Whistleblowing and the Fairness-Loyalty Tradeoff

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Whistleblowing
Difficulties

• 82% of named whistleblowers: fired, quit under duress, or responsibilities were significantly altered (Dyck, Morse, Zingales, 2009)

• Since 2009, physical retaliation for workplace whistleblowing has increased over 25% (ethics.org, 2012)

• “Snitching” and retaliation (Jacobs & Wright, 2006)
The question

What factors determine willingness to report unethical behavior?
Who blows the whistle and why

• Abrupt unethical behavior prompts more whistleblowing than gradually developing unethical behavior of the same magnitude (Bazerman & Gino, 2009)

• When organizational climate supports whistleblowing (less fear of retaliation), it is more likely (Near & Miceli, 1995)

• Whistleblowing is more likely when wrongdoing is less ambiguous (Greenberg, Miceli, & Cohen, 1987)

• Role responsibility—when whistleblowing is perceived to be part of one’s job—increases whistleblowing (Vadera, Aguilera, & Caza, 2009)

• Whistleblowers tend to have higher levels of pay, education, more years of service and higher levels of professional status (Miceli & Near, 1984; 1988)

• HOWEVER, very little work on psychological
A Psychological Theory of Morality

Moral Foundations Theory  (Haidt & Graham)

- Harm
- Fairness
- Purity
- Authority
- Loyalty
Fairness

• <2-year-olds divide resources fairly (Sloane, Baillargeon, & Premack, 2012; Kanngiesser & Warneken, 2012)

• 8-month holds prefer those who reward helpful behavior and punish harmful behavior (Hamlin, Wynn, Bloom, & Mahajan, 2011)

• Chimpanzees show aversion to inequity (Brosnan, Schiff, & de \

![Image of balanced scales with apples and oranges]
Loyalty

- 3.5-year-olds will share resources more with friends/family vs. strangers (Sloane, Baillargeon, & Premack, 2012; Kanngiesser & Warneken, 2012)
- Toddlers prefer loyalty in competitive contexts (Shaw, DeScioli, & Olson, 2012)
- Chimpanzees show more positivity toward members of their own group (Mahajan, et al., 2011)
- Toddlers see tattling as just, but shift views in adolescence when value of loyalty increases (Ingram & Bering, 2010; Friman, et al., 2004)
Predictions

• Whistleblowing is a case where loyalty and fairness are brought into conflict

• Fairness > Loyalty = Whistleblowing
• Loyalty > Fairness = Whistleblowing
Individual Differences

1. When deciding right and wrong, how relevant is...
   – Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty
   – Whether or not someone acted unfairly

2. Who do you want as a friend? loyal or fair person

3. Who is more morally good? loyal or fair person \( (\alpha = .64) \) = FAIRNESS-LOYALTY

Whistleblowing (1-7 scale)  SCORE
Would you report family, friend, acquaintance, stranger for:
   – Stealing
   – Robbery
   – Embezzling
   – Vandalism
   – Cheating
   – Drug Use
   – Assault
Individual Differences

Willingness to Whistleblow

- Family
- Friend
- Acquaintance
- Stranger

Comparison:
- Fair > Loyal
- Loyal > Fair
Individual Differences

- People who prioritize fairness > loyalty are more willing to blow the whistle vs. people who prioritize loyalty > fairness
- Whistleblowing increases as social distance increases
Inducing Values

• Loyalty
  – Why is loyalty important for society
  – Write about behaving in a loyal manner
  – Write about why loyalty > fairness

• Fairness
  – Why is fairness important for society
  – Write about behaving in a fair manner
  – Write about why fairness > loyalty

• Whistleblowing scenarios
Inducing Values

Willingness to Whistleblow

- Fair > Loyal
- Loyal > Fair

- Family
- Friend
- Acquaintance
- Stranger
Inducing Values

- Inducing people to prioritize fairness > loyalty increased willing to blow the whistle vs. inducing people to prioritize loyalty > fairness

- Whistleblowing increases as social distance increases
Recalling misdeeds

• Recall a time when you blew the whistle (WB +)
• Recall a time when you could have but did not blow the whistle (WB-)
• How much was decision driven by:
  – Fairness (1-10)
  – Loyalty (1-10)
  – Other (22%)
Recalling Misdeeds

- WB+:
  - Loyalty: 6
  - Fairness: 8

- WB-:
  - Loyalty: 7
  - Fairness: 3
Recalling Misdeeds

• People who recalled witnessing misuse/whistleblowing said decision was driven by fairness > loyalty
• People who recalled witnessing misuse/NOT whistleblowing said decision was driven by loyalty > fairness
A whistleblowing opportunity

• Amazon MTurk: Online marketplace where workers can perform tasks for small fees.
• Write about Fairness amongst MTurk workers.
• Write about Loyalty amongst MTurk workers.
• Please complete a typing task typing all numbers 1-30 in English. First, see a prior worker’s performance on this task…
A whistleblowing opportunity

At the end of the study, participants were asked to evaluate their prior participant:

- "Would you recommend this participant for future studies?" (1-7)
- "Did this participant violate any rules?" (1-7) (Averaged to generate WHISTLEBLOWING SCORE)
A Whistleblowing Opportunity

![Bar chart showing whistleblowing opportunity with categories Fairness and Loyalty]
A Whistleblowing Opportunity

• Workers “primed” to consider fairness vs. workers primed to consider loyalty = more willing to engage in whistleblowing
Conclusions

• Individual differences in fairness vs loyalty
• Brief inductions of fairness vs loyalty norms
  – Increase whistleblowing in hypothetical & real situations
• Prior decisions to blow the whistle vs not = reportedly driven by fairness vs loyalty
Insights

• Whistleblowing predicted better by values-tradeoff vs. single value

• Suggests anti-whistleblowing cultures are those that are high in loyalty (collectivist, conservative, “tight” cultures)

• Suggests difficulty for whistleblowers because of validity of loyalty norm
Interventions to Boost Whistleblowing

• Promote justice/fairness
• Reframe whistleblowing as a loyal behavior (loyalty to the organization)
• Talk about loyalty as a larger loyalty (“greater good”)
Future Directions and Questions

- Becoming a well-liked whistleblower
- The role of guilt
- The morality of loyalty
Thank you

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