WHY DO PEOPLE FOLLOW (FORMAL) RULES?:
Some social-psychological notions

M. Verkuyten
Erasmus University Rotterdam,
The Netherlands

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with everyday rule-governed behavior. The central question is why people follow formal rules such as laws. This question is addressed from a theoretical psychological point of view and a heuristic scheme has been developed which may help in providing an answer and which can guide empirical research. Although theories and empirical results from criminology will be used, it is the day-to-day behavior of 'normal' people that is the central subject. The theoretical notions which will be developed are based on: existing assumptions about human behavior; empirical studies of rule-governed behavior; and empirical studies of deviant and delinquent behavior. At present there is an extensive literature on rule-breaking behavior. Many empirical and theoretical studies pay attention to different variables which are supposed to be of importance. Most of these studies focus on one or a limited set of variables which are considered as more or less decisive with the result that many different variables are being stressed.

In recent empirical studies researchers have tried to consider the different variables simultaneously. However what most of the literature lacks is a theoretical ordering of the different variables which are considered relevant for rule-governed behavior. The present paper aims to fill this gap by developing a heuristic scheme. The scheme that will be presented is not concerned with what is sometimes called a genetic approach. So no attention will be paid to conditions and processes in socialisation. My concern is with the actual determinants of rule-governed behavior: thus this is a situational-dynamic or social-psychological approach.

An investigation of actual determinants of behavior is not simple. Firstly, because there are almost always many determinants which together influence behavior, and secondly because these determinants are heterogeneous in nature. Despite this complexity I want to suggest a systematic analysis of actual determinants of rule-governed behavior and to analyze how they work. In this paper the attention is focussed on general human characteristics
which are supposed to help understand the motivational dynamics of rule-governed behavior. No attention will be paid to individual differential characteristics which influences the form and content of rule-governed behavior.

Studies concerning rule-governed behavior are mostly restricted to three variables which are considered central (see Tyler, 1990). Grasmick and Green (1980, p. 41) for instance say, "The three independent variables - moral commitment, perceived threat of legal punishment and threat of social disapproval - appear to constitute a concise and probably exhaustive set of factors which inhibit illegal behavior." This paper will look at these three factors and is especially concerned with their assumed exhaustiveness.

Central in the argument is rule-governed behavior as such, which I intend to analyze in its own complexity. The behavior itself is the point of departure and not a basic assumption about human nature which restricts and determines the analysis in advance and which can be found for instance in control theories (see Shoemaker, 1984).

2. RULE-GOVERNED BEHAVIOR

I am concerned with rules as formal codified behavioral prescriptions, like laws, which indicate what people or a specific group of people, have to do or not to do or what is allowed. Rule-governed behavior is behavior that is or is not in agreement with the behavioral prescriptions, and which makes it meaningful to distinguish between correct and incorrect behavior. This description of the kind of rule-governed behavior I am concerned with, seems simple and unequivocal but there are several questions which can be asked. For one thing a distinction can be made between a legal and a social-psychological approach. Legally, the difference between rule-following and rule-breaking is reasonably clear. Psychologically, however, such a positivistic approach is not very interesting because there are numerous legal rules which people are unaware of and which consequently are not followed nor considered by people as rule-breaking. Also it is likely that people often obey the law without knowing that they do so. In this paper I am concerned only with behavioral prescriptions people know about. In this context, ‘knowing about’ does not mean that people have actually thought about rules or reflected on them. It means that people are aware that a certain rule exists and especially that they know how they have to behave in a certain way to comply with the rule.

The existing literature is mostly concerned with rule-breaking. This is understandable because rule-following is considered as more or less self-evident and as non-problematic. Social problems as a result of rule-breaking are normally the subject of interest. The present paper is concerned with both types of behavior but emphasizes rule-following.
Focussing on rule-following allows us in principle to study other determinants than the ones usually considered with regards to rule-breaking. However, there are probably several variables important to both types of behavior. Rule-breaking, for instance, can be the result of general motivational processes, such as the desire to achieve a positive image of the self, which can also be the reason why people follow rules. Although in both cases there is the same motivational process at work it does not mean that the content is the same: the question is which behavior leads to social approval and a positive self-image. Dependent on the specific context, rule-following or rule-breaking may result.

In presenting our theoretical notions the scheme in figure 1 will be followed which is assumed to be helpful in making a distinction between the different variables which determine rule-governed behavior.

3. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: SPHERES OF LIFE

Empirical studies on rule-breaking behavior normally concentrate on specific types of behavior such as traffic violations, shop lifting and tax-evasion. At the same time, however, questions addressed and conclusions drawn are often concerned with rule-governed behavior in general. Characteristics of the particular behavior that is being studied are easily lost sight
of. Consequently some authors have argued for specific models: "Rather than estimating a
type for general delinquency or even composite offense types, offense-specific models
should be developed." (Paternoster, 1989, p.12). The different types of behavior are,
however, so different that a classification seems necessary in order to formulate more than
idiosyncratic notions. The different kinds of rule-governed behavior for instance can be
classified formally into civil law and penal law. However, such a legal classification is not
very interesting from a psychological point of view where human thinking, feeling and
behaving is central. There are several possible approaches to systematize the study of the
social psychological aspects of different types of rule-governed behavior. Hessing and Elffers
(1987), for instance, distinguish between behavior that is and is not concerned with the
division of scarce means and between behavior which is public or private. There is a
difference between the social psychological determinants of behavior in public and behavior
private life. Behavioral prescriptions which are meant to regulate the daily flow of people are
not the same as the obligation to contribute to collective goods. Conceptions of people about
how, what and why regulation is allowed and justified can differ for these types of behavior.
Interference in private life (like the punishing of rape in marriage) is from an experiential
viewpoint quite different to public regulations concerning, for example, the closing-time for
shops. In these two cases there are very different variables which play their part in determi-
ning rule-following or rule-breaking.

In the present paper an analytical distinction is made between five spheres of life
where behavioral prescriptions can influence human conduct. This distinction is an elabora-
tion of the private-public distinction and refers to spheres of human-social life which can be
distinguished on the basis of human activities, instrumental conditions and regulation
demands. The five spheres are: 1) personal life, or the psychological makeup and the way the
person relates to him/herself; 2) inter-personal life, or the regulation of personal relationships,
obligations and feelings with more or less intimate others; 3) collective-economic life,
or the collective regulated provisions for material wellbeing and continued existence; 4) cultural-expressive life, or the regulations and provisions for the non-material life; 5) public
life, or the regulation of relations, obligations and feelings in day-to-day encounters.

This analytical distinction can be useful because to a certain extent for the different
spheres of life there can be different variables which determine rule-governed behavior.
Empirically this of course has to be studied but there is probably a difference between, say,
the prevention of drugs abuse (first sphere), rape in a marriage (second sphere), tax-evasion
(third sphere), not following compulsory education (fourth sphere), and traffic violations
(fifth sphere). These different spheres can also be distinguished psychologically. For instance,
there are probably other reasons for following rules when economic issues are concerned
(e.g. own interests) than in the case of cultural-expressive issues where people want to
develop and use their talents.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RULE

In the literature there is hardly any systematic attention to rule-characteristics as determinants of rule-governed behavior. Normally, existing rules are the point of departure and subsequently different personal and social conditions are studied which are supposed to determine rule-governed behavior. In this panel a field experiment was presented which studied the different characteristics of behavioral prescriptions. Partly based on this experiment I distinguish between five characteristics.

1) The clarity of the rule which has at least two aspects: a) unequivocality and b) complexity. Unequivocality refers to the precision of behavioral prescriptions which can vary according to three aspects: what is required, where and when and for whom. Firstly, what exactly is required or forbidden? This can be very detailed and exact (as in most traffic rules) but also very general and broad as in 'keeping public order'. In the first situation it is quite clear to people what is allowed and forbidden whereas this is much less the case in the second situation. Rules or a system of rules, are mostly very precise from a legal point of view but this does not mean that they are unequivocal for the people who have to behave according to them. For instance, with tax-assessment it is not very clear to many people what may be subtracted with the result that people can practice fraud without knowing that they have done so. Secondly, there is the question **where and when** a rule is valid and when not. Not only can the sphere of life for which a behavior prescription is valid be more or less specific (e.g. public life) but also the different situations, the conditions and the time of validity may differ. Thirdly, the question for **who** the rule is valid. Is it a rule which is valid for all groups of people or is it a rule which has been specially drawn up for certain groups? (but which groups, and who belongs to them?). This is an important question about which there can be ambiguities which influence rule-governed behavior.

The level of complexity refers not to the unequivocality of the rules but to the relationships between the different rules. A rule is not an isolated behavioral prescription but is almost always part of a system of rules which have reference to certain aspects of human conduct. People can find such a system too complicated - such as with fiscal law - with the result that they do not comply with the law to the same extent as was meant by the legislator. Knowledge of the system with all its different exceptions and specializations is often limited and resistance is frequently inversely proportional to knowledge.
2) A second characteristic is the objective of the rule: Why does the rule exist and is the existing rule adequate in view of its objective? It is probably quite a difference for rule-governed behavior if people can understand that a rule exists and that the rule is as it is: why a rule and why this rule. These two aspects are not similar. People can understand that a rule is necessary to regulate certain forms of behavior but at the same time they can reject the existing rule as inadequate. In combination with the first characteristic it is probably important to make a distinction between adequacy in general and adequacy in specific situations. Most people find it self-evident that one stops for a red traffic light but this is much less self-evident in the case where they have to stop for a red light at night in the country when there is nobody around. In addition to this situation-dependency it can also be asked for whom a rule is meant. People can find a rule relevant in general, but not for everybody (e.g. themselves).

3) A third characteristic is the imperativeness of the rule. There can be a difference, for instance, between an injunction where one form of behavior is required and others are not allowed and a prohibition where one form of behavior is forbidden but alternatives are allowed.

4) The enforcement of a rule refers to the possibility of control and the actual control that exist. It can be practically impossible to control rule-breaking. Rule-breaking can also be tolerated because a rule is no longer considered adequate in view of the changing values and norms in society or because a strict observance can have undesirable, social disturbing consequences or because there are special situational circumstances (e.g. double parking in very busy streets). In the case where rule-breaking is not allowed but observed, three aspects are of importance to rule-governed behavior: the certainty, severity and velocity. In general for all three aspects it is supposed that there exists an inverse relationship with rule-breaking behavior.

5) A fifth characteristic which can be important to rule-governed behavior is the source of the rule. A (legal) prescription can be framed by the legislator or administrator of justice and the authority, credibility and legitimacy of these institutions and individuals can differ with the result that people consider themselves differently bound to act upon a rule.

These five characteristics are in reality of course simultaneously and in combination with each other relevant, but in experimental settings they can be studied separately. What has to be kept in mind when conducting these kind of studies, however, is that most rules are only meaningful in actual and specific situations and that people come across these rules in those
situations and at specific periods of the day. In other words, characteristics of the rules can be studied as such, but the meaning of the rules and their influence on actual behavior is dependent on the circumstances and also on human characteristics. Both aspects will be elaborated on, starting with the second one.

5. HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS: BASIC MOTIVATIONS

In the previous paragraph characteristics of rules have been discussed which are of importance for rule-governed behavior. As was implied these characteristics do not have a direct impact on people, but are always being perceived and interpreted in the situation in which they occur. The limited studies on the relationship between actual and perceived characteristics of sanctions report for instance a very low correlation (see Grasmick & Green, 1980). For this reason recent studies concentrate on the perception of the probability of rule-breaking being noticed and the perception of the possible sanctions (see Paternoster, Saltzman, Waldo & Chiricos, 1983). Also, there are all sorts of legal rules which people, although they recognize that they are reasonable, do not obey. In other words paying attention to human characteristics is important because it is people who interpret and evaluate rules in social situations.

I will concentrate on general human characteristics and especially on basic human needs and motivations which form the dynamic background of rule-following and rule-breaking. Such needs and motivations are often implicitly assumed in the case of legislation and control, which use different assumptions about what people essentially strive for. However, in order to understand the reasons why people do or do not obey behavioral prescriptions, it is of importance to have a more founded and explicit understanding about human needs and motivations. Such a description, however, is not easy because human motivation is one of the most difficult and controversial subjects in psychology. My concern is to indicate human needs and motivations which give insight in general dynamic backgrounds of rule-governed behavior. So as to avoid giving an arbitrary enumeration, I will provide a description of basic needs based on a general inclusive theory developed by Wentholt in the Netherlands. This theory is summarized by Munning (1986) and partly used by Verkuyten (1990). For my purposes here five basic human motivational dynamics are of importance: cognitive ordering, securing one's own interests, the search for meaning, positive self-image, and attachment.
5.1 Cognitive ordering: people give meaning to their world

During the last decennia the cognitive approach has become very popular within social science in general and within psychology in particular. Several theories and models have tried to make clear how meaningless processes result in meaningful perception and understanding. The motivational background of many of these models is the cognitive tendency to ordering. Because the human organism is dependent on knowledge of the social and physical world, it is equipped with extended and refined cognitive skills. The use of these cognitive skills is in itself satisfying (Murray, 1966), and this means that the organism seeks to order data, distinguish patterns, cognitively solve problems and contradictions, look for generalities, etc. Cognitive ordering is not only satisfying in itself, but is also a necessity because of the abundance and diversity of information with which people are confronted and which they can not handle without ordering. In other words, people search for ordering and regularities in their environment by which they provide meaning to their daily life. If this fails, people get the feeling of living in a chaotic world without any cognitive grip on it and as a result they will suffer psychological and physical disfunctioning very easily.

In order to be able to live daily-life with confidence, people need to believe that they live in an orderly, meaningful world. The result of this basic need for ordering is a meaningful structure which is created in community with each other. In social reality a shared ordering exists which among other things makes it possible for people to communicate with each other. In modern social psychological literature the concept of 'social representations' is used. These representations constitute the social world and exist apart from the individual (Gergen, 1985). They offer a framework for understanding, for perception and behavior, and also a code for social interactions (Zeegers, 1988). Both framework and code give everyday life a self-evident and familiar - but also a coercive - character. The importance of such a character has for instance been studied by Garfinkel (1967) who in his experiments has shown that in day-to-day interactions common knowledge about rules which structure the interaction, is very important because as a result 'ontological security' exists. People feel very uncomfortable to say the least, when this security and familiarity is affected.

This process of looking spontaneously for ordering and regularity is a very important reason for creating and following rules. Numerous informal but certainly also formal rules, constitute social situations and events: they give it meaning. Following rules cannot then be detached from social conduct in that situation and the rules derive a self-evident, natural character.

Rules can be followed, however, not only because of their constitutive aspect, but also because of their regulating aspect for which it is essential that the prescription has to
'fit' into the social definition of the situation. In an earlier paper the experiments in the underground have been presented. Many people obeyed the different behavioral prescriptions. An important reason was that the prescriptions were meaningful in the context where they appeared: they 'fitted' in the existing social definitions of the situation. It was not only understandable that behavioral prescriptions appeared but also their content was meaningful. This is, for instance, not the case with a prescription such as "You have to hop in this passage" and the percentage of people who would obey such a prescription would undoubtedly be much lower.

As indicated, providing security by transforming the unknown to the self-evident and familiar is an important function of existing structures of meaning (Zeegers, 1988). An important aspect with security is predictability. Ordering and meaning do not only imply an understanding of the actual situation but also predictability in future ones. People are constantly in different social situations and it is impossible to determine in each of them over and over again what is required and how one has to behave. This would exceed the human capacities very easily and it would hamper psychological functioning. Regularity which implies predictability and consequently provides interaction-security, is necessary. Predictability is important not only in contact with the physical reality but also in social encounters. Consequently, behavioral prescriptions can be obeyed because they provide interaction-security and predictability. This is especially apparent in situations which are unknown, unusual or unclear. In the underground-experiment people face the questions 'what is the matter?' and 'how am I to behave?'. Because there are no other people who can serve as a model, the behavioral prescription forms a clear directive. People assume that the existence of the rule has a reason. The fact that this is not the case, even in a situation where this is visibly clear, is for many people not enough reason to neglect the prescription.

Apart from rule-following because of the constituting aspects of rules, the importance of a normative structure has to be pointed out. In social life predictability means interaction-security. Rules for behavior emerge spontaneously in human interaction as social-psychological experimental research has shown (Sherif, 1965). As soon as people come together typical ways and patterns of interaction develop automatically. These empirical regularities very easily become a normative pattern. The usual behavior becomes the expected behavior with social approval and disapproval attached to it: a normative ordering which governs rule-following behavior. In that case 'ontological security' is not the issue, but behaving in accordance with the expectations from the social environment is. People follow rules because they ought to, because the rules represent a system of binding prescriptions and agreements, and social disapproval or other sanctions are the consequences of breaking the rules.
In this respect a brief word can be said about the normative pluriformity in society. This is especially emphasized by sociologists studying law. They are interested in specific social environments which have their own normative ordering and social structure. Moore (1973) speaks of 'semi-autonomous fields' - like family, neighbourhood, school and company - which are able to produce and maintain their own habits and rules of conduct. Although these 'social fields' have their own regulating abilities they are semi-autonomous because they are to a more or lesser degree subject to the regulating abilities of other social fields such as the state (see Moore, 1973). This approach in terms of social fields indicates that rule-governed behavior of people does not exist in a social vacuum. Also people very often find themselves in different social fields at the same time where normative structures can come into conflict with each other.

5.2 Securing one's own interests: People as self-oriented rational human beings

In most analyses of rule-governed behavior securing one's own interests is regarded as the dominant or even the only guiding principle. This is understandable because although it is not always visible, looking after ones interests is nearly always present. This motivation is grounded in the fact that people are autonomous, self-regulating organic systems which, although dependent on others, ultimately depend on their own signals and resources for well-being and maintenance. As a consequence every human organism will strive for, 1) survival and physical security, and 2) social security and well-being. The first aspect has to do with the direct physical existence such as people trying to avoid or approach cautiously what they assume to be a dangerous situation. In the underground-experiment, for instance, some people explained their obeying of the behavioral prescription by referring to the possibility of danger. The second aspect concerns the general need to secure one's own continuance by ensuring necessary conditions of existence and comfort (e.g. the phenomenon of hoarding). This need is self-orientated, in search of one's own profit in order to ensure and easy one's life.

This motivational background is the main theme in Hirschi's social control theory (Hirschi, 1967). Delinquent behavior in this theory is regarded as "acts of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self-interest" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 15). Self-orientation is supposed to be people's natural tendency because fundamentals, like security, food and comfort will always have to be satisfied while the means to fulfil these requirements are limited. Moreover, this theory assumes that people always 'want more', which in principle makes everyone motivated to commit crimes, and makes it necessary to have mechanism of control to prevent it.

Social control theory stresses the self-interest motive, but leaves the content of this
motive relatively open because there can exist a great variability. There is always a cultural and individual variable filling in, and the self-interest motive may, for instance, take the shape of gaining material prosperity at the cost of others. An example of a theory where such prosperity is central, is Merton’s strain theory (1967). The starting point in this theory is that people are socialized into the dominant (Western) opinion about the importance of material success. In reality, however, not everyone gets the same opportunity to reach a certain level of prosperity. Those at the bottom of the social ladder in particular will have a very low chance of being successful in a material way. As a result they will experience a certain tension or strain, which can lead to criminal behavior (or to "ritualism, retreatism and rebellion", p. 140) which is an alternative route to 'success'.

Self-interest is also often a central concept in socio-legal theories. What is sometimes called the instrumentalistic view implicitly stresses this need in assuming that behavior is mainly guided by reward and punishment. According to this view people’s behavior must be regulated by either manipulating the access to valued things or by the threat of punishment. As people mainly seek their self-interest, such a model would work out all right to realize behavioral conformity. This would certainly be the case, because instrumentalistic views don’t only speak about what it is that motivates people, but also about how they are motivated. Pre-eminently people are self-orientated beings, but also very rational beings who try to determine and evaluate their interests in a reasonable and well-thought way (see Becker, 1968; Paternoster, 1989). This rational decision approach is not only used more and more in recent literature, but is also implicit in older theories. Regarding rationality it is understandable that people sometimes break rules, because the advantages are supposed to outweigh the possible sanctions. In general people can follow rules because they match their interests or because rule-breaking can harm their own interests.

5.3 The need for meaning

Human cognition does not only lead to a fundamental need for cognitive ordering and knowledge about (social) reality, but also to questions about desirability (what is the meaning and purpose of the world and of the human presence in it?) and to a need for experiencing one’s own existence as meaningful. Frankl (1959) talks about a 'will-to-meaning' which, if not fulfilled, can lead to a 'noueogenic neurosis': a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness, an existential vacuum. People need to believe that they live not only for themselves, but that their existence has a more general purpose and meaning which exceeds their self-interests. A purpose and meaning which is not merely cognitive plausible, but also emotionally satisfactory and which makes life worth living.
Answers to questions about the meaning of life can often be found in cultural standard-views and -convictions like ideologies and religions. Such general views can differ substantially but they all provide important guide-lines for thinking and behaving. Of special importance are values. Values are social, objectivated, basic convictions about good versus evil and beauty versus ugliness, which give life substantial meaning. It is about what people value because it is in itself right or valuable. Such esthetic and ethical basic convictions give clear guide-lines for human behavior.

The question is how do these basic convictions influence rule-governed behavior? At least two aspects can be distinguished. The first aspect is a more general one and it concerns the idea that existing rules, whatever their content, should in principle be followed. The second aspect concerns the personal attitude towards specific forms of behavior being right or wrong, apart from the formal regulations. In both cases people feel an inner obligation to conform to the existing rules, which lead to voluntary - that is without external social pressure or sanctions - rule-governed behavior. Both aspects can be addressed.

5.1.1 Legitimacy

People may follow behavioral prescriptions because, apart from the type of behavior that is being regulated, they are convinced of the necessity to do so and they feel this as a personal obligation. The reason is that people subscribe to and believe in the rightness of the system which has made and issued those rules. As a result people feel that rules, once they are formalised, should be followed. A representative sample showed that 65% of the Dutch population shared this opinion.

Historically, the social contract-idea is relevant here. In modern times and in the western world this idea often means a belief in democracy and in democratic decision-making. Behavioral prescriptions like laws are not obeyed because of their content, but because the democratic procedures are believed to be just and right. Essential in this respect is the legitimacy of the existing social order and of those who make, interpret and maintain the rules. Legitimacy means that specific balances (of power) correspond with people's opinions and convictions, so that they can be regarded as right and just. The grounds on which such a qualification is being given, may alter. An important foundation, however, is that existing institutions and procedures can be regarded as right because they are seen as realized democratically and also can be checked and possibly be revoked through the democratic rules of the game. This applies not only to the social order with its procedural and distributive aspects, but also to the actions of authorities who execute and maintain the rules. In other words, people can obey behavioral prescriptions because legal order as well as
its institutions and authorities are being regarded as having a legal right to affect other people's behavior. As long as that order, those institutions and authorities remain within the legal and moral limits so that there will be no arbitrariness and deceit, this is an important background of rule-governed behavior. Psychologically, legitimacy means that people will voluntarily follow rules because they feel obligated to do so, although those rules may not correspond with their own interests. Among the Dutch population 79% were of the opinion that people should obey the law, even if it contradicts their personal ambitions.

An important aspect of the psychological obligation to rule-governed behavior is the confidence and trust one has in rules and authorities. As Tyler (1990, p. 172) says "only if people can trust authorities, rules and institutions can they believe that their own long-term interests are served by loyalty toward the organization". The social contract is partly based on expectations of how authorities will act and on the credibility and confidence in their acting. A legitimacy-crisis means that present institutions and authorities are not able to realize enough involvement and attachment with their civilians and as a result of this their credibility and the trust in the ruling order and its representatives is being affected. Such a confidence and trust is not unimportant in following rules and can also partly explain the results of the underground-experiment. In these experiments many people followed the prescriptions because they supposed and trusted that the responsible authorities had acted in the situation as they are supposed to. Surely that prescription will serve a purpose, they reason.

5.3.2 Moral judgement

A second background of rule-governed behavior can be found in the judgement of the behavior itself. Not the belief that rules ought to be followed just because they are rules is at stake, but the content of the rules itself is considered important. The need for meaning, can be particularized into the need to be a good human being, of acting according to what one feels to be right or wrong. It is about the need to be morally good, to live according to one's own moral values. As with the question of legitimacy, there is an internalized guide-line for behavior which is being felt as an obligation. However, there is a difference in content. The need to be a moral person does not have to imply a feeling of obligation to external legitimit authorities, but it implies a personal sense of what is morally right and wrong. People themselves approve or disapprove of the behavior that is being required or forbidden. For instance, people give up the idea of unrightfully appropriating something, not because there is a law against stealing, but because they feel stealing is morally reprehensible. These moral beliefs imply an internal guiding-system for behavior, such as human conscience, and to act
against one's own belief can lead to feelings of guilt and a loss of self-respect. Among the Dutch population 48% agreed with the statement that rule-breaking and self-respect hardly go together, 28% had no opinion and 24% disagreed (Verkuyten, Masson & De Jong, 1990).

Moral beliefs do not lead to rule-following behavior just like that, because it depends on the correspondence between one's own convictions and what the rules prescribe. If there is a correspondence, morality will have a great impact on rule-following, because in that case rule-following will mean following one's own beliefs and conscience. The existing legal order and its specific rules can be regarded not only as necessary sanctionable formal statements, but especially as the vivid expressions of basic human values such as justice and independance, which can be embodied by the formal system of rules. In that case the legal order and its system of rules has a symbolic meaning in which such fundamental values are being embodied and therefore can be experienced. The rules are regarded as a just and necessary expression of the moral and legal conscience and are therefore easily accepted. The functioning of a legal order, for instance, depends strongly on the human sense of justice. The sense of injustice is partly based on the contradiction between actual behavior and basic beliefs about what is right and just. A legal order that reflects these basic beliefs may count on a great deal of acceptance. Tyler (1990) has empirically shown the importance of such a reflection to rule-following behavior and he especially stressed procedural justice.

Of course this is not self-evident nor unchangeable. The legal order and its system of rules may become for instance more and more a technical apparatus in which efficiency is the main issue. As a result the involvement with the original values can easily get lost so that the legal order has to depend more on force. In that case the law will not be regarded any more as the vivid expression of values and beliefs that guide human behavior, but mainly as an instrument for social order and control. It is also possible that the existing legal order and its rules will be regarded as the embodiment of injustice and inequality, or as justifying power-relations instead of propagating basic values. In that case, dissent with the present situation may especially focus on this order and its rules, and people will take little notice of the behavioral prescriptions. What will happen is that personal moral beliefs lead to rule-breaking behavior because the prescriptions contradict one's own convictions. For example, a prohibition of euthanasia may be broken because people believe that they have a right to decide upon their own lives and because they feel that they have a moral duty to release others from their unbearable suffering.

Both aspects, the democratic process of forming rules and the reflection of basic values, have been discussed seperately but of course they are connected to each other. For instance, if authorities break fundamental principles of what is regarded as right (especially concerning procedures), their legitimacy will easily be affected, because the social contract-idea is also
based on the expectations of how people who occupy the democratically assigned positions of authority, should behave.

5.4 Social identity motivations

People are not only aware of their environment but also of themselves, of their own individuality. This self-consciousness develops during childhood and leads to two different basic human needs. First, the need to be valued and socially confirmed in the own sense of the self i.e. in that which differentiates the person from his social environment. Secondly, people do not just want to differentiate themselves from others, but they also want to feel attached to their environment.

5.4.1 Need for self-esteem

People want to count socially, to be valued as a person by the group or groups to which they belong. If this need is met it will contribute to a positive self-valuation. In social reality social groups and categories to which people belong are very important for social acknowledgement. If, as a member of a social category, one is being judged positively and is accepted, this will be favourable to one's self-esteem. The case in which one is being labelled negatively and is being treated that way is different: although it is not impossible, a positive self-concept will then be very difficult to achieve.

The importance of self-esteem has especially been elaborated with rule-breaking behavior and more precisely with delinquent behavior among youngsters. Emler (1984) stresses that delinquent behavior is used strategically by adolescent boys to build up a reputation in their peer-group. Youngsters regard a delinquent reputation as a means of gaining prestige and enlarging their social reputation, which will lead to a more positive self-concept. This would explain why most of their rule-breaking behavior occurs in the company of other people, who are, in effect, playing the part of an audience (Emler, Reicher & Ross, 1987).

A comparable theory is that of Kaplan (1980) who focusses on the need for a positive self-esteem and is especially interested in the effect it has on deviant behavior. Empirically he finds that feelings of self-rejection affect deviant behavior (e.g. Kaplan, Johnson & Baily, 1986). Negative self-evaluation would result in ending up in a delinquent sub-culture where youngsters - with respect to the social normative pattern - find an alternative route for gaining social prestige. Other researchers, however, find that there is
only a negligible effect and that the relationship between self-esteem and deviant behavior is rather the other way around (McCarthy & Hoge, 1984). Although this need for social esteem and for positive self-esteem has been studied mainly in relation to rule-breaking behavior it does not mean that it is unimportant to rule-following behavior. Reckless (1956) stresses in his 'containment' theory that positive self-esteem will protect people in an important way from the pressure of delinquent behavior.

This all implies that people need to be someone, to count; people "(are) especially motivated by the desire to achieve a positive image of self by winning acceptance and status in the eyes of others" (Wrong, 1961, p.186). The grounds on which this happens are in principle variable and can relate to servitude to others or to compliance with socially accepted conventions. This means that if a person orientates him- or herself towards others who don't break rules and disapprove of such behavior, there will be a strong pressure to follow behavioral prescriptions. For if these prescriptions are not met it will lead to social disapproval and rejection. What are essential are the criteria for social esteem which count in the group to which one belongs or wants to belong. Which behavior, rule-following or rule-breaking, will lead to social approval or disapproval?

The fact that those assessments affect human behavior should not only be understood from the need for social esteem, but also from the need for attachment.

5.4.2 The need for attachment

People are not only trying to (positively) distinguish themselves from others, but they are also looking for attachments with their social environment. A sense of identity also consists of feelings of belonging ('I am like they are, one of them'). Motivationally it is a matter of being able to attach oneself to the social environment by means of interpersonal, social and physical-cultural bonds. People want to relate themselves to something or someone, want to feel 'at home' in their social environment. If one succeeds, one can be sure of a continuity between oneself and the environment. Aspects of the environment will emotionally become a part of one's self and one will be a part of one's social surroundings: there will be a feeling of unity and oneness. In case this need is not fulfilled the consequences will be alienation and feelings of loneliness.

The importance of this need for attachment to rule-following behavior has, among others, been developed in the social control-theory by Hirschi (1969). Hirschi assumes that social integration, within the social framework that is important to a person and the attachment to it, limits rule-breaking behavior. One of the elements of social integration concerns the affective relations with other people or other groups of people. Research about
this topic shows for instance that a firm, affectively warm relationship between parents and their children may hinder children's rule-breaking behavior. On the other hand, affective relations with peers can also stimulate such behavior.

People do not only attach themselves to other people, but they can also feel attached to the social system of which they are a part and also to the physical-cultural environment like the material and cultural-symbolic aspects of their city and their neighborhood. If there is such an attachment those aspects emotionally form a part of one's own person: one identifies with them and feel committed. As a result, rules can be followed. For instance, if one feels attached to its neighbourhood this will prevent vandalistic behavior in that surrounding, and Nijboer & Dyksterhuis (1987) came to the conclusion in their study among Dutch adolescents, that: "the attachment to the school is of essential importance in explaining delinquent behavior" (p.167). People can also feel attached to the social system and therefore they won't easily break the rules which form the foundation of that system.

5.5 Psychological mechanisms

The discussion of general motivational dynamics has considered various answers to the question of why people follow rules. Differences between rule-following and rule-breaking have also became apparent. Thus in day-to-day rule-following the need for ordering will be crucial, while in rule-breaking self-interest is often dominant. The description of the various motivations also offers possibilities for an analysis of the psychological mechanisms which guide rule-governed behavior. All of the motivations discussed can have an influence on human behavior, but offer their own insights into the question of the nature and the necessity of behavioral prescriptions. In the literature a distinction is made between 'internal' and 'external' factors. Internal factors concern guiding-mechanisms of the individual himself, external factors concern behavioral effects caused for instance by rewards and punishments. I will discuss both factors, starting with the last one.

Sanctions affect human behavior because people try to avoid punishments and try to gain rewards. Sanctions concern manipulating the admittance to valued things or the possibilities of realizing goals. What these things or goals are, is variable and links up with the various motivations which have been discussed, such as social approval, attachment and material profit. Using punishments and rewards is an important mechanism for regulating human behavior, but at the same time it has obvious limitations. For one thing it can easily lead to mere behavioral compliance. As soon as sanctions cannot be applied, the prescriptions lose their effect on the behavior. This means that sanctions or the threat of sanctions have to be present more or less permanently.
There is much empirical literature about the question of whether a punishment and rewards approach is effective. It is not possible to reach a definitive conclusion. This is partly the result of the great variety of research methods and operationalizations that have been used. A lot of studies have serious methodological shortcomings (see Paternoster et al., 1983). In general, however, rule-following behavior is affected by the certainty of punishments while this is the severity of the penalty is less important. Existing research is especially concerned with the deterrent effect of punishments.

Psychologically, sanctions do not only need to affect human behavior because they actually provide people with advantages or disadvantages, but also because there is often an appeal to specific emotions. The threat of punishment can have a deterrent effect in which feelings of *fear and anxiety* are being evoked. Such feelings are unpleasant and give an impulse to avoid anxiety-arousing situations and behavior. Sanctions that evoke anxiety will have a more profound effect on behavior than sanctions that do not evoke such emotions. However, we must not lose sight of the opposite effect, because fear may easily turn into aggression and thus cause rule-breaking behavior.

Apart from fear and anxiety *shame* (along with its emotional nuances like feeling ridiculed, feeling left out, and feeling out of favor) is an important emotion for rule-governed behavior. Shame is caused by being looked at, ridiculed or by being rejected by other people (Munning, 1986). Thus shame always appears in a social context: the person experiences himself as an object of judgement. Social disapproval in rule- and especially norm-breaking behavior can lead to feelings of shame, which induces people to avoid the shame-evoking behavior. Sanctions which are connected to external social judgements and therefore can lead to shame, appeal to an important emotion that can guide behavior. However, it is a mechanism that depends mainly on the social environment. Extensive external control-mechanisms remain necessary because when the rule-breaking is not discovered or cannot be seen people keep going their own way.

Behavioral prescriptions do not just depend on external controls because people themselves often have important control-mechanism such as a conscience. Recently more attention is being paid to these internal mechanisms which are very important to people's rule-following (see Tyler, 1990). The main process through which such an internal control-mechanism is constructed is internalisation. The moral guide-lines for acting right, offered by the environment, are being incorporated as personal guide-lines. Such an internal mechanism of control is quite stable in time and relatively independent of situational conditions. It regulates behavior in various situations and on various times. Socially it has the great advantage of not needing extensive external control to regulate behavior. Psychologically, however, it has the disadvantage of people coming into conflict with themself because, by the process of internalisation, the conflict between social demands and personal desires is
located within the individual.

A feeling of guilt (along with emotional nuances like regret and repentance) is the typical emotion that occurs whenever the internalised convictions and principles are being broken. Guilt implies a special sort of negative self-conviction and it is, unlike shame, not directed socially. It concerns one's own shortcomings in specific situations. The person himself is the cause of and responsible for his feelings of guilt. The reaction to feelings of guilt may be a search for (re)confirmation of one's own moral value and dignity and an attempt to avoid breaking moral standards in future. Cognitively, ego-defense-mechanisms (like isolation and rationalisations) may enter or dominate the consciousness. These aim at preventing the feeling of guilt. For instance, an important mechanism for avoiding guilt is the justification of one's own misconduct by indicating that one has followed the demands and the desires of legitimate authorities.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Human behavior is always tied to a particular place and time. This implies that an analysis of behavioral determinants of rule-governed behavior can not merely look at human characteristics and the characteristics of the rule. Temporal and situational characteristics may influence rule-following or rule-breaking. People who, in a certain situation, break a rule do not just distinguish themselves from rule-followers by a specific motivational constellation, their personality or an emotional attitude towards laws and rules. It is possible that the rule-breaking behavior results from a combination of situational circumstances - like the influence of others and the opportunity to break the rule - which is independant of the person or the rule itself. In this regard the criminological literature talks about "criminogenic situations". Characteristics and events tied to the time and the place of the rule-breaking can be important determinants of a behavior (Gibbons, 1971). Many of the influences referred to in the literature, such as social pressure, normative orientation and mutual attachment, have already been discussed. In this paragraph I want to confine myself to a brief indication of factors which may be present in the environment in which people will have to deal with a rule, and that are not attached to the rule itself. In order to do so I will make a distinction between objective characteristics of the environment and social influences in that environment.

1) The first regards characteristics of the actual situation in which people find themselves. This can be illustrated with the well-known Dutch phrase "the opportunity makes the thief". In general people often break rules because the situation offers an opportunity for it. An
example of this is the broad, neatly arranged and well-asphalted motor-ways which invite one to break the speed-limit. In this connection interesting social-psychological experiments have been carried out, investigating the phenomenon of graffiti and other forms of vandalism. If there is a lot of graffiti in an environment, people will be inclined to add more to it, whilst a totally neat environment inhibits graffiti. An example is the Rotterdam underground which has two lines: north-south and east-west. On the east-west line there is hardly any graffiti while on the other line, built earlier, it is common. The reason for this lack of graffiti on the east-west line lies in the experiences the authorities had on the north-south line. On the east-west line they used different materials which are less inviting to graffiti. In other words, the actual environment can cause rule-breaking as well as rule-following behavior.

2). Second, there are social influences in which a distinction can be made between group and non-group influences. The latter is concerned with the part played by the presence of others, in situations in which people are not present as a member of a group but as an individual. It is of importance whether one's own behavior is visible to others and whether the person is able to see others in the same situation. The first aspect concerns the distinction I have made earlier between private and public behavior, whereas in the last case various normative influences will play a part. The second aspect concerns the possibility of following others. In common life we can find various examples. If for instance one or two people walk through a red pedestrian traffic-light it is likely that more people will follow. In the underground-experiment we found that if one person obeyed the prescription the people behind him/her were inclined to do the same. I will not go further into the psychological aspects of such behavior.

Group-influences are often very important to rule-following or rule-breaking behavior. For instance, among adolescents delinquent behavior is in most cases a group activity and not an isolated act of one individual. In such situations adolescents, but also people in general, tend to go much further in their behavior than when they are alone. They dare to do things they would not think of doing alone. The various group-dynamic and psychological processes that play a part here have been investigated extensively in social-psychological studies and will not be discussed any further.

7. CONCLUSIONS: THE STATUS OF THE SCHEME

The scheme that has been presented before as a guide-line to the description can now be filled in further. This scheme does not pretend to do more than give a more extensive distinction between actual behavioral determinants that can affect rule-governed behavior than has previously been the case. The distinctions will have to prove their relevance, but I
think* that the scheme offers an opportunity to gain insights into the enormous variety of behavioral determinants. Therefore it is a exploratory scheme which makes one attentive to possible relevant factors (compare Paternoster, 1989). Whether and how the various factors affect rule-governed behavior will have to be studied. The scheme itself does not explain such behavior. It is not a model that indicates causal directions and relevant processes of influence which can be tested empirically. Depending on the behavior that is being studied such a model will have to be deduced. However, what should not be forgotten is: that different factors nearly always are relevant and that they determine the behavior together.

This indicates that formulating a theory and conducting research is a difficult task: at least, if one does not give in to the temptation of identifying one or only a few factors as the most important one(s). This temptation often gives a very one-sided and reductionistic view of social reality. This does not mean, however, that it is pointless to investigate empirically the importance of some factors under the control of others. On the contrary, such an investigation is extremely important and is often the only possibility. As soon as some important factors have been established, however, this should not lead to the conclusion that the crucial factors have been found. Of course it is probable that there are cases in which indeed some factors may dominate specific forms of rule-governed behavior. Such a result, however, is something else than a theoretical ordering of possible factors that can have an effect, and it is also something else than an initial one-sided view of some factors. What seems necessary is to identify the various actual behavioral determinants, to investigate how they work and to analyse their mutual effects (Duyker, 1982). The scheme as it is presented can, I think, be useful in addressing this task, if only because it attracts attention to the diversity of behavioral determinants, so that a one-sided analysis can be prevented.
TYPES OF BEHAVIOR
BY SPHERES OF LIFE
personal: inter-personal:
collective-economic:
cultural expressive:
public

CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE RULES
- clarity
- objective
- imperativeness
- enforcement
- source

PERSONAL
CHARACTERISTICS
basic motivations

SITUATIONAL
CHARACTERISTICS
- environmental
- social
  :as group member
  :as individual

RULE-GOVERNED BEHAVIOR
- following
- breaking
1. More recently Paternoster (1989) has tried to fit the rational choice perspective into the more general social control theory. In doing so the self-interest motive also includes social approval, moral values etc.

2. These results are from a study which was conducted for psychometric reasons (Verkuyten, Masson & De Jong, 1990).

3. Confidence and trust as explanatory concepts are not uncommon in the social sciences (see Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

4. The distinction between formal and informal sanctions (or control) is sometimes based on these different motivations. Informal sanctions concern rejection and disapproval by intimate others, such as parents and friends. Formal sanctions concern for instance fines and imprisonment. In general informal sanctions seem to be more effective (Paternoster, 1989).

5. As early as 1961 Wrong pointed out that among social scientist the concept of internalization has lost much of its original and specific meaning. For instance, the concept sometimes refers to habit-formation and the process of learning as such. As a result is that the specific processes which are relevant in case of internalisation, are lost sight of. What is central is that in establishing self-control psychological tensions comes to exist between personal desires and impulses on the one hand and the regulations which have been incorporated on the other hand.
REFERENCES


