



Expecting

RECIPROCITY, COLLECTIVE ACTION, AND SOCIAL NORMS

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- Sweden’s “H-Day”: the Högertrafikomläggningen; 360,000 traffic signs were prepared over five years at a cost of \$300m today.
- The H-Day illuminates the role social expectations play in human action, and how long it takes to modify social expectations.
- The goal of this paper is to focus on those social expectations. It starts with an introduction to game theory, then turns to society-wide games, connects these scaled-up games to the emergence of responsibility, and shows how this impedes norm change. Then I focus on the lack of maternal and parental leave in the United States.

INTERDEPENDENT DECISION THEORY

- Individuals’ choices are often *interdependent*.
- Modeling the driving case game theoretically:

	Blake		
		<i>Left side</i>	<i>Right side</i>
Amani	<i>Left side</i>	Survive \ Survive	Crash \ Crash
	<i>Right side</i>	Crash \ Crash	Survive \ Survive

- A game of Rock, Paper, Scissors:

	Dani			
		<i>Rock</i>	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Scissors</i>
Cristian	<i>Rock</i>	0 \ 0	-1 \ 1	1 \ -1
	<i>Paper</i>	1 \ -1	0 \ 0	-1 \ 1
	<i>Scissors</i>	-1 \ 1	1 \ -1	0 \ 0

- The Prisoner’s Dilemma is a non-zero sum game:

	Harper		
		<i>Clean</i>	<i>Don’t clean</i>
Gerry	<i>Clean</i>	5 \ 5	0 \ 8
	<i>Don’t clean</i>	8 \ 0	3 \ 3

- Game theory helps to see how expectations and incentive structures can shape human action.

SCALED UP GAMES AND SOCIAL NORMS

- In 1984, Robert Axelrod published the results of his computer tournament in *The Evolution of Cooperation*.
- The winning strategy, Tit-for-Tat, was nice, retaliatory, forgiving, and clear.
- Hume says that the reciprocity we see in Axelrod's Tit-for-Tat is the source of social norms, which are then scaled up in large societies.
- Lessig says that the costs of enforcing compliance can be minimized by instilling community members with something like an affective shock device.
- Bicchieri similarly says that social norms do this work.
- Notice the similarity between what Lessig describes and Foucault's discussion of the Benthamite panopticon. But for Hume, Lessig, and Bicchieri, the function of social norms is often a positive one.

THE BIRTH OF RESPONSIBILITY

- We might speak of "second-order norms": norms about the way that those "first-order" social norms are to be promulgated and enforced.
- In his *Birth of Ethics*, Philip Pettit both develops accounts for the emergence of moral responsibility that look like this.
- We might think of moral responsibility as a sort of grammar.
- Religious communities historically have played a significant role in the development and maintenance of this grammar. See Norenzayan & Shariff's "The Origin and Evolution of Religious Prosociality" and Norenzayan's *Big Gods*.
- (This need not reduce religious belief & practice to a mere instrumental good; religion can be both true and socially beneficial.)

NORM CHANGE

- While social norms can help overcome collective action problems, they can also *themselves beget further collective action problems*.

- Consider patriarchal beauty standards: women who comply are rewarded, and those who do not are sanctioned. This makes norm change very difficult.
- Strategies for addressing this difficulty include encouraging conscientious objectors, encouraging independent thinking more generally, and identifying those who are best positioned to serve as norm change pioneers.
- Law can also help to modify social norms.

LEAVE: A LOT TO BE DESIRED

- The present movement to institute federal paid maternity leave is a great example of the need to modify—not merely eliminate—social expectations.
- American society cannot enjoy the benefits of having more women participate in the labor force and maintain social norms that demand mothers do the bulk of the family's caregiving.
- However, norms about motherhood, like all norms, tend to be self-reinforcing and even self-justifying.
- Men are constrained by social norms, too.
- Law can be useful here in modifying empirical expectations, such that modifications in normative expectations follow.

CONCLUSION

- Debates about abortion are much more common than discussion about maternity leave, which is a shame as only one in four women will ever get an abortion, while seven out of eight women will have a child in their lifetime. This has to do with our failure to pay attention to the importance of interdependent decision making.
- We need to take social cooperation more seriously so that each of us can proceed through life in ways that are both equitable and gratifying.

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