
Justifying the Justification Hypothesis: Scientific-Humanism, Equilintegration (EI) Theory, and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI)



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The Justification Hypothesis (JH; Henriques, 2003) is a basic, general, and macro-level construct that is highly compelling. However, it needs greater specification (i.e., justification) regarding what it is, how it might be operationalized and measured, and what it does and does not predict in the real world. In the present analysis, the act of “justification” is conceptualized as the ongoing attempt to convince self and/or others that one’s beliefs and values, which is to say one’s “version of reality” or VOR, is correct, defensible, and good. In addressing these issues, this paper is divided into two complementary parts: (a) consideration of justification dynamics and exemplars from a scientific-humanist perspective and (b) an examination of how justification systems and processes have been studied vis-à-vis research and theory on beliefs and values as well as an extant model—Equilintegration (EI) Theory—and method—the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI). © 2004 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *J Clin Psychol* 61: 81–106, 2005.

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*These events have divided the whole world into two sides—the side of believers and the side of infidels.*¹

Osama bin Laden

God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve.

Jerry Falwell

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¹Osama bin Laden’s October 7, 2001 videotaped statement. (2001, October 28). *The Washington Post*, B2. See Carlson (2001) for the Jerry Falwell reference.

In his article, "Psychology Defined," Henriques (2004) offers a persuasive and integrative formulation for how scientists in general and psychologists in particular might come to understand and appreciate their ineluctable interdependence (see also Henriques, 2003). More specifically, the Tree of Knowledge (ToK) System illustrates how and why scientific inquiry, defined in the broadest sense—from micro-level examination of inanimate matter, to the macro level study of human culture and self-consciousness—is best conceptualized along continuous and quantitative rather than dichotomous and qualitative terms. That is, science is really about the examination of phenomena at different levels of analysis, which interact and are inextricably linked; in this sense, the distinctions between "pure" and "applied" or "natural" and "social" become far less salient than the shared commitment among all scientists to principles of observation, prediction, and verification that are appropriate to phenomena at different levels of analysis. A "true scientist" understands this essential fact, and therefore respects and appreciates the contributions and findings of scientific colleagues who work at these different levels of analysis, rather than seeking either to appropriate or denigrate such work.

But the ToK System offers much more than a compelling call for scientific rapprochement. It also provides a theoretically integrative accounting of human behavior through the introduction of two novel theories: (a) Behavioral Investment Theory (BIT), which offers a general theory of "mental behavior," and (b) the Justification Hypothesis (JH) which offers a theory of the human self-consciousness system and the evolution of culture. These fundamental considerations provide a necessary conduit between human culture writ large and the basic constituents of life. Moreover, related to psychology in particular, Henriques' (2004) distinction between psychological formalism and human psychology clarifies why the "noise" within our field has too often lamentably overwhelmed the possibility for "music." This step is essential if we are to get our own epistemological house in order and create a more coherent, workable professional identity for scientists and practitioners alike (e.g., see also Henriques & Sternberg, in press; Shealy, 2004; Shealy, Cobb, Crowley, Nelson, & Peterson, 2004). For all of these reasons, as a proposal, the ToK System is as bold and audacious as they come, and warrants serious consideration by all scholars who are interested in identifying a framework that can accommodate a truly unified theory and organizational template for the sciences.

In the context of a larger discussion of "justification" systems and processes, this article focuses primarily on the JH, and does so in two parts. Part I offers a rhetorical analysis of justification from the standpoint of a "scientific-humanist." The "justification" for such rhetoric is sound and potent, for psychology has been historically crippled by incompatible visions, especially between those who emphasize science and those who emphasize humanism. As a scientific-humanist (as I define the term below), I believe the JH affords us new opportunities to build bridges between the science of psychology and the problems of "the real world," and I justify the use of rhetoric to facilitate this crucial process. Part II considers justification in terms of theory and research on beliefs and values, and seeks to operationalize and assess justification systems and processes in general and the JH in particular through an extant model—Equilintegration (EI) Theory—and method—the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI). Hopefully, this approach will illustrate one way in which the ToK System and its concomitants can be translated into applied research in the real world.

I. Justification From the Perspective of Scientific-Humanism

As I prefer to define the construct, a scientific-humanist understands and embraces three core commitments: (a) *critical thought* (i.e., the ability and willingness, when necessary,

to identify and challenge assumptions about reality in self, others, and the larger world); (b) *replication* (i.e., the recognition that all findings or observations that are characterized as “scientific” are rightly subject to scrutiny by other scientists, who justly strive to be completely impartial but correctly suspect they cannot be); and (c) *the pursuit of self-awareness* via an ongoing process of self-reflection and self-assessment (see also Kodish, 2003; Shealy, 2004). Although deeply respectful of the power of scientific observation and methodology, a scientific-humanist does not pledge fealty to some distant and immutable god of empiricism, but rather recognizes that *all* scientific observations and findings are ineluctably derived from and interpreted through a subjective human lens. Thus, a scientific-humanist appreciates that “scientists” are not somehow immune to the same potentially biasing factors and forces that plague the rest of humanity.

Moreover, a scientific-humanist as defined here—though devoted to clear thought and reasoned discourse—also values the arts and humanities; has the maddening tendency to question the latest scientific “findings”; is quite capable of imagining or even concluding that human existence has a spiritual, metaphysical, and/or transcendent dimension; is able and willing to experience deeply a wide range of emotions about all aspects and manifestations of life; and is prone to wonder aloud when other self-identified “scientific” colleagues appear loathe to do so, even when life circumstances clearly call for a purely human and “non-scientific” response. Note that “scientific” is a modifying adjective of the “humanist” noun, which conveys the proper relationship between these two synergistic constructs. It is the human being first and always who learns through disciplined study to think and practice scientifically.

Along these same lines, as a field of inquiry and practice, psychology has long been encumbered by its historic inability or unwillingness to integrate “science” and “humanism” in a way that is credible, recognizable, and compelling. Instead, the scientific theories we create, studies we construct, analyses we conduct, and findings we report are too often too far removed from whatever human phenomena they are designed to explain, predict, or control. In my experience (e.g., as a training director, course instructor, dissertation chair, and clinical supervisor), when we subsequently “feed” such theories and findings to our students and trainees, they often leave the table feeling empty and dissatisfied, because the humanistic “food group” has been scientifically extruded from the main course; the reason being, if we put it on the plate along with everything else that our field has neatly prepared, we’re bound to have a mess at the table.

One of the most compelling aspects of the ToK system is that it lends itself clearly and directly to both rigorous scientific formulations (Henriques, 2003) and to the deep, real world concerns of the humanist. Thus, it is hoped that the concepts described in this paper will help the once and future scientific-humanists among us to enjoy a full course meal that is balanced and fulfilling.

What Is Justification and Why Does It Matter?

According to Webster, to “justify” means “to prove to be just, right, or reasonable.” For social psychology, processes of “self-justification”—the human tendency and apparent need to justify, defend, and/or reconcile beliefs, emotions, and behaviors in self or others—represent a primary area of inquiry in their own right, and are integral to some of the most thoroughly studied constructs in this field (e.g., cognitive dissonance) (cf. Aronson, 1999). In both the layperson and scholarly sense, the process of justifying suggests an active but not necessarily conscious attempt to convince self or others about the “truth” or “goodness” of what I will call, a particular “version of reality” (VOR). Theoretically, one’s

“version of reality” could refer to the entire range of human expression, conduct, and existence, from the way in which one presents self to others, to opinions about the way in which the world and the people in it should function or be structured, to deeply held convictions about who one is and how, why, and to what degree one’s thoughts, feelings, or actions are or are not internally consistent with one’s sense of self.

Fundamentally, then, one of the basic propositions in this paper is that the act of “justification” is really an attempt to convey and convince oneself and/or others about the validity of one’s own beliefs and values, which is to say, that one’s personal worldview or VOR is correct, defensible, and good. From this perspective, the beliefs and values that comprise one’s VOR function as a lens or filter through which self, others, the world at large, and life itself are experienced and interpreted (see Shealy, 2004).

Presuming the validity of these observations, this perspective suggests a fundamental paradox, in that two human beings are capable of asserting diametrically opposed “versions of reality” while simultaneously declaring with complete certitude that one’s version of reality is true or good whereas the other’s is not. In so doing, individuals who express diametrically opposed VORs appear often to seek out a basis for justifying why their particular version of reality is not only good or true, but sometimes better or superior to another’s. And one of the most striking and defining characteristics of such justification processes is the demonstrable absence of awareness of the basic constructivist fact that one’s own beliefs and values may, in the end, be nothing more or less than that . . . one’s own (cf. Gergen, 1998, 1999; Gerhardt & Stinson, 1995; Neimeyer & Raskin, 2000; see also Martin & Sugarman, 2000). To be sure, human beings will claim that their beliefs and values are right or superior to those of others because they are derivative of, congruent with, or prescribed by a larger system of thought or practice (e.g., political or religious) which has declared itself to be “right” or “true.” But, if there is no clear and credible way to ascertain whether claims about the inherent “truth” or “rightness” of one’s beliefs and values are “more” valid than another’s, then there is no external means by which support for such claims can be reliably mustered. *None of this is to say that specific beliefs and values are not or cannot be true, right, or better than others*, only that such claims often cannot be justified on the basis of either reliable scientific grounds and/or universal opinion.

Justifying the Belief in Belief

Disney notwithstanding, believing something to be “the real truth”—even vehemently—has no more power to make it so than nonbelief has the power to make it not so. That is because there is no inherent and necessary linkage between that which is or is not believed and that which is or is not “truth” in any absolute sense. Belief exists in a realm that may or may not be aligned with “reality” or “truth,” despite the fact that human beings behave as though there is a direct and inviolable linkage between what they believe and what might, in fact, be real or true. This phenomenon is particularly apparent in the subjective spheres of politics and religion. One need only tune in to “talk radio” or political “talk shows” on television in the United States, where even under the best circumstances (e.g., when honest dialogue and an open exchange of perspectives actually occurs), devotees of the major political parties will argue for the inherent goodness or rightness of their particular beliefs and values, which may be expressed in the form of preferred and often diametrically opposed perspectives regarding particular sociopolitical events, proposals, or policies. Such “debates” often appear to unfold on the basis of a priori assumptions about reality that (a) are designed to identify and present confirmatory rather than

disconfirmatory evidence and (b) do not appear to recognize how such versions of reality become internalized (i.e., claimed as one's own) in the first place. Instead, the mere fact that such versions of reality are *held to be true* often appears to be all that is necessary and sufficient to contend that such versions of reality *are in fact true*.

But it is in the sphere of religious belief that these paradoxical processes become most apparent. For example, contrast person A who believes that the only way to “get to heaven” is to believe in X, with person B who believes that the only way to “get to heaven” is to believe in Y. The rather ironic and disturbing fact that both belief systems can't be true—if the validity of X is predicated on the invalidity of Y (and vice versa)—seems often lost on persons A and B. In short, at the level of expressed conviction and certitude in politics and religion, at least, these tautologies often do not appear to be recognized as such.

As an exemplar of these phenomena, consider the following news account of comments by the Reverend Jerry Falwell and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson, which occurred 2 days after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 in the United States.

*Robertson and Falwell: God gave us 'what we deserve'*²

The Associated Press

The Rev. Jerry Falwell and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson said Tuesday's terrorist attacks happened because Americans have insulted God and lost the protection of heaven.

“We have imagined ourselves invulnerable and have been consumed by the pursuit of . . . health, wealth, material pleasures and sexuality,” Robertson wrote in a four-page statement issued Thursday by the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Terrorism, he said, “is happening because God Almighty is lifting his protection from us.”

Falwell, a Baptist minister and chancellor of Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA, said Thursday on Robertson's religious program “The 700 Club” that he blames the attacks on pagans, abortionists, feminists, homosexuals, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the People For the American Way.

“All of them have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say, ‘You helped this happen,’” Falwell said.

He added later, “God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve.” “Jerry, that's my feeling,” Robertson responded. “I think we've just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven't even begun to see what they can do to the major population.”

Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights organization, said Friday the comments of Falwell and Robertson “were stunning. They were beyond contempt. They were irresponsible at best, and a deliberate attempt to manipulate the nation's anger at worst.”

Robertson, who founded the Christian Coalition and unsuccessfully ran for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination said in his statement that Americans have insulted God by allowing abortion and “rampant Internet pornography.” He also chided the U.S. Supreme Court for, among other things, limiting prayer in public schools.

“We have a court that has essentially stuck its finger in God's eye,” Robertson wrote. “We have insulted God at the highest level of our government. Then, we say, ‘Why does this happen?’”

Robertson was among leaders on the religious right who backed President Bush in last year's election. A White House official called the remarks “inappropriate” and added, “The president does not share those views.”

²Robertson and Falwell: God gave us ‘what we deserve.’ (2001, September 15). *The News Leader*, p. A2.

Falwell said Friday that he didn't mean to blame any one group.

"But I'd say this is a wake up call from God," Falwell told The Associated Press. "I feel our spiritual defenses are down. If we don't repent, then more events might happen in the future."

Bill Leonard, dean of the Wake Forest University Divinity School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, compared Falwell's and Robertson's comments with militant Islamic rhetoric that has been condemned worldwide.

"It trivializes theology. It trivializes the dead," Leonard said. "It suggests that God was somehow protecting us more than other countries—Britain, Israel—that had terrorist attacks in the past.

"This is not a time to be blaming anyone, but to huddle together. To lament and cry out."

Asked to comment on Falwell and Robertson's comments, a spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union said, "We are not dignifying it with a response."

As indicated above, if one is disinclined toward such beliefs, reactions may range from outright dismissal ("not dignifying [them] with a response"), to objections on logical grounds (Does the fact that terrorists could successfully attack other nations—Britain, Israel—imply God has not been providing them protection?), to outrage (such comments were "stunning," "beyond contempt," "irresponsible at best, and a deliberate attempt to manipulate the nation's anger at worst"). Moreover, as one commentator notes above, the stark and unequivocal tone of such remarks seem strikingly similar to those of Osama bin Laden and his followers, in that a problem is identified (e.g., Americans are "consumed by the pursuit of . . . health, wealth, material pleasures and sexuality") which has effects (i.e., "God Almighty is lifting his protection from us") which has a solution (e.g., "If we don't repent, then more events might happen in the future").

But apart from one's personal reaction to these statements, such comments actually seem to reflect refreshing candor on the part of Falwell and Robertson, in that they were giving full and open voice—in the heat of the moment (i.e., 2 days after the attacks)—to deeply held beliefs that seemed entirely logical, defensible, and internally consistent to them; in fact, from their VORs, as men who appear to represent the views of millions of Americans and seek to "lead" others in matters spiritual, they perhaps felt obliged to offer this perspective, since from their point of view, not doing so would violate their duty to lead others, and the nation, toward their concept of a better end for all of us. This relatively empathetic analysis is just that, and should not, of course, be construed as a defense of their remarks (the pillorying they both received in the press and in religious quarters throughout the nation speaks for itself).

As scientific-humanists, it is important to move beyond personal and emotional reactions to such comments, understandable though they are, and consider basic questions of etiology. That is, how is it that people who witness the same event can hold such radically different beliefs about why it occurred? Moreover, why is it that people who witness the same event are compelled to focus on such radically different aspects of it? For Falwell and Robertson, these attacks provide "data" about causal dynamics and processes at a metaphysical level that, from their perspective, are clearly operative in our three-dimensional world: God has been "insulted" and angered by our profligate and secular ways, and has therefore decided to "lift the protection" that has apparently shielded us from such horrific events historically. Although absurd, illogical, and offensive to many, such beliefs suggest a complex but largely mechanistic and deterministic VOR in which events, outcomes, and processes on earth may be determined by an omnipotent and omniscient entity who is capable of being enraged by our actions and impelled to "teach us a lesson" that will set us on the correct path once again. If you do not share this VOR, imagine for a moment what it would be like to see things in these terms: all of your own

behavior and that of others, all events in the world, natural and otherwise, are ultimately under the potential control of an inscrutable yet all-powerful and capricious entity who seems strikingly human (e.g., this entity appears to think, perceive, feel, and behave) and could, at any moment, lash out at us or create a long-term plan for our demise if it concludes that we are sufficiently disobedient or in opposition to its idea of who we should and must be. On the other hand, presumably, if we demonstrate appropriate deference to and congruence with its idea of whom we should and must be, protection and intercession become our just reward.

An adherent to such a VOR would certainly remain vigilant to evidence about where we stood, as individuals and as “a nation,” and would rightly fear and decry signs that we were straying from this prescribed “path” as a harbinger of bad things to come. And of course, since such individuals appear to believe that they articulate a rendering of the Christian faith that is literal and true, such fears and concerns are arguably well founded (e.g., can certainly be supported by a source document, the Bible, that such individuals believe directly communicates this entity’s perspective on things). From all of this, then, the link for such individuals between, say, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament and the destruction of the Trade Center Towers in New York City is logical and inevitable, since such destruction is permitted and/or caused by a God who is capable of insult and outrage, and inclined toward violent retribution as a corrective measure, particularly when our collective “sin” (e.g., tolerance and “promotion” of homosexuality, feminism, rampant pornography, disavowal of prayer in schools) is experienced by this entity as rampant, unyielding, or simply too much to bear.

The point is not to validate or invalidate such thinking, but to note that even if we experience another’s beliefs as personally “unbelievable,” it is still the case that to the adherent, such beliefs are often experienced as (a) internally consistent, (b) a logical outgrowth of a larger system of thought, (c) a crucial element in justifying or making sense of events in the world, and (d) an ineluctable part of being human, in that it is simply not possible to be completely void of “belief.” To contemplate this reality from a more universally accessible viewpoint, consider that we live in a probabilistic universe where many phenomena and events are mysterious, debatable, not entirely predictable, or subject still to discovery; where the meaning and purpose of life cannot be unequivocally affirmed by everyone; and where reality often cannot be tested against some inviolable and absolute standard that is clear and agreed upon by everyone across time and place. In such a milieu, it is simply not possible to avoid having to accept some things on “faith,” even if that faith is limited to an implicit conviction that oxygen will still be accessible the moment you complete this sentence. Even then, with probabilities so high as to be virtually certain, they are not entirely so, and we cannot be completely sure, because the truth is, we simply don’t know what the next moment will bring, at any level, and so having no good alternative, we accept such uncertainties “on faith” and don’t think much about them, occupying ourselves with other matters over which we seem to have some control.

If such processes are operative even within the temporal and material realm, imagine how much more equivocal matters become around issues of political ideology or religious faith. Here, it seems (current and historical evidence suggests, in fact) that anything goes, that anyone can come to believe anything about anyone or anything. In this subjective realm, it can seem that there are no rules, no boundaries, no universally agreed upon sense of what is right and what is wrong. Because this is the nature of this level of reality, it is indeed the case that within oneself, one’s own convictions can be experienced as correct, defensible, and good even if, theoretically, the entire human race expressed a heartfelt and diametrically opposed belief. For example, even if the entire species believed,

to a person save one, that the earth was round, it is still possible that one individual among us could believe something different. True, such an obstinate person may be persuaded to believe as we do, or we could beat or torture that individual until he or she recanted or even came to share our belief. But the mere expression of belief does not in itself have the power to eliminate or invalidate the mental space in another where a contrary belief can continue to exist. Anyone who has ever felt compelled to assert or argue for the legitimacy of one's own beliefs and values (and who hasn't?), but in the end, does not convince others, knows how maddening this reality of being human can be.

The fact that human beings appear capable of believing just about anything, is a quite separate issue from the fact that the processes by which beliefs and values are acquired and maintained are knowable, albeit imperfectly and incompletely. That is, while we may not be able to alter the fact that we are built to believe in just about anything (and probably wouldn't want to), we do know something about why people come to believe and value that which they do, and the forces and dynamics that tend to be associated with such processes and outcomes (Shealy, 2004). Such knowledge is no small thing, because with it, we also know something about how to apprehend and potentially shape what is actually held to be true. In discussing these issues, it is crucial to make this distinction between the space within us that is capable of belief, and the study, exploration, and understanding of what ultimately occupies that space within us (as individuals, groups, and nations). As is argued below, psychology and psychologists have much to offer in exploring both of these realms.

Justifications Before, During, and After 9/11: A Scientific-Humanist Perspective

If the above observations are valid, they have significant relevance for science and practice in psychology from a scientific-humanist perspective. Why? Because if we psychologists were so bold as to identify the single most important lesson from the last century—and the beginning of this one—that is within our collective purview and relevant to a more peaceful and sustainable 21st century, a leading contender would certainly be the need to understand the central mediating role of beliefs and values across the entire range of human functioning, from the private and public justifications we harbor for the perpetration of violence against others, to the way we treat and regard societies, cultures, and religions different from our own, to our attitude and subsequent actions vis-à-vis the protection and sustenance of planet earth. That human beings (and the governing systems created by them) make statements about their beliefs and values to legitimize, explain, or otherwise justify behavior—mundane and extraordinary—can hardly be contested.

As perhaps the most dramatic recent exemplar of such justification processes, consider again the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 through a scientific-humanist lens (in contrast to the above-noted VOR of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson). From this perspective, these malignant and iniquitous acts were distinctive at a number of levels: the coordination of attacks in broad daylight in major metropolitan areas; the indiscriminant killing of as many people as possible, most of whom were civilians with no involvement in military operations or affairs; the calculated use of airliners as weapons of mass destruction, and the deliberate selection of planes filled to capacity with fuel for long flights; the apparent willingness and desire of the terrorists, several of whom are purported to have families, to sacrifice their own lives in pursuit of their larger objectives; and perhaps most striking, the vainglorious justification for all of this in the name of Islam and the Muslim people.

If these attacks are unprecedented, however, it is because of the brazen intent and graphic magnitude of their impact, rather than because the justifications of their principle

agents are unknown to us. Certainly, the varied and concomitant justifications for the destruction of others are manifest in our recent collective history as a species, from Nazi Germany and the Holocaust to more recent ethnic cleansing in Serbia and Rwanda; to the enslavement of millions of Africans and subsequent lynching of thousands more in our own country; to practices of footbinding, suttee, and genital mutilation that have been perpetrated against millions of women; to contemporary bombings and killings that are all “justified” in one way or another by governments, organizations, and the individuals who represent or comprise them across the entire ideological, economic, sociocultural, and geopolitical landscape.

Of course, destructive justifications that emanate from the human psyche are apparent on a less massive scale. Consider, for example, Matthew Shepherd, the gay male from Wyoming who was beaten, tied to a fence, and left to freeze to death on the grounds that he had made sexual advances toward two men in a bar. Or, James Byrd, Jr., the Black man from Jasper, Texas who, for racially motivated reasons, was beaten, chained to the rear of a pickup truck, and dragged to his death. And of course, these are just a few national “exemplars.” Pick up the paper or turn on the news on any day of the week. There, you’ll see evidence for more of the same—less dramatic perhaps, in terms of scope or detail—but not qualitatively different in terms of the intrapsychic dynamics that compel people to behave in these ways toward other living beings, and certainly no less traumatic for those who bear the consequences.

As scientific-humanists who are also psychologists, how should we respond to events like these? What can we legitimately claim in terms of knowledge or expertise about how, why, and under what circumstances human beings are compelled to commit and subsequently justify such acts? Do we really have anything of worth to contribute to this dialogue, or should we simply leave it to our judicial, political, religious, military, and economic systems to make sense of things, restore order, and put matters right?

These are not easy questions. Our theories are imperfect, our methods imprecise. We are only beginning to understand the complex interactions among behavior, cognition, affect, biology, development, society, culture, and life circumstances, to say nothing of the religious and spiritual forces that provide meaning and motive to so many people all over the world. And yet, with all of these limitations and caveats, we do know something—quite a bit actually—about how and why people come to believe and value what they do, and subsequently justify their behavior. More to the point, the ToK System and its concomitants—BIT and the JH—offer a compelling framework through which extant and future scholarship regarding events such as these can be organized (Henriques, 2004). This focused consolidation is crucial if we are to heed Phillip Zimbardo’s post-9/11 call “. . . to act, to apply everything we know about human nature” (Murray, 2002, p. 24).

But how would a field like psychology actually go about the business of applying “everything we know about human nature” to a topic as vast and multidetermined as understanding why, how, and under what circumstances individuals will commit and justify violent and destructive acts toward other human beings? Doesn’t the inherent complexity of such phenomena suggest that our scholarly reach as psychologists will almost certainly exceed our grasp? The short answer is, “probably,” simply because there are too many interacting factors and forces that are not explicitly or exclusively psychological, but still likely to influence the timing and nature of events like these. For example, economic and political factors are certainly relevant if not necessary to the construction of ideologies like those of the Third Reich, or the Taliban, for that matter. In this regard, consider the observations of former United States President, Jimmy Carter, about current global conditions:

Nearly a billion people are illiterate. More than half the world's people have little or no health care and less than two dollars a day for food, clothing, and shelter. Some 1.3 billion live on less than *one* dollar a day. At the same time, the average household income on an American family is more than \$55,000 a year. . . . The nations of the European Union have set a public goal of sharing four-tenths of one percent of their GNP with the developing world. But the United States and most other rich nations fall short of this goal. (2002, p. 3)

When such disproportionate inequities are juxtaposed with the perception—right or wrong—that the United States is often indifferent to views other than its own, or the effects of its policies on the rest of the world, it is easier to understand why extremist ideologies are directed at us and “our interests” (e.g., *Consider this America*, 2002; White, 2002).

Nonetheless, such economic and political factors do not begin to explain either the “complex psychological reasons [that] give rise to the terrorist impulse, which is to purge through a spasm of violence a soul that feels corrupted by the modern world” (Ignatius, 2001, p. B7), or why so few people exposed to these debilitating conditions ever resort to violence, terrorist or otherwise. In short, for a scientific-humanist and psychologist, analyses that attempt to explain extremism only or primarily on economic or political grounds will inevitably lack a measure of depth, because the crucible for these dark forces is—and must be—the human psyche. Although nonpsychological factors certainly do facilitate the emergence of extremist beliefs (indeed, all beliefs), such “states” are ultimately mental as much as they are economic or political; for those who are motivated to harm or annihilate others often find ways to justify such conduct, which implies internalization of, or receptivity to, beliefs about who “others” are and what “they” deserve (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Aronson, 1999; Staub, 1993, 1996).

Complicating matters, we humans are nowhere near as free to discern and control such intrapsychic forces and dynamics as we fancy ourselves to be. Rather, as discussed below, abundant evidence suggests that what we believe and value as good or true is a function—at least in part—of our unique developmental, life, and contextual experiences, which interact with powerful affective and attributional processes of which we may have little awareness (Shealy, 2004). Therefore, in the context of an organizing system like the ToK, a plausible strategy could find the “scientific-humanist” striving to identify extant and emerging programs of inquiry that are logically aligned with the larger task of understanding these complex phenomena. Psychology would certainly play a key role in the construction of such a framework.

Toward that end, and a true integration of our “scientist–practitioner” ideal (cf. Gaudiano & Statler, 2001), it would be necessary for us to consider perspectives and contributions that derive from a range of different epistemologies, activities, and subfields—from abnormal, biological, clinical, cognitive, cultural, developmental, family, personality, political, and social psychology—abandoning along the way our unfounded prejudices about who is and is not qualified to comment on such complicated matters. But our active presence and collective contribution, though necessary, would not be sufficient. Other perspectives from allied fields of inquiry and practice are also needed, including, but not limited to, anthropology, economics, political science, religious studies, and sociology, not to mention rich and compelling theory, data, and analyses that transcend any specific domain (cf. Boudon, 2001; Gioseffi, 1993; Inglehart, Basañez, & Moreno, 1998; Kelley & De Graaf, 1997; Mays, Bullock, Rosenzweig, & Wessells, 1998; McElroy, 1999; Sargent, 1995).

In this respect, the study of beliefs and values in the context of the ToK System is akin to entering a very large, expandable, and inclusive scientific arena, where scientists at all levels can enter through their respective doors and find a place to collaborate

together in the creation of integrative and multifaceted explanatory systems, which can subsequently point the way toward coherent and nonredundant programs of inquiry. Toward such means and ends, the study of beliefs and values offers an ideal opportunity to observe how the ToK could accommodate and facilitate such processes, since as Braithwaite and Scott (1991) have observed, “The study of values is central to and involves the intersection of interests of philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists” (p. 661), and should “occupy a central position . . . able to unify the apparently diverse interests of all the sciences concerned with human behavior” (Rokeach, 1973, p. 3) (cf. Boudon, 2001; Gioseffi, 1993; Inglehart et al., 1998; Kelley & DeGraaf, 1997; Mays et al., 1998; McElroy, 1999; Sargent, 1995). In the second half of this paper, I offer some historical and current perspectives regarding the study of beliefs and values, and describe a model (Equilintegration or EI Theory) and method (the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory or BEVI) that are explicitly designed to examine justification systems and processes.

II. Justifying the Justification Hypothesis: Beliefs, Values, EI Theory, and the BEVI

In considering how our larger field has formally studied “beliefs” and “values” over the years, one first must determine how wide a scholarly net to cast. From an explicit standpoint—that is, those who formally declared they were studying “beliefs” or “values” *per se*—there are a few pioneers who contributed substantially to our understanding of these issues, most notably, the social psychologist Milton Rokeach, discussed below (cf. Braithwaite & Scott, 1991; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). Aside from such seminal figures, however, formal models or theories of beliefs and values, along with accompanying methodology and data, are uncommon. As Fiedler and Bless (2000) observe, “In all the huge and wide-spread literature on the psychology of cognition and emotion, there is almost no reference to research on beliefs” (p. 144). Likewise, Musek (1998) notes, “Despite the growing interest in the study of values . . . no great attention has been devoted to individual values in relation to political and religious orientation” (p. 47). On the one hand, these omissions are striking because human beings so often invoke their own beliefs and values to explain or justify what they do (including, but by no means limited to, the violent and destructive acts noted above).

On the other hand, abundant evidence suggests that “beliefs and values” are, in fact, at the very heart of some of the most significant programs of scholarship in our field, but not always in an explicit manner; their reputed “omission,” therefore, may be due to semantics as much as substance. For example, if Aronson (1999) is correct in asserting that “social influence . . . the influences that people have upon the beliefs or behaviors of others” is a good “working definition of social psychology” (p. 6), then it becomes clear how central the construct of “belief” is to this rich and compelling field of inquiry. Or, consider clinical and counseling psychology: even therapeutic systems that strive for or claim neutrality (e.g., toward issues of “normality” for example) are doing so in relation to the beliefs (i.e., the worldview, narrative) that clients convey. From developmental psychology, one might argue that the fundamental process of learning about the world in which one lives (e.g., as an infant) is concerned with the burgeoning belief in the relative predictability and consistency of that world, as evidenced, for example, in Erik Erikson’s first stage of psychosocial development—trust-versus-mistrust. Or from a behavioral perspective, what is “learned helplessness” (in dogs or humans) but the erroneous belief, acquired through experience, that one’s behavior has no effect upon one’s circumstances?

The point of this momentary glance across the scholarly and applied landscape of our field is not to claim that we’re all basically just studying beliefs and values, and should

acknowledge that fact. The point is rather that beliefs and values, although variously defined and understood, are at least peripherally if not centrally relevant to a wide spectrum of phenomena, issues, and topics that are of demonstrable interest to scholars and practitioners in our field. Therefore, it seems relevant to consider not only direct approaches to the study of beliefs and values, but programs of scholarship where “beliefs” and “values” have a virtual but ineluctable presence. In this regard, there is perhaps no better point of departure than Milton Rokeach, who designed and built a durable theoretical and methodological bridge between these explicit and implicit realms.

Rokeach sought to describe the ontological and etiological relationship among beliefs, values, and attitudes—constructs that had theretofore lacked sufficient differentiation. According to Rokeach (1979), “humans have thousands of attitudes but only dozens of values . . . values are deeper as well as broader than attitudes . . . values are standards of ‘oughts’ and ‘shoulds’ whereas attitudes are not [and] . . . values are determinants rather than components of attitudes” (p. 272). Rokeach (1973) also had much to say about the relationship between beliefs and values, defining a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p. 5). Ultimately, Rokeach was interested in understanding how beliefs emerged from and were inextricably linked to core aspects of the self, a theme that will emerge throughout this paper. More specifically, as summarized by Braithwaite and Scott (1991), Rokeach theorized that value systems were:

Part of a functionally integrated cognitive system in which the basic units of analysis are beliefs. Clusters of beliefs form attitudes that are functionally and cognitively connected to the value system. Rokeach further postulated classes of beliefs concerned with self-cognitions representing “the innermost core of the total belief system, and all remaining beliefs, attitudes and values can be conceived of as functionally organized around this innermost core” (1973, p. 216) . . . beliefs are not just cognitions in Rokeach’s conceptual schema, but predispositions to action capable of arousing affect around the object of the belief. (pp. 662–663)

Over the years, Rokeach and colleagues investigated the interactions and properties emergent from this general framework, through The Values Survey (Rokeach, 1967), and other allied programs of research. Among many other findings, this research illustrated that values, as conceptualized by Rokeach, were “significantly related to variations in socioeconomic status, age, gender, race, religion, and lifestyle . . . [and] significant predictors of many social attitudes and behaviors, including consumer behavior,” addiction, political and economic tendencies (e.g., fascist, capitalist, socialist, and communist) as well as conservative and liberal ideologies (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 776).

In addition to the predictive elements of this theoretical framework, and the implication that such beliefs and values are acquired during socialization and adaptation to a prevailing sociocultural context (cf. Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990), Rokeach also maintained that beliefs and values were central to other allied conceptual frameworks and programs of research, particularly authoritarianism and attribution theory. In fact, prior to development of The Values Survey (Rokeach, 1967) noted above, Rokeach (1956) developed a measure of authoritarianism called *The Dogmatism (D) Scale*, which has been extensively researched as a measure of general authoritarianism, and “designed to measure individual differences in open versus closed belief systems” particularly in relation to politics and religion (Christie, 1991, p. 560). At a more general level, Rokeach also recognized that beliefs and values were, in a very real sense, causal attributions about reality, in that believing something to be true about oneself, others, or entities/systems within the larger world, implied something about the way in which an individual

made causal meaning. For example, relevant to this discussion, and prescient of September 11th, Rokeach (1979) noted that

Generally neglected in theories of beliefs, attitudes, and values, and neglected also in attribution theories, is an analysis of the extent to which existential and causal beliefs are implied whenever we say a person has an attitude, a philosophy of life, a belief system, a political ideology, or a religious or scientific outlook. In all such instances existential attributions as well as causal attributions are made and the two are so closely tied to one another, and tied also to evaluative and prescriptive–proscriptive beliefs, that it is difficult to sort out chicken from egg. Racists, for example, account for the impoverished conditions and performance of Blacks by first attributing the existence of certain attributes to them, such as lack of effort or laziness, and by then making causal attributions to explain the existential attributions, such as inferior genes, or God having decreed it that way (p. 276). . . . Humans will engage in conflict with one another and even go to war with one another not so much over whether attributions are internal [attributed to genes, free will, etc.] or external [attributed to Zionism, God, etc.], but over which attributions are the more valid. Perhaps more to the point, wars have been fought over *whose* rather than *which* existential and causal attributions are the more valid. (p. 279)

From this perspective, belief and attribution are inextricably linked, in that an attribution is nothing less than a *belief* about etiology. In short, authoritarianism and attribution theory are not only closely aligned with the seminal contributions of Milton Rokeach, these vibrant programs of research are at the very heart of what we know about the acquisition and expression of beliefs and values in general. More to the point, the voluminous research on authoritarianism and attribution theory illustrates much about how such beliefs are acquired in the first place, and as such, speaks directly to issues of socialization and development, processes which must be accounted for if we are to understand not only what human beings believe and value, but why (see, for example, Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Bugental, Johnston, New, & Silvester, 1998; Christie, 1991; Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000; Dix, 1993; Duncan & Stewart, 1995; Fincham, 1998; Kowalski & Leary, 1999; Manusov & Harvey, 2001; Miller, 1995; Peritti & Statum, 1984; Peterson, Smirles, & Wentworth, 1997).

Overall, these and related programs of inquiry suggest that the acquisition of beliefs is influenced, at least in part, by developmental (e.g., life history) and contextual (e.g., ethnic background) variables that interact with affective and attributional processes to produce a tendency to “see” the world in particular ways, although the nature of that interaction may be highly complex (see, for example, Aronson, 1999; Auerbach, 1998; Bach, 1998; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Curtis, 1991; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998; Kirsch & Lynn, 1999; Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Muran, 2001; Park, 1999; Roth & Kulb, 1997). At another level, because the beliefs and values we claim as our own are

Acquired and maintained vis-à-vis powerful, often non-conscious interactions among developmental, affective, and attributional processes . . . it should be of no surprise that their alteration would be resisted, or that—in extreme cases—aspects of one’s external world could be experienced as so threatening to the stability of one’s sense of self, to be worthy of destruction. Depending upon their strength, and the sociocultural context in which they evolved and preponderate, the beliefs and values people claim as their own are far more than idiosyncratic artifacts of different life histories that can be modified or removed like software code; they are rather akin to living nervous tissue, the potential loss of which is extremely threatening to the human organism. (see Shealy, 2004, p. 1079)

In this respect, it may not matter that some beliefs and values strike others as adle-headed, wrong, unfair, dangerous, or even evil. To the “true believer,” the consequence of

contradiction or opposition from others (perceived or real) is often to strengthen and defend one's own beliefs and values, and/or attack those of others, because the vitality and integrity of the self is literally at stake; in extreme cases, when beliefs and values are axial to self-cohesion, their preservation may become more important than life itself, because for all intents and purposes, such "sacred" beliefs and values *are* life itself. As Storr (1991) comments,

It is curious and deplorable that beliefs, whether political, religious, or psychoanalytic, become so emotionally important that they turn people into fanatics. It is a reflection of our basic insecurity that any accepted faith purporting to explain our relation with the universe often becomes so integral to our identity that we treat attacks upon our faith as attacks upon ourselves. (pp. 23–24)

It is important, however, to understand these processes in relative and subjective terms, in which expressive endpoints represent extreme manifestations of the same underlying affective, attributional, and developmental processes. As Frijda, Manstead, and Bem (2000) note, ". . . participation in political violence or, at least, support for violent movements by one's votes, one's budget allocations, or one's emotional support, is facilitated by the firmness of one's beliefs regarding the states of the world motivating those actions." As a result, "the way in which beliefs are influenced by emotions is therefore highly relevant to the understanding of socio-political events such as intergroup hostility and violence" (p. 4).

As a final exemplar, the implications of this synergic relationship—at contextual and intrapsychic levels—is also illustrated by Skolnik (1994), who observes:

. . . beliefs can be both vitally important to the meaning of our lives, and terribly handicapping. Cultures are constructed on the foundation of beliefs, and wars and terrorism destroy lives because of beliefs. Even though people often come in for psychotherapy with beliefs they know are erroneous, painful, debilitating, and life-constricting, they frequently hold onto them tenaciously. Most people don't want to change their beliefs because they hold them as central to their sense of themselves. (p. 87)

Beliefs and Values in Research and Practice

In psychology, scholarship on beliefs and values, broadly defined, has culminated in two parallel sets of conclusions. From a research standpoint, abundant evidence suggests that (a) beliefs and values are transmitted across generations; (b) some networks or constellations of beliefs and values become reliably codified into recognizable systems of thought (e.g., authoritarianism); (c) what people believe about why they and others do what they do (i.e., their attributions) have a demonstrable impact on human development and functioning; (d) developmental, affective, and attributional processes are inextricably linked to the beliefs and values people claim as their own; and (e) such processes often occur at a relatively automatic or non-conscious level (see, for example, Aronson, 1999; Baumrind, 1971; Bugental et al., 1998; Cummings et al., 2000; Dalhouse & Frideres, 1996; Dix, 1993; Fonagy, 1996; Kaslow, Celano, & Dreelin, 1995; Duncan & Stewart, 1995; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Koestner, Losier, Vallerand, & Carducci, 1996; Miller, 1995; Myers, 1996; Peritti & Statum, 1984; Shealy, 2004; Simon, 1996; Snyder, Velasquez, Clark, & Means-Christensen, 1997; Zeller, 1991).

At another level, practitioners in psychology have also devoted considerable attention to the study of beliefs and values, but from a more applied and pragmatic perspective. A clear consensus has subsequently emerged that (a) there is no such thing as "value

free” therapy, assessment, or other clinical activity; (b) because practitioners occupy positions of influence and power over others, clinicians, supervisors, and trainees are obliged to know and understand what they believe and value, and why; (c) insofar as possible and clinically justified, practitioners endeavor to evaluate, understand, and respect the beliefs and values of their clients; and (d) awareness and sensitivity toward beliefs and values, in self and others, is not only good clinical practice, but an ethical imperative (see, for example, Bergin, 1980, 1991; Bishop, 1992; Gartner, Harmatz, Hohmann, Larson, & Gartner, 1990; Hall & Hall, 1997; Harris, 1998; Hays, 1996; McLeod & Machin, 1998; Picchioni, 1995; Shealy, 1995, 2004; Stern, 1996; Vachon & Agresti, 1992).

On the one hand, this split-level focus is emblematic of the chronic disconnect between scientists and practitioners in our larger field (cf. Gaudio and Statler, 2001). In the case of beliefs and values, for example, scientists (e.g., social psychologists) have been largely concerned with developing broad-based, nomothetic theories that can help explain behavior at a general level, even across contexts and cultures (e.g., Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). For example, social psychologists have powerfully demonstrated that our attitudes and actions are shaped by potent social and situational forces (e.g., to conform), even though we tend to underestimate or minimize the impact of such forces on our own behavior (e.g., Aronson, 1999; Kowalski & Leery, 1999). As Staub (1993, 1996) profoundly illustrates, such theory and research has been particularly salient for understanding genocide and other cultural–societal “roots” of violence.

Although such theory and data should be familiar to practicing clinicians, it is not often clear how to translate and apply such information to the individual case (cf. Kowalski & Leery, 1999). For example, if you are a psychologist engaged in the process of evaluating the killers of Matthew Shepherd or James Byrd, Jr., theory and data on prejudice—a key emphasis in social psychology—might provide a theoretical backdrop against which specific assessment material could be juxtaposed. However, from a clinical and forensic standpoint, such theory doesn’t provide the level of specificity that is necessary for practitioners, or the judiciary for that matter. Instead, to make sense of why people do what they do, practitioners have tended to draw upon theories and methods that have been derived largely from the individual case; such perspectives often focus on diagnostic and intrapsychic processes and dynamics (e.g., Storr, 1991). For scientists, such concepts and “findings” may seem poorly conceptualized and abstruse at best; they don’t seem to generalize beyond the individual case, and may not meet putative scientific and empirical standards.

The consequence of this “cultural clash” (e.g., Kimble, 1984) is that neither side gets a fair hearing, nor appreciates the powerful contributions and epistemologies of the other (Henriques, 2004). Minds close, and the two “cultures” walk away from each other. This unfortunate tendency is perhaps one reason why scientists and practitioners have followed such divergent paths vis-à-vis beliefs and values. Ironically, however, as noted above, beliefs and values may epitomize the need and opportunity for greater “unification” in our field (Braithwaite & Scott, 1991; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2001), mainly because these phenomena intersect at the point where the individual psyche and the surrounding context meet; thus, our ability to offer a coherent and ecologically valid explanation for such processes and dynamics will require awareness and integration of both levels of analysis. In short, the fact that beliefs and values must be both “transmitted” and “internalized” suggests they function as a mediational and dialectic vinculum between the contextual and intrapsychic realms.

To derive a more comprehensive and unified approach to these issues, it is necessary to speak to the interests and concerns of both scientists and practitioners regardless of subfield or predilection, and provide theory and methods that can promote dialogue and

collaboration across these two levels of analysis and the profession of psychology (cf. Henriques & Sternberg, 2004; Shealy, 2004; Shealy et al., 2004; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2001). For one, a plausible model or theory is needed to account for the acquisition and maintenance of beliefs and values across a wide but representative spectrum of what can be believed, from the sort of extreme religious and political ideology that can justify terrorist attacks, to basic beliefs about etiology that lead one to prefer a particular way of intervening with clients. That is, models or theories are needed to account for processes and dynamics that are relevant to understanding and investigating the acquisition and maintenance of beliefs and values in general, regardless of their specific manifestation. Moreover, reliable and valid methods are needed to test such models, to determine the degree to which fundamental propositions are robust and relevant to real world events, circumstances, and processes. That is, if we are to try and understand and address the implications of beliefs and values (writ large) in a way that is epistemologically relevant and ecologically valid, our methods should be useful not only for matters of theoretical development, but to those (e.g., practitioners, clients, training faculty, policy makers) who must contend with and make predictions about beliefs and values in the real world (Shealy, 2004). Indeed, the Justification Hypothesis would appear highly congruent with this formulation (Henriques, 2004), and is defined and operationalized next via the following model—Equilintegration (EI) Theory—and method—the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI).

*Justifying the Justification Hypothesis: Equilintegration (EI) Theory
and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI)*

The ToK System provides a novel and compelling system through which research and theory across the scientific spectrum may be organized and integrated. However, as things stand, the ToK does not sufficiently articulate crucial matters of application, or specify the relationship between core features of the model (e.g., BIT and JH) and their manifestation in the “real world.” For example, the contention that human beings “became the first animal in evolutionary history that had to justify why they did what they did” (Henriques, 2004, p. 1217) says little about how, why, and in what form such justification processes will manifest at an individual or group level.

Henriques (2004) localizes justification processes as “existing between nonverbal biopsychological drives and defenses on the one hand and a sociolinguistic system that dictates what actions are justifiable and what actions are not on the other” (p. 1216). It would appear, then, that the “process” of justification essentially arose from the need to reconcile basic biopsychological impulses, drives, and needs with the opportunities, limits, and parameters of the sociocultural milieu in which those needs are expressed. The fact that humans have a unique linguistic capacity that may be expressed internally (as thought) and externally (as speech) is essentially where one’s justifications manifest and become clear to one’s self and others.

Of course, as Henriques observes, this formulation is deliberately congruent with the Freudian conceptualization of id, ego, and superego as well as aspects of current scholarship in neuropsychology, cognitive psychology, and philosophy of mind, among other areas of inquiry. What is most important about this observation is that Henriques links the evolution of justification as a process with the evolution of the species as a whole. Furthermore, the JH “readily allows for bridges to be built between the individual level analyses and sociocultural perspectives” (Henriques, 2004, p. 1217), as indicated in the Tree of Knowledge system.

Ultimately, however, the JH raises more questions than answers, mainly because it is—by design—a general theory that is, in its present form, short on specifics. To be clear, I don't see this shortcoming as a fundamental flaw. To the contrary, Henriques clearly frames his proposal as a “bridging” framework, which is capable of unifying different levels of scientific analysis. At this stage of development, a lack of specificity is not necessarily a drawback, and may even be advantageous, particularly given the scope and intent of the ToK, which is nothing short of the unification of science. But, the devil is in the details, and I fully expect that researchers and theorists of all stripes who are otherwise sympathetic toward this model will still need to provide rather substantial pieces of several interlocking ToK puzzles.

So, what pieces are missing from the JH? To begin with, as things stand, the JH says nothing about individual differences in justification among human beings. That is, even if all human beings engage in processes of justification, do they not show great variability in the types of justifications that are expressed to explain “why one's claims, thoughts, or actions are warranted”? Moreover, the JH offers little by way of specifying or illuminating the complex interaction among historic and “biopsychological” forces in a unique human being's life that may account for why some justifications might be preferred under specific circumstances, and others not. For example, the crucial interaction between developmental, affective, and attributional processes is not specified in this formulation. Along these same lines, the JH doesn't offer a set of measurable constructs that might help map these interactive processes, so that the reason for particular justifications to be preferred might be explained. Likewise, the JH does not address whether and how the process of justification might develop or change over the lifespan, and what forces and factors would and would not be associated with such evolution (see Shealy, 2004).

More specifically, as presently articulated, the JH does not consider how, why, and under what historical or contextual circumstances a particular set of justifications might be acquired, retained, or modified as a result of maturation and experience. Nor does it speak to the “content” of justification. That is, what are the linguistic artifacts of justification (i.e., what does justification sound like)? What are its constituents or components (i.e., can and should “justification” be defined in more basic terms)? How do we know the difference between “justification” proper and what might simply be ordinary human discourse with no justifying intent? Is nonjustifying discourse possible under the terms of the JH? Should such matters be conceptualized in dichotomous or continuous terms? Along these same lines, doesn't much of the reason for justification vis-à-vis the JH arise from the fact that others may deny us the legitimacy of our justifications (i.e., we learn to justify, at least, in part, to explain and defend our actions to others)? So what happens if no one is around to experience or interact with our justifications? Put in other words—and psychosis, paranoia, and extreme neuroticism notwithstanding—would a justification be heard if no one were around to hear it?

Do our own justification systems not interact with those of others to produce changes in both? How about socially constructed systems that are designed to shape and influence the justification systems of others, such as organized religion, political parties, or even various psychotherapeutic interventions? If our justifications differ under similar circumstances (as the rhetoric of opposing political parties or different religious systems would suggest), why would that be? Where do these differences come from? Why, and under what circumstances, do such differences exist? What causes change to justification systems? When is change not likely or possible? The point is, the “justification hypothesis” is a basic, general, and macro-level construct that is highly compelling for the reasons noted above, but needs greater specification (i.e., justification) regarding what it is, how it might be operationalized and measured, and what it does and does not predict in the real world.

Equilintegration (EI) Theory and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) provide one way to operationalize, evaluate, and assess the JH in general and justification systems and processes in particular.³ More specifically, EI Theory draws upon a wide range of theoretical, empirical, and applied perspectives to account for the dialectic process between the “transmission” and “internalization” of beliefs and values, and constituent aspects of self-regulation, content, structure, affect, attribution, and development. Beginning with the seminal work of Jean Piaget (e.g., on assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration), EI theory integrates a wide range of empirical findings and theoretical perspectives over the past several decades in order to “explain the processes by which beliefs, values, and ‘worldviews’ are acquired and maintained, why their alteration is typically resisted, and how and under what circumstances their modification occurs” (see Shealy, 2004, p. 1075). For example, among other “hypotheses and principles,” EI Theory maintains the following:

1. Beliefs and values are central mediating processes for behavior at individual and societal levels, but they may or may not be “known” (i.e., may be implicit or nonconscious), and are not necessarily rational or logically grounded.
2. Beliefs and values are determined by an individual’s history, larger culture, and unique Zeitgeist, inculcated over time, and may or may not transcend a specific time and place. Although that which is believed and valued may be relative to a given time or place, the human capacity and need for an organizing worldview is an etic derivative of the self; thus, although the content of our beliefs and values may vary as a function of what is available for acquisition, the processes (e.g., developmental, affective, attributional) by which beliefs and values are acquired are determined by constitutive aspects of the self.
3. When combined with sufficient knowledge about important life experiences and events, belief and value statements often provide (a) a great deal of information about the hypothetical structure and organization of personality or “self” and (b) a relatively accessible point of entry to issues and phenomena that are meaningful for supervisors, student-trainees, practitioners, and researchers alike.
4. Beliefs and values are not easily modified because they represent, for each individual, the unique culmination of an interaction among these affective and attributional processes and developmental/life experiences, which are codified (ultimately at a physiological level) in personality and “self.” Because human beings balance the desire for equilibrium and stasis against the inevitable internal and external pressures for development and growth, changing beliefs and values often means changing underlying structure (and vice versa); this process of understanding how structure came to be inevitably involves an emotionally charged and not-always-conscious examination of what one believes and values about self, others, and the world at large; evaluating and cultivating the capacity for engaging in this process are key objectives of many “mental health” training programs and psychotherapeutic approaches, and common hallmarks of growth and change in both clinical supervision and real world practice.

Concomitant with this theoretical model, the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) is a 494-item inventory that is “designed to identify and predict a variety of

³Aspects of this section have been adapted or excerpted from Shealy, C.N. (2004). A model and method for “making” a C-I psychologist: Equilintegration (EI) Theory and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI), *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 60, 1065–1090. The BEVI is a copyrighted instrument.

developmental, affective, and attributional processes and outcomes that are integral to EI Theory” (Shealy, 2004, p. 1075). In addition to acceptable reliability and stability (the majority of estimates are .80 or above), evidence of validity is indicated by a number of studies demonstrating that the BEVI is able to predict group membership across a wide range of demographic variables, including gender, ethnic background, parental income, and political orientation (cf. Isley, Shealy, Crandall, Sivo, & Reifsteck, 1999; Hayes, Shealy, Sivo, & Weinstein, 1999; Shealy, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Shealy, Burdell, Sivo, Davino, & Hayes, 1999; Shealy, Sears, Sivo, Alessandria, & Isley, 1999). Similarly, in a study comparing Mental Health Professionals and Evangelical Christians on the BEVI, Hayes (2001) found that “. . . the instrument accurately classified Evangelical Christians and Mental Health Professionals, with 95% of originally grouped cases correctly classified, which strongly suggests that the BEVI can validly discriminate between these two groups” (p. 102).

Recently, the BEVI was selected as the quantitative measure for a six-institution Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant under the auspices of the American Council on Education (ACE) (see <http://www.acenet.edu/programs/international/fipse/>). This three year grant is designed to assess a range of international learning processes and outcomes. In the context of EI Theory, the BEVI would appear to be suitable for projects such as these, as it is designed to assess a number of relevant processes and constructs including (but not limited to): basic openness; receptivity to different cultures, religions, and social practices; the tendency (or not) to stereotype in particular ways; self and emotional awareness; and preferred but implicit strategies for making sense of why “other” people and cultures “do what they do.” More specifically, because the BEVI is designed to understand whether, how, and to what degree people are (or are likely to be) “open” to various transformational experiences (e.g., such as participating in international education), the BEVI should be able to help assess a number of the learning outcomes developed for this grant (e.g., understanding of one’s own beliefs and values in the context of different cultures; capacity for interpersonal, intercultural, and interprofessional relations; capacity to apply cultural knowledge in diverse contexts).

Currently, the BEVI is also being used in a national, large scale study of the beliefs and values of students in APA-accredited doctoral training programs in psychology; other studies are piloting the BEVI in the context of supervisor–supervisee dyads in a doctoral training program, and examining the ability of the BEVI to operationalize and reliably measure “self-awareness” in dyadic interactions. Ultimately, it is hoped that the BEVI will serve as a kind of MMPI of justification systems and processes, by facilitating a way to access, operationalize, and study the various versions of reality (VOR) that human beings are capable of constructing along with crucial and interacting etiological factors (e.g., life history, demographic variables) that influence the acquisition, maintenance, and modification of such systems and processes.

At this point, it may be helpful to review the 10 process scales from the BEVI, which should illustrate why this instrument is well suited to an examination of “justification” systems and processes. These scales are as follows (sample items for each scale are listed in parentheses).

1. *Negative Life Events* consists of items that practitioners ask their clients early in the therapeutic process to establish a sense of the client’s history and background. For example, negative life events encompass poor parent–child relations, legal problems, difficulty in basic living, the experience of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, and so forth (e.g., *I wish my mother or father had done things differently./ have had legal problems in my life.*).

2. *Naïve Determinism* refers to implicit etiological concepts about why people are as they are, and includes items that address attributions about behavior, personality, experiences, and so forth (e.g., *Some children are born troublemakers./Past trauma causes emotional problems.*).
3. *Sociocultural Closure* assesses how an individual sees him or herself in relation to larger issues of people, policies, and practices, such as racial issues, global and environmental concerns, economic views, and political ideology (e.g., *The Confederate flag is a great symbol of honor and pride./Big corporations often harm the earth.*).
4. *Authoritarian Introjects* refers to concepts of what is right and wrong, with a specific focus on the internalization of beliefs and values about child rearing practices (e.g., *Shame can be a good motivator for children./Parents should earn the respect of their children.*).
5. *Religious Traditionalism* consists of belief and value statements that may be reflective of an individual's religious and spiritual worldview or lack thereof (e.g., *I know that evil people go to hell when they die./Hinduism and Buddhism have much to teach the modern world.*).
6. *Need for Control* refers to an implicit need to guide, structure, or manage behavior, emotions, and decisions for oneself and others (e.g., *If you want something done you have to do it yourself./I have problems that I need to work on.*).
7. *Emotional Attunement* assesses receptivity and attitude toward a range of feelings, emotional experiences/behaviors, and affect in general, for oneself and others (e.g., *Crying never solved anything./Sometimes I feel things too deeply.*).
8. *Self Access* assesses the inclination and capacity for understanding or seeking to apprehend "inner" phenomena that are theoretically associated with self-change, growth, and development (e.g., *Dreams have no real meaning./I like to think about why things are the way they are.*).
9. *Separation-Individuation* is comprised of items suggestive of the relative degree to which an individual has been, or may be, able to differentiate from and take perspective on, defining experiences and events in their lives, including (but not limited to) relations with primary caregivers (e.g., *My family and I see things pretty much the same way./I have had to create distance from my parents.*).
10. *Gender Stereotypes* consists of statements about how men and women are and should be, how relationships (heterosexual and homosexual) should be regarded, as well as beliefs about how gender roles will or should evolve in the future (e.g., *Men are naturally more competitive than women./We should elect a woman to lead our nation.*).

As noted above, the BEVI is designed to investigate key principles of EI Theory. For example, the BEVI "provides a systematic basis for understanding beliefs and values associated with related programs of inquiry (e.g., ethnocentrism, religious intolerance, partisanship, gender-based policies/practices)" as well as the "means to study simultaneously a range of interrelated affective, attributional, and developmental constructs and processes." Taken together, EI Theory and the BEVI help explain systems and processes of "justification," by mapping and illustrating how and to what degree specific beliefs and values to which individuals ascribe are associated with a range of life history and contextual factors (see Shealy, 2004). As such, EI theory appears to explicate that which is implied or stated at a more general level by the JH. That is because the JH maintains that human beings are motivated to ensure that their "versions of reality" are justifiable,

and experience tension (at an ego level) when evidence suggests that they are not (Henriques, 2003). This process is precisely what is meant by the above “principle and hypothesis” of EI Theory that “human beings balance the desire for equilibrium and stasis against the inevitable internal and external pressures for development and growth.”

In short, the JH describes justification at a basic, general, and macro level; EI Theory explicates particular hypotheses and principles regarding the nature of justification (e.g., how, why, and under what circumstances justification” occurs as it does); and the BEVI seeks to define, operationalize, and assess these justification systems and processes. At the same time, it should be emphasized that this model (EI Theory) and method (the BEVI) represent just one way that the JH could be operationalized and assessed. Certainly, as noted above, the profound implications of the ToK system and its concomitants (BIT and JH) will require the active assemblage and integration of multiple and inter-related programs of research from the past, present, and future. At the very least, however, this presentation of EI Theory and the BEVI illustrates how extant programs of research can be integrated into this powerful organizational system.

In Conclusion: A Scientific-Humanist Justification for Solving the “Mystery” of Evil

There is a mystery to evil that we will never fully understand this side of eternity. But I do know this: We live in a world that is in the grip of evil, and in this present age God’s plans are often blocked by Satan’s supernatural force. (Billy Graham, 2002)

In the final analysis, it is difficult to conjure a more graphic example of the horrific consequences that justification systems may have than the terrorist acts of September 11th, 2001, which were indeed evil as well as grave “crimes against humanity” (Ross, 2001). At the beginning of a new millennium—when our demonstrable capacity to degrade our planet and destroy each other is unprecedented—among the most important questions we must answer are who and what is responsible for such acts, and are they, or are they not, “mysterious” in the way that Reverend Graham implies above? That is, did these events occur because “God’s plans” (which presumably did not include flying airplanes into buildings and killing thousands of people) were effectively “blocked by Satan’s supernatural force” (Graham, 2002, p. A6)? Or, as Reverend Falwell asserted, did these attacks occur because “the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians . . . the ACLU [and] People for the American Way” had all “mocked” God and made Him “mad” (Carlson, 2001, p. F5)? Is that how all of this works? If so, we have a problem on our hands, because short of eliminating these offending groups from our societies—and the beliefs and values they are alleged to condone—it doesn’t seem at all clear that we have any real power to stop such events from occurring in the future. Let one conclude that such views are confined to millions of Americans who strongly support Reverend Falwell and Graham, recall that the attackers were equally convinced that their acts of mass terror were sanctified by Allah, and a surefire way to secure the salvation of their own souls (Thomas, 2001). Indeed, as a prominent Shiite cleric in Iraq recently declared, the attacks of 9/11 were in fact “a miracle from God” (“Iraqi cleric calls 9/11 ‘miracle from God,’” 2004).

If none of this seems logical (not to mention reasonable, constructive, or charitable), the following five points from EI Theory and the BEVI may be helpful: (a) cohesion and preservation are among the highest aspirations of “self”; (b) we believe and value as we do for reasons that are often unknown to us; (c) we are inclined toward particular beliefs and values because of a complex interaction among affective, attributional, and developmental processes, that typically occurred over a long time in a specific context; (d) we

exist *in* our beliefs and values, and are *subject*—not *object*—to them; they innervate the deepest aspects of self and personality; they are—in no small part—who and what we say we are; and (e) our beliefs and values may evolve vis-à-vis the experiences of our lives, but without substantial and sudden contradiction—or a deliberate and prolonged process of self-exploration—such evolution is likely to be quantitative not qualitative, and retain congruence with the basic cognitive structures and affective templates that represent constituent aspects of self and personality. Like the spoken language we learn, we tend to acquire the dominant beliefs and values of our context and culture; they become part of the “real” us, and we cannot call them into question without some parallel deconstruction of self.

Nonetheless, as noted above, the fact that we all possess beliefs and values is not in itself sufficient to confer legitimacy upon them; that is to say, beliefs and values are not necessarily true, right, or better simply because they are held to be so, even if they are embraced with such reverent certitude that one is willing to destroy “non-believers” and perish in their name. To insist otherwise is like asserting that English is superior to French simply because you speak the former, as do your parents, children, and most everyone else you know. Although the absurdity of such logic (the non-logic) should be painfully apparent to us all, our history as a species indicates it is not. Instead, what we too often seem to “know for sure”—with a steely confidence that belies the fanatic in us all—is a tautology that our beliefs and values are right by virtue of the fact that they are ours (cf. Isley et al., 1999; Hayes et al., 1999; Shealy et al., 1999; Shealy et al., 1999; Shealy, 2000a, 2000b; Shealy, 2004). As psychologists, we know otherwise. Let us promote a more sustainable and flexible paradigm of self that can acknowledge and apprehend its own subjective potential. Let us help make sense of “justifications” and rebuke the miasmatic and pernicious declaration that evil cannot be explained. As scientific-humanists and citizens of our still-riven world, we can and must do our part to solve these “mysteries” right here on earth.

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