

Sweatshop labor is wrong unless the shoes are cute: Cognition can both help and hurt moral motivated reasoning

Neeru Paharia^{a,*}, Kathleen D. Vohs^b, Rohit Deshpandé^c

^a Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, Rafik B. Hariri Building, 37th and O Streets, NW Washington, DC 20057, United States

^b Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, 321 Nineteenth Avenue South, Suite 4-300, Minneapolis, MN 55455-9940, United States

^c Harvard Business School, Morgan Hall, Soldiers Field Road, Boston, MA 02163, United States

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ABSTRACT

The present research investigated the dual role of cognition as either an enabler of moral reasoning or self-interested motivated reasoning for endorsing sweatshop labor. Experiment 1A showed motivated reasoning: participants were more likely to endorse the use of sweatshop labor when considering a Caribbean vacation with questionable labor practices for themselves than for their friends. Experiment 1B demonstrated that endorsement of sweatshop labor mediated the relationship between product desirability and purchase intention. Experiment 2 found that cognitive resources were recruited to enhance motivated reasoning regarding sweatshop labor, the latter of which was reduced under cognitive load. Experiments 3A and 3B found that when cognitive resources were specifically directed in a comparative joint evaluation, participants offered harsher views on the ethicality of a favored company, and were less influenced by motivated factors than when under separate evaluations.

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Introduction

Why would people pay for goods that they know have been made using questionable labor practices? Given that consumers say they care about sweatshop labor and are willing to pay for products that are free of it (Ehrich & Irwin, 2005; Hainmueller, Hiscox, & Sequeira, 2011; Luchs, Naylor, Irwin, & Raghunathan, 2010; Vogel, 2005), it remains vexing why there is continued demand. The context of sweatshop labor is a natural setting to study how people process ethical information in everyday situations where their beliefs may conflict with their actions. We investigated the cognitive conditions that either enabled or prevented self-serving motivated reasoning towards endorsing sweatshop labor when a product was self-relevant or desirable.

Background and theory

Research in motivated reasoning suggests that people are likely to arrive at conclusions they prefer, as long as they maintain an “illusion of objectivity” (Kunda, 1990). To this end, people are motivated to search for beliefs and rules that support the interpretations that they desire. Consistent with research on motivated reasoning, moral judgments may be rationalized as being correct

and be vulnerable to self-interested motivational factors (Uhlmann, Pizarro, Tannenbaum, & Ditto, 2009). By engaging in rationalization, people may be able to consciously think of themselves as moral even as they engage in unethical behaviors by justifying the ethical burden away (Bandura, 1991, 1999; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008).

A dual-process model suggests that moral judgments are driven by both an intuitive process and a consciously-guided cognitive process that work to mediate moral decision making (Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, & Cohen, 2004; Haidt, 2001; Pizarro & Bloom, 2003). Some scholars have suggested that cognitive processes lead to superior ethical decision making (Bazerman, Gino, Shu, & Tsay, 2011; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011; Keeney & Raiffa, 1993; Kohlberg, 1969) whereas intuitive processes may be more vulnerable to self-interest and motivated biases (Knoch, Pascual-Leone, Meyer, Treyer, & Fehr, 2006; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2008). In one recent study, authors found that when individuals had more time for cognitive deliberation they were less likely to lie in a deception game, while in another study, authors found that when cognitive resources were available, participants were less likely to cheat (Gino et al., 2011; Gunia, Wang, Huang, Wang, & Keith Murnighan, 2012). These findings suggest that cognition can help people be moral in their judgments and actions.

Yet, other scholars have suggested that intuitive processes lead to superior moral judgments whereas cognitive processes may lead to less ethical decision making. In the case of motivated reasoning, Bandura (1991, 1999) suggests that higher-order processes might

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: np412@georgetown.edu (N. Paharia), vohsx005@umn.edu (K.D. Vohs), rdeshpande@hbs.edu (R. Deshpandé).

be employed to rationalize and justify personal transgressions. As such, another study found that participants viewed their own unfair behavior as being less fair when under cognitive load than without (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2008). These findings speak to the ethical nature of intuition, and the power of cognition to enhance immoral judgments and behaviors.

One possible explanation for the discrepancy in the preceding results could be the dual role that cognition may play as an enabler both of ethical reasoning and of self-interested motivated reasoning. In Gunia et al., where more cognitive deliberation led to less lying, the authors surmised the absence of motivated reasoning could be attributed to the nature of lying itself, where there is an obvious right and wrong, allowing little room for reasoning to maneuver (Gunia et al., 2012). Therefore, it may be the case that cognitive resources could be recruited by motivated processes as Bandura suggests, but only in cases where they are not restricted by the decision context. Unlike studies that measure lying or cheating where a clear right and wrong is present, the morality of sweatshop labor may be more flexible where justifications in favor of its use are common in public discourse. Therefore, we predicted that with more room to maneuver, cognitive resources could be recruited by motivated factors in order to justify the use of a sweatshop-made product. Accordingly, this would not be the case if cognitive resources were limited.

In a morally flexible context such as sweatshop labor, the use of a joint evaluation task may be one way to direct cognitive reasoning, which should enhance moral judgments by limiting maneuverability. Under separate evaluations only one alternative is considered in isolation, whereas under a joint evaluation, multiple alternatives are considered simultaneously (Bazerman, Loewenstein, & Blount White, 1992). Substantial evidence has found differences in what people choose in separate evaluations vs. joint evaluations (Bazerman & Moore, 2008). In the case of moral judgments, scholars theorize that when people think about one option at a time their views may be more vulnerable to motivated biases than when they compare multiple options in a joint evaluation mode (Bazerman et al., 2011). Because options may be easier to evaluate under a joint evaluation, they are more likely to be reflective (Hsee, 1996), and motivated processes may have less room to maneuver. Accordingly, for a morally flexible issue such as sweatshop labor, cognitive resources may be less vulnerable to biases when considering a favorable sweatshop-made product under a joint evaluation due to the inflexible nature of the evaluation context.

While processing ethical information in the marketplace, consumers too may be influenced by whether products are viewed separately or jointly, and may also be swayed by motivated factors. Ethical attributes in products often induce preference reversals and other anomalies more so than do attributes without ethical characteristics (Baron & Spranca, 1997; Irwin, 1994; Irwin & Baron, 2001; Irwin & Spira, 1997). In one study, participants were more likely to use ethical information if they had it, but were less likely to ask for it in the first place. This so-called “willful ignorance” was stronger for participants who cared about the ethical issue in question because it offered a way to avoid the emotional and cognitive cost of incorporating knowledge of potentially unfavorable unethical attributes in their decision (Ehrlich & Irwin, 2005).

Whereas some consumers try to avoid information about sweatshop labor altogether, others may have no choice than to consider it. In a pilot study, we found that participants were more likely to agree with economic justifications regarding sweatshop labor when considering a desirable pair of jeans made under poor working conditions than when participants considered the jeans specifically stated as having been made without sweatshop labor. We propose that although consumers generally may take positions against sweatshop labor, they also may endorse it when their level

of motivation is high (based on the self-relevance of the situation or product desirability), cognitive resources are available to engage in motivated reasoning, and the decision context is flexible enough for cognitive resources to maneuver.

Given that surveys have shown that consumers in general do not favor the use of sweatshop labor (Pollin, Burns, & Heintz, 2004) and may view its use as unethical, we predicted that motivated reasoning would be present when considering the use of sweatshop labor for oneself, rather than for a friend. Past studies have shown that people are motivated to think differently about their own unethical behavior than the unethical behaviors of others insofar as they believe that they are more fair, honest, and trustworthy than others (Messick & Bazerman, 1996; Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985). Moral hypocrisy is said to occur when people evaluate their own moral transgressions to be less objectionable than others' moral transgressions (Batson, Thompson, & Chen, 2002); such moral hypocrisy may exist in order to protect one's self-concept. Thus:

Hypothesis 1A. Motivated reasoning to protect one's self-concept will be present when considering the use of sweatshop labor for oneself, as opposed to a friend.

In addition to considering self-relevance as a method to vary motivation, we surmised a variation in product desirability would also impact motivation. If a product is more desirable, a consumer may be more motivated to attain it. Thus we predicted greater motivated reasoning for a high desirability product made with sweatshop labor than a product of low desirability.

Hypothesis 1B. Motivated reasoning will be higher when considering a product made with sweatshop labor of high desirability than one of low desirability.

Given the effects of motivated reasoning, we predicted that an application cognitive load would limit such effects. As Bandura (1991, 1999) suggested, higher-order processes may be employed to rationalize and justify personal transgressions, and thus we predicted that limiting these resources through an application of cognitive load would disable one from engaging in motivated reasoning.

Hypothesis 2. Motivated endorsement of sweatshop labor will decrease when under cognitive load.

Finally, we predicted that participants would revise their ethical judgments between separate and joint evaluation frames (Bazerman et al., 2011). Through a joint evaluation context (evaluating two options at a time), we predicted that ethical leniency towards a favored company would be reduced compared to separate evaluations. Accordingly, we predicted that motivated factors would be more relevant under separate evaluations than under joint evaluations. Thus:

Hypothesis 3A. Judgments of ethicality towards a favored company will be more lenient in separate evaluations than in joint evaluations.

Hypothesis 3B. Judgments of ethicality will be more vulnerable to motivated factors under separate evaluations than under joint evaluations.

Experiment 1A

Experiment 1A tested whether agreement with economic justifications for a product associated with questionable labor practices would differ as a function of whether it was being considered for oneself or friends, thus varying the level of motivation to protect

one's self-concept. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, we predicted that participants would agree more with economic justifications when considering a vacation with questionable labor for themselves vs. for their friends. We defined economic justifications as consequence-based financial reasons in favor of using sweatshop labor. Commonly-cited economic reasons in support of using sweatshop labor include those concerning improvement of short-term employment and long-term economic development (Krugman, 1997; Powell & Skarbek, 2006). These justifications are referred to frequently in public debates and are therefore accessible to and used by consumers when considering sweatshop-made products (Eckhardt, Belk, & Devinney, 2010).

Methods

One hundred and twenty students (59 females, $M_{age} = 22$) were paid \$20 for participation. In a 2×2 between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: self vs. friends, crossed with sweatshop labor vs. no sweatshop labor.

Participants' first task was to read information about a vacation. In the sweatshop labor condition, participants read: "Many resorts are in developing nations in the Caribbean. Consider that many of these resorts may use questionable labor practices for their staff members." Participants in the no sweatshop labor condition did not read about labor conditions.

All participants then read about a vacation that was to be taken by them along with their friends vs. their friends alone. In the self condition, participants read the text in brackets; in the friends condition they read the text in parenthesis: "Imagine after a hard semester [you and] your friends decided to reward [yourselves] (themselves) with a nice week-long vacation at a Caribbean beach resort. [You] (They) swam, relaxed, and enjoyed the nightlife. [You] (They) are feeling refreshed after a week away from the challenges of school life."

Participants then indicated their agreement with commonly-cited economic justifications for the use of sweatshop labor (Eckhardt et al., 2010; Powell & Skarbek, 2006). The four items were: Sweatshops are the only realistic source of income for workers in poorer countries; Without sweatshops poorer countries could not develop; The use of sweatshop labor is okay because otherwise these products would not be affordable to low-income people; The use of sweatshop labor is okay because companies must remain competitive (1 = disagree; 7 = agree). The economic justification measures were collapsed into one economic justification index ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

We conducted a 2×2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the two factors of sweatshop labor (present vs. absent) and vacationer (self vs. friends) as the independent variables, and the economic justification index as the dependent variable.

This model revealed the predicted interaction between the presence of sweatshop labor and self relevance, $F(1, 116) = 6.67$, $p = .01$. The main effects of sweatshop labor and vacationer were not significant, $F(1, 116) < 1$, $F(1, 116) < 1$ respectively. As seen in Fig. 1, simple effects showed that, as predicted, in the sweatshop labor condition participants indicated greater agreement with economic justifications when considering a vacation for themselves than their friends ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.67$ vs. $M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(63) = 2.45$, $p < .02$. Also as predicted, there was no difference in agreement with economic justifications between themselves and their friends when there was no sweatshop labor ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.45$ vs. $M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.33$), $t(53) = 1.21$, $p > .20$.

In addition, a spotlight analysis at one standard deviation above the mean for the presence of sweatshop labor showed a significant

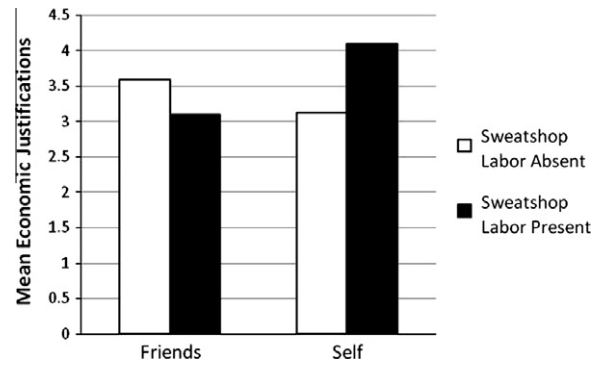


Fig. 1. Experiment 1A, agreement with economic justifications as a function of vacationer condition and the presence of sweatshop labor.

difference such that when sweatshop labor was high, participants indicated greater agreement with economic justifications when considering a vacation for themselves vs. their friends (self = 1, friends = -1), $\beta = .32$, $p = .01$. A similar spotlight analysis at one standard deviation below the mean for the presence of sweatshop labor found no significant difference in agreement with economic justifications between themselves vs. their friends $\beta = -.15$, $p > .2$.

Discussion

Experiment 1A showed that participants reported greater agreement with economic justifications when considering a vacation with questionable labor for themselves as opposed to their friends confirming H1A. In Experiment 1B, we sought to connect the use of economic justifications to purchase intentions so as to show that participants who endorsed economic justifications would report stronger intentions to buy a sweatshop-made product.

Experiment 1B

Experiment 1A found that people are motivated to agree with economic justifications based on self-relevance. Experiment 1B varied motivation by manipulating product desirability, and tested the mediating role of agreeing with economic justifications to explain the effect of motivation on purchase intention. Participants read a hypothetical scenario about a familiar company, Nike. Because Nike has been accused of using sweatshop labor in the past, this added a realistic context. We used a product's sale price to manipulate product desirability and predicted that receiving a large discount would render the product extra desirable (Knutson, Adams, Fong, & Hommer, 2001; Thaler, 1985), thus increasing motivation to attain it.

Attesting to the role of motivation, we predicted that agreement with economic justifications would be higher when participants valued a product more as compared to less. Furthermore, we predicted that levels of agreement with economic justifications would mediate the relationship between product desirability and purchase intention.

Method

One hundred and thirty-seven participants (47 females, $M_{age} = 38$) were recruited online from a national sample of community adults and were allotted points to redeem for products in exchange for participation. In a two-cell between-subjects design participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of high desirability vs. low desirability.

Participants first read about the value of a hypothetical pair of Nike shoes. In the high desirability condition participants read: “Imagine that you own a pair of Nike running shoes. The shoes retail for \$175.00 and you got them at a 75% discount. You are extremely happy with these shoes.” In the low desirability condition participants were told that they only got a 5% discount and they were satisfied with the shoes.

Next participants responded to three manipulation check questions about the desirability of the shoes: How desirable are these shoes to you?; How happy are you with these shoes?; and How good do you think you'll look in these shoes? (1 = not desirable/not happy/not good; 7 with very desirable/very happy/very good). The three desirability measures were collapsed into a desirability index ($\alpha = .91$).

Participants then imagined learning that Nike used sweatshop labor to make their shoes. Then they indicated their agreement with the economic justification questions used in Experiment 1A. The four economic justification measures were collapsed into one economic justification index ($\alpha = .92$). Finally participants were asked about purchase intention: If you were again faced with purchasing these shoes, how likely would you be to purchase them? (1 = not likely; 7 = very likely).

Results

As a manipulation check, we conducted a *t*-test and found that the shoes were rated higher on the desirability index in the high desirability condition than in the low desirability condition ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.70$ vs. $M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(135) = 4.77$, $p < .001$. We then analyzed ratings on the economic justification index using a *t*-test with product desirability condition (high vs. low) as the predictor. As predicted, agreement with economic justifications were significantly higher in the high rather than low desirability condition ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.63$ vs. $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.26$), $t(135) = 3.21$, $p < .005$. Participants also were significantly more likely to indicate they would purchase the shoes in the high desirability than in the low desirability condition ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 2.02$ vs. $M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(135) = 2.49$, $p < .02$, even after learning about sweatshop labor.

We next tested whether agreement with economic justifications mediated the high and low product desirability manipulations with purchase intention following the procedures outlined by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010). We used a bootstrap procedure to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals based on 5000 resamples. The size of the indirect effect $a \times b$ was .65, $p < .03$, and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval excluded zero (.27, 1.07) suggesting a significant mediation effect. The effect of the product desirability manipulation on agreement with economic justifications was significant $a = .85$, $p < .002$, as was the effect of agreement with economic justifications on the purchase interest $b = .76$, $p < .001$. The total effect of desirability on purchase intention was significant $c = .87$, $p < .02$, whereas the direct effect was not $c' = .23$, $p > .4$.

Discussion

Experiment 1B found that agreement with economic justifications was higher for sweatshop-made products of high desirability than for products of low desirability, demonstrating an effect of motivated reasoning consistent with H1B. Further, Experiment 1B found that agreement with economic justifications mediated the relationship between the product desirability conditions and purchase intention.

Experiment 2

The results of Experiments 1A and 1B suggested that participants who had more motivation both in terms of self-relevance and product desirability were more likely to agree with economic justifications than those who had less motivation.

Experiment 2, in addition to varying levels of motivation, varied whether cognitive resources were available. As reflected in theories of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1991, 1999) we expected that self-interested motivated reasoning would be reduced under cognitive load. To that end, Experiment 2 placed some participants under cognitive load by asking them to memorize a lengthy number (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991) and then had them consider the same scenarios regarding the self or friends vacationing at the Caribbean resort with questionable labor practices (Experiment 1A). We predicted that the effect of motivated reasoning found in Experiment 1A would be reduced when participants were under cognitive load compared to when they were not. As such, we expected an effect of cognitive load only to be relevant when considering a vacation for the self, where self-relevance was high. We predicted that there would be no effect of cognitive load condition when the vacation was for friends.

Method

Two hundred and sixteen students (109 females, $M_{age} = 23$) were paid \$20 for their participation. In a 2×2 between-subjects design participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: self vs. friends crossed with cognitive load vs. no cognitive load. The first task for participants assigned to the cognitive load condition was to memorize the number 7264281. Participants assigned to the no cognitive load condition were not asked to memorize numbers.

Participants then read about a vacation at a Caribbean resort with questionable labor that was for themselves or for their friends (as in Experiment 1A). Then, they answered the same economic justification questions that were used in the prior two experiments. We collapsed the four economic justification items into an index ($\alpha = .83$).

Results

We analyzed this index using a 2×2 ANOVA with cognitive load condition (yes vs. no) and vacationer condition (self vs. friends) as the independent variables. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between cognitive load condition and vacationer condition $F(1,212) = 5.83$, $p < .02$ (Fig. 2). Simple effect tests revealed the expected effect that participants in the self condition reported less agreement with economic justifications when under cognitive load than when not under cognitive load ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.26$ vs. $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(107) = 3.38$, $p = .001$. As

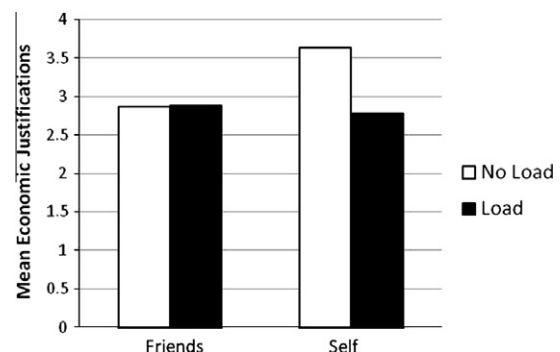


Fig. 2. Experiment 2, agreement with economic justifications as a function of vacationer condition and cognitive load.

expected, agreement with economic justifications did not differ as a function of cognitive load condition in the friends condition ($M = 2.88$ $SD = 1.27$ vs. $M = 2.87$ $SD = 1.30$), $t(105) = .03$, $p > .90$.

There was a significant main effect for cognitive load condition $F(1,212) = 5.64$, $p < .02$, and a marginally significant effect for vacationer condition $F(1,212) = 3.51$, $p < .07$. Overall, participants agreed with the economic justifications more in the no load condition than in the load condition ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.37$ vs. $M = 2.83$ $SD = 1.26$) and agreed with economic justifications somewhat more for themselves than their friends ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.28$). In addition, a spotlight analysis at one standard deviation above the mean for the vacationer condition (spotlight on the self) showed a significant difference such that participants indicated lesser agreement with economic justifications when cognitive load was present than when it was not (yes = 1, no = -1), $\beta = -.32$, $p = .001$. A similar spotlight analysis at one standard deviation below the mean for the vacationer condition (spotlight on the friend) found no difference in agreement with economic justifications based on the presence of cognitive load $\beta = .003$, $p > .5$.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated the findings of motivated reasoning from Experiment 1A, when considering sweatshop labor for oneself as compared to a friend. However when participants' cognitive resources were taken up by the rehearsal of a lengthy string of digits, the effect of motivated reasoning was diminished and they reported less agreement with economic justifications for sweatshop labor for themselves, which is consistent with H2. In the absence of self-interested motivation (i.e., the friend condition), cognitive load had no effect on the endorsement of sweatshop labor, suggesting that in this case, moral evaluation without motivation was not affected by the restriction of cognitive resources. Experiment 2 therefore provided evidence that in the case of sweatshop labor, self-interested motivated reasoning is reduced when cognitive resources are unavailable. Under cognitive load, participants who otherwise might have engaged in motivated reasoning were no longer able to do so.

Experiment 3

In Experiments 3A and 3B, we investigated whether a joint evaluation frame could mitigate the effect of motivated reasoning. We used a situation that was recently highlighted in the news to increase the relevance of the scenarios, and a brand, Apple Computers, which is one of the most admired firms in the world (Duhigg & Barboza, 2012). The company recently has come under high-profile scrutiny for labor abuses found in contracted factories in China. Furthermore, Apple in particular was noted for having more unfavorable labor practices than others in the industry such as Hewlett Packard (Duhigg & Barboza, 2012). Because Apple is a highly favorable brand, we predicted that in separate evaluations participants would be motivated to be more lenient with Apple, however in a joint evaluation, judgments would be less lenient. In Experiment 3B, we replicated this experiment and in addition measured participants' liking for Apple prior to the main experiment. We predicted that those who had greater affinity for Apple would offer more lenient ratings of Apple's ethicality in a separate evaluation, but would not do so in a joint evaluation.

Experiment 3A

One hundred and forty-two (62 females, $M_{age} = 22$) participants were paid \$20 for their participation. Participants were randomly

assigned to one of three between-subjects conditions where they either read about Apple alone, Hewlett Packard alone, or a joint condition where they read about Apple and Hewlett Packard together. In both the separate and joint evaluations, the descriptions of Apple's labor conditions were less favorable than Hewlett Packard's labor conditions. In addition, Apple's labor conditions were described as being far below industry averages whereas Hewlett Packard's were described as being above them. Despite Apple being below industry averages and worse than Hewlett Packard, we predicted that because Apple is the more favorable brand, it would receive more lenient assessments in separate evaluations than in joint evaluations.

In both the Apple alone condition and the Hewlett Packard alone condition participants read: "In a number of recent newspaper articles, the technology industry has come under scrutiny for allowing low margins to outsourced factories in China. Because of these low margins the factories sometimes must force workers to work long hours under unsafe working conditions in order to stay in business." In the Apple condition, participants read: "In particular, Apple Computers was highlighted for allowing extremely low margins, far below industry averages." In the Hewlett Packard condition participants then read "In particular, Hewlett Packard was highlighted for allowing low margins, but above industry averages." In these two alone conditions participants were then asked "How unethical are Apple's (Hewlett Packard's) business practices regarding production in offshore factories?" (1 = not unethical; 7 = very unethical). In the joint condition participants read both descriptions about Apple and Hewlett Packard and then were asked the same two questions regarding the ethicality of Apple and Hewlett Packard as a repeated measure. Rather than using the general economic justification measures from Experiments 1A, 1B, and 2 we used a measure of ethicality specific to the company, as it was appropriate for the joint vs. separate evaluation paradigm.

In a separate sample, the conditions were pretested without the company names to confirm the description associated with Apple was less ethically favorable than the description associated with Hewlett Packard. Instead of reading about Apple and Hewlett Packard participants read about Company Y with less favorable labor conditions (same as the Apple description) and Company Q with more favorable labor conditions (same as the Hewlett Packard description). In separate evaluations (between subjects) participants rated Company Y to be significantly more unethical than Company Q ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .93$ vs. $M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.52$), $t(18) = 2.18$, $p < .05$. Furthermore, in the joint evaluation participants also rated Company Y to be significantly more unethical than Company Q ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .78$ vs. $M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.36$), $F(1,8) = 7.84$, $p < .05$, suggesting that without mentioning a company name, views did not vary between separate and joint evaluations.

Results

Six participants failed to answer questions and were excluded from analyses. We conducted a t test to measure whether ratings of unethicality differed between the Apple and Hewlett Packard alone conditions. As seen in Fig. 3, participants indicated no significant differences in ratings of unethicality when they read about Apple and Hewlett Packard alone under separate evaluations ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.56$ vs. $M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(87) = .32$, $p > .50$. We then conducted a repeated measures analysis to evaluate the joint evaluation condition. When considering Apple and Hewlett Packard under a joint evaluation participants rated Apple as significantly more unethical than Hewlett Packard ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.46$ vs. $M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.51$) $F(1,46) = 17.51$, $p = .001$. In addition, participants considered Apple to be more unethical compared to itself when they considered Apple in a joint evaluation (alongside

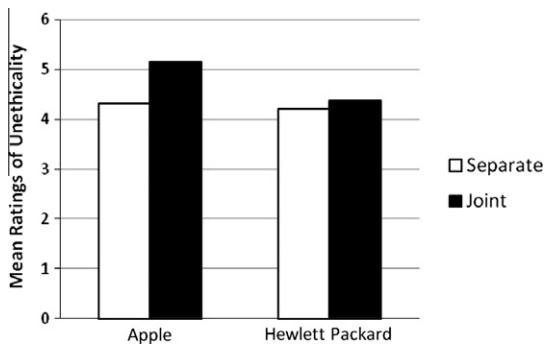


Fig. 3. Experiment 3A, ratings of unethicality for Apple and Hewlett Packard under separate alone and joint evaluations.

Hewlett Packard) than when they considered Apple alone in a separate evaluation ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.46$ vs. $M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(90) = 2.66$, $p < .01$, whereas there was no significant difference in evaluations of Hewlett Packard between the joint and separate evaluation conditions ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.51$ vs. $M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(89) = .55$, $p > .5$.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 3A support Hypothesis 3A. When participants jointly considered Apple and Hewlett Packard, their assessments of ethicality were harsher towards Apple but unchanged towards Hewlett Packard.

Experiment 3B

In Experiment 3B we again considered ethical evaluations of Apple and Hewlett Packard's use of unfavorable labor practices. However, in Experiment 3B we also measured how much people liked Apple prior to the main experiment to consider how affinity for Apple would impact evaluations of ethicality in both separate and joint evaluations. We expected that affinity for Apple would predict more leniency of ethical judgment under separate evaluations than under joint evaluations.

Method

One hundred and seventeen (84 females, $M_{age} = 35$) participants were recruited from an online subject pool and paid \$5 for their participation. At the beginning of the study, participants were first asked how much they liked ten well-known brands including Apple and Hewlett Packard (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). The other brands were included to diminish focus on the target brands. After completing unrelated studies, participants were randomly assigned to one of three between-subjects conditions where they either read about Apple alone, Hewlett Packard alone, or a joint condition where they read about Apple and Hewlett Packard together in the same manner as Experiment 3A, with one exception. Rather than using a repeated dependent measure in the joint condition, we used a one-item comparative question in order to enable a natural comparison of the two options (Bazerman et al., 1992). Accordingly, in the joint condition participants were asked: "Which company's business practices regarding production in off-shore factories is more unethical?" (1 = Apple; 4 = equally unethical; 7 = Hewlett Packard). Participants across all conditions were then asked: "Imagine that the company [companies] you just read about is [are] considering a strong program to improve labor conditions in their factories. How important would this be to you?" (1 = Not at All; 7 = Extremely).

Results

In a repeated measure analysis across all conditions, liking ratings for Apple were significantly higher than liking ratings for Hewlett Packard ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.59$ vs. $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.7$) $F(1,116) = 37.19$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, compared to the other eight brands evaluated, Apple was liked significantly more than each of the others. As in Experiment 3A, participants indicated no significant differences in ratings of ethicality when they read about Apple and Hewlett Packard under separate evaluations ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.65$ vs. $M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.69$), $t(76) = .08$, $p > .50$. However, when they considered the ethicality of Apple and Hewlett Packard under a joint evaluation they rated Apple to be significantly more unethical than Hewlett Packard ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .9$), $t(38) = 2.48$, $p < .02$, as compared to the midpoint of the scale of 4, which indicated equal unethicality.

In a linear regression, unethicality of the computer company was regressed on condition (Apple alone = -1 or Hewlett Packard alone = 1), liking for Apple, and the interaction between them. The variables forming the interaction were centered for ease of interpretation. The overall model was significant $F(3,74) = 3.42$, $p < .03$, the company condition was not significant $\beta = -.007$, $p > .5$, and liking for Apple was not significant $\beta = .001$, $p > .5$. However the interaction between condition and liking of Apple was significant $\beta = .35$, $p = .002$. Analyzing the simple effects, in the Apple alone condition, there was a significant relationship between liking for Apple, and unethicality evaluations $\beta = -.33$, $p < .05$, where greater affinity for Apple indicated more lenient judgments of ethicality for the company. However, in the Hewlett Packard condition, greater affinity for Apple predicted harsher judgments of Hewlett Packard's unethicality $\beta = .37$, $p = .02$.

In addition, a spotlight analysis at one standard deviation above the mean of liking for Apple showed a significant difference such that those who liked Apple more found Hewlett Packard to be more unethical than Apple $\beta = .36$, $p = .03$. A similar spotlight analysis at one standard deviation below the mean of liking for Apple showed a significant difference such that those who liked Apple less found Apple to be more unethical than Hewlett Packard $\beta = -.38$, $p = .03$. In the joint evaluation condition where participants compared Apple and Hewlett Packard together, no relationship was found between liking for Apple and ratings of unethicality of either company $\beta = .15$, $p > .3$.

Participants were significantly more supportive of the company instituting a program to improve labor conditions in the joint condition than in the Apple alone condition ($M = 5.77$, $SD = .9$ vs. $M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.63$), $t(75) = 2.4$, $p < .02$, and marginally so than in the Hewlett Packard alone condition ($M = 5.77$, $SD = .9$ vs. $M = 5.4$, $SD = 1$), $t(77) = 1.71$, $p < .1$. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in endorsement of labor programs between the Apple and Hewlett Packard alone conditions ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.63$ vs. $M = 5.4$, $SD = 1.0$), $t(76) = 1.14$, $p > .20$. Finally liking for Apple did not predict endorsement of labor improvement programs in the Apple alone condition $\beta = -.05$, $p > .5$ or Hewlett Packard alone condition $\beta = .06$, $p > .5$, however it did predict endorsement of labor improvement programs in the joint evaluation condition $\beta = .39$, $p < .02$, where greater liking for Apple predicted a greater endorsement of programs to improve labor conditions.

Discussion

In Experiments 3A and 3B participants were more lenient with Apple in separate evaluations than in joint evaluations. Furthermore, Experiment 3B found that motivated factors were more predictive in separate evaluations than they were in joint evaluations when evaluating ethicality. Liking for Apple predicted more ethical leniency for Apple and scrutiny for Hewlett Packard, but only in

separate evaluations showing an effect of motivated reasoning. Because Apple fans were less able to revise their views of ethicality in a joint evaluation, it may explain why these participants were more in favor of programs to improve labor conditions.

General discussion

Five experiments found that undirected cognitive resources can be used in the service of motivated reasoning when considering sweatshop labor in the context of self-relevant or desirable products. Yet, we also found that when cognitive resources are reduced through cognitive load or directed through a joint evaluation, judgments became less susceptible to motivated factors. In Experiment 1A, we showed an effect of motivated reasoning, such that participants agreed more with economic justifications when considering a Caribbean vacation with questionable labor for themselves than for their friends. In Experiment 1B, we again found an effect of motivated reasoning based on product desirability, such that agreement with economic justifications mediated a relationship between product desirability and purchase intention. Experiment 2 found evidence to support our hypothesis that motivated reasoning requires cognitive resources to carry through. Participants under cognitive load were less able to endorse the use of sweatshop labor than if they were not under cognitive load. Finally in Experiments 3A and 3B, we found evidence of motivated reasoning under separate evaluations, but that participants made harsher ethical judgments towards a favored company under a joint evaluation. Furthermore, we found that motivated factors were less relevant under a joint evaluation as compared to a single evaluation.

Theoretical contributions and practical implications

Taken together, the preceding studies illuminate the cognitive conditions under which motivated reasoning is more or less likely to occur. Though consumers say they care about sweatshop labor and prefer products made without it, our investigation finds that self-interested motivation, the availability of cognitive resources, and a flexible moral context limit their ability to turn their feelings into action. When cognitive resources were available, participants endorsed sweatshop labor when self-interest was high. Their views on sweatshop labor affected purchase intentions, where higher levels of endorsement led to more purchase intention of sweatshop-made products. However, we found that the role of cognition in motivated reasoning was more complex than that.

Unlike the domains of cheating and lying, the morality of sweatshop labor is more flexible and therefore cognitive resources may be recruited in the direction of motivated reasoning when self-relevance is high, or in the presence of a desirable product or service. We find that decision contexts that reduce flexibility (such as a joint evaluation) are able to limit motivated reasoning.

While some have argued that the availability of cognitive resources may enhance moral decision making (Bazerman et al., 2011; Gino et al., 2011), others have suggested that cognitive resources can support one's initial intuitions (Haidt, 2001) or rationalize unethicality (Bandura, 1991, 1999). We found evidence for both: Cognitive resources appeared to be used by motivated processes, but only in cases where cognitive resources were undirected (i.e., in separate evaluations), with room to maneuver. However, when cognitive resources were specifically directed through a joint evaluation choice frame, participants were less influenced by motivated factors. Thus the availability of cognition on moral reasoning may be more complex based on how exactly cognitive resources are being recruited – by motivated or reflective processes.

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