Reducing Ethical Dissonance

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An Apparent Conflict

- People really care about being **moral**, and desire to behave honestly and preserve a positive moral self esteem
  - **E.g.**: people value honesty and morality (4.2 out of 5, see Aquino & Reed, 2002)

- People lie and **cheat** much more often than they care to admit (DePaulo et al., 1996; Fischbacher & Heusi, 2008)

- **E.g.**: Average person reports on 1-2 lies per day (Feldman & Forrest, 1996); Many individuals cheat at least to a certain extent (e.g., Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009, Shalvi et al., 2011).
Actual vs. reported attendance in Social Psychology class
Ethical Dissonance

- **Ethical Dissonance** is the tension that arises from the inconsistency between people’s actual dishonest behavior and their desire to maintain a positive moral self-image (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Barkan, Ayal, Gino & Ariely, 2011)

- **How people bridge this gap?**
  - People behave dishonestly enough to profit from their behavior, but then use creative mechanisms to preserve their positive self-image. Specifically, we discuss psychological mechanisms that enable people to rationalize and condone their unethical behavior.
Take advantage of ambiguous ethical code
Reducing Ethical Dissonance

When behavior is undeniably wrong, Ethical Dissonance is salient and can be reconciled by:

1. People overcompensate for their own unethicality via judgment of others with stricter moral standards

2. Moral Cleansing – asking for forgiveness and turning over a new leaf

3. Pro social behavior (charity) or lying for the benefits of others
Watch this:

Spitzer 2006
"Simple Rule" :30
SPTZ-6306
4.14.06
Crew Cuts•28 W. 44th Street NY, NY•212-302-2828
1. The Pot Calling the Kettle Black
"I misrepresented my academic degrees when I first applied to MIT 28 years ago and did not have the courage to correct my resume when I applied for my current job or at any time since”

Marilee Jones, Dean of Admission at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) since 1979
Study 1: Experimental Design and Procedure

- **Four between-subjects manipulation**
  - Recalling a bad deed, a good deed, a neutral event, a bad incident

- **Manipulation check**
  - Three-item state version of self-esteem scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991)
    - 1) Right now, I feel good about myself; 2) Right now, I feel I am a person of worth; 3) Right now, I like the way I look

- **Task**
  - Hiring a person whose behavior is ethically questionable

- **DV**s
  - Likelihood of hiring candidate
  - Evaluation of candidate (honesty, loyalty, etc.)
Recall Paradigm

Eliciting Ethical Dissonance

• Please describe below one unethical thing you have done, one that made you feel guilt, regret or shame. Other people engaging in this type of introspective task frequently write about instances where they acted selfishly at the expense of someone else, took advantage of a situation and were dishonest, or an event in which they were untruthful or disloyal.

• When
• Where
• Who was involved
• What did you do
• What did you think
• What did you feel
Recall Paradigm

Manipulation Check

![Bar chart titled Self Esteem showing categories E. Diss, Worthy, Neutral, Negative with corresponding values.](chart.png)
Study 1 - Hiring

During a job-interview a candidate implies he has access to classified files of competing firms

**DV’s**

(1) Likelihood of hiring

(2) Candidate’s honesty

(3) Candidate’s future loyalty

Strongly Disagree 1 -- 9 Strongly Agree
To distance themselves from their own unethical behavior, individuals adopt a more stringent criteria for judging the behavior of others and present themselves as more virtuous and ethical.
2. Moral Cleansing

• Conscious process that enables individuals to distance themselves from transgressions and turn a new page in their moral ledger (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000)
Forgiveness as a Social Mechanism

- Repentance and “turning over a new leaf” are at the core of many religious rituals:
  - Islam and Hinduism use physical cleansing ceremonies to purify the soul
  - Jewish people fast and pray during Yom Kippur to repent for their sins
  - Christians have Confession
A 75-year-old man goes to confession and tells the priest, "Forgive me father for I have sinned. I had sex last night with two 20-year-old girls" 
The priest says, "How long has it been since your last confession."
The man says, "I have never been to confession, I am Jewish."
"So why are you telling me?" asked the priest.
The man says, "I'm telling everybody."
The Promise of Confession

In the words of a Catholic priests we interviewed:

“People want to feel like they are being brought to their right self. It is a human need to refocus their lives and get back on track”

“You are doing something active by going to talk to a priest and therefore you’re being released”
Study 1: Naïve theories about the effect of Confession

- We start in exploring people’s intuitions about the relationship between confession and unethical behavior.

- *Task*: a story about a person with a temptation to cheat (e.g., Unethical love affair)

- *DV*: Likelihood of dishonest behavior in each time point

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Few Days Before</th>
<th>Right After</th>
<th>Few Days After</th>
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<td>Confession</td>
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<td>Control</td>
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The probability of unethical behavior
Naïve Theories about confession

• People predict the behavior of other according to concern for-moral-balance model – In all our conditions the lowest likelihood of dishonesty was obtained a short time after the confession

• The positive effect of a confession was eliminated and even reversed with time.

• Mixed results concerning expectations
Simulating Confession In The Lab

• We explore direct measure of dishonest behavior

• *Task*: perceptual task that induced conflict between honesty and maximizing one's self-interests

![Graph showing points on a grid with text overlays: More on right (5 cents) and More on left (0.5 cents).]
Study 2 - Experimental Design and Procedure

- **Three Phases:**
  - Practice trials
  - Phase 1 (2 blocks of 50 trials for real money)
  - Manipulation
  - Phase 2 (2 blocks of 50 trials for real money)

- **Manipulation:** forgiveness versus thankfulness
  - Introspective writing task
Study 2 - Manipulation

• Writing Task -

“Please think about a time you found yourself planning or actually engaging on one of these unethical activities and describe what you did.”

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

• Forgiveness -

“For the next few minutes, please think about asking for forgiveness for the cheating you have described in the first page, close your eyes and ask God or any other entity for forgiveness. Then please write to God or any other entity to ask for forgiveness in just a sentence or two.”
Results: Total “More on Right” Clicks
Study 3: Knowing Vs. Not Knowing

• We want to explore the real effect of expectation. All participants did confession with one between-subjects manipulation:
  Knowing in advance about the confession vs. not knowing

• Explore if the effect of confession is eliminated as a function of time.

• Same procedure as before
  – But 20-minute filler task after last stage (in a different lab room)
  – After the filler task, participants engaged in an additional 100 rounds of the perceptual task
“More on Right” Clicks on Ambiguous Trials

Confessing reduces cheating

- Stage 1 - Practice Trials
- Stage 2 - Real Trials
- Stage 3 - Real Trials after confession

- Blue line: without knowing
- Red line: with knowing
Stage 1 - Practice Trials
Stage 2 - Real Trials
Stage 3 - Real Trials after confession
Stage 4 - Real Trials after filler task

“Restart” Effects

Increased cheating after “break”

- without knowing
- with knowing
Summary for confession

• Confession is an effective way to reduce dishonest behavior, at least as moral reminder and for the short term

• However:
  — this effect reduces but does not eliminate the level of dishonesty
  — the positive confession effect can be diminished and even reversed with time
3. Balancing the scales with Pro social behavior
“It’s Not Cheating, It’s Collaborating.”
The Matrix Task

In the boxes below, find 2 numbers that sum equals 10. Circle these numbers and mark the ‘Found It’ box. See example.

For each pair you find, you will receive $0.50. When finished:
1. Count your solved tables.
2. Trash this page.
3. Take money according to your performance from the attached envelope.
4. Return the envelope with the leftover money to the experimenter.

1.69 1.82 2.91
4.67 4.70 3.05
5.82 5.06 4.28
6.36 5.30 4.57

Found it ☑
Study 3a – Method

- Participants – 196 students
- Task: matrix task
- But we can precisely measure whether Ps cheated or not
- Design: 3x2 between-subjects

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Collaboration – Hypotheses

• **H1 (Justification and local social utility)**
  – The level of dishonesty will be higher in settings with collaboration, since people can more easily justify their actions and feel good about themselves.

• **H2 (Diffusion of responsibility)**
  – The level of dishonesty will be higher in collaborative settings compared to settings with no collaboration. But in this case, higher levels of communication will decrease the level of dishonesty.

• **H3 (Peer monitoring)**
  – The level of dishonesty will be lower in collaborative settings with collocated collaboration compared to settings with distributed collaboration.
Study 3a – Results
Study 3b – Method

- Participants – 122 students
- Task: matrix task
- Design: one between-subjects manipulation about communication
  - No talking
  - Talking
  - Friendly taking
Results 3b: Performance on Matrix Task

Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2012
Mechanism 3– Discussion

• “People are good. But if you monitor them, they are better.” Juan Domingo Peron

• The level of dishonesty is highly dependent on the type of collaboration

• Close others’ benefits increase cheating: Self Serving Altruism – after cheating for the benefit of others people explore less guilt
אישים פוטרים את המתח בין מוסריות وبين אינטרסים כלכליים, בערר הפרשנות יצירתיות של התנהגויות בלתי מוסריות מעורפלות, המושפעים מזכガイドים הארגוניים ואובקפים. המשמעות בקטבית כדי להציד את התנהגותם.

حس הפוטר של אישים תהליכים בוגרימים
חביתים, אשר נרמזים על ידיアニטראקטיבحادثים, אשרNeil על ידי ביוטי בחרבות אורתים, ועשויים לבוא לידי ביוטי בחרבות אורתים, ועשויים לבוא לידי ביוטי בחרבות אורתים.
דימו הכללים

פתרון עמידים
משמר мыוסר
בעברת החוץ
מודעות עולמית

толעתו העצמית
משמר мыוסר
בעברת הפנים
והלוית אחורית

Ῥוחים חיצוניים-עלית חיצונית
תגמולים חיצוניים=
כדי למנוע אי הבנה בנדון אנו מבקשים ממך לחתום על ההצהרה:

הבא:

אני ________________
ז.
______________
מצהיר/ה בזאת כי העבודה הסמינרונית המצורפת بتاريخ היא פרי יצירה עצמית וכתבה על פי כללי ציטוט והפנייה המקובלים באקדמיה. كما כל-
ónico מצהיר/ה כי ידוע לי שהגשת עבודה אשר חלקים רבים או משמעותיים או מהותיים בה העתקו מעבודה אחרת היא עבירה וكيف אם יתגלה כי עברתי עבירה זו, תוגש נגדי תלונה על כך לוועדת הממשיח של האוניברסיטה.

הצהרת מקוריית

אני ________________
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וסמכים/א/א מ맛ונים 바odoreת היא עבירה וكيف אם יתגלה כי עברתי עבירה זו, תוגש נגדי תלונה על כך לוועדת
המשיח של האוניברסיטה.
כשאמרו לי לא להתחרט
כבר לא יוכלו لي להתחרט
הלכתי רוחק מדי...."

"חרטה" של נתן זך
(קטע מהשיר מ"חרטה" של נתן זך)
“Corruption never has been compulsory.”

Anthony Eden