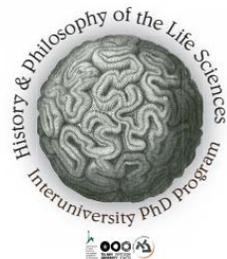


Norm psychology, normative stress & polarization

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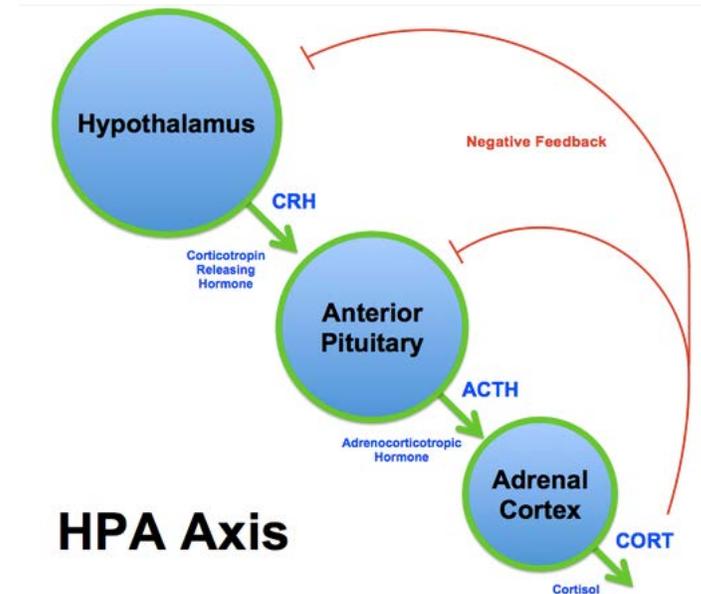
<http://www.ehudlamm.com>

ISH 2019 - Oslo

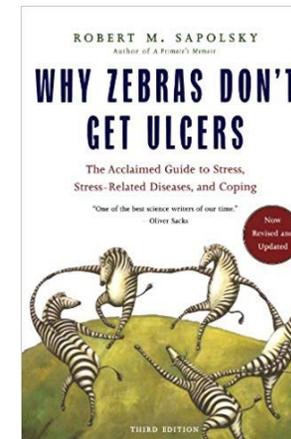


Stress

- A similar set of responses is deployed to broad array of stressors: injury, starvation, psychological stress. (“general adaptation syndrome”/ “stress-response”). It involves the midbrain and hormonal glands.
- Epinephrine (adrenalin) from the sympathetic nervous systems acts within seconds; glucocorticoids (cortisol) back this activity over the course of minutes or hours.
- Glucose; heart rate; blood pressure; breathing rate
- Other process: growth, immunity, sex drive etc. are depressed during stress response.
- Predictability makes stressors less stressful. Loss of predictability triggers stress-response.
- Control
- Acute and chronic stress

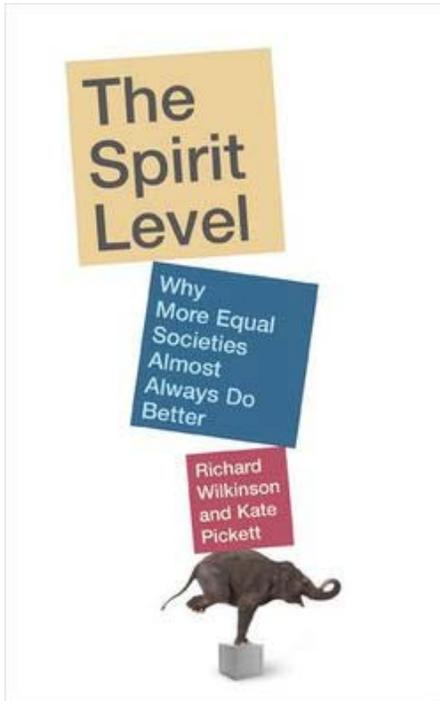


HPA Axis



Psychosocial Stress and animal hierarchies, SES stress

- Robert Sapolsky
- Nancy Adler
- Richard G. Wilkinson



"Strong associations between social status and health thus occur in numerous species, including humans, with the poor health of those in the “wrong” rank related to their surfeit of physical and psychosocial stressors. In considering these issues in nonhuman species, the variability, qualifiers, and nuances of the rank-health relationship are frequently emphasized, a testament to the social complexity of other species. **In contrast, in humans, there is a robust imperviousness of SES-health associations to differences in social and economic systems.** It is not plausible that this human/nonhuman contrast reflects human sociality being less complex than in, say, baboons. Instead, it is a testimony to the power of humans, after inventing material technology and the unequal distribution of its spoils, to corrosively subordinate its have-nots.

Sapolsky, R. M. 2005. “The Influence of Social Hierarchy on Primate Health.” *Science* 308 (5722): 648–52.

Norms as causes and remedies of stress

- Violations
 - Observing
 - Expecting violations
 - Committing violations
 - Cost of violation(see Gelfand)
- Predictability
 - Small/homogenous societies
 - Large/heterogeneous societies
- Someone with different norms is potentially a threat (out-group).
- Social outlets for frustration; interpretation of violations.

Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An “Experimental Ethnography”

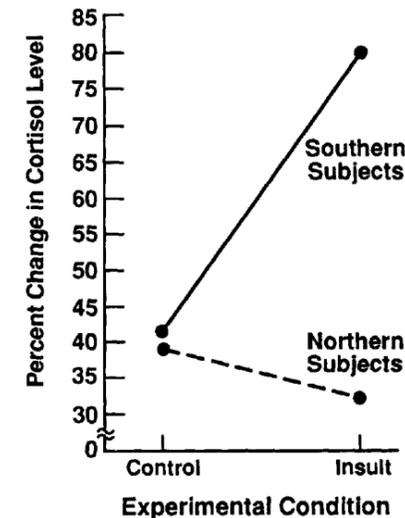
Dov Cohen
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Richard E. Nisbett
University of Michigan (Ann Arbor)

Brian F. Bowdle
Northwestern University

Norbert Schwarz
University of Michigan (Ann Arbor)

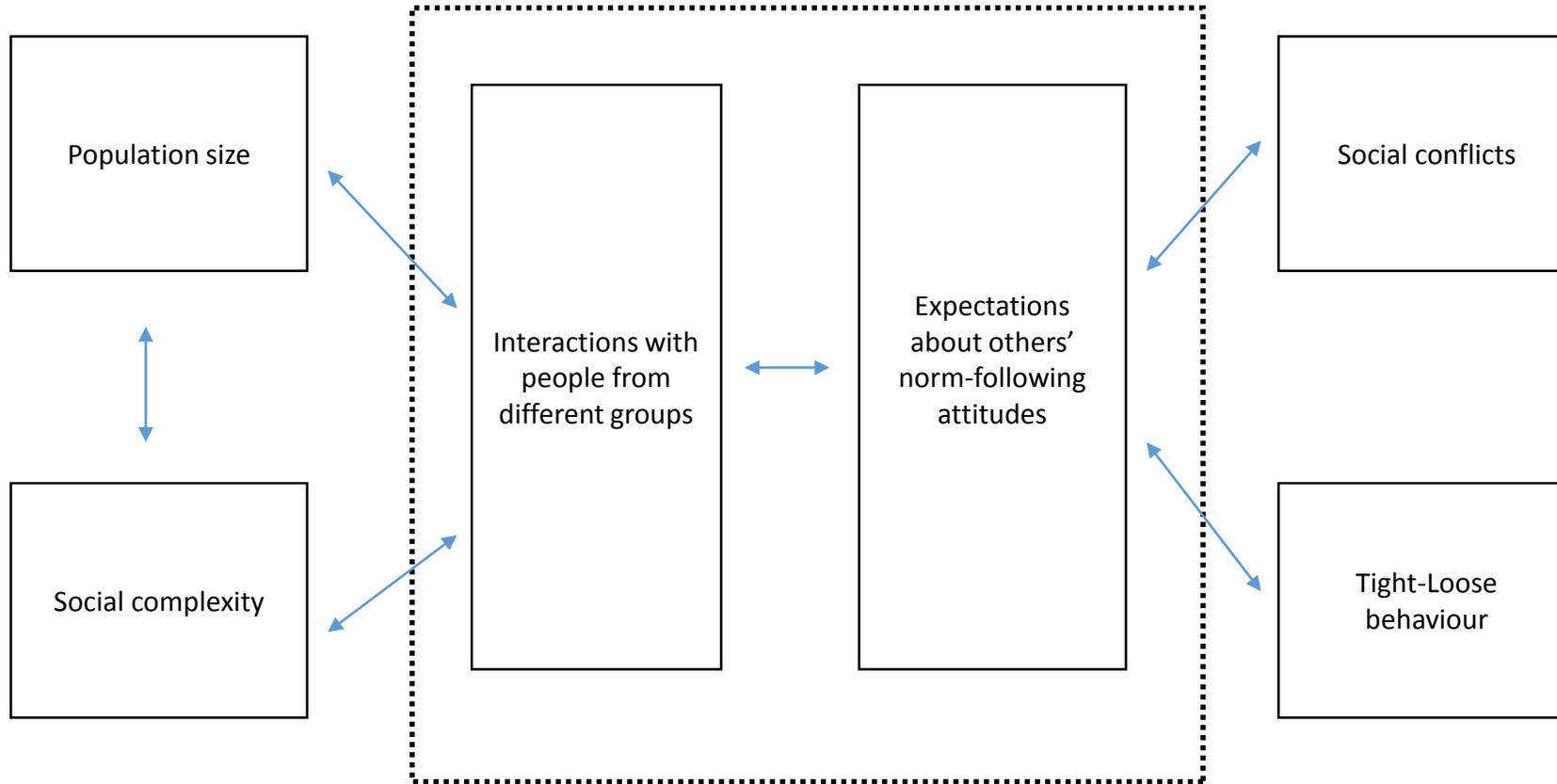
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1996.



Normative Negotiation



Norm Negotiation



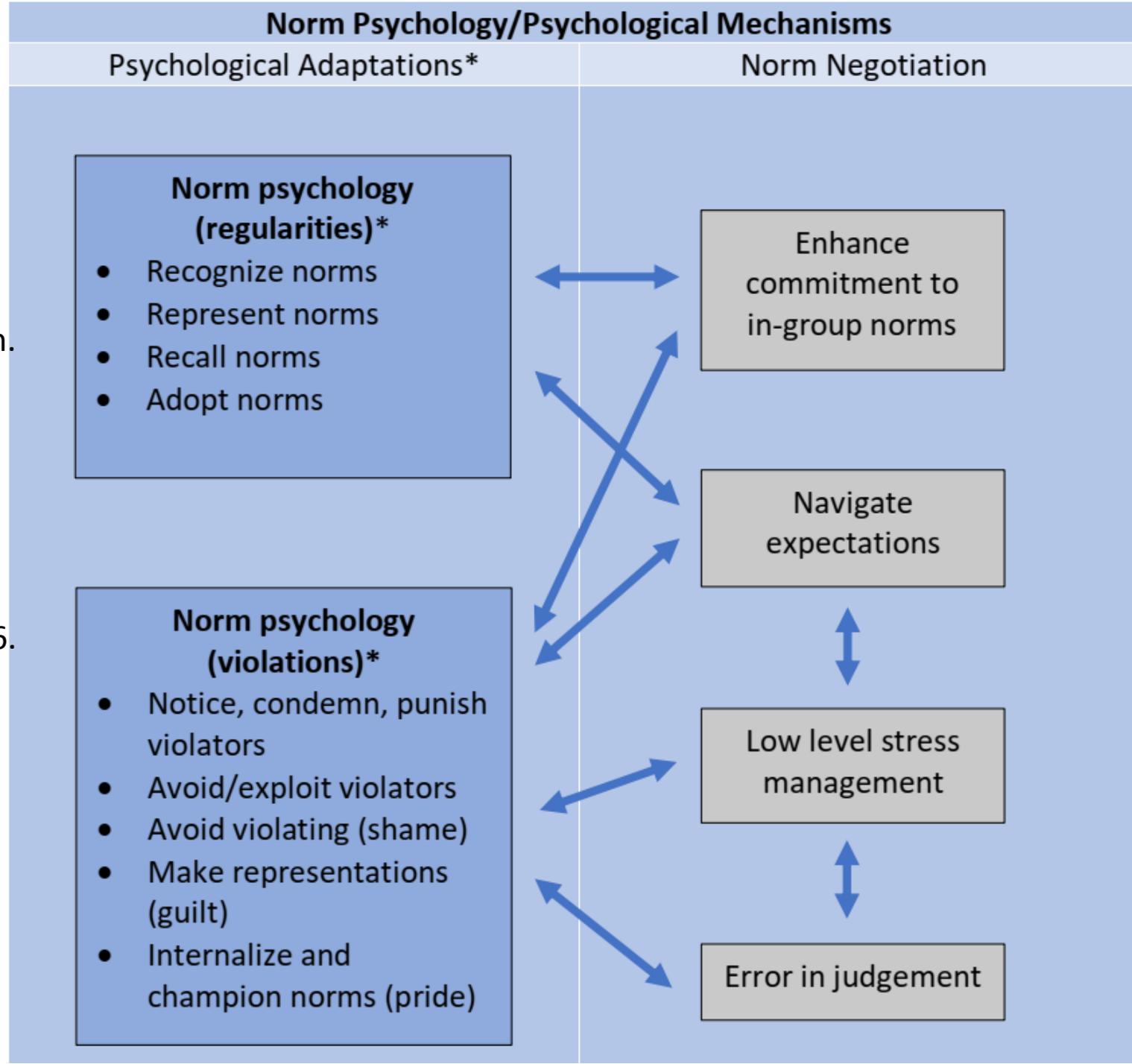
Normative Stress

- Normative stress occurs when people interact with others who have different social norms. It results from interactions with people who adhere to different norms than the agent, and from being aware that people one is interacting with may obey other norms than the agent.
- Repeated, ongoing, interactions, as routinely happen in multi-cultural societies, may lead to ongoing, or chronic, normative stress.
- (this is as opposed to acute stress related to norm violations)
- **Key point:** increasing intergroup relations need not lead to more tolerance.

Normative stress

- Less predictable empirical expectations
- Less predictable normative expectations (see Bicchieri)
- Regularly observing behavior one considers as violation of norms
 - ... but not considered as such by violators (hence no shame, guilt etc.)
- In-group, out-group uncertainty
- Group relations

Cf. Chudek and Henrich.
2011. "Culture–Gene
Coevolution, Norm-
Psychology and the
Emergence of Human
Prosociality."
*Trends in Cognitive
Sciences* 15 (5): 218–26.



Proposed model of polarization

- Polarization (for my purposes here):
 - Society split into two groups (“pro-life”/”pro-choice”); no gradient (bimodal); “us vs. them”.
 - Multi-dimensional differences reduced to one-dimensional (Democrats are “pro-choice”, favor public spending, and do not go to Church; Republicans are “pro-life”, fiscally conservative and go to Church regularly).
- Two ways in which polarization may reduce normative stress:
 1. Improving predictability (norms become better signals)
 - Non-overlapping behaviors
 - A single norm of an individual is predictive of their other norms
 2. Reducing social friction (norms lead to assortment) – improves predictability and control.

Proposed model of polarization

- Thus: Polarization increases normative stress when interacting with the second group but allows reducing the frequency of these interactions and increases norm predictability when they occur.
- Polarization may be a symptom of stressful normative negotiation.
- So does polarization improve health? Not if people routinely have to interact with people in the other group.

Can this process be mitigated?

- Yes... by reducing normative stress!
- Reducing norm friction (e.g., “good fences make good neighbors”)
- Meta-norms of tolerance (e.g., the harm principle)
- And so on
- These are not new ideas – nor do I want to endorse any of them – the point I am making is that they relate to normative stress, which I’ve argued plays a role in social polarization.

When did groups become normatively heterogeneous?

- Even in normatively homogenous societies there is norm stress.
- Cultural Group Selection (both migration and imitation of successful groups) involves normative negotiation and navigating conflicting norm systems.
- Egalitarianism in hunter-gatherers is not evidence of norm homogeneity.
- Evolution of social complexity involves “negotiating” multiple normative systems.
 - Social complexity creates normative stress.

The emergence of modern humans, some 150,000 years ago, is marked by growth in the size of social groups, leading eventually to tribal organization - involving multiple semi-independent “bands”, united into a larger tribe - and to competition with other tribal groups. What this meant was that one’s group now contained a new category of individuals - in-group strangers – who had to be distinguished from out-group competitors. For individuals, this meant that it was important to identify who was and

Tomasello 2019

relationships. The number of individuals in a foraging group varies with habitat quality, but in a dynamic way, as group size is shaped by ecological legacies of land use. The flexible size and composition of foraging groups link individuals across their “estates”: spatially explicit storehouses of ritual and relational wealth, inherited across generations through maintaining expansive networks of social interaction in a large and complex society. We propose that human cognition is tied to development of such expansive social relationships and co-evolved with dynamic socio-ecological interactions expressed in large-scale networks of relational wealth.

Bird et al. 2019

in which the social order is premised on sharing. Finally, Polly Wiessner describes egalitarian social structures as resulting from complex cultural institutions and ideologies that empower a coalition of the weaker to keep the stronger in check.

Townsend 2016

Take Home Message: norm psychology

- Assuming intra-society homogeneity of norms is a useful but limited research strategy.
- Normative stress and normative negotiation probably played a role in the evolution of norm psychology.
- Complex, modern societies, involve significant normative stress.



Take Home Message: norms and health

- Norms can cause stress and can mitigate stress.
- Normative negotiation leads to chronic stress.
- Thus, societies with high levels of normative negotiation may suffer health consequences of norm driven stress.
- Hypothesis: this may happen in (some) multi-cultural societies.



Thanks!

- **Kati Kish Bar-On**, Philosophy, Tel Aviv University
- **Adam Krashniak**, Philosophy, Tel Aviv University
- **Yair Ben Horin**, Philosophy, Tel Aviv University
- **Rotem Yahel**, Philosophy, Tel Aviv University

