The Regulation of Good and Evil:

A Deviance Regulation Analysis of Social Control

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Societies are little more than the collection of carrots and sticks. From the formal social institutions that govern complex organizations to the informal social norms that guide daily interactions, societies put contingencies in place that determine which actions will be rewarded, which will be punished, and which will be ignored. Consider the presence of such diverse social entities as the criminal justice system, the free market, a family's traditions, and NIMH review boards. Each of these entities does its part to ensure that we become and remain good citizens, individuals who will contribute to society. To the extent that we internalize the codes of conduct that are promoted by these and other sources of influence, we can "self administer" carrots and sticks on our own.

Yet closer inspection reveals a simple structure underlying the complex array of social contingencies that govern our daily lives. There seem to be predictable differences in the way society reinforces specific behaviors, and specifically, whether a system of rewards (i.e., carrots) or a system of punishments (i.e., sticks) is employed. Think about the civic behaviors that are reinforced by the legal system. In Eastern and Western cultures and modern and developing nations alike, the rule of law is most frequently reinforced through formal codes that dole out punishments. Take, for example, the laws in the U.S. that promote safe driving. Each state has established a formal set of rules that define for drivers which behaviors merit punishment – and to what degree. Speeding, ignoring traffic signals, and passing on the wrong side of the road can result in fines and loss of driving privileges, and it is the driver's fear of these sanctions that will cause most of us to drive reasonably safe, most of the time. In contrast, consider the career choices that are made by members of a society. Monetary incentives, interpersonal rewards, and

prestige are bestowed upon individuals who pursue highly valued positions in modern capitalist societies. Future police officers, business owners, presidential hopefuls, and experimental social psychologists all adopt their chosen paths because they hope that, in so doing, they one day will collect various material and symbolic rewards (e.g., money, power, a desirable identity).

In this chapter, we ask how societies choose between the carrot and the stick, why these choices are made, and how internalization of these codes affects behavioral decision-making on both the societal and individual level. We ask these questions in part because we see consistency in the forms and structures of many diverse regulatory mechanisms in societies —consistencies that we hope to explain. We also ask these questions as a way of drawing attention to the features that contribute to a good, highly-functioning society. In our analysis, we use the term "society" to refer broadly to the sum total of the social norms, codes of conduct, and evaluative standards that place either explicit or implicit contingencies on individual actors. Our definition of society thus includes the complex organizations and bureaucratic agencies that ground modern nations (e.g., criminal justice systems, religious bodies, the division of motor vehicles), the informal organizations and entities that ground social interactions (e.g., peer groups, social identities) and the specific individuals, real or imagined, who shape our actions through their ability to act as reference others (e.g., spouses, parents, gods, social psychology professors).

Deviance Regulation:

Our carrot-and-stick analysis is adapted from our earlier work on deviance regulation theory (Blanton & Christie, 2003). This is a behavioral-decision model that links principles of behavioral self-regulation to normative social influence. Many of the research findings that form the core of this model were developed through applications in the area of health communication. However, we believe DRT can inform a broader conversation about social control.

At the heart of the model is a proposed asymmetry between the social inferences that are drawn from norm-inconsistent (also "deviant" or "counter-normative") actions and norm-consistent (also "normative" or "conforming") actions. We thus introduce this model by first considering the many consequential actions that an actor might pursue that would nevertheless generate few inferences from the actors themselves or from observers. Imagine, for instance, a social psychologist who starts his day each morning at 7:30 a.m. with a shower and a light breakfast, followed by a twenty-minute drive to work. Nothing about his morning is so provocative that it would promote strong social inferences. This routine probably does little to shape the actor's own self-concept, and would not influence his public image if it were brought to the attention of others. Contrast this with the morning routine of another social psychologist— a woman who starts her each day at 4:00 a.m. with a raw egg, a shot of bourbon and a 10-mile run. Because her behavior deviates from the norms typical in most known and common reference groups, her morning routine probably shapes both her public image and her private sense of self.

The "inferential asymmetry" between normative and counter-normative actions that this example highlights has had a recurring emphasis in various domains of psychology. It was influential in some theories of perception (Koffka, 1935), attention (Treisman & Gelade, 1980), attribution (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1972), social comparison (Campbell, 1986; Marks, 1984; Mullen & Goethals, 1990), and identity (Ditto & Griffin, 1993; McGuire & McGuire, 1980; Tajfel, 1978; Turner et al., 1987; Mullen & Goethals, 1990). Deviance regulation theory builds on these frameworks by showing how this same asymmetry shapes the way people frame their behavioral decisions.

The model predicts that when actors are choosing between normative and counter-normative courses of action, greater attention is focused on the counter-normative than normative choice. The example we often use to illustrate this basic principle is that of a conflicted smoker. Imagine a woman who is trying to decide whether or not to have a cigarette. When she is socializing with a group of fellow social psychologists, her attention will be drawn toward the consequences of lighting up. Because few social psychologists smoke, performing this behavior in their company would be counter-normative. The woman's choice to smoke would thus carry two potential consequences. First, it would cause her to 'stick out' from the people around her, increasing the likelihood that others would observe her behavior. Second, it would cause the woman to engage in self-reflection and so she might ultimately develop a "smoker self-image" (see McGuire & McGuire, 1980). Now consider how this same decision might be framed if the woman were sitting at a bar with her musician friends, individuals who commonly use the embers of recent cigarettes to light their next smoke. In this new social environment, *not* smoking is the counter-normative behavior and socially informative choice. Thus, it is the decision not to smoke that stands to influence both public and private perceptions of the woman.

Let's now suppose that this actor chooses to smoke when she is with the musicians but not with the social psychologists. A casual observer might infer that set of choices shows that the woman simply has a desire to "fit in." Yet closer inspection might reveal a more interesting decision dynamic. It is possible that neither the decision to smoke nor the decision not to smoke were driven by a desire to conform. Both of the choices could have been generated by the woman's private opinions and beliefs. This could occur if she does not have a favorable view of the "smoker image" (because she sees such individuals as unhealthy and smelly), nor does she

have a favorable opinion of the "non-smoker image" (because she sees such individuals as up-tight and boring). By going with the group norm in each case, both of these identities were avoided (and see Gibbons & Gerrard, 1989). Compare this example with that of a less conflicted smoker, someone who likes the rugged smoker image, who knows he can realize this identity by smoking, but who would gain this appearance the psychologists but not musicians. This individual might smoke with both groups, but he would do so for different reasons. Among psychologists, it is because he likes the image it creates. Among musicians, it is not possible to associate the self with provocative image by smoking. In this environment, however, he might smoke out of habit.

Social Influence Framing. The most direct evidence for the proposed decision process comes from our research examining the framing of influence attempts designed to promote health behaviors (Blanton, Stuart & VandenEijnden, 2001; Stuart & Blanton, 2003). We've proposed that when targets of influence think that a healthy behavior is normative, social marketing efforts should be crafted to discourage unhealthy actions. When targets of influence think that an unhealthy behavior is normative, efforts should encourage healthy actions. In both instances, the communication will target counter-normative actions and so it should invoke a socially informative standard that can be used by actors to evaluate their own choices.

In one study, for instance, we exposed participants to one of two health communications designed to influence the intention to use condoms (Blanton, Stuart & VandenEijnden, 2001; Study 4). Before exposing participants to the message, however, we first measured their beliefs about the norms surrounding condom use. Consistent with predictions, the positively framed messages that associated a desirable image with safer sex exerted stronger influence on behavioral intentions among participants who thought condom use was uncommon, whereas

negatively framed messages that associated an undesirable image with unsafe sex exerted stronger influence on behavioral intentions among participants who thought condom use was common. Moreover, these results were replicated in a conceptual replication in which norm perception was manipulated rather than measured.

Communication and Inference. The findings in Blanton, Stuart and VandenEijnden (2001) offered advice to communicators hoping to exert social influence, however, we've also argued that most agents of influence do not actually need this advice (Blanton & Christie, 2003). This is because most communicators spontaneously adopt a frame of communication that is consistent with these prescriptions. That is, communicators have a natural tendency to focus their rhetorical skills on counter-normative actions. As indirect evidence, consider the inferences you would draw if, at a dinner party, if you overheard a husband compliment his wife on "looking thin" or the wife praise the husband for "not acting like a jerk." We can imagine that such "compliments" would elicit a negative rather than a positive reaction from the recipients because of what these statements reveal about the speaker's unstated assumptions. As Grice (1975) has pointed out, the default assumption in everyday communications is that a communicator has crafted a message so that it is not redundant with common expectations. The implication for everyday influence is that, when communicators try to shape the behavior of others by praising or criticizing specific actions, they reveal their own assumptions about which actions are expected and which are not.

In the case of backhanded compliments, a speaker inadvertently communicates his or her expectations about a specific individual. Praise highlights negative expectations and criticism highlights positive expectations. With public communications or with other messages designed to influence the actions of groups, communicators more typically reveal their assumptions about

the norms for the members. Thus, a public service announcement encouraging Americans to eat healthy meals is saying something different about Americans than a message encouraging Americans not to eat junk food.

We were reminded of this dynamic when we first observed a health campaign designed to increase sexual abstinence among teenagers. The campaign was titled "Not Me, Not Now" and its goal was to promote sexual abstinence in high schools.[1] One of the primary tools used by this campaign was to praise teen role models who abstained from sex. It stated, for instance, that "No" is "what smart kids say to sex" and had abstaining teens assert their positive qualities (e.g., "because I am worth the wait"). Although this campaign is well-meaning, we wondered if the decision to praise abstaining teens did not inadvertently communicate a hidden assumption; one that could ultimately reduce the campaigns' effectiveness. We wondered if by praising teens who abstain from sex – rather than by criticizing teens who do not – that this campaign was unintentionally communicating a belief among health professionals that it is rare for high school students to abstain from sex. If abstaining from sex was common, after all, it would not be worthy of praise.

We tested this hypothesis by having college students read a health communication that was adapted from the "Not Me, Not Now" campaign (Blanton & Stuart, 2004). Half of our participants read a message modeled after the "Not Me, Not Now" campaign, in which teens who abstained from sex were praised for being responsible (positive message frame). The other half read a variation of the "Not Me, Not Now" message in which teens who were having sex were criticized for being irresponsible (negative message frame). As predicted, participants who had read the original, positively framed message estimated a lower prevalence of teen abstinence

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[1] http://www.notmenotnow.org/

than participants who read the modified, negatively framed version of the message. By holding abstaining peers up as good role models, the positively framed material seemed to indicate that they were the exceptions to the rule.

In subsequent studies, we have found that both praise and criticism can alter norm perceptions relative to a "no message" control group (Blanton & Hall, 2008). We've also shown that these shifts can alter the effectiveness of an influence attempt. For example, we found in one study that a communication praising students for refusing to have sex without a condom exerted less influence on participants' own intentions to have safe sex than a communication that criticized students for not using condoms. This effect was partially mediated by changes in normative assumptions. We obtained similar results in a study of a public service announcement that encouraged handwashing after restroom use. We posted positively and negatively framed announcements above the urinals in men's rooms on a college campus. As predicted, the negatively framed message resulted in more hand washing (as indicated by the volume of hand towels used) than the positively framed message. Later, in a controlled laboratory study, we found that these public service materials exerted the predicted effects on norm perceptions, again supporting the mediating model.

In summary, we find evidence that when influence attempts try to promote desired actions, they can reveal underlying negative assumptions held by the agent of influence. To the extent that such effects do occur, and to the extent that a person's actions might be normatively driven, communications that try to discourage unwanted actions should be more influential than ones that encourage the desired alternatives.

Deviance Regulation:

A Dual-Process Model of Social Control

We see in this program of research focused on health promotion a broader framework for understanding how social entities regulate behavior on a larger scale. At times, it is in the best interest of formal and informal organizations to promote behavioral conformity. For example, modern nations will be better off to the extent that the majority of their citizens conform to the standards for law abiding behavior. When conformity is the goal, DRT suggests that organizations should put in place a system of "negatively framed" incentives, with social and material sanctions that punish people who pursue undesired courses of action. There are other times, however, when it is in the best interest of organizations to promote behavioral diversity. For example, a nation that encourages a wide range of career pursuits will be more successful than one in which all members embark on the same exact path. For behaviors such as this, DRT predicts that a system of "positively framed" incentives, with social and material rewards given to people who pursue desired courses of action, should and will be put in place. In the section below, we expand on these predictions, showing first how punishments can promote conformity and then how rewards can promote diversity.

The Language of Conformity: Go Negative

The DRT Analysis. Research on DRT suggests a number of reasons why punishments will be instituted when the goal is conformity. First, if most of the members of a group are mostly on board with the group norms for a given behavior, then the research on message framing suggests that this way of acting will be most strongly reinforced by messages that discourage deviation. Our research has illustrated this in the case of health communications, but consider other ways that societies promote the status quo through social sanctions. For example, as a general rule, most legal codes focus attention on acts of evil that are worthy of being

punished – murdering, stealing, etc. The civil alternatives to these actions – respecting life and property, etc. – receive little legal attention.

This asymmetry makes sense, given the strong behavioral norms in society. Most Americans, for example, go their entire lives without murdering and the majority of us only steal in moderation. It is thus is socially informative to single out the few deviants who choose not to join the masses, rather than those who have mostly pro-social inclinations. This same focus on the negative can also be found in the less formal incentive systems that reinforce the status quo. The sociological literature on deviance has shown us, for instance, that social groups tend to create negative labels that can contaminate the identities of those who break the often implicit rules of good conduct in the group. In contrast, they spend little time crafting positive labels that will lift up the people go with the flow (Becker, 1963; Hughes, 1945; Kitsuse, 1962).

But what about actions that are also needed by society but for which conformity has not been established? Consider again the example of speeding. It was noted earlier that speeding is targeted for punishment by the American legal system, whereas lawful driving is not. However, the average American driver does break the speed limit quite a bit of the time. In this sense, it would be socially provocative to find someone who never drives above the speed limit, who comes to a full stop at all marked intersections and who obeys all other traffic signs. Statistically speaking, this individual is rare and, rhetorically speaking, this individual is worthy of our attention. It thus might make sense for the legal system to focus attention on such exemplary drivers, rather than focusing their attention on individuals who get caught violating the commonly violated standards of good driving. Instead of punishing bad driving with traffic citations and expensive fines, police officers could instead pull over good drivers and bestow upon them such rewards as tax relief, shiny medals or maybe tasty cookies.

But what would be the societal consequences of rewarding a behavior like good driving, a behavior that is expected of all of us even if it is rarely practiced fully by any of us? The research we reviewed on conversational norms suggests that by targeting the unusually good driver, law enforcement agencies would draw attention to the fact that people rarely obey the driving codes fully. Even tacit focus on this fact by a group of law enforcement officers armed with cookies could lower the social inhibitions against speeding. Our analysis thus points to a societal benefit of social hypocrisy. At times, a society's control agents will want to promote standards of "good behavior" that few or none of us ever fully live up to and they will do this by punishing the norm. Although this might put them in the odd position of trying to create the appearance of a transgression in an otherwise "normal" activity, there may be some social good in this, if it promotes a motivating appearance.[2]

Consider, for instance, parents who punish their children for cursing and religious organizations that take the hard line on sinning. Despite the fact that cursing and sinning are fairly normal behaviors for most of us (including many parents and religious leaders), one could argue that by criticizing people who don't live up to these standards, these agents are doing their best to promote the social good. Perhaps in many cases such criticisms do not shape our perceptions of what people actually are doing, but they still might shape perceptions around

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[2] This proposed benefit of hypocrisy was pointed out by President George W. Bush, who reflected on drug use in a taped interview by saying: "I wouldn't answer the marijuana questions. You know why? Because I don't want some little kid doing what I tried … Baby boomers have got to grow up and say, yeah, I may have done drugs, but instead of admitting it, say to kids, don't do them." At the risk of revealing of our own assumptions about the speaker, we wish to praise him for this very insightful comment.

some "theoretical norm" related to a behavior. When parent criticize their teenager children for being rude, for instance, this might not cause teen to infer that their parents thinks such rudeness is uncommon among their peers. But, it could communicate to the teens that in "the population of theoretical children" that might have been born to these parent, her acts of rudeness were provocative.

We think tacit messages regarding the presumed norms for different actions create a strong push towards more negatively framed incentives to promote moral conformity. Take, for instance, a common source of moral guidance for many individuals: the Old Testament. We find it interesting that eight of the Ten Commandments were framed negatively (pointing out the "shalt nots" that lead to an afterlife). This choice of frame suggests not only that immoral behavior is worthy of punishment, but also that it is not typical and thus not something that would be supported by the group. Although this normative assumption may not accurately describe the behavioral tendencies of all groups, it could suggest the behavioral norms that one should expect among God-fearing individuals.

Complementary Analyses. There are other reasons why punishment and negatively framed incentives should be the language of conformity. Although these other mechanisms are not central to a deviance regulation analysis, they are compatible with it. Consider for purposes of illustration the positively framed Commandment that urges people to "honor thy Father and Mother," and consider how it compared with the negatively framed Commandment mandating that "thou shalt not commit adultery." Putting aside the normative assumptions elicited by these two messages (i.e., that most people do not honor their parents but do refrain from adultery), consider how the latter Commandment invokes a more clear standard for evaluating command compliance: It is easier to recognize when you have violated the commandment against adultery

than when you have fulfilled the commandment to honor parents. Imagine a daughter trying to comply with the positively framed Commandment. Honoring her parents could entail listening carefully to them and eating her vegetables when she is child, and building a career and a family when she is an adult but it might include many other things. Is it dishonoring her parents to experiment with drugs or is that casting too wide a net? Knowing how and when one has fulfilled this Commandment can be problematic. Thus, the challenge of positively framed messages is that there often invokes no obvious standard for evaluating compliance.

In contrast, it is fairly easy to determine if a person has violated a code when it is framed negatively. Although this daughter might proceed through her entire life uncertain of whether she honored her parents sufficiently, she should be fairly certain of her record on adultery. Negative incentive systems can thus empower the agents of influence to monitor and control the actions of others, just as they provide precise regulatory guides to the actors themselves that they can use to evaluate the goodness or badness of their own actions. By this measure, positive incentives are lacking. Whereas a well-written and negatively framed legal code can make it clear to all citizens what actions merit punishment, a legal scholar could struggle in vein trying to codify the behaviors that exemplify the civic norms of good conduct expected of all citizens.

Not only is it easier to define and monitor negative actions than their positive counterparts, negative actions also have stronger consequences for the individual. Across a wide range of psychological literatures, we see that people tend to be more strongly motivated to avoid punishments than to achieve rewards. For instance, people give more weight to negative than to positive information about the self and others (Anderson, 1974; Fiske, 1980; Wyer, 1974; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989), are affected more by social rejection than acceptance (e.g., Fenigstein, 1979; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), react more strongly to losses than to

gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), and are motivated more by negative than positive outcomes (Taylor, 1991; Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). Together, these findings suggest that a social institution that seeks to punish individuals who violate the codes of good conduct will exert more influence on ones seek to reward individuals who honor these codes (see Blanton et al., 2001).

Once set in place, systems of punishment also are more likely than systems of rewards to exert broad influences that will generalize beyond the specific behavior being targeted. In a revealing set of studies, Fazio, Eiser and Shook (2004) found that participants in a simulated game setting took more risks when determining which choices might lead to positive as opposed to negative outcomes. That is, fear of punishment seemed to cause participants to avoid events that had even a small probability of being punished, whereas hope for reward encouraged them to take risks to test their luck. They thus developed relatively accurate knowledge of the contingencies leading to rewards and overly liberal beliefs about the contingencies leading to punishment.

Their findings suggest that a more punitive society will not only control the actions it actually will punish, but also the actions that are loosely linked; actions that people suspect *might* be marked for punishment. Thus, a society that institutes an elaborate system of punishments might see conformity not only on the targeted behaviors but also on some "bonus" actions that are similar in form and function. In contrast, a society that institutes a complex system of rewards should see only an increase in those specific behaviors that have been targeted for reward. As an example, consider how tax incentive might get individuals to engage in the specific set of behaviors that are promoted (e.g., buying a house, investing in weather proofing)

but laws that are designed to prevent tax fraud might cause individuals to steer clear of a wide range of actions that suggest just the possibility of risk.

Conformity Summary. When conformity is the goal, we see it as in the interest of regulatory agents to introduce systems of punishment that will target the actors who deviate from the desired norm, rather than systems that reward actors who personify or exemplify a desired standard. If most actors already conform to these codes of conduct, a system of negatively framed incentives will have the advantage of focusing attention on the more provocative actors in society, people who command social attention and inference due to their counter-normative choices. It will be the goal of regulatory bodies to spoil the identity of these actors, so that others do not make similar choices. If conformity is not yet established, then a punishing system at least implies that bad actions should be (and one day might be) socially provocative. And, once a system of punishments is in place, it should run more efficiently than a system that focuses on rewards. Regulatory agents that control people through their use of punishments will institute standards that are easy to monitor, that trigger strong avoidance motivations, and they will introduce codes of conduct that are likely to generalize beyond the specific actions that will generate punishment.

The Language of Difference: Go Positive

Although social sanctions can increase conformity, it is not always in the interest of a group to bring its members in line. There are a number of classic studies in social psychology documenting the negative consequences of too much group conformity (e.g., Janis, 1972). In fact, psychologists often suggest that the domination of human beings over organisms that possess superior skills at hunting, fighting, and burrowing can be attributed, in part, to the complex specialization that occurs within the groups we form (e.g., Baumeister, 2005). In other

words, diversity is as much a defining feature of groups as conformity and, in many ways, it is their virtue. Perhaps the strongest example of this can found in modern nation states. All nations need skilled engineers, medical doctors, politicians, and janitors in order to thrive. A nation comprised entirely of janitors would run into problems, however, as would a nation of engineers, medical doctors or politicians.

We think the importance of diversity in a group's was largely overlooked in the early literature on group process, which often portrayed groups as conformity-generating entities that stamped out dissent. Classic groups research, for instance, demonstrated that the pressure to conform to group norms is often so strong that members seek to punish and reject deviants who step out of line (e.g., Asch, 1956; Festinger, Gerard, Hymovitch, Kelley, & Raven, 1952; Festinger & Thibaut, 1951; Hensley & Duval, 1976; Schachter, 1951). Little formal attention was given to the ways members might reinforce one another or the steps groups might adopt in order to promote behavioral diversity. Closer inspection reveals, however, that the pressure to conform documented in these studies occurred because the groups being observed were constructed to pursue simple and shared goals, to confront clear and shared threats, or try to maintain straightforward beliefs, perceptions, or identities. In these contexts, there is value in uniformity of opinion and action.

But more dynamic tendencies do arise as a result of group process and when they do, groups must find ways of promoting diversity. Because diversity, by definition, is not shared, it will be more informative for society to promote and reward the individuals who deviate in desired ways than to punish individuals who do not. Under what circumstances will such a dynamic occur? One was just discussed: Societies should promote actions using social rewards when a desired action is needed of some, but not all of its members. Similarly, a rewards system

should be of value when one "positive outlier" will be more beneficial to a society than many "good examples." An illustrative behavior is leadership. It is to a group's benefit to encourage the majority of its members to follow the leader (through punishment), but it also needs to encourage an extremely qualified individual to step forward and lead (through reward).

Positive incentives will also be put in place when it would not be possible or fair to expect conformity on a given dimension. Consider musical or athletic abilities. Although it might be nice to live in a world in which all people can run 100 meters in under 13 seconds and play Beethoven's concertos, it is not reasonable for a society to mandate such actions. Many people lack the necessary abilities to accomplish these feats, and so a society that pursues these goals will be quite busy doling out the punishments. We also suggest that social sanctions should be avoided when punishments can bring with them the potential for reactance (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Actors often cooperate in the face of extreme threats when these come from respected parents, the criminal justice system, or a vengeful god, but our openness to being controlled has its limits. With greater threats of punishment come greater chances that actors will strike out against the messenger.

Finally, it is worth noting that positive incentive systems can be efficient in ways that negative systems cannot. Although we suggested earlier that it is easier to monitor and control rule violations than to monitor and reward rule adherence, there are situations in which a system of rewards will be easier to maintain than a system of punishments. This will occur when a given action is afforded a low priority by society. When incentive systems are set up to reward positive deviations, they can be more loosely regimented in comparison to systems that are set up to punish negative deviations. Many positive actions might go unnoticed if one is not vigilant, but this will not necessarily undo a system of rewards. In fact, intermittent reinforcement can

often promote more powerful motivations among the actors who seek rewards (Ferster & Skinner, 1957). However, because good deviations are not needed of all individuals in all instances, societies can relax their monitoring of these pursuits. They need not reward every instance of every desired behavior. They simply need to provide clear and predictable steps that individuals can pursue to attain rewards, and these steps must give individuals a realistic hope that some of their goods acts will be noticed and rewarded, some of the time.

The above analysis suggests that rewards are the best tool for promoting diversity, but they do not speak to the ability of rewards to motivate diverse pursuits. Lost at times in the discussions about the power of negative information over positive, we think, is the fact that rewards can overpower punishments in some specific instances. We note, for instance, that positive reinforcement has been found to be more effective than punishment when individuals are learning new or complex tasks. There also are times when positive identities do grab attention. For instance, in the domain of abilities and competencies, where variability is of value to the social group, there is a robust positivity bias in social perception (Skowronksi & Carlston, 1989). That is, observers typically view few instances of high ability as more diagnostic of a person's true underlying talents than multiple instances of inability (Martijn, Spears, Van der Plight, & Jakobs, 1992; Skowronksi & Carlston, 1987). This is not the case within the moral domain, as reviewed above. Thus, although the identity a person builds from a lifetime of moral living (e.g., being faithful to a spouse) might be undone by a single instance of immoral behavior (e.g., adultery), a single noteworthy accomplishment (e.g. winning an Olympic gold medal) can forever alter the identity of an actor who thereafter fails to gain similar distinction.

Summary

Our analysis suggests two societal control mechanisms. One encourages conformity by punishing "bad deviations" and the other encourages diversity by encouraging "good deviations." The former will be engaged when an action is needed of all (or at least a majority) of citizens in order for the society to function (e.g., respecting other's safety, welfare, and property), when it is not practical or possible or when it is linked to core values or world-views that define the group (e.g., accepted moral and ethical standards). The latter will be engaged when actions are desired by the group, but are "optional" for any given member. This system need not affect every individual in the same way and, in fact, it will work best if people respond differently based on their interests, abilities and socialized proclivities.

Tracing Social Control in Self-Regulation

Although our portrait of societal controls to this point has focused on the influence exerted by an external agent, it is important to note that these systems also become internalized and are thus become self-sustaining. Traces of this system can be found in the ways that societal contingencies are represented in the self-regulatory structure of individuals. Specifically, people engage in self-regulation to avoid negative distinctions that would bring unwanted results and they self-regulate to achieve positive distinctions that bring about desired outcomes. These two distinct regulatory systems can be found in Higgins' (1989) self-discrepancy model and his later related model of self-regulation (Foerster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998).

According to Higgins, people possess *ought self-guides* that are used to evaluate actions in relation to social obligations, and *ideal self-guides* that are used to evaluate actions in relation to standards of excellence. We have proposed that the "oughts" and "ideals" in Higgins' work reveal how individuals have internalized the negative incentives that encourage conformity and

the positive incentives that encourage deviation, respectively (Blanton & Christie, 2003).

Indirect support for this proposal can be found in research by Higgins and colleagues showing

that ought self-guides produce stronger emotional reactions in response to failure than success,

and consequently initiate avoidance motivation, whereas ideal self-guides produce stronger

emotional reactions in response to success than failure, and thus initiate approach motivation.

Both patterns are consistent with the proposed asymmetry between normative and counter-

normative behavior at the heart of DRT.

More direct evidence comes from own lab (Hall, Blanton, Prentice & Felps, 2008), where

we have studied the ways that ideal and ought self-guides are linked to different distinctiveness

motives and inferences. We've found, for instance, that people tend to assume that groups that

are described as "moral" or "principled" are comprised of members that are more similar to one

another than groups that are described as "able" or "accomplished." More telling, however, is

our research showing a link between different self-guides and different distinctiveness motives.

In one study, for instance, we had participants write about the ideals that motivate them (e.g.,

"the things I want to achieve in my life"), the codes of conduct they try to honor (e.g., "the moral

codes that guide my actions"), or perform a filler task as an experimental control. We then

measured their uniqueness striving using a scale by Snyder and Fromkin (1977). As predicted,

participants who wrote about their ideals expressed more of a desire for uniqueness and

participants who wrote about their oughts expressed less of a desire for uniqueness compared to

the participants in the control group, for whom neither ideal or ought self-guides had been

activated.

We believe this finding shows how societal standards can become "hard wired" in the

individual. This interpretation was reinforced by the results of another study in which we

activated participants' self-guides outside of conscious awareness. In this study, we primed

participants with the traits they had listed in an earlier phase of the experiment while completing

a Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001).[3] We found that compared to control

participants who were primed with nonsense words, ought priming led to an increase in false

consensus for attitudinal preferences and ideal priming led to a countervailing decrease. This

study suggests that when personal obligations come to mind, people are motivated to believe that

they are in sync with others. When ideals come to mind, people they are motivated to believe

that they stand out.

In perhaps the most dramatic demonstration to date, we had participants write essays

about their ought or ideal self-guides, and then sent them to a different room to work on another

questionnaire. In the second room, they were seated at cubicles where they could choose

between a set of relatively "normal" (black) pens or a set of "counter-normative" (red or green)

pens. Consistent with our predictions, the majority of the participants who had just completed an

essay about their morals completed the questionnaire using a black pen ($M = 88\%$). In contrast,

a smaller majority completed the questionnaire using the black pen if they had just completed an

essay about their ideals ($M = 62\%$). Because the questionnaire they completed also included

Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) measure of uniqueness striving, we were able to test if this effect

revealed a difference in behavioral motivations. It seems it did. A Sobel test revealed that the

primes influenced pen choice through their tendency to alter distinctiveness striving.

The Good Society

We believe that the work we've described above bears direct relevance to two societal

control mechanisms (reward and punishment) and shows their link to two social motivations

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[3] Because the two word lists often had overlapping words, the priming procedure we used also included repetition of the word "ideal" or "ought," presented in every other condition. We hoped that by priming both the category label along with the traits in the category, we could activate just one motivational state, not both.

(conformity and uniqueness). Perhaps more interestingly, this research may offer perspectives on the nature of a good society. Here we consider the incentive systems that promote stable and adaptive organizational structures and the dilemmas that complex organizations must seek to resolve.

Reference Status

In order for the formal and informal social agents in a society to "incentivize" behavior effectively, they must gain reference status in the eyes of the individuals they seek to influence. That is, in a healthy society, organizations not only link social contingencies to different actions, they also do so in such a way that the targeted individuals will later regulate their own behavior based on their internalization of these norms (what Higgins terms "self-guides"). Up to this point, our discussion has assumed that social institutions have reference status but they can vary considerably in their ability to exert social influence. Reference status will be needed by a social institution, regardless of whether it is designed to punish bad behaviors or reward good behaviors. The specific type of reference status needed should vary, however, depending on whether an incentive system is based on punishment or reward.

Because the agents that institute punishments are designed to promote behavioral conformity, it is important that these entities be respected by all (or nearly all) of the individuals they target. Following this logic, the formal and informal social institutions that promote conformity to a set of moral or legal codes, norms of civic behavior, or some shared sense of social obligation to others must gain the respect of the vast majority of the individuals they seek to influence. In fact, to maximize their effectiveness, these institutions should aim to achieve reference status in the eyes of all targeted individuals so that each member of the collective will work to reinforce institutionalized norms. When group members observe "social deviants" who

break from societal norms of good conduct, for instance, they can ostracize, isolate, and reject these actors to help bring them in line with societal expectations.

For agents that institute social rewards, the reference demands are not nearly as stringent. Because reward systems are designed to promote individual-level variability, it is not necessary for rewarding agents to introduce incentive systems that will motivate all of the members they target. Instead, it is important that they influence a sufficient number of individuals that the societal needs on these dimensions are met. Consider for purposes of illustration a society that needs a subgroup of individuals to work as electrical engineers and another subset to work as plumbers. This society should set up rewards that will appeal to the small groups of individuals who will likely seek (and possibly compete for) each of these professions, but it need not entice all individuals.

As with negative incentive systems, the power of positive incentive systems can be magnified by collective participation. Thus, even if most people do not seek out careers in engineering or plumbing, all individuals in a societal collective can help "pile on" the praise of those rare individuals who do seek out these professions. To this end, societies might also enlist the media to promote positive images of the "heroic engineer" and the "rugged plumber." This, no doubt, would help ensure that the society can draw from a stable reserve of capable engineers and plumbers. There would be a downside to such heavy-handed praise, however. If the masses worked to reinforce positive reward systems, they could inadvertently draw attention away from other valued pursuits. Too much appreciation of engineering and plumbing, for instance, could produce a vacuum in a society. It could pull talented individuals away from careers in education or law enforcement and other valued pursuits, drawing them all towards engineering and plumbing pursuits.

We thus think that collective reinforcement of idealized pursuits typically will occur only for activities that have inherent constraints that prevent mass participation. These constraints are the large differences in talent, aptitude and self-control that stand as obstacles in the way of certain accomplishments. To illustrate, consider the almost religious devotion that often is associated with extreme successes in the performing arts. Despite the hysteria that at times follows the most accomplished people in these professions, a wide range of constraints ensure that only a minority of people will feel that they too can become similarity accomplished. They thus are content to focus their energies on other idealized pursuits.

We should note, however, that there may be rare historical instances in which praise will reach lofty heights and will thus siphon away talent from other pursuits. We expect that this will occur when historical events necessitate widespread (if still minority) participation in a given pursuit. Here we are thinking of the high collective value that is placed on military service during times of war. The tremendous praise bestowed on young adults who enlist in the armed services may entice some individuals away from other valued pursuits, yet this sacrifice could be viewed acceptable when tangible threats create a pressing need for mass participation in the military. Yet in peacetime, it seems unlikely that extreme praise would be given to this pursuit. Such broad interest within a society could reduce its diversity. When a pursuit is attainable to most but needed of only a few, a society will do well to appeal only to the idiosyncratic interests of each individual.

Balancing Rewards and Punishments

A healthy society must do more than simply gain reference status. It must also make wise choices between its use of the carrot and the stick. At the most basic level, we suggest that punishments should be reserved for those actions that are needed of everyone in order for a

society to prosper and function. Because negative incentives reduce intra-group variability, they can undermine the group's ability to take on more complicated, problem-solving forms. Complexity is not simply generated by the absence of negatives, however. A healthy society must also have a rich system of rewards, because reward systems will drive members to adopt a range of different roles and specialized pursuits. As noted before, these positive incentive systems often will target specific activities that are needed at the level of the aggregate, but that are optional for each individual. With rewards, societies thus gain "value added" qualities that would not be generated if they were to evolve only in response to the threats that challenge all members. Thus from rewards systems come more diverse, thoughtful, and unpredictable societies.

Flexibility and Change

Inherent in our analysis is an assumption that societies that are flexible in their application of positive and negative incentive systems will be the most effective. During times of societal upheaval or when salient external threats emerge, group cohesion becomes more important. During these times, social institutions should adopt a more punitive tone. As we noted earlier, the psychological dynamic that results was of key interest in many of the classic social psychological studies on group processes. Researchers in the 1950s and 1960s considered, for instance, how the desire for "group locomotion" or the collective desire for "uniformity of opinions" caused groups to become more critical of "opinion deviants" and thus to reject those who did not further the shared needs of the group. When societies feel that they are under siege, we expect such dynamics to flower.

Wars, epidemics, natural disasters, and loss of APA accreditation all represent tangible threats to that can narrow organizational focus around a smaller set of shared goals; goals that all

members of a group must help to advance. In such trying times, organizations will put greater

emphasis on conformity, and they will do so by punishing those individuals who step out of line.

In this analysis, we cannot help but be reminded of recent changes in the regulatory focus of

American society following the September 11th terrorist attacks. We point, for instance, to the

United States Patriot Act, an act of Congress signed into law, ostensibly to protect Americans

from future attacks. Despite its upbeat title, this doctrine expanded the authority of U.S. law

enforcement agents to seek out and punish bad actors. In this sense, if the U.S. government truly

was interested in promoting "patriotism," then it was interested in doing so by punishing its

negation. Similar historical examples are easy to find. We might just as easily point to the

internment of Japanese Americans during World War II or to the Alien and Sedition Acts that

suspended Habeas Corpus during the American Civil War. When the (real or perceived) threats

to a group are high, greater attention to social deviants also will be high – as will be the desire to

punish difference. However regrettable these changes might seem when viewed from a less

urgent vantage point, they can be understood by considering the problems of promoting

uniformity of action through praise.

For societies to thrive, however, they not only need to know when to ramp up the

punishments, they also must know when to stand down and to again cultivate carrots. As threats

subside and once necessary behaviors are no longer needed, a healthy society will have the

flexibility to adopt a new regulatory focus. Societies oftentimes fail at this transition, however.

In the popular press book, *Collapse*, Jared Diamond (2005) suggests that societies decline and

crumble when ritualistic behaviors become so deeply integrated into the group's definition of

self and sense of morality that they are unable to adapt to new crises. His analysis points to some

of the dangers of a highly moralistic society. With an increasingly moralistic view of the world

comes greater interest in conformity, and, therefore, a greater tendency to sanction bad actors. There is undeniably value in instilling and maintaining a set of group morals, yet ethical systems can be counter-productive when they dampen variability and individual tendencies to strive for the distinctions that ultimately serve the group. Put another way: Whereas an angry God or an authoritarian leader might inspire a nation to stand up in solidarity against a threat to its border, these same agents might dampen the individual-level creativity that will be needed after the war is over, if the nation later is going to compete outside its borders in the open market.

Our analysis points to a tension that may exist in all complex social organizations. This is the tension between punishment and reward, between order and complexity, and between stability and innovation. In previous work, we have argued that world cultures differ considerably in how they resolve these tensions (Blanton & Christie, 2003). We've suggested, for instance, that broad differences in the ways Eastern and Western cultures traditionally are structured cut across these fault lines. Cultural differences that in the past have been attributed to differences in "self-construal" (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1999) may actually reflect differences in how societal incentive structures shape action and structure self-regulation. In Western cultures, the strong emphasis on ideals produces greater variability in action but also leads to less unity and group cohesion. In Eastern cultures, the strong emphasis on oughts results in less individual variability and diminished organizational complexity but also promotes more stable and interconnected arrangements. Neither solution is necessarily preferable, as any scholar might point to prospering cultures in either the East or the West. Moreover, societies in both hemispheres face the same challenge – of not becoming too singularly focused on either carrots or sticks. Change and adaptation will be needed for any society, if it will respond effectively to the full range of challenges it ultimately will face.

A Drift Towards Moralism?

Deviance regulation theory predicts that social organizations will slide towards negative incentive systems and become increasingly moralistic and punitive over time. We are thinking here of the Orwellian shifts that corrupt the ideals of a group and lead group members to more authoritarian and oppressive arrangements. To explain why such a dynamic might occur, first consider why an action would become idealized. DRT predicts that a focus on ideals typically will occur when a given action is relatively rare but also desired by the group. Under these circumstances, it is not meaningful to promote the desired behavior through punishments. Instead, entities should hold up the desired action as an ideal that others should follow. This strategy can be effective in the short-run, but it becomes unstable over time: If agents of influence are successful at promoting the rare but desired action, then the rare but desired action becomes more common. As a result, it becomes less able to be perceived as desirable. If influence agents want to exert continued influence after they've triggered a normative shift, they must stop associating the desired action with a positive image and begin associating the undesired action with a negative image. Put another way, if an idealistic group is able to exert majority influence, then the time will come when it will need to trade in its ideals for a set of principles.

Given that moralistic groups will be less complex and adaptive over time, a healthy society must have built-in constraints that can prevent this turn. We've mentioned one corrective force already. When a group has a diversity of needs, it will have reason to a "light touch" when it promotes any given ideal. By so doing, it will avoid invoking such strong incentives that virtually all people will try to fulfill specialized needs. Another corrective force may actually stem from the limited ability of social agents to gain reference status. Whereas in the long run, it

is clearly in the interest of an agent of influence to gain reference status, there may be an adaptive advantage for societies that are limited in their ability to do so – if they are trying to speak in a negative tone.

Earlier we noted some qualifications in the area of persuasive communication. We mentioned, for example, that targets of influence often resist negatively framed communications when they do not view the communicator as a moral authority. We see this hesitation on the part of individuals as adaptive for a society, because it can prevent a societal slide towards more authoritarian arrangements. To illustrate its value, it is useful to consider a pervasive social force that seeks to generate conformity in American society, but that is limited in its ability to move in a punitive direction. This is the consumer marketing industry.

The goal of consumer marketers is to get people to buy their products. When marketers are good at their jobs, the majority of their "targeted demographic" will buy their goods. Based on a DRT analysis, one might conclude that highly successful marketing efforts should begin to adopt a more negative tone over time. Consider, for instance, a marketing agency so successful at promoting a new "cool" image of people who drive Honda Accords that virtually every American begins to drive this car. On one level, DRT might suggest that as people who do not drive Honda Accords become the informative minority, and so we should expect for the agency to begin drawing attention to the "losers" who are still driving other cars. Such shifts are not predicted, however. Even if a marketing agency managed to get the majority of Americans to purchase a specific consumer product, it is not likely that it would then begin to emphasize the negative. Americans simply do not give consumer marketers the authority to criticize people for the choices they make. It is American consumers' resistance to negatively framed influence attempts that has forced marketers to pursue strategies that seem to be at odds with DRT: They

want to promote conformity in the purchasing habits of Americans, but they do so primarily through positively framed appeals.

How do they continue to exert influence with this strategy? The answer in many cases is that they do not. We think fads in marketing reflect the challenges facing consume marketers. It simply is not possible to link a positive image with common pursuits and so a highly successful marketing campaign will become a victim of its own success. American landfills are filled with the once fashionable items that lost their appeal when they became common. Pet rocks, lava lamps, and Rubik's cubes all seized public attention, but they then faded from view once they became too common to sustain a desirable image. That said, not all products fade from attention and in these instances we find a lesson for how to avoid authoritarian shifts and at the same time promote complexity in a society.

How do marketers manage to stay positive and also maintain influence? The answer, in a word, is innovation. Although it will be hard to make Honda Accord drivers seem "cool" if almost every American drives this car, it is possible to boost the image of the small minority of individuals who have the newest model. In a similar fashion, when social institutions are unable to adopt a more punitive voice because they are not able to do so and retain their reference status, ten they can continue to exert influence if they promote change in the system they are trying to promote. Whether the "product" that an institution is trying to promote is a consumer good, a political candidate, or a healthy lifestyle, institutions that continually update their "merchandise" can continue to exert influence in a positive voice. This possibility again shows how carrots promote variability and change in a group. If a group relies on rewards to motivate individuals, it must update and change continually, so that the rewards provided continue to be associated with actions that can hold value.

Closing Thoughts

We hope that this chapter has some light on the regulation of good and evil within societies. Our analysis underscores the need for societies to maintain a delicate balance between two methods of behavior regulation; a system of carrots – or rewards – and a system of sticks – or punishments. For a society to prosper, the majority of its members must adhere to a basic moral code of conduct, and the most effective way to enforce such a code is through a system of negative incentives that punishes actors who would deviate from the expected norm. It also needs a rich system of rewards that will help promote diversity in thought and action, so that the group can become something more than a mere collection of individuals. An effective society also will be calibrated to historical events, clamping down under times of threat and easing up during times of plenty. Clearly the dynamics that lead to a stable and prospering society go beyond what we can consider in this chapter, yet much of this complexity arises from a simple psychological fact: The unusual is more interesting than the norm.

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