

SELF-LEGITIMATIONS AMONG ACADEMICSⁱ

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1975

Abstract

A social psychological analysis of self-legitimizing beliefs within a university context is examined using questionnaire data. For each of 39 goal statements four images – how much faculty think they are stressed, how much they desire them stressed, how much they think students see them stressed, and how much they think students desire them stressed – are obtained. Six hypotheses relating these four images to each other are developed. The results are consistently of the predicted nature.

Introduction

A perduring tenet of sociology is that every system of domination "attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy" (Weber, b, 213). Although it has also been recognized that "he who is more favored feels the never ceasing need to look upon his position as in some way legitimate" (Weber, b, 953), this aspect has received little empirical or theoretical attention. Our general concern in this paper is this latter aspect -- the beliefs of the dominant group itself. Our main task is to unravel how the content and the structure of the beliefs of the dominant group justifies to themselves their privileged position. This aspect of the beliefs of a dominant group we label self- legitimations.

Past research on this paper's topic has invariably focussed on political elites with nation-states as the unit of analysis. In this paper we assume that similar processes of self-legitimation operate in different arenas and at other levels, such as the educational arena at the level of the university as an organization. Within a university context faculty occupy a dominant position with respect to students. As such, faculty should not be immune to problems of legitimacy (Perrow, 100; see Bendix for an insightful description of legitimation processes in industry). The specific focus of this paper is to determine how the beliefs and perceptions of the faculty serve to legitimate to themselves their dominant position.

Although the concept of legitimation as developed by Weber has been widely accepted, it remains a problematic one (cf. Bensman). Regardless of the number of meanings that can be found in Weber's use of the term, there is an implicit consensus that legitimation involves three basic processes: (1) the claims for legitimacy made by the dominant group, (2) the beliefs of the subordinate group with respect to these claims and (3) the self-justifying beliefs of the dominant group.

The dominant group's claims for legitimacy usually are comprised of promises made to the subordinate group and justifications for the unequal distribution of power thought to be acceptable to the subordinate group. This component of legitimacy as claim refers to the tendency of those in power to seek justification for their position "in the eyes of the ruled" (Rosen, 75-76). These beliefs, which the dominant group disseminates to the subordinate group as a strategy for obtaining legitimacy, is often referred to as ideology.ⁱⁱ

The second part of this process involves the beliefs of the subordinate group concerning the acceptability of the existing distribution of power. These may or may not

be congruent with the claims made by the dominant group. When they are congruent, the dominant group has been legitimated. This of course is a matter of degree which depends on the extent of acceptance of the claims.

The third component of the legitimation process involves the self-justifying beliefs of the dominant group which we call self-legitimizations. According to Weber, the dominant group members are not "satisfied merely with the fact of being fortunate" but they need to believe that their privileged position is just (Weber, a, 271). Self-legitimizing beliefs are defined as images the dominant group has of itself and of the subordinate group (see Lefebvre, p. 76; Barroe). These are the images that are measured in the research to be reported in this paper.

With these definitional distinctions in mind, it is now possible to clarify more precisely the nature of self-legitimation. It should be noted that studies of legitimacy have most often addressed the question of whether the subordinate group actually accepts these ideologies; self-legitimation has simply been assumed. The first point to be noted is that the self-legitimizing beliefs of the dominant group may not be the ones that are disseminated as an ideology to the subordinate group. For example, the belief in "blood superiority" may be at the heart of the self-justification of many in power. However, in only certain types of authority or power relationships will this belief be communicated as a direct claim for legitimacy. In many situations, particularly in rational-legal relationships of inequality, such a belief would often remain as an underlying construction and not be overtly proclaimed.

This brings us to the second characteristic: legitimacy as claimed tends to be quite explicit and is defined by its content. Self-legitimation on the other hand is more often a latent construction which manifests itself in the structure or configuration of the beliefs of the dominant group. Self-legitimation is fundamentally a "process in which the structure of the larger society becomes incorporated within the inner consciousness of the individual" (Della Fave, 956). This mirroring" of the structure of the society in the perceptions of the dominant group is the key to self-legitimacy.

Although self-legitimacy is only validated internally, in the minds of dominant group members (Bensman, 30), it does have external referents in that it involves beliefs about the subordinate group. As Weber asserts, the notion that someone deserves good fortune is at the same time an assertion that he does so in comparison with others (Weber, a, 271). Not only is his advantage deserved but the disadvantages of the others are "brought about by the latter's 'fault'" (Weber, b, 953).

This quote implies a third characteristic of self-legitimizations: they have both a cognitive and an evaluative or normative component. As Berger and Luckmann put it, legitimizations explain the institutional order by "ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings" and they justify it by giving a "normative dignity to its practical imperatives" (Berger and Luckmann, 111). In simpler language, they define what is and imply that what is, is good. We share the social constructionist point of view that cognitive awareness of reality is socially constructed. One of the important consequences of this awareness for dominant groups is that it is structured precisely so as to legitimate their privileged position. Our guiding assumption is that the relationship between the cognitive and normative elements will most clearly reveal the process of self-legitimation.

Organizational Goals and Institutional Myths

Our analysis of the nature of self-legitimation in the preceding section leads to the conclusion that manifestations of the same should be found in the images the dominant group has of itself and of the subordinate group. That leaves unanswered, however, the specific content of the images. The composition of the claims for legitimacy is seldom simple and Weber did not specify them concretely (Bensman, 33). What self-legitimizing constructions do have in common is an exalting of the dominant group and a devaluing of the subordinate group. In different historical periods and in different types of organizations the specific form and content of these constructions will vary. For example, during the Middle Ages the legitimating construction of the divine right of kings had a religious content and a form which maximized the difference between the ruler and the ruled. In contrast, in voluntary democratic organizations such as universities, rational-legal content (stressing things like efficiency) and a form which emphasizes working for the common good (i.e. minimizing the differences between the dominant and subordinate groups by focusing on common goals).

Yet it is not the case that dominant groups create their own unique self-legitimizing beliefs. As Bensman recognized (39) both the objects of legitimation and the legitimating theories are interlaced at different levels of generality. This recognition is consistent with those institutional theories which define organizations as "dramatic enactments of the rationalized myths pervading modern societies" (Meyer and Rowan, 346). Thus we would expect that the self-legitimizing beliefs of the faculty affirm principles of legitimacy accepted at wider levels of generality (Bensman, 39). The point of view taken here is that organizations are inseparably linked to institutions. The specific link accepted in this paper is that if the goal statements of an organization are isomorphic with currently prevailing institutional myths, then that organization is likely to enjoy legitimacy. As Meyer and Rowan (p. 344) note, "many formalized organizational programs are also institutionalized in society" and appear as "prefabricated formulae available for use by any given organization."

In brief, organizational goal statements can be conceptualized as the arenas for legitimation attempts and not only as descriptions of what the organizations are attempting to accomplish (Perrow, b, Bates, Gouldner, et. al.).

Research Procedure

This is a secondary analysis of data collected in 1969. All faculty at a small midwestern state college were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was relatively long, resulting in a response rate of just over 50 per cent, and a final sample size of 139. This particular state college had been a teacher-training college and had recently received accreditation as a degree-granting liberal arts college.

Both the time of data collection and the history of the college result in non-generalizeability of any of the substantive findings to other universities. But then, it is not the aim of this paper to provide a description of universities. Rather, it is to empirically illuminate the processes of self-legitimation at an organizational level. The fact that the data was collected in the late 1960's becomes an advantage since it was during this time that polarization between faculty and students could in general be expected. This would make issues of self-legitimacy particularly salient. Similarly, that the college recently had

been a teacher-training college can be seen, from a research point of view, as a felicitous event, since it will permit an assessment of the linkage of organizational goals with institutional myths. Furthermore, we suspect that the between-universities variance in organizational goals is sufficiently large that it would mask many aspects of self-legitimacy. In other words, we believe it is important that the organizational context be incorporated specifically in an empirical analysis of self-legitimation. A random sample of academics from various universities would therefore not be an appropriate data base.

For reasons discussed above we focussed on how the faculty viewed the goals of their university. To this end we administered a list of university goals developed and used previously by Gross.ⁱⁱⁱ A few examples provide the general flavor of the goal statements:

"Assist students to develop objectivity about themselves and their beliefs and hence examine those beliefs critically."

"Carry on applied research."

"Serve as a center for the dissemination of new ideas that will change the society, whether those ideas are in science, literature, the arts, or politics."

"Hold our staff in the face of inducements offered by other universities."

"Maintain top quality in those programs we feel to be especially important (other programs being, of course, up to acceptable standards)."

As can be seen from the above examples, the goal statements are worded in a positive direction. That is, one would expect that more respondents would endorse each of the statements than reject them, although the priorities among both individuals and universities would of course differ. Since these goal statements were taken from the literature pertaining to what the goals of universities are, this seems to be a reasonable assumption.^{iv}

An empirical analysis of the nature of self-legitimizing constructions must of course incorporate the characteristics of this concept discussed earlier. This is done in the following manner: The faculty-student relationship is assumed to be one characterized by an unequal distribution of authority with the faculty in the dominant position.^v As we argued above, self-legitimation involves beliefs about both the dominant and subordinate groups. It is therefore necessary to obtain two images from the faculty. The first is their own. This we shall call the personal view. These are the views which are ordinarily addressed in studies where the answers are assumed to reflect a person's own beliefs and desires. There are in addition, a parallel set of beliefs which are not the individual's own but rather his or her perceptions of the beliefs and desires of some other individual, group, or category. That is, they are the perceptions of the perceptions of others. For Laing they are "metaperspectives"; for Larsen they are "second level" beliefs. Consequently we obtained a second image from the faculty, their metaperspective. In this case it is the faculty's image of the student's views on the goals of the university. This second image is closely related to Mead's notion of the "generalized other". For this reason, it will be called the generalized view (see Bem). In this study, it is the generalized view imputed to students by the faculty.

Finally, in the review of the concept of self-legitimation, we argued that the cognitive element in faculty's images of the goals of their university must be distinguished from the normative element. The cognitive element - faculty's perception of what "exists"

- is obtained by asking how much each of the 39 goals is being stressed at their university. For the normative, we asked how much each of the goals should be stressed. The terms 'existing' and 'desired' will be used in reference to the cognitive and normative elements respectively. These considerations result in the following four distinct ways in which each faculty member responded to the 39 goals.

1) Personal Existing (PE): How much is this goal stressed at the university?

2) Personal Desired (PD): How much should this goal be stressed at this university.

3) Generalized Existing (GE): How much do the students think this goal is stressed at this university?

4) Generalized Desire (GD): How much do the students desire this goal to be stressed at this university?

Information on these four images for the 39 goal statements was obtained through questionnaire responses from 139 faculty members at a small American state college^{vi} which had been, until recently, a teacher-training college.

The research provides an intensive case study of self-legitimations of one dominant group in a specific organizational context. Both the general organizational character and the unique history of this organization allows for the development of specific hypotheses which will reveal the structure of self-legitimations. We therefore do not expect these hypotheses to be applicable to other universities, although we do expect that self-legitimizing processes would be revealed in analogous ways in other settings.

For most of the hypotheses to be tested, the unit of analysis will be the goal statements rather than the individual faculty members. Furthermore, the "variables" analyzed are the four images with respect to each goal statement rather than each faculty member's various beliefs and perspectives.

Hypotheses

Generally speaking, the dominant group in an organization is most likely to feel responsible for the success or failure of the organization and therefore to identify more closely with its performance. They would predictably be the most likely to view the organization in the best light and to regard the successful implementation of its goals as having primarily to do with their performance (Della Fave). With respect to the goals of their university, the faculty should see them as having been implemented to a greater degree than students would credit them. For each of the 39 goals, the hypothesis would take the form:

$PE > GE$

In words, faculty perceive university goals as being implemented (PE) to a greater extent than they think students see them as being implemented (GE).

Second, as the elite theorists have argued in connection with political power, the ruling elite fosters the myth or political formula that they are more committed to the Positive values of society than other classes (Mosca).

In this study, the faculty would be likely to see itself as more committed than students to the goals of the university. The chief limitation of this factor in the analysis of the particular goal statements is that a few of the statements specifically relate to exclusive students' interests. Two examples of such items are: "Maintain a full round of student activities" and "Protect and facilitate the students' right to advocate direct action

of a political or social kind." In these instances, were faculty to see themselves as more committed than students, we would accuse them of exhibiting a particularly overt form of false consciousness and the process of self-legitimation would be more obvious than we have assumed.

Generally speaking, self-interest can be assumed to be the first priority and others' interest will not be given as high a priority. Consequently we would argue that for all issues except those in which others' interests are served exclusively, we would expect the hypothesis to hold that the dominant group will believe itself more committed to the goals than the subordinate group. The domain for the hypothesis in this study, then, is all those statements where the other's interest is not the exclusive focus. (A second limiting condition is described below in the final hypothesis.) There are altogether thirty-two items in the relevant domain. For these items, the hypothesis is:

$$PD > GD$$

In words, faculty believe that they desire the implementation of the goals of the university more than they assume students implemented.

Third, within rational-legal organizations, the existence of common goals is deemed by many sociologists to be of paramount importance in the maintenance of social stability. We hypothesize that dominant groups would tend to minimize the disparity they think exists between their own goals and those of the subordinate group. The most valid test of this hypothesis would be to show that the perceived disparity in goals is smaller than the actual disparity and would involve a comparison between faculty beliefs and actual student beliefs. This would take the form of

$$[GD(F) - PD(F)] < [PD(S) - PD(F)]$$

where the (S) and (F) refer to whether it is the student's or the faculty's responses respectively. In words, this hypothesis states that the perceived disparity in goals between faculty [PD(F)] and students -- in the eyes of faculty [GD(F)] -- is less than the actual disparity between the goals of the faculty on the one hand [PD(F)], and those of the students -- in the students' own eyes -- on the other [PD(S)]. In this sense, the faculty would be misperceiving the disparities, in fact minimizing the differences which actually exist. This test requires information about actual student desires [PD(S)] which is not available. In this paper we are limited to seeking self-legitimizations solely in the construction of the faculty.

For our purpose, goals may or may not be common for the dominant and subordinate groups, but there will be a tendency for the dominant group to perceive the goals as being common. This does not mean that we would predict that $PD = GD$, that faculty will assume that their goals are equivalent to those of the students. We have just argued that the dominant group will regard themselves as more committed than the subordinate group to the goals of the organization. A tendency to see these goals as being relatively common, then, would most likely be manifest by minimizing this difference. As a test of this third hypothesis we decided on the following: with four images, there are six possible disparities when taking two at a time -- (PE - PD; PE - GE; PE - GD; PD - GD; PD - GE; GE - GD). Our test of this hypothesis will take the form that the PD - GD disparity is smaller than that of the other five. In other words, this means that the smallest difference will be between faculty desires and assumed student desires. The dominant group can feel

that by implementing the goals of the organization they are working for the common good; indeed in the interests of the subordinate group.

A further element in this process of assuming that the purposes of the dominant and subordinate group are relatively common is for the former to assume that the subordinate group is better off than they think themselves to be. This implies that the dominant group perceives dissatisfaction among the subordinate group, but discounts part of it as being invalid.

Personal dissatisfaction can be conceptualized as the disparity between how much a goal is seen to exist and how much it is desired, that is $[PE - PD]$. In like manner, the total dissatisfaction perceived to characterize someone else would be $[GE - GD]$. This total dissatisfaction we will show, is composed of a part which the dominant group perceives as warranted and a part it would regard as unwarranted. In order to develop this hypothesis, we must make a few theoretical observations.

Mannheim, among others, recognized quite clearly that a most difficult task is to recognize ideological distortions in one's own cognitive constructions. One important element involved in the explanation of this fact is that our own perceptions are almost always too real. Stated differently, we ordinarily do not make a distinction between our own perceptions of the world, and the actual characteristics of the world. We often assume the two to be equivalent. With the exception of some situations of unequal authority and status, when differences in perception are manifest between two different individuals, each of the two is most likely to think this is because the other person's perceptions are in error. Attribution theory has provided both empirical evidence and a theoretical rationale for the above assertions (Jones and Nisbett). The recognition of this leads to an important implication for the legitimating constructions of faculty specifically and perhaps for dominant groups generally. We must start with the assumption that the faculty consider their own perceptions of what exists in their university (PE) as being more valid than those of the students (GE). By doing this, we can distribute the total normative dissatisfaction that faculty perceive among the students as a group into two components: the warranted and the unwarranted. As mentioned previously, the total perceived dissatisfaction is contained in the $[GE - GD]$ disparity. However, the faculty will be presumed to believe that the students misperceive "reality" and see it as worse than it is (this is the reverse of the argument that the dominant group will tend to perceive things as "rosy"). Since PE is their measure of existing conditions, the warranted part of student dissatisfaction will be the disparity between what the students are thought to desire (GD) and what exists in the eyes of faculty (PE); that is, the warranted dissatisfaction will be contained in the $[PE - GD]$ disparity. It is our hypothesis that the difference between what students are assumed to think exists (GE) and what they are thought to desire (GD) will be greater than between what faculty think really exists (PE) and what students are assumed to desire (GD). We can express this in algebraic form as:

$$[PE - GD] < [GE - GD]$$

Another way of expressing this relationship is to note that the total perceived dissatisfaction is composed of the sum of the warranted and the unwarranted, that is:

$$[GE - GD] = \{[PE - GD] + [PE - GE]\}$$

Fifth, a common sense attitude towards power differentials compares the justice of the present power structure with that of its opposition. Dictatorial regimes justify their existence in part by asserting that their opponents are worse, that they, the current dominant group, are more just than the subordinate group would be if they were to take their place. In this study, the faculty can believe that their exercise of power is more just than would be the case if the students were to have their power. This would manifest itself most clearly in a belief that they, the faculty, are more sympathetic to the vested interests of the students than vice versa. An empirical examination of this component of self-legitimizing constructions would require pairs of issues, one of which would favor students, the other the faculty. Furthermore, the two issues comprising a pair must be of equivalent "value". It would be an unfair test if the issue involving one group was a significantly more powerful one than that of the other. There was only one pair of goal statements that meet these criteria. The items are:

1. "Involve the Faculty in the government of the college.
2. "Involve the students in the government of the college."

The amount of sympathy faculty feel the students have with the faculty vested-interest is obtained by subtracting, on the first item how much the faculty feel students desire this from how much the faculty think it exists (i.e., GD - PE). On the other hand, the amount of sympathy faculty express toward the same student vested-interest would be given by the PD - PE difference on the second item. The final component of constructions would manifest itself in the legitimizing following prediction:

$$(PD_2 - PE_2) > (GD_1 - PE_1)$$

In words, the fifth hypothesis states that the faculty will see themselves as more committed to the implementation of a student vested interest than they will believe the students are committed to the fulfillment of a faculty vested interest.

Organizational structures are of course not static. In one of their propositions, Meyer and Rowan suggest one source for the dynamics that are involved. They hypothesize (p. 345) that as "rationalizing institutional myths arise in existing domains of activity, extant organizations expand their formal structures so as to become isomorphic with these new myths."

Our sixth and final hypothesis about self-legitimizing beliefs emerges out of this proposition. It is our contention that teacher-training colleges have not been, or perhaps more importantly, have not been perceived to be, as isomorphic with rationalizing institutional myths" as universities have been. One would therefore expect such colleges to strive to become more similar to universities in their goal structure. This was indeed the case for the particular organization in our study. It had been a teacher training college and recently had attained the status of a liberal arts college. One would therefore expect the faculty to reject those goals that are stereotypically seen as being more appropriate for teacher training colleges than for liberal arts colleges. Low standards of admission and a focus on career skills are two examples. In our list of goal statements there are three that have such a content. They are:

1. Educate to the utmost capacities every high school graduate who meets the basic legal requirements.

2. Prepare students specifically for useful careers.
3. Place more emphasis on teaching skills.

For these we would hypothesize that faculty are less committed to these goals than they assume students to be ($PD < GD$). In so doing, the faculty would successfully distance themselves from an "inferior" goal structure. Since this hypothesis makes a prediction which is diametrically opposite that of the second one, it is perhaps important to discuss it in greater detail. The second hypothesis states that the dominant group will perceive themselves as more committed to the common good than the subordinate group. The sixth hypothesis, on the other hand, provides an important limiting condition. The dominant group will be less committed to an organizational goal than they perceive the subordinate group to be, if that goal is incompatible with the rationalizing institutional myths. This limiting condition is clearly seen by Meyer and Rowan (349-350) when they state that "organizations that omit environmentally legitimated elements of structure, or create unique structures lack acceptable legitimated accounts of their activities."

indings

The first hypothesis was that faculty would see their university as having accomplished each of the goals to a greater extent than they felt students would recognize (i.e., $PE > GE$). Taking the arithmetic mean of both the PE and the GE responses separately for each of the 39 items, we found that in 37 of the statements, the difference was in the predicted direction. Using the sign test, this pattern is statistically significant below the 0.01 level.^{vii}

The second hypothesis was that faculty would be more committed to the goals of the university than they perceived students to be (except for the two provisos mentioned). Of the 32 relevant items, 31 of them behaved in the predicted direction. This too is significant at the 0.01 level, providing strong support for this second component of self-legitimizing construction.

In order to test the third hypothesis, the mean difference between each of the four reality bases across all 39 goals was computed.^{viii} The results are portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean differences between the four reality images.

| Comparison | Mean |
|------------|------|
| PD-GD | .23 |
| PE-GE | .26 |
| PE-GD | .55 |
| GE-GD | .79 |
| PE-PD | .80 |
| | |

| | |
|-------|------|
| PD-GE | 1.04 |
|-------|------|

Our hypothesis was that of the six possible disparities, the PD - GD disparity would be the smallest. Table 1 shows that this is indeed the case; it is statistically significantly smaller than that of four of the five other disparities. We therefore conclude that our third hypothesis is correct: faculty feel that there is little conflict of interest between themselves and the students.

The same figure also provides the information for testing the fourth hypothesis. From there, we can see that the faculty perceive students to have a relatively large normative dissatisfaction (GE - GD). Note however, that they feel their own dissatisfaction (PE - PD) to be of equal magnitude (.79 vs. .80). The university, in the view of the faculty, is not run in a manner essentially more congruent with their own desires than with the desires of the students. In fact, when one looks at the warranted dissatisfaction (PE - PD) we can see that it is substantially smaller than the total perceived dissatisfaction (.55 vs. .79). The warranted dissatisfaction is statistically significantly smaller than the students' total perceived dissatisfaction, corroborating the fourth hypothesis. This implies that the faculty feel they are doing a reasonably good job, thus legitimating their dominant position.

This last point in particular can be shown more clearly through the correlation matrix of the four reality images. (See Table 2).

TABLE 2 Correlation Matrix (tau's) for the four reality images

| | PE | PD | GE |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| PD | .46 | | |
| GE | .51 | .34 | |
| GD | .48 | .39 | .07 |

If we rank-order the importance the 39 goals have with respect to each other separately for each of the four reality images, then the correlation coefficients on the rank-orders can be interpreted as a measure of the congruencies of the goal structure of the university. Thus, for example, the correlation between PE and PD would measure the extent to which the existing goal priorities are congruent with the faculty's desired priorities. As one might expect, the highest correlation is between PE and GE. This finding is, to some extent, consistent with the 'social construction' theorists contention that we live in a 'shared and taken for granted' reality, simply assuming that others see the world as we see it. However, a correlation of .51 is far from perfect and it is unlikely that this is due simply to measurement error. It is unlikely precisely because we have already documented that there are self-legitimizing systematic differences between PE and GE.

More importantly, note that for the faculty the goal structure of the university is more congruent with their own desires than they perceive it to be for the students. ($\tau_{PE, PD} = 0.46$; $\tau_{GE, GD} = 0.07$). Thus at first glance it would appear that the faculty think the university is run in a manner more consistent with their own desires than that of the students. This would violate our fourth aspect of self-legitimizing constructions. However, we have already made the distinction between warranted and unwarranted dissatisfaction. The correlation between PE and GD is, from the faculty's point of view, a measure of the extent to which the goal structure is congruent with student desires. This correlation is 0.48. Thus the goal structure is not seen to accommodate faculty desires more than perceived student desires.^{ix}

The fifth hypothesis involves the prediction that $(PD_2 - PE_2) > (GD_1 - PE_1)$ where the subscripts refer to the two items listed previously. The null hypothesis of no difference in this comparison can be rejected at the .001 level. Thus this component is also given empirical support.

The sixth and final hypothesis involved a prediction about three specific items concerning goals stressed by teacher-training colleges. For these, the prediction was, in direct contrast to the other goals, that faculty would see themselves as less committed to them than students; i.e., $PD < GD$. This was indeed the case.

Conclusion

In this paper we explored how the dominant structural position of the faculty with respect to the students influenced their cognitive and normative perceptions of their university. Specifically empirical evidence was provided which revealed how the faculty's perceptions provided self-legitimations for their privileged position. The research strategy was to search for the self-legitimations more in the structure of their cognitions than in their substantive content.

The research strategy used was to obtain four separate images of the organizational goals from the faculty. Two of these were their own images (PE and PD) and two were the images of what they believed were the subordinate group's images (GE and GD). The units of analysis were the 39 organizational goals and the 'variables' were the four images. We were able to show that these four images stand in a predictable relation to each other which reveals the self-legitimizing components of the faculty's perceptions. The differences between the four images for any particular goal are not impressively large. That is, looking at the goal statements individually, there are few blatant dissimilarities in the four images. What is impressive is the consistency of the differences. What we found was a consistent patterned difference in the four images of the goal structure. This may reflect the limited, intermediate position the faculty occupies in the power structure of the university

A second strategy was to treat organizational goals as the resources the dominant group can manipulate for self-legitimation purposes. Our analysis showed that an institutional approach to organizational goals is fruitful. The global hypothesis was that the four images the dominant group of an organization holds will affirm in particular ways the prevailing institutional myths. These myths act as a general model of organizational goals. The task of the dominant group is to translate these myths into a form appropriate to their particular organization. It is important to stress that such an approach to organizational

goals does not deny the relevance of other factors, such as coordination and control, on the formation of organizational goals. Our analysis simply shows that the institutional myths should not be excluded from consideration.

With respect to the issue of common goals, our research supports the contention that one strategy of the dominant group is to stress goals as being common regardless of whether they are or not (Perrow, b,83). Yet note that this is a two-edged sword, since some difference in goal priorities must be attributed to the subordinate group, even if it does not exist (Pusey, 46). In this respect our findings have some implication for social construction theorists, such as Berger and Luckmann. It is indeed true that there is an assumed shared reality. However, such an assumed common reality is far from perfect. The structural position of members of a group has an important bearing on what kind of consensus is assumed. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 5 predict patterned assumed disagreements of various sorts, and these hypotheses were supported in this research. Hypothesis 3 on the other hand predicts a commonality of a specific sort and it too was supported. These findings suggest that it is no more important to assume a shared reality than to assume a non-shared one. Both assumptions are made by the dominant group, differing only in the specific patterns and function they play. Certain types of assumed agreements justify a dominant group's privileged position and other kinds of assumed disagreements serve the same function.

This raises the question of validity of self-legitimizing beliefs. The concept of self-legitimation as used in this paper is intended as a neutral term, rather than as a negative or a positive term. Questions about the truth or falseness are essentially irrelevant in this context (see Foster). For example, whether faculty are indeed more committed to the goals of their university than students has not been assessed in this paper. One would need to obtain information about the student's actual commitment to test the validity of this claim. Nevertheless, from their structural position within the university, one can predict that they would believe themselves to be more committed, regardless of the "truth" of such a belief. The defining characteristic of self-legitimizing beliefs is that they are believed to be genuine by those who hold them. This does not deny that beliefs can be manufactured expressly for the consumption of the subordinate group. This is frequently done in an attempt to gain legitimacy. In such instances, the dominant group may not themselves believe in them. Such beliefs Mott calls legitimating myths. These are not the concern of this paper precisely because the belief patterns described here may not be the ones the faculty would want to transmit to the students. We have shown, for example, that faculty believe they are more sympathetic to student vested interests than they believe students would be to the faculty vested interest. It is doubtful that the faculty would actually say that to students. This is one of the major differences between legitimating and self-legitimizing beliefs.

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NOTES:

- i. This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the 10th Annual Conference of the Canadian Sociologists and Anthropologists Association, Edmonton, Alberta, May, 1975. The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Mark Iutcovich who was responsible in part for collecting the data.
- ii. Cultivating a belief in legitimacy is not the only means of establishing social stability. (See Bensman). However, in democratic rational-legal settings it is likely to be the preferred mode.
- iii. The procedures to construct these goal statements and the actual contents of the goal statements can be found in Gross. The list of 47 goals that he used was reduced to 39 which were the most relevant in this university. The answer categories and scoring procedures are identical to his. The data was collected in the late 1960's when, in general, a polarization between faculty and students might be expected. However, despite the specific historical conjuncture, the campus remained remarkably tranquil throughout with no politically-oriented student agitation or faculty-student confrontation.

iv. Empirically, the best test for whether an item should be regarded as negative rather than positive is that, in the former case, it is seen as existing more than it is desired. One normally thinks of goals as end states towards which one is striving but which haven't been fully reached. Of the 39 statements in the research, only one item was seen by faculty as being implemented more than it is desired. This was the item:

"Keep this place from becoming something different from what it is now; that is, preserve its peculiar emphasis and point of view, its character."

There is additional evidence that this a negatively rather than positively valued item. Of the 39 goal statements selected from Gross' study of American universities, this item was the least desired by the faculty at that time. Second, in our own study, the faculty desired this goal the least by far and also thought the students would desire it the least. It is our contention that this goal is negatively valued because it suggests support for the status quo rather than the more positive connotation of preserving one's cultural heritage. As a generally negatively-valued item in contrast to all the other positively-valued items, one would require a mirror-image empirically in order to retain a theoretically consistent substantive meaning. Therefore the scoring categories for this item will be reversed for the analysis.

v. It must be noted that the university does not exist as a closed system, nor is it simply characterized by a dichotomous dominant-subordinate relationship. There are vested interests impinging on the university from outside the institution, and within the institution there are administrators, staff and blue-collar workers as well as faculty and students. These undoubtedly affect the cognitive and normative constructions of the faculty. However, they do not nullify the impact of the dominant-subordinate relationship between faculty and students.

vi. The questionnaire was relatively long, resulting in a response rate of just over 50%. The state college had been a teacher-training institution and had recently received accreditation as a degree-granting liberal arts college.

vii. Exceptions are sometimes as important as those behaving in a predicted direction. The first exception is the item:

"Accomodate only students of high potential in terms of the specific strengths and emphases of this college."

This particular institution had been until recently a teacher-training college. The desire of the faculty to be a worthy liberal arts college is coupled with a feeling that they have not yet attained such status. This probably accounts for the first exception. The faculty feel the admission standards have been too low to permit them to achieve the quality they desire. Note that this exception places the failure to achieve a quality program on the students themselves. Thus this item too is but an apparent exception since it helps to 'devalue' the subordinate group. This item is in some ways similar to those discussed under the final hypothesis. The second exception is the item "Make sure that on all important issues the will of the full-time faculty prevails." The faculty do not think this characterizes their university as much as they feel students think it does. This implies that the faculty feel

their university is not run in a manner which unduly favors them in their dominant position vis-a-vis students. As we shall see later, perceptions of this sort are in fact involved in the dynamics of the fourth hypothesis. Thus these 'exceptions' do not weaken our postulates about self-legitimizing constructions but actually provide additional support for them.

viii. The content of the 39 goals statements do not form a substantive scale and hence the traditional rationale of internal consistency cannot be used for justifying the summation. The methodological justification for summing the scores across all 39 goal statements is two-fold: First, these 39 goal statements do have one element in common -- they are all positively-valued statements and it is this crucial aspect of the statements that is of concern in this analysis. Secondly, the summated scores do not camouflage internal differences. The pattern we describe with the summated scores holds for the most of the individual items. Hence the summated scores are simply convenient figures expressing summarily the pattern which holds individually.

ix. This finding cautions us against an uncritical acceptance of Lazarsfeld's notion of the "interchangeability of indicators". If we consider PE and GE as two separate measures of a common taken-for-granted reality, then by his argument we should obtain roughly similar results when correlating either of these two measures with a third factor, such as GD. Yet we have just seen that this does not hold here for good theoretical reasons (see Lazarsfeld).