The myriad ways in which people, contrary to their own self-interest, "buy into" a social system that objectively harms them constitute the theme of Thomas Frank’s (2004) best-selling book *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* In seeking to understand the resurgence of blue-collar conservatism and what he calls “The Great Backlash” in middle America, Frank writes:

The country seems . . . like a panorama of madness and delusion worthy of Hieronymous Bosch: of sturdy blue-collar patriots reciting the Pledge while they strangle their own life chances; of small farmers proudly voting themselves off the land; of devoted family men carefully seeing to it that their children will never be able to afford college or proper health care; of working-class guys in midwestern cities cheering as they deliver up a landslide for a candidate whose policies will end their way of life, will transform their region into a “rust belt,” will strike people like them blows from which they will never recover. (p. 10)

The book is full of vivid ethnographic details, but it does relatively little to shed light on the general social psychological mechanisms by which people defend and justify existing social, economic, and political arrangements, often to their own detriment—not just in the midwestern United States in recent years, but around the globe and for as long as anyone can remember (see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

Why is the attraction of the status quo so great? What drives popular ideological support for the existing social system, even among those citizens whose interests it seems not to serve? What inhibits those who are disenfranchised by the status quo from denouncing the system and working toward a better one? What allows those who are privileged by the status quo to suppress guilt and dissonance evoked by the suffering of others? Finally, how does adopting a social psychological perspective on these questions enable us to better understand dynamic processes of change?
In attempting to understand why acquiescence in the face of injustice is so prevalent and why social change is so rare and difficult to accomplish, system justification theory posits that—to varying degrees, depending on both situational and dispositional factors—people are motivated to defend, justify, and rationalize the status quo (e.g., Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005). In this chapter we lay out the motivation of system justification, the palliative function it serves, and the implications of the theory for the dynamics of social change. More specifically, we seek to develop the following four theoretical propositions:

1. There is a goal to maintain the status quo. Once a given system or regime is firmly in place, people will be motivated to maintain its existence and stability. Consequently, system-justifying tendencies will display features of goal pursuit.

2. System justification tendencies are modulated by dispositional and situational factors. The extent to which an individual possesses heightened needs to reduce uncertainty and threat will affect his or her system justification tendencies. Similar responses are elicited when the status quo is directly or indirectly threatened.

3. System justification serves a palliative function: It operates as a coping mechanism for members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups by reducing anxiety and uncertainty when the system's faults are highlighted and promoting positive affect. However, this palliative function inhibits the motivation for social change and therefore may have detrimental long-term consequences for the individual and society.

4. Once change is inevitable, system justification processes should produce rapid conversion to the new status quo.

Before we discuss these four propositions more elaborately, we summarize recent theory and research on system justification processes.

### A Brief Overview of System Justification Theory

System justification theory provides a sustained, integrated approach to understanding how and why people defend the status quo, even when a different system would better meet their interests (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005). We use the term system justification to refer to the set of social psychological processes by which the status quo is defended and upheld because it serves (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Kay, Jimenez, & Jost, 2002; Keller, 2005). To varying degrees, depending on both constitutional and dispositional factors, people are motivated to accept and perpetuate features of the status quo, even if those features are arrived at accidentally or arbitrarily. System justification efforts are associated with increased ideological support for economic and political systems and arrangements; stereotypic differentiation of social groups; and ingroup favoritism by members of advantaged groups and outgroup favoritism by members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004). These tendencies help to maintain an imperfect but stable status quo.

Typically, system justification efforts are consistent with self-interest and the maintenance of resources and power advantageous by the status quo, but harmful to the interests of the disadvantaged. However, research on system justification theory has shown that members of disadvantaged groups engage in system justification efforts at the expense of their own personal and group interests (Henry & Saul, 2006; Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003). This inherent conservative tendency to maintain the legitimacy of the status quo cannot be explained in terms of theories that emphasize justification on behalf of oneself or one's own group. For members of disadvantaged groups, system justification reactions appear to be conceptualized as a psychological striving to maintain the status quo, it should exhibit goal-like properties. When the system's legitimacy is in question, people should persist in system justification efforts until it is restored.

Thus the motivational aspects of system justification may provide the key to understanding its effects and consequences.

### Proposition 1: There is a Goal to Maintain the Status Quo

In previous work, system justification has been operationalized largely in terms of explicit ideologies, such as beliefs and attitudes that are used to justify conservation about the social system (e.g., Jost & Hunyady, 2002, 2005). Here we consider the notion that system justification operates as a conscious and unconscious goal: People do not only believe the system is fair and legitimate; they want to believe that it is fair and legitimate, and they are prepared to legitimate it despite its evident failings (e.g., Napier, Mandosouda, Andersen, & Jost, 2006). Insofar as system justification can be conceptualized as a psychological striving to maintain the status quo, it should exhibit goal-like properties. When the system's legitimacy is in question, people should persist in system justification efforts until it is restored. Thus the motivational aspects of system justification may provide the key to understanding its effects and consequences.

Theory and research on goals and goal pursuit processes assume that individuals have desired ends toward which they strive vigorously and purposely (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996). Such goal-directed action continues until these ends are attained (or otherwise altered or abandoned). It is characterized by properties such as persistence (a goal will grow stronger until it is attained or the possibility of attainment is eliminated), substitutability of means (a goal can be read through a number of different means), flexibility (a goal can be altered upon changes in individual's needs or in the situational circumstances), and resumption following interruption (a goal will remain activated even if a goal pursuit is interrupted, and it will resume when the possibility arises) (Atkinson & Birch, 1959; Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Bardenfors, & Trötschel, 2001; Gollwitzer & Wickerl 1985; Heckhausen, 1991). Attaining a goal leads to positive affect, whereas failure to attain a goal leads to negative affect (Brendel Higgins, 1996; Gollwitzer & Bargh, 1996).

Extensive research has shown that goal setting and the processing, interpretation, and memory of information for a goal are consistent with goal-related information, processing of information (e.g., systematic information processing following accuracy goals), and encoding/recall of information (e.g., interest in processing information according to the goal), as well as judge and decision making (e.g., greater reliance on heuristic heuristics according to a goal of reach closure).

Evidence from decision-making studies indicates that people anchor on the status quo, however arbitrarily it was arrived at, make insufficient adjustments to it when the context changes (cf., Loevenstein, & Prelec, 2003). Typically, people compare the status quo to counterfactual alternatives and find the alternatives worse (e.g., Lubyomirsky & Ross, 1999). Inducing disappointment or interfering with attempts to understand them. O'Brien, Crandall (2005) found that people are tending to dismiss arguments that challenge the status quo as more compelling than argument in favor of the status quo. All of these processes can lead to perpetuation of the status quo reasons that are largely tangential to the merits of the system (i.e., the benefits it best serves its citizens). Both those who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged by the status quo are therefore likely to support it in general (Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004).

### Effects on Information Processing

In a study that examined more directly the effects of system justification tendencies on it
System Justification as a Nonconscious Goal

We further postulate that system justification processes can operate nonconsciously, leading people to implicitly accept and defend current social arrangements. Extensive research has demonstrated that goals can be activated outside of awareness, and that subsequent behavior is then guided by these goals to attain the desired end-state (e.g., Bargh et al., 2001; see also Chartrand, Dalton, & Cheng, Chapter 22, and Ferguson, Hassin, & Bargh, Chapter 10, this volume). Hence people may not even be aware of the extent to which they are preserving the status quo and resisting change. Moreover, some forms of system justification efforts are not normatively acceptable, such as stereotyping of and discrimination against low-status groups, and thus may interfere with social desirability concerns at a conscious level (see Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004). Additionally, an explicit acknowledgment of their inferiority may have negative consequences for members of disadvantaged groups. Thus system justification processes may be especially likely to be manifested implicitly rather than explicitly.

Consistent with this assertion, several studies have documented the nonconscious operation of system-justifying biases (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monetere, 2003; Lane, Mitchell, & Banaji, 2005; Rudman, Feinberg, & Fairfield, 2002; Ulhmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwood, & Swanson, 2002). For example, Jost, Pelham, and Carvallo (2002) found evidence for outgroup favoritism among members of disadvantaged groups and ingroup favoritism among members of advantaged groups, thereby exhibiting attitudes that legitimize inequality between groups in society. In one study, more than twice as many members of a low-status group (San Jose State University [SJSU] students) exhibited implicit outgroup favoritism on an affective Implicit Association Test (IAT) measure as did members of a high-status group (Stanford University students). Among SJSU students, this also included implicit stereotyping of the two groups (Stanford as more academic, SJSU as more involved in “extracurricular” activities) was associated with implicit outgroup favoritism on the affective measure. In a second study, Jost and colleagues showed that European, Hispanic, and Asian American students all preferred to associate with another participant whom they believed to be European American.

The intensity of goal-directed actions is determined by the individual’s motivation to commit, to pursue the goal. Thus studies have shown that highly committed individuals are those typically exhibiting the properties commonly attributed to goal pursuit (e.g., studies on self-completion theory, Gollwitzer & Kirchhoff, 1998; or studies on goal shielding, Shah, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2002). In line with this theory and research on the moderating effect of commitment on goal-directed behavior, we propose that system justification tendencies depend on dispositional and situational factors that increase motivation to maintain and defend the status quo and render such goals more accessible.

There are several individual difference variables that gauge the extent to which individuals support versus challenge the status quo (Crandall, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Examples of system-justifying ideologies that people endorse to different extents include the Protestant work ethic (Quinn & Crocker, 1999), the belief in a just world (Hafer & Bego, 2005), political conservatism (Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004), opposition to equality (Kluegel & Smith, 1986), and fair market ideology (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). The degree to which people endorse conservative, system-justifying beliefs is affected by such general dispositional factors as uncertainty avoidance; intolerance of ambiguity; and epistemic needs for order, structure, and closure (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003; see also Kruglanski & Chaiken, Chapter 10, this volume). It appears that there is a resonant match between psychological needs to reduce uncertainty and threat and the contents of attitudes that serve to justify the status quo (thereby preserving what is familiar). As illus- trated in Figure 39.1, needs for uncertainty reduction and threat management can be satisfied by attaining the system justification goal through various means.

In some commitment to goals (such as system justification) can be activated by situational as well as dispositional factors (Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2002). Much as self-serving biases are accentuated after self-threat events and goal-supporting biases are accentuated after group threat, we find that system justification tendencies increase following system threat. Defensive forms of justification can be triggered by threat to the legitimacy or stability of the system. Indeed, the need for system justification is greater when a flaw in the system is exposed or the status quo is otherwise threatened. There is reason to think that system-level threats induce negative affect, such as anxiety, cognitive dissonance, and discomfort, and that the endorsement of system-justifying ideologies serves to reduce these negative experiences.
IV. APPLICATIONS OF MOTIVATIONAL RESEARCH

and derogate those who are disadvantaged (Jost, Banaji, et al., 2004; Kay et al., 2003).

The powerless, meanwhile, may feel understandably frustrated and angry about their position in society. They may rail against the system, deriding barriers to individual and social mobility. However, they seldom do. According to system justification theory, the disadvantaged may lower their own aspirations and adapt to the status quo to minimize the anger and resentment evoked by a system with impermeable boundaries. For example, Kluegel and Smith (1986) found that poor people who blamed themselves for their own poverty reported feeling more positive emotion, less guilt, and greater satisfaction than did poor people who made external attributions for their situation. Similarly, Jost, Pelham, and colleagues (2003) found in a national survey that holding the belief that inequality is both legitimate and necessary was associated with increased satisfaction, regardless of a respondent's income level.

Several studies that have examined the relationship between system justification tendencies and affect support the palliative function of system justification. For example, research by Jost, Pelham, and colleagues (2003, Study 5) indicates that ideology is related to satisfaction in terms of one's job, one's financial situation, and life in general. These researchers examined the effects of demographic variables (race and socioeconomic status [SES]) and ideological beliefs concerning meritocracy (e.g., ambition, ability, and hard work are important for "getting ahead in life") and the legitimacy of economic inequality (e.g., "large differences in income are necessary for America's prosperity") on satisfaction. Structural equation modeling revealed that (1) African Americans and people who were lower in SES were more likely than others to believe that self-determination needs were necessary and legitimate, apparently because they had stronger needs to justify the system in order to reduce cognitive dissonance and restore positive affect; and (2) endorsement of meritocratic beliefs concerning inequality is positively related to satisfaction for all respondents. That is, the more people believed that hard work, ability, and motivation lead to success, the more they reported being satisfied with their own economic situation, regardless of whether they were rich or poor.

In the United States, stark inequality is a potential indicator of system legitimacy, and as such it can pose a threat to the system. Placing people in a situation of inequality among peers should therefore activate the system justification goal. Studies conducted by Waksler at colleagues (2007) explored the dynamics of differential consequences of system justification, including effects on discrete negative emotions (e.g., guilt, frustration, anxiety, and unease) associated with advantaged versus disadvantaged positions in hierarchical systems. In a heretofore unpublished study, inequity among peers was artificially created via the "Star Power" exercise, so that a stratified system involving status differences, power, and privilege was established. Members of all three groups were given the opportunity to endorse meritocratic ideology and conform stereotypes to justify the system. Result indicated that system justification increases satisfaction in all groups, and that it decreases frustration for members of disadvantaged groups and decreased guilt for members of advantaged groups. The beneficial effects of system-justifying stereotypes and ideologies, then, were evinced by greater self-reported satisfaction and happiness and (less negative) affect on the part of people who were given opportunities to control the system. For both advantaged and disadvantaged individuals, it appears that system justification processes serve a palliative function.

Endorsing complementary stereotypes of disadvantaged groups can reduce psychological dissonance and guilt for the advantaged, and can reduce dissonance and frustration for the disadvantaged (see Kay & Jost, 2003). Perhaps this is even more crucial for the disadvantaged who must come to terms with their complicity in the system (Lane, 1962). Sticking with the status quo provides the added benefits of fairness, coherence, and security, thereby reducing uncertainty and worry among disadvantaged groups (Glaser, et al., 2003). Thus, affirming the status quo simultaneously restores integrity to the status quo and reduces negative affect.

Although the palliative function of system justification may be adaptive in some ways, it may also have long-term negative consequences, particularly for members of disadvantaged groups. Jost and Banaji (1994) argue that there are two other motivation systems: intergroup justice, or the tendency to develop a maintain favorable self-views; group justification, or the tendency to maintain a favored image of one's social group and defend its...

PROPOSITION 3: SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION SERVES A PALLIATIVE FUNCTION

We have addressed the issues of what people do (i.e., defend, bolster, and justify the status quo), and when they typically do it (i.e., when motivation is increased because of dispositional and situational factors). We have only partially dealt with the perplexing question of why people support the system so enthusiastically, especially when it clearly does not benefit them. We suggest that justifying the status quo satisfies several social and psychological needs—including epistemic needs for consistency, coherence, and certainty, and existential needs to manage various forms of threat and dissonance—and that the status quo to minimize the anger and resentment evoked by a system with impermeable boundaries. For example, Kluegel and Smith (1986) found that poor people who blamed themselves for their own poverty reported feeling more positive emotion, less guilt, and greater satisfaction than did poor people who made external attributions for their situation. Similarly, Jost, Pelham, and colleagues (2003) found in a national survey that holding the belief that inequality is both legitimate and necessary was associated with increased satisfaction, regardless of a respondent's income level.

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Although the palliative function of system justification may be adaptive in some ways, it may also have long-term negative consequences, particularly for members of disadvantaged groups. Jost and Banaji (1994) argue that there are two other motivation systems: intergroup justice, or the tendency to develop a maintain favorable self-views; group justification, or the tendency to maintain a favored image of one's social group and defend its...
tions; and system justification, or the tendency to defend and bolster the social system. For the disadvantaged group, ego justification, group justification, and system justification goals are concordant. For the disadvantaged group, however, these justification goals are potentially discordant; these conflicts should give rise to attitudinal ambivalence toward ingroup members, and may affect psychological well-being. Indeed, research has shown that conflict among long-term goals is associated with poorer psychological well-being, including lessened life satisfaction and affective problems (Emmons & King, 1983; Riddiger & Freund, 2004). Relatively, Jost and Thompson (2000) found that opposition to equality was positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to depression and neuroticism for members of advantaged groups (see also O’Brien & Major, 2005). Thus pursuing system justification goals may have positive and negative consequences for members of disadvantaged groups in the short term, but it may also have aversive consequences for long-term well-being (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

In addition to these aversive consequences at the individual level, the palliative effects of system justification may have negative ramifications at the societal level. That is, the positive outcomes of attaining system justification goals may inhibit efforts to improve and change the status quo, thereby producing serious impediments to bringing about substantial change in society’s institutions and organizations. Two follow-up studies to the “Star Power” study described above support this notion. These studies indicated that the palliative effect had as its by-product a weakening of support for social policies aimed at eliminating imbalance (Waksłak et al., 2007). In particular, reductions in moral outrage (Montada & Schneider, 1989) mediated the dampening effect of system justification on support for helping the disadvantaged through social programs (Weksler et al., 2007). These findings support the notion that system justification tendencies encourage resistance to social change and a reluctance to support policies that would lead to a more equal redistribution of resources (see also Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Tendencies to blame individuals rather than systems for poor outcomes, and to minimize the extent of corruption, could also lead to system undercorrection in circumstances in which qualitative change would be beneficial (Jost, Blount, et al., 2003). The palliative function of system justification, therefore, may help to explain many cases of failure to support changes in the system.

**PROPOSITION 4: ONCE CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION PROCESSES PRODUCE RAPID CONVERSION TO THE NEW STATUS QUO**

Given system justification tendencies to maintain the status quo and to defend and buttress it in times of trouble, one might expect social change to be virtually impossible. Indeed, collective action and protest are rare and occur only when the system is seen as severely unjust (e.g., Gurr, 1970; Moore, 1978; Zinn, 1968). Paradoxically, criticism can make current arrangements seem more attractive because without them the future seems at least as bad. Critical views are often selectively communicated in line with views expressed within one’s social system. Critical views can be ignored, belittled, or counterattacked by the very people who should be motivated to change the status quo.

Thus, when a new status quo is established, people should become motivated to perceive the emerging social arrangements in favorable terms and to rationalize the new regime. In contrast, defending the old status quo has no psychological benefits any more, and therefore people will eventually disengage from their previous goal of justifying it. Such a process was observed in the United States with regard to the relatively rapid shift to a system of racial integration from the earlier norm of racial segregation. Kelman (2001) described a study conducted in 1954 concerning African American students’ attitudes toward maintaining some private all-black colleges in the face of an impending decision by the Supreme Court regarding racial desegregation in education. After hearing a persuasive message advocating the maintenance of some all-black colleges, students’ attitudes were measured just 3 days before the decision and again on the day of the decision. Regardless of the source and degree of the communicator’s power, students were significantly more opposed to maintaining all-black colleges after the decision to integrate was made than before. That is, when segregation was the status quo, African Americans professed stronger support for voluntary segregation. When integration became the status quo 3 days later because of the Supreme Court decision, the same group of students became more enthusiastic integrationists.

More direct evidence for our claim that people are motivated to justify an emerging status quo comes from experimental studies by Kay and colleagues (2002). They demonstrated in two studies that system justification processes contribute to anticipatory rationalization for outcomes that have not yet occurred but are likely to occur. In Study 1, a political survey was administered to Democrats, Republicans, and independents/nonpartisans prior to the 2000 presidential election. The survey manipulated the perceived probability of the election outcome (victory likelihoods: 43%, 45%, 47%, 49%, 51%) in favor of Bush vs. Gore. Participants were asked to indicate how desirable a Bush victory would be for them, how desirable a Gore victory would be for them. Results showed that for Democrats and Republicans alike, the greater a particular participant’s chance of Gore’s victory, the more desirable his presidency became. For non-partisans, there was no relationship between likelihood and desirability. When people were motivated to avoid defeat and to reason in terms of favorability, they expressed higher evaluation of more likely outcomes (and denied unlikely outcomes) regardless of their partisanship.

To eliminate potential confounding effects associated with the use of consensus information and impression management conceits and to generalize beyond the historic demonstration of system justification, Kay and colleagues (2002, Study 2) conducted a laboratory study concerning rationalizations of a decision made by university trustees to increase or decrease tuition rates. The researchers found evidence consistent with a decision that the increase in tuition was high (large tuition changes), so that more probable outcomes were seen as more desirable. The findings were not replicated when people high in motivational involvement again engaged in rationalization by enhancing the favorability of likely outcomes and derogating unlikely outcomes, regardless of whether they were initially motivated to avoid losses. Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg, and Wheatley (1998) obtained similar results in search on what they termed *inelegant neglec*: one of their studies, they contacted citizens who voted in the 1994 Texas gubernatorial election between Ann Richards and George Bush, just before the elections and approx. 1 month following them. On the occasion, voters were asked to predict 1 month whether they would be 1 month before the elections. Results showed that the higher the perceived probability of Bush’s victory, the more likely that they would be 1 month before the elections. How would they be 1 month after the election if their candidate were to win or lose, as how they would evaluate Bush or Richard the winning candidate. One month later, voters were contacted again and were asked about their happiness and about their satisfaction with Bush (who won the election). Gilbert and colleagues found that supporters of Richard
were significantly happier than they had expected to be, evaluated Bush more positively after the election than before, and felt better about their new governor than they had expected to feel. The authors explained these results in terms of intrinsic neglect. That is, "people fail to recognize that their negative affect will not merely subside but will be actively antagonized by powerful psychological mechanisms that are specifically dedicated to their alleviation...[and therefore] tend to overestimate the longevity of those emotional reactions" (p. 619).

In the current system justification perspective, these effects are not merely indicative of people's inability to predict their own internal states, but they also signal a shift in people's motivational concerns. Prior to the Texas election, Richards' voters did not possess the goal of rationalizing a hypothetical victory for Bush, and most likely even had the opposite goal. However, once Bush's authority was firmly in place (i.e., it became the status quo), system justification goals were activated, thereby motivating these people to justify and legitimate Bush's position as governor. Furthermore, research on the effects of goal pursuit on object evaluation has shown that when an object facilitates current goal attainment, it is evaluated more favorably than when the goal is absent (e.g., Shah & Higgins, 2001). Ferguson and Bargh (2004) pointed out that this increased favorability could result from greater accessibility of positive object information, greater inhibition of negative object information, or both. Thus, when Bush's administration became the status quo and people were motivated to justify it, then presumably positive aspects of his tenure became more accessible, negative aspects became less accessible, or both.

In sum, according to our conceptualization of system justification as a motivated process, initial resistance to change should be greater than would be expected on the basis of other theories, and yet adaptation to fully implemented change (i.e., when a new status quo is firmly established) may be easier than expected (Blasi & Jost, 2006). Once change becomes inevitable, support for the former system should dwindle as quickly as support for the emergent system grows, and the old regime should be derogated as much as (or more than) other alternatives to the current status quo. As soon as the new system is completely installed, people begin to rationalize its distinctive features, both consciously and unconsciously. Although there is no way of predicting future events with certainty, it is possible to take advantage of naturally occurring changes to investigate these phenomena. Several studies by Kay and colleagues (2002) took advantage of the 2000 presidential election in the United States to demonstrate the increase in support for a new regime as soon as it becomes reality—in this case, support gained by Bush when he was elected. The implication of a system justification analysis for social change is that it will either come not at all or at all once, the way that catastrophic change occurs in dynamic systems and in tipping point phenomena (e.g., Gladwell, 2000; Johnson, 1966).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we have sought to deepen our understanding of the motivational underpinnings of system justification tendencies. Conceptualizing system justification as a goal helps us to understand what we could defend and justify the status quo, even when the old regime was falling, and to identify the social, economic, and political interests that lie behind this system justification goal (see also Kay et al., 2005; Napier et al., 2006). In the language of goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Shah et al., 2002), system justification thereby exhibits the properties of equitability. More importantly, perhaps, system justification also possesses the property of multifinality (see Figure 39.1). That is, it seems to satisfy several epistemic and system needs, including uncertainty reduction and threat management (Jost, Fittsmons et al., 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2005), and it serves a palliative function in general (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Waksleak et al., 2007). Ultimately, these psychological benefits may help to explain the prevalence of system justifying tendencies, the motivational strength that they can acquire, and the extent to which these tendencies will persist in efforts to justify the status quo.

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39. System Justification as Goal Pursuit

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