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Revising the Value Pluralism Model: Incorporating Social Content and Context Postulates

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One of life's painful truisms is that difficult choices are unavoidable. This truism holds up pretty well whether we are talking about managing individual lives or complex social systems. At the individual level, we run into a multitude of familiar value trade-offs: obligations to others versus self-interest, self-interest now (consumption) versus self-interest later (savings), autonomy versus intimacy, work versus family versus leisure, and the common dilemma of accountability to conflicting constituencies (in order to please this person or reference group, I must anger this other one). At a societal level, we confront an equally daunting battery of trade-offs. In political economy, there is the classic tension between social equality and economic efficiency. In international relations, there are the contradictory goals of deterrence (be strong enough to resist exploitation) and reassurance (don't be so intimidating that you scare the other side into preemptively attacking you). The list is potentially endless, but we have already made our point: the world can be a very dissonant place. It is impossible to arrange our lives and our values to escape trade-offs completely.

The original value pluralism model of ideological reasoning was an effort to explain how people cope with a wide array of personal and political value trade-offs. We have five objectives in this chapter. First, we present the early version of the value pluralism model and sketch some experimental and archival studies to test the predictions of that model. Second, we note some conceptual and empirical problems with the early value pluralism model. Third, we revise the value pluralism model in two key respects: the addition of the social content and context postulates. The social content postulate asserts that how people cope with value conflict depends on the "social content" of the colliding values—in particular, whether "secular values" have been pitted against "sacred ones." The social

context postulate asserts that how people cope with value conflict depends on the social context of decision making—in particular, whether people are accountable for their decisions and, if so, in what ways they are accountable. These postulates also identify a variety of coping strategies that although little studied in the experimental literature, have received considerable attention in political science, law, and moral philosophy—coping strategies such as concealment and obfuscation of taboo trade-offs, buckpassing and procrastination to avoid blame for imposing losses on others, and oppositional posturing to incite resentment toward those who must make trade-offs. Fourth, we examine the subtle question of whether it is possible to have a value-free value pluralism model. We urge social psychologists to resist the temptation to assume that integratively complex trade-off reasoning is either cognitively or morally superior to alternative, simpler, strategies of dodging, ducking, denying and redefining value conflict. Finally, we close by sketching some boundary conditions on the applicability of both the VPM and some of its major theoretical competitors.

THE ORIGINAL VALUE PLURALISM MODEL

Tetlock (1984, 1986) initially proposed the value pluralism model of ideological reasoning to solve a long-standing puzzle in political psychology: namely, “Why are some people and ideological groups much more willing than others to acknowledge that the world is indeed a dissonant place, that cherished values often come into conflict?” The model consisted of three interrelated sets of propositions:

1. Underlying all political belief systems are core or terminal values (Lane, 1973; Rokeach, 1973, 1979) that specify what the ultimate goals of public policy should be (e.g., economic efficiency, social equality, individual freedom, crime control, national security, racial purity, and so on). Values are the backstops of belief systems. When we press people to justify their political preferences, all inquiry ultimately terminates in values that people find it ridiculous to justify any further. Anti-abortion partisans consider “because life is sacred” a self-explanatory explanation for their position just as pro-choice partisans consider “women’s liberty” a self-justifying justification for their position.

2. Acknowledging conflict among core values is aversive for three mutually reinforcing reasons. First, it is cognitively costly to make the difficult interdimensional (apples–oranges) comparisons required in trade-off judgments (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1981). Most people do not have carefully calibrated subjective scales that lend themselves to judgments of the form: What loss of liberty would I accept to achieve this increment in public safety? Second, value conflict is emotionally painful (cf. Festinger, 1957). Most people find it dissonant to acknowledge to themselves that they have sacrificed one important value for

another. The more important the value, the greater the potential for anticipatory regret, in which people ponder what would have happened in the counterfactual world in which they chose the “other path.” Third, trade-offs are politically embarrassing. Critics can always accuse us of having chosen the wrong path, an especially tempting accusation given the psychophysical tendency for losses on the value we have sacrificed to loom larger than gains on the value we have chosen (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Politicians quite rightly see early career changes in their future when they publicly endorse trade-offs that offend substantial segments of the electorate.

- 3 Given these formidable obstacles, explicit trade-off reasoning should be both difficult and stressful. Whenever feasible, people should prefer modes of resolving value conflict that are simple and require minimal effort. These simple modes of inconsistency reduction are feasible when the conflicting values activated by a policy choice are of markedly unequal strength and value conflict is therefore weak (cf. Abelson, 1959). Under these conditions, the model hypothesizes that people will rely on the simplest of all the cognitive coping strategies: denial and bolstering. They will downplay the weaker value and they will exaggerate the stronger value (a process that dissonance theorists called spreading of the alternatives—Festinger, 1964). As value conflict intensifies, as increasingly important values come increasingly clearly into conflict, people turn to increasingly complex strategies. Initially they shift from denial and bolstering (which allow them to choose on the basis of only one value) to lexicographic strategies (which allow them to screen options on the most important value, eliminating all that do not pass some threshold, and then rely on secondary values to rank the remaining options). On the 7-point integrative complexity continuum (Tetlock, 1986), we observe a progression from the lowest possible level of complexity (scale level 1) in which decision-making is dominated by a solitary value to an intermediate level of complexity (evaluative differentiation) in which people use two or more values to screen options (scale level 3). Lexicographic strategies are still, however, strictly intradimensional decision rules. Decision-makers need only consider one value dimension at a time, thereby eliminating the need for awkward interdimensional comparisons of the form “how much of value x am I willing to give up for this much of value y?” (Cf. Payne et al. 1992; Tversky, 1971.)¹ When value conflict is most intense—when the conflicting values are

¹Lexicographic strategies such as elimination-by-aspects short-circuit the cognitive confusion and emotional angst of complex trade-off reasoning. As long as one has a clear value hierarchy that specifies when value A should trump B and when B should trump C, one can screen options one value at a time until only one option remains. Of course, the closer to equally important values become in one’s hierarchy and in the minds of evaluative observers, the more difficult it becomes to use lexicographic strategies. People become increasingly unsure which value is more important in this or that context. As soon as one starts eliminating options using one evaluative standard, one is tempted (or pressured) to re-include them in the option set using another evaluative standard. In principle, one could be trapped in the throes of Hamlet-like ambivalence forever.

not only important, but equally important and equally activated by issue cues, people turn to “conceptually integrated” strategies that specify when, why, and to what degree, one value should prevail over another (scale level 5). People make interdimensional comparisons (How much clean air am I willing to give up for this amount of economic growth?) and try to understand why reasonable people (not just fools and scoundrels) might attach different weights to the same values. Finally, at the highest levels of integrative complexity (scale level 7), we observe not only explicit trade-off reasoning, but self-conscious attempts to think about value conflict in a broader historical, institutional or systemic context. What counts as a reasonable trade-off at one time or in one setting may look patently unreasonable at other times or in other settings.

Figure 1 summarizes the key predictions of the early value pluralism model. The model leads us to expect that “integratively complex” trade-off reasoning is more likely among advocates of pluralistic ideologies—who acknowledge conflicts among core values—than among advocates of monistic ideologies—who insist that core values are mutually reinforcing. For instance, in domestic policy debates, liberals and social democrats are most committed to the often conflicting values of social equality and economic efficiency (cf. Mitchell, Tetlock, Mellers, & Ordonez, 1993). They are therefore under the greatest psychological pressure to take into account the effects of policy proposals on both values as well as to develop criteria for appropriate compromises between the two values—compromises that may take different forms in different economic and political situations. As an example of a highly integratively complex response to value conflict, we paraphrase the comments of a social democratic politician in Sweden who recently observed that a progressive tax code that struck a “reasonable” balance between equality and efficiency in the 1960s looks decidedly “unreasonable” in the 1990s when workers prefer generous unemployment benefits to lowest-paying jobs, firms move plants to lower-tax countries and black

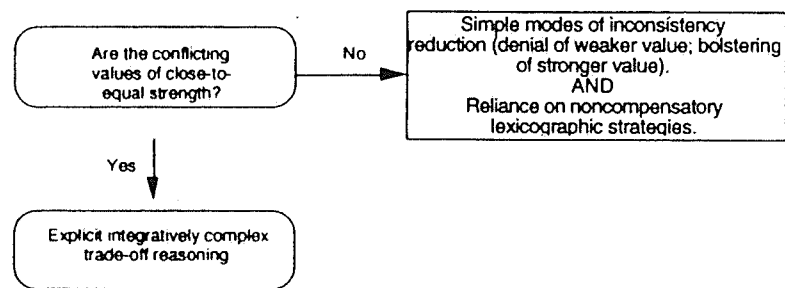


FIG. 2.1. Original value pluralism model of ideological reasoning.

markets in professional services proliferate. In his view, it is not enough to recognize a trade-off; one must recognize that there is no single equilibrium solution to equality-efficiency trade-offs. To admirers, such integratively complex trade-off reasoning is flexible, multidimensional and sophisticated; to detractors, it is unprincipled, weak, and vacillating.

In brief, the value pluralism of an ideology determines how often people experience value conflicts and how often they resort to complex strategies to cope with such conflicts. This value pluralism model had several noteworthy advantages over earlier formulations of the links between cognitive style and political ideology. As we shall soon see, the model fit existing data better than did its two major theoretical rivals: authoritarian personality theory (Adorno et al., 1950) and the ideologue hypothesis (Rokeach, 1960; Shils, 1956). And it led to novel and testable predictions, some of which were subsequently supported. But the model had serious limitations. Most notably, it underestimated the ingenuity with which both individuals and institutions cope with value conflict.

Empirical Work on Value Pluralism

Over the last twenty years, we have carried out a series of content analytic studies of the policy statements of various political elites, including United States Senators, Supreme Court justices, British Parliamentarians, members of the Soviet Politburo and others. One goal of this research program was to explore the distribution of reasoning styles across the political spectrum. Our earliest studies yielded results quite consistent with authoritarian personality theory (or the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis). This school of thought posits a special affinity between rigid, self-righteous, and defensive modes of thinking and right-wing political perspectives. Conservative political views supposedly serve ego-defensive functions that permit people to project deeply-repressed hostility toward parents onto socially acceptable scapegoats such as the poor, minorities, and foreign foes. Challenges to this ego-defensive belief structure provoke not rethinking of basic assumptions, but rather anger, intolerance, and resentment (Altemeyer, 1981). In three different samples of U.S. Senators over a thirty year period (1950–1982), we found that conservatives made less integratively complex policy statements (statements that acknowledged the legitimacy of counter-arguments and attempted to strike reasonable balances) than did their moderate and liberal counterparts. This result held up after controlling for a variety of possible confounding variables, including age, seniority, and education (Tetlock, 1981b, 1983; Tetlock Micheletti, & Hannum, 1984).

These studies of U.S. Senators were, however, far from the last word on the cognitive style-political ideology relationship. The first problem stemmed from the confounding effects of political role and the reliance on public policy statements. In most of the Congressional sessions studied, conservatives were an out-of-power minority in Congress. The lower integrative complexity of conserva-

tive policy statements may have reflected a rhetorical strategy that legislative minorities use to rally opposition to the government (sharp, unqualified criticism—a “give-em-hell” approach). The greater integrative complexity of liberals and moderates may have reflected a rhetorical strategy that dominant legislative coalitions use to justify policies that they are enacting (complex rhetoric that weighs the pros and cons of competing proposals in order to take into account the interests of diverse constituencies). This counter-interpretation gains some credence from the finding that when conservatives held majority control of the Senate and the Presidency, the differences in cognitive style between liberals and conservatives diminished sharply (Tetlock, Hannum, and Micheletti, 1984).²

The second complication stemmed from the limited ideological range of positions represented in the U.S. Senate. A defender of the ideologue hypothesis could argue that there simply were not enough representatives of the ideological left to provide a fair test of the hypothesis. In contrast to many advanced industrialized societies, there was no influential socialist or communist party in the United States.

Tetlock (1984) provided a stronger test of the cognitive style–political ideology relationship than did the earlier work on senators. The data consisted of confidential interviews that the political scientist Robert Putnam conducted with 93 members of the British House of Commons. There was good reason to believe that strategic impression management motives exerted much less influence on what politicians said in this setting than in more public settings such as press conferences or in Parliament. The politicians were willing to criticize their own party and even themselves on numerous occasions in these in-depth discussions. In addition, the British politicians represented a wider range of ideological positions than existed in the U.S. Senate. The British MPs included extreme socialists who favored nationalizing all major industries and moderate socialists who favored limited public control of major industries as well as moderate and extreme conservatives.

Complexity peaked somewhat left of center. Moderate socialists were the most integratively complex trade-off reasoners, followed by moderate conservatives, who were, in turn, more complex than extreme socialists and extreme conservatives. Although these latter two groups were least similar in the content of their political beliefs, they were most similar in the integrative complexity of their world view. These relationships between political ideology and integrative complexity remained significant after controlling for a variety of background

²This narrowing of ideological differences was due however to a sharp drop in the integrative complexity of liberals, not to a rise in complexity among conservatives. Out-of-power liberals look like out-of-power conservatives from a cognitive style perspective but in-power liberals remain more integratively complex than in-power conservatives. A purely impression management explanation is hard pressed to explain this asymmetry.

variables as well as belief and attitudinal variables assessed in the Putnam research.

In some respects, these results vindicate the ideologue hypothesis which posits that, although extremists of the left and right may disagree on almost everything, they exhibit remarkably similar styles of thinking, tending to be contemptuous of other points of view, to subscribe to simplistic views of the causes of societal problems, and to be slow to acknowledge disconfirming evidence. In the British House of Commons, extremists of the left and right were very similar to each other in integrative complexity but very different from politicians closer to the center of the political spectrum. The ideologue hypothesis is, however, inadequate as an explanatory framework. It fails to explain why the point of maximum integrative complexity is consistently displaced to the left of center. The ideologue hypothesis is merely descriptive. It simply asserts that as one departs from an ill-defined political center of gravity, one is increasingly prone to view issues in simple, dichotomous terms. But what determines where this mysterious midpoint lies? Why are liberals and moderate socialists apparently closer to it than conservatives? Why was it necessary to go as far out to the political left as radical socialists to observe a marked decline in integrative complexity?

These objections convinced us that both the rigidity-of-the-right and ideologue hypotheses provided inadequate explanations of linkages between cognitive style and political ideology. The value pluralism model offered an alternative to these static and one-dimensional analyses—an alternative in two key respects. First, the value pluralism model does not force multidimensional belief systems onto a unidimensional left–right measurement scale.³ It acknowledges that people try to promote many values through political action—values that do not correlate nearly as highly as one would expect if one assumed that people structured their thought along conventional ideological lines. It is not hard, for

³Tetlock and Boettger (1989) have noted the bizarre consequences of trying to map multidimensional political figures onto a unidimensional scale. They note that, in the final years of the former Soviet Union (1984–1991), reformist Soviet politicians—who advocated political liberalization and economic decentralization—were more integratively complex than traditionalists who opposed these measures. One could construe this finding as support for the ideologue hypothesis. Traditionalists, perhaps, represent the extreme left, which resisted introducing market incentives into the rigidly centrally planned Soviet economy; reformers, perhaps, represent the moderate left, which was willing to compromise Marxist-Leninist principles in order to stimulate efficiency and initiative. As one moves toward the center from the rigid-state-control left, one discovers greater integrative complexity. Alternatively, one could construe the same finding as support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. Soviet traditionalists, like American conservatives, are more likely to harbor deeply authoritarian commitments to traditional in-group symbols and to resent attempts to tamper with fundamental systemic values (e.g., the Protestant or socialist work ethic, law and order, free enterprise or central planning, support for free-world or progressive regimes abroad). As one moves from the center toward the right (more nationalistic forms of ideology), integrative complexity falls.

example, to identify people (including policy elites) who are liberal on social welfare policy but conservative on defense, conservative on welfare policy but liberal on defense, or conservative across the board except, say, on environmental protection and civil liberty issues. Researchers ignore this multidimensional variation in values at their peril. As we shall see when we discuss ideology-by-issue interactions, the relationships between integrative complexity and political ideology take different forms in different domains.

Second, in contrast to its theoretical rivals, which treat issue-to-issue variation in reasoning styles as random, the value pluralism model asserts that different issues "pull" or elicit complex reasoning from different ideological groups. By focusing on underlying cognitive processes that shaped policy reasoning, the VPM yields specific predictions concerning the forms that complexity-ideology relationships should take in different domains.

The VPM nicely fits early data which indicated that advocates of centrist and moderate left wing causes thought about policy issues in more integratively complex ways than did advocates of conservative causes. In this zone of the political spectrum, we were especially likely to find politicians who valued both social equality and economic efficiency, environmental protection and economic growth, crime control and civil liberties, and deterring Soviet expansion and maintaining good working relations with that country to preserve the peace. From the VPM perspective, the point of maximum integrative complexity was often "left-shifted" because that was the point of maximum value conflict, at least on many issues in that period of history.

The VPM also clarified how far one must go to the left or right for integrative complexity to decline: to the point where conflict between core values begins to diminish sharply. For example, in domestic policy debates in the United Kingdom of 1968, one would expect to find—and one actually does find—a sharp reduction in integrative complexity of reasoning as one moves from moderate socialists who placed nearly equal importance on economic efficiency and social equality to extreme socialists for whom concern for equality dominates concern for efficiency. Similarly, one would expect to find and does find a reduction in complexity of thought as one moves from moderate socialists to moderate conservatives (for whom economic efficiency is a dominant value) to extreme conservatives (for whom economic efficiency is the overwhelmingly dominant value).

The VPM is, however, tricky to test. We need to make assumptions about what values are important to people, the extent to which the world places values in conflict, and the extent to which people perceive values to be in conflict. The VPM becomes a thinly veiled tautology if we are allowed to make empirically convenient ad hoc assumptions about value importance and value conflict. It is trivially simple to "explain" any pattern of data if we proceed down that path.

We have, however, conducted laboratory studies that experimentally control, and archival studies that statistically control, for the influence of value conflict on cognitive style-political ideology relationships. For instance, Tetlock (1986)

obtained two types of information from a non-elite (college student) sample: (a) subjects' rank order evaluations of the importance of 18 terminal values from the Rokeach Value Survey (values that included national security, natural beauty, economic prosperity, equality, and freedom); (b) subjects' support for six public policy positions and their thoughts on each issue (e.g., redistributive income policies, domestic CIA activities, defense spending). Each of these policy issues had been selected on the basis of careful pretest scaling data indicating that the issue clearly brought two values from the Rokeach Value Survey into conflict. For instance, the defense spending question was phrased so as to activate tension between the values of national security and economic prosperity. On five of six issues, people reported more integratively complex trade-off cognitions to the degree the policy domain activated conflicting values that people held to be both important in their value hierarchy and close to equally important. This study demonstrated that we should not assume certain ideological groups will always be more integratively complex than others. Although there are main effects, there is also lawful ideology-by-issue variation in complexity of thought. For example, liberals were more integratively complex about raising taxes to redistribute income to the poor (economic prosperity versus equality) but conservatives were more integratively complex about raising taxes to increase defense spending (national security versus prosperity) and violating civil liberties of suspected spies by wiretapping their phones (national security versus liberty). The complexity of one's reasoning in an issue domain is a function of the intensity of value conflict activated by that issue domain.

Several investigators have independently reported findings that reinforce this conclusion. Suedfeld, Bluck, Loewen, and Elkins (1994) show that patterns of value conflict help to explain individual variation in integrative complexity among student political activists of varying ideological loyalties. Suedfeld and Walbaum (1992) also show that intensity of value conflict predicts integrative complexity. Liberman and Chaiken (1991) combine Tesser's (1978) work on thought-induced attitude polarization with the VPM. They hypothesized and found that people develop more extreme attitudes toward a policy as a function of the time spent thinking about the policy, only when they are in a state of low value conflict (one of the activated values is much more important than the other). By contrast, people in a state of high value conflict tend to "depolarize" as a function of how long they think about the issue. The Liberman and Chaiken findings were not, however, completely consistent with VPM. The depolarization effect was somewhat weak and value conflict itself was a function only of differential value ranking and not of average value importance.

Shifting back to archival research, Tetlock, Armor, and Peterson (1994) tested the VPM by assessing both value priorities and integrative complexity in political debates over slavery in pre-Civil War America. With the advice of several historians, these investigators classified 32 prominent political figures of the 1850s into one of four distinct political positions: Radical Abolitionists, Free-Soil Re-

publicans who tolerated slavery in the South but opposed its spread to new territories, Buchanan Democrats who supported Southern states' right to slaves and would permit slavery in new territories if local majorities so favored, and advocates of slavery who favored Southern secession if slavery were not recognized as a constitutionally protected property right. A functional relationship emerged between political ideology and integrative complexity in antebellum America that quite closely mirrored the relationship observed in the British House of Commons during the Prime Ministership of Harold Wilson. Again, integrative complexity peaked somewhat left of center. Integrative complexity was highest among Free-Soil Republicans, followed by Buchanan Democrats, with sharp declines in integrative complexity as we moved either leftward toward Radical Abolitionists or rightward toward fire-eater advocates of slavery. Integrative complexity was also a positive function of endorsing values widely regarded as in conflict in that historical period: especially property rights, state's rights, and domestic peace versus the threat of Southern slave power to free labor and democracy. Once again, value conflict and integrative complexity tracked each other (although there was substantial unexplained residual variance).⁴

THE REVISED VALUE PLURALISM MODEL

Notwithstanding the empirical support for the original value pluralism model, we became convinced that the original formulation was too simplistic. We reached this position for two reasons. First, integratively complex trade-off reasoning is a relatively rare cognitive phenomenon. It is common—in both experimental and archival studies—for 50% to 60% of statements coded for integrative complexity to receive the lowest possible score (1) which indicates a complete denial of ambiguity, uncertainty, or conflict. Although there are some individual difference exceptions, it is also common for less than 10% of thought-sample statements coded to manifest either implicit or explicit awareness of value trade-offs (scores of 4 or higher on a 7-point scale). From these observations, we can conclude

⁴In addition to the strong possibility that value conflict is not the only cause of integratively complex reasoning, there are several possible explanations for the unexplained variation. Some raise obvious methodological issues. We failed to measure all the conflicting values or our measures were imperfect. Other possibilities are more theoretically intriguing. The conceptual connections that people forge between abstract values and concrete policy are sometimes startling, at least to those who lack the historian's in-depth knowledge of particular ways of life. For instance, most 20th century observers are startled that "fire-eater" Southern politicians could defend slavery by invoking the values of liberty and equality. Surely those values "belong" to the other side, to the abolitionists. By and large, they do. But some fire-eaters argued (and apparently with great conviction) that restrictions on their freedom to own slaves outside the South violated their equality and liberty as citizens of the republic; after all, Northerners could move their "property" across state lines without fear of forfeiture or confiscation. The key theoretical point is that values are remarkably slippery social constructions that take on different meanings over time and across political cultures.

either that value conflict is a much less pervasive feature of the human condition than we asserted at the outset of this chapter or that people have invented a much wider range of strategies of coping with value conflict. Second, research developments in fields adjoining social psychology—behavioral decision theory, moral reasoning, public policy studies of legislators and government agencies—highlight alternative strategies of circumventing, concealing, and avoiding value trade-offs.

To be specific, whether one responds to value conflict in an integratively complex fashion depends on two classes of moderator variables not specified in the earlier formulation: (a) the social content of the colliding values (in particular, the meaning that people attach to competing values and the normative acceptability of trade-off reasoning); (b) the social context of decision-making (in particular, the types of accountability demands on decision-makers). These moderators influence coping responses to value conflict by affecting the strength of the cognitive, emotional and social-identity obstacles to complex trade-off reasoning identified in the original statement of the VPM. The social-content postulate of the revised value pluralism model reminds us that some value trade-offs are much more emotionally and morally wrenching than are others. Attaching a monetary value to a bottle of wine or house or the services of a gardener can be a cognitively demanding task but raises no questions about the morality of the judge (at least within this political culture); attaching monetary value to human life or familial obligations or national honor seriously undermines one's social identity or standing in the eyes of others (Schlenker, 1980). Proposals to exchange "sacred" values for secular ones (money, time, convenience, . . .) constitute taboo trade-offs and activate their own distinctive set of coping responses. They do so because even contemplating such trade-offs is normatively unacceptable—something to be condemned if one is an observer of the decision process and something to be concealed if one is the decision-maker.

The social-context postulate of the revised VPM reminds us that institutional-political accountability demands can dramatically lower or raise thresholds for complex trade-off reasoning. People do not make decisions in a social vacuum; they live and work in complex webs of accountability in which they frequently wonder "How will others react if I do this or that?" Depending on contextual cues, these accountability demands can either strengthen or weaken each of the hypothesized obstacles to trade-off reasoning. Some forms of accountability heighten concern for minimizing potential blame ("I don't want to think of myself as that type of person and I don't want others to think of me that way"), encouraging decision-avoidance tactics such as buckpassing and procrastination (Tetlock & Boettger, 1994). Other forms of accountability encourage demagoguery and sloganeering (Tetlock, 1981a), as when one is responsible not for making prudent long-term policy but rather for whipping up opposition to trade-offs among people with well-known prejudices and limited knowledge (e.g., mass publics in contemporary democracies). Still other forms of accountability encour-

age vigilant, self-critical analysis of options, as when one is accountable prior to making a decision to a knowledgeable audience with unknown views or high performance standards (Tetlock, 1983).

The Social-Content Postulate

There is an anti-content bias in much of cognitive psychology (cf. Cosmides, 1989). A good cognitive theory should be comprehensive; it should capture how people think across a wide range of content domains. The original value pluralism model was offered in this parsimonious and universalistic spirit, as an effort to explain when people deny or confront value trade-offs in general. By implication, the identity of the conflicting values was irrelevant. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, a trade-off was a trade-off was a trade-off.

The social-content postulate backs off from that sweeping commitment. It acknowledges that how people think about trade-offs depends on what they are thinking about. In our political culture, people deem some trade-offs legitimate but reject other trade-offs as contemptible because they treat "sacred values"—life, liberty, justice, honor—as fungible into the "secular values" of money, time, and convenience (cf. Durkheim, 1925/1973). This resistance to cross-domain trade-offs is puzzling from a micro-economic perspective which reduces all values to a single utility metric, but not at all surprising within a value pluralism framework that stresses the qualitative diversity of reasons that people have for liking or disliking things. From the perspective of the value pluralism model, we should expect sharp resistance to reductionist attempts to translate all values onto a common scale (resistance that reminds us of Oscar Wilde's amusing (albeit unfair) definition of an economist as someone who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing). Under certain conditions, people are better thought of not as "intuitive economists" but rather as intuitive theologians who seek to shield sacred values from the universal solvent of money.

What accounts for the sharp resistance to the notion of a unified utility metric on which people weigh all conflicting values? In part, opposition is rooted in the old "incommensurability" problem. People find it cognitively difficult to make apples-oranges interdimensional comparisons. This explanation is, however, inadequate. Such comparisons are hard, but we implicitly or explicitly make them every time we go shopping, or decide not to go shopping. Moreover, we don't find it embarrassing or shameful to admit that we make trade-offs between money and the wine or meat or leisure time that we consume. It is not only acceptable to think in integratively complex trade-off terms about one's household budget; we expect, indeed require, secular-secular trade-offs of all competent, self-supporting adults in competitive market economies. Perhaps for this reason, examination of within-individual, cross-issue variation in integrative complexity often reveals that scores peak when people discuss their household budgets (Tetlock, unpublished data).

Opposition to reducing all values to a single utility or monetary metric runs deeper than mere "incommensurability"; it is rooted in the concept of "constitutive incommensurability" that plays an important role in both modern moral philosophy (Lukes, 1991, Raz, 1982; Williams, 1980) and in classic sociological theory (Durkheim, 1925/1973). The guiding idea is that our commitments to other people require us to deny that we can quantitatively compare the values of certain things. To transgress this normative boundary, to attach a monetary value to one's friendships or one's children or one's academic integrity, is to disqualify oneself from certain social roles, to demonstrate that one is not a true friend or parent or scholar. We run into "constitutive incommensurability" of values whenever treating values as commensurable subverts one or both of the values to be entered into the trade-off calculus. To compare is to destroy. To think about certain trade-offs is to weaken, corrupt, and degrade one's standing as a moral being. In Joseph Raz's words: ". . . it is impoverishing to compare the value of a marriage with an increase in salary. It diminishes one's potentiality as a human being to put a value on one's friendship in terms of improved living conditions." Durkheim (1925/1973) expressed the same sentiment in more sociological language when he observed that in both "primitive religious" and "advanced secular" societies, people ascribe a "transcendental quality" to the fundamental values of their social order. We should not be surprised, therefore, when sophisticated citizens of secular societies tenaciously resist treating sacred values as objects of utilitarian calculation. Their attitude is less one of market or political calculation than it is that of believers to their god, a stance of absolute faith that imposes an "aura" or "mysterious barrier" around social morality. This Durkheimian perspective leads us to expect that violations of sacred values will provoke both moral outrage and cries for punishment. Secular-sacred trade-offs are more than cognitively perplexing; they are deeply disturbing.

The revised value pluralism model treats constitutive incommensurability as a critical moderator of how people respond to value conflict. Confronted by constitutive incommensurability, people will adopt one of two stances, depending on whether they are cast in the role of actors (decision-makers) or observers (judges of decision-makers).

When resource scarcity compels people to make decisions that violate the normative ban on taboo trade-offs, people will make massive impression management efforts to conceal, obfuscate or redefine what they are doing (Calabresi & Bobbitt, 1978; Elster, 1992). Decision-makers will construct institutional buffers between themselves and evaluative observers—buffers that promote secrecy and anonymity (observe the decision-making practices of central banks, many regulatory agencies and, closer to home, affirmative action committees in universities).⁵ Decision-makers will also resort to vague rhetorical appeals to shared

⁵People who are thrust into roles that require making tragic choices seek secrecy for good reason. The classic example is early demand for kidney dialysis. In 1961, as demand for dialysis soared, the

values that obscure the trade-offs being made. These rhetorical obfuscations—"the Federal Reserve seeks to maximize long-term prosperity," "OSHA would never put a price tag on life" or "the admissions committee believes that diversity is excellence"—disguise the politically unpalatable fact that decision-makers are prepared to trade off current jobs to contain future inflation, the loss of lives in work-place accidents to reduce regulatory burdens on business, and the imposition of higher college admissions standards on some racial groups to compensate for past and perhaps current discrimination. Our point is not, of course, that these decision-makers are doing something immoral. The political merits of each policy can be debated endlessly. Our point is that decision-makers do not like to acknowledge—in private and especially in public—that they are making taboo trade-offs. In many cases, to discuss the trade-off openly and honestly is to commit political suicide.

The revised value pluralism model also predicts that people will resist induction into decision-making roles that require making forbidden trade-offs. Many people will refuse to respond or will respond indignantly (what kind of person do you think I am?). Respondents will even challenge the morality and integrity of the interviewer (what kind of person would pose such a question?). Research on the contingent valuation method of assessing the dollar value that people place on public goods illustrates these reactions. When survey interviewers ask people what amount of money would persuade them to accept more polluted lakes, dirtier air, or the loss of an endangered species (Mitchell & Carson, 1989), half or more of the respondents often refuse to state any amount, as though to attach less than infinite value to such political objectives would be *prima facie* evidence of immorality.

A recent exploratory study clarifies when trade-off questions spark indignation and punitive responses (Tetlock, unpublished data). Berkeley undergraduates were asked a series of questions that explored their willingness to treat various values as fungible (possessing a dollar value). Although there were ideological exceptions (Marxists at one end of the political continuum and libertarians at the other),⁶ most people believed it was permissible and moral to buy

Seattle Artificial Kidney Center Admission and Policy Committee (otherwise known as the God Committee) was charged with deciding which applicants would receive the treatment (and therefore who would live or die). It does not take a lot of political imagination to realize that, no matter what this committee did, its members should have been prepared for public vilification. When *Life* magazine revealed that the committee's decision strategy included weighting factors such as sex of the patient, marital status, number of dependents, income, net worth, emotional stability, educational background, past performance, and future potential, there was an avalanche of criticism (Calabresi & Bobbitt, 1978).

⁶Of the 90 participants in this research, we made special efforts to recruit 12 libertarians and 14 Marxists from Berkeley campus political organizations and responses to an attitude questionnaire. Libertarians allowed the market to encroach into traditionally forbidden domains (surrogate mothers for hire, payment for one's body organs and one's vote) whereas Marxists were inclined to ban the market in traditionally permitted domains (the right to profit from the sale of one's property and labor).

and sell most forms of labor and property, but that it was immoral to attach monetary value to human organs, human lives or basic rights of citizenship. For example, 90% of respondents had no objection to mutually consenting adults entering into contracts to perform such services as cooking, cleaning or painting, or to exchange tangible goods such as housing, clothing, or cars, but support plummeted close to zero when we asked whether it was acceptable to sell one's right to a jury trial or one's vote, or to offer for a fee to go to jail for someone else. The latter transactions fell in the category of "blocked exchanges" (Walzer, 1983). When we asked people for their reactions to possible trade-offs between money and traditionally fungible and non-fungible objects of exchange, we also found sharp, qualitative shifts in emotional and cognitive reactions. People experienced little emotional distress at the prospect of monetizing the skills of a gardener or the value of a house, but they were angered and indeed insulted by questions that explored monetizing organs, lives, and democratic rights ("what kind of person do you think I am?"). In addition to deep emotional distaste, people responded in a punitive attributional fashion to the posing of the question. They often assumed that the questioner must be of dubious moral character. We call this combination of emotional and cognitive reactions—anger, indignation and questioning the character of anyone who could possibly think that way—the "outrage response." We suspect that it is a defining feature of reactions to trade-offs that breach the secular-sacred divide.

In sum, there are some value-trade-off questions that we pay a penalty for even posing. These exploratory data forge a functionalist link between the actor and observer predictions of the social-content postulate: decision-makers (actors) conceal and obfuscate taboo trade-offs because they know that observers will judge them harshly for even contemplating such trade-offs.⁷

⁷In addition to the novel predictions noted in the text, the social content postulate of the revised VPM casts a new light on existing effects in the research literature. Consider, for instance, the endowment effect: the tendency for people to demand much more to give up an object than they would be willing to pay to acquire it. The effect is robust and replicable. Reviewing a series of elegant choice and exchange experiments, Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler (1991) show that people are often willing to pay only half as much for recently acquired objects as they demand as payment for giving up the same objects (a 2:1 ratio of willingness to accept/willing to pay). This effect generalizes across a wide range of consumer goods (lottery tickets, emblem mugs, pens, and so on) and holds up in even competitive market settings (as even the skeptical behavioral economist, Vernon Smith, 1994, concedes).

Whereas prospect theory traces the endowment effect to loss aversion and the psychophysics of the gain-loss function, the revised VPM traces the endowment effect to the tendency of people to view the objects that the experimenter transferred into their possession as gifts, with all the socio-emotional implications of gifts. In our culture, it is counternormative simply to cash in gifts. Doing so comes dangerously close to attaching a dollar value to the love or respect that the gift expresses. Subjects in endowment experiments may feel constrained by past normative experience from simply turning around and selling something that someone has given them.

This argument suggests that it should be possible to eliminate the endowment effect altogether by experimentally deactivating all norms pertaining to gifts and guaranteeing sellers complete anonym-

The Social-Context Postulate. Although it is less pronounced than the anti-content bias, there has also been an anti-context bias in cognitive psychology. To be sure, cognitive theories often make strong predictions concerning how contextual cues influence judgment and choice (e.g., framing, priming). Nonetheless, the aspiration has been to identify fundamental laws of human thought (grounded in psychophysics or associative network models or schema theory) that hold true regardless of the context in which people happen to find themselves. The early value pluralism model followed in this universalistic spirit. The social-context postulate retreats from this commitment. It acknowledges that, if we want to understand how people respond to value conflict, we need to locate the decision-maker in a matrix of accountability relationships that strengthen or weaken the three motivational obstacles to trade-off reasoning: the desires to conserve cognitive effort, to protect self-esteem, and to avoid blame.

Research has thus far identified three distinctive ways in which accountability demands moderate responses to value conflict. One is by heightening decision-makers' concern for avoiding blame. If decision-makers believe that they will be blamed by one or another audience no matter what position they take on a trade-off problem, we should expect—following the Janis and Mann (1977) conflict model—that decision-makers will resort to the avoidance tactics of buckpassing (shift responsibility to others) and procrastination (delay decision-making).

The work of Tetlock and Boettger (1994) illustrates how accountability amplifies avoidance of trade-off decisions. The study simulated Food and Drug Administration decisions to admit prohibited drugs onto, or keep approved drugs on, the U.S. pharmaceuticals market. Researchers told subjects that the FDA had the power both to prevent the adoption of drugs and to remove drugs currently in use, and that they wanted subjects to role play FDA regulators whose task was to determine whether a particular anti-clotting drug (Carozile) should either be allowed onto the market (change the status quo) or be allowed to remain on the market (retain the status quo). They also told subjects about the likely risks and benefits of the drug: either no one, 100 people, or 300 people would be killed by side-effects, and either 300, 600, or 900 people would be saved. They then asked subjects to judge the permissibility of the drug under either total anonymity or public accountability. In particular, they assessed the degree of risk from the drug that subjects were willing to tolerate, the tendency to avoid blame by procrastinating or buckpassing, and the degree of conflict or ambivalence that people experienced in decision making through both rating scale and thought-protocol data.

The results revealed how aversive value conflict can be when one is publicly accountable for a decision that requires imposing a loss on one group in order to confer a greater benefit on another. There was a surge of interest in delaying the

ity (so they don't have to confront the imagined hurt stares of the experimenter whose gift they have so casually liquidated).

decision for a year (the maximum allowed) whenever subjects were publicly accountable for deciding whether to allow a currently banned drug that would save 300, 600, or 900 lives at the cost of either 100 or 300 lives. Decision-makers did not want to take responsibility for either side-effect casualties or for denying society the benefit of a drug that would save hundreds of lives. Caught in what they perceived to be a no-win political conflict, decision-makers tried to delay the day of reckoning, even though they had been told that the likelihood of finding a breakthrough drug without side-effects in the "permissible delayed-action period" was virtually zero.

Tetlock and Boettger (1994) also assessed the dependent variable of buckpassing. When people believed they had the option of referring the decision to someone else—in this case, a fictitious government agency known as the Agency for Cost Benefit Analysis—they seized upon the opportunity with alacrity. Again, we saw a surge of decision referrals among publicly accountable subjects contemplating admitting a drug that will kill some people but save even more. Subjects (especially integratively complex thinkers) were uncomfortable with both of the options confronting them: taking the responsibility for approving a drug that would kill some people or taking responsibility for rejecting a drug that would have a positive benefit to society as a whole. They sought to escape this discomfort by both procrastinating and buckpassing.

Dilemmas of this sort are by no means unusual; rather, they are the essence of political struggles over resources and entitlements. Given the well-established tendency for losses to loom larger than gains in value trade-offs (by a ratio of 2:1 in prospect theory, Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), it seems reasonable to hypothesize a strong motive among politicians to delay or redirect responsibility whenever decisions require imposing losses on well-defined constituencies (see also Beattie, Baron, & Spranca, 1994). In this political calculus, the friends one gains will be more than offset by the enemies one makes. It should not be surprising that buckpassing and procrastination are common documented patterns of coping among both legislators and regulatory agencies (cf. Wildavsky, 1978).

The second and third pathways of accountability effects alter the incentives and disincentives for integratively complex trade-off thinking. Decision-makers sometimes face accountability pressures that strongly discourage explicit trade-off reasoning; other times, decision-makers face the pressures that demand it. As noted earlier, Tetlock, Hannum & Micheletti (1984) argued from data on senatorial speeches that the role of minority or opposition party created the former set of incentives and the role of majority or governing party created the latter (see also Gruenfeld, 1995). Both the opposition and governing parties seek the approval of a relatively ill-informed audience (the mass public) but do so within radically different political constraints. The majority party must actually govern and is held responsible, rightly or wrongly, for the state of the nation. Accordingly, it has strong incentives to fashion prudent long-term policies that balance the interests of competing constituencies, never completely satisfying everyone and

continually having to explain "On the one hand . . . on the other . . ." to each constituency that feels it has been denied its due. The opposition party is much less constrained. It can nurture various constituencies' grievances by engaging in simple rhetorical posturing that depicts the government as foolish, duplicitous, and immoral and that offers plenty of unconditional (and probably unrealistic) promises. It is possible, of course, for the opposition to become too demagogic and to lose credibility, but available evidence suggests that American politicians consider it an advantage to be on the integratively simple offensive (Tetlock, 1981a).

Experimental research makes a similar point about the power of different types of accountability to create incentives or disincentives for complex trade-off reasoning. Accountability manipulations motivate people to recognize trade-offs only when we experimentally foreclose simple strategies of coping with accountability such as "telling people what they want to hear" (the acceptability heuristic). When people are accountable to an audience with known political views, liberal or conservative, they often adjust their opinions in the direction of the audience but show no more awareness of counterarguments or trade-offs. By contrast, when people are accountable to an audience with unknown views or to audiences with conflicting views, there is no simple solution to the accountability predicament and people respond with "pre-emptive self-criticism". In effect, they acknowledge trade-offs and legitimate objections that reasonable critics might raise (cf. Tetlock, 1983; Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989).

Taken together, archival work on the effects of political roles and experimental work on accountability sharply qualify the original VPM prediction that decision-makers respond to clear conflicts between important values in an integratively complex trade-off fashion; the revised VPM asserts that complex trade-off reasoning will be activated only when decision-makers are accountable to an audience that cannot be appeased by simple stratagems such as oppositional posturing, ingratiation or attitude shifting. These simple tactics cease to be viable when we are accountable for the long-term consequences of the decisions we make (as occurs when one's political party takes over the government), when we are accountable to especially sophisticated or knowledgeable audiences, and when we are accountable to audiences with unknown or conflicting views.

Figure 2 summarizes the key predictions of the revised value pluralism model. Whereas the original model predicted that people turned to integratively complex coping strategies whenever they confronted a serious value conflict that could not be resolved via denial and bolstering, or lexicographic screening, the revised model identifies a much wider array of options for decision-makers. The social-content postulate alerts us to the fierce indignation that taboo trade-offs trigger. Decision-makers who must make such trade-offs will shroud the process in secrecy and try to conceal what they have done under cover of vague rhetorical appeals to shared values. The social-context postulate alerts us to the powerful role that accountability demands play in selecting strategies of coping with value

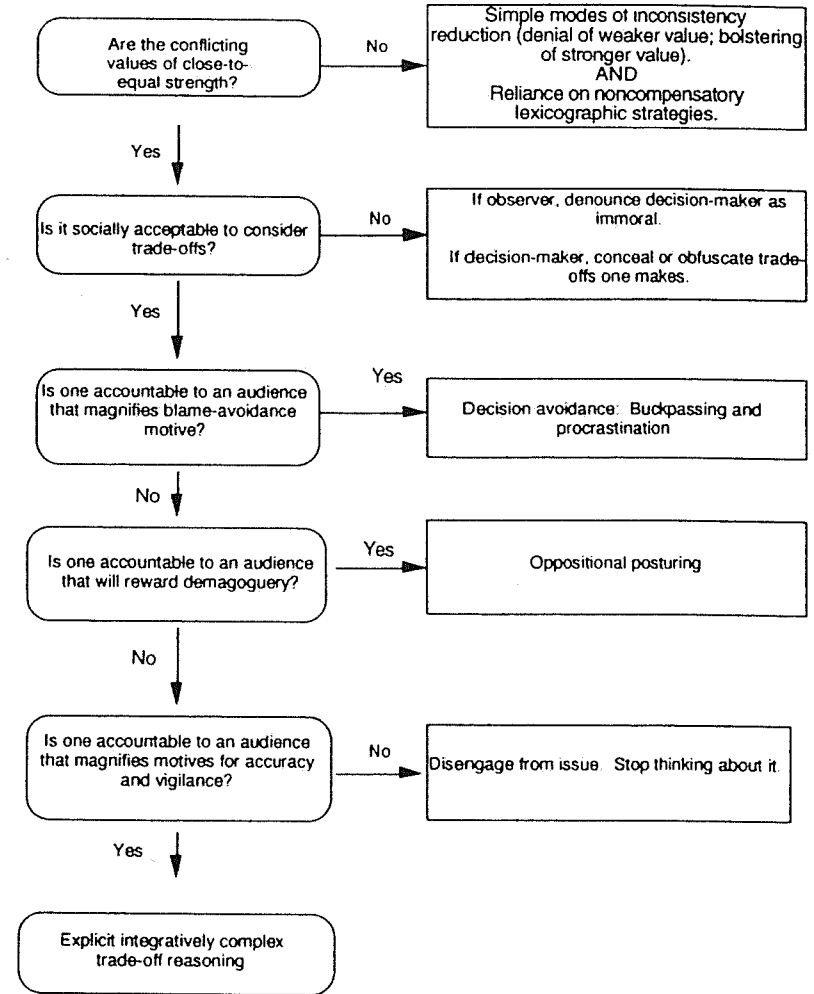


FIG. 2.2. Activating conditions for coping strategies in revised value pluralism model.

conflict. Accountability can promote buckpassing and procrastination by heightening the blame-avoidance motive; it can promote oppositional posturing by giving decision-makers the goal of arousing anger in apathetic and ill-informed audiences; and it can promote integratively complex trade-off reasoning by compelling decision-makers to answer to knowledgeable audiences who cannot be easily appeased by simple ingratiation tactics.

Is a Value-Free Value Pluralism Model Possible?

Although it is tempting to play political favorites and to applaud one coping strategy or to denounce another, the VPM is a descriptive and explanatory theory, not a normative one. We subscribe to the old-fashioned, neo-positivist view that it is possible to document strategies of coping with value conflict, and the conditions for activating those strategies, without taking any stand on the appropriateness of the values involved or conflict resolution strategies employed. We recognize, however, that "value pluralism" is a politically charged phrase, with enthusiastic advocates and detractors.

Perhaps the most eminent proponent of value pluralism in political philosophy is Isaiah Berlin (1969, p. 167–169) who declared that "conflicts of value are an intrinsic, irremovable element in human life: we are continually faced with choices between ends equally ultimate and claims equally absolute, the realization of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others . . . the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other." For instance, "the extent of a people's liberty to choose to live as they desire must be weighed against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples." Berlin counsels us to be deeply suspicious of Utopian promises of a perfectly harmonious society that reconciles all of our aspirations. Conflicts among values are inevitable and admit of only imperfect compromises and partial, temporary solutions. Our world is one in which legitimate ends clash irreconcilably. To quote Isaiah Berlin again: "should democracy in a given situation be promoted at the expense of individual freedom; or equality at the expense of artistic achievement, or mercy at the expense of justice, or spontaneity at the expense of efficiency; or happiness, loyalty, and innocence at the expense of knowledge and truth? The simple point which I am concerned to make is that where ultimate values are irreconcilable, clear cut solutions cannot, in principle, be found."

Isaiah Berlin is an unapologetic advocate of integratively complex responses to value conflict. In *Four Essays on Liberty*, he notes that

"If the claims of two (or more than two) types of liberty prove incompatible in a particular case, and if this is an instance of the clash of values at once absolute and incommensurable, it is better to face this intellectually uncomfortable fact than to ignore it, or automatically attribute it to some deficiency on our part which could be eliminated by an increase in skill or knowledge, or, what is worse still, suppress one of the competing values altogether by pretending that it is identical with its rival—and so end by distorting both."

In psychological terminology, Berlin warns us to eschew simple, low-effort modes of dissonance reduction and to embrace complex, emotionally-draining cognitive strategies that specify trade-offs between (among) legitimate competing concerns.

We think it, however, a mistake—one likely to retard scientific progress—to view the value pluralism model as an empirical counterpart to Berlin's normative theory of political pluralism. There is no need to repeat Kohlberg's error in the domain of moral reasoning in the domain of policy reasoning; there is no more psychological justification for positing Kantian categorical imperatives to be the pinnacle of ethical reasoning than there is for anointing integratively complex policy reasoning superior to integratively simple policy reasoning. It is easy to find historical situations or to create laboratory ones in which a resounding majority of "reasonable" observers (social scientists included) will applaud integratively simple responses to value conflict—"value X must trump value Y"—and deplore integratively complex responses—"values X and Y should be weighted in this fashion in this class of situations but in that fashion in that class of situations."

The study of the slavery debate provides an instructive cautionary tale. Most behavioral scientists tend to be more left-of-center than the general population in their political sympathies and more integratively complex than the general population in cognitive style (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1991). There is thus a double temptation to put a positive value spin on the tendency for integrative complexity to peak in the left-center range of the political continuum on many issues. The slavery debate illustrates how dramatically, over the course of 150 years, value judgments of value conflict can change. The moderate center-left of the political spectrum in antebellum America was occupied by Free-Soil Republicans (foremost among them, Abraham Lincoln) who sought a political compromise that permitted slavery in the South while forbidding it to expand into new territories. A value trade-off that many once judged reasonable (limited slavery in return for national unity and avoidance of war) now looks patently unacceptable. It is a mistake to identify integratively complex trade-off reasoning as inherently more moral than simpler, more absolutist forms of reasoning.

The slavery debate is no isolated example. Many people on both the political left and political right want the Food and Drug Administration to use a simple cost-benefit rule for admitting drugs that treat life-threatening conditions (Tetlock & Boettger, 1994). Their implicit reasoning seems to be: If I am dying and the most effective available drug increases my chances of survival by, say, 25%, I want the doctor to be able to use that drug and not to be second-guessed by an integratively complex panel of deontological bioethicists who wonder whether a drug that kills anyone, under any conditions, no matter how dire, should be permitted in the U.S. pharmaceuticals market. Or, to turn to another historical example, with benefit of hindsight, almost everyone (save a few revisionist naysayers) believes that Winston Churchill was a wiser judge of events, and shrewder framer of options, with respect to British policy toward Nazi Germany in the 1930's than were the advocates of appeasement. Churchill offered a starkly simple dichotomy: prepare to defend the liberty and sovereignty of British allies on the continent or submit to brutal Nazi hegemony over Europe. Chamberlain

offered a nuanced integratively complex trade-off between the goals of deterrence and reassurance: build British defenses to communicate resolve but do so cautiously and prudently to avoid provoking Germany (cf. Tetlock & Tyler, in press).

These examples show that our value judgments of value trade-offs are not easily divorced from our judgments of the degree to which situations threaten particular values (subjective probability judgments of the form "If we do X or Y, this or that is likely to happen") and our judgments of the degree to which one value merits priority over another (judgments ultimately grounded in backstop moral commitments that, from the decision-maker's perspective, require no further justification). There is nothing inherently good about integratively complex trade-off reasoning.

The argument does not, however, end here. A committed value pluralist could concede these counterexamples—contexts where value monism seems more appropriate than value pluralism—but still insist that, given the practical realities of human affairs, decision-makers who are incapable of integratively complex trade-off reasoning are not up to the challenge of managing a household budget, less still an entire society for any prolonged period of time. Resource scarcity, volatile expectations, social interdependence, and competing interest groups make trade-offs inevitable. Decision-makers ignore this fundamental feature of social life at their peril. This counterargument is powerful. It persuades us that integratively complex trade-off reasoning must be in the cognitive repertoire of any competent politician, administrator or business executive. Effective decision-makers must decide how to decide, a tricky meta-decision-making task that requires weighing the values at stake, information search costs, accountability demands and procedural constraints. We simply caution against the *automatic* presumption that integratively simple reasoning is either cognitively or morally inferior to integratively complex reasoning.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The revised VPM is open to theoretical challenges from many intellectual directions. In closing, we consider two contradictory criticisms that help to clarify the range of circumstances in which the VPM is likely to be useful. One objection comes from advocates of the standard rational actor model who find all this fuss over value conflict a bit odd. Subjective expected utility theorists reduce the diversity of human values to a single common denominator or utility function. Everything, in their world view, is supposed to be fungible and subject to the inexorable laws of supply and demand (Becker, 1981). Confronted by close judgment calls, one simply identifies the option with the slightly higher expected utility and moves on, with no time for regret over paths not taken. If one

confronts a genuine tie, one minimizes further information search and transactions costs by flipping a coin.

The revised VPM concedes that decision-makers occasionally approximate this rational actor ideal—perhaps, for instance, when they find themselves accountable to highly knowledgeable audiences in intensely competitive financial markets. Here we find that complex trade-off reasoning is an integral part of the presupposed background of investment decisions (Malkiel, 1990). Financial analysts have well-rehearsed integratively complex answers to an integratively complex question that their role in a system of market accountability repeatedly requires them to answer: Given this institutional client's time horizon and level of risk aversion, how can we create a portfolio that strikes the right balance between risk and return under current market conditions? This hyper-analytic approach to trade-offs has, moreover, become much more common as executives schooled in economic theory play increasingly prominent roles in corporate and governmental decision-making. From the VPM perspective, however, this rational style of decision-making remains mostly an elite phenomenon and one that even these elites confine mostly to their jobs (most financial analysts balk at monetizing the value of personal relationships). Mathematical decision aids have not yet relegated "value conflict" and related social psychological hypotheses to the status of historical curiosities.

A second objection to VPM comes from the opposite end of the rationality continuum. Drawing upon a potpourri of theories, including cognitive dissonance and self-perception theories in social psychology, psychodynamic theories of political preferences, and classical and operant conditioning theories of political attitudes, one could argue that people often act first and then invoke whatever salient values conveniently justify those acts (Eiser, 1987; Kristiansen & Zanna, 1988; Lasswell, 1948). Far from being the product of careful premeditation and analysis of the impact of each action alternative on internalized values, many people go through much of life on autopilot, responding unthinkingly to salient stimuli of the moment (Langer, 1990; Taylor & Fiske, 1978; Zaller, 1991). It would be foolish to deny that these theoretical perspectives also capture an important slice of life, indeed, quite possibly, the majority of our waking hours.

In a contextualist spirit (McGuire 1983), the challenge is to identify the explanatory range of application of the VPM. We suspect that the VPM is most appropriately invoked at the choice points of our lives where circumstances demand that we make self-conscious decisions that implicate deeply held values that, in turn, cannot be easily quantified and entered into some conditional optimization algorithm. The model thus avoids both maximalist and minimalist assumptions about human rationality. The VPM is a contingency theory of judgment and choice that, like other contingency theories, depicts people as neither rational actors nor cognitive misers, but rather as "mental managers" who like to

keep life simple by minimizing cognitive effort, emotional pain, and political embarrassment but who recognize that circumstances sometimes require acknowledging that life is complex.

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