

2. TIME, MONEY, AND MORALITY

We specifically predicted that priming people to think about time, rather than money, would lead them to behave more ethically by encouraging them to reflect on who they are and making them more conscious of how they conduct themselves so as to maintain a positive self image.

We first examined whether priming people to think about time, rather than money, would lead them to behave more ethically by cheating less. Participants were primed with money, time, or neither and then completed a task in which they had the opportunity to cheat by overstating their performance, thereby taking unearned money.

Method

Participants and design. Ninety-eight students and staff members at a university in the southeastern United States (43 males, 55 females; mean age = 23.15 years, $SD = 8.13$) participated in the study for pay. They received a \$2 fee for showing up and had the opportunity to earn an additional \$20 according to their performance in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: money prime, time prime, or no prime (control condition).

Prime. Participants were told that they would complete a series of unrelated tasks and were first presented with a scrambled-sentences task in which they were surreptitiously exposed to time-related words, money-related words, or only neutral words (Mogilner, 2010). Each item consisted of a set of four words, and the task was to use three to create a sentence. For example, participants in the time condition were asked to construct a sentence out of the word set “sheets the change clock,” those in the money condition were presented with the set “sheets the change price,” and those in the control condition were presented with the neutral set “sheets the change socks.” Participants had 3 min to create as many sentences as possible.

Cheating opportunity. The next task was presented as the “numbers game.” Participants received an envelope that contained \$20, along with two sheets of paper. The first was a collection slip that included instructions and an example number matrix, a space for participants to report their performance on the task, and demographic questions. The second was a work sheet with 20 matrices, each consisting of a set of 12 three-digit numbers (e.g., 4.78; Mazar et al., 2008). Participants had 5 min to find two numbers per matrix that added up to 10, but 5 min is not enough time to solve all 20 matrices (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009). For each pair of numbers identified correctly, participants were instructed to keep \$1 from their supply of money; they were to return the remaining amount in the envelope along with the collection slip at

the end of the task. Before returning the money and submitting their collection slips, participants threw their actual matrix work sheets into a recycle bin.

There was no apparent identifying information anywhere on the two sheets, so participants' actual results seemed anonymous. Thus, participants had both an incentive and opportunity to overreport their performance in order to earn more money. In actuality, one of the three-digit numbers in the example matrix on the collection slip was different for each participant and was equal to one of the three-digit numbers in a matrix on the work sheet. This allowed us to later match the work sheet.