

Book Review: Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty by Jan-Willem van Prooijen & Paul A. M. van Lange, eds

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Recommended Citation

Krylova, Yulia V. () "Book Review: Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty by Jan-Willem van Prooijen & Paul A. M. van Lange, eds," *International Social Science Review*: Vol. 94 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol94/iss1/15>

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van Prooijen, Jan-Willem, and Paul A. M. van Lange, eds. *Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xiv + 315 pages. Hardcover, \$126.95.

This volume is a state-of-the-art presentation of one of the most rapidly growing currents of research on the subject of dishonesty. *Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty* is the result of a project conducted by a multinational team of scholars from Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The researchers' diverse backgrounds allow them to develop a holistic framework to understand the phenomenon of dishonesty exploring its psychological, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural aspects. Much of the credit for the organization of these cutting-edge essays goes to its editors from the VU University Amsterdam: Jan-Willem van Prooijen, Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology, and Paul van Lange, Professor of Psychology.

Dishonesty takes many forms. For analytical purposes, the scholars distinguish between three dominant strategies that people commonly use: cheating (bending or violating rules individually to receive unfair advantages for themselves or others), corruption (bending or violating rules in cooperation with other people to receive unfair advantages for themselves or others), and concealment (hiding or misrepresenting information). This volume provides new insights into distinctions and connections between these strategies. In fact, in their introductory essay, van Prooijen and van Lange indicate that “cheating, corruption, and concealment should be regarded as interrelated elements of dishonesty, and frequently people combine multiple strategies to reach their goals” (p. 3). To illustrate this point, they give an example of tax evasion, which usually involves both cheating and concealment.

The volume moves beyond a ‘mainstream’ economic approach. As van Prooijen and van Lange state, “dishonesty is more complex than the assertion of ‘Homo Economicus’ that people’s behaviour is motivated solely by the pursuit of material self-interest and a radical calculation of costs and benefits in social exchanges” (p. 2). Instead, the researchers approach dishonest behaviour from a theoretical perspective that focuses on its psychological dynamics within given moral and ethical constraints. This focus allows for the identification of specific factors that play a critical role in motivating people to bend the established rules, such as self-justification, self-deception, interpersonal influences, social pressures, situational contexts, and even unselfish motivations. In this respect, this volume represents a new generation of literature on dishonesty that integrates results of interdisciplinary studies within experimental economics, behavioural ethics, and social psychology.

Structurally, the volume is divided into four parts. Following the introductory chapter, the first part of the volume explores motivations for dishonest behaviour, such as the prevalence of moral hypocrisy over moral integrity, the fabrication of moral

credentials, and the availability of different deceptive bargaining strategies to reach various self-interested and even prosocial goals. The second part of the book covers an extensive list of justifications of dishonesty. They include the ability to generate multiple and diverse rationales for why dishonest behaviour is morally acceptable, self-deception about the morality of such actions, and self-persuasion about generating benefits to other people with the aid of dishonesty. The third part presents an analysis of the role of individual and interpersonal factors facilitating dishonesty, such as narcissism, creativity, socioeconomic class, and social power. The final part of the volume is devoted to the search for new strategies to reduce the prevalence of dishonesty in society through the reliance on religious priming and activities, the modification of certain aspects of the physical space in which people function, the alteration of situational factors, and the use of different lie detection approaches. The assemblage of these small mosaic pieces related to dishonesty allows the reader to see the big picture of this complicated psychological phenomenon and to trace intricate connections between its multiple facets.

The authors of this volume present numerous interesting findings related to dishonesty, some of which are unconventional. For example, in their study of the relationship between wealth and wrong-doing, Paul Piff, Daniel Stancato, and E.J. Horberg find that people belonging to upper socioeconomic classes are more likely to commit dishonesty. Exploring the dark side of creativity, Lynne Vincent and Evan Polman provide strong evidence that creativity often gives moral licensing for engaging in unethical or bad behaviour. Contrary to the conventional belief that power corrupts, Steven Blader and Andy Yap find that “dishonesty is a product of the complexity that underlies power holders’ justice judgements” (p. 223). These and many other new findings about cheating, corruption, and concealment allow the authors of the volume to propose various recommendations and innovative techniques to encourage justice, honesty, and ethical decision-making in different spheres of people’s lives.

Cheating, Corruption, and Concealment: The Roots of Dishonesty will be of interest to academic experts who specialize in behavioral economics, sociology, and psychology. The book will also be of great importance to those who are interested in decreasing and preventing dishonesty, such as corporate compliance officers and civil servants responsible for enhancing ethics and integrity in their organizations. The volume clearly shows that without understanding the psychology of dishonesty, it is impossible to counteract this undesirable phenomenon.

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