

Book Review

Van Lange, Paul A. M., Bettina Rockenbach, and Toshio Yamagishi, eds. 2014. *Reward and Punishment in Social Dilemmas*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

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In her seminal book, *Governing the Commons* (1990), Elinor Ostrom identified graduated sanctions for resource appropriators who do not comply with rules as one out of eight “design principles” for the successful management of self-governed commons. She was also one of the first researchers to use economic experiments for studying the effects of punishment on cooperation levels in social dilemmas (Ostrom et al. 1992). A large empirical literature has since emerged, extending this line of research in various directions.

The present volume is the first in a series on “Human Cooperation,” and it focuses on rewards and punishment as a means to establish cooperation among humans in social dilemma situations. Although the book investigates these issues in a broad set of contexts, one can find specific references to common pool resource management throughout the volume, especially to the empirical experimental work on the topic.

The book’s twelve chapters are organized into three parts: (1) the workings of reward and punishment, (2) the organization of reward and punishment, and (3) the functions of rewards and punishment in society. The authors are from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, including anthropology, biology, economics, neuroscience, political science, psychology, and sociology. Most chapters are empirical in nature with a methodological emphasis placed on (economic) experiments. When reading the entire book, this approach leads to some redundancies in the reviewed literature. On the other hand, this structure ensures that single chapters are easily accessible for readers who are interested in a particular issue.

While reading the book, I particularly enjoyed two chapters, both of which may also be of specific interest for scholars working on the commons. First, Louis

Putterman's review of the experimental literature on punishment in voluntary contribution mechanism public good games (Chapter 2) is particularly well written. He eloquently shows how our understanding of the *endogenous* evolution of sanctioning systems is still limited. Economists have only recently started to study how externally *imposed* sanctioning and reward systems differ from those *chosen* by participants in economic experiments.

Second, Pierre Lienard's ethnographic study on monitoring among Kenyan Turkana pastoralists (Chapter 12) demonstrates how the Turkana age-set system ensures cooperation in the absence of centralized sanctioning institutions. With its focus on regional coalition networks, the chapter offers several links to concepts such as polycentricity and multi-level governance, which may be familiar to many scholars of the commons.

In summary, the book serves as a general introduction to the reward and punishment literature in social dilemma research. I strongly recommend the book to scholars of the commons who are planning to conduct social science experiments on the topic.

Literature cited

- Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, E., R. Gardner, and J. Walker. 1992. Covenants with and without a Sword: Self-governance Is Possible. *American Political Science Review* 86(2):404–417.