 1997; Wright et al., 1990; Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997). All of this suggested to us that the time was ripe to capture the intellectual moment of discovery and integration and to propel work forward on the social psychological aspects of legitimation and the role of legitimacy in the perpetuation of social inequality.

It was in light of these developments that we decided to hold a conference at Stanford University in August 1998 on "The Psychology of Legitimacy." The goal of the conference was to highlight what we saw as some of the best social scientific research being conducted on the ways in which people maintain social inequality through stereotypes, justifications, rationalizations, and legitimizing ideologies. Because these questions were at the cutting edge of several different disciplines (including psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational behavior), we felt that the time was right to assemble top researchers in various fields and to attempt the shared integration of insights coming from diverse theoretical perspectives and distinct research methodologies.

What this volume represents, then, is a unique convergence of theoretical opinion that began to emerge in social psychological treatments of ideology, justice, and intergroup relations by the time of the Stanford conference. In many ways, this convergence is traceable not only to the cumulative work of the 1980s and 1990s that we have already mentioned, but also to the traditions of equity theory, relative deprivation theory, and social identity theory. According to equity theories of justice, people will accept outcomes as fair and legitimate to the extent that they are directly proportional to inputs (Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). As Folger (1986) points out, issues of legitimacy and justification enter into calculations of equity in practice, so that people are willing to accept outcomes that are not commensurate with their abilities or efforts, as long as they are treated with consideration and provided with reasonable explanations for the inequity. Thus, equity theorists identify an important basis for perceiving injustice as well as a legitimate rationale for getting people to accept unequal outcomes, but they probably underestimate the strong moderating role played by procedural justifications (Folger, 1986; Haines & Jost, 2000).

Theories of "relative deprivation," like equity theories, were largely borrowed from sociological accounts (e.g., Gurr, 1970; Pettigrew, 1967; Runciman, 1966) and applied to individual and group judgments about fairness and entitlement (e.g., Cropanzano & Randall, 1995; Crosby, 1976; Major, 1994; Martin, 1993; Olson, 1987; Wright et al., 1990). The guiding notion was that people would experience injustice not necessarily because

of absolute levels of deprivation but rather because they were deprived relative to others. In many ways, this insight opened the door to the empirical study of the tolerance of injustice (Martin, 1986), the denial of personal discrimination (Crosby, 1984), and false consciousness (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Tyler & McGraw, 1986). The traditions of equity theory and relative deprivation are exemplified most clearly in this volume by Olson and Hafer, whose chapter integrates work on relative deprivation and the belief in a just world.

Finally, work on the psychology of legitimacy owes a considerable debt to the legacy of Henri Tajfel, who in the 1970s successfully drew on sociological works such as Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Albert Hirschman's (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* in the course of proposing a psychological theory of intergroup relations that placed issues of system legitimacy and stability at its core (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1993; Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wright et al., 1990). The essence of social identity theory, insofar as it applies to issues of legitimacy, is that members of low status groups will accept their inferiority to the extent that they perceive the status differences between groups to be both highly legitimate and unlikely to change. This insight has provided inspiration for system justification theorists such as Jost and Banaji (1994) who have sought to pick up where social identity theory leaves off (see also Jost et al., this volume; Major & Schmader, this volume).

Tajfel is an especially important model not only because of his interdisciplinary breadth, but also because he explicitly linked intergroup relations to issues of justice, justification, ideology, and myth (Tajfel, 1981, 1984b). For instance, he argued that an "important requirement of research on social justice would consist of establishing in detail the links between social myths and the general *acceptance* of injustice" (Tajfel, 1984b, p. 714). Interestingly, Tajfel was quick to observe that much work remained to be done in integrating insights concerning ideology, justice, and intergroup relations (see also Jost, 2001). He noted, for example, that the asymmetry in patterns of ingroup and outgroup favoritism between members of high status and low status groups "has been recognized to some extent in the social identity approach to intergroup relations," but he concluded that "this is not enough" (Tajfel, 1984b, p. 700). It is fitting that this volume, which seeks to rekindle interest in questions of legitimacy in social relations, is being published by the same press, Cambridge University Press, that published most of the enormously influential books written or edited by Tajfel (1981, 1982, 1984a).

Tajfel's untimely death in 1982 caused a fairly serious setback in making progress on these ambitious theoretical and empirical goals (see Robinson,

1996). The influence of social identity theory has remained very strong, but most empirical research on the theory has addressed issues of personal and collective self-esteem, situational and individual variation in identification with the ingroup, and perceptual and cognitive processes of self-categorization (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Work on the system-level concepts of legitimacy and stability fell off somewhat after Tajfel's death, although that tradition of theorizing has been represented admirably by three of the contributors to this volume: Russell Spears, Naomi Ellemers, and Stephen Wright. The group-value model developed by Tom Tyler (1989, 1990) and Allan Lind (Lind & Tyler, 1988), too, owes a considerable debt to Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, as do social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999) and system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Burgess, 2000).

   The Hungarian philosopher of science Imre Lakatos argued that scientific research programs acquire coherence only retrospectively, through the rational reconstruction of advances and developments. Although the convergence in the 1990s of social, organizational, and political psychological perspectives on topics of legitimacy and legitimation may have been something of an accident, meaning can be provided now. The question, therefore, that the reader may pose in relation to this book is, "What are the emerging insights of the psychological study of legitimacy?" By way of introduction to this volume, we summarize the elements of a collective answer to this question.

An Introduction to This Volume

This book is organized according to five major substantive themes. Following this introduction, part two recounts historical perspectives on sociological and psychological theories of legitimacy and contains personal and profound chapters by two pioneers of the study of legitimacy, Zelditch and Kelman. Part three focuses on understanding the cognitive and perceptual processes involved in the appraisal of legitimacy and includes contributions by Crandall & Beasley, Yzerbyt & Rogier, and Robinson & Kray. Part four concerns the tolerance of injustice among members of disadvantaged groups, with special attention given to consequences for self and society. It features chapters by Olson & Hafer, Major & Schmader, Ellemers, and Wright. Part five addresses issues of stereotyping and ideology in the legitimation of inequality, integrating insights from theories of social identification, social dominance, and system justification. This section contains chapters by Ridgeway; Glick & Fiske; Sidanius, Levin, Fed-

erico, & Pratto; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje; and Jost, Burgess, & Mosso. Part six of the book deals specifically with institutional and organizational perspectives on legitimation, which are represented well by Elsbach, Tyler, and Jackman.

Historical Perspectives on Sociological and Psychological Theories of Legitimacy

In chapter 2, Zelditch provides a rare historical overview of a key sociological concept from the perspective of one of the field's luminaries. Zelditch and his mentor, Talcott Parsons, are responsible for much of the last 50 years of sociological scholarship on legitimacy, but he does not restrict his scope to that time period. Rather, Zelditch succinctly and yet comprehensively reviews 24 centuries' worth of attention to the concept of legitimacy, beginning with Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, moving through Machiavelli, Locke, and Rousseau, on up to Marx, Weber, Mills, and Gramsci, and into the late twentieth century, when sociological and psychological concerns finally begin to converge. Zelditch's review is extraordinarily useful because of the subtle and informed ways in which he distinguishes various theoretical accounts of the legitimation of social relations, some of which stress the establishment of consensus (e.g., Aristotle, Rousseau, Parsons, Lipset), some of which stress the existence of conflict (Machiavelli, Marx), and some of which seek to combine and integrate elements of conflict and consensus (Weber, Gramsci, Blau, Berger & Luckmann, Stinchcombe, Habermas, Dornbusch & Scott, Zelditch & Walker).

Zelditch also makes a strong case for why we need theories of legitimacy that are not merely theories of conflict, consensus, or of normative rule following. He points out that "other things beside norms become legitimate and other things beside norms create legitimacy," and he draws on institutionalist and neo-institutionalist theory to connect beliefs about what is "taken for granted" to social processes of legitimation and stability. Zelditch also covers social and psychological needs to provide legitimate accounts to others, in the traditions of C. Wright Mills and Scott and Lyman. By laying out the full range and scope of sociological and psychological theories of legitimation, Zelditch has provided an invaluable context for appreciating how and where the remaining chapters fit both in terms of historical influences and conceptual space.

In chapter 3, Kelman reflects on nearly 40 years of personal and professional history, applying the concepts of legitimacy and illegitimacy to the study of power, authority, social influence, collective action, and political change. Although Kelman worries that the concept of legitimacy may be overly broad, he argues for a core sense of the term in which legitimacy

refers to the moral basis of social interaction. According to Kelman, the concept of legitimacy reminds us that many aspects of social behavior and social structure are determined not so much by interests and preferences, as we often assume, as by rights and obligations.

The balance of Kelman's chapter is devoted to a highly insightful discussion of the opponent processes of legitimization and delegitimization, which, he argues, help to explain major shifts in social norms within a society or segments of a society as well as extreme violations of norms. Legitimization and delegitimization are defined as socially sanctioned processes of categorizing and recategorizing individuals, groups, actions, and systems in such a way that they fall either inside or outside of the domain of moral acceptability and obligation. Generally, these processes are set into motion by authorities of some kind, and he observes that the legitimization of any given act or actor entails the delegitimization of the opposite set of acts or actors. He illustrates how these processes operate in tandem by drawing on historical examples such as racial desegregation in the United States, the role of the church in facilitating or inhibiting social change, and the temporal shift whereby former "terrorists" become legitimate negotiating partners (e.g., the PLO and the IRA). His analysis of legitimacy also sheds new light on such diverse cases as political assassination, gross violations of human rights (e.g., massacre and torture), the anti-smoking crusade, and the use of psychedelic drugs at Harvard in the 1960s. Kelman's chapter highlights admirably the double-edged nature of legitimacy: he notes that although processes of legitimization and delegitimization can serve disastrous ends, such as the preservation of unjust, oppressive systems of social stratification, they can also serve the causes of justice, progress, and social change. We are able to build a better, more legitimate system only to the extent that we delegitimize social arrangements that came before.

Cognitive and Perceptual Processes in the Appraisal of Legitimacy

Chapter 4 builds on prior research by Crandall (1994) linking ideological beliefs about personal control to appraisals of legitimacy and anti-fat prejudice. Crandall and Beasley explore the perceptual processes underlying appraisals of legitimacy in domains of politics, leadership, and public policy, and they argue provocatively that the perception of legitimacy is a combined product of the underlying structure of social perception and a "simple justification ideology." Drawing on the work of Fritz Heider, they argue that perception is motivated to create structural balance and to maintain affective consistency among acts and actors that are linked. Attributing control or responsibility is one way of connecting individuals (or

groups or social systems) to actions or outcomes, thereby creating the perception of a single unit. When judged as a unit, the affective and moral value of the person (or group or system) is equated with the value of the corresponding action or outcome in order to preserve affective consistency. According to their framework, if an outcome is bad and perceived as controllable, then the person performing the action must be seen as bad. The two perceptual processes of affective consistency and unit relationship, when combined with simple justification ideologies that bad people deserve bad treatment and that people who receive bad treatment must be inherently bad, result in what the authors refer to as a naïve perceptual theory of justice and legitimacy.

In chapter 5, Yzerbyt and Rogier build on an earlier argument linking beliefs about the essential characteristics of social groups and categories to ideological processes of legitimation and system justification (Yzerbyt et al., 1997). Specifically, they argue that social attributions concerning "entitativity" (the degree to which a group is perceived as a tight, cohesive unit) serve the function of legitimizing prejudice and discrimination. Research summarized here indicates that people frequently commit the group-level equivalent of the "fundamental attribution error" (Ross, 1977), such that entitative groups are perceived as sharing certain essential characteristics that explain and justify their social standing, whereas aggregates of individuals do not exhibit these properties. This work is important because it highlights the role of cognitive and perceptual processes that are implicated in ideological legitimation on behalf of the group and the social system as a whole. Yzerbyt and Rogier document ways in which stereotypes about the essential biological characteristics of different social groups serve to perpetuate the status quo by granting it inevitability and legitimacy. A biologically essential difference between people, in other words, is a legitimate difference.

Past research by Robinson and Keltner (1996) links political ideology to cognitive biases in favor of the status quo, with clear relevance for the exacerbation of intergroup conflict. This work builds on the concept of "naive realism," according to which people experience their own opinions as reflective of objective reality and the opinions of their adversaries as tainted by ideological bias (Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995). Studies summarized by Robinson and Kray in chapter 6 of this volume suggest that there is an asymmetry with regard to ideological bias in that defenders of the status quo misperceive their ideological opponents to a greater degree than do critics of the status quo. For instance, a study of English professors indicated that traditionalists interested in preserving the "Western Canon" were more likely to misperceive the actual prefer-

ences of revisionists than vice versa. Presumably, this is due to the fact
that in order to succeed and control their fate, relatively powerless perceiv-
ers must expend greater levels of attention and effort on learning about
powerful targets than powerful perceivers must expend on powerless tar-
gets (Fiske, 1993). Robinson and Kray further apply these insights to con-
texts of negotiations and intergroup relations, arguing that attackers of the
status quo are much more likely to be misperceived and delegitimized
than are defenders of the status quo. This work is theoretically and practi-
cally important because it links cognitive processes such as distortion and
bias to specific structural positions such as the degree of social power that
one holds. It also provides an ideological context that takes into account
different strategic and motivational needs to preserve the status quo.

The Tolerance of Injustice: Implications for Self and Society

Olson and Hafer open chapter 7 with an observation that is central to
this book, namely that if a system that distributes outcomes unequally
among its members is to survive, then its members must view the inequal-
ities as justified and legitimate. Thus, perceived legitimacy must come not
only from those who benefit, but also from those who are disadvantaged
by the system, as many others have argued (e.g., Crosby, 1984; Jost &
Banaji, 1994; Major, 1994; Martin, 1993; Tyler, 1990). In explaining why the
disadvantaged so often view unequal arrangements as fair, Olson and
Hafer hone in on three processes that they believe contribute to the toler-
ance of injustice: (a) the motivation to believe that the world is a just and
fair place (Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975), (b) the tendency for indi-
viduals to deny and minimize personal experience with discrimination
(Crosby, 1984), and (c) the fact that reporting resentment about deprivation
is viewed as socially undesirable.

Olson and Hafer argue on the basis of their data that each of these three
processes increases the tolerance of deprivation by affecting either the
perception of the extent of deprivation or the intensity of negative emo-
tional arousal that motivates assertive actions for improvement. For in-
stance, they find that individuals who believe strongly that the world is a
fair and just place are more likely to defend this belief by rationalizing
their own plight and by concluding that they deserve their own negative
outcomes. In addition, they summarize research indicating that self-
presentational goals of appearing likeable and/or competent do interfere
with expressing resentment to others about experienced injustice. They
conclude that although the tendencies to believe in a just world, to mini-
mize discrimination, and to try to appear likeable and competent are

adaptive in many circumstances, they can also serve to justify inaction and to legitimize the status quo. Thus, the work of Olson and Hafer forces us to confront the important insight that even psychologically adaptive motivations can contribute to the legitimation of inequality.

In chapter 8, Major and Schmader similarly address paradoxical responses exhibited by members of disadvantaged and oppressed groups, including their apparent tolerance of injustice and elevated levels of self-esteem. They focus on cognitive construal processes that mediate the relationship between objective circumstances and affective and behavioral reactions to those circumstances. In particular, they examine the attributions or explanations that people provide for potentially discriminatory social outcomes, and the extent to which people value social outcomes of which they are deprived. Major and Schmader argue that the ways in which members of disadvantaged groups construe their social outcomes are shaped by strong tendencies both to enhance and protect self-esteem (ego-defense/ego justification) and to perceive the world as legitimate and justified (system justification). These two tendencies have conflicting effects on construal processes among disadvantaged groups (see also Jost et al., this volume). Major and Schmader argue that these construal processes are governed by appraisals of legitimacy, which are subjective perceptions of the fairness of the distribution of social outcomes among individuals or groups.

Major and Schmader propose that when distributions are appraised as legitimate, construal processes are more likely to follow system justification patterns. That is, members of low status groups will tend to attribute their lesser outcomes to unfavorable qualities of themselves or their group and to highly value (rather than devalue) domains in which their group is disadvantaged relative to higher status groups. When distributions are appraised as illegitimate, however, construal processes follow ego-defensive patterns. Specifically, members of disadvantaged groups will be more likely to attribute their outcomes to external factors beyond their control (such as discrimination) and to devalue domains in which they or members of their group are disadvantaged. Major and Schmader go on to argue that appraisals of legitimacy may buffer the self-esteem of members of socially disadvantaged groups, through their impact on construal processes. They summarize a series of survey and experimental studies that provide empirical support for these predictions. Major and Schmader conclude with the observation that although appraising specific situations and outcomes as illegitimate may temporarily buffer self-esteem, the development of chronic beliefs of illegitimacy may have psychological costs. This

possibility may help to explain why legitimizing ideologies are so widely endorsed, even among the most disadvantaged in society (see also Jost et al.; Ridgeway; Sidanius et al., this volume).

In chapter 9, Ellemers addresses how processes of social identification contribute to the legitimization and stabilization of existing intergroup status differences. Social identity theory enumerates several motivated strategies that people may use to cope with membership in a lower status group, including strategies focused on improving the position of the individual (called "social mobility") as well as strategies focused more on improving the position of the group as a whole ("social creativity" and "social competition"). Ellemers argues that there is a fundamental difference between individual-level and group-level strategies, insofar as they involve different psychological predispositions, different perceptions of oneself and the group, and different behavioral responses. Ellemers further argues for the provocative thesis that the pursuit of individual mobility harms rather than helps the future chances of fellow group members, and thus serves to legitimize existing intergroup differences.

Ellemers reviews experimental evidence that individuals who pursue strategies of individual mobility seek to establish that they are different from the rest of their group. She also finds that improving the prospects for individual mobility (i.e., increasing the perceived permeability of group boundaries) increases the perceived legitimacy of intergroup status differences as well as the degree of competitive behavior that is directed toward fellow ingroup members, while simultaneously decreasing concerns for the well-being of the ingroup as a whole. Ellemers bolsters these laboratory findings with survey data indicating that professional women in the Netherlands – individuals who have been individually successful despite disadvantages encountered as a result of their social group membership – are particularly likely to perceive themselves as non-prototypical members of their gender group, and to apply gender stereotypes to other women. She concludes that the combined effects of token mobility and perceptions of intergroup differences held by disadvantaged group members who have successfully pursued individual mobility strategies serve to justify and perpetuate existing status relations.

Chapter 10, by Wright, further addresses how the perception of permeability of group boundaries, even if more illusory than real, can legitimize and maintain intergroup inequalities. Wright addresses the psychological and behavioral consequences of tokenism, which he defines as an intergroup context in which the boundaries between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups are not closed, but where there are severe restrictions on access to advantaged positions on the basis of group membership. He

considers the context of tokenism from three perspectives: (a) that of disadvantaged group members who are denied access to the higher status group; (b) that of "successful" tokens, that is, members of the disadvantaged group who gain access to the higher status group; and (c) that of advantaged group members. In a series of experiments summarized in this chapter, Wright contrasts responses to tokenism with responses to completely closed and/or open intergroup contexts from each of these three perspectives.

The conclusion that emerges from this impressive program of research is that rather than being a benign step in the process of social change, tokenism serves to legitimate and perpetuate the prevailing social arrangements between groups. For example, research taking the perspective of members of disadvantaged groups demonstrates that those who are denied access to higher status groups under conditions of tokenism show little interest in collective action. The success of a very few disadvantaged group members appears to undermine interest in collective action by creating ambiguity about injustice (whether it is legitimate or illegitimate), about the target of injustice (whether it is personal or collective), and about the likelihood of support for collective action from ingroup members (how stable or unstable the situation is). Research taking the perspective of successful tokens illustrates that although they recognize and are angered by the collective injustice of tokenism, they are nonetheless unwilling to support collective or non-normative actions on the part of disadvantaged ingroup members in response to this injustice. In a manner consistent with Ellemers' thesis, evidence suggests that their unwillingness to support collective action may result from their rapid shift in identification from the low status group to the high status group. Finally, research demonstrates that tokenism obscures recognition of injustice by members of advantaged groups and reduces their likelihood of supportive action on behalf of the disadvantaged group, especially when the needs of their own group are highly salient. Taken together, the findings of this body of research suggest that allowing a very small window of opportunity to disadvantaged group members permits the position and privileges of advantaged group members to go unchallenged. Consequently, tokenism can serve as an empirically effective tool by which advantaged groups can legitimize and maintain their position of power.

Stereotyping, Ideology, and the Legitimation of Inequality

For several years, proponents of "status-expectation states" theory (e.g., Berger, 1982; Berger & Zelditch, 1998; Ridgeway, 1991; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986) have examined the ways in which interpersonal interactions tend to

confirm stereotypical expectations, with the result being that systems of social status, power, and prestige become reinforced and legitimated. The development of this work is placed in broad historical context by Zelditch's chapter 2 and brought up to date by Ridgeway, whose experimental research complements many of the psychological contributions collected here. Ridgeway's chapter 11 addresses the fundamental question of how consensual status beliefs develop. She defines status beliefs as widely held beliefs that people who belong to one social category are more worthy or deserving or competent than those who belong to another social category.

Because status beliefs both affirm the significance of a given categorical distinction and justify unequal outcomes based on that distinction, they are pervasive and fundamental forms of legitimizing ideologies. Status construction theory, which Ridgeway summarizes here, holds that interactions between people who differ both on easily observable attributes and in terms of material resources are crucial to the development and spread of status beliefs. A central claim of the theory is that goal-oriented encounters serve to create status beliefs about personal attributes that favor members of privileged groups. The theory assumes that resource differences that are associated with observable characteristics produce different expectations about competence and worthiness and that these expectations provide the basis for each actor's degree of influence and conformity in the situation. Repeated social interaction in which members of one category are more influential than members of another category leads both actors and observers to form consensual, compensatory status beliefs, which are further spread when actors treat others according to these beliefs and expectations.

There are several important implications that follow from Ridgeway's program of research. One is that people can be "taught" status beliefs merely by repeatedly witnessing someone like themselves being treated by a different other as though their difference had status value. Thus, she argues that any factor that gives one group a systematic advantage over another group in social interaction hierarchies across the population will eventually create consensual status beliefs about the value of the categorical distinctions. These status beliefs, because they are consensual, serve to legitimize the structural inequality between the categorical groups and locate the basis of the inequality more firmly within categorical membership itself. Ridgeway's analysis highlights the fact that failing to react against (speak out, criticize) a social event serves to legitimize that event. Kelman echoes this observation in chapter 3 with an example of how faculty members at Harvard failed to speak out against curriculum-based

drug use and thereby implicitly legitimized the practice. The implication here is that inaction itself becomes a form of legitimation.

Chapter 12, by Glick and Fiske, builds on Mary Jackman's (1994) earlier argument in *The Velvet Glove* as well as on social dominance theory and system justification theory in order to explain attitudes toward subordinate groups that are ambivalent because they contain elements of both hostility and benevolence. They focus, therefore, on the role of ambivalent stereotypes in legitimizing and maintaining group inequality. They argue compellingly that two structural aspects of intergroup relations – relative socioeconomic status and type of interdependence (cooperative or competitive) – determine the contents of stereotypes; status is said to be associated with competence, whereas the type of interdependence determines whether a group is viewed as warm and sociable or not.

According to Glick and Fiske, ambivalent prejudices are not only the most common forms of prejudice, but they are also particularly effective at legitimizing the structure of group relations, because they can be defended in ways that purely hostile stereotypes cannot. Their analysis highlights two forms of ambivalent prejudice: paternalistic prejudice, which is directed at socioeconomically unsuccessful, non-competitive outgroups that are viewed as warm but incompetent (e.g., women), and envious prejudice, which is directed at socioeconomically successful, competitive groups that are seen as competent but not warm (e.g., Jews). Research summarized by Glick and Fiske leads to the conclusion that even favorable stereotypes of low status groups (as warm, friendly, sociable) can serve to legitimize the status quo, which is an argument made also by system justification theorists (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., this volume; see also Hunyady, 1998).

Chapter 13, by Sidanius, Levin, Federico, and Pratto, is concerned with the ubiquity of group-based social hierarchies and how such hierarchies are established and maintained without the use of physical force. Sidanius et al. approach this question from the perspective of social dominance theory, which holds that the many specific varieties of group-based oppression and conflict that exist (e.g., sexism, racism, classism) are all manifestations of a general set of more fundamental processes that are similar across different social systems. According to the theory, "legitimizing ideologies" play a central role in justifying support for or opposition to group-relevant social policies. In order to be properly called "legitimizing," Sidanius et al. argue that an ideology must be shown to mediate between a general desire to establish and maintain group-based inequality (operationalized as social dominance orientation) and the endorsement of

social policies that either enhance or attenuate the social hierarchy (e.g., support for the death penalty, support for affirmative action). Theory and research on social dominance demonstrate that the strength of the relation between legitimizing ideologies and group-level variables (such as social dominance orientation and ingroup identification) increases as the power and status of the group increases (see also Jost et al., this volume). Thus, we know from social dominance theory, as from social identity theory and system justification theory, that members of advantaged groups (who benefit from the status quo) are the most likely to justify and legitimize it.

Social identity theory, we have already stated, deserves a great deal of credit for bringing the concepts of stability and legitimacy to the psychological study of intergroup relations (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wright et al., 1990). Specifically, social identity theorists have argued that members of disadvantaged groups are likely to justify the status quo and internalize a sense of inferiority to the extent that the system is perceived as legitimate and stable and to the extent that they cannot conceive of cognitive alternatives (Turner & Brown, 1978). In chapter 14, Spears, Jetten, and Doosje update theoretical and empirical progress on social identity theory as regards issues of legitimacy, and in so doing they engage other theories, such as social dominance theory and system justification theory.

Spears et al. argue that both ingroup favoritism and outgroup favoritism require some degree of legitimation, and they claim that the ease with which these patterns of intergroup behavior may be legitimized is a function of "social reality." What this means is that members of low status groups are more likely to accept the legitimacy of their own inferiority and display outgroup favoritism when there is a clear, well-established, nonoverlapping status-related difference between their own group and a higher status outgroup. According to their interpretation of social identity theory, strongly identifying members of low status groups will reject their inferiority and feel legitimate in displaying ingroup favoritism whenever the status-relevant information is open to question, that is, when they have observed only a small number of cases or when the variability of both groups is relatively high. Thus, Spears et al. seek to demonstrate the ways in which members of disadvantaged groups juggle motives for social identification and ingroup bias with the constraints of social reality.

System justification theory was first proposed by Jost and Banaji (1994) as an attempt to unify social and political theories of ideology and justice with theories of intergroup behavior. Specifically, Jost and Banaji linked outgroup favoritism among members of low status groups to the system justifying tendency to legitimize existing forms of social arrangements.

Chapter 15, by Jost, Burgess, and Mosso, summarizes empirical progress on this theory and compares it to perspectives stressing social identification and social dominance. They argue that past evidence (much of which has been produced by contributors to this volume) concerning the causes and consequences of the legitimation of inequality points to the conclusion that members of low status groups are often forced to make (conscious or unconscious) choices between supporting their own group or supporting the social system, and between seeing the self as valid and legitimate or believing that the system is valid and legitimate (see also Major & Schmader, this volume).

Jost et al. thus argue that for members of high status groups, motives for self-enhancement, ingroup bias, and system justification are consistent and complementary, whereas for members of low status groups, these motives are often in conflict or contradiction with one another. One consequence of this state of affairs is that members of disadvantaged groups are more likely to express attitudinal ambivalence toward their own group than are members of advantaged groups (Jost & Burgess, 2000). Another consequence is that for members of advantaged groups, a system justifying ideology like opposition to equality is related positively to self-esteem and ingroup favoritism, whereas for members of disadvantaged groups opposition to equality is related negatively to self-esteem and ingroup favoritism (Jost & Thompson, 2000). By distinguishing clearly among needs or motives at the level of individual, group, and system, system justification theory helps to integrate a wide variety of theoretical principles and empirical findings having to do with self-enhancement, social identification, stigma, social dominance, belief in a just world, and the tolerance of injustice.

Institutional and Organizational Processes of Legitimation

In the field of organizational behavior, the importance of achieving legitimacy in the eyes of customers and other relevant constituencies has been rediscovered by Elsbach (1994) and her collaborators (e.g., Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). By uniting the impression management goals of public and private organizations with issues of ideology and justice at the level of the institution, this work has successfully integrated "micro" and "macro" levels of analysis, so that legitimacy emerges as a desideratum both internally and externally. Chapter 16, by Elsbach, is quite consistent with the work of Tyler (1989, 1990) on procedural justice, in that both stress the importance and value of conveying rationality, consideration, and legitimacy to relevant audience members. Drawing on a case analysis of public relations mistakes made by Sears Auto Centers, Elsbach argues that when

organizations find themselves in the position of defending decisions that led to unforeseeable negative outcomes, then they ought to focus on communicating the rationality of their decision-making process, but when they must explain controversial outcomes that were foreseeable, then they ought to communicate consideration and sincere regret. Thus, Elsbach builds on research to offer practical advice for managers and organizational representatives about how to anticipate the legitimacy concerns of employees and customers.

The "group value model" developed by Tyler (1989, 1990) applies principles of social identification to explain attitudes toward legal and political authorities. Specifically, Tyler argues in chapter 17 that trust and respect are important values that determine not only perceptions of the legitimacy of authorities, procedures, and systems, but also the extent to which people are loyal and obedient to them. Thus, Tyler summarizes a substantial body of his own research, leading to the conclusion that judgments of legitimacy are more closely linked to procedural concerns about fair interpersonal treatment than to distributive concerns about outcome favorability (see also Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Authorities who use fair decision-making procedures and who treat their followers with dignity and respect are perceived as more legitimate than those who do not, because dignified treatment satisfies needs for social identification and conveys to people that they are respected members of valuable, high status groups that are worthy of pride. When people feel pride in institutional and organizational memberships, they have a great deal to gain from deference, insofar as their favorable views of themselves are intertwined with the effectiveness and the success of the group. Quite consistent with Tyler's argument is Kelman's observation that the national system is perceived as legitimate to the extent that it provides identification and meets the needs and interests of its citizens.

Addressing issues of system justification and "false consciousness," Tyler argues that people may accept lesser outcomes from an organization if they experience its procedures to be fair and legitimate. On the other hand, people will be dissatisfied with an organization in which they experience their treatment by authorities to be rude and demeaning, even if they are not deprived of resources. Both of these implications flow from the same argument – that satisfaction and views about the legitimacy of authorities develop from identity-based rather than resource-based needs or concerns (see also Spears et al., this volume).

In an extremely provocative chapter, Jackman examines the role that violence plays in the stability and maintenance of unequal social relations. The relationship between violence and legitimate rule long has posed a