Lockdown: A Case Study in How to Lose Trust and Undermine Compliance

On 23 March 2020, the UK Government introduced three new measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. These measures (i) required people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes; (ii) closed certain businesses and venues; and (iii) stopped all gatherings of more than two people in public (Cabinet Office 2020). These *lockdown* measures were promoted with the slogan 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives'. This directive was very clear, and remained so even after it was clarified that one could in fact leave home for 'very limited reasons', specifically: 'shopping for basic necessities'; 'one form of exercise a day'; 'any medical need' and 'travelling for work purposes' (Department of Health and Social Care 2020). There was widespread compliance with these lockdown rules with people making the sacrifices needed for compliance (Jeffrey et al. 2020).

On 22 May 2020, the newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Mirror* carried the story that Dominic Cummings, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson's key advisor, had broken the lockdown rules in driving his family from London to Durham while his wife was suspected of being ill with Covid-19 (Crerar 2020; Weaver 2020a). This news item occupied the headlines for the next few days and led to Mr. Cummings giving a press conference in the Rose Garden of No.10 on 25 May to set out his version of events (Bland 2020). Throughout the Government choose to defend Mr. Cummings and on 27 May, in an appearance before the Commons liaison committee, Boris Johnson refused to apologize for Mr. Cumming's actions, rather insisting that there had been no breach of the rules. 'If you have exceptional problems with childcare', he said, 'you can vary your arrangements, that's clear', and he said repeatedly that it was time to 'move on' (Walker 2020). This support of Mr. Cummings occurred against an emotive background. For many, what was 'clear' was that Mr. Cummings had broken the lockdown rules, and this mattered. One Minister resigned as an MP over the Government's refusal to sanction Mr. Cummings (Mason & Proctor 2020). One doctor quit the NHS (Campbell 2020). Constituents sent over 180,000 emails complaining to their MP about Mr. Cummings' actions (Proctor, Murray & Brooks 2020). Over 1,200,000 people signed a petition calling for Mr. Cummings to be sacked (Kelly 2020). And many influential people voiced a complaint: England's deputy chief medical officer said the lockdown measures apply to all; the former chief prosecutor of north-west England wrote to the Met commissioner urging her to investigate Mr. Cummings' actions (Weaver 2020b); the ex-Durham police chief said the government defence of Mr. Cummings 'just

beggars belief' (Dodd 2020b); and England's chief nurse was stood down from the daily government briefings for not backing Mr. Cummings (Siddique & Campbell 2020).

This paper will not engage with the question of whether or not Mr. Cummings broke the lockdown rules. Rather, it takes as its starting point the following *unhappy conjunction*. First, Mr. Cummings was widely *believed* to have broken the lockdown rules. When a reporter asked him about how his Durham trip looked, Mr. Cummings responded, 'Who cares about looks? It's a question of doing the right thing. It's not about what you guys think' (Weaver, Dodd & MacInnes 2020). This is often a good distinction to make: often what matters are the facts, not what the facts are believed to be. But when it comes to matters of trust, it is belief that is important. The belief that Mr. Cummings broke the lockdown rules then institutes the demand for some sanction. However, second, the Government refused to sanction Mr. Cummings, rather choosing to justify his actions. The justification was that Mr. Cummings' 'exceptional problems with childcare' fell under the 'very limited' exceptions to the directive to 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives' and so legitimised his trip to Durham.[1]

This paper also takes as its starting point two further facts. Third, that levels of approval or trust in government fell markedly after the government justification of Mr. Cummings (with the Conservative party lead falling by eight points) (Helm 2020). Fourth, that levels of compliance, or willingness to comply, with the lockdown measures also dropped after the government justification of Mr. Cummings (Calcea & Rea 2020). That is, the scandal surrounding Mr. Cummings' trip to Durham broke both compliance with the lockdown measures and trust in government (Butler 2020).

A fifth starting point of this paper is that this loss of trust and reduction in compliance were expected consequences of the unhappy conjunction. Thus, 26 senior UK academics and health administrators wrote to the government to warn of these consequences (Rae, et al. 2020). Prof Stephen Reicher, a member of the SPI-B Sage subcommittee providing advice to the government, tweeted: 'I can say that in a few short minutes tonight, Boris Johnson has trashed all the advice we have given on how to build trust and secure adherence to the measures necessary to control Covid-19' (Syal, Weaver & Walker 2020). While in his Commons liaison committee hearing Boris Johnson was mocked by Pete Wishart of the Scottish National Party who said, 'I actually think that you've been quite brave. The way that you've been prepared to sacrifice the credibility and popularity of your own government, just to stand by your man' (Walker

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[1] The argument was that Mr. Cummings' situation was one of 'medical need' since this was elaborated as 'including to donate blood, avoid risk of harm, provide care or help a vulnerable person'. This argument re-interprets this exception which was originally added to cover abusive relationships (Cafola 2020).

2020). But although the possibility of these consequences was obvious, it is worthwhile outlining the logic by means of which social compliance and trust are sustained, and so the logic of how social compliance and trust can be lost. It is this logic that underpins the expectation of these consequences, and it is the explication of this logic that is the aim of this paper.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section shows how the lockdown measures set up a social coordination game, which threatens to result in a 'tragedy of the commons'. Sections three and four then outline the two classes of reason people have for complying with directives such as 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives', which is to say, for cooperating in social coordination games. Section five shows how the unhappy conjunction undermines both of these reasons for compliance. Section six shows how the unhappy conjunction led to a loss of generalised trust in government. Section seven concludes.

1.   Lockdown as a Social Coordination Problem

Group hunting and warfare are age old cooperative human activities that realise a public good. Every individual member of the group then benefits from these public goods – gets to enjoy meat and peace – irrespective of whether or not that individual cooperated and so contributed to the public good. This then sets up a tension between individual interest and group benefit, where this tension is famously illustrated by the 'tragedy of the commons', (Hardin (1968). When common land is open to all, each herdsman will try and graze their cattle on this pasture as much as possible. But if each does this, then the common land will soon become overgrazed. So to safeguard this pasture each herdsman must limit their grazing. By limiting their grazing the pasture is preserved as a public good to be enjoyed by all. However, the best outcome for any given herdsman is to graze their cattle on the common land as much as possible while this pasture is preserved by everyone else limiting their grazing. Unfortunately, every herdsman can reach this same conclusion. 'Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest' (Hardin (1968), 1244).

This group dynamic can be modelled by the Public Goods game, (Gächter and Herrmann (2009). Players are divided into groups of n with each player given an endowment of £20, and asked to contribute some of this to a collective project. The marginal gain from cooperation is then α; that is, each member of the group earns £α for every £1 contributed to the collective project (where $0< \alpha <1$). For example, Fehr and Gächter (2002) set up this game with n=4 and α=0.4. It follows that each player ends up with £20 if everyone invests nothing in the

collective project, and each player ends up with £32 if everyone invests everything in the collective project. However, the best outcome for any individual player is to invest nothing when all others invest everything. By *free-riding* in this situation, the pay-off is £44. Thus, Gächter and Herrmann (2009), 792) observe that this Public Goods game 'epitomizes the tension between collective welfare and individual incentives in a simple and stark way because selfish rationality implies full 'free-riding' (i.e. zero contributions), whereas collective welfare is maximised if every player makes maximal contributions.'

The Lockdown measures institute a social coordination game of this form. What the Government asked is for individuals to comply with the lockdown measures, thereby limiting their liberty of movement and association, in order to realize the public good that is the suppression of the social incidence of Covid-19. And in this case, the best outcome for any individual is to continue to enjoy the liberty to move and associate as they so desire and for the suppression of the social incidence of Covid-19 to be achieved by everyone else complying with the lockdown measures. That is, the best outcome is to free-ride on everyone else's compliance. However, given that everyone is capable of reasoning to this conclusion, or at least so much should be assumed, why isn't 'ruin the destination toward which all men rush'? That is, why were there nevertheless such high levels of compliance with the lockdown measures?

To answer this question, what needs to be considered are the reasons that people have for cooperating. Two broad kinds of reason can be identified: practical and moral. I take each in the next two sections.

2.   Reasons for Cooperating 1: Self-Interest

Why do we do things? A simple answer is that people, when acting rationally, act in ways that they believe will satisfy their desires; people do what they believe to be in their interest. To say that someone has *a practical reason* to φ is then to say that they believe that φ-ing is in their interest or would lead to a desirable outcome. Someone then has *all things considered* practical reason to φ when they believe that φ-ing is in their best interest or would lead to the most desired outcome. In the Public Goods game, if a player believes that others will not cooperate, the player has all things considered practical reason to not cooperate as well. Cooperation would only lose them money – leave them with the sucker's pay-off. However, if a player believes that others will cooperate, then the player has a practical reason to cooperate in turn; this reason is given by the marginal gain that accrues to cooperation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one result in studies of this game is that the greater this marginal gain – the closer

α approximates to 1 – the greater levels of cooperation, (Anderson, Goeree, and Holt (1998). However, given the belief that others will cooperate, practical reason still favours defection since this maximises the player's pay-off. Defection is thus the *dominant* choice since it is all things considered practically rational whatever it is believed that the other players will do. It follows that if people are to reasonably cooperate in group interactions, then either the pay-offs in these interactions are not properly represented by the Public Goods game, or people have some a non-practical reason for cooperation.

In fact, both these consequences can be drawn. We can have practical reason to cooperate in group interactions because while these interactions are modelled by the Public Goods game, they frequently involve two further grounds for cooperation not specified in this game. These grounds are given by the *ongoing character of these interactions* and the *presence of sanctions*.

First, group interactions are frequently on-going affairs. We might regularly hunt together, for example. The iteration of these interactions can then make cooperation a matter of self-interest. The logic here is clearest in two person games, so consider Hume's thought experiment involving two farmers, which runs as follows. Each farmer needs the other farmer's help to harvest their corn. But each farmer suspects that the other famer will have no desire for further labour once their own corn is harvested; further labour being, from their perspective, just a pointless cost. It follows that if their interaction is one-off neither will be willing to help the other first, and so 'both … lose [their] harvests for want of mutual confidence' (Hume (1740), 521). However, if their interaction is on-going, there will be an eye on future harvests, so labouring second ceases to be pointless. The future harvests make it so that the subsequent labour lies within the first farmer's interest. Thus, the second farmer can trust the first to help with his harvest when the time comes and so will be willing to help with the first's harvest. Considering such cases led Hardin (2002), 4) to propose that trust is simply a matter of *encapsulated interest*. The second farmer trusts the first because it lies with the first's interest to subsequently attend to second's interests.[2] Translating these two person interactions to social interactions that have the form of the Public Goods game is made complex by the fact that the public good can be achieved even when there is some individual defection. Nevertheless, the same logic applies. Empirically it has been shown that most people are conditional cooperators; that is, most cooperate when they believe others will cooperate, (Gächter (2007) and Sznycer et al. (2019)). And it is commonly believed that this is so. Believing this, I believe that my defection in this round will make it likely that more will defect in the next. So it will make it likely that *in the long run* that the monies to be gained from present defection will be less than the monies

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[2] For the general claim that repeated interactions give practical reasons to cooperate see Axelrod and Hamilton (1981)

to be gained from cooperation. Thus, cooperation can be a matter of self-interest when the social interaction that resembles the Public Goods game is iterated or on-going.[3]

Second, group interactions frequently involve sanctions for defection. Sanctions can be informal or formal and, in both cases, they ensure cooperation through fear. Informal sanctions consist in some form of punitive social judgement or social exclusion, such as the loss of reputation or simple ostracism. The fact that we care about what people think of us, then gives us a practical reason to cooperate (Pettit (1995); disapproval and reputational loss is punishment enough, (Fessler and Haley (2003), Ge et al. (2019)). These forms of judgement and exclusion can also cause further losses as cooperation is withdrawn in other domains, which provides a further practical reason to cooperate (Gauthier (1994). Formal sanctions can be anything from a fine to a prison sentence to the loss of rights to practice a profession or engage in certain activities. Following Hobbes (1651), one might think that it is one of the chief roles of the state to institute such formal mechanisms in order to secure the public goods that rest on cooperation in social interaction. We are then sensitive to the existence of all these sanctions and their presence can change the pay-off structure of the group interaction sufficiently to give all things considered practical reason to cooperate. Fear of sanctions can then tip the balance of self-interest in favour of cooperation.[4]

The on-going nature of some group interactions and the presence of sanctions, both formal and informal, ensures that we can have practical reason to cooperate even when the interaction is otherwise perfectly modelled by the Public Goods game. However, cooperation is not solely grounded on these practical grounds. If it were, cooperation would be fragile, always threatening to break down. It should not occur when the group interaction is one-off (or known to have a determinate end, since then a backwards induction threatens (Broome (2014)). And it should not occur whenever there was any doubt over the imposition of sanction. Why cooperate on those occasions when you can get away with defection? This advice of Hobbes' Foole would always be a siren call, (Hollis (1998). However, our tendency to cooperate can be quite robust. The prediction that the Public Goods game – played as a one-off game with no punishment option – would result in widespread defection has been conclusively shown to be false, (Ledyard (1995) and Zelmer (2003). It follows, on the assumption that people are nevertheless rational, that they have reasons for cooperation other than self-interest.

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[3] Thus repeated plays of the Public Goods game lead to higher contributions, Sonnemans, Schram and Offerman (1999).
[4] And arguably fear of informal sanctions is a greater motivator than fear of formal ones, see Wu, Balliet and Van Lange (2016).

3.   Reasons for Cooperating 2: Moral

It is possible to add a punishment option to the Public Goods game. After each player has made their contribution decision, they are told how much other players have decided to contribute. They can then choose to punish other players, spending between £1 and £10 where for each £1 spent the punished player loses £k where k ≥ 1, (Gächter and Herrmann (2009). When this version of the Public Goods game is played, the punishment of free-riders seems to be a human universal, (Herrmann, Thöni, and Gächter (2008). Moreover this is not a strategic response but an emotive response: punishment is not affected by whether the game is one-off or repeated (Fehr and Gächter (2002). It thus expresses the sentiment that one *ought not* to free-ride, and that the free-riders are *wrong* in not cooperating. This tendency to exhibit punitive behaviour sets up an informal sanction on defection, which as observed in the last section, grounds a practical fear-based reason for cooperating. (Thus, it has been observed that adding a punishment option to the Public Goods game contributes to, and stabilises cooperation (Boyd et al. (2003)). The resulting sanctioning system is thereby itself a public good in that it that it is something that can be enjoyed regardless of contribution. It follows that there can be second-order free-riders or those that enjoy the benefit of the sanctioning system without bearing the cost of maintaining it. And this raises the question why one should cooperate to a second level, (Heckathorn (1989). That is, why should one suffer the cost of punishing first order free-riders? This is a natural question to raise if practical reasons exhaust our reasons for action. However, our tendency to punitive behaviour should rather be taken to show that this is not the case. Sometimes we do things not because it is in our best interest but because we think that we ought to do that thing.[5] That is, we can take ourselves to have and respond to moral reasons for cooperating.[6]

In the last section I argued that we need to recognize moral reasons if we are to explain the robustness of cooperation – otherwise there is no response to the Foole's advice. Now it can be added that we need to recognize moral reasons if we are to make sense, from the inside, of punitive, and so cooperative behaviours. Both these claims are made by Williams (2002) in his discussion of Sincerity, or the disposition to tell the truth or be trustworthy in speech.

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[5] Thus it's been argued that the punitive response is driven by concerns about fairness, see Raihani and McAuliffe (2012).

[6] Strictly speaking, these reasons are normative rather than moral but calling them 'moral' makes the contrast with reasons of self-interest clearer.

Any functioning society will involve cooperation, which requires that information be communicated. So truth telling is desirable from a social perspective, but it will not always be in an individual's best interest. Williams (2002), 92) imagines a society where the spoils of hunting are shared and a hunter has just made a kill, which he would prefer to keep for himself and his family. While it may be useful to know when others have made a kill, because it is good to share this, the best thing for the hunter is not to tell the truth about his hunt. What we have here is a social coordination game with free-riding being the hunter's best interest. The root of this problem, Williams goes on to argue, is that Sincerity has only been given *instrumental value*: its value is given by that good which follows from the cooperative pooling of information, goods such as meat. But when Sincerity is only valued in this way there will always be the possibility of a fissure between the interests of interacting parties. What this shows, Williams (2002), 59) claims is 'that no society can get by … with a purely instrumental conception of the values of truth' of which Sincerity, which is trustworthiness in speech, is one. Rather, what any society requires is that Sincerity be *intrinsically valued*, so that it be thought 'a good thing (many other things being equal) to act as a trustworthy person acts, just because that is the kind of action it is' (Williams (2002), 90).

Three points need to be made about this idea of intrinsic value. First, to value trustworthy acts intrinsically is to take an evaluative stance: it is to believe it to be a *good thing* to act trustworthily, and to believe one *ought* to act this way. Second, intrinsic value is not reducible to instrumental value or desirability for the agent. If there are only practical reasons, the most that could be concluded is that it is in one's best interest to act *as if* trustworthiness has intrinsic value, but this is consistent with pretending to value, rather than actually valuing, trustworthiness. [7] So to recognise the intrinsic value of trustworthy acts is to recognise that we can have a non-practical, which is to say moral, reason for acting in these ways. Third, there is the thorny question of how to account for the intrinsic value of trustworthiness without being reductive, since any account of its value, such as that it secures cooperation, threatens to make this value instrumental. Williams (2002), 92) proposal is *genealogical*: trustworthiness has intrinsic value because 'first, it is necessary (or nearly necessary) for basic human purposes and needs that human beings should treat it as an intrinsic good; and, second they can coherently treat it as an intrinsic good'. On this account, to understand the intrinsic value of trustworthiness requires one occupy the perspective, which is socially and

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[7] Thus, Williams (2002), 90) observes that no argument 'which sets out from a game theoretical formulation of the problem of trust could possibly show that trustworthiness had an intrinsic value.'

historically determined, of those for whom the disposition to be Sincere, or trustworthy makes sense.[8]

The intrinsic valuation of trustworthiness – or the disposition to be cooperative – be it in speech or act, is necessary for basic human purposes. So it is unsurprising, as observed, that the tendency to punish free-riders is a human universal. But there will be differences in the explanations that are given of this tendency; that is, differences in how it is made sense of.[9] These cultural and historical differences, however, are not relevant to this paper. What is important is that, occupying our present perspective, we believe that certain actions ought to be done just because they are trustworthy or cooperative. The fact that an action is cooperative can itself be seen as a reason to do that act. This reason is a moral reason, or one that is independent of interest. So we can judge others in the wrong for being non-cooperative just because what they did was non-cooperative irrespective of whatever practical reasons justified their action.

4.   Lockdown Compliance

The lockdown measures instituted a social coordination game that resembles the Public Goods game. But this resemblance is imperfect because people had both practical and moral reasons for compliance. As a result, there was widespread compliance with the lockdown measure, the public good was realised and the social incidence of Covid-19 was suppressed. Practical reasons were essentially fear based; that is, they came mainly from the existence of sanctions, both formal and informal. Although the police had the power to issue fines up to £1000 for breaches of the Coronavirus Act 2020, formal sanctions consisted primarily of a fixed penalty notice, which was £60 for the period up to the easing of lockdown measures on 11th May. For this period, over 14,000 fines were issued (BBC News 2020). Informal sanctions consisted of disapproval or negative social judgment. As observed, our care about what others think gives a reason for compliance and disapproval can be fearful enough. The degree to which breaches of lockdown were disapproved of can then be measured by reporting of alleged breaches. By 30th April, police had

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[8] Williams' genealogy is imagined, but it is consistent with an evolutionary story. Thus, Henrich and Boyd (2001) gives an evolutionary account of the emergence of punishment norms – and so norms of social evaluation – in terms of the basic human tendency to imitate the majority and the successful.

[9] For example, Gächter and Herrmann (2009) observe differences in punishment behaviours and explanations between Switzerland and Russia. Williams (1993) shows how shame can figure in motivations to be trustworthy, where this is not something that presently animates us.

received 194,000 calls reporting alleged breaches of lockdown (Dodd 2020a). To manage this level of 'snitching', by 9th April, 26 out of 43 police forces in England and Wales had launched dedicated forms allowing the reporting of alleged breaches of lockdown measures (Halliday & Parveen 2020). Reporting then issues the demand, by the reporter, that their disapproval of the reported be elevated to a formal sanction. But more than this, reporting is an expression of the collective pre-occupation with compliance and disapproval of failure to comply with the lockdown measures. And this suggests that the primary reason supporting compliance was moral rather than practical. People complied because they believed that they *ought* to comply. That is, they complied primarily not out of fear but because they saw it as their *social duty* to 'Stay at Home' in order to 'Protect the NHS' and 'Save Lives'. This was a matter or social, or moral, *obligation.*

It is against this background that *The Guardian* and *The Mirror* ran their exclusive that Dominic Cummings had apparently broken the lockdown measures. As observed, this exclusive then dominated the news for the next couple of days, and it is a starting point of this paper that it was widely believed that Mr. Cummings had, in fact, broken the lockdown measures. It follows that there was the wide-spread expectation that the government would sanction Mr. Cummings. But, again as observed, the government chose rather to justify Mr. Cummings' actions; his 'exceptional problems with childcare' made his failure to stay at home reasonable. This government justification of what was widely believed to be a transgression then straightforwardly undermined both practical and moral reasons for compliance with the lockdown measures. Thus, it explains the significant drop in compliance that immediately followed. The undermining logic is as follows.

As observed, practical reasons were essentially based on fear, or the desire to avoid sanction. With respect to formal sanctions, these sanctions motivate compliance only insofar as there is the belief that sanctions will be implemented. Without this belief, there is no fear and the Foole's advice holds sway: for why should one comply when one can get away with not doing so? In choosing not to sanction Mr. Cummings, the government then undermined the belief that sanctions follow non-compliance. So it encouraged all to listen to the Foole's advice.

With respect to informal sanctions, the strength of the sanction that is social disapproval rests upon two variables. First, the uniformity of social opinion as to whether an action is right or wrong; and, second, the degree to which social opinion is disapproving. The sanction is strongest, or most fearful, when there is a uniformity of social opinion that is strongly disapproving. It weakens as these two variables weaken. With respect to these variables, the first is entirely determined by the clarity of the social rule that determines what is right and what is wrong. On the face of it, the government rule — 'Stay at

home, Protect the NHS, Save lives' — was wonderfully clear, and disapproval of actions that allegedly breached it, such as Mr. Cumming's trip to Durham, was correspondingly swift and uniform. The level of complaint this generated, together with the social incidence of 'snitching', also suggest that social opinion was strongly disapproving. So, as previously suggested, fear of this sanction of social disapproval should play a key explanatory role in accounting for the level of compliance seen. However, in choosing to justify Mr. Cummings' actions, the government then undermined the clarity of the rule that determined what is right and what is wrong. The rule, the government made 'clear', was subject to a wider range of exceptions than most had envisaged. This justification made it hereafter much harder to determine whether an action was right or wrong. What follows is a loss of the basis for a uniformity of social opinion. But insofar as a uniformity of social opinion is a key determinant of the strength of this sanction, what follows is a loss of the strength of this sanction. In short, by justifying Mr. Cummings' actions, the government undermined the possibility of consensus over whether an action ought to be disapproved of or not, and by undermining this possibility of consensus, the sanction of disapproval lost its teeth as fear of disapproval correspondingly lessened.

With respect to moral reasons, the clarity of the rule determining what is right and what is wrong is again of crucial importance. The idea of moral reasons is the idea that the judgement that something is right or wrong can itself give a reason for doing or not doing that thing. You ought to act a certain way *just because* you judge it to be right way to act – irrespective of whether acting that way is in your interest, or whether you have any desire to act that way. These points need to be emphasized. First, this judgment of right or wrong is not premised on interest generally. What is judged to be right is one thing and the lie of one's interests is another and the two could well conflict. It follows that one can have a moral reason for doing something that it is not in one's all things considered practical interest to do. For example, the hunter might have a moral reason to tell others about the success of his hunt, given a social norm of truthfulness, even when it is clear to him that he could get away with keeping this secret, so that his all things considered practical reasons favour this. Second, the reason that comes from this judgment of right or wrong is not premised on the specific desire to do the right thing or avoid doing the wrong thing. We can have such desires, and our reasons can be premised on these desires. When they are so premised, moral reasons and reasons of self-interest converge. But, crucially, we need not have any such desire to do the right thing; it might be that the hunter, for instance, has no desire other than keeping the meat for himself and his family. Nevertheless, it remains true that that he has a reason to tell the truth about his hunt given his judgement that this is the right thing to do.

The idea of moral reasons, then, is the idea that our recognition that circumstances are a certain way itself gives us a reason for doing things. It

follows that if the capacity to make these recognitional judgements is undermined, the believing subject will no longer be able form any judgement about what is right or wrong, or at least be less able to form these judgements. And in not forming these judgements, or forming less of them, the subject will correspondingly have less moral reasons for action. Thus, in muddying the rule that is applied in coming to judgment about whether or not lockdown measures had been followed or breached, and so undermining the capacity for judging what one ought or ought not to do, the government undermined moral reasons for complying with these rules.

The unhappy conjunction of the belief that Mr. Cummings' trip to Durham was in breach of the lockdown measures conjoined with the government justification of this trip thus undermined both practical and moral reasons for complying with the lockdown measures. What is further problematic is that these reasons operate synergistically both when they function to support compliance and when they unravel.

With a clear-cut rule, and a corresponding uniformity of judgment about what ought to be done, there are strong moral grounds for compliance. As people correspondingly comply out of a sense of obligation, their disapproval of free riders gets stronger and the practical reason that is fear of judgement is correspondingly strengthened. With greater practical reasons for compliance, there will be higher social levels of compliance and it becomes clearer what ought to be done and easier to hold others to the moral expectation that they do what they ought to do. So there is a virtuous circle of rational support between moral and practical reasons. Unfortunately, this connection cuts both ways so that as one kind of reason is undermined so too is the other. Thus, as it becomes unclear what is right and what is wrong, and so both unclear what one ought to do and what moral expectations one can hold others to, practical reasons become more important in determining levels of social compliance. However, a key practical reason – fear of informal sanctions – is determined by levels and strength of social approval and disapproval and the former is equally undermined by any lack of clarity as to what is the right thing to do. As these practical reasons weaken, there is a greater need for formal sanctions but with confidence in those, and so fear of formal sanctions also going down there will be much more free riding. Except now it is no longer clear whether an alleged instance of free riding is in fact a case of free riding or a reasonable response to individual circumstances. So people will be more likely to tempted by the Foole's advice, which is to say that they will be more tempted to fall under the sway of particular self-interest and do what they previously judged they ought not to do. But as more people do this there will be less social judgement and the notion of social obligation will be further eroded. So there is a vicious circle of rational erosion in the loss of moral and practical reasons.

Thus, while the government set up the conditions needed for rational compliance with the lockdown measures – a clear message with an emphasis on both sanctions and duty – its defence of Mr. Cummings set up the conditions needed for the collapse of these reasons for compliance. It was therefore unsurprising that levels of compliance, and willingness to comply, with the lockdown measures dramatically dropped after this defence.

A Loss of Trust in Government

The unhappy conjunction can be offered as an explanation of the drop in levels on compliance, and, in this section, I want to argue that it can also be offered as an explanation of the dramatic drop in levels of approval of the government, where this is understood to be a proxy for a loss of generalised trust in government. To make this claim, what needs to be introduced into the debate is the idea of trust and the idea of trust in its generalised form.

So far what has been considered is cooperation in the social coordination game that was the lockdown. But cooperation is closely connected with trust. Trusting is both an attitude and action. Trusting is something we do, and it is an attitude that we can have and take. The act of trusting, in the interpersonal context where trust is fundamentally located, is the act of cooperating. The attitude of trust is then that attitude that makes cooperation, and the reliance it involves, willing; it is a willingness to take on the risk of reliance without worry. Moreover, it is this attitude that makes an act of reliance into an act of trust, or cooperation, as opposed to something that is forced or done under duress. Given its interpersonal nature, these connections are best illustrated in two person games. So consider again Hume's two farmers. Recall that the corn of farmer A has ripened first and farmer B is considering whether to help A with his harvest. Farmer B's worry is that once A's harvest is in the barn, A will have no reason to labour further and so will not help him with his harvest in return. And if this worry takes root both will 'lose [their] harvest for want of mutual confidence', (Hume (1740), 521). However, if B trusts A to help him when the time comes, B will put this worry aside, or better: B simply will not feel fearful. In trusting A, B will then help with A's harvest, which is to say cooperate in this game.

Trust implies cooperation and cooperation, it was argued above, can be motivated by practical and moral reasons. Acts of trusting can then have this same set of motivations, however the difference between these motivational grounds then determines different psychological attitudes of trust. In general, trust is a matter of reliance and expectation: in trusting A to φ, B *relies* on A φ-ing and *expects* A to φ. However, this expectation can either be subjective – it

can be the *belief that A will φ* – or it can be moral – it can be an *expectation of A, that A will φ*. Both subjective and moral expectations can render reliance willing.

Consider, first trust as reliance plus subjective expectation, which is to say reliance plus belief. We make predictions about how people will behave and rely on them in the light of these. Trust as reliance plus belief might be called 'predictive' trust, (Faulkner (2007; Hollis (1998) or 'strategic' trust. (Uslaner (2002).[10] With a belief about outcome being its constitutive expectation, trust forms part of a practical reason for cooperation, where the other part of this reason is supplied by the desire for the goods that follow from cooperation. The attitude of trust, and the act of cooperation that follows from it, are then grounded by whatever grounds this belief about outcome. As argued above, this belief is fundamentally grounded on what sanctions are believed to apply to non-cooperative behaviour.

The problem, again as argued above, is that our grounds for forming a belief about outcome are limited. This is particularly so in one-off encounters with unknown others, and when sanctions are known to be imperfect – or known to be not that fearful. So if our reasons for trusting, or cooperating, are limited to practical reasons, cooperation will be scarce and fragile. That this is not the case is because belief is not the only attitude that can explain a willingness to rely on others. A moral expectation can equally do so. Trust can involve placing a moral expectation on trusted. In trusting A φ, B's expectation can be *of A*, that A will φ because this is what A *ought to do*. Of course, people don't always do what they ought, but it is essential to trust that it involves a thinking well of the trusted. So it carries the presumption that the trusted will do what they ought. Trust as reliance plus a moral expectation might be called 'affective' (Jones (1996), Faulkner (2007), 'moralistic' (Uslaner (2002) or 'moral' (Fricker (2007).[11] With a moral expectation being its constitutive expectation, trust grounds cooperation through supplying the presumption that the trusted will be moved by the moral reasons contained within the interaction situation.

Thus, in the interpersonal context, the expectation constitutive of trust is either a belief about outcome or a moral expectation placed on the trusted, where these are distinct psychological attitudes. Where cooperation is then based on practical reasons it expresses one attitude of trust; and where it is

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[10] This way of thinking about trust is 'the dominant social science conception', Braithwaite (1998). Perhaps because conceived in this way trust can be theorized using rational choice theory. For a cross section of social scientific papers, see Gambetta (1988).

[11] This way of thinking about trust is dominant in philosophy. For example, see the papers in Faulkner and Simpson (2017). Again note: 'moralistic' and 'moral' are bad terminology, since we can trust people to do immoral things, (Lenard (2005), 365). But again, as noted above, I am using these terms, rather than the better 'normative', since they make salient the contrast with self-interest.

based on moral reasons, it expresses another attitude of trust. These attitudes can overlap and be held at one and the same time. We can cooperate for mixed and multiple reasons. In the last section, I outlined how these reasons can interact in positive and negative ways.

Generalised trust is then trust abstracted from interpersonal interactions. Just as B might not merely trust A to φ, but trust A more generally, so B might not merely trust A more generally but have a trusting attitude towards people in general or at least towards some class of people in general. Generalised trust is then a general willingness to think well of some class of persons; a willingness to rely on some class of persons because of the quasi-moral belief that if they were relied upon, persons in this class would, for *whatever reason*, do the right or prove to be trustworthy. It is important here that the grounds of generalised trust are unspecified, since this is trust in its most general form abstract from specific trusting interactions, which would then instantiate a given psychological kind. Thus, when it comes to generalised trust, the grounds for thinking that persons in the given class would do the right thing might be moral or practical: the trusted class might be thought to have the tendency to do the right thing because of fear or morality; or the grounds might be no more than a general optimism about this class of person, (Uslaner (2002).

For political discussion, horizontal and vertical axes of generalised trust should then be distinguished. That is, the trusted class of people can be taken to be other citizens, where such *horizontal* generalised trust has standardly been measured by way of the survey question, 'Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' [12] And generalised trust can be considered along a *vertical* axis with the trusted class taken to be government. When levels of generalized trust are then high along both axes, the state is 'characterized by a climate of trust', Lenard (2015, 314). There needs to be a certain basic climate of trust, Lenard (2008) then argues, in order for democratic institutions to function since these depend on widespread voluntary compliance with their rules and regulations. The unhappy conjunction then undermined the climate of trust in the UK. That is, the government justification of Mr. Cummings undermined both generalised trust in government *and* generalised trust in other citizens, given that it was situated against a background where most believed, rightly or wrongly, that Mr. Cummings breached the lockdown rules.

First, the government justification of Mr. Cummings undermined generalised trust between citizens for the reason already noted. In order to

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[12] This question has formed part of three big longitudinal social studies: the American General Social Survey, the World Values Survey, and the European Social Survey. See (Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman and Soutter (2000)

believe that other citizens will do the right thing, when one relies on their doing this, it is necessary to believe that it is clear what the right thing to do is. But, as argued above, what the government justification of Mr. Cummings made 'clear' was that it was quite unclear what the right thing to do is. To the extent that this is unclear, it is hard to sustain the belief that other citizens will do the right thing. Correspondingly, generalised trust in other citizens was undermined. Second, the government justification of Mr. Cummings also undermined trust in government insofar as this justification amounted to a visible failure to do what was believed to be the right thing. Again, the question of the whether or not Mr. Cummings actually breached the lockdown rules is irrelevant here; the starting point of this paper is that he was largely believed to have done so. Given this belief, there was a collective expectation – both subjective and moral – that the government would sanction him. Given this expectation, it was not merely believed that the government failed to do the right thing, it was further believed that, in justifying Mr. Cummings, the government did the wrong thing. The sin was not that of omission, or a failure to act, it was that one of transgression, or a wrongness of act. And that the expectation was moral here and not merely subjective is evidenced by the reactive attitudes in play; there was a sense of indignation at the government response, witness, for example the number of letters written to MPs. Nothing could provide better evidence that the government would fail to do the right thing than their doing the wrong thing. So the government justification of Mr. Cummings made it hard to sustain the belief that the government will do the right thing. Correspondingly, generalised trust in government was undermined.

Moreover, just as practical and moral reasons for complying with the lockdown measures, which is to say cooperating or being trustworthy in this social coordination game, operate synergistically, so too do vertical and horizontal trust. Starting with a loss of trust in government, this loss will see citizens lose confidence in mechanisms of formal sanction. This loss of confidence will feed into the worry that other citizens will listen to the Foole's advice and cease to be trustworthy, rather trying to get away with what they can. So a loss of trust in government leads to an erosion of trust in other citizens.[13] From the other side, as there is a loss of trust in other citizens doing the right thing, there will be greater temptation to listen to the Foole's advice and do what is in one's self-interest rather than do what is right or trustworthy. But as more people do this, there will be more possibility for observing the failure of government to implement formal sanctions, so there will be an erosion of trust in government. Thus, a loss of trust along one axis can

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[13] Correlatively, punishment is more effective at promoting cooperation when there is a climate of trust, see Balliet and Van Lange (2013).

precipitate a loss of trust along the other axis; and a loss of trust along both axes can lead to precipitous loss in the climate of trust.

Thus, given that it was set against the background belief that Mr. Cummings breached lockdown rules and so ought to be sanctioned, the government justification of Mr. Cummings significantly undermined the climate of trust in the U.K. It was consequently unsurprising that there was a subsequent dramatic drop in the levels of approval of the government.

5.   Conclusion

This paper started from the following empirical claims. (1) Mr. Cummings was widely believed to have broken the lockdown rules. (2) The government chose to justify Mr. Cummings' actions. (3) The levels of approval of the government fell after this justification. (4) Social levels of compliance with the lockdown rules fells after this justification. (5) It was widely perceived at the time that (1) and (2) were at least part of the explanation of (3) and (4). The aim of this paper has been to support this last contention by outlining the logic by means of which social compliance and trust are sustained. Given this logic, (3) and (4) were to be expected as consequences of (1) and (2). Given that this logic is so well known, so that these consequences were expected as (5) notes, what is remarkable is the government's willingness to risk these consequences. A climate of trust is of fundamental importance to the functioning of democratic institutions.[14] It is something that it is the responsibility of government to both cultivate and safe-guard. Instead, this government was willing to risk a precipitous and calamitous loss in the climate of trust. Given how remarkable this is, there can be no expectation that the government will do the one thing that has been shown capable of restoring generalised trust, (Maclachlan (2015) which is issue some kind of apology, along with the making good this would entail.[15]

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[14] See Lenard (2008). It has also been argued that horizontal generalised trust furthers economic prosperity and growth (Putnam 1993 and Fukuyama 1995), while vertical generalised trust fosters good government (Knack 2002). Levels of generalised trust, along both axes, have been found to correlate with civic participation (Brehm and Rahn 1997) and well-functioning institutions (Delhey and Newton 2005), and to inversely correlate with corruption (Uslaner 2013), violent crime (Lederman, Loayza, and Menéndez 2002) and income inequality (Knack and Zak 2002).

[15] Thanks to Max Hayward for enjoyable discussion of these matters.

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