

BOOK REVIEW

Tyler, T. R., & Trinkner, R. (2017). *Why Children Follow Rules: Legal Socialization and the Development of Legitimacy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 280 pp. ISBN: 9780190644147. \$44.95 (hardcover)

Processes of socialization and subsets of socialization take place throughout people's lives but play a particularly significant role during the formative years of an individual's development, namely, during childhood and adolescence. In spite of the degree to which an individual's earlier years and experience inform their relationships at a later stage in life, adults receive disproportionate attention—an uncomfortable irony, as Tom R. Tyler and Rick Trinkner explore in their book, *Why Children Follow Rules: Legal Socialization and the Development of Legitimacy*. Without the proper socialization groundwork for future interaction and conduct, children and adolescents can grow to have negative encounters, from rejection to rebellion as well as depression, apathy, poor value systems, and run-ins with the law involving violent behavior. Tyler and Trinkner address the dearth of attention to the socialization of children through cognitive development engagement with the law and legal practice, and organizational and procedural justice. This four-part, 280-page book undertakes a deep exploration of this topic in the context of the family, school life, and the juvenile justice system.

Tyler and Trinkner set the tone of the book as one of exploration of enduring oversight concerning preadult development and socialization—what the authors refer to as the “missing component” (p. 7). In the introduction, Tyler and Trinkner present their basic but provocative research questions. Their inquiries respond not only to a puzzle but also to a practice of overlooking the fundamental years that should lead to a positive relationship with legal authority and legal socialization. The authors explore the literature on legal and moral socialization, and discuss meaningful research in these areas. To address the gaps in existing studies, Tyler and Trinkner pose a wealth of questions to guide their research, establish what socialization looks like from different angles within society, and argue that, “a key part of legal socialization is developing a sense of what the appropriate exercise of legal authority looks like” (p. 7). Thus, the book is, in part, a reconceptualization of the dynamics of interaction between authority and adolescents.

Chapters 1 and 2 plunge readers into the mechanism of legitimacy, emphasizing a failing institutional trust or growth of mistrust in present-day society in the United States. What has been well documented as a decrease in trust leads to heightened concern that a society devoid of such a quality is likely to face more systemic problems with and between communities and government, and notably the imperative of consensus in democratic functioning. There is a need, Tyler and Trinkner argue, for a broader framework linked to new strategies for the implementation of “legitimacy-enhancing strategies” in the 21st century (p. 33). As the authors

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Scott Nicholas Romaniuk is now at the University of Alberta, Canada.*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEHAVIOR, 201X, Vol. XX, No. X, Month 2019, 1–3.

DOI: 10.1177/0093854818823019

Article reuse guidelines: sagepub.com/journals-permissions

© 2019 International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology

assert, “society works more effectively when the population has the supportive attitudes and values that are instilled during the legal socialization process and the need for coercion is minimized” (p. 47).

Chapter 3 and 4 expound on the utility of a life-course framework for the study of legal socialization. This chapter maps a variety of facilitators and hindrances to research within the realm of legal socialization. The value of this approach emerges from its recognition that, “development occurs within a unique cultural environment of historical events [and considers that] legal values, attitudes, and reasoning as they develop, grow, and change across the life cycle [all of which is rooted in] generational development” (p. 51). What can be derived from this exploration is the view that changes (i.e., generational) across time offer insight into diverse authority systems and structures, such as family, school, and legal authority. To build on the aforesaid and in their subsequent address of inconsistencies within the complexity of legal socialization, Tyler and Trinkner discuss sundry theoretical perspectives, including the treatment of values internalization, social norms, attitudes linked to authority, democracy, citizenship, and legal socialization in the context of normative alignment.

Chapter 5 offers an in-depth look at the developmental process related to moral and legal reasoning and what this says about individuals’ dealings with the legal system. In short, this observation is important because it reveals the dearth of work dedicated to the role and extent to which legal reasoning plays in peoples’ perception of the legitimacy of laws and in foretelling behavior as it relates to willingness to comply with various laws.

Chapter 6 connects the neurological dimension of people and behavior to the law and legal socialization. Turning to the neurological element brings to the fore two important points related to young people and criminal behavior: first, adolescent crime stems from a struggle to manage the requisite cognitive and social skills for following rules; second, neurology facilitates our understanding of young people via diversion.

Chapters 7 to 9 discuss legal socialization spanning three spheres of childhood and adolescence. Collectively, these chapters constitute the core or research thrust of the book. Each chapter looks at a singular sphere: family, school, and the juvenile justice system.

The family (Chapter 7) is important for playing a role in establishing the boundaries and relationship between authority and child at an early age. “Family and parents are central features,” Tyler and Trinkner contend, “of the environment and serve to develop or undermine those attitudes and values that are most important to the legal socialization that leads to consensual models of authority” (p. 130). This chapter illustrates the important role of quality parental models and child-rearing practices that are fundamental for setting a child’s future perspective of authority.

Legal socialization (Chapter 8) in the school concerns another version of authority because children, while dealing with authority and authority figures, in the classroom setting for example, are interacting with nonfamily members—people they are possibly unfamiliar with but whom carry the same degree of legitimacy in terms of authority. The school environment presents a new level of civic interaction and life beyond the home and how society works on an augmented scale. In schools, authority comes in all forms and presents children and adolescents with tests of legal reasoning and law-related behavior. According to Tyler and Trinkner, “[i]f students view their teachers and administrators as legitimate—that is, if they feel obligated to accept their authority and they trust them as authorities—then rule-following behavior ensues” (p. 182).

The juvenile justice system (Chapter 9) focuses on adolescence. Although coercive measures and responses have been shown to manage social orders within society, the authors reveal and argue that, “civic attitudes and values have a stronger influence upon law-related behavior” (p. 206). A particularly interesting finding is the sensitivity that adolescents reveal toward fair and respectful utilization of force by authority figures and institutions. Although much study is undertaken in this book about the value of noncoercive means of maintaining social order, there exists an ongoing tension over the best or right direction to take. Despite research finding supporting the efficacy of nonpunitive approaches and measures, punitive practices are favored and have become entrenched in managing social order.

Tyler and Trinkner’s book is a rich mix of information and insight. Each chapter can be treated as an authoritative account of the topic. The authors have drawn on a lengthy and active history of researching and writing in their respective fields and have masterfully merged a variety of academic areas of inquiry to create an admirable piece of interdisciplinary scholarship. The authors deftly outline their basis of inquiry. In addition to addressing a notable puzzle and tending to several glaring gaps in the existing literature, the authors have set in motion a critical research agenda that ties into the a well-perceived and identified crisis of trust and legitimacy today. Among the many strength of this book, the research is in stride with a growing wave of challenges, not exclusively concerning the United States, seen across a number of Western democracies in relation to violent crime, organized crime, and the radicalization of youth—thousands of whom have traveled great distances to oppose authority in exceedingly violent and egregious ways. The clear connections made between the academic realm and the real and pervading issues within society makes this book a highly relevant study for policymakers and practitioners of a wide range.

Tyler and Trinkner, having identified an area suffused with overattention to adults behaving badly, produced a powerful book that has clear connections to both scholarship and the wider social order. The authors present a well-organized and adeptly argued case for rethinking legitimacy and socialization. In fulfilling its objectives, the content of the book also makes a broader argument for a reorientation of legal authority and proactive engagement with members of society to see the development of healthy and positive individuals, and move toward a resilient and sustainable legal authority. Scholarship of this cast can help to alter a course that runs contrary to what societies strive to correct in adult life. This book has set the stage for further scholarship with inspiring assertions and lines of inquiry that should do much to shape and drive future research.

SCOTT NICHOLAS ROMANIUK
Università degli Studi di Trento

REFERENCE

Tyler, T. R., & Trinkner, R. (2017). *Why children follow rules: Legal socialization and the development of legitimacy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.