

Understanding and Assessing the Process by which College Students Hold Each Other Accountable to Standards of Conduct

Chad Ahren

Removed from home environments where many aspects of their lives are regulated, traditional-age residential college students often have trouble identifying and enforcing standards of their own behavior. This paper explores the psychological foundation of how students in groups establish and maintain standards among their members. Considerations for connections with student development theory are also discussed.

Introduction

Young adults living on a college campus are often given considerable latitude and room to grow and develop. Typically free of the usual high school constraints, students choose to re-invent themselves or explore new avenues once they move into their first residence halls or apartments (Astin, 1998). They make new friendships, eat and sleep on their own schedules, and join organizations that may not have been available or permissible when they lived with parents and subject to high school teachers' and administrators' supervision.

College administrators do not have the same level of oversight as their high school counterparts (Friedl, 2000). Students generally come and go as they please, whether or not they live on campus. Space is not as restricted on a college campus as it is in high school; students often have unsupervised access to spaces that are closely regulated in a high school environment. Libraries, art studios, and residence halls are all examples of this increased access.

Most importantly, students in a college environment are less likely to have codes of conduct imposed upon them. Short of obvious criminal offenses or serious policy infractions, college administrators are unable to follow up on many conduct issues (Dannells, 1991). Detecting violations, gathering witnesses and supporting documentation, and sanctioning students can be a serious issue of bureaucracy (Friedl, 2000).

Responses to this issue have included involving students in the accountability process. A common example is the resident assistant, a student who lives in campus housing and is responsible for day-to-day programming and enforcement of rules among residents. Another convenient instance is the student component of college judicial processes (Dannells, 1991; Wilson, 1996) because they lighten the load for administrators and increase

legitimacy for offenders by providing a peer presence in the sanctioning process.

A student club or organization is a less formal context for exercising accountability. Rather than representing values and codes created by administrators, they cultivate their own expectations and enforce them in a peer-to-peer environment nestled within the greater culture of the institution (Gellin, 2003). These behavioral expectations ordinarily reflect institutional values, thus legitimizing the school's sponsorship of the group. The most salient codes of conduct in this environment are of a more informal nature. Rules may not even be formally articulated but rather must be detected through participation in the group's culture (Kuh, 1995; Martin, 2002). For example, there may not be a stated rule to prohibit sleeping through a fraternity chapter meeting, but a member who does so is likely to face some level of implicit disapproval from others in the group.

It is not appropriate to assume that students are ready to take on this shared responsibility (Denzine, 1999). What are the mechanisms and pathways by which students come to hold each other accountable to certain standards of conduct? This paper explicates extant research and appropriate applications to college students' accountability structures. Though the literature does not address this question directly, there are indirect means to accessing its relevant aspects. For the purpose of this paper, much of the focus will be on accountability within social fraternities. This context will allow for closer examination of the inherent issues by way of social psychological constructs. Examples of fraternal behavior are drawn from common advisors' anecdotes.

"Standard of conduct" can be a difficult concept to fully understand. To focus the discussion, the most pressing issue is agreement on how these standards are established and what relationship they have to members' pre-existing attitudes. Intuitively, one might expect better adherence to standards if a previous personal investment is present, but these investments change as group dynamics affect the individual (White, Hogg, & Terry, 2002).

Norms: Their Establishment

The most convenient inroad to understanding the concept of standards is to approach it psychologically with the idea of norms. "Underlying the formation of norms is the ubiquitous belief that there is a correct response for every situation and an abiding interest for persons to base their responses on these correct foundations" (Friedkin, 2001, p. 167). Individuals accumulate experience and learn what kinds of actions elicit favorable responses in certain circumstances. Specifically, norms are defined as "social attitudes of approval and disapproval, specifying what ought to be done and what ought not to be done" in any given social situation (Sunstein, 1996, p. 914).

It is important to note that norms exist independent of value judgment. Normative behavior can be just as often destructive as it is constructive or healthy (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001). For example, fraternity men who act graciously with elderly alumni at a chapter dinner and compete in drinking contests later that night in a nearby bar are displaying different kinds of normative behavior. They have made a tacit agreement with each other and their alumni that elders are to be treated with total respect and have likewise agreed with each other that public drunkenness is acceptable and encouraged. These behaviors are in stark contrast with each other, but both come to exist in the same way.

Since a norm may arise or persist independent of its value, it will be important to explore the substance of these norms later. This will provide the bridge between the concept of norms (value-blind behavior) and standards (value-conscious behavior). For now, it is important to understand how norms are established and maintained.

Feldman (1984) outlined four sources from which norms develop in most groups. The first is statements by external authority, which might be codes of conduct or other expectations outlined in student handbooks or other communication from college administrators. Alumni of a fraternity might have specific expectations that would also fall into this category. Second, "critical events in the group's history" (p. 51), like stories, legends, traditions, and other artifacts or values of a group's culture, influence the development of current norms (Kuh, 1995; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Martin, 2002). They can also be distorted by time and might perpetuate norms that have false roots. Third, the first behavior pattern that emerges in a group often sets group expectations (Feldman, 1984). This could range from where people sit during chapter meetings to whether someone brings a case of beer to an alumni gathering. Finally, individual interests help create norms. If members are recruited to a fraternity based on their interest in community service, then conversations or activities surrounding service activities will play a part in the norms structure of that group.

While these sources provide the material of group norms, the conditions under which the norms develop are equally important. Pendry and Carrick described how a predisposition to avoid conflict accelerates the normalization process (2001). Instead of stubbornly asserting their initial preferences, individuals with previously disparate interests succumb to a desire to conform and minimize turbulence. This facilitates reaching a modified consensus more quickly. The substance of the norm is secondary to the individual desire to belong; this can have serious implications for the norm's genesis. Insecure new members with a strong desire for direction in a newly formed group could likely warm to more dubious norms as long as those

norms provided some sense of normalcy and stability. Where established groups with rooted norms are concerned, however, this dynamic describes only members who do not wish to create unrest in their new groups. Entering college students fit this description (Sidle & McReynolds, 1999). If they are faced with values they do not agree with in an organization they wish to join, such as alcohol use in a fraternity, they must decide whether or not to abandon their previous value structure (Arnold & Kuh, 1992).

Norms: Their Enforcement

Once norms are established, they are perpetuated through enforcement within the group. There is no shortage of research on how norms are supported (Costarelli, 2005; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004; Horne, 2001; Marques, Abrams, & Serodio, 2001; Sunstein, 1996). Feldman (1984) efficiently described the four primary conditions governing how and why groups enforce their norms among members.

First, members tend to enforce norms that facilitate group survival. An example might be an expectation that alcohol not be brought to fraternity alumni gatherings because those alumni have a cooperative relationship with college administrators and wish to encourage more educational activities, such as service projects.

Members also enforce norms that help to make behavior predictable. When members know how to act in given repetitive situations, they are more comfortable. If a fraternity member usually takes notes at a meeting and is absent one week, the resulting confusion may seem disproportionate. That member's role is ingrained in the group, so his absence unexpectedly disrupts the meeting's routine.

Members more readily enforce norms that articulate the central beliefs of the group. If a group's stated values are in opposition to its enacted values, norms enforcement could be difficult. A fraternity "committed to chivalry" whose member is suspected of sexual assault faces difficult choices. To be clear, if his guilt is obvious or proven then sanctions may be inevitable. It is when details are murky and there is opportunity to dodge the charges that the true character of members can be ascertained. In turn, the identity of the organization, as perceived by both members and nonmembers, may be in jeopardy (Feldman, 1984).

Finally, norm enforcement helps to prevent members' embarrassment. The in-group loyalty to fellow members drives this enforcement motive. Members want to help others preserve their self-image and protect them from situations where threats may arise (Sabini, Garvey, & Hall, 2001). In a fraternal context, the practice of hazing new members is problematic regarding this point. Students traditionally regard hazing as temporarily unpleas-

ant, ultimately creating a valuable shared experience instead. Once the process is complete, they argue, all members enjoy the bond of those degrading events (Nuwer, 1999). Fraternity advisors work diligently to help students see that this logic is faulty, however, and that hazing is a destructive means to establishing common bonds. It is now understood that the embarrassment that hazing elicits has lasting effects and compromises the ability of fraternities to effectively enforce norms (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005).

Fehr and Fischbacher (2004) explored important concepts regarding the position and disposition of the punisher/defender in relationship to the norm violator. That is, there is a distinction between an enforcer with a stake in the violated norm and an enforcer who is a more neutral third party. The authors demonstrated that a norm violation rarely has an immediately direct and deleterious effect on a person. When it does, it can be hard to distinguish whether or not norm enforcement would be an effect of commitment to the norm or retaliation for whatever loss the enforcer experienced. For this reason, the authors posited that third parties are actually responsible for almost all meaningful norm enforcement. Bernhard, Fehr and Fischbacher (2006) referred to this as "altruistic" norm enforcement (p. 217): The third party has no truly personal stake besides defending the norm itself, which in turn defends the organization whose norm is threatened. In this case, it is much easier to approximate the motive for enforcement because private interests are removed from consideration.

An example of this intuitive dynamic might involve two fraternity brothers discussing a rivalry with another fraternity. One member insists that they prank their rival by stealing and smashing its (rightfully earned) intramural trophy. The other brother, who does not endorse the plan, has two choices: He can either agree with his friend and accompany him on the mission or he can employ reasonable strategies to change his friend's mind. The member with this choice has no personal, private stake in the decision. The potentially destroyed property is not his, and he is extremely unlikely to be caught or sanctioned for the crime if he participates. In fact, the plan is likely to be carried out with almost no risk and the member in question will not suffer repercussions either way. But his fraternity's stated values promote honor and integrity, and these actions would contravene those values. He knows this, and though his brotherhood may include a small number of troublemakers, the group generally tries to promote more productive behavior. The student must decide if he is committed to those values. Demonstrating that commitment here would be an act of altruistic norm enforcement as described by Bernhard et al. (2006).

Altruism, insofar as an enforcer has nothing material to gain from the transaction, contributes to the present question of standards enforcement

(Fowler, 2005). It may not be the prime concept, however, in the case of student organizations like fraternities. Group cohesion may instead play that role. Hogg and Hains (1996) described a cohesive group as having "intra-group conformity, intergroup differentiation, stereotypic perception, ethnocentrism, and positive intermember attitude" (p. 298). The authors noted that members who are perceived as more similar to the rest of the group tend to be better liked, so homogeneity is also important. This needs to be distinguished from simple personal attraction. In this case, members' "depersonalized" social attributes rather than their "idiosyncratic preferences" govern likeability and, consequently, group cohesion (Hogg & Hains, 1996, p. 296). That is, a member is more likely to be embraced by the group if he is much like other members in attitude and philosophy. Personal likes and dislikes are important only to the extent they match the group's idea of a prototypical member. Otherwise, these qualities are idiosyncratic and do not figure prominently into a member's acceptance into the group.

In student groups demonstrating high levels of cohesion, the willingness to enforce norms, altruistically or otherwise may be seriously compromised. Flache and Macy (1996) described a dynamic where sanctions for deviating from norms may be discouraged due to group cohesion. As articulated by Horne, "sanctioning may create the risk that the deviant will retaliate. It also requires resources that could be used more profitably in other personally beneficial exchanges" (2001, p. 258). This implies that it could be more unpleasant to impose a sanction within a close group of individuals who have frequent meaningful interaction than to do so within a less cohesive group with less meaningful interaction. The costs to the individual could be great, and the larger group would not benefit if the smaller cohesive group objects to the enforcement as unjust instead of examining the norm at stake. That results in the enforcer using social capital in an investment that ultimately does not pay off.

Meta-norms

Horne's (2001) examination of Flache and Macy's (1996) research explored how norm enforcement patterns emerge. She incorporated the concept of *meta-norms*, or the degree to which individuals are encouraged to enforce an organization's norms. That is, "a meta-norm emerges insofar as group members reward those who punish deviance" (Horne, 2001, p. 255). This reward need not originate with group members exclusively but could be affected by reactions or encouragement from third parties as well. For example, a fraternity that runs social events without incident, even if it takes more effort and the events are a little tamer than many might prefer, may derive certain benefits from the college's administration for such behavior. These benefits, such as leniency on report deadlines or recognition

in an alumni newsletter, can encourage meta-norms toward enforcement of policy-friendly norms. Alternatively, alumni of the fraternity might create a hostile atmosphere for such enforcement, invoking the seriousness of tradition and past practice (Kuh & Whitt, 1988) as arguments against it.

Horne (2001) noted that the benefits to the group for sanctioning deviant behavior may not outweigh the costs to the enforcing individual or the group's costs of rewarding that person. Horne shifted the focus in order to answer these concerns about group cohesion and its supposed harmful effect on sanctioning. Individuals may reward sanctioners with whom they have a pre-existing relationship in order to preserve that relationship. This is more likely the stronger the relationship is.

This dynamic, however, presupposes that a smaller group, perhaps informally known as the major group's enforcers, is willing to sustain a level of moral responsibility and bear that for the rest of the major group. Though Fowler (2005) showed how this kind of altruism has been sustained throughout civilization by evolutionary means, the shorter-term implications are more dependent on context and individuals. Certainly Fowler allowed for extreme examples: tragic, altruistic individuals who have been subsumed by the vulgar intuitions of their respective mobs. This is exactly the dynamic that must be avoided on the micro-level to promote the enforcement of norms, especially those that benefit the group.

Prosocial Norms

It is appropriate here to differentiate between types of norms. The norms most salient to the concept of standards at issue in this paper are most commonly referred to as prosocial norms:

Prosocial norms are those whose increased frequency in a population enhances the average level of well-being... The importance of prosocial norms arises in interactions structured such that the uncoordinated actions of individuals lead to outcomes inferior to those that would have been attainable had coordination of the individual actions been possible. (Bowles & Gintis, 1998, p. 2)

This definition requires refinement to isolate the kind of norms that will ultimately comprise standards for fraternities and other student organizations. Adhering to Bowles and Gintis's definition, individuals might act in ways that benefit their friends or other individuals but ultimately compromise the success or well-being of the group. This is up to interpretation by those individuals, but if one member of a fraternity helps another member cheat on exam and no one finds out about it (i.e., the group's reputation remains intact), the cheaters could argue that their actions enhanced the "average level of well-being" (Bowles & Gintis, 1998, p. 2). To avoid these

loopholes, it is important to highlight certain distinctions within the realm of prosocial norms.

First, to address the example above, the norms exercised must be functional in terms of the group's goals. They cannot benefit only the individuals involved in the transaction that enacts the norm, but rather should benefit the individuals and enhance the group's needs (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986).

Baruch, O'Creevy, Hind, and Vigoda-Gadot (2004) made the distinction between norms that are exercised both "in-role" and "extra-role" (p. 402). This signifies the difference between engaging in prosocial behavior while acting within a defined position or outside of it. The development officer of a fraternity, for example, can help committee chairs develop programs to encourage responsible use of alcohol (in-role), as well as help monitor members' consumption at events where alcohol is present (extra-role). While it would be an oversimplification to term this "going the extra mile," extra-role prosocial behavior generally augments any given position. The distinction is that this behavior can be undertaken, encouraged and enforced regardless of role. Extrapolating from Astin's study of the co-curriculum (1999), the value of this less formalized prosocial behavior is clear. Extra-role prosocial norming is likely indicative of a deeper commitment to standards than in-role norming, as it uses an internal motivation rather than the imposed role definition to encourage prosocial behavior.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the recipient of prosocial behavior need not be an individual or a specific group of individuals; the organization itself can benefit as well (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Loyalty or vigilant adherence to prosocial traditions of the group, such as the fraternity brother who routinely awakes early to carefully raise the flag in front of his house, is an example of this distinction. Prosocial norms can also seem to damage the organization or individual in the short term but eventually provide long-term benefits (Horne, 2001), such as in cases of whistle-blowing (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). When members of a fraternity enlist advisors' help to eradicate hazing, for example, the group suffers temporary negative effects during the ensuing investigation. Those who initiated it may experience animosity from other members. The organization emerges from that ordeal, however, better equipped to promote prosocial norms. The norms that affect individuals, as opposed to the organization, are clearly germane to the examination of accountability since the interest lies in students monitoring and informing each others' behavior.

Brief and Motowidlo (1986) acknowledged that distinctions like these can rarely be made cleanly. Any act that commits to a prosocial norm might be functional on the surface but simultaneously feeds a more self-centered

and dysfunctional need that detracts from the group's well-being or goals. Likewise, it can be difficult to distinguish between in-role and extra-role behavior, and many actions can benefit both individuals and the group as a whole.

To be sure, there are certain additional considerations for specifically enforcing prosocial norms. There can be two types of enforcers: Gintis (2000) described "strong reciprocators" (p. 169) who promote prosocial norms within their immediate groups, while Carpenter, Matthews, and Ong'Ong'a (2004) described "social reciprocators" (p. 408) who enforce these norms regardless of the violators' group affiliation. Though it is important that the concept of a "group" be clear, the authors only asserted it must be "well-defined" (Carpenter et al., 2004, p. 416). The examination seems to hinge on the group subscribing to the same norms, so both types of enforcement may surface for students depending on subgroups and how their norms may differ from those of the larger organization (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Carpenter et al. (2004) found that these two styles of "punishment" are differentiated from that of "fitness differential theory," whose punishers do so only to equalize the benefits between prosocial norm violators and themselves (Price, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2002, p. 203). When these prosocial norms are enforced, they are enforced by strong or social reciprocators who are doing so in order to promote the norms in question regardless of the cost to them or the benefit accrued to the violators (Carpenter et al., 2004).

Bernhard, Fehr, and Fischbacher (2006) built on this research and found that punishers "give in-group norm violators more of a break" (p. 220). Their findings suggested that the "impact of group affiliation on altruistic punishment is a stable phenomenon with external validity" (p. 221). The implications of this possible in-group leniency are heavy, as students may be more reluctant than expected to enforce prosocial norms among their closest peers.

This implication can be most relevant when considering a group that exhibits especially high levels of cohesion, such as a prototypical social fraternity. Hogg and Terry (2000) discussed social identity theory, insofar as people's identities are determined in some part by the groups in which they choose to persist. This theory has been tested in terms of loyalty to a group and the conditions under which members might be willing to leave it to protect their own interests (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). "High identifiers" invest more in the group and are less willing to abandon it. This may not mean they will enforce inconvenient norms, however, especially if they identify with some other possibly more convenient or easily enforced set of norms also existing within the group. One crisis that may elicit the choice to stay or to leave is that of divergent norming within the group. If some members

prioritize prosocial norms and others believe different norms to be primary, the resulting schism can test the level to which individuals identify with the group.

The Role of "Groupthink"

This possibility raises the specter of the long-popular notion of "groupthink" (Janis, 1971), a theory explaining why cohesive groups can demonstrate, occasionally or habitually, poor decision-making. As articulated by Haslam, Ryan, Postmes, Spears, Jetten, and Webley (2006):

A group that has fallen prey to the syndrome tends to believe it is more powerful and invulnerable than it really is and has unquestioning faith in its own moral authority... Within-group consensus is also highly prized, so that individual group members who have doubts fail to voice them (i.e., they engage in self-censorship) and the group as a whole puts pressure on members who deviate from the group position. (p. 608)

This phenomenon is a real possibility in a fraternity. Having typically been founded years earlier by one group of students, the ideals on which it was established may be interpreted, amended, or ignored by each new cohort of students who join. This kind of transfer is expected, but prosocial norms may eventually be displaced by baser beliefs. This degeneration is reminiscent of Pendry and Carrick's (2001) discussion on quick compromise in the establishment of norms. Such an erosion of values may result in the majority of the membership believing the group stands for one set of compromised ideals while a minority sees that the founding ideals are more important to the group's health. These students, the would-be enforcers, can be stifled by peers' subscription of a groupthink-driven norm to which they are implicitly pressured to conform.

While groupthink continues to be a popular term and has caught on in mainstream language, it is important to acknowledge the shortcomings of research that supports the original thesis. Esser (1998) reviewed the literature and found scant empirical findings that rigorously tested and supported groupthink. He did, however, conclude that certain antecedents to the phenomenon appeared to hold up under scrutiny. Groups with a "lack of impartial leadership" (p. 131) exhibited the dangerous characteristics listed above. Without embarking on a detailed examination of leadership theory, if student leadership is more directive and less collaborative, membership is likely to stem its efforts to influence the organization's activities and collective decisions (Rost, 1993). Limiting this labor promotes groupthink symptoms. Another solid finding follows the same logic: Groups lacking "methodical decision-making procedures" (Esser, 1998, p. 132) also exhibit groupthink tendencies.

Counterintuitively and in opposition to Janis's (1971) assertions, group cohesion has not been demonstrated as an antecedent to groupthink. While Esser (1998) hypothesized this may involve lower levels of trust (and thus higher levels of self-censorship) among members of less cohesive groups, his primary concern is that cohesiveness has not yet been operationalized appropriately. In any case, there is presently no empirical support for cohesiveness predicting the symptoms of groupthink as described here.

In spite of the research outlining the development and enforcement of prosocial behavior, groupthink has the potential to thwart students' best behavioral efforts. In college fraternities, declines in group commitment to founding values are well-documented (Kilgannon & Erwin, 1992; Reisberg, 2000). The residual damage from the material and chemical excess and mass departure from those values in the late 1970s and 1980s is only now being addressed purposefully and has created a strong recalcitrance in the all-important alumni support base (Baade & Sundberg, 1996). Alumni entrust their fraternity to incoming students who are eager to form attachments within their new environment (Rice, Fitzgerald, Whaley, & Gibbs, 1995), and those students readily accept the group's established (and compromised) norms as part of its legitimate history. Depending on their level of identification with the fraternity (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004), new members set about internalizing the prevalent norms and discouraging deviant opinions as to the group's identity. Some of these attitudes are socialized forcibly through hazing and other antisocial mechanisms, as vividly described by Nuwer (1999) and Arnold and Kuh (1992).

Relationships to Student Development Theory

In terms of students holding each other accountable to prosocial standards of behavior, the prominent norms are those functional to the group, existing outside of activities associated with formal roles, and benefiting individuals as opposed to the organization. Concentrating on these distinctions helps to identify the norms that match best with student development theory.

Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development is central to the idea of accountability through norms. This sequential model describes levels and stages that students experience in order (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998), each incorporating aspects of those previous to it. In the *preconventional* level, students are concerned with avoiding punishment. As students move into the conventional level, they become interested in living up to peers' expectations and translating those into a consistent set of rules that apply to everyone. Students at the *principled* level recognize that context is essential to determining the best course of action and guidelines for conduct are not merely dictated by the will or whim of those around them (Kohlberg, 1976). Students must have reached this principled level to hold each

other accountable. Though the conventional level acknowledges groups' ownership of their norms, consensus on those norms is unlikely. In order for members to assert their own values in a group context, they must believe that the group's norms need prosocial realignment and make norm adjustments with other members. The abilities to balance multiple moral perspectives and negotiate paths toward value and norm improvement are hallmarks of Kohlberg's third level (1976).

Though morality is difficult to assess rigorously (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992), it remains a topic of keen interest and such assessments are in constant development (Evans et al., 1998). One of the preeminent and enduring assessments is Rest's Defining Issues Test (1979; 1986), which has been shown with modest success to judge capability of making moral judgments according to Kohlberg's levels. In one early but compelling analysis, purposeful advising and education were shown to have noticeable effects on judgment (Schlaefli, Rest, & Thoma, 1985). Worldly experience appears to trump deliberate efforts to develop morals, however, so student affairs practitioners may have limited opportunities to engender prosocial norm enforcement from a moral perspective (Bebeau & Thoma, 1999).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) provided a suitable inroad with their seventh vector, *developing integrity*. This vector is comprised of three stages:

1. Moral absolutism becomes a more *humanized value system*, incorporating others' needs into those of one's own.
2. Core values emerge and reconcile with the beliefs of others.
3. A sense of *congruence* materializes between action and belief, and values must satisfy both personal and social needs.

These components are sequential but overlap and influence each other; students are not expected to progress neatly from one stage to the next. Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors are similar to the stages above in that the first is more elementary and the seventh more complex. Students may pass through them or revisit them according to their own experiences and success in learning the lessons in each.

Even so, the fact that "social responsibility" appears in the most advanced stage of the highest vector indicates that accountability can be a difficult quality for students to attain. Though this theory is grounded in research on college students, by no means do all or even most students grow to experience characteristics of all seven vectors (Flowers, 2002; Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Glover, 2000). Assessment of this and any development theory can be fraught with challenges, but early research has shown reaching the seventh vector can be a long journey and may require time beyond the college years (Evans et al., 1998). This is an important

point to consider when searching for a willingness to exercise accountability in these students. If they are not moving through Chickering and Reisser's seventh vector, they may not have the capacity to hold their peers to standards via the prosocial norm enforcement described herein.

Though it is not a social psychological theory, Perry's theory of cognitive development (1968) also helps to contextualize this idea of accountability. It is an intuitive continuum in which students start as *dualistic* (seeing issues in absolute terms), progress to *multiplistic* (acknowledging there are several perspectives and solutions for any given problem), and eventually become *relativistic* (able to select the best solution based on the right information). Versions of this final stage, which students may not reach during their college years, indicate the importance of incorporating others' views into one's own (Evans et al., 1998; Perry, 1968). This relativism amounts to seeing a problem from multiple perspectives and evaluating the merits of each. This is necessary for one to recognize which norms are most appropriate and why prosocial choices are best for the group. A prosocial enforcer must be advanced in Kohlberg's levels (1976), Chickering and Reisser's scales (1993), as well as in Perry's continuum (1968).

Conclusion

The constructs of *accountability* and the *standards* to which one is held accountable are complex, comprised each of several concepts that can be difficult to disentangle. Having insight into how students operate in social groups is an essential component of advising strategy, and enables faculty and staff to better facilitate students' progress in learning important life lessons while pursuing their degrees. For colleges that profess a role in meeting global needs by graduating leaders and community-minded citizens, having the tools to encourage this essential education outside the classroom has never been more important.

References

- Arnold, J. C. & Kuh, G. D. (1992). *Brotherhood and the bottle: A cultural analysis of the role of alcohol in fraternities*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for the Study of the Collegiate Fraternity.
- Astin, A. W. (1998). The changing American college student: Thirty-year trends, 1966-1996. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 115-135.
- Astin, A. W. (1999). Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 587-598.
- Baade, R. A. & Sundberg, J. O. (1996). What determines alumni generosity? *Economics of Education Review*, 15(1), 75-81.
- Baruch, Y., O'Creevy, M. F., Hind, P., & Vigoda-Gadot, E. (2004). Prosocial behavior and job performance: Does the need for control and the need for achievement make a difference? *Social Behavior and Personality*, 32(4), 399-411.

- Bebeau, M. J. & Thoma, S. J. (1999). Intermediate concepts and the connection to moral education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 11(4), 343-360.
- Bernhard, H., Fehr, E., & Fischbacher, U. (2006). Group affiliation and altruistic norm enforcement. *American Economic Review*, 96(2), 217-221.
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1998). The moral economy of communities: Structured populations and the evolution of pro-social norms. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 19(1), 1-28.
- Brief, A. P. & Motowidlo, S. J. (1986). Prosocial organizational behaviors. *The Academy of Management Review*, 11(4), 710-725.
- Campo, S., Poulos, G., & Sipple, J. W. (2005). Prevalence and profiling: Hazing among college students and points of intervention. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 29(2), 137-149.
- Cannon, M. D. & Edmondson, A. C. (2001). Confronting failure: Antecedents and consequences of shared beliefs about failure in organizational work groups. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22(2), 161-177.
- Carpenter, J., Matthews, P., & Ong'ong'a, O. (2004). Why punish? Social reciprocity and the enforcement of prosocial norms. *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 14(4), 407-429.
- Chickering, A. W. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Costarelli, S. (2005). Short communication: Affective responses to own violations of ingroup norms: The moderating role of norm salience. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35(3), 425-435.
- Dannells, M. (1991). Changes in student misconduct and institutional response over 10 years. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32(2), 166-170.
- Denzine, G. M. G. (1999). I can do it: Resident assistants' sense of self-efficacy. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(3), 247.
- Esser, J. K. (1998). Alive and well after 25 years: A review of groupthink research. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 73(2-3), 116-141.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fehr, E. & Fischbacher, U. (2004). Third-party punishment and social norms. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 25(2), 63-87.
- Feldman, D. C. (1984). The development and enforcement of group norms. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(1), 47-53.
- Flache, A. & Macy, M. W. (1996). The weakness of strong ties: Collective action failure in a highly cohesive group. *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 21(1-2), 3-28.
- Flowers, L. A. (2002). *Developing purpose in college: Differences between freshmen and seniors*. *College Student Journal*, 36(3), 478-485.
- Foubert, J. D., Nixon, M. L., Sisson, V. S., & Barnes, A. C. (2005). A longitudinal study of Chickering and Reisser's vectors: Exploring gender differences and implications for refining the theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(5), 461-471.
- Fowler, J. H. (2005). Altruistic punishment and the origin of cooperation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 102(19), 7047-7049.
- Friedkin, N. E. (2001). Norm formation in social influence networks. *Social Networks*, 23(3), 167-189.
- Friedl, J. (2000). Punishing students for non-academic misconduct. *Journal of College and University Law*, 26(4), 701-726.
- Gellin, A. (2003). The effect of undergraduate student involvement on critical thinking: A meta-analysis of the literature 1991-2000. *Journal of College Student Development*,

44(6), 746.

- Gibbs, J. C., Basinger, K. S., & Fuller, D. (1992). *Moral maturity: Measuring the development of sociomoral reflection*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gintis, H. (2000). Strong reciprocity and human sociality. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 206, 169-179.
- Glover, R. J. (2000). Developmental tasks of adulthood: Implications for counseling community college students. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 24(6), 505-514.
- Haslam, S. A., Ryan, M. K., Postmes, T., Spears, R., Jetten, J., & Webley, P. (2006). Sticking to our guns: Social identity as a basis for the maintenance of commitment to faltering organizational projects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(5), 607-628.
- Hogg, M. A. & Hains, S. C. (1996). Intergroup relations and group solidarity: Effects of group identification and social beliefs on depersonalized attraction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(2), 295-309.
- Hogg, M. A. & Terry, D. J. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 121-140.
- Horne, C. (2001). The enforcement of norms: Group cohesion and meta-norms. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 64(3), 253-266.
- Janis, I. L. (1971). Groupthink: The desperate drive for consensus at any cost. *Psychology Today*, 5(6), 43-50.
- Kilgannon, S. M. & Erwin, T. D. (1992). A longitudinal study about the identity and moral development of greek students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33(3), 253-259.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stages and moralization. The cognitive-developmental approach. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral development and behavior: Theory, research and social issues*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Kuh, G. D. (1995). Cultivating high-stakes student culture research. *Research in Higher Education*, 36(5), 563-576.
- Kuh, G. D. & Whitt, E. J. (1988). *The invisible tapestry: Culture in American colleges and universities*. Washington, D.C.: Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Association for the Study of Higher Education.
- Marques, J. M., Abrams, D., & Serodio, R. G. (2001). Being better by being right: Subjective group dynamics and derogation of in-group deviants when generic norms are undermined. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(3), 436-447.
- Martin, J. (2002). *Organizational culture: Mapping the terrain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R. & Viswesvaran, C. (2005). Whistleblowing in organizations: An examination of correlates of whistleblowing intentions, actions, and retaliation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 62(3), 277-297.
- Nuwer, H. (1999). *Wrongs of passage: Fraternities, sororities, hazing, and binge drinking*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Pendry, L. & Carrick, R. (2001). Doing what the mob do: Priming effects on conformity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31(1), 83-92.
- Perry, W. G. (1968). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme*. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Wilson.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and

suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 513-563.

- Price, M. E., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2002). Punitive sentiment as an anti-free rider psychological device. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 23, 203-231.
- Reisberg, L. (2000). Fraternities in decline. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46(18), A59-A62.
- Rest, J. R. (1979). *Development in judging moral issues*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rest, J. R. (1986). *The defining issues test* (3rd ed.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Center for the Study of Ethical Development.
- Rice, K. G., Fitzgerald, D. P., Whaley, T. J., & Gibbs, C. L. (1995). Cross-sectional and longitudinal examination of attachment, separation-individuation, and college student adjustment. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 73(4), 463-474.
- Rost, J. (1993). Leadership development in the new millennia. *Journal of Leadership Studies in Higher Education*, 1(1), 91-110.
- Sabini, J., Garvey, B., & Hall, A. L. (2001). Shame and embarrassment revisited. *Personal and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(1), 104-117.
- Schlaefli, A., Rest, J. R., & Thoma, S. J. (1985). Does moral education improve moral judgment? A meta-analysis of intervention studies using the defining issues test. *Review of Educational Research*, 55(3), 319-352.
- Sidle, M. W. & McReynolds, J. (1999). The freshman year experience: Student retention and student success. *NASPA Journal*, 36(4), 288-300.
- Sunstein, C. R. (1996). Social norms and social roles. *Columbia Law Review*, 96(4), 903.
- Van Vugt, M. & Hart, C. M. (2004). Social identity as social glue: The origins of group loyalty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(4), 585-598.
- White, K. M., Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2002). Improving attitude-behavior correspondence through exposure to normative support from a salient ingroup. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 24(2), 91-103.
- Wilson, J. M. (1996). Achieving fundamental fairness: The code of conduct. *New Directions for Student Services*, 96(73), 19-33.

Chad Ahren is a second-year doctoral student in the Indiana University HESA program. He works at the National Survey of Student Engagement, concentrating on client services and research on the effect of organizational involvement on student engagement. His other research interests include leadership development and student learning. Before attending IU, Chad was the Director of Student Activities, Leadership Development, and Greek Life at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. He attained his M.S. in College Student Personnel at Canisius College and his B.A. in Philosophy at Hiram College.