Cooperation and punishment

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In this chapter, we discuss human cooperation from an anthropological point of view while also taking on board some lessons drawn from the interdisciplinary field of 'cooperation studies', broadly defined. To be more specific: we have found it very productive, as anthropologists, to think about a series of questions that psychologists and others have been asking in relation to *punishment* – which, so far as we know, is not something most anthropologists would naturally associate with cooperation. These questions about punishment can both enrich anthropological understandings of cooperation across cultures but also help us to make systematic comparisons across cultures. In order to explain this, however, we need to set the scene a bit more in terms of disciplinary orientations and also clarify what all of this has to do with morality and ethics.

From ethnography of cooperation to comparative anthropology

The existing ethnographic record is pervaded by accounts of cooperation and these, in turn, are pervaded by questions of morality and ethics. To cite one of many possible examples: Olivia Harris has told us about cooperative agricultural labour among the Laymi of Bolivia, focusing in particular on the *values* they attached to cooperative labour and to work more generally – work being central to their ideas of what it is to be human. In the Laymi view, as Harris reports, it was considered 'unseemly to cultivate the fields alone'. They organised cooperative work parties instead, dressing up for the occasion and then relaxing 'with a delicious meal, plenty to drink and music at the end of the day' (Harris 2007: 145).

If one looks at this case study in more detail, it contains features that anthropological readers would certainly consider important – but probably also unsurprising:

- Laymi cooperation entails not only cultural particularities but also historical and political ones. For example, it turns out that the Bolivian Agrarian Reform of 1953 had significant consequences for the amount of work, cooperative or not, that local people were prepared to do.

- Cooperation in one domain of Laymi life tends to spill over into other domains, as a consequence of which it must be analysed holistically. For example, work practices are closely tied up with patterns of courtship, marriage, family and kinship.

- Reciprocity, and the morality attaching to it, is a central organising motif in Laymi cooperation – however, this plays itself out in complex ways. For example, Laymi give more than they probably should to townspeople, accepting little back in return, because 'they feel sorry for them' in light of their inability to do proper work.

From their starting point in rich ethnographies of real-world cooperation, such as the one provided by Harris, anthropologists have shown little interest in the booming interdisciplinary field of 'cooperation studies'. One reason for this is that many, if not most,

of the scholars contributing to this field – game theorists, institutional economists, philosophers, biologists, evolutionary anthropologists, cognitive psychologists and others – start with assumptions about rationality and human self-interest that most social and cultural anthropologists cannot accept; use methods (such as mathematical modelling, or experimentation) that lack the holism, and thus richness, of ethnography; and focus on what are basically 'universalist' questions about the fundamentals of human cooperation.

> *Why is it that humans cooperate at all, i.e., as opposed to just being selfish? What are the core problems, such as free riding, that beset human attempts to cooperate? What are the underlying skills and dispositions – such as the capacity for sharing intentions with the people around us – that provide the building blocks of cooperation? Why did these skills and dispositions evolve in our species?*

From an anthropological point of view, to start in this way when studying cooperation, the forms of which vary dramatically both culturally and historically, seems highly reductionist. But there is arguably less distance between 'universalist' and 'relativist' views of, and questions about, human cooperation than might at first be assumed. It surely *is* the case that cooperation pervades human life, as the ethnographic record shows, and that this poses similar sets of questions for our species across space and time, even if these are framed in historically particular ways. This is precisely why Harris's account of Laymi cooperation is interesting in its details but also in many respects totally unsurprising for anthropologists, e.g., we would *expect* reciprocity to be a central motif in Laymi cooperation but also expect this to play itself out in complex ways. Meanwhile, a good deal of the interdisciplinary research on cooperation, far from being crudely universalist in outlook, focuses centrally on the relationship of cooperation to cultural artefacts and historical variation (see Henrich & Henrich 2007; Tomasello 2009).

To step back and frame this at a more general level: our engagement with the psychology and evolutionary science of cooperation is motivated in part by recent calls for anthropologists to re-think the project of meaningful comparison (Astuti in preparation, Candea 2018, Itéanu and Moya 2015, van der Veer 2016). Assuming our goal is to understand the diverse ways in which humans cooperate, and also the meanings they give to cooperative activities in the flow of life, how can we engage in this comparative exercise – but *without* losing the ethnographic specificity of each case? Rita Astuti, in her 2019 ASA lecture, argues that one way to anchor the comparison of the historically specific is to do so in relation to the evolutionary history of our species (Astuti, in preparation; see also Bloch and Sperber 2002). We know, for example, that even very young infants are able to 'read' the intentions of carers and to provide various forms of help to other agents – as a precursor to engaging in full blown cooperative activity later on; with age, their motivations and capacities for cooperation continue to develop in complex ways (Warneken and Tomasello 2006, 2007). Since nothing for humans is ever only social, or only biological, i.e. since both history and evolution are always at play (Astuti in preparation), what we know about the developmental psychology of cooperation can provide grounds for meaningful anthropological comparison (a point also made by Keane 2015). It allows us to ask questions such as: why are people more cooperative in some contexts than in others; what are the ethical and moral investments that people make in the course of cooperation; and what is understood by 'cooperation' and how does this vary in space and time?

These are important questions that can and should be explored (however critically) via ethnography. Conversely, ethnographic evidence about real-world cooperation poses very important questions that can and should be informing the interdisciplinary debates – although, as the philosopher of science Francesco Guala observes, this potential has not always been taken up in practice (Guala 2012). In what follows, we want to initiate a modest step towards interdisciplinary dialogue by considering three inter-linked topics related to human cooperation – topics we have examined in our own field research:

(1) the role that *punishment* plays in supporting cooperation, i.e., when one person's failure to cooperate appropriately is sanctioned in some way;

(2) how cooperation is linked to questions of *learning in general and of child development in particular*;

(3) the relationship between *kin and non-kin cooperation*.

The evolution of cooperation

Before going any further, however, we should add a few more words about the interdisciplinary debates. In addition to the question of how to explain the – surprising, as some would see it – disposition of humans to behave altruistically, the scientific interest in cooperation is driven by another puzzle: what explains the success of our species, especially in comparison with other primates. In evolutionary terms, success can be measured as population size, which for humans started to increase dramatically only very recently, coinciding with the rise of agriculture and cities about ten thousand years ago. The current consensus is that cooperation, or more precisely, *the capacity and motivation to cooperate with non-genetically related conspecifics*, has something to do with this success. How exactly human cooperation evolved, and the ultimate mechanisms that underpin its scale and complexity compared with that found in other species, are matters of ongoing debate. One influential theory is the Cultural Group Selection (CGS) hypothesis, which posits competition between groups as the main driver behind the evolution of cooperation, as groups that had altruistic tendencies were more successful than groups that did not (e.g. Henrich and Henrich 2007; Richerson and Boyd 2005; Richerson et al. 2016). Importantly, these tendencies were not transmitted genetically, but first passed on through cultural learning (Richerson et al. 2016).

The main competing view is the Interdependence hypothesis, which argues that many of the mechanisms of cooperation in humans evolved *prior* to group competition dynamics, and more specifically in the reciprocal relations between individuals who lived in small bands consisting mostly of kin (Tomasello et al. 2012). In the context of allo-parenting and hunting, humans had to come up with ways to coordinate goals, roles and actions, share spoils and so on. Cooperation at this point took place between individuals, was motivated by mutual benefit, and was controlled by mechanisms such as partner-choice and reputation. The second step in the evolution of cooperation followed when populations increased in size, which led to the emergence of distinct cultural groups and competition between them. Cooperation was no longer governed by face-to-face interactions with

partners on the basis of shared goals. Rather it rested on shared culture and norm-based morality at a group level, internalized into emotions such as guilt and shame (Tomasello et al. 2012)

Still others have emphasised that even though human cooperation is remarkable, it is the capacities that *enable* cooperation (as well as other things, such as tool use) that distinguish humans from other species at a more fundamental level. For example, Elizabeth Spelke (2012) has emphasized the role of language, which enables humans to make connections flexibly and rapidly between systems of core knowledge. The two core knowledge systems crucial to cooperation are the systems for representing and reasoning about (1) intentional agents and their goal-directed actions; and (2) social partners who engage in reciprocal relationships with the self. Experimental studies have provided evidence that many other species, such as chimpanzees, rhesus-monkeys and even birds, have the same core systems of knowledge as are found in human infants, and also that these have similar limitations (Regolin and Vallortigara 1995; Santos, Hauser and Spelke 2005). For human infants and these other species, the systems of core knowledge are fairly independent and separate from each other. It is when humans start to acquire language that they develop the ability to combine information from these systems in a way that is rapid, flexible and productive. For example, human infants and several animal species can represent a single inanimate object, like a block, but they cannot represent a block tower or understand a block as part of a category for specific *kinds* of objects, that have specific functions. This ability develops in humans after they start to learn names for objects, which is when culture becomes critically important (Spelke 2012). Different languages represent the world very differently, of course, and therefore have an influence on our cognitive development beyond the core systems. In his work, which comes from a different starting point, Michael Tomasello (2009) puts *shared intentionality* at the core of cooperation, and therefore human uniqueness. Shared intentionality involves, most basically, the ability to create with others joint intentions and joint commitments in cooperative endeavours. It is based on the triadic relationship of the self both to a social partner and to the objects of goal-directed actions. Spelke suggests, however, that it might not be shared intentionality per se that makes humans unique, but rather the combinatorial capacity that comes via language that makes shared intentionality possible in the first place.

Entire subfields of anthropology (and philosophy) have revolved around questioning the assumptions behind approaches of these kinds, such as the oppositions between other-regarding (altruistic) and selfish motivations; between living (human) agents and inanimate objects; and between the objective world and the mind that represents it. Nevertheless, and even to those who are less interested in the phylogeny of human uniqueness and more interested in cooperation as it unfolds in actual social behaviour, engaging with the evolutionary and developmental approaches can be fruitful, as we have already noted. After all, a view these approaches share is that culture, cooperation and morality are deeply inter-linked: part of one package. Culture is a major driver behind genetic evolution (Boyd & Richerson 2009); it deeply influences cognitive development from early infancy (Spelke 2012); and it is essential to group level cooperation of the kind found in human societies (Tomasello et al. 2012). Many classic fields of anthropological inquiry, notably the anthropology of exchange and of kinship, are directly relevant to the study of cooperation and can help illuminate its complexity as an everyday lived phenomenon. For example, one

central strand of research by psychologists has focused on the development of cooperative skills such as children's altruistic acts of helping and sharing, and how the emergence of dispositions to help, share, etc., is influenced by group-level norms and social expectations. Experimental work seeks to systematically control the social context in which people's cooperative behavior is tested, for example, helping kin vs. helping strangers, or helping where there is no cost vs. helping when it involves a cost (Warneken & Tomasello 2006), etc. However, it is often unclear to what extent these experimental situations mirror the real-world contexts in which cooperation takes place and thus, to give one example, how particular research subjects understand the others with whom they are 'cooperating' in a given experimental task. Making critical connections between different aspects of human cooperation and the ways it unfolds in actual cultural-historical environments will be necessary if we are to achieve theoretical progress in this field.

Cooperation and punishment in the flow of life

Much of our own work has focused on childhood and child development in China and Taiwan. Our starting point is that human infants are born with underlying cognitive capacities and psychological tendencies/biases that provide a foundation for the ontogenetic development of cooperative (and many other) behaviours, which in turn are profoundly shaped by language and life experience in broader social and cultural contexts. To return to the work of Tomasello and his colleagues: on the basis of a large body of experimental work, it is argued that from around their first birthday – when they begin to walk and talk – human children (irrespective of where they live) are already cooperative and helpful in many, though not all, situations. They do not learn this from adults; it comes naturally. However, later in ontogeny children's relatively indiscriminate cooperativeness becomes mediated by such influences as their judgements of likely reciprocity, and their concern for how others in the group will judge them. At this point children begin to internalize many culturally specific norms about how one ought to do things if one is to be a member of a given group (Tomasello et al 2009; see also Warneken 2015; Warneken & Tomasello 2007). In other words, they gain experience of, and knowledge about, the mechanisms that maintain real world cooperation, i.e. beyond the basic prosocial acts of helping, sharing, coordinating joint goals, etc. Children acquire social norms and, importantly, learn about the sanctions against breaking these norms – that is, they start to learn about *punishment* (McAuliffe, Jordan & Warneken 2015; Jordan, McAuliffe & Warneken 2014).

For anthropologists, it may not be immediately obvious why punishment per se should be such a central topic in the interdisciplinary field of cooperation studies (see Jensen 2010; Raihani et al. 2012). Perhaps this is because we think of cooperation, and of reciprocity-based cooperation in particular, as a broadly *positive* phenomenon – neglecting that, for example, people do cooperate in the service of such things as genocide. Many of the real-world examples in the ethnographic record, such as cooperative agricultural labour among the Laymi, appear (at least at first glance) to be entered into freely for joint benefit and are also culturally valued. But let us think of two different evolutionary stories, ones that are not mutually exclusive. In the first, humans have evolved to be good cooperators and as a crucial aspect of this to have the moral bearings that lead to this being so, e.g. the intuitive disposition to treat others fairly. In the second story, what has evolved in us is something

different: not a disposition to be good, per se, but rather a willingness to take on and punish those who are *bad* in some sense, e.g. the bully who demands more than his fair share of a joint resource such as food. Of course, in order for cooperation to be sustained we need both of these things: that is, both the disposition to act morally in our dealings with others *and* the disposition to push back against bad behaviour when we encounter it in the flow of life, even if doing so carries considerable risks.

What does this look like in practice? As every anthropologist would expect, cooperation in everyday social encounters is a multifaceted phenomenon, something that involves not only evolving (sometimes clashing) cultural norms but also shifting group dynamics, the vagaries of individual personalities and much else besides.

For example, in the primary schools in Nanjing, China, where Kajanus has done fieldwork, classroom life is a constant flow of cooperative activities (Kajanus 2018). Children form partnerships, engage in joint activities, share, help each other, and so on. Much of this takes place without adult involvement or enforcement, e.g., when children let others sip from their bottle of hot water and share their pack of toilet paper, time their eating with friends so they finish at the same time and can leave together, or coordinate a quick game of tag during play-time. These children do indeed cooperate remarkably well, much of the time. In cooperation, however, there are always transgressions. Someone freerides and never brings a pack of toilet paper, cheats during tag or plays too rough, leading to an injury. Perhaps most annoyingly, some transgress in ways that alert the attention of adults, and sometimes bring down punishment on the entire group. When the entire class gets criticised because a few of them are messing around during the flag raising ceremony, this is acceptable. According to the norms of the children's peer group, this degree of resistance to the adult norms in the school is expected, and the children take the minor collective punishment that follows in their stride. But other transgressions are less well tolerated and lead to punishment from other children, which can take the form of second-party and/or third-party punishment (Jensen 2010). The former involves a transgressor being punished directly by their partner, for example, when a child who gets pushed in tag, pushes back. Experimental studies have also found this form of punishment in non-human species, for example in the mutualistic cooperative relationships between blue-streak wrasse and their reef-fish clients. The client fish punish mucus eating cleaners by chasing them off, which promotes cooperative behaviour from cleaner fish (Bshary & Grutter 2005). Third-party punishment, by contrast, seems to be somewhat unique to humans (Raihani et al. 2012). This refers to punishment of bad cooperators by those who are not the immediate victim of a given transgression. An example of this would be the group of children excluding the child who has pushed another player from the game of tag, despite not being hurt themselves. In the view of some theorists, it is this mechanism in particular, i.e. the willingness to dispense punishments, and especially *costly* punishments, to those who break our group-level moral expectations that underpins the human ability to have complex cultures and institutions that can survive over time, and so is foundational for human sociality and everything we might recognise as history.

Note that punishment, as defined in these literatures, is normally held to entail immediate cost and delayed benefits to the punisher (Jensen 2010; Raihani et al. 2012). For example, when a person decides to punish a bad cooperator they may suffer a physical cost of getting

into a fight with a cheater, a financial cost of losing money through severing business ties with a cheater, or the social cost of ostracising a member of their intimate social circle. In the future, however, the punisher and/or the wider social group will at least in theory benefit from the act through the enforcement of cooperation and the social norms that sustain it. It is this dynamic of immediate cost and delayed benefits that distinguishes punishment from other forms of aggression, such as retaliation and harassment, and from other mechanisms that maintain cooperation, such as sanctioning through partner choice, in which bad partners are simply avoided rather than directly sanctioned (Jensen 2010). Punishment is always costly, as understood within this framework, but the degree varies from less costly forms such as gossip, verbal reprimands, ostracism and centralized punishment (i.e., punishment that is outsourced to authority figures and institutions), to forms that are costlier for the punisher, such as direct physical aggression of the kind that might provoke a counter-attack or lead to a concrete loss of the punisher's resources (Wiessner 2005).

In the following examples of punishment among school children in Nanjing there are two points worth highlighting. The first is that punishment (with its attendant costs) can sometimes be understood as an *investment* in a cooperative relationship. By extension, looking at forms of punishment that pertain to particular transgressions can tell us a lot about the moral and ethical investments people are prepared to make in relationships that matter to them. The second point is that in order to understand how punishment-as-investment operates in actual real world settings, we must take account not only of the surrounding cultural context but also the complex interpersonal relationships that exist between given punishers and transgressors – something that itself will always be socially, culturally and historically framed.

Miss Wu, the second grade Moral Character teacher at one of the schools in Nanjing studied by Kajanus was particularly gentle and mild mannered. She often struggled to keep the classroom full of 8-year-olds under control and allowed them to watch Hollywood films during class. For the children, the Moral Character classes came as a welcome break from the endless drilling of math worksheets, and the strict demeanour of their other teachers. On one afternoon, the children were being rowdy, playing, chatting with each other and paying little attention to Miss Wu – as per normal. But for one reason or another, Miss Wu had an unusually low tolerance for noise on that day, and spent most of the class talking sternly into a microphone, trying to calm down the classroom and criticizing the children for their bad behaviour. In front of the classroom stood a board of smiley faces, which the teachers used to reward individuals for good behaviour by awarding smiley faces, and punishing them for bad behaviour by removing them. This had very limited impact on the noise level, and Miss Wu upped the punishment by making it collective. She singled out one boy, Li Wei, in particular, and blamed him for bringing down the group of four children who sat together. Miss Wu removed some smiley faces from the group, stating that because of Li Wei, the entire group was being marked down for bad behaviour. This elicited some vocal protest from the other kids in the group, who tried to defend themselves by saying that they should not be punished for Li Wei's behaviour. But Miss Wu had had it, and she further escalated the punishment by ordering that the film of the day was to be cancelled for the entire class due to Li Wei's behaviour. That day's film being *The Avengers* the children were enraged but gritted their teeth and remained quiet for the remainder of the class.

When the bell rang for play time, the children ran into the corridor and Miss Wu retreated to the teachers' office for a nap. What ensued was a collective third-party punishment (see below) in a manner that was swift, aggressive and highly costly. A group of boys attacked Li Wei, started pushing him around and kicking him. Li Wei is big, sturdy and short tempered, and the fight escalated quickly. By the time adults got to the boys to break things up, Li Wei was sitting on one of the attackers and hitting him on the head, while the other boys beat him. The fight was epic and so was the aftermath, involving crying boys, angry teachers, parents being called in, a visit to the emergency room, and all the rest. It was therefore quite astonishing to observe in the following days how quickly and seemingly easily Li Wei and the entire group move forward from it. Li Wei chatted and played with his attackers in his usual exuberant manner but took more care, at least for a while, not to annoy the teachers. The fight – the punishment – appeared actually to have reaffirmed the children's relationships, and to some extent reaffirmed the adult/teacher norms of classroom behaviour as well.

In this case – noting that most lab experiments would not seek, or be able to capture, even a fraction of the complexity – it turns out that the character of the relationships between given punishers and transgressors is extremely important. Experimental protocols have to be kept simple, of course, and by definition aim to control variables rather than taking 'everything', such as individual personalities or shifting relationships, into account. As it happens, Li Wei is well-liked by his classmates while less so by the teachers. He forgets homework, is noisy, short-tempered and always the last one to line up. But he is also fun to be around, a happy-go-lucky character who is almost always in a good mood, easy-going and who comes on board and becomes excited about things. It is precisely because of these admirable qualities that the children in this particular case are willing to engage in such costly punishment with him, even if they know from the outset that there is a high risk of hurt and injury by him, and further punishment from teachers and parents. But the role that punishment plays in the maintenance of cooperative relationships (such as friendships, in this case) will be made clearer if we compare the fight with Li Wei to the ostracism of another boy, Jia Hao, in the same classroom.

From the teachers' perspective, Jia Hao has a similar disruptive presence in the classroom as Li Wei. He is forgetful, noisy and often inattentive. In the children's group, however, his position is very different from that of Li Wei. Li Wei's main transgression was annoying the adults too much, otherwise he was fluent in the children's moral code of being a good, fun friend. Jia Hao, by contrast, tries to engage with other children, but is sensitive and easily offended when not getting his way, often causing conflict. Bigger in size than most of his classmates, he also tries to dominate by force, bullying girls or some of the smaller boys in class. He is not well-liked and most of the children simply avoid him. When Jia Hao caused trouble in games, rather than engaging in direct punishment, the children usually called for adults to remove him. Even though ostracism and avoidance are milder forms of punishment in terms of their cost to the punisher than fighting, in this case they actually have a more severe impact on the transgressor. In short, while fighting can be a way of maintaining cooperative ties, in this particular context, avoidance and ostracism are ways of excluding someone from the group altogether.

The fight with Li Wei also illustrates that in real life, cooperation is nuanced and second-

party and third-party punishment can take place in the same event. The original transgression occurred in the relationship between the teacher and Li Wei, when Li Wei failed to follow the adult norms of the school. The fight that ensued could be seen as a third-party punishment by the group of children who observed this transgression. As is characteristic of third-party punishment, the fight worked to enforce the adult norms that maintain cooperation (i.e. good behaviour) in the school. However, the school environment is permeated by more than one moral code and set of social norms. The children's own moral code values engaging in joint fun and excitement, in a manner that to an extent is incompatible with adult norms, but *not* if this means eliciting a serious punishment from adults. Li Wei broke this code when his actions resulted in the cancellation of *The Avengers*, and the fight that followed can thus also be understood as a direct second-party punishment for this.

Meanwhile, in another Nanjing school studied by Kajanus, it seemed that children rarely called on teachers to mediate transgressions in the cooperative relationships between friends. In children's peer groups, friends appeared to protect each other from the shame of public punishment by adults. But the playing out of this is often very complicated and may even involve a form of *self*-punishment, as is illustrated by the following example. Two boys, Yong Rui and Tian Lang, were sitting at their desks and using their stationary to engage in a battle. Getting too excited, Tian Lang accidentally pushed Yong Rui, which resulted in Yong Rui's notebook being ripped in half, causing him to cry. At this point the teacher noticed the commotion and called Yong Rui to her desk to receive a scolding, which Yong Rui withstood in silence without pointing to Tian Lang's involvement. He then returned to his seat but remained visibly upset, despite the comforting efforts of two girls who sat next to him. While the two girls were trying to cheer up Yong Rui, Tian Lang remained seemingly unapologetic, continuing to work on his math sheet. Suddenly he turned around, grabbed a handful of pages of the ripped notebook from Yong Rui's desk and stuffed them in his mouth. The three others giggled. Yong Rui's face lit up, and he instructed Tian Lang to take all the papers to the bin at the back of the classroom. He and the girls laughed when Tian Lang made a big show of stuffing all the pages in his mouth, and then triumphantly proceeded to take them to the bin. As he was walking back, Yong Rui extended his leg and Tian Lang tripped over it. If he was hurt, he did not show it, and while Yong Rui and the girls giggled, he got up, took a few steps back, and with an exaggerated inattentiveness, stepped forward again. Yong Rui read the cue and extended his leg for the second time, bursting into silent giggles when Tian Lang tripped over again. This scene was repeated, each time more dramatically than the last, with the two girls joining in. By the time Tian Lang was lying on the floor, pulling the legs of the three others, the teacher had to intervene again.

Notably, self-punishment is not covered in the interdisciplinary literature on cooperation, but this vignette provides an example of it – i.e. Tian Lang basically makes himself ridiculous and, in the end, actually gets himself in trouble with the teacher. The whole thing is induced by his transgression in the course of cooperation with his friend (playing too roughly), it involves self-induced cost (getting in trouble when this could very easily have been avoided), and it involves delayed benefits (i.e. in the form of a maintained cooperative relationship with his friend). While Tian Lang's actions could also be described, for example, as making amends or restoration, they therefore also fit the characteristics of a punishment, as defined in the cooperation literature. Part of what is interesting in this case is that the

punishment is initiated by the transgressor himself, rather than the victim – who precisely had done his part to protect his friend from any blame whatever. The nature of the relationship and the moral code it entails are, again, important. For the children, being fun and loyal are central values, and Yong Rui and Tian Lang restore the status quo and the fun atmosphere in a creative and ethical manner.

The culture and the consequences of punishment

None of this takes place in an historical vacuum, needless to say. On the contrary, as anthropologists would expect, a wide range of cultural-historical artefacts – including, in this particular case, Chinese ideas and practices related to friendship, schooling, teachers, authority, humour, punishment, etc. – directly influence everyday experiences of cooperation. For example, in line with the broader cultural emphasis on exemplary behaviour as a form of social control (Bakken 2000), the Chinese criminal justice system has long encouraged defendants to confess to their wrongdoings so as to speed up the criminal justice process. A key feature of traditional law was the provision that an offender who voluntarily surrendered and confessed before discovery and who made full restitution was entitled to remission of punishment. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the slogan "leniency for confession and severity for resistance" (*tanbai congkuan kangju congyan*) was made popular, and ideas linked to this still pervade the Chinese legal system and the consciousness of many ordinary people. Examining summary court documents in 1009 criminal cases from the post-Mao reform era, Lu and Miethe (2003) found that those who confessed received more favorable case dispositions than those who did not confess, even after controlling for offender and offense characteristics.

These ideas and practices surrounding confession are linked, in turn, to ideas and practices surrounding education and self-cultivation. In classical Chinese thought, selfhood was framed around the notion that the human mind is malleable, and that through an appropriate education that focuses on shaping attitudes, any person can become correctly dispositioned regardless of background. Public self-criticism, rather than simply apologizing or enduring a punishment, is one way to display attitude change (Munro 1977). Mao, for his part, made this a revolutionary priority, but it sat uncomfortably with a tradition that stressed 'not losing face'. In the famous Rectification Movement of 1942, the Communists based at Yan'an were put to the task of studying 22 educational party texts and writing confessional and self-critical autobiographies. Moreover, these were to be read out at public meetings. According to Zhao Weili (2015), this was initially met with dismay by those trained in the Confucian tradition, to whom it would necessarily provoke a deep sense of shame because of the loss of face it necessarily entailed. However, this shame was discursively reframed by the Maoists as a glorious thing and as the *moral* responsibility of any member of the Chinese Communist Party. Public confessions thus became a central practice in many of the movements and campaigns of the decades that followed.

Years later, these dynamics of shame, reform, exposure and secrecy are visible in the disciplinary practices of the elementary schools studied by Kajanus in Nanjing – however transformed they may be as a result of intervening histories, including shifting priorities in the national educational project as a whole. The relevant practices include shaming in front of other students for bad performance, self-criticism, peer-criticism, verbal reprimands and

moral lecturing (Kajanus et al. 2019). From the school's point of view, all of these are directed towards reforming attitudes, as opposed to correcting behaviours per se. In children's peer groups, however, friends sometimes protect each other from the shame and reformative practice of the public punishment by adults. Tian Lang's act of self-mockery might be viewed as reformative, on some level, but it is primarily directed at an intimate circle of friends, and in a way "matches" the shame of mild public scolding his friend had endured through Tian Lang's fault. Within the context of close friendship, protection from public punishment is used to maintain intimacy in children's groups, while in more distant relationships other forms of punishment, such as public accountability, are used.

The fact that self-punishment does not figure in the interdisciplinary debates about cooperation illustrates the potential importance of an anthropological perspective that pays attention to who is cooperating, and according to what culturally specific rules and norms, in a given setting. Moreover, as soon as we look at these real-world settings, such as the ones outlined above, we will see how our shared beliefs and practices (such as those related to traditional Chinese, and more recently Maoist, notions of moral development and public life) shape what punishment actually is and what it can really achieve. Finally, it is also the case that the punishment, when we look at this autobiographically in historical context, will be highly complex – e.g., in cases where the reaction to punishment is very different from what was intended, because individuals reject the 'moral' basis on which punishments have been dispensed (Stafford 2010).

Child development and kin *vs.* non-kin cooperation

We noted near the outset that three interlinked topics would be addressed in this chapter: the role that punishment plays in supporting cooperation; how cooperation relates to questions of learning and child development; and the relationship between kin and non-kin cooperation. The connection between the first two topics should be obvious by this point. If punishment is a way of enforcing social norms of cooperation it can also be seen as an *instructional* practice in which we learn about cooperation – for example, learn that failures in it may be sanctioned in some way, and that even one's closest friends are capable of inflicting such sanctions. Learning of this kind, which will always be culturally and historically situated, could take place at any point in life. As the examples from Nanjing illustrate, however, it certainly takes place during childhood, i.e. as we are acquiring the 'primary habitus' (Bourdieu's phrase) that will inform our subsequent agency in the world (for other ethnographic illustrations, see Fechter 2014).

This, in turn, brings us to the third topic (covered only briefly here for reasons of space). For if we study children's early experiences of 'cooperation-related learning' in a holistic manner, we will inevitably be led to ask questions about the connection between kin and non-kin cooperation. As explained above, the existing interdisciplinary work on cooperation focuses primarily on our *capacity and motivation to cooperate with non-genetically related conspecifics*, i.e. it focuses primarily on cooperation with non-kin as this category would be defined in evolutionary science. The logic of this is straightforward. As predicted by the theory of inclusive fitness, kin-based cooperation is incredibly important in all societies: we should be expected to cooperate with, and if necessary sacrifice hugely for, those with whom we share a genetic destiny. By contrast, what is surprising about humans is that we

cooperate so readily with *non*-kin and even, in many contexts, with total strangers. Much of the empirical and theoretical work in cooperation studies has thus focused on this – relatively surprising – fact about humans, which cries out for an explanation.

In itself, this is not problematic, but it does raise for us an empirical question: can one really distinguish so neatly between kin and non-kin cooperation? In fact, when it comes to real world cultural practices and folk models, the boundary between kin and non-kin others is sometimes very porous (Carsten 2000), and cultural understandings of what it even means to 'be kin' (whether conceived biologically, in some form, or sociologically) vary widely. By extension, the distinction between kin and non-kin *cooperation* is also very porous – something that has direct consequences for many (and arguably all) forms of supposed 'non-kin' cooperation. Perhaps most crucially, children's early cooperative interactions in the context of family life are certain to have both cognitive and behavioural consequences – helping shape the knowledge, skills and dispositions they bring to subsequent experiences of cooperation in the course of life, e.g. with strangers.

In a recent essay on kin and non-kin cooperation, Stafford illustrates some of these points with material from the Taiwanese community of Angang (Stafford 2018). In brief: this is a kin-saturated fishing community in which a high proportion of residents would claim kin connections to each other through agnatic or affinal connections. As a result, it is a place in which kin and non-kin cooperation overlaps significantly, e.g. local people will bump into and interact with relatives not only at home and in their (typically kin-defined) neighbourhoods, but also in schools, temples, markets, the local branch of the Fisherman's Association, and so on. While living in Angang in the late 1980s, Stafford observed a very particular kind of training that could be seen in the flow of everyday life. In brief, infants and very young children were pinched or lightly slapped by their parents – as well as by other adults (who were either close kin, distant kin, or 'kin-like friends') – and then praised if they did *not* react to this with crying or irritation. The children quickly learned not to react. Stafford was told by some people that this was just a game (and it could indeed be quite funny to watch), but by others that it was a way of teaching local children to 'take punishment'. In other words, it seemed that children were being toughened up – but why? And what consequences does this practice have?

These are not simple questions to answer. However, in Angang at that time, and to some extent more broadly in Taiwan, one found both a desire to have good, obedient, even docile children and a desire to have children who were somewhat naughty, rambunctious, noisy and tough. That is, it was seen as a good thing for children to be filial and 'cute' (in looks and behaviour) but there were also contrasting cultural models that, at least in certain contexts, took the 'bad' behaviour of children and youth as being admirable. Certainly, parents wanted their children to be resilient and to be able to withstand rough treatment as and when they encountered it in life, e.g. if they were bullied at school or when (for the boys) they went through mandatory military service. Above all, it was crucial for children to survive and, if possible, thrive so as to be able to contribute to the cooperative family projects such as the provision of elder support and the continuity of the family line (Stafford 1995). It may seem a stretch to say so, but teaching children to 'take punishment' might make a small contribution to these grand ends. As for the more immediate consequences of this training, it may have made local children a bit less responsive to being punished, e.g. by

their schoolteachers or by their friends – and even by their own parents. After all, the extent to which punishment actually works to enforce cooperation must surely depend on how people respond to it. Interestingly, by nudging their children towards toughness, an indifference to punishment, parents in this community were perhaps making their children a bit harder to control – one might suggest a bit less cooperative, at least in certain contexts (e.g. when being disciplined by school teachers). However, by strengthening them against future challenges, they were arguably investing in the parent-child relationship and in the long-term survival of the kin group (in other words: it is costly to have an undisciplined child, but it may turn out to be worth it if the child is also resilient as a consequence.)

Stepping back for a moment to historicise things: of course, the Confucian ideal would be for Chinese children to be highly loyal/obedient to parents, teachers and other elders, and to be very much under their strict control. But we shouldn't say that this is unproblematically what 'Chinese' or 'Taiwanese' parents want – there are a lot of moral codes in play here, just as there are various moral codes at play in the cases from Nanjing described above. And there is history too: in Taiwan for some decades, for example, the Japanese derived idea of *ke'ai* or cuteness has played a significant role in forming popular ideas about what children should be; while in mainland China, meanwhile, the anti-Confucianism and promotion of class conflict in the Maoist era had a significant impact on the popular morality of cooperation within and outside of families, including in relation to teachers and school based moralities in particular. None of this is static.

So, returning to the practice in Angang, what does it illustrate? First, that early experiences with kin (in this case, being taught to tolerate punishment) may have consequences for non-kin cooperation. Second, that these experiences are shaped not only by culture but also by history (in this case, Taiwanese/Chinese ideas about childhood and child behaviour have changed significantly over time). Third, as with the cases outlined above from Nanjing, that punishment-related practices (in the Angang example, over the very long term) may be viewed as an investment in a relationship, a way of helping it survive.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have looked at questions related to human cooperation, focusing in particular on punishment as a means of enforcing cooperation and taking child development processes as a domain in which to investigate this. Now, by way of conclusion, we return very briefly to the example with which we started: Olivia Harris's account of cooperative agricultural labour among the Laymi. Nothing that we have said in this chapter would oblige us to change fundamentally what Harris and other anthropologists have taught us about human cooperation. It remains the case, as for the Laymi, that cooperation is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a historical and political one (this is true in relation to ideas about punishment and child development in the contexts we have studied); it remains the case that reciprocity is a key feature of human cooperation, but that the manifestations of this are highly variable and sometimes surprising (this is true in relation to parent-child reciprocity in China, which at points in history, including quite recently, has deviated sharply from the Confucian script during the Maoist campaigns against familism as the enemy of communism); it remains the case that cooperation in one domain of life spills over into other domains of life (notably often starting with kin-based experiences of cooperation,

which are formative for us all). All of these points are important ones that scholars working in the interdisciplinary field of cooperation studies would do well to attend to. What we hope to have added to the standard anthropological accounts, meanwhile, is a set of questions regarding punishment and child development – some possibly unexpected (and thus productive) questions that might, in turn, help bring the anthropological study of cooperation into dialogue with some of the fascinating work being done by other scholars on this important topic. Moreover, as we hope to have shown, this approach helps us develop some important *comparative* questions: ones anchored in species-level understandings of what it is to be human and to engage in human cooperation.

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