

Conflict, Delegitimization, and Violence

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Abstract

In this chapter we focus on a key sociopsychological mechanism that frees human beings from their normative and moral restraints and therefore leads individuals and groups to engage in acts that intentionally harm others, including discrimination, oppression, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide. Delegitimization is defined as *the categorization of a group, or groups, into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values and therefore deserving maltreatment*. It thus plays a major role in intense, vicious, violent, and prolonged intergroup conflicts by legitimizing, and allowing the involved group members to carry out, the most immoral acts. In the chapter, we elaborate on our conception of delegitimization, distinguish it from other similar constructs in the literature, and review relevant theoretical and empirical studies that illustrate the utility of the concept in understanding various intergroup practices, particularly behaviors in intergroup conflicts. Second, we describe its roots and development in societies, focusing on the context of intractable conflict. Third, we outline the various sociopsychological negative consequences of delegitimization. Finally, we outline potential ways to reduce delegitimization, focusing on both individual-psychological and collective-structural strategies.

Key Words: Stereotype, delegitimization, dehumanization, conflict, violence, intergroup relations, prejudice

In this chapter we focus on a key sociopsychological mechanism that leads individuals and groups to engage in acts that intentionally harm others, including discrimination, exploitation, oppression, physical violence, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide. The sociopsychological process we call *delegitimization* plays a major role in intense, vicious, violent, and prolonged intergroup conflicts by legitimizing participation in the cycle of violence.

We recognize that delegitimization is not the only sociopsychological mechanism that underlies the malevolent and immoral behaviors that exacerbate and perpetuate violent conflicts. Social psychology

has elucidated also such mechanisms as conformism, obedience, or deindividuation that facilitate hurting other people (Cialdini, 2004; Milgram, 1974; Postmes & Spears, 1998; Zimbardo, 2007). But in this chapter, we argue that delegitimization represents a salient mechanism that frees human beings from their normative and moral restraints and justifies participation in violence, including in the most evil actions. Therefore, we argue that it is vital to elucidate its nature and uses not only by the perpetrators of violence, but also by leaders and groups who construct a delegitimizing narrative about outgroups and as a result may eventually turn into perpetrators because this narrative leads by its

nature to harm-doing. Delegitimization as a narrative, we argue, appears in public discourse as well as in cultural and educational products (Bekerman & Maoz, 2005; Durante, Volpato, & Fiske, 2010; Savage, 2007) and can become a fundamental part of the culture of conflict that maintains intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2010, in press).

In the present chapter, we will elaborate on our conception of delegitimization, distinguish it from other similar constructs in the literature, and review relevant theoretical and empirical studies that illustrate the utility of the concept in understanding various intergroup practices, particularly behaviors in intergroup conflicts. Specifically, we first define delegitimization, describe its nature, and delineate its scope. Second, we describe its roots and development in societies, focusing on the context of intractable conflict. Third, we outline the various sociopsychological consequences of delegitimization. Finally, we outline potential ways to reduce delegitimization, focusing on both individual-psychological and collective-structural strategies.

Nature and Scope of Delegitimization

Definition of Delegitimization

Delegitimization is defined as *the categorization of a group, or groups, into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values and therefore deserving maltreatment*. That is, delegitimization implies inclusion of the delegitimized group in categories that are completely rejected by the norms and/or values of the delegitimizing society. But the special contribution of this cognitive-affective mechanism is in its *psychological authorization and legitimization to harm the outgroup*. Because it is rooted in the rhetorical construction of social categories (Billig, 1987), we view delegitimization as a discursive phenomenon that facilitates intergroup violence by rhetorically placing members of an outgroup in a position of lesser moral and existential worth (see also Tileaga, 2006, 2007). Thus our conception can be linked to critical approaches in the social sciences that emphasize the relationship between language and power (e.g., Foucault, 1972; for review, see Hammack & Pilecki, 2012).

In the past, a number of forms of delegitimization were proposed (Bar-Tal, 1989, 1990, 2000), which represent *rhetorical strategies* of categorization intended to authorize harm toward the delegitimized

group. *Dehumanization* involves categorizing a group as nonhuman. It is manifested in discourse by using (1) subhuman epithets such as “uncivilized savages” or “primitives” (see Constantine, 1966; Jahoda, 1999; Myrdal, 1964); (2) biological/zoological/medical labels such as “monkeys,” “snakes,” “worms,” “cancer,” or “microbes” (Boccatto, Capozza, Falvo, & Durante, 2008; Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Savage, 2006, 2007); (3) demonizing terms such as “demons,” “monsters,” “devils,” or ones who control the world economy or even drink blood (see Wistrich, 1999); or (4) mechanistic terms such as being emotionless or cognitively opened (Haslam, 2006). *Outcasting* involves rhetorical categorization into groups that are considered violators of pivotal social norms, such as murderers, thieves, psychopaths, terrorists, or maniacs (Bar-Tal, 1988). *Trait characterization* involves the rhetorical attribution of traits considered extremely negative and unacceptable in a given society. Traits such as aggression or brutality exemplify this type of delegitimization (Bialer, 1985; Dallin, 1973; English & Halperin, 1987; Ugolnik, 1983).

A fourth form of delegitimization involves the use of *political labels*, which denote political groups that are absolutely rejected by the values of the delegitimizing group. These labels are culturally bound, and their use depends on society’s cultural ideology, political goals, or values. “Nazis,” “fascists,” “imperialists,” “colonialists,” “capitalists,” “Zionists,” and “communists” are examples of labels used in this type of delegitimization (Bronfenbrenner, 1961; White, 1984). Finally, delegitimization by *group comparison* occurs when a group is labeled as a category that traditionally serves as an example of negativity, such as “Vandals” or “Huns.” These forms may not be exhaustive and they are clearly culturally bound, but they provide illustrative examples of the type of rhetoric used to construct delegitimized social categories.

While many groups are categorized into negative categories and/or negatively stereotyped or experience prejudice, they may continue to be considered as part of the society (for example, Americans of Mexican origin in the United States, or Jews in France). Delegitimization, by contrast, as a societal phenomenon is exclusionary and indicates that the delegitimized group exists outside the boundaries of commonly accepted groups. A delegitimized group is excluded from the scope of justice, norms, and values that ordinarily govern social relations (see Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2005; Opatow, 1990, this volume). But the significant part of our

conception is the *psychological permit* that delegitimization provides: Delegitimization provides the sociopsychological rationale, the moral and the discursive basis to harm the delegitimized group, even in the most inhumane ways. Thus, categorization into the extreme negative categories does not constitute merely an exclusion. Rather, it has the purposive function of licensing harm of an outgroup. Our conception identifies the phenomenon at the collective level of societal discourse, promulgated in societal and cultural institutions such as the media and education, and at the individual level of an internalized narrative of social categories that provides group members with the moral license to commit violence.

The idea of delegitimization is intimately connected with notions of *legitimacy*, which Zelditch (2001) relates to the acceptable norms, values, beliefs, and practices of a group. In our view, delegitimization is one of the key concepts for understanding the social system and its rules and norms for particular types of intergroup interactions. Delegitimization thus in many respects is a concept that sheds light on behaviors that go beyond the acceptable norms and codes of morality. It involves a cognitive-emotional and linguistic process of placing individuals and/or collectives beyond the realm of what is considered normal, moral, or within the accepted standards of beliefs, norms, and practices of a group (see Opatow, this volume). Consistent with earlier approaches and articulations (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1988, 1989, 1990, 2000; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007), our approach explicitly links this process to the denial of an outgroup's moral, normative, or existential legitimacy that allows its harm.

In addition, we suggest that delegitimization, as a far-reaching social phenomenon, is embedded within a theory of intergroup relations stating that people perceive social groups in essentialized terms (cf., Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997; see Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Mahalingam, 2007; Medin, 1989; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). This view suggests that the attributed features characterize the group, are inherent in the group, and cannot change (Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). In most cases, the delegitimizing groups view the delegitimizing category labels as being essential dispositional features of the delegitimized groups (Dweck & Ehrlinger, 2006). Therefore the denial of humanity is not temporary or conditional, but often permanent and persistent and may only end with the termination of the delegitimization practices. This view has far-reaching consequences for

intergroup relations and especially for the treatment of the delegitimized group. As an example we consider the delegitimization of the Tutsi in Rwanda as it appeared in an article published in March 1993 in an influential anti-Tutsi propaganda newspaper, *Kangura*:

We began by saying that a cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach. . . . The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed. (cited in Des Forges, 1999, pp. 73–74)

Delegitimization thus, in our conception, is linked to the reification of social categories as embodying some “natural” and enduring “essence” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). The naturalization and essentialization of the social category works to thwart any challenges to the master narrative of the outgroup by suggesting a permanent state of affairs with regard to intergroup relations.

Delegitimization and Related Concepts

Conceptually, delegitimization is a close cousin of several related phenomena that have emerged as major areas of study within social psychology in the past two decades. Here we distinguish delegitimization from four such concepts—moral exclusion, infrahumanization, ontologization, and dehumanization.

Of the four constructs reviewed here, delegitimization possesses the most conceptual overlap with moral exclusion (Opatow, 1990, this volume). Moral exclusion is a process by which individuals or groups are placed “outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving; consequently, harming them appears acceptable, appropriate, or just” (Opatow, 1990, p. 1).

Our conception of delegitimization suggests that it is a process characterized by extreme moral exclusion that results in the willingness to do harm. Moral exclusion in and of itself does not prescribe harm to an outgroup and its members. Rather, morally excluded groups are placed outside the scope of justice (Deutsch, 1973, 1985; Opatow, 1990, 1993, this volume), the implications of which can range from denial of fair treatment in the criminal justice system to explicit delegitimization (see also Kelman, 2001). By contrast, delegitimized groups are rhetorically constructed as worthy targets of violence.

A second related concept that has emerged in social psychology is *infrahumanization*. Infrahumanization refers to the denial to certain individuals and/or groups the experience of more complex *secondary* emotions that characterize human beings, rendering them subhuman (Demoulin et al., 2004; Leyens et al., 2000; Leyens et al., 2003). This concept does not suggest that the outgroup members are delegitimized with extreme categories, including dehumanization, but it indicates only that they differ in the extent of "humanness" from the ingroup members.

An extensive line of research has established that infrahumanization is very prevalent in intergroup relations. Studies show that it appears in various situations such as conflict or differential status between groups (Demoulin et al., 2004; Leyens et al., 2001, 2003; Leyens, Demoulin, Vaes, Gaunt, & Paladino, 2007). This phenomenon is a type of differentiation that has a flavor of delegitimization, but does not necessarily exclude the infrahumanized group from the normatively accepted groups. In our view, this tendency is more a reflection of ethnocentrism than an expression of vicious and violent conflict, high threat, or deep depreciation that leads to the severe harm. As Leyens and colleagues (2007) suggest, "On the one hand, [infrahumanization] contributes pride for the ingroup and, on the other hand, it devalues the outgroup" (p. 144). Infrahumanization is a more similar phenomenon to mechanistic dehumanization presented by Haslam (2006) and to the idea proposed by Schwartz and Struch (1989) that outgroups may be viewed as sharing lesser humanity because they are perceived as having different values in comparison to the ingroup.

Another related approach to delegitimization that has emerged within the tradition of social representations theory is concerned with *ontologization*. This approach focuses on the process of ethnic group classification and refers to the representation of certain minorities outside the realm of "humanity" (Moscovici & Pérez, 1997; Pérez, Moscovici, & Chulvi, 2007; Roncarati, Pérez, Ravenna, & Navarro-Pertusa, 2009). As Tileaga (2007) suggests, ontologization is concerned not only with "evaluation" but also with the "semantic-anthropological"—hence, an essentialized, reified account of the nature of groups. His work on the dehumanization and social exclusion of the Roma from a discursive approach is particularly central to this area of research (e.g., Tileaga, 2006a, 2006b).

Recently, work by Harris and Fiske (2009) elaborates another type of dehumanization—denial of typical humanity—that is based on

affective-cognitive differentiation between groups. Specifically, it is reflected in the differential image of the mental state between the dehumanized group and the ingroup. For example, people tend to use fewer mental state verbs to dehumanize a person or a group. Of special interest is the finding indicating that when individuals look at the dehumanized person there is reduced activation in the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC)—an area of the brain known to be important in social perception. Thus there appears to be a barrier in neurocognitive processing in dehumanization, which might minimize empathy.

We suggest that processes such as infrahumanization and minimal dehumanization are more implicit and subtle ways in which processes of categorization and differentiation occur. By contrast, delegitimization describes an explicit, open, and normative process of categorization and differentiation that becomes institutionalized through discourse and rhetoric in settings characterized by vicious and violent conflict and/or ethnocentrism (Bar-Tal, 1990). Because of its very downgrading nature and behavioral implication, shared cultural delegitimization cannot easily flourish without institutionalized support. In most cases, delegitimization is thus rhetorically regulated by social norms that maintain and encourage this process. Furthermore, it is imparted and promoted by sociopolitical institutions and even may be enforced by legal code (see Kelman, 2001). Because of this explicit expression and institutionalization, it provides rigid, persistent durable categories that are very difficult to change.

Thus, the focal element of delegitimization is that it provides the epistemic basis necessary to defend the particular matrix of social dominance (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), to protect a social system of institutionalized differentiation and discrimination (Jost & Banaji, 1994), to explain systematic exploitation (Genovese, 1966; Lutz, 1999; Stamp, 1956), to justify violence in conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998b, 2003, 2007; Staub, 2001) and even rationalize extreme acts of brutality such as mass killings, ethnic cleansing, or genocide (Goldhagen, 1996). It also is usually accompanied by psychological reactions such as disgust, hatred, or scorn—all expressing total rejection of the delegitimized group (Bar-Tal, 1990; Halperin, 2000; Harris & Fiske, 2009; Hodson & Costello, 2007). In line with Tajfel's (1978) view, in a framework of intergroup interaction, delegitimization as social categorization allows society members "to structure

the causal understanding of the social environment" (p. 61) as a guide to social actions.

Roots and Conditions for the Development of Delegitimization

We propose two premises about the roots and development of delegitimization. The first premise is that delegitimization rarely occurs by itself and is more often part of a broader ideology. The second premise is that delegitimization develops under two conditions that are not necessarily mutually exclusive: a situation of extreme ethnocentrism and a situation of vicious and long-lasting intergroup conflict.

DELEGITIMIZATION AND IDEOLOGY

Ideology can be defined as an organized construct of beliefs, attitudes, and values that provide a general worldview about a present and future reality (see Cohrs, this volume), with the aim to create a conceptual framework that allows human beings to organize and comprehend the world in which they live, and to act toward its preservation or alteration in accordance with this standpoint (Eagleton, 1991; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Shils 1968; Van Dijk, 1998). Delegitimization is part of an ideological system that provides a narrative about ingroup, outgroup, the interrelationship between them, and the context they inhabit (see for example, Hodson & Costello, 2007; Kelman, 2001). With special implications for social systems and social structure, delegitimization provides an ideological system of description, explanation, and justification and thus often plays an imperative role in the particular ideology. In this framework, delegitimization is an important determinant of the relationship between the delegitized group and delegitimizing one, and at the same time it is often crystallized and institutionalized by the nature of this relationship.

The implication of this view is that delegitimization is constructed with some kind of purpose that can be identified in the ideology it serves. It allows the members of a society to accept the cruelty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness of the behaviors involved in the nature of the relations between the delegitized and the delegitimizing group. In this way, delegitimization allows people to live in the world with the sense of belief in a just world that has a fair and just order (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Lerner, 1980).

The ideologies in which delegitimizing beliefs are embedded can be of various types—religious,

political, socioeconomic, national, or cultural. Tileaga (2007) illustrated in the case of the Roma how various forms of delegitimization, as ideologies of exclusion, are reflected in discourse and assume a determinative role in interpersonal talk. He suggests that delegitimization is thus produced and reproduced in the discursive management of category memberships and used in moral evaluations and worldviews.

In this respect, we suggest that delegitimization is almost always constructed about another group that is very relevant to the life of the ingroup. That is, the delegitized group is perceived as having influence on the well-being of the ingroup, and/or the intergroup relationship has some meaning for the delegitimizing group. Borrowing from Jones and Davis's (1965) conception, we can say that the ingroup perceives some kind of "hedonic relevance" in the relations—that is, the ingroup is pleased or displeased by the being and behavior of the outgroup. This observation corresponds to the findings of Cortez, Demoulin, Rodriguez, and Leyens (2005), who found that the best predictor of infra-humanization was the relevance of the outgroup to the ingroup.

DELEGITIMIZATION AND ETHNOCENTRISM

One basis for an ideology that incorporates delegitimization is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism¹ provides the fundamental reason for differentiation between groups in the direction of elevating one's own group above other groups in order to consider it morally and culturally superior (Brewer & Campbell, 1976; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sumner, 1906). Since the pioneering work of Adorno and his colleagues on the authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), it has been established that prejudice based on ethnocentric views is part of a broader right-wing ideological orientation, as reflected in conservative beliefs and attitudes toward various social-political issues (Altemeyer, 1981; Volpato & Durante, 2003).

In cases of ethnocentric delegitimization, the ideology establishes differentiation between the delegitized group and the delegitimizing group, denoting the tendency to accept the ingroup and reject the outgroup (Sumner, 1906). Delegitimization can serve this tendency: through it, society members see themselves as virtuous and superior and the outgroup as contemptible and inferior (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). But delegitimization occurs only in extreme cases of ethnocentrism,

since it sharpens the intergroup differences to a maximum and totally excludes the delegitimized group from commonly accepted groups, implying total inferiority by denying its humanity and legitimizing harm against it.

We suggest that there are at least two likely causes for ethnocentric delegitimization: (1) the desire to make a total differentiation between the delegitimized group and the society in order to exclude it from human groups in general, or (2) the will to exploit the delegitimized group. In most cases these two reasons complement each other, and both speak to a strategy for one group to maintain a particular status hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, delegitimization based on ethnocentric foundations may be related to the religious dogma (ideology) about the inferiority of black people as was propagated by the Afrikaners in South Africa (Cornevin, 1980). In this case, religious justification for the delegitimizing beliefs was called on to justify the maintenance of lower status for blacks and their exploitation (Wood, 1970).

Nature of Delegitimization in Conflicts

Another basis for the development of delegitimization is conflict. Delegitimization does not appear in every intergroup conflict, but it tends to emerge especially in very violent conflicts when the contested goals are perceived as far-reaching, unjustified, and endangering the fundamental goals of the group (Bar-Tal, 1990, 2007, in press). These types of conflicts involve violence, and intractable conflicts² represent their extreme prototype (see also Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, this volume). Many of these types of conflicts, which last decades and more, are perceived as being about essential and basic goals, needs, and/or values that are regarded as indispensable for the group's existence and/or survival. They usually concern territory, self-determination, autonomy, statehood, resources, identity, economic equality, cultural freedom, free religious practice, central values, and so on. In many cases, they involve a number of these conflictive domains—a reality that enhances their totality. These conflicts are also often characterized by physical violence in which group members are killed and wounded in either wars, small-scale military engagements, or terrorist attacks. Over the years, in most of the cases not only soldiers are wounded or killed but also civilians, including women and children, and civil property is often destroyed. Additionally, vicious and violent conflicts frequently create refugees and

sometimes involve atrocities, including mass killing, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2011, in press; Brubaker & Laitin, 1998; Horowitz, 2000; Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Staub, 1989, 2011; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003).

The consequences of physical violence, especially the loss of life, have an immense emotional impact on group members. They perceive the violence as intentionally inflicted by the opposing party, as unjustified, sudden, untimely, and especially as violating the sanctity of life. In addition, the consequences of violence are considered a group duty and hence the group takes the responsibility to treat and compensate victims, to prevent the reoccurrence of physical violence and avenge the human losses (see Lickel, this volume). As a result, the conflicts occupy a central place in the lives of the individual group members and the group as a whole. The leadership, members of the society, the media, and other societal institutions are intensively and continuously preoccupied with the conflict (Horowitz, 2000; Kriesberg, 2007). We suggest that, in these types of conflicts, delegitimization represents an inseparable part of the repertoire that evolves in the societies involved (see examples in Normand, 2008). Moreover, delegitimization becomes one of the major themes in the culture of conflict that develops in such settings over time (Bar-Tal, 2010, in press).

The use of delegitimization in intractable conflict is not surprising because the rivals are viewed as an enemy (e.g., Frank, 1967; Holt & Silverstein, 1989; Kaplowitz, 1990; Moses, 1990; Rieber, 1991). A group defined as an "enemy" is seen as a group that threatens to carry unjust harm and therefore arouse feelings of hostility (Normand, 2008; Silverstein & Flamenbaum, 1989). Moreover, enemies are expected to be eliminated and destroyed (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999; Herrmann, 1985; Keen (1986), who examined how enemy images are portrayed in posters, leaflets, caricatures, comic photographs, drawings, paintings, and illustrations appearing in books from different countries, suggested that the prototype has various delegitimizing features: The enemy is a stranger; a faceless, barbarous, greedy, criminal, sadistic, immoral aggressor; torturer, rapist, desecrator, beast, reptile, insect, germ, death, or devil.

In sum, we suggest that delegitimization is part of a very negative intergroup repertoire toward a rival that includes deep mistrust, hatred, and animosity. It should be seen as part of a hostility syndrome, assuming a central role (Halperin, 2001).

Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008; White, 1970). Although it is hard to determine the first psychological reaction that leads to the development of the hostility syndrome, it is clear that when delegitimization evolves it is possible to detect other cognitive-affective reactions as well.

Examples of Delegitimization in Conflicts

Seminal field experiments conducted with small groups by Sherif and his colleagues (Sherif, 1967; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1969) demonstrated that real conflicts lead to hostility, negative affect, and even delegitimization. These experiments served as a solidifying basis for the emergence of an approach known as realistic conflict theory that describes the influence of intergroup conflicts on the formation of stereotypic contents and prejudice. In the words of Sherif (1967), "The sufficient condition for the rise of the hostile and aggressive deeds...and for the standardization of social distance justified by the derogatory images of the outgroup was the existence of two groups competing for goals that only one group could attain, to the dismay and frustration of the other group" (p. 85). The conflict between groups, he suggested, created the psychological conditions that correspond to our concept of delegitimization—ingroup bias, outgroup hostility, and the placement of the outgroup in a space of lesser moral and existential worth.

Influential thinkers in social and political psychology have recognized that delegitimization plays a crucial role in intergroup conflicts. Various chapters in the pioneering book edited by Kelman (1965) point to the importance of images that groups in conflict have about each other. The chapter by White (1965) specifically presented the images of Soviet citizens about the United States in terms of their influence on the dynamics of the intergroup conflict. His ideas were considerably developed and extended in subsequent books about intergroup conflicts. In these books, White (1970, 1984) elaborated on the concept of the diabolical-enemy image that depicts the very evil image of the rival in conflict. It stands as in contrast to the virile and moral self-image, and this distinction draws a binary and simplistic picture that differentiates between the two groups to the maximal extent and leads to delegitimization because it facilitates harm of the rival group. In his view, this is an important mechanism that fuels the continuation of the conflict and leads to performance of extensive violence including atrocities (see also Stagner, 1967).

Sinha and Upadhaya (1960) showed that serious and violent conflict can change previously held positive views of the other group as in the case of Sino-Indian relations during the border disputes in 1959. Before the dispute, Indian students considered the Chinese to be artistic, religious, industrious, friendly, progressive, and honest. But, as the conflict developed, the Chinese were stereotyped by the same Indian students not only as artistic but also as aggressive, cheating, selfish, war-mongering, cruel, and shrewd.

A second example can be found in the case of Northern Ireland and the mutual delegitimization between Protestants and Catholics. In the present conflict, many of the Catholic minority aspire to unite with the rest of Ireland, while many of the Protestant majority prefer to remain part of the United Kingdom. These are two irreconcilable goals that have led to violent confrontations between the two communities. Through the years, both communities developed mutual negative stereotypes, including delegitimizing characteristics (see Darby, 1976; Harris, 1972). Cecil (1993) reported that in the early 1990s Protestants viewed Catholics as "lazy, priest-ridden, untidy and potentially treacherous" (p. 152), whereas Catholics perceived Protestants as "bigoted, mean, and lacking in culture" (p. 152).

A third example occurred during the Iran-Iraq war, which lasted eight years and ended in 1988. During these years, both the Iranians and Iraqis formed societal beliefs of delegitimization to explain the brutality of the other side and to justify acts of violence. Bengio (1998) presented Daily Reports of the Foreign Broadcast Information, which reported radio speeches and interviews of the political and military leaders of both Iran and Iraq. These reports offered a plethora of examples of delegitimizing beliefs. In 1984, the Iranians, for example, called Iraqis "Saddamist mercenaries," "aggressive Ba'hist forces," "Zionist protectors," "terrorists," "archsatans," "imperialists," "criminals," and "reactionaries," and described their acts as "inhuman" and "diabolical." Similarly, the Iraqis branded Iranians as "criminals," "aggressors," "deceitful diabolic entity," "neo-fascists," "agents of Zionism," "illiterates," and "expansionists." As a specific example, one of the military commanders reported in a publicized statement to the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein:

We gladly inform you of the annihilation of thousands of harmful magi insects... We... will turn what is left of these harmful insects into food for the

birds of the wilderness and the fish of the marshes.
(Bengio, 1986, p. 475)

The example of delegitimization with which we are most familiar occurs in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Delegitimization has been an integral part of the long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, who both claim the former British Mandate of Palestine as their national home (Smith, 2001; Tessler, 1994). In many respects, the terms Palestinians and Israeli Jews use to delegitimize one another represent mirror images (see Bar-Tal, 1988; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007). Already at the beginning of the conflict, Jews arriving in Palestine in the early 20th century initially viewed Arabs residing in the region ethnocentrically as being primitive, dirty, stupid, easily agitated, and aggressive. As the conflict evolved and became violent, Arabs were perceived as killers, a bloodthirsty mob, rioters, treacherous, untrustworthy, cowards, Nazis, cruel, and wicked (see Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Gorny, 1987; Shapira, 1992; Tessler, 1994). These delegitimizing labels have persisted through the years of conflict.

A study by Maoz and McCauley (2008) shows in a national sample of Israeli Jews that dehumanization of Palestinians was related to support for coercive policies toward Palestinians, such as administrative detention, the use of rubber bullets, demolishing homes, and torture. Hammack and colleagues (2011) recently discovered a relatively high prevalence of delegitimization among Jewish Israeli adolescents, two thirds of whom expressed either agreement or uncertainty regarding the idea that Palestinians do not constitute a "nation" in the same ways as Jews. They found that delegitimization mediated the relationship between demographic and experiential predictors, such as being male, and participating in political violence against Arabs.

A series of studies conducted throughout the 1990s by Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) used explicit and implicit measures to document and examine the acquisition and development of the intergroup psychological repertoire of Israeli Jews in the context of conflict. They showed that, in a society engulfed by intractable conflict, delegitimizing beliefs are acquired by children at a very early age. Specifically, they found that the first indication for this acquisition may be noticed in the recognition and attainment of words identifying the self-reference group (Jew/Israeli) and that of the enemy (Arab). But, what is of more importance is that the role of the word "Arab" acquires a negative connotation even before learning the meaning of this

word (see also Bar-Tal, 1996). Subsequently children learn the delegitimizing labels together with other elements of the negative psychological repertoire (attitudes, affect, emotions) for the social category of "Arabs" and maintain it through the years (see also Teichman & Bar-Tal, 2008).

At the same time, Arabs viewed Jews almost from the start of Zionist immigration as colonialists and imperialists who came to settle Palestinian land and expel the Palestinian population. They were stereotyped as strangers, crusaders, unwanted, and enemies. Also, Jews were attributed with labels such as deceitful, treacherous, thieves, and disloyal, and were seen as aggressors and robbers. In addition, they were perceived as racists, fascists, and imperialists, and they were even compared to the Nazis. The term "Zionism" itself has become a delegitimizing label, as it has been considered a colonialist ideology (Hadawi, 1968; Harkabi, 1972; Khalidi, 1997; Rodinson, 1973; Said, 1979; Sayigh, 1997; Webman, 2010).

Conflict, Delegitimization, and Ideology

We suggest that, in cases of severe and violent lasting conflicts, delegitimization does not stand as a separate set of societal beliefs, but is part of the sociopsychological repertoire in which societies are involved as intractable conflicts evolve (Bar-Tal, 2003; 2007, 2011; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007). It is an essential part of the ethos³ and collective memory of conflict that both serve as an ideology of conflict and eventually provide the contents for the development of the culture of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2010, in press; Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsh, 2009; Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, & Zafran, in press). In this system, delegitimization develops together with the following other important themes of ethos of conflict and collective memory of conflict: justness in own goals, collective self-victimhood, and positive collective self-image (see Bilali & Ross, this volume; Roccas & Elsrer, this volume; Vollhardt, this volume).

The theme about the *justness of own goals* outlines the supreme goals in conflict, indicates their crucial importance, and provides their explanations and rationales. The theme of *positive collective self-image* presents positive traits, values, and behavior of one's own society, especially characteristics related to humaneness, morality, fairness, and trustworthiness (Sande, Goethals, Ferrari, & Wortel, 1989). Finally, the theme of *collective self-victimhood* depicts one's own society as being the victim in the

conflict, focusing on the unjust harm, evil deeds, and atrocities perpetrated by the adversary (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009; Volkan, 1997; see Vollhardt, this volume).

In this framework, the rival group is delegitimized first of all because it objects to the ingroup's goals. That is, the ingroup, which views its own goals as justified and perceives itself positively, delegitimizes the rival in order to explain this inconsistency—how another group can object and fight the goals of the ingroup. Only a very negative group can stand in the way of achievement of the justified goals. In addition, since the intractable conflicts involve violence in which ingroup members are wounded and die, and there is destruction, the ingroup explains this situation, on the one hand, by viewing itself as the victim of the conflict and, on the other, by attributing to the rival delegitimizing characteristics and thus explaining the violence of the other group.

In this respect, delegitimization is part of a developed system of beliefs that evolves in times of lasting and vicious conflicts (see Bar-Tal, 2003; Cohrs, this volume). Indeed, studies by Zafran (2002), Gopher (2006), and Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, and Zafran (in press) showed that the three themes (justness of own goals, collective self-victimhood, and delegitimization of the rival) stand as the core of the ethos of conflict. In fact, they are the key themes that serve as the major prism through which society members evaluate incoming information and interpret their experiences in conflict. They also serve as a major barrier to alternative information that may facilitate peaceful resolution of the conflict (for example, information about peaceful gestures of the rival). Thus, they are principle obstacles to the peacemaking process in serious conflicts (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011).

As noted, delegitimizing societal beliefs play a major role in the ideology of conflict. They provide a cognitive-affective system of description, explanation, and justification based on language, discourse, and rhetoric about intergroup relations. This role is crucially important in the situation of violent conflict, which is extremely threatening and accompanied by stress, vulnerability, uncertainty, and fear (Lieberman, 1964). Such social contexts raise a need for psychological structure, allowing quick description, explanation, understanding, prediction, and justification (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Delegitimizing labels fulfill these needs. A binary approach, without ambiguity, enables a fast, parsimonious, unequivocal, and simple grasp

of the situation. It provides absolute clarity as to which group is to be blamed for the conflict and violence. The context of existential insecurity that characterizes conflict represents a fertile breeding ground for what Allport (1954) called “two-valued” judgments—patterns of cognition low in tolerance for ambiguity and high in outgroup prejudice.

As a system of *description*, delegitimization provides information about the other group—such as its roots, characteristics, values, morality, intentions, and practices. Specifically, it infuses a narrative that describes the evil nature of the rival, its past behavior, and its intentions. Delegitimizing categories (e.g., bloodthirsty, murderer, terrorist, cruel, oppressive, savage, vandal, or Nazi) present the opponent as “extreme,” “irrational,” and “malevolent”—rhetoric likely to negate the goals of the delegitimized society. Such categories portray the outgroup as aggressive, destructive, malicious, cruel, and vicious, with lack of concern for human life. Delegitimizing categories also describe the nature of the conflict and the relations between rival groups, and they indicate that it is a violent and severe conflict. In essence, according to Oakes, Haslam, and Turner (1994), expressing delegitimizing categories is a political act of the group, revealing the norms and values to which group members are expected to subscribe.

As a system of *explanation*, delegitimization clarifies the causes and the context of the particular relations between the delegitimized and delegitimizing groups, including the reasons for the delegitimization. In the case of conflict it clarifies the nature of the conflict and the causes for its eruption. In addition, delegitimizing labels provide an explanation for the opponent's violence in all of its forms, and especially for atrocities and immoral behaviors. Such discourse also explains why the adversary is intransigent, irreconcilable, and precluding any possible peaceful solution; therefore, the conflict continues and cannot be resolved (Bar-Tal, 1990).

Finally, as a system of *justification*, delegitimization naturalizes and rationalizes the nature of relations between the delegitimized and delegitimizing groups and the aggressive behaviors that the delegitimizing group is performing in this relationship. In the context of conflict it legitimizes the violence performed against the rival group and even provides a moral permit to brutality that goes well beyond the codes of actions allowed even in violent conflicts. Delegitimization provides justification for individuals and for the social system as a whole to intentionally harm the rival, and for continuing

to institutionalize aggression toward the enemy (Jackman, 2001; Jost & Banaji, 1994). By providing moral justification for dominance, defense, or prevention, delegitimization operates to fulfill larger political goals related to exclusion and violence. The sanctity of life is perhaps the most respected value in modern societies. Killing or even hurting other human beings is considered the most serious violation of the moral code (Donagan, 1979; Kleinig, 1991). Delegitimization is thus a key psychological mechanism through the denial of the adversary's humanity, and attribution of threatening characteristics allows harm.

In its ideological form, delegitimization also plays a major role in motivating society members for mobilization and action in times of conflict. The delegitimizing categories supply information that implies threat and danger to the group. They constantly remind group members of the violence against them and indicate that it may recur. Therefore, group members are required to unite and mobilize in order to cope successfully with the rival. Those are necessary steps in order to avert the danger coming from the delegitimized groups such as "murderers," "Nazis," "terrorists," or "psychopaths." In addition, the categories imply the need to revenge the rival for the acts already performed. The labels indicate that violence was already done, that ingroup members were hurt, and/or that innocent civilians were killed. Thus these acts cannot pass without reaction. The villain rival has to be punished.

Institutionalization of Delegitimization

In view of the functions that the delegitimizing beliefs fulfill, it is not surprising that they are institutionalized and become part of the culture of conflict, particularly through the discourse and rhetoric constructed by leaders and often blindly adopted by other social institutions such as education and media (Bar-Tal, in press). Institutionalized beliefs are beliefs that have been transmitted and disseminated among society members through various channels of communication in a systematic, consistent, and continuous way. They are widely held by members of the society, underlie various institutionalized decisions, are expressed in cultural products and educational materials, and are reflected in behaviors, and sometimes they are even fixed firmly in legal codes. Moreover, institutionalization indicates delegitimizing categories (i.e., beliefs) are hegemonic and provide the prism through which the majority of society members view various issues that are related to conflict.

Institutionalization of delegitimizing beliefs was documented by Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) in the case of the evolvement of these beliefs by the Israeli Jewish society toward the Arabs. They systemically showed that the very negative repertoire regarding Arabs, in which delegitimizing labels figure prominently, has been extensively disseminated, shared by society members, expressed via political, social, cultural, and educational channels, and is integrated into the collective memory of the conflict. This finding is not really surprising in view of the intractable conflict between Arabs and Jews that has lasted over a century. It is important to note that our focus on delegitimization does not suggest that the claims of groups are not rooted in actual experience, particularly in conflict settings. Delegitimization of Arabs in Jewish Israeli society is connected to the long-standing violence Jews have experienced as part of the conflict. Our suggestion is rather that violence and narratives become intertwined and institutionalized in conflict settings in such a way that they reproduce the status quo of a conflict (Hammack, 2008, 2011).

The institutionalization of delegitimizing beliefs in culture is well documented in other conflicts besides the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, Hutu delegitimization of Tutsis in Rwanda has been documented (e.g., Melvern, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Also, there is well-established evidence of the institutionalization of delegitimizing beliefs about Albanians in Kosovo by the Serbs (e.g., Bieber & Daskolovski, 2003; Erjavec & Volcic, 2007; Ron, 2003). Another example includes the case of the mutual delegitimization of Sinhalese and Tamil institutionalized in Sri Lanka (e.g., Bartholomew, 2002; Ramanathapillai, 2006). In these cases, delegitimizing beliefs were one of the key factors that led to vicious violence accompanied by mass atrocities and even genocide.

In sum, institutionalization of delegitimization implies that it is stable and becomes part of the cultural context in which society members live. The channels of communication and the societal institutions maintain and support this repertoire by repeatedly communicating it. Institutionalization consolidates the repertoire and facilitates its perseverance and durability, even in the face of contradictory information. The contradictory information is rejected, and the society uses control mechanisms to ensure that society members do not express alternative beliefs. The institutionalized repertoire is a frozen and rigid repertoire which resists change.

Sociopsychological Consequences of Delegitimization

Institutionalized delegitimization has a number of sociopsychological consequences on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of society members in conflict settings, which have important implications for intergroup relations. They appear in the shared repertoire by society members, as well as in the individual repertoire. These sociopsychological consequences, in fact, ensure the reproduction of the conflict if not challenged or contested by changes in policy, social structure, and societal discourse.

Framing of Conflict

The most basic cognitive consequence of institutionalized delegitimization involves a framing of the conflict as immutably connected to a naturalized status quo. A key component of this framing is the relationship with the rival group and the conflict. Delegitimization consequently facilitates the reproduction of the conflict by suggesting that the rival is not a legitimate partner in dialogue or negotiation because it does not share the ingroup's basic humanness. The rival has unacceptable goals and uses ruthless and immoral means to achieve them. Therefore, it is assumed that with this type of rival it is impossible to make peace because its characteristics, goals, and lines of actions are deplorable.

This cognitive framing has a determinative effect on the view of the conflict among society members. It strengthens the view of the conflict as irreconcilable and as zero-sum in nature and greatly helps to construe this situation in dichotomous terms as threatening, dangerous, explosive, and menacing. This view reinforces greatly the ethos of conflict and thus serves a reproductive role (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). In this way, strong delegitimization of the rival has an effect on the course of the conflict. Society members in conflict who carry delegitimizing beliefs embrace an irreconcilable view of the conflict, hold strongly to the ethos of conflict, and strive to achieve their goals, prevent future harm, and avenge losses and destruction already done. All these courses of thinking and behaviors are accompanied by intense hostility, mistrust, and hatred directed toward the rival, which prevents even the beginning of peacemaking (Halperin, 2008).

One of the clearest descriptions of how delegitimization influenced the framing of conflict was provided by Russell (2002, 2005) in his analysis of Russian delegitimization of Chechens. Chechens had long been viewed as savages, wolves, thieves,

bandits, and mafia types. But when factions of the Chechens began to conduct bloody terror attacks against Russian civilians, and Russian institutions began to systematically and intensively delegitimize Chechens, Russians' views of Chechens and the conflict changed. It came to be perceived as a conflict between merciless Islamic fundamentalist terrorists, who have the unacceptable goal of building an Islamic state, versus enlightened Russians. Furthermore, with the events of September 11, 2001, the conflict was framed as a frontline battle for survival against Islamic fundamentalism. The past suffering of the Chechens and the brutality of the Russian military forces were overlooked, and the focus remained fixed only on the immoral acts of the Chechens as a uniquely criminal nation (Wood, 2007).

Sensitivity and Information Processing

Delegitimization also causes group members to be more sensitive to threatening information because the threshold of attention to threatening stimuli is lowered when individuals are under stress (Broadbent, 1971; Mackie, 1977). This sensitivity is necessary to avoid surprise negative action from the rival which, given its perceived evil intentions, may always act harmfully. The society members have to be continuously prepared for any harm to come, and therefore every information or cue is scrutinized for indications of negative intentions of the rival (Jervis, 1976).

Moreover, since the delegitized beliefs are central, society members may be disposed to search for information that is consistent with these beliefs, while disregarding evidence that does not support them (Fisher & Kelman, 2011; Kelman, 2007). Any ambiguous information may be interpreted as validating the delegitimizing views of the rival and the conflict. Society members may even unintentionally bias and distort information in order to validate their delegitimizing beliefs. Thus, even when the rival presents signs for peacemaking, they are viewed with mistrust and disregarded or interpreted as being manipulative (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Silverstein & Flamenbaum, 1989).

Although there are few studies that have examined the effects of delegitimization on the selective, biasing, and distorting information processing in intractable conflicts (for example Porat, Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011), there is considerable evidence from studies about negative stereotypes in less threatening situations that suggest such effects (e.g., see Baumeister & Hastings, 1997; Stephan & Renfro,

2002; von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & Vargas, 1995). Thus, we can reasonably assume that if such effects are found in less threatening situations, they would also be found in the real-life situations of vicious and violent conflict.

In situations of severe conflicts, group members tend to make inferences, evaluations, interpretations, and attributions that shed negative light on the rival group, and they change and add elements to construct images that are consistent with their delegitimizing beliefs, negative attitudes, and emotions. For example, group members tend to attribute the negative behavior of the rival to innate or internal characteristics and disregard situational or external factors (Pettigrew, 1979). In this line, Hunter, Stringer, and Watson (1991) found that Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland tended to attribute their own group's violence to external causes, whereas they ascribed the opponent's violence to internal delegitimizing characteristics such as being "psychopaths" or "bloodthirsty" (see similar results in the study by Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsh, 2009).

Two studies performed in the context of the Cold War demonstrate how group members go beyond the information they have and add interpretations that are in line with their psychological intergroup repertoire. In a study by Burn and Oskamp (1989) carried out in 1986, American students were asked to stereotype Soviet and American citizens and their governments. In addition, they were asked to explain four comparable acts by the USSR or the United States in the international arena (for example, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and American invasion of Grenada; the Soviet presence in Poland and American support of the Nicaraguan contras). They were supplied with four different reasons for these acts, which varied in terms of how positive or negative they were. The results showed not only that the Soviets were evaluated negatively in absolute terms, but that all four of the Soviet actions were evaluated negatively, whereas the actions of the United States, with the exception of one, were evaluated positively. Similarly, a study by Sande et al. (1989), conducted in 1985, found that American high school and college students gave opposing explanations of similar acts if performed either by the Soviet Union or United States. The results indicated that the positive act (e.g., smashing ice fields to allow whales to reach an open sea) was evaluated as more typical of Americans than of Soviets. Moreover, while the actions of the United States were attributed to the positive moral characteristics of the Americans, the same acts of the Soviet Union were attributed to

the self-serving and negative motives of the Russians in line with their enemy image.

Sense of Being a Victim, Egocentrism, and Lack of Empathy

We also suggest that the use of delegitimization in conflicts greatly strengthens the ingroup's sense of being a victim and the perceived justness of ingroup goals. From the perspective of the ingroup, the rival tries to prevent the achievement of just goals and then uses violence, including immoral acts and even atrocities in this effort. As a result, society members view the rival as the perpetrator of unjust harm and responsible for the outbreak of the conflict, its continuation, its violence, and their suffering. Therefore, they portray the ingroup as the victim, which is reflected in a sense of collective victimhood that develops in times of serious and violent conflicts (see Bar-Tal et al., 2009).

Social psychologists have increasingly argued that conflicts can be framed in terms of *competitive victimhood* (e.g., Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008; Vollhardt, 2009; see also Vollhardt, this volume). We suggest that this phenomenon is part of a broader sociopsychological process of social competition in which, on the basis of group membership, individuals use a victim discourse to compete for status and recognition (Pilecki & Hammack, 2012; see Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The sense of victimhood fulfills important psychological functions for individuals in conflict settings, including supporting the sense of moral superiority relative to the outgroup and justifying the delegitimizing narrative of the outgroup (Bar-Tal, 1998b; Pilecki & Hammack, 2012).

Moreover, this view of reality results in self-focus and concentration on ingroup needs to cope successfully with the conflict situation. This dominant view of reality disregards sensitivity, consideration or empathy to the needs of the rival. A collective in this state is unable to take the perspective of the rival group and, as a result, has difficulty identifying with the suffering of the outgroup and the experience of empathy. A recent study by Cehajic, Brown, and Gonzales (2009) showed that dehumanization of victims allows avoidance of feeling of empathy. The cases of Israelis and Palestinians as well as Russians and Chechens provide examples of this process. Both Israelis and Russians are the stronger groups in their respective conflicts, yet they delegitimize the weaker group, view themselves as victims, and lack empathy for the outgroup (Bar-Tal, 1998b; Russell, 2005).

Pressure Toward Conformity

In addition, we suggest that, when members of an ingroup believe that the rival possesses characteristics of delegitimization, they feel threatened and prepare themselves for the worst possible events. At these times, cohesiveness and unity within the group are needed to withstand the threat (Bar-Tal, 1998b, 2000, 2007; see also Roccas & Elster, this volume). To achieve these objectives, those who hold the delegitimizing beliefs most strongly exert pressure on others to conform to the group. This pressure can take various forms, like calls for unity, attempts to conceal disagreement within the group, as well as threatened or actual negative sanctions against those who disagree within the group. As Coser (1956) suggested, "Groups engaged in continued struggle with the outside tend to be intolerant within. They are unlikely to tolerate more than limited departures from the group unity" (p. 13).

We view this process through the lens of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and the documented phenomenon of group polarization in social psychology (Isenberg, 1986), such that individuals will conform to highly polarized positions in order to achieve a sense of positive distinctiveness (see also Brewer, 1991). In cases of existential insecurity such as intractable conflict, conformity is needed in order to protect and promote the threatened interests of the ingroup.

In spite of the intuitive nature of the relationship between conformity and conflict, no systematic empirical work to our knowledge has thoroughly investigated this idea. One line of research that comes close examines the reproduction of national narratives of identity in the personal narratives of Israeli and Palestinian youth (Hammack, 2011). This work suggests that adolescents in conflict settings tend to reproduce the form, thematic content, and ideological setting of national narratives, thus conforming to the ingroup interpretation of conflict and identity (see also Hammack, 2009b, 2010). Relatedly, Pilecki and Hammack (2012) studied the use of historical narrative in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, finding that youth closely appropriate a narrow ingroup narrative of the history of the conflict that reflects ingroup conformity and delegitimization of outgroup claims.

Freedom of Action

We also suggest that, when society members believe that the rival group has very negative intentions toward them on the basis of the

delegitimization, they may take drastic measures in order to defend themselves, revenge past harm, and/or try to prevent possible future violence. In this situation, delegitimization and the sense of being the victim in the conflict free the society members from the limitations of moral considerations that usually limit the collective's scope of action. Their actions may not be even within the range of the norms of the international community but considered extreme, immoral, and unacceptable by the international community. This tendency is strongly related to the feeling of moral entitlement, which can be defined as the belief that the group is allowed to use whatever means necessary to ensure its safety, with little regard to moral norms (see Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006; see also Lickel, this volume).

Rationalization and Justification of Ingroup Immoral Acts

Still, the effects of delegitimization go beyond the freedom of action. Delegitimization not only serves as a motivator to harm the rival with freedom of action, but it also frees the delegitimized group from feelings of guilt and other thoughts and emotions that are usually felt when a group acts immorally. As such, it serves as a buffer against group-based negative thoughts and feelings and allows maltreatment of other groups (Bernard, Ottenberg, & Redl, 2003). Bandura (1990, 1999) called this reaction *moral disengagement*. That is, perceiving outgroup members as inhumane does not activate empathic reactions that usually make it difficult to mistreat them without risking personal distress. But with delegitimization, the distress associated with maltreatment of others can be alleviated as a result of moral disengagement. In fact, studies showed that delegitimization of a target increases aggressive behavior and is related to moral disengagement (e.g., Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001; Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975). Relatedly, using the paradigm of inhumanization, Castano and Giner-Sorolla (2006) found that individuals tend to delegitimize even outgroup members that are considered victims as a method to morally disengage and relieve the distress of recognizing immoral acts performed by one's own group. Grossman (1995) also noted delegitimization as one of the psychological mechanisms that allows soldiers to kill soldiers of the rival group, as rivals are reduced to delegitimized social categories that can be exterminated. Thus, with delegitimization, negative and even evil behaviors "may be carried out

or acquiesced in with relative freedom for restraints of conscience or feeling of brotherhood" (Bernard et al., 2003, p. 64).

Reducing Delegitimization in Conflict

In this chapter, we have argued that delegitimization represents a sociopsychological process at the *societal* level that functions to differentiate groups and maintain violent conflicts. Because outgroup members are officially delegitimized in the societal repertoire of beliefs and narratives, ingroup members feel justified to discriminate, derogate, and commit acts of violence against outgroup members on the basis of this societal conception. Delegitimization thus serves as a sociopsychological tool for dominant groups to maintain their hegemony and practice immoral behavior and for competing groups to justify the use of violence as a means to achieve dominance and/or victory. Once it is established that an outgroup exists at a place of lesser moral and existential worth, it becomes possible to engage in extreme acts of harm, including genocide.

Looking at mainstream social psychology, we find that most of the proposed interventions to reduce various factors considered central to intergroup conflict have tended to privilege individual cognition and personality development over structural, cultural, or political intervention. In our view, interventions to reduce delegitimization that are targeted primarily at the level of individual cognition and personality development are problematic in cases of institutionalized delegitimization for at least two reasons. First, they are guilty of what Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux (2005) call "theoretical individualism"—an inappropriate bias toward conceptions of the individual as more powerful than his or her social and political ecology of development. This bias is common in European and American social science, and psychology in particular, given the central cultural value of individualism and independence in these societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Second, interventions that focus on individual cognition and personality development rely on what some have argued is an American "folk psychology" of social change as occurring from the masses—a "bottom-up" notion of how social and political change occurs (Hammack, 2009a). This view also reflects a Western bias in thinking about the relationship between the individual and society (see Moghaddam, 1987).

Without rejecting this line of thinking and discounting the utility of work with individuals and small groups, we would like to propose a

complementary approach that recognizes the societal nature of delegitimization and therefore prescribes a mode of intervention that is aimed at the *collective* rather than the individual (see also Paluck, this volume). The ultimate goal of this mode of collective-level intervention is to affect four processes that occur at the individual cognitive-affective level in order to alter the repertoire that maintains conflict: legitimization, equalization, differentiation, and personalization (see Bar-Tal, in press; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Legitimization involves acceptance of the rival group as an acceptable category of person worthy of the same moral treatment as the ingroup. Equalization is a fundamental concurrent cognitive process in which members of the outgroup are explicitly framed as equals. Any kind of social or ethnic hierarchy is rejected in favor of equal status. Differentiation involves recognition of the heterogeneity of the outgroup. Members of the group are not viewed as culturally uniform but rather as diverse as members of the ingroup. Finally, personalization involves recognition that members of the outgroup are individuals with the same human needs as members of the ingroup. Then the outgroup is no longer viewed as a "depersonalized entity."

We outline five specific strategies to achieve these processes and reduce delegitimization in conflict settings. We recognize that all of these strategies require some level of collective commitment to change the dynamic of intergroup relations and thus the will of leaders.

1. Pragmatic conflict resolution. Sherif (1958) long ago argued that reduction of intergroup conflict requires a reformulation of the *functional* nature of relations between groups. Rather than viewing themselves in direct competition over material resources, they must come to unite to achieve superordinate goals. In the spirit of this theoretical approach to intergroup relations, our first strategy assumes that the underlying basis for delegitimization is typically an ongoing conflict over material resources and/or political and territorial control. Sometimes the conflict is primarily about recognition and/or political rights and privileges for minority groups. Regardless, in order to reduce delegitimization at the societal level, the conflict must be resolved peacefully in a pragmatic way that results in an actual political agreement that satisfies the needs of the two rival groups. Cessation of violence is thus almost a necessary condition for aborting

delegitimization practices. Moreover, the peaceful resolution crystallizes new relations in which positive images of the past rival groups can be constructed. Unless a conflict is actually resolved through such means, delegitimization will remain an active sociopsychological tool that leaders use to motivate a populace to engage in intergroup aggression and violence. The case of Northern Ireland provides one example. Following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the rival sides gradually ceased to carry violence and reduced mutual negative stereotyping (Cairns & Hewstone, 2009).

2. Recognition and political protections.

A key part of any agreement must entail a rescripting of the narratives about one another by formally recognizing the legitimacy of the other and providing necessary political assurances to maintain this level of mutual acknowledgment. Thus, again, we view delegitimization as a societal product of the larger structural issues that define a conflict, such as absence of mutual recognition of the legitimate claims and grievances of the other. For recognition to occur at the collective level, it must form a key part of any political resolution to conflict. A good example of this strategy is the 1993 Oslo Accords, an interim agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization which specified mutual recognition. It led to a new level of mutual legitimization, equalization, differentiation, and personalization (Beilin, 1999).

3. Structural symmetry. Following these basic preconditions for the reduction of delegitimization, a more systematic project for social change should occur, if the sides strive to crystallize a new relationship. Since the proliferation of delegitimizing beliefs often results in an infrastructure of intergroup relations characterized by power asymmetry, we suggest that an explicit focus on creating conditions of structural symmetry is necessary to reduce delegitimization (Rouhana, 2011). As groups begin to inhabit spaces of social, economic, and political *equality*, they can no longer make claims about the differential humanity or moral worth of the other, for they share a common social structure. Concretely, this strategy will typically require direct policy intervention to change the structural asymmetry—for example, equalizing the economic status of the rival group that was subordinated through the years of conflict. This strategy has been used widely in the case of changing the power relationship in every sphere of life in

Northern Ireland. The goal has been to equalize economic and political resources (Byrne, Standish, Arnold, Fissuh, & Irvin, 2009; Shuttleworth & Osborne, 2004).

4. Deinstitutionalization of delegitimization.

As we have suggested in this chapter, delegitimization is part of a repertoire that becomes institutionalized in conflict settings. It becomes embodied in cultural products and artifacts, most notably the education system and the media. Hence a primary step in reducing delegitimization requires a collective commitment to challenge these aspects of the ethos of conflict. Again, the support of authorities is crucial because policies must be enacted (particularly with regard to educational materials) in order to alter the content of these materials. There is evidence that delegitimization decreased substantially in both Israeli and Palestinian societies following the Oslo Accords (Bar-Tal, 1998a; Brown, 2003), which provided a political context of mutual recognition for the first time in the history of Israeli-Palestinian relations. The reduction of delegitimization in the media is more challenging. Nevertheless, specific media campaigns can be enacted in order to promote a new vision of the outgroup and to dispel delegitimizing stereotypes (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005).

5. Rescripting master narratives. A master narrative represents the dominant storyline of a group's history and collective memory (Hammack, 2008, 2011). It is a document that is codified in cultural materials (as noted above) and promulgated in political speeches and media interpretations of events. It also typically abounds in the literature of a society, such as the novels, memoirs, and poetry that a group values and holds as exemplary of their collective values and identity (see Abdel-Malek & Jacobson, 1999). In conflict settings, these master narratives are highly polarized (Hammack, 2006, 2008) and very often characterized by a state of *negative interdependence* (Kelman, 1999), such that the legitimization of one group's narrative would seem to negate the legitimacy of the other. A classic example concerns Israeli and Palestinian contradictory interpretations of the 1948 war, which Israelis celebrate as a marker of *independence*, while Palestinians mourn it as a *catastrophe* (Jawad, 2006; Rotberg, 2006). A key need to reduce delegitimization is to *rescript* these master storylines—to alter the nature of collective interpretations of historical events to allow for a degree of perspectivalism regarding history and

memory. In other words, the narratives must be acknowledged not as a set of absolute truths, even as they certainly reflect a lived experience, but as a set of interpretations about the past that significantly color views of the outgroup in the present and future. Beyond recognition of historical relativity, though, we also suggest that groups must come to recognize their own actions that have violated the rights of the outgroup. A good example of how this can be achieved can be found in the model of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a historic process in which victims of apartheid were given the opportunity to confront perpetrators of violence and to achieve a measure of intergroup reconciliation (see Chapman, 2007; Foster, 2006; Gibson, 2006; Herwitz, 2005). We suggest that a reduction in delegitimization requires this kind of institutional and cultural intervention in order to rescript master narratives and acknowledge mutual injustices.

These five strategies we preliminarily suggest to work toward a reduction of delegitimization in conflict settings are intended to activate four cognitive and affective processes: legitimization, equalization, differentiation, and personalization. Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) have identified these processes as key to the sociopsychological change needed to modify the intergroup repertoire that maintains stereotypes and prejudice in conflict settings. It is important to note that these strategies are by no means mutually exclusive. For example, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, Adwan and Bar-On (2004) have developed a textbook for teaching the history of the conflict that contains (and thus recognizes) both historical narratives of the conflict. Thus they are using two strategies we outline above—deinstitutionalization and rescripting of master narratives.

In sum, we suggest that because delegitimization is a sociopsychological process that occurs at the societal level and becomes manifest in the cognitive and affective life of individual group members, interventions must target societal factors in order to effect maximum change. Then a shift in individual psychological processes, including those that we have outlined above, from a hierarchical to a pluralistic mode of social cognition will likely occur. Thus psychological interventions targeted at the level of the individual or at interpersonal relationships are insufficient. Rather, interventions in the realm of policy, media, and education are absolutely fundamental to the social change needed to avoid political violence.

The State of Research on Delegitimization

In spite of previous conceptualizations and the intuitive nature of delegitimization in conflict settings, extremely little empirical research has been conducted on the construct directly. As our review suggests, numerous studies have examined delegitimization more indirectly. The few studies that have directly sought to develop a measure of the construct have not yet carried out systematic assessments of validity and reliability for an instrument that can be used in multiple settings.

Three studies conducted in Israel have developed measures of delegitimization based on Bar-Tal's (1989, 1990) original formulation. Halperin and colleagues developed an instrument on which respondents rate their level of agreement with statements regarding the character of Arabs, designed to assess the extent to which they place Arabs beyond the realm of acceptable groups (Halperin et al., 2008). They used items assessing delegitimization from an ethos of conflict scale (see Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, & Zafran, in press). They found that delegitimization was associated with emotions of fear and hope (assessed in terms of both the individual and the collective). That is, delegitimization correlated positively with fear and negatively with hope.

Hammack and colleagues (2011) assessed delegitimization among Israeli adolescents using a similar conception and measure but added the element of derogation of outgroup narrative. They found that delegitimization was associated with being male, being religious, political violence participation, and endorsement of noncompromising attitudes toward conflict resolution with the Palestinians (e.g., continued Israeli settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territories). They also found that delegitimization mediated the relationship between demographic predictors and behavioral and attitudinal outcomes, precisely as the conception would suggest.

Finally, Y. Bar-Tal, Bar-Tal, and Cohen-Hendel (2006) constructed an instrument that contained a list of 60 characteristics in random order that included 30 positive (e.g., honesty, warmth, modesty) and 30 negative ones (e.g., dirtiness, inhumanity, criminality). This instrument was administered to comparable groups of students at four points in time between 1990 and 2000 to assess their view of Palestinians. The results showed that "dovish" (i.e., left-wing) participants tended to be more positive toward Palestinian people than "hawkish" (i.e., right-wing) participants. Of special importance was

finding that the perceptions were not only dependent on the political orientation, but also on the political context relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Delegitimization has also been empirically examined through a qualitative methodological lens. One direction, which relied on drawings, was proposed by Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005). They used this method with children asking them to draw a typical Arab or a Jew. The results showed that some children drew an Arab with delegitimizing features such as murderous and criminal characteristics. Another direction was used by Raviv, Bar-Tal, and Arviv-Abromovich (in preparation) who conducted intensive interviews with 96 Jewish adults in Israel which assessed, among other factors, their characterization of Arabs and Palestinians. The analysis of the interviews indicated that some interviewees, especially ones that adhered to ethos of conflict, used a variety of delegitimizing labels in their characterization. This direction can be seen as focusing on discourse and rhetoric. This approach is vital to the study of delegitimization as we conceptualize it, since we emphasize it as a discursive process. Thus the direct interrogation of delegitimization in language and everyday rhetoric represents a critical area of study.

The leader in the qualitative study of delegitimization has been Tileaga (2005, 2007), whose studies of discourse about the Roma in Europe emphasize the way in which delegitimization is used to place a social category beyond the realm of a perceived normative order. Tileaga emphasizes how discourse about the Roma places them in a social category deemed to be beyond "nature" and in a moral position in contrast to other "civilized" groups in society, which legitimizes prejudice, discrimination, and even violence against them. In a similar vein, using the stereotype content model (SCM), Durante, Volpato, and Fiske (2010) examine descriptions of social groups in newspapers during Italy's Fascist era and show frequent use of delegitimizing labels, especially in characterization of Jews.

In sum, empirical work on the construct of delegitimization is in its early stages of development, even though the concept was initially articulated in the late 1980s (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1989). This lag between theory and empirical research can be connected to (1) the lack of sufficient attention to psychometric development related to the construct, (2) the emergence of several competing constructs, and (3) the only recent appreciation for qualitative research in mainstream social psychology. The new areas of empirical work on delegitimization address all of these issues. Work in progress by Pilecki and

colleagues is focused both on the conceptual differential of the construct and on the development of an instrument that can be used in multiple settings (Pilecki & Hammack, in preparation-a; Pilecki, Hammack, Bar-Tal, & Halperin, in preparation). Work by Tileaga (2005, 2007) and also by Pilecki and colleagues is focused on delegitimization in conversation and everyday discourse, utilizing sophisticated qualitative approaches (Pilecki & Hammack, in preparation-b). These lines of research will provide much-needed empirical elaboration of delegitimization and will move theory forward in this area.

Summary

Individuals, as society members, have the potential to perform the most immoral and evil acts. They kill, rape, injure, expel, and perform various atrocities against other individuals just because they belong to another group, a rival in conflict opposing the achievement of their own group's goals. They do so as part of a collective, often even as a subject of the state system, fulfilling orders and/or willingly carrying out acts—all in the name of their society, believing that such actions benefit their people.

Violence is thus a universal and transhistorical phenomenon, rooted in basic processes of social conflict. Violent acts were always part of civilization, but with changes in norms, mores, and moral codes, their occurrence has become unacceptable to the international community. As violent acts still occur in many parts of the world, many people are puzzled by how it is possible that, in spite of the fact that every person on this planet knows that these acts are seriously violating moral codes, they still take place. For example, in Rwanda within three and half months in 1994, about 800,000 people were killed in a genocide in the context of the conflict between Tutsi and Hutu (see Hintjens, 2001; Mamdani, 2001). In the war in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, about 100,000–150,000 were killed, and about 1.8 million were displaced in the conflict between Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats (see Gow, 2003; Maass, 1997). Such large-scale atrocities and crimes against humanity do not occur only in situations of a vicious conflict. They also take place as a result of ethnocentric ideology, which sometimes is embedded into a conflict framework. Nazi Germany believed that it was in conflict with Jews and therefore its ideology sought to use the "final solution" to exterminate the entire Jewish population (Goldhagen, 1996).

The fundamental question for the social sciences, and social psychology in particular, is how is it possible that human beings—who have families

themselves; who have normal routines of daily life; who feel joy, happiness, and also sadness and sorrow; who often feel empathy for their neighbor's fate; and who even experience guilt for their deeds—can also perform the most evil acts against members of another group? In our view, the process of delegitimization provides one significant explanation for this human phenomenon.

The same society members, who are ordinary human beings and lead normal lives, learn sometimes from an early age to deny the humanity of another group or groups. They engage with discourse and rhetoric, provided by leaders and institutions, that construct an outgroup as culturally and morally inferior and as worthy targets of direct violence. Thus delegitimization not only denies the humanity of an outgroup, it also provides a psychological permit to seriously harm the delegitimized group and sometimes even to eliminate it, if such an opportunity appears. Delegitimization represents an extreme form of moral exclusion, moral disengagement, and moral entitlement. When threat, trauma, and insecurity support the delegitimizing discourse, this narrative has profound psychological appeal to the members of a society. As part of the ethos of conflict, this narrative questions the claims of the outgroup and even the existence of the outgroup as part of the same moral community as the ingroup. It places members of the other group beyond the circle of the accepted groups that deserve human treatment.

We have suggested that delegitimization does not represent a state of psychopathology or a form of deviant cognition but rather is a *normative* psychological phenomenon in conflict settings. It is part of the basic cognitive process of categorization that social psychologists have theorized and empirically examined as central to the discipline (e.g., Allport, 1954; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Delegitimizing categorization and its accompanying feelings and thoughts are usually part of an ideology rooted in ethnocentrism, conflict, or both. It is a psychological mechanism that can turn normal human beings into immoral perpetrators such as murderers. Because delegitimization presents a vision of intergroup relations in which one group is morally excluded (Opotow, 1990), it provides individuals with the necessary level of moral disengagement to commit acts of violence (Bandura, 1999).

Our conception suggests that delegitimization *mediates* the relationship between the material,

political, and structural context of conflict and/or ethnocentrism and the collective action necessary to either support (in the case of the higher status group) or challenge the status quo. Delegitimization thus may be viewed as a fundamental cognitive component of the human tendency to manage power and hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). It can also be viewed as a critical force in the *reproduction* of conflict in that it provides a rationale and justification for the very political violence that maintains and exacerbates the conflict.

The present chapter cannot end without saying more about the prevention of delegitimization. Leaders, international institutions, educators, and others who care about a moral and just world have to fight delegitimizing practices as devotedly as they fight racism. Racism and anti-Semitism, in fact, are particular forms of delegitimization that have been recognized as negative and immoral ideologies. The practice of delegitimization in all forms must be considered intolerable in the enlightened world. There is a need for widespread education that will provide a stage for explaining the meaning and implications of delegitimization as is done with education for human rights. Of special importance is to avoid delegitimization in the context of conflict which by its nature encourages the prevalence of delegitimization. International institutions that monitor and punish crimes against humanity must also sanction practices of delegitimization that often underlie these crimes. While delegitimization may represent a normal psychological phenomenon, its vicious role in violence and human suffering can be exposed so as to instill a collective ethic of legitimacy, recognition, and justice for all groups. Social psychologists have the capability to produce knowledge that reveals this function of delegitimization and, in the process, potentially contribute to calls for social change and the promotion of harmonious intergroup relations founded on principles of mutual recognition and legitimacy of human diversity.

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Notes

1. Ethnocentrism as introduced originally by Sumner (1906), "is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it... Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders" (Sumner, 1906, pp. 12–13).

2. Intractable conflicts are defined as protracted, irreconcilable, violent, of zero-sum nature, total, and central; parties involved in such conflicts invest in them their major resources (see Azar, Jureidini, & McLaurin, 1978; Bar-Tal, 1998, 2007; Goertz & Diehl, 1993; Kriesberg, 1993).

3. Ethos of conflict is defined as the configuration of central societal beliefs that provides a dominant orientation to a society experiencing prolonged intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000). It has been proposed that, in the context of intractable conflict, an ethos evolves, characterized by eight themes (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2007). These themes include beliefs about the justness of ingroup goals, beliefs about security, beliefs about the positive distinctiveness of ingroup identity, beliefs about ingroup victimization, beliefs about delegitimization, beliefs about patriotism, beliefs about unity, and beliefs about peace.

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