

Time, money, morality and self-reflection

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



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Abstract

Gino and Mogilner's study on time, money and morality (2013) presents findings that suggest that dwelling upon the general concepts of time and money can impact upon the moral choices that individuals make. The link found between time, money and cheating by Gino and Mogilner (2013) is very convincing. The methodology used to obtain these links is found to be very well verified by other studies (Bargh, Chen and Burrows, 1996) and also even superior than other methods (Bryans, Adams and Monin, 2013).

Another conclusion that Gino and Mogilner (2013) come to is that self-reflection is the cause of the effects, this however is not as convincing as they use self-awareness techniques to increase self-reflection. Other research suggests that self-awareness does not always promote moral behaviour, meaning that the two concepts are different, (Vallacher and Solodky, 1979) thus Gino and Mogilner's study has not effectively examined self-reflection.

Time, Money, Morality and Self-Reflection?

The idea that time and money have the ability to impact upon one's moral decisions is quite shocking (Gino and Mogilner, 2013). Prior to Gino and Mogilner's study (2013) there have been links found between money and anti-social behaviour such as a diminished desire to help and work with others (Vohs, Mead and Goode, 2006). Time however has been connected with pro-social behaviour such as a stronger desire to socialise (Mogilner, 2010). Gino and Mogilner (2013) however go on further to link time and money to morality, attributing the amount of self-reflection elicited as the

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cause. They define self-reflection as the evaluation of how ones actions will affect their self-image, stating that acting morally will increase positive self-image which is more desirable (Adler, 1930 and Rogers, 1959 as cited by Gino and Mogilner (2013)). The link found between time, money and morality seems to be very convincing, however the attribution of self-reflection as the cause is not so. This is due to definitional issues which would have impacted upon Gino and Mogilner's (2013) methodology.

The link between time, money and the likelihood of cheating was proven to be fairly significant by Gino and Mogilner (2013). Time and money were described as general concepts and it was seen that the intent was to examine how thoughts of these concepts would affect behaviour. Priming was used by Gino and Mogilner (2013) which has been shown to be a very effective technique which can reveal subconscious attitudes towards the concept being primed. Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996) showed that when participants were primed with words that were associated with the elderly, they took longer to walk down a hallway than those who were not primed. Bargh et al. (1996) concluded that this effect was due to the activation of the elderly stereotype. It was also shown that participants that were primed with rude words displayed ruder behaviour than those who were primed with polite words (Bargh et al., 1996), showing that people can be easily influenced by exposure to concepts. Thus, the effects seen in Gino and Mogilner's (2013) study can be certainly attributed to subconscious attitudes that participants had about the general concepts of time and money.

The way in which morality was operationalised was specific to cheating behaviour, meaning that links drawn between time, money and morality can be extended only to immoral behaviour that is related to cheating. Cheating involves lying and stealing, both of which are involved in much immoral behaviour that has major impacts upon society (Gino and Mogilner, 2013). Gino and Mogilner (2013) employed a very effective technique to measure cheating behaviour that allowed them to determine whether cheating occurred and to which extent it occurred. By using secret identification numbers they were able to identify worksheets of participants who thought they were anonymous, without stirring up suspicion. Bryans, Adams and Monin's (2013) study measured cheating by comparing the statistical likelihood that a person would think of an odd number first with people who are given a chance to lie and benefit financially. Their technique was able to determine the likelihood that cheating occurred, but results were not as definite as the ones in Gino and Mogilner's study (2013). Thus the link between money, time and cheating behaviour is very strong as concepts were operationalised and measured very effectively. The link made between self-reflection and time, money and morality however, does not seem to be as clear.

Throughout their study, Gino and Mogilner (2013) use the terms self-awareness and self-reflection interchangeably, thus using techniques that increase self-awareness to increase self-reflection in their study, namely the mirror technique. The mirror technique has been shown to increase self-awareness which in turn decreases cheating (Duval and Wicklund, 1972, as cited by Diener and Wallbom, 1976). However it has been found that when

an individual's ability or other internal factors are being attributed to their performance on a task, subjects that are more self-aware (i. e. had a mirror in front of them) will cheat more as self-defensive tendencies are triggered (Vallacher and Solodky, 1979). However when causes of failure are attributed to external factors such as luck, subjects who were self-aware barely cheated, in contrast to this non self-aware subjects cheated similarly in both cases (Vallacher and Solodky, 1979). If this indeed is the case, self-awareness will not always increase the likelihood of acting morally, thus self-reflection is not the equivalent of self-awareness in all cases. The results of Experiment 3 (Gino and Mogilner, 2013) showed that when a subject was made more self-aware by the presence of a mirror; the time and money conditions had the same amount and extent of cheating. However, Gino and Mogilner (2013) didn't relate the individual's success to internal factors and thus self-awareness in this context would have reduced cheating (Vallacher and Solodky, 1979). In this case, perhaps the mirror did not invoke self-reflection but rather self-awareness which in the context reduced cheating. In experiment 2, (Gino and Mogilner, 2013) different types of self-awareness were seen to have different effects on cheating levels such as was shown by Vallacher and Solodky (1979). When personality was attributed to success, cheating levels between time and money were the same. However, when intelligence was attributed, those primed with money cheated more. The individuals in the time condition cheated equally in both conditions, suggesting that time does have an impact upon the way people behave. Whereas, attributing the cause of the effect on self-reflection does not seem

to be as convincing since Gino and Mogilner (2013) failed to make a distinction between self-reflection and self-awareness in their methodology.

In conclusion, Gino and Mogilner (2013) have found a convincing link between time, money and morality as concepts were well defined and operationalised. The causal attribution of these effects to self-reflection however was not as compelling, as Gino and Mogilner (2013) failed to recognise that self-awareness is not the equivalent of self-reflection in all cases. Due to these definitional issues the conclusion made by Gino and Mogilner (2013) that self-reflection is the cause of the effects may not be entirely correct. This would limit the applicability of the findings to the real world.

References

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