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**A spillover effect of altruistic cheating:
When benefiting others goes wrong**

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Introduction.....	2
The case of Altruistic Cheating.....	3
The Spillover Effect.....	5
Study 1	6
Method	6
Results and Discussion	9
Study 2	13
Method	15
Results and Discussion	17
General Discussion	19
Conclusion	23
References.....	23
Appendices.....	27
Appendix A: The Dots Task	27
Appendix B: List of 9 charities chosen in the Altruistic blocks.....	28
Appendix C: Demographic questionnaire.....	29
Appendix D: The Manipulation message.....	32
תקציר.....	א

Abstract

Recent research in behavioral ethics has introduced the concept of ethical dissonance, which is defined as an inconsistency between one's moral values and behavioral misconduct contradicting these values. Justifications are known to help people deal with the psychological distress that can be prompted by this inconsistency. The current study investigated the interplay between justifications for altruistic cheating, i.e. unethical behavior for the benefit of others, and ethical dissonance. In two experimental studies, we examined when and how altruistic cheating might contribute to a diffusion of the ethical dissonance, by weakening the moral shackles and spilling over to self-serving unethical acts. Study 1 proposes a dark side to benevolent behavior such as donating to charity, and suggests that unethical behavior, conducted with the justification of helping others, might serve as an anchor for future selfish dishonest acts. Participants who had an opportunity to cheat for increasing donation to charity, later demonstrated an increased tendency to cheat for their own profit. We termed this 'the spillover effect' of altruistic cheating on subsequent self-serving unethical behavior. Study 2 further explored this effect and its underlying mechanisms and in particular whether it can be attributed to an altruistic justification process, or merely to learning and habituation. The results showed that the spillover is mainly governed by the feeling of entitlement to cheat and the ability to altruistically justify one's previous unethical act. When we manipulated this ability, and restrained the justification that had been based on altruistic motives, less selfish unethical behavior ensued. Understanding how to disentangle the virtues of benevolent behavior from its hidden destructive forces may take us one step further towards developing a more moral-supportive environment.

Key words: Ethical dissonance, Altruistic cheating, Justification, Unethical behavior, donations

Introduction

“Those that think it permissible to tell a white lie soon grow color-blind”

Austin O'Malley, Keystones of Thought

Individuals frequently face situations involving a conflict between doing what is right and moral, and what is perceived as more profitable, or better serves their own personal interests. Although this conflict takes on different shapes and magnitudes, ethical failures are abundant and constitute one of society's greatest challenges. Even more so when it comes to public servants: the news is full of examples of corruption, influence peddling, bribery, racketeering, etc. (e.g. Ariely, 2012). However, unethical behavior takes its psychological toll, in the form of what is known as ethical dissonance. Ethical Dissonance describes the tension arising from an inconsistency between one's ethical values and this individual's actual behavior (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Barkan, Ayal, Gino & Ariely, 2012; Hochman, Glöckner, Fiedler & Ayal, 2016).

The theory of Self-Concept Maintenance posits that people typically engage in dishonest behavior to enjoy its benefits, but only to the extent that allows them to maintain a positive and moral self-image (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008). Research shows that when given the chance, most people cheat slightly and only to a certain extent, not to the maximum possible payoff (Mazar et al., 2008; Shalvi, Handgraaf & De Dreu, 2011). In other words, most people value their morality and therefore avoid dishonest behavior that threatens their self-concept, but are fine with cutting corners when given the opportunity to benefit from unethical behavior (Shalvi, Gino, Barkan & Ayal, 2015).

For this reason, engaging in unethical behavior often goes hand in hand with the ability to justify this act (Hochman et al., 2016; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Shalvi, Dana, Handgraaf & De Dreu, 2011; Shalvi, Eldar & Bereby-Mayer, 2012; Shalvi et al., 2015). The justification process can appear either before or after the unethical act. Its role is to help people preserve their high moral self-image despite their misconduct, and hence attenuate the psychological cost of

violating ethical rules. Put differently, justifications serve the self by bridging two opposing desires: benefitting from unethical behavior while at the same time perceiving oneself as moral (Shalvi et al., 2015).

The case of Altruistic Cheating

Both contextual and psychological factors intervene in the justification process and influence the tendency to behave unethically. Some justifications are purely contextual; for instance, Gino, Norton & Ariely (2010) found that people knowingly wearing fake sunglasses cheated more across numerous tasks than did participants wearing authentic sunglasses. They suggested that this effect is mediated by the counterfeit self in that feelings of inauthenticity are generated by wearing fake products (Gino et al., 2010). Other justifications are purely psychological. In a set of experiments, Mead, Baumister, Gino, Schewitzer, and Ariely (2009) showed that when people's capacity to employ self-control is impaired, dishonesty increases. That is, after being depleted by a task that demanded self-control resources, people cheated more than after a less taxing task.

In the case of cheating for the benefit of others, studies have suggested that justifications can be composed of both contextual and psychological factors. For instance, the number of beneficiaries and the concern/closeness one feels to them influence the willingness to cheat. Gino, Ayal & Ariely (2013) found that when people's dishonesty benefits others, they are more likely to view dishonesty as morally acceptable, and thus feel less guilty about benefiting from cheating. Moreover, individuals' cheating was shown to be influenced by the size of the group of beneficiaries; The larger the group, the greater the level of cheating. These authors then investigated the interaction between the existence of beneficiaries other than themselves, and the concern for these beneficiaries. They found that justification and social benefit work in concert to create an additive effect which promotes dishonesty. The potential benefits dishonesty may create for others, both act as a motivator for immoral behavior, and help people

justify their misconduct and feel less guilty about it (Gino et al., 2013). Other works have found that people are more likely to behave unethically if they are empathetic towards (Gino & Pierce, 2009) or feel similar to (Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009) the beneficiaries of their dishonesty, and when they are concerned for their outcomes and their welfare.

In altruistic cheating, i.e. committing dishonest acts that benefit others, the focus on others' social utility enables people to classify their own actions in positive terms more freely, thus avoiding a negative update of their moral self-image (Mazar et al., 2008; Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009). One explanation is that behaving in an unethical manner for an altruistic cause is more easily justified. People find it easier to discount moral concerns for their transgressions when it benefits another person than unethical behavior that benefits themselves alone (Wiltermuth, 2011). As a result, while cheating increases in these altruistic circumstances, individuals' moral self-image suffers less impact (Gino et al., 2013). A study showed this to be the case even when imposing a cost on the unethical act (Erat & Gneezy, 2012). Altruistic cheating is especially widespread when the beneficiaries are identifiable and in need (The Robin Hood effect; Gino & Pierce, 2010). Thereby, third-party beneficiaries play a key role in the ethical decision-making process. By authorizing a social justification for dishonest behavior (Klein, Thielmann, Hilbig & Zettler, 2017; Wiltermuth, Bennet & Pierce, 2013), the psychological distress is reduced (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Barkan et al., 2012).

For this reason, by justifying unethical behavior and blurring the distinction between what is moral and what is immoral, altruistic cheating might serve as a gateway to unethical behavior in general (Gino & Bazerman, 2009). Moreover, if cheating that benefits others is perceived as more moral (e.g., Gino et al., 2013; Weizel & Shalvi, 2015; Wu, Loke, Xu & Lee, 2011), it may contribute to people's self-worth and license subsequent unethical behavior (Sachdeva et al., 2009).

The Spillover Effect

Austin O'Malley's statement "Those that think it permissible to tell a white lie soon grow color-blind" depicts the danger in altruistic cheating. Once engaged in unethical behavior, as justifiable as it may be, people's moral standards are weakened and the likelihood of sliding down the slippery slope increases (Garrett, Lazzaro, Ariely & Sharot, 2016; Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Welsh, Ordóñez, Snyder & Christian, 2015). Small forms of misconduct over time may progressively lead people to engage in greater unethical behavior that otherwise would be considered impermissible. Welsh et al., (2015) proposed that the slippery slope effect increases unethical behavior by facilitating people's tendency to morally disengage across a series of gradually changing ethical choices. Since people's past behavior serves as a guide for future ethical decisions, moral disengagement - a set of cognitive mechanisms that deactivate moral self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1986) - may allow individuals who have engaged in minor misconduct to justify future unethical acts (Welsh et al., 2015). Moreover, in a process of self-signaling (Bem, 1965), these forms of minor misconduct may cause people to infer that they are less moral than they previously thought. Consequently, they may behave less morally (Gino et al., 2010; Lee, Hochman, Prince & Ariely, 2016).

Here we posit that because individuals more readily justify altruistic cheating, the likelihood of it paving an unethical road for normative people should be higher. What started out as an insignificant, though unethical, act for another's benefit can spill over into other fields involving pure self-interest. Thus, unethical behavior justified by the feeling of helping others might also serve as a cognitive anchor (Epley & Gilovich, 2001; Kahneman, 1992) for future self-serving (egoistic) unethical acts.

The studies presented here were designed to further explore the slippery slope effect and its interaction with altruistic cheating to create the spillover effect. They examine the

relationship between altruistic and egoistic cheating, propose a mechanism to explain this relationship, and a possible way to reestablish a more moral environment.

Study 1

Study 1 was designed to examine the spillover effect of altruistic cheating; namely, whether acting unethically for the benefit of others, a behavior which is easier to justify, would later increase a person's cheating behavior when he or she is the only beneficiary. To do so, we first explored whether people were willing to cheat for no personal gain (the benefits from cheating went to a good cause), and whether this 'altruistic' cheating caused people to cheat more than when doing so for their personal gain. Our second goal was to examine the influence of this type of cheating on subsequent egoistic cheating. Participants played a computerized perceptual task which induced a conflict between being accurate (honest) and cheating to maximize either donation to charity (altruistic cheating) or personal benefit (egoistic cheating). To explore the effect of the former type of cheating on the latter, half of the participants started the task with the opportunity to cheat for donation and then the opportunity to cheat for themselves, and the second half played in the reverse order.

We hypothesized that unethical behavior in the name of helping others would be higher than self-serving unethical behavior, which is harder to justify. Moreover, we hypothesized a spillover effect of altruistic cheating on subsequent self-serving unethical behavior: starting with altruistic, as opposed to egoistic cheating, was assumed to set a higher anchor for participants, so they would subsequently cheat more for their own benefit.

Method

- *Participants.* One hundred and thirty-seven participants (70.1% female, $M_{age} = 24.15$ years $SD=3.16$) were recruited at a college in Israel. On average they each won 13.27 NIS (~ 3.8 USD) and donated 13.5 NIS (~ 3.9 USD) out of 21 NIS (~ 6 USD) possible. Actual payments

were contingent upon their choices. All participants gave their informed consent before participating.

-Procedure and Materials. Participants engaged in a modified version of the Dots task (Gino et al., 2010; Hochman et al., 2016), a perceptual task adapted to specifically examine the objectives of the current experiment. On each trial, participants are presented with a square divided down the middle into two parts by a vertical line, with red colored dots appearing in different configurations within each side of the square (Appendix A). The dots are symmetrical and their position is mirrored on the midline. The dots only appear for 1 second, and the participants are required to determine which side of the square (right or left) contains a larger number of red dots. However, while the participants are instructed to be as accurate as possible, incentives are not based on accuracy, but rather on the chosen side. Specifically, in ‘Pay for Left’ blocks, participants are paid 0.25 New Israeli Shekel (NIS) every time they choose Left and 0.01 NIS every time they choose Right. By contrast, in ‘Pay for Right’ blocks, they get 0.25 NIS for selecting Right and 0.01 NIS for selecting Left. Thus, every trial that includes more dots on the low paying side presents a conflict between following instructions (providing the correct answer) and maximizing profit. Participants aiming to maximize profit should indicate Right/Left (depending on the high paying side) in all trials and disregard the actual number of dots appearing on each side of the square. This task has been validated as a measure of levels of dishonesty (e.g., Ayala & Gino, 2011; Gino et al., 2010; Hochman et al., 2016; Mazar & Zhong, 2010; Sharma et al., 2014).

Upon arrival, participants were seated in a private room. Task instructions were presented on the computer. To familiarize participants with the task, they started with 10 practice screens and were told to call the experimenter during practice if needed. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two between-subject conditions. In the ‘Start Altruistic’ condition, participants were first instructed to choose one charity (out of a list of 9 charities,

see Appendix B) to which they would like to donate all their profits from the task. They then played 84 trials (42 consecutive ‘Pay for Left’ and 42 consecutive ‘Pay for Right’ in random order) for the benefit of that charity. After completing these 84 trials, participants started the second phase, in which they played 84 additional trials, this time receiving all the earnings for themselves. By contrast, in the ‘Start Egoistic’ condition, the order was reversed: participants were first instructed to play for personal gain, and after completing 84 trials, chose one of the 9 charities and played 84 more trials for the benefit of the charity they chose.

At all times, a counter was visible on screen, indicating the accumulated amount (updated with every trial) and the beneficiary of the current phase (charity or the self – See Appendix A). After the task, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). The study lasted approximately 12 minutes.

- *Measures. Cheating level:* To estimate cheating level, we calculated the difference between beneficial errors and detrimental errors. Specifically, a beneficial error is when a participant chooses the high paying side although there were more dots on the low paying side. For example, in the ‘Pay for Right’ trials, we calculated the number of times the participant selected Right when it was the wrong side and divided it by the number of possible errors (number of times in which there were more dots on the left). In a similar manner, we calculated the number of times participants selected Left in ‘Pay for Left’ trials when there were actually more dots on the right and divided it by the number of possible errors. Similarly, detrimental errors were calculated as the number of times the participant chose the low paying side when more dots were on the high paying side, divided by the number of possible errors. To differentiate the cheating behavior from honest errors, we then calculated the difference between beneficial errors, which represent selections that are aimed at increasing gain, and detrimental errors, which represent honest mistakes (Hochman et al., 2016) (See Figure 1). For example, consider a participant in the ‘Pay for Left’ trials who made 15 errors to the left (Selected Left when there

were more dots on the right) out of the 21 in which there were more dots on the right. The rate of beneficial errors for this participant is thus 0.71. Since the same participant made only one error to the right (out of the possible 21), his/her detrimental error rate is 0.05. This participant's cheating score is the difference between the proportions of beneficial and detrimental errors, namely 0.67.

Fig 1.
$$\frac{\text{actual errors to the left}}{\text{possible errors to the left}} - \frac{\text{actual errors to the right}}{\text{possible errors to the right}} = \frac{15}{21} - \frac{1}{21} = 0.67$$

Affinity to Charity: Participants were asked to name the charity they chose to donate their earnings, and to rate the extent to which they related to that charity on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – not at all, to 5 – very much.

Results and Discussion

The cheating scores means ranged from 0.170 ± 0.312 to 0.301 ± 0.314 and were significantly different from zero (Start Altruistic condition: Altruistic cheating $t(65)=6.56$, $p<.001$, Egoistic cheating $t(65)=7.78$, $p<.001$; Start Egoistic condition: Altruistic cheating $t(70)=6.98$, $p<.001$, Egoistic cheating $t(70)=4.58$, $p<.001$), suggesting that participants acted dishonestly and cheated on the Dots task. The Dots task is somewhat of an analogy to everyday situations in which people need to decide between following their values or their moral self-image (e.g., not breaking the rules, maintaining the moral self), and doing what pays more. Our results replicate previous studies showing that when given the opportunity, people cheat to improve financial gain/donation but not to the maximum extent possible (e.g., Gino et al., 2009; Hochman et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2012; Mazar et al., 2008; Shalvi et al., 2011).

Surprisingly, a Pearson correlation between the 'affinity to charity' measure and the level of altruistic cheating did not indicate a significant association ($r=.070$, $p=.417$). Nevertheless, this low correlation can be accounted by the fact that our sample distribution in

this measure was limited and strongly skewed to the right ($M=4.13$, $SD=.922$) as people naturally tended to choose the charity they affiliated with the most.

The averaged cheating score in the first phase was 0.267 ($SD=.331$) for altruistic cheating and 0.170 ($SD=.312$) for egoistic cheating. Thus, as predicted, the participants were more likely to engage in unethical behavior when it was altruistic than self-serving. An independent samples t-test revealed this difference to be significant ($t(135)=-1.771$, $p=.039$, one-tailed).

To examine our main hypothesis, we used a 2 (condition: Start Egoistic/Start Altruistic) $\times$ 2 (type of cheating: Earnings for Self/Earnings for Charity) repeated-measures ANOVA with cheating level as the dependent variable. In line with our prediction, the results revealed a condition*type interaction effect ($F(1,135) = 8.35$, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2=.058$), suggesting a spillover of altruistic cheating on subsequent self-serving unethical behavior. Specifically, after an initial phase in which the participants could cheat for the benefit of others, they were found to cheat to a greater extent for themselves than they would have without first cheating altruistically. However, this spillover effect worked only in one direction, from altruistic to egoistic cheating.

This pattern was not found for the opposite direction: After giving people the opportunity to cheat for themselves, they did not exhibit less cheating to benefit others (Figure 2).

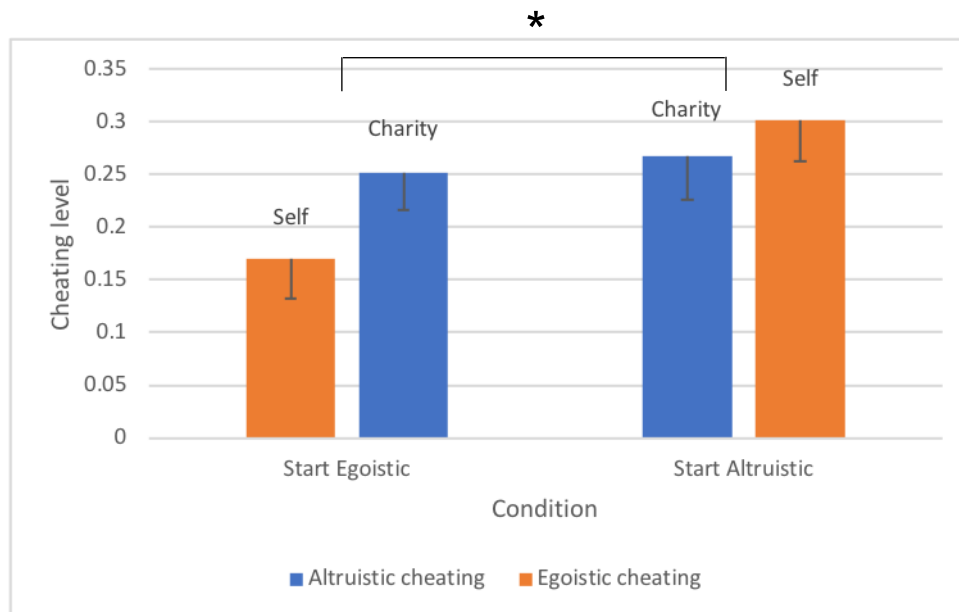


Fig. 2. Cheating level as a function of type of cheating, and condition. In the ‘Start Egoistic’ condition, participants play for personal gain in the first half of the experiment and for donation to charity in the second half. In the ‘Start Altruistic’ condition the order is reversed. Cheating level is calculated as rate of beneficial mistakes minus rate of detrimental mistakes.

Most importantly, as seen in Figure 3, post hoc tests with a Bonferroni correction indicated that the cheating level only differed in Egoistic cheating ($p=.015$), and not in Altruistic cheating ($p=.776$). In other words, when examining levels of each cheating type between the groups, a significant difference in cheating level was only found in Egoistic cheating, thus demonstrating the spillover effect. Altruistic cheating might have created a high anchor for participants that later influenced their selfish misconduct. These results are consistent with recent findings indicating a ‘dark’ side of benevolent acts (e.g. collaboration) that can lead to dishonesty (Weisel & Shalvi, 2015)

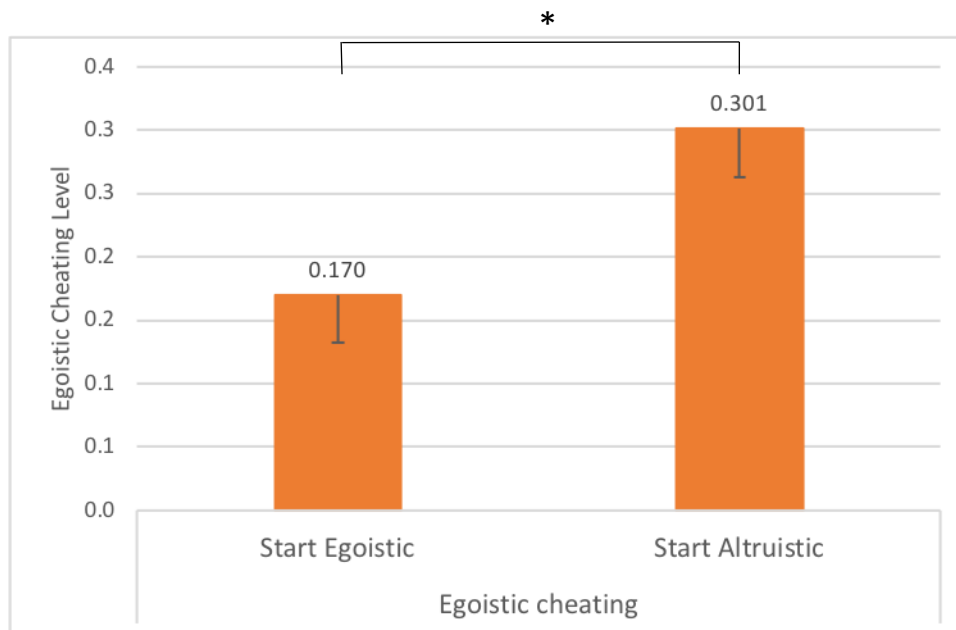


Fig. 3. Cheating level as a function of type of cheating and condition.

When comparing cheating levels in terms of order (across condition and type of cheating) between the first and second phases of the study (phase refers to every set of 84 trials played either for self or for charity) using a paired sampled t-test, an interesting pattern emerged. The order (phase 1/phase 2) significantly influenced the cheating level ($t(136)=-2.93$, $p=.004$) which increased from phase 1 ($M=.216$, $SD=.324$) to phase 2 ($M=.275$, $SD=.309$), regardless of condition or cheating type. This could suggest the existence of a spillover effect which could be dismissed as no more than a slippery slope of cheating behavior regardless of whether it was altruistic or egoistic. In this reasoning, once people are engaged in unethical behavior, they are more likely to engage in another unethical act (Welsh et al., 2015). However, since the type of cheating in the second phase of the ‘Start Egoistic’ group was altruistic, it is also possible that these results simply reflect the ‘normal’ level of altruistic cheating. In fact, no significant difference was found between the altruistic cheating levels in the two conditions. Moreover, an analysis of each condition alone revealed that this pattern stemmed from the increase in cheating level in the ‘Start Egoistic’ group, where the mean difference between phase 1 ($M=0.170$, $SD=.312$) and 2 ($M=0.251$, $SD=.303$) was significant ($t(70)=-3.00$,

$p=.004$). In the ‘Start Altruistic’ condition, this increase was non-significant ($M_{\text{phase1}}=0.267$, $SD=.331$; $M_{\text{phase2}}=0.301$, $SD=.314$; $t(65)=-1.16$, $p=.250$). Nevertheless, this result suffers from the limitation that exploring egoistic cheating levels with or without altruistic cheating preceding it, necessitates a comparison across different time points (egoistic cheating in the first phase compared to egoistic cheating in the second phase). Since an increase from phase 1 to phase 2 was observed in the ‘Start Egoistic’ group as well, we would need to show that the high egoistic cheating level following altruistic cheating (what we termed the spillover effect) was not due to alternative explanations such as habituation (Engelmann & Fehr, 2016; Garrett et al., 2016), depletion (Mead et al., 2009), or simply learning that cheating without being caught is possible (Becker, 1968).

Our next study addressed these arguments by using a different group for the comparison of egoistic cheating, as well as manipulating altruistic cheating to differentiate between the spillover effect and these alternative explanations.

Study 2

After showing that following unethical behavior for an altruistic cause, people cheat more for their own benefit, Study 2 aimed to further understand this behavior and its underlying mechanism. Specifically, we examined whether the second phase increase in egoistic cheating was indeed a result of a spillover effect of the altruistic cheating that preceded it, and not the result of learning or habituation. By using a different control group that played for personal gain in both phases, we overcame this limitation of Study 1 and examined second phase egoistic cheating level when no altruistic cheating preceded it. If, as we predicted, egoistic cheating that follows another egoistic cheating is not as high as egoistic cheating after altruistic cheating, this will take us one step further in defining the spillover effect of altruistic cheating as a unique phenomenon.

The second objective was to identify the underlying mechanism for spillover and determine whether the altruistic justification process is a boundary condition for it. To achieve this goal, we employed a different cheating measure and started the first phase in a design similar to Study 1. All participants were presented with a task with a cheating opportunity. Half the participants began playing for themselves ('Start Egoistic' condition) and the other half playing for donation ('Manipulation' condition). This time though, after the latter group completed their first phase, a message on the screen (Appendix D) revealed they were actually playing for their own gain, and not for the charity they chose. Put differently, this group played the first phase of the task believing it was for an altruistic cause, and only after being given the opportunity to increase their benefits by cheating, were they informed that they will be the ones personally gaining from the benefits in this phase. This served to differentiate between this mechanism and other alternatives such as habituation and learning by restraining the altruistic justification. In the second phase, however, both conditions played for their personal gain. The egoistic cheating level in the second phase of the 'Start Egoistic' condition was designed to shed light on the influence of order on the cheating level.

We reasoned that if the mechanism behind the spillover effect is rooted in an altruistic justification process enabling the participants to feel they are entitled to cheat, we would expect a low level of subsequent egoistic cheating since the spillover effect should be eliminated by the manipulation. Getting the payoffs from the first phase should thus impede the participants' ability to post-justify their behavior; i.e., decrease their entitlement (Sachdeva et al., 2009; Shalvi et al., 2015). Alternatively, observing a second phase increase in egoistic cheating despite the manipulation could lend credence to either a habituation or a learning process.

Method

- *Participants.* Sixty-two participants (69.4% female, Mage = 24.11 years SD=2.14) were recruited at a college in Israel. They won 21.93 NIS on average (~6.21 USD) out of 36 NIS (~10.32 USD) possible, and actual payments were contingent upon their self-reported outcomes. All participants gave informed consent before participating.

-*Procedure and materials.* We used the die-under-cup paradigm (Shalvi et al., 2011; Fischbacher & Föllmi-Heusi, 2013). In this paradigm, participants roll a die under a paper cup and report the outcome. The result of the die roll can be seen through a hole at the top of the cup, so the participant can see the outcome without lifting the cup and without the actual result being revealed to anyone else. Payoffs are directly connected to the roll outcome and participants earn money as a function of their reports: reporting rolling an outcome of 1 yielded 1 NIS (~0.29 USD), a 2 yielded 2 NIS etc. This paradigm allows participants to cheat by giving false reports on higher outcomes than they actually rolled, without the fear of being caught. As in the Dots task, participants are faced with the conflict between giving the correct answer and maximizing profit. Participants aiming to maximize profits need to report a maximum outcome of 6 in all rounds. This task has been widely used and is a validated measure of dishonesty levels (e.g., Fischbacher & Föllmi-Heusi, 2013; Mitkidis et al., 2017; Shalvi, Dana, et al., 2011; Shalvi et al., 2011).

Upon arrival, participants were seated in a private room in front of a computer. On the table were a paper cup (with a hole in the top) and a standard six-faced die. Task instructions were presented on the screen. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two between-subject conditions. As in Study 1, participants in the ‘Start Egoistic’ condition started the task by playing for the self. The first block was composed of 3 rounds and upon its completion, they shifted to the second block and played 3 more rounds, again for their personal gain. In the ‘Manipulation’ condition the participants were first instructed to choose one of 9 charities to

which they would like to donate all their payoffs from the task. After completing 3 rounds in which all earnings were for donation ('Block 1'), the following message appeared on screen: *"You belong to a group of participants for whom the task conditions were changed retroactively. The amount of money you reported will actually be given to you at the end of the study and will not be donated to the charity you selected"*. In other words, the participants in the 'Manipulation' condition were notified that they will be the ones personally gaining from the profits of the first phase. In addition, before completing the task for 3 more rounds ('Block 2'), they were told that for the rest of the game they would get to keep their earnings. To make sure that the participants understood where the earnings would go on each block, they were asked, before beginning each block, to mark whether they understood that all payoffs on the following 3 rounds would be donated/given to them at the end of the game.

Importantly, following Shalvi, Dana, et al., (2011) participants were instructed to roll the die 3 times on every round, but they were requested to report the outcome of a specific roll out of the three (the first, second, or third, alternatively). In other words, only one specific roll out of every three was 'valid' for determining payoff. Two of the three rolls were to be discarded completely. Previous studies have shown that people's cheating level was critically influenced by the availability of self-justifications in the form of observed counterfactuals. Rolling a die several times to verify that it was legitimate led to greater cheating. The participants appeared to have reported rolling the highest die-throw outcome they encountered, although they knew the additional rolls were not supposed to "count" for determining pay (Shalvi, Dana, et al., 2011). After the task, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). The study lasted approximately 10 minutes.

- *Measures. Cheating level:* The true outcomes of the die rolls were truly confidential, but cheating level could be analyzed by comparing the observed mean of the reported outcomes and the hypothesized normative mean of an honest die roll at the aggregate level (Shalvi et al.,

2011). Reports were compared to the expected mean result of rolling a die based on statistical probability, which is 3.5 $((1+2+3+4+5+6)/6)$.

Affinity to Charity: Participants in the ‘Manipulation’ condition were asked to name the charity to which they wanted to donate their earnings, and to rate the extent to which they related to that charity on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 – not at all, to 5 – very much.

Results and Discussion

We started by observing whether people took the opportunity to cheat on this task. Since actual rolls were anonymous, we compared the reported outcome mean with the normative statistical solution: an expected mean of 3.5. A one sample T-test in compared to the expected mean of 3.5 revealed that participants in the ‘Start Egoistic’ condition reported higher outcomes than expected only in the 2nd block ($t(29)=1.92$, $p=.032$, one-tailed), whereas participants in the ‘Manipulation’ condition only cheated on the 1st block ($t(31)=2.633$, $p=.013$).

To examine how cheating type affected cheating level, we first compared cheating levels between the first blocks of the two conditions using an independent-samples t-test. As expected, altruistic cheating was significantly higher ($t(57.68)=-2.11$, $p=.039$) indicating that the participants were more likely to cheat when payoffs were donated to a charity of their choice. Once again, no significant Pearson correlation was found between the level of altruistic cheating and the ‘affinity to charity’ measure ($r=.144$, $p=.430$, $n=32$). Here too, affinity level was high and skewed to the right ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.039$).

A 2 (condition: Start Egoistic/Manipulation) $\times$ 2 (time: Block 1/Block 2) repeated-measures ANOVA with order as a within-subject factor and cheating level as the dependent variable revealed an interaction effect ($F(1,60)=8.42$, $p=.005$, partial $\eta^2=0.123$) between condition and order. While cheating level in the ‘Start Egoistic’ group increased from the 1st block ($M= 3.49$, $SD=.820$) to the 2nd block ($M= 3.81$, $SD=.887$), our manipulation resulted in a decrease from the 1st block ($M= 4.00$, $SD=1.074$) to the 2nd block ($M= 3.23$, $SD=1.021$) (Figure 4).

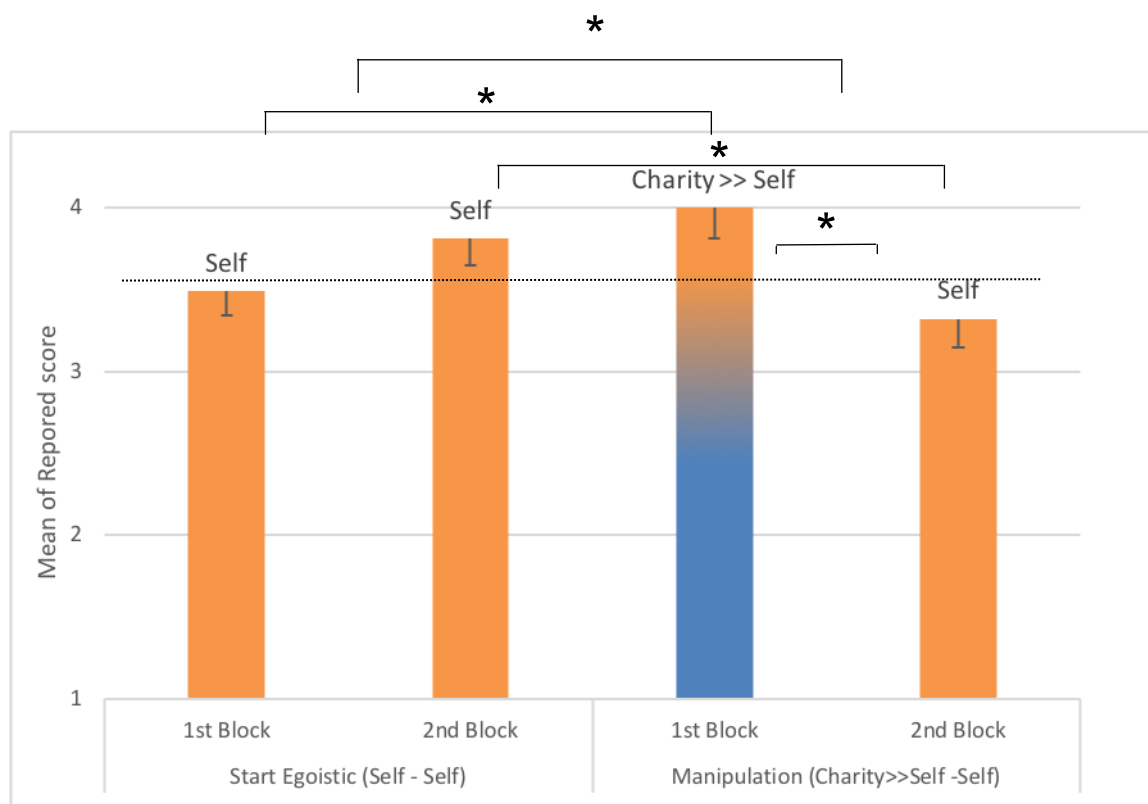


Fig. 4. Means of reported scores in the ‘Die under cup’ task as a function of condition. In the ‘start Egoistic’ condition participants play both blocks for self. In the ‘Manipulation’ condition they play the first block for charity and are then notified it was actually for self. They play the second block for self. Dotted black line indicates the expected mean based on statistical probability (3.5). The error bars represent standard errors.

Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni correction revealed a significant difference in the 1st block cheating level ($p=.040$) between the groups, indicating that once again, and in line with previous findings, altruistic cheating was higher than egoistic cheating. In addition, a

significant difference between the groups was also found for the level of 2nd block egoistic cheating ($p=.050$). Our manipulation led to a sharp decrease in the 2nd block egoistic cheating, implying that the spillover effect was mainly affected by the feeling of entitlement to cheat and the ability to justify the preceding unethical act. When this ability was eliminated by the manipulation, the subsequent unethical behavior was attenuated. Finally, a significant within-subject difference in cheating levels between the 1st and 2nd blocks was found in the ‘Manipulation’ condition ($p=.006$) but not in the ‘Start Egoistic’ condition ($p=.198$). In the former condition, the cheating level decreased significantly, while in the latter an increase was observed, although it was not statistically significant. Since in the ‘Start Egoistic’ group the 2nd block egoistic cheating was not significantly higher than their 1st block cheating, order itself cannot explain higher cheating levels in the 2nd block. Thus, there may be more to the spillover effect than learning or habituation. The spillover effect observed in Study 1 can be considered to have had a unique and strong influence, stemming from the nature of the induced altruism.

General Discussion

This study investigated the interplay between altruistic and egoistic cheating and the influence of the former type of cheating on the latter. Specifically, we examined when and how altruistic cheating contributes to a diffusion of the ethical dissonance, causes the moral shackles to weaken, and spills over to self-serving unethical acts.

The first study examined the spillover effect using the Dots task and donation to charity as a model of altruistic cheating, which provided a strong possible justification for preserving moral self-image while engaging in unethical behavior. Once individuals behave dishonestly, they are at a higher risk of committing another transgression, since their moral standards have been weakened (Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Welsh et al., 2015). Since altruistic cheating is easier to justify (Gino et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2012), it can more easily prompt people to slide down an immoral slope, while creating a

higher anchor for level of cheating. As predicted, Study 1 revealed a spillover from altruistic cheating to subsequent egoistic cheating. The cheating level was higher when preceded by an opportunity to cheat for an altruistic cause.

Alternative explanations to the spillover effect could be that 2nd block cheating was consistently higher, regardless of what preceded it, due to habituation (Engelmann & Fehr, 2016; Garrett et al., 2016), learning (Becker, 1968) or ego depletion and a lack of sufficient executive resources to identify an act as immoral or unethical (Mead et al., 2009; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011). For this reason, Study 2 further explored the dynamics between these two types of cheating (altruistic and egoistic) and different orders of presentation. The findings suggest that the above explanations are unlikely, since the ‘Start Egoistic’ group exhibited a somewhat different behavior. Their 2nd block egoistic cheating was in fact higher than the 1st block egoistic cheating, though not significantly. If the spillover effect we found was due to depletion of resources, this group’s moral awareness during the 2nd block, when faced with the opportunity to cheat, would have been reduced and in turn, led to heightened cheating levels (Gino et al., 2011). As for habituation and learning, they might have an effect as seen in the increase from the 1st to the 2nd blocks. This increase, though, was not significant, hinting that while habituation and learning cannot be dismissed as contributors to the spillover effect, they alone cannot fully explain it.

Importantly, Study 2 also sheds light on the mechanism behind the spillover effect. Our manipulation eliminated participants’ ability to justify their earlier dishonest acts, because they learned retrospectively that the beneficiary of their act was themselves, not a charity, or a greater cause. Hence, their cheating was no longer altruistic. Thus, the entitlement for future unethical behavior evaporated as shown by the fact that the 2nd block egoistic cheating attenuated significantly. In fact, the 2nd block egoistic cheating in the two conditions demonstrated a reversed pattern. Unlike the (non-significant) increase in the ‘Start

Egoistic' condition, the cheating level in the 'Manipulation' condition ceased completely. This pattern can be explained by the slippery slope phenomenon on the one hand and justification on the other. While the participants in the 'Manipulation' condition had a strong altruistic justification to lean on when behaving dishonestly, the participants in the 'Start Egoistic' condition had no way to justify their immoral behavior and indeed, no cheating behavior was observed. When playing the 2nd block, the 'Start Egoistic' participants cheated more in what can be interpreted as the premise for a slippery slope. However, this increase was not statistically significant. Conversely, participants in the 'Manipulation' group had a strong altruistic justification for their actions in the first phase. When we eliminated this justification retroactively, the unethical behavior stopped.

The reasons for this sudden change in behavior remain unclear. We showed that elimination of the justification led to elimination of the subsequent (unjustifiable) cheating. Several explanations are possible. Retroactively taking the justification away might have given rise to post-violation ethical dissonance (Shalvi et al., 2015). In other words, the psychological cost of behaving unethically was too high for the participants to disregard (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Barkan et al, 2012) so they did not cheat. Alternatively, they might have suddenly felt guilty about their misconduct (Battigalli, Charness & Dufwenberg, 2013) or developed speculations about the purpose of the study, which influenced their behavior. Another possible explanation is that the manipulation served as a moral reminder that they were being watched or supervised, which caused the cheating to decline (Ayal, Gino, Barkan & Ariely, 2015). As in other cases of moral reminders, it could make the unethical behavior more salient, and draw the participant's attention to their own moral standards and as a consequence, reduce cheating (Mazar et al., 2008).

Overall these results suggest that the spillover effect is based mainly on a feeling of entitlement to cheat and the ability to altruistically justify the preceding unethical act. Future

research could benefit from further examining the characteristics of the spillover effect and its possible explanations. It could be claimed that pure altruistic cheating does not exist in real life situations, since altruistic intentions tend in fact to be combined with selfish motivations such that people usually benefit in part from what seems to be altruistic cheating. A more representative paradigm of reality could explore the spillover effect with mixed (Pareto; Erat & Gneezy, 2012) altruistic and egoistic cheating with different percentages of the payoffs split between self and other (Klein et al., 2017). Second, additional research is needed to provide further insight into the nature of the spillover effect. It would be worthwhile to determine whether spillover has a dichotomous threshold such that once crossed ethical dissonance weakens and greater cheating can take place, or that its impact is more of a continuum and thus can be prevented at different time points. Another question of interest is whether spillover is sustainable when the beneficiaries are not identifiable and in need (a specific charity of choice). Finally, it would be interesting to explore whether unethical behavior that is justified by other means (not only altruistic) can spill over in the same manner.

The findings may hint at why dishonesty in public services is all too common. Public servants are in a unique position where they can cheat altruistically, for the benefit of hundreds of thousands, and often even more. Public servants are probably the best case of where the hypothetical becomes reality. When a single decision can influence so many people, specifically ingroup members whose well-being is the public servants' main concern, it is easy to understand how they might rely on altruistic justifications for unethical behavior. These situations put public servants on the verge of the slippery slope, where their altruistic cheating weakens their moral shackles and spills over to subsequent selfish unethical behavior.

Conclusion

Reducing unethical behavior constitutes one of society's major challenges today. This research focused on the dark side of the benevolent, valued, behavior of donating to charity. It suggests that behavior can quickly turn into self-serving unethical behavior through easily justified altruistic cheating. It thus contributes to the growing body of behavioral ethics literature by broadening our comprehension of the interplay between altruistic and egoistic unethical behaviors and their roles in diffusing or facilitating ethical dissonance and the weakening of moral shackles. A better understanding of the role of altruistic cheating should thus help identify forces that promote unethical behavior and develop a more moral-supportive environment in the future.

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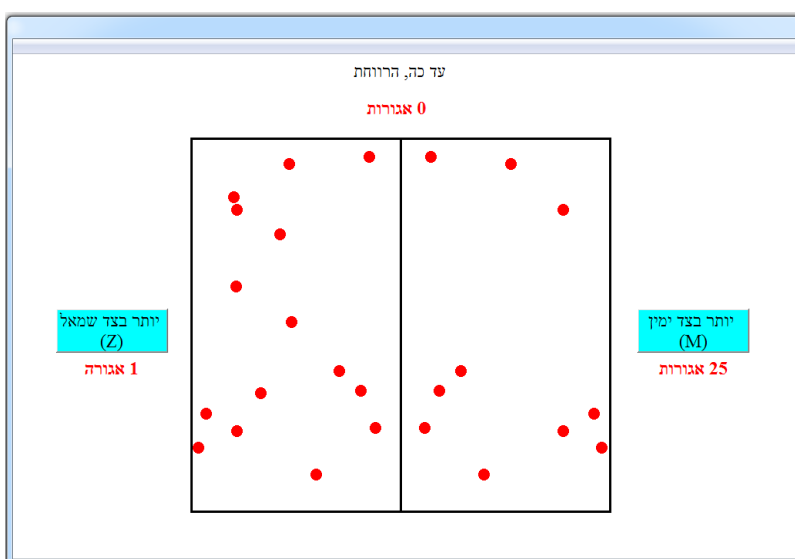
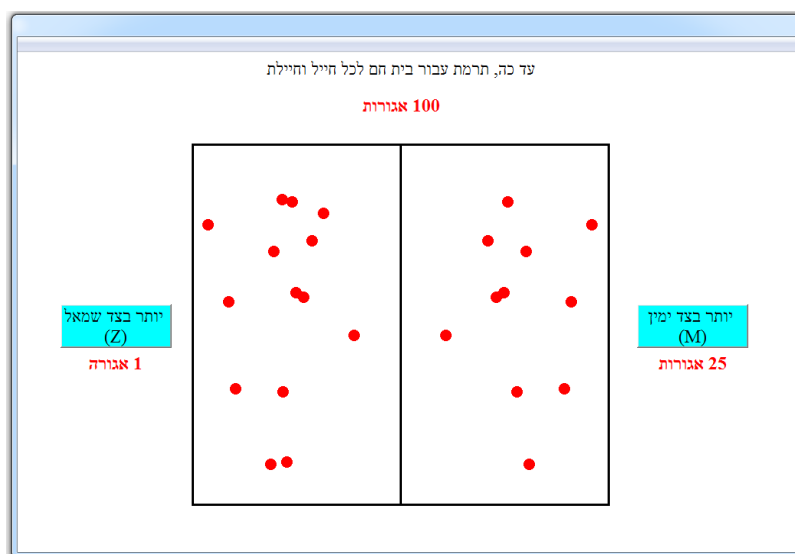
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Appendices

Appendix A: The Dots Task



Appendix B: List of 9 charities chosen in the Altruistic blocks

- בית חם לכל חייל וחיילת - עמותה התומכת ומסייעת לחיילים בודדים ומעוטי יכולת
- אם תרצו – עמותה העוסקת בנושאי ליבה ציוניים כדי להבטיח את עתיד עם ישראל היושב בארצו
- שוברים שתיקה – עמותה הפועלת לתעד בכתב ובאמצעים חזותיים עדויות חיילים באשר למתרחש בשטחים הכבושים
- מרכז סיוע לנפגעי תקיפה מינית - ארגון המציע סיוע, מענה ותמיכה לנשים וגברים שעברו פגיעה מינית
- ארגון לתת – עמותה הפועלת לסיוע הומניטרי ישראלי, נוסד במטרה לפעול לצמצום העוני
- שלום עכשיו – תנועת מחאה הפועלת לקידום פתרון מדיני של שתי מדינות לשני עמים לסיום הסכסוך הישראלי-פלסטיני
- תנו לחיות לחיות - ארגון שמטרתו לספק עזרה מיידית לבעלי חיים נטושים והנתונים במצוקה, לשקמם ולמצוא להם בתים מאמצים.
- עמותת א.ל.ע.ד – עמותה הפועלת לחיזוק הקשר היהודי לירושלים לדורותיה, ולעידוד התיישבות יהודית במזרח ירושלים
- עתיד כחול לבן – עמותה השואפת להבטיח לדורות את זהותה היהודית והדמוקרטית של ארץ ישראל

Appendix C: Demographic questionnaire

1. גיל

2. מין

☐ זכר

☐ נקבה

3. מצב משפחתי

☐ רווק/ה

☐ נשוי/אה

☐ חיה עם בן/בת זוג

☐ גרוש/ה

☐ אלמן/ה

☐ אחר

4. מקום מגורים נוכחי

5. מהי ההכנסה החודשית עבור משק הבית שלך

☐ הרבה מתחת לממוצע

☐ מעט מתחת לממוצע

☐ ממוצעת

☐ מעט מעל לממוצע

☐ הרבה מעל לממוצע

6. דת

☐ יהודי

☐ מוסלמי

☐ נוצרי

☐ אחר

7. רמת דתיות

☐ חילוני

☐ חילוני עם נטייה למסורתיות

☐ מסורתי

☐ דתי

☐ חרדי

8. מהי רמת השכלתך?

☐ השכלה תיכונית

☐ השכלה מקצועית

☐ במהלך לימודי תואר ראשון

☐ תואר ראשון

☐ במהלך לימודי תואר שני

☐ תואר שני/שלישי

9. במידה והוצגה לך רשימת עמותות במהלך הניסוי, איזו מהן הכי קרובה אלייך מבחינה ערכית?
אם לא הוצגה לך, אנא דלג/י על שאלה זו ועל השאלה הבאה.

☐ בית חם לכל חייל וחיילת - עמותה התומכת ומסייעת לחיילים בודדים ומעוטי יכולת

☐ אם תרצו - עמותה העוסקת בנושאי ליבה ציוניים כדי להבטיח את עתיד עם ישראל היושב בארצו

☐ שוברים שתיקה – עמותה הפועלת לתעד בכתב ובאמצעים חזותיים עדויות חיילים באשר למתרחש בשטחים

☐ מרכז סיוע לנפגעי תקיפה מינית - ארגון המציע סיוע, מענה ותמיכה לנשים וגברים שעברו פגיעה מינית

☐ ארגון לתת – עמותה הפועלת לסיוע הומניטרי ישראלי, נוסד במטרה לפעול לצמצום העוני

☐ שלום עכשיו - תנועת מחאה הפועלת לקידום פתרון מדיני של שתי מדינות לשני עמים לסיום הסכסוך הישראלי-פלסטיני

☐ תנו לחיות לחיות - ארגון שמטרתו לספק עזרה מיידית לבעלי חיים נטושים והנתונים במצוקה, לשקמם ולמצוא בתים מאמצים

☐ עמותת א.ל.ע.ד - עמותה הפועלת לחיזוק הקשר היהודי לירושלים לדורותיה, ולעידוד התיישבות יהודית במזרח ירושלים

☐ עתיד כחול לבן - עמותה השואפת להבטיח לדורות את זהותה היהודית והדמוקרטית של ארץ ישראל

10. עד כמה העמותה שציינת קרובה אלייך מבחינה ערכית?

☐ כלל לא

☐ מעט

☐ ד"י

☐ קרובה

☐ מאוד קרובה

Appendix D: The Manipulation message



Processing...



INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER (IDC) HERZLIYA

שים/י לב

את/ה שייר/ת לקבוצת נבדקים שתנאיי המשחק שונו עבורם בדיעבד! סכום הכסף עליו
דיווחת יינתן לך בתום הניסוי במזומן על ידי הנסיין ולא ייתרם לעמותה שבחרת.

<<

תקציר

מחקרים עדכניים באתיקה התנהגותית מציגים את מודל הדיסוננס האתי, הנובע מהפער בין הרצון לשמור על דימוי עצמי מוסרי חיובי, והרצון ליהנות מהתועלת שבהתנהגות לא אתית. אחת הדרכים להתמודדות עם מתח זה שעלול להוביל לקושי פסיכולוגי, היא שימוש בהצדקות. המחקר הנוכחי בוחן את מערכת היחסים בין רמאות אלטרואיסטית, קרי, מעשה לא מוסרי שנעשה לטובת האחר, לדיסוננס האתי. בשני מחקרים התנהגותיים, בדקנו מתי וכיצד רמאות אלטרואיסטית עלולה לתרום להתפוגגותו של הדיסוננס האתי, על ידי החלשת היסודות המוסריים וזליגה למעשה רמאות אגואיסטי. הניסוי הראשון, מציע צד אפל להתנהגות ראויה כגון תרומה לעמותה, ומדגים כי רמאות שנעשתה תחת הצדקה אלטרואיסטית של טובת האחר, עלולה אחר כך לשמש כעוגן עבור רמאות אגואיסטית. משתתפים להם ניתנה הזדמנות לרמות עבור תרומת הרווחים לעמותה, היו אחר-כך בעלי נטייה גדולה יותר לרמות עבור עצמם. אנו מכנים התנהגות זו 'אפקט הזליגה' של רמאות אלטרואיסטית להתנהגות לא אתית עוקבת בשירות העצמי. ניסוי 2 ממשיך לחקור את אפקט הזליגה ואת המנגנון העומד בבסיסו: האם מדובר על הצדקה ותחושת זכאות לרמות, או התרגלות לרמות ותו לא. התוצאות מעלות כי האפקט משויך ברובו לתחושת הזכאות והיכולת להצדיק את מעשה הרמאות המוקדם. כשתפעלנו יכולת זו על ידי חסימת האפשרות להצדיק בדיעבד את הרמאות בעזרת מניעים אלטרואיסטים, האפקט נחלש והרמאות העוקבת בשירות העצמי פחתה. הבנת התמונה לעומקה תאפשר לנו להפריד את המעלות הברורות שבהתנהגות נדיבה וראויה, מהכוחות ההרסניים שטמונים בחובה גם כן, ולצעוד צעד נוסף בדרך לפיתוח חברה מוסרית יותר.

מילות מפתח: דיסוננס אתי, רמאות אלטרואיסטית, הצדקות, התנהגות לא אתית, תרומות

עבודה זו נכתבה בהנחייתם של פרופסור שחר אייל וד"ר גיא הוכמן מהתכנית לתואר שני בפסיכולוגיה חברתית, בית הספר ע"ש ברוך איבצ'ר לפסיכולוגיה המרכז הבינתחומי הרצליה

המרכז הבינתחומי הרצליה
בית הספר ברוך איבצ'ר לפסיכולוגיה
תכנית תואר מוסמך בפסיכולוגיה חברתית

אפקט הזליגה של רמאות אלטרואיסטית: הצד האפל של מעשים (לא) אתיים למען אחרים

ענת הלוי

עבודה זו מוגשת כחלק מהדרישות לשם קבלת תואר מוסמך

בפסיכולוגיה חברתית בבית הספר ברוך איבצ'ר לפסיכולוגיה של המרכז הבינתחומי הרצליה

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