Does Networking Make People Feel "Dirty"?

Reconsidering the Evidence in Casciaro, Gino, Kouchaki, 2014

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ABSTRACT

In 2014, Casciaro, Gino, and Kouchaki published an influential paper (hereafter referred to as CGK) for our understanding of networking behaviors. Specifically, the paper offered experimental evidence that people view networking actions as morally impure, which leads them to feel physically dirty when networking, which ultimately heightens the mental accessibility of cleansing-related concepts. In the present paper, I challenge the theoretical premise and the empirical evidence presented in CGK. To that end, I present a well-powered pre-registered experiment[1] aimed at 1) replicating CGK's main effect, 2) replicating the psychological mechanism that underpins CGK's finding (i.e., the Macbeth Effect), and 3) establishing a "maximum positive control" (Hilgard, 2021) for any effect of networking on people's desire for cleansing. This experiment reveals a null result on the effect documented by CGK (d = .02), a null result on the Macbeth effect (d = .02), and a maximum positive control effect that is much smaller than the original finding reported in CGK (d = .51 vs. d = .98). I finally discuss other incidental issues in CGK, and conclude that there is no evidence that people experience physical dirtiness when networking.

Keywords: networking, need for cleansing, moral purity, replication

[1] The pre-registration, raw data, materials, and code of the replication are accessible on the following OSF repository: https://osf.io/9f4kd/?view_only=72bcbef47c5e4f08b7e47d8a4f716645.

INTRODUCTION

Network scholars have repeatedly called for more research on the role played by human agency on network dynamics (Ahuja, Soda, & Zaheer, 2012; Bensaou, Galunic, & Jonczyk-Sédès, 2014; Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009; Emirbayer, 1997; Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Gulati & Srivastava, 2014; Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, & Kalnysh, 2014; Vissa, 2012), and in particular on the role played by networking behaviors in the shape and evolution of network These networking behaviors were even called "the great black box of social network research" (Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, & Kalnysh, 2007: 1): a blind spot in our understanding of social networks.

Following these calls, a growing number of scholars took interest in the micro-foundations of social network (i.e., for the principles at the origin of the formation and modification of networks). They challenged the structural view of social networks (Tasselli, Kilduff, & Menges, 2015), put the individual back into focus, and investigated how individual attributes (motives, cognition, or personality) explain the actions people take to shape their network, and subsequently how those actions affect their position in the network (Tasselli & Kilduff, 2020).

In this framework, scholars refined the construct of networking behaviors (Kuwabara, Hildebrand, & Zou, 2018; Wolff & Moser, 2009), and provided new theoretical models to understand them (Gulati & Srivastava, 2014; Khattab, van Knippenberg, Pieterse, & Hernandez, 2020; Kuwabara et al., 2018). Others documented why people network, how they network, what the psychological and motivational antecedents of networking are, and the impact of networking on the resources that people obtain and the positions they attain (Bensaou et al., 2014; Shipilov et al., 2014; Wolff & Kim, 2012; Wolff & Moser, 2009).

In this stream of research, Casciaro, Gino, and Kouchacki published a paper (2014) explaining an important paradox: Why are people so reluctant to network, even when they

acknowledge the benefits of doing so? The paper provides evidence that people feel uncomfortable networking because networking triggers a state of "moral impurity," which manifests itself through feelings of "dirtiness" and the heightened accessibility of cleansing-related concepts. To the best of my knowledge, it is the first paper that provides causal evidence for a negative change in people's psychological state when networking. The paper unsurprisingly gathered significant attention: It received the Outstanding Publication Award in OB at the 2015 Academy of Management annual meeting for its "significant contribution to the advancement of the field of organizational behavior", it was published in a major management outlet (i.e., Administrative Science Quarterly), and it accumulated about 200 citations over the past seven years.

In the present article, I revisit the findings of the paper considering recent theoretical and methodological developments, and offer a replication that casts doubt on the original conclusions.

THEORY

The idea that people feel uncomfortable networking predates CGK: Multiple studies have described what people feel or think about networking. A general conclusion is that people hold negative views of networking activities: People often describe networking as "uncomfortable," "awkward," "humiliating," "threatening," "intimidating," "unfair," "inappropriate," "illegitimate," "presumptuous," "unnatural," "insincere," "dishonest," "fake," "artificial," "manipulative," "selfish", "useless" or "immoral" (Bensaou et al., 2014; de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Ferrazzi, 2005; Ibarra, 2016; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Kuwabara et al., 2018; Trefalt, 2014; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). However, not only those papers are purely descriptive (i.e., theoretical, qualitative, or correlational), but they also do not explore the mechanism that leads to discomfort and the specific negative psychological state networking

triggers. The contribution of CGK is precisely to provide causal evidence between networking and this discomfort and to offer a mechanism to explain this relationship.

The main argument of CGK is that people engaged in networking actions will experience "moral impurity," which translates into feeling "dirty" and experiencing a desire for "cleansing." More precisely, the paper argues that, because networking is motivated by the satisfaction of personal interests with little to no concern for others, people engaged in such activity will experience a moral contamination and therefore feel morally impure. It defines moral purity as "a psychological state that results from viewing the self as clean from a moral standpoint" (p. 705), and "moral impurity" as the state of feeling "psychologically dirty", which is measured through the mental accessibility of cleansing-related words.

The Macbeth Effect Underpins CGK's Theory

The idea of a relationship between psychological dirtiness and physical dirtiness was first suggested by Zhong and Liljenquist (2006). In this seminal paper, they established what has since then been called the "Macbeth Effect": Recalling or witnessing immoral actions (e.g., sabotaging a co-worker) activates a need for physical cleansing.

The Macbeth effect situates itself in a stream of the literature in psychology that has claimed metaphorical links between bodily sensations and cognitions / emotions.[2] According to this effect, there is a psychological connection between moral integrity and physical cleansing: When people recall unethical deeds, they feel morally contaminated, they then feel morally impure, which then triggers need for physical cleansing. Other follow-up papers have claimed a similar association. For example, Lee and Schwarz (2010) have claimed that participants who lied with malevolent intentions (i.e., to hurt someone else's career) were

[2] It is worth noting that many of the foundational effects claiming metaphorical connections between bodily sensations and cognitive or emotional states have failed to replicate (Chabris, Heck, Mandart, Benjamin, & Simons, 2018; Doyen, Klein, Pichon, & Cleeremans, 2012a; Goldhill, 2019; Michigan State University, 2017; Skibba, 2016).

willing to pay more for a mouthwash or a hand sanitizer. Similarly, Schnall, Benton, and Harvey (2008) have claimed that physical cleansing reduces the severity of moral judgment: Participants judge moral transgressions (e.g., eating one's dead dog, switching the tracks of a trolley to kill one workman instead of five, keeping money inside a found wallet, killing a plane crash survivor to avoid starvation, putting false information on a résumé, and using a kitten for sexual arousal) as less serious when they have been primed with concepts related to cleanliness first.

Scant Evidence for the Macbeth Effect

However, a recent re-analysis of the effects documented in those papers suggests that the results are actually false positives stemming from selective reporting (Ropovik, Sparacio, & IJzerman, 2020). Further, direct replications of the effects have since repeatedly failed to replicate. For example, several large-scale replications of the relationship between moral threat and desire for cleansing (Earp, Everett, Madva, & Hamlin, 2014; Fayard, Bassi, Bernstein, & Roberts, 2009; Gámez, Díaz, & Marrero, 2011; Johnson, Cheung, & Donnellan, 2014) have failed to replicate the original Macbeth effect (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006) and its downstream consequences (Schnall et al., 2008). In addition, a meta-analysis of eleven studies that did not involve the original authors of those findings found no effect (Siev, Zuckerman, & Siev, 2018).

Taken together, those findings suggest that there is no discernable association between moral purity and physical cleanliness and therefore no evidence for the Macbeth effect. The original effect was likely to be a false positive, stemming from uncontrolled degrees of freedom on the researchers' side.

Since the Macbeth effect is central to CGK's causal model, that its effect size is very large, with a very small p-value, making a false positive very unlikely, and that this effect is found for a milder moral violation (i.e., networking) than the ones documented in the Macbeth

effect (e.g., hurting someone), CGK is a prime target for replication, and replication the most accurate way to determine whether networking indeed triggers need for physical cleansing.

METHODS

I selected Study 1 for replication because it presents the strongest evidence against the null ($p < .001$), and the largest effect size ($d = .98$). I contacted the authors and asked them for the materials and raw data of the study: They promptly replied and sent me materials and data. I am grateful for their responsiveness and transparency.

Original Study

In Study 1 of CGK, MTurk participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (approach: instrumental vs. spontaneous) by 2 (content: professional vs. personal) between-subject design. The study relies on priming manipulations: Participants were asked to recall a situation in which they instrumentally (vs. spontaneously) approached someone else for professional (vs. personal) reasons. After that, participants were asked to complete six words, three of which could be completed as cleansing-related words. The number of cleansing-related words found formed the dependent variable.

The authors expected and found that participants in the instrumental condition would find more cleansing-related words than participants in the spontaneous condition, and that this effect would be strengthened when the content of the interaction was professional (compared with personal). The descriptive statistics of this study are reported in Table 1 and a graphical representation of the results is presented in Figure 1.

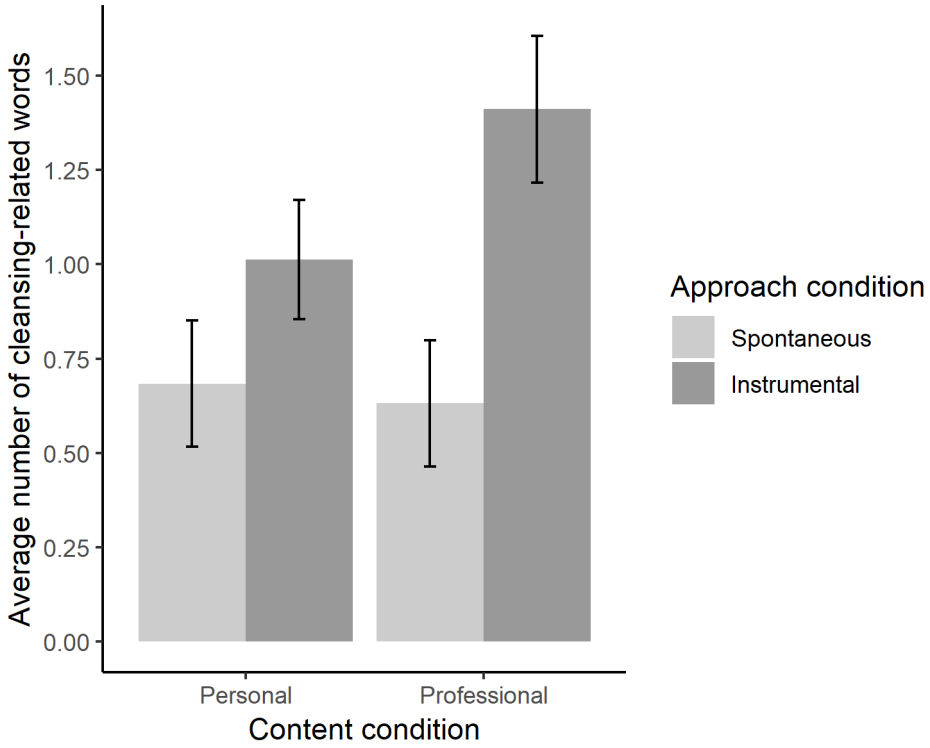
TABLE 1

Original Study: Descriptive Statistics

Conditions		Sample size	Cleansing-related words	
Content	Approach		mean	std. dev.
Personal	Spontaneous	79	0.68	0.76
Personal	Instrumental	78	1.01	0.71
Professional	Spontaneous	76	0.63	0.75
Professional	Instrumental	73	1.41	0.85

FIGURE 1

Original Study: Results (means and 95 % CI)



Replication

Design

Given that CGK hypothesized and found the largest effect of networking in the professional condition, I chose to replicate only those two conditions (i.e., a professional-instrumental condition vs. a professional-spontaneous condition). This choice maximizes the

chances of finding a significant effect in the replication. The replication used the exact same instructions as the ones provided by the authors.

In addition to these two conditions, I added two other conditions to test the intermediary steps in the causal chain theorized by CGK. The full theoretical causal chain includes three steps: Networking is perceived as a moral violation, which leads people to feel physically dirty, which heightens the accessibility of cleansing-related words.

As the length of a causal chain increases, the capacity to detect an effect between the manipulation (i.e., first step of the chain) and the dependent variable (i.e., last step of the chain) decreases. That is why it is important to test whether more proximal manipulations of "moral violation" and "physical dirtiness" would yield detectable effects on the accessibility of cleansing-related words. To do so, I included an "unethical" condition and a "physically dirty" condition. Figure 2 shows CGK's original causal chain, as well as the causal paths tested in the replication.

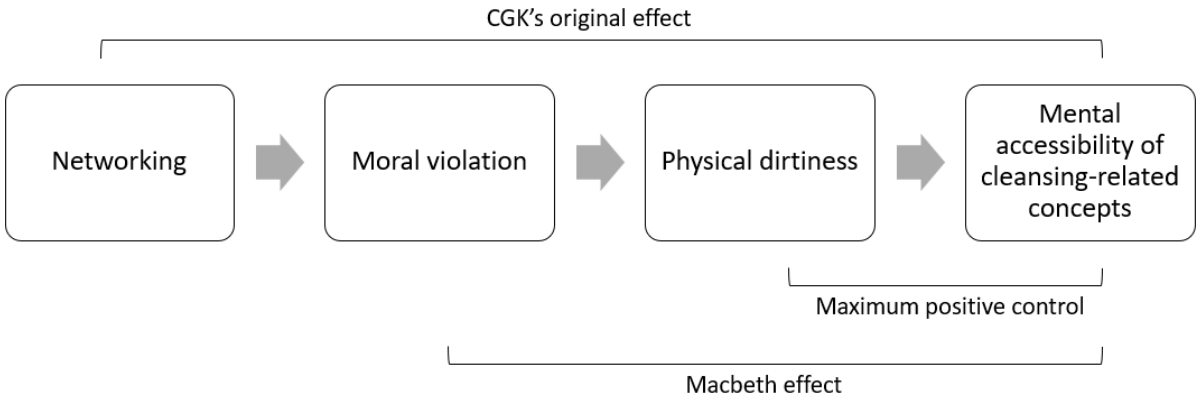
The unethical condition is a replication of the Macbeth effect: Participants were asked to recall an unethical or immoral deed they committed. This manipulation provides a more proximal manipulation of moral impurity than networking. If, as predicted in CGK, networking triggers moral impurity and subsequently heightens people's need for physical cleansing, then we should expect that directly recalling a morally compromising action (i.e., an unethical deed) will heighten people's need for physical cleansing to a greater extent, and therefore produce a larger effect size.

The "physically dirty" condition asked participants to recall a time during which they felt physically dirty. This condition provides a "maximum positive control" (Hilgard, 2021): The upper bound that any recall task might have on people's accessibility of cleansing-related words. If recalling a moral violation (i.e., networking, or an unethical deed) heightens the

accessibility of cleansing-related words because it leads people to feel physically dirty, then directly asking people to recall a time when they felt physically dirty should produce the strongest possible effect.

FIGURE 2

Causal Chain Tested in the Original Study and in the Replication



Dependent Variables

As in CGK, participants were asked to complete six word-fragments: W _ _ H, S H _ _ E R, S _ _ P, F _ O _, B _ _ K, P A _ _ R. Three of them could be completed as cleansing-related words (wash, shower, soap), while the three others were fillers (food, book, paper). The total number of cleansing-related words generated (0, 1, 2, or 3) formed the dependent variable.

I also added two exploratory dependent variables: The desirability of cleansing behaviors and the desirability of cleansing products. The desirability of cleansing behaviors scale is used in another paper on the same topic (the moral consequences of networking), from a recent paper from the same authors (Gino, Kouchaki, & Casciaro, 2020). For this dependent variable, participants were asked to indicate how desirable they found eight different behaviors on a 7-point scale going from (1) completely undesirable to (7) completely desirable. Among those behaviors, four referred to cleansing behaviors (e.g., taking a shower) and four referred to neutral behaviors (e.g., listening to music). The dependent variable is the average of those four cleansing behaviors. The desirability of cleansing products was used in study 2 and 4 of

CGK, in another paper on inauthenticity and moral impurity by two of the three authors (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015), as well as in the original paper of the Macbeth effect (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). For this dependent variable, participants were asked to indicate how desirable they found ten different products on a 7-point scale going from (1) completely undesirable to (7) completely desirable. Among those products, five referred to cleansing products (e.g., Dove shower soap) and five referred to neutral products (e.g., Snickers bars). The dependent variable is the average of those five cleansing products. Given that these scales have been used by the authors in other papers on relatively similar topics, I added them to maximize my chance to find an effect.

Sample Size and Participants

To maximize the odds of detecting significant effects, I set the sample size such that I had a 99.9% power to detect an effect as small as the lower bound of the 99% confidence interval of the original effect reported in CGK (i.e., d = 0.52). The output of this power calculation was 57 participants per cell (N = 228). Because of a mistake I made at the time however, I pre-registered a much larger sample size (N = 1070, i.e., 267 participants per cell). This mistake had no other consequence than increasing my ability to detect an effect: It gives me 99.9% power to detect an effect as small as d = .24. As in CGK's original study, the participants were recruited via MTurk, and randomly assigned to conditions.

In total, 1346 participants started the experiment: 246 participants did not finish, and 31 participants failed to give the correct answer to the two attention checks at the beginning of the experiment. As pre-registered, those 277 participants were excluded prior to analysis. The final sample includes 1069 participants, and the number of participants in each cell ranged from 249 to 288.

RESULTS

CGK's original study indicates that people find more cleansing-related words when they wrote about instrumentally (vs. spontaneously) approaching someone for professional reasons ($t(143) = 5.95$, $p < .001$, $d = .98$, 95% CI = [0.63, 1.32]). The very low p-value associated with this test ($p = 0.00000001948$) indicates that this result is very unlikely under the null. On the contrary, the replication finds no evidence of differences between these two conditions: $t(502.56) = .20$, $p = .84$, $d = .02$, 95% CI = [-0.16, 0.19].

A more proximal manipulation of moral impurity (i.e., recalling an unethical deed) also produced no difference in the number of cleansing-related words found when compared to the control condition (i.e., spontaneously approaching someone): $t(526.17) = .26$, $p = .80$, $d = .02$, 95% CI = [-0.15, 0.19]. This second result replicates other failed replications of the Macbeth effect (Earp et al., 2014; Fayard et al., 2009; Gámez et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Siev et al., 2018), which further undermines the original result documented in CGK.

The maximum positive control condition shows that people who recalled feeling physically dirty (vs. recalled approaching someone spontaneously) does increase the accessibility of cleansing-related words: $t(536.76) = 6$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$, 95% CI = [0.34, 0.68]. However, it is noteworthy that the effect size is twice as small as the original effect reported in CGK ($d = .98$).

The descriptive statistics of the replication are reported in Table 2, the results of the replication are presented in Figure 3, and a comparison of effect sizes is presented in Figure 4.

TABLE 2

Replication: Descriptive Statistics

Conditions	Sample size	Cleansing-related words		Cleansing products		Cleansing behaviors	
		mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.	mean	std. dev.
Spontaneous	259	0.87	0.81	4.85	1.22	5.69	1.07
Instrumental	249	0.88	0.84	4.96	1.27	5.64	1.15
Unethical	273	0.89	0.78	4.7	1.25	5.69	1.13
Physically dirty	288	1.34	1.02	5.15	1.29	5.87	1.11

FIGURE 3

Replication: Results (means and 95 % CI)

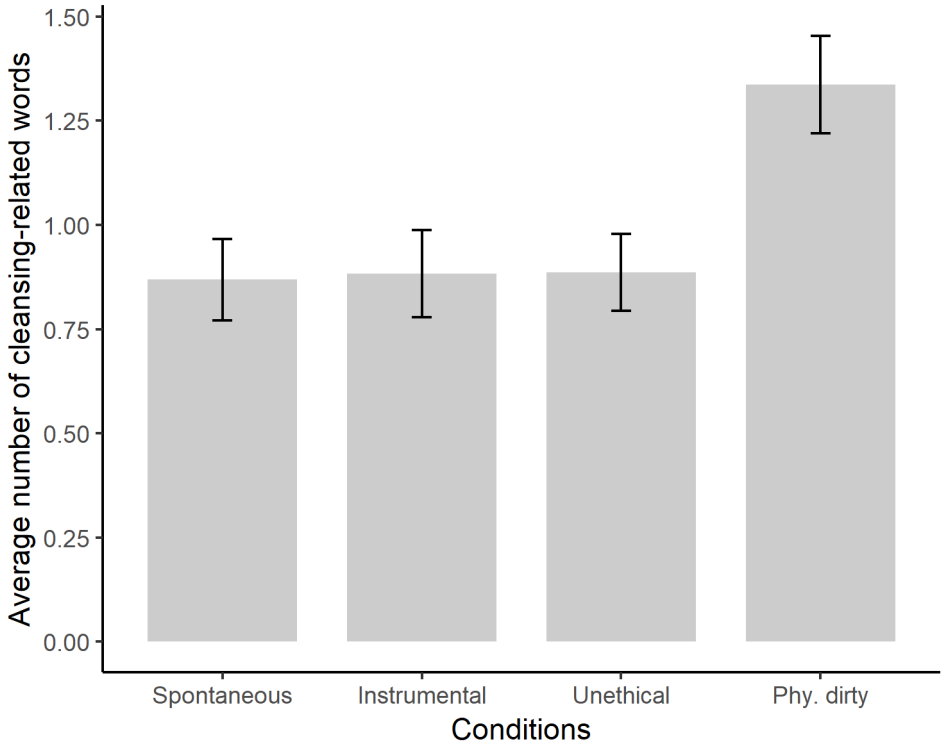
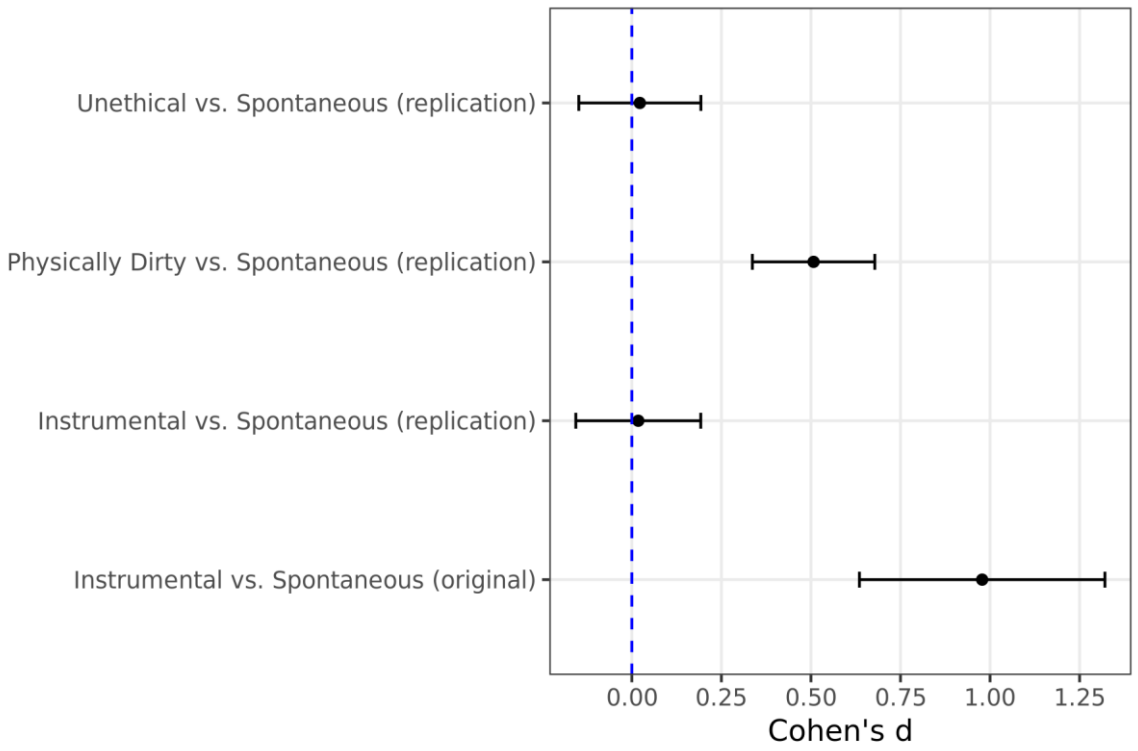


FIGURE 4

Effect Sizes of the Different Contrasts in Original vs. Replication



Finally, the two exploratory variables also did not reveal any difference between the "instrumental" and the "spontaneous" condition, or between the "unethical" and the "spontaneous" condition (all ps > .17). In contrast, the "physically dirty" condition shows a small, marginally significant increase in the desirability of cleansing behaviors (t(542.28) = 1.92, p = .055, d = .16, 95% CI = [-0.004, 0.33]); and a small, statistically significant increase in the desirability of cleansing products (t(543.92) = 2.78, p = .006, d = .24, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.41]).

DISCUSSION

Summary

Before the replication, the original effect documented in CGK was surprising for multiple reasons. First, it is very large: CGK's effect size (d = .98) is more than twice as large

as the estimated average effect in social psychology (d = .43, Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003) or as the average effect size in OB/HR (d = .49, Paterson, Harms, Steel, & Credé, 2016). This large effect is all the more surprising that the study relies on a priming manipulation, which are known to produce small, unreliable effects (Doyen, Klein, Pichon, & Cleeremans, 2012; Harris, Coburn, Rohrer, & Pashler, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Pashler, Coburn, & Harris, 2012; Rivers & Sherman, n.d.; Shanks et al., 2013; Steele, 2014), and that the causal chain between the manipulation and the dependent variable is long. Second, the effect hinges on a psychological mechanism (i.e., the Macbeth effect) that has repeatedly failed to replicate (Earp et al., 2014; Fayard et al., 2009; Gámez et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Siev et al., 2018): There is no evidence that moral violations lead people to feel physically dirty, or that moral violations heighten the need for cleansing.

The replication confirmed these doubts. Indeed, despite very high statistical power to detect an effect, I found no evidence that networking heightens the accessibility of cleansing-related words. Worse, a stronger manipulation of moral violation (i.e., asking people to recall an unethical deed) also failed to produce any discernable effect. Finally, prompting people to recall a concrete situation in which they felt physically dirty only produced an effect that was twice as small as the original effect reported in CGK.

Finally, if the lack of evidence that networking affects people's need for physical cleansing is a major threat to CGK's conclusions, it is not the only problem. Indeed, a closer look at the paper reveals other methodological and theoretical issues.

Other Methodological Issues

CGK reports four studies in total, two of which provide causal evidence for the impact of instrumental (vs. spontaneous) interactions (study 1 and 2). As seen previously, the first study failed to replicate. Unfortunately, study 2 presents other issues that prevent us from drawing conclusions about the effect of networking on the need for physical cleansing.

Independent Variable

Study 2 does not rely on writing prompts: Instead, participants are asked to read vignettes that describe different types of approach (instrumental vs. spontaneous) in different contexts (professional vs. personal). However, those constructs are not orthogonally manipulated: Only two vignettes are used, and participants are assigned either to the Spontaneous-Personal condition or to the Instrumental-Professional condition. Since this design does not uniquely manipulate networking by comparing the spontaneous to the instrumental approach, it does not offer a discriminant test of networking: The paper cannot tease apart the effect of instrumental (vs. spontaneous) interactions from the impact of the content and setting of the interactions (professional vs. personal), and therefore cannot attribute this effect to networking (as opposed to a change in context or content).

Dependent Variable

On the dependent variable side, CGK captures "moral impurity", not with an indirect measure (i.e., a word-completion task) as in study 1, but a direct measure: Participants report dirtiness-related feelings using a Likert scale. This concept is measured using a three-item scale in Study 2 ("dirty", "inauthentic", "uncomfortable"), a four-item scale in study 3 (with the addition of "ashamed"), and a single item in study 4 ("dirty"). However, these direct measures of moral impurity raise several questions.

First, it is unclear how the feelings those items refer to map onto the idea of "moral impurity" as defined in the paper. Since the concept has little precedent in the psychological literature, and seems uniquely defined by the existence of a link between moral integrity and physical cleanliness, it is difficult to see how the items are measuring this association.

Second, the scale is composed of items, such as "ashamed" and "inauthentic", that are known to map onto distinct constructs, and for which established scales exist (state authenticity: Fleeson & Wilt, 2010; Kernis & Goldman, 2005; and state shame: Izard, 1977; Mosher &

White, 1981; Tangney, 1996). On the one hand, authenticity refers to "the degree to which individuals connect with and enact their true selves in various situations" (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013: 281). People typically feel authentic in a situation when their enduring propensities (e.g., their attitudes, beliefs, values, or personality) are aligned with their cognition and actions in this situation (Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2013). On the other hand, shame is a self-conscious moral emotion "elicited by the appraisal that there is something wrong or defective with one's core self, generally due to a failure to measure up to standards of morality, aesthetics, or competence" (Haidt, 2003: 860). "Shame involves a negative evaluation of the global self" (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007: 349) which makes this emotion particularly painful for the one experiencing it. Finally, the two constructs are also distinct at face value: A person who feels ashamed would not necessarily feel inauthentic, and vice versa.

The other two items on the scale are equally problematic. Indeed, while "dirty" might be a face-valid measure of moral impurity (although it is unclear if it refers to physical or moral cleanliness), it is again distinct from feelings of shame and inauthenticity. Finally, that networking makes people feel "uncomfortable" is too unspecific to be psychologically informative: The intended contribution of CGK was precisely to go beyond the general claim that people feel uncomfortable networking, and instead to identify the psychological mechanism.

Finally, the fact that the construct is measured with different scale items in different studies casts doubts on the psychometric properties of the scale, and inflates the likelihood of a Type 1 error caused by uncontrolled researchers' degrees of freedom (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). Indeed, in a recent paper from the same authors (Gino et al., 2020) on the same topic (i.e., networking and moral impurity), four different scales to measure moral impurity in five different studies are used (study 1 and 5: "dirty", "tainted", "inauthentic",

"ashamed"; study 2: "dirty", "inauthentic", "impure"; study 3: "dirty", "inauthentic", "impure", "ashamed", "wrong", "unnatural", "tainted", study 4: "dirty", "inauthentic", "ashamed"). Similarly, Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky (2015)[3] reports other scale items to measure the same concept (study 1 and 3: "impure", "dirty", "tainted").

Other Theoretical Issues

Confusion Surrounding the Concept of "Moral Cleansing"

CGK's theory relies on two lines of work. On the one hand, it cites the paper at the origin of the Macbeth effect (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006); on the other hand, it relies on the sacred-value-protection model (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). How are the two connected?

The sacred-value-protection model (Tetlock, 2000) explains how people cope with threats to sacred values. To distance themselves from moral transgressions, people express moral outrage and engage in "moral cleansing": A set of actions that seek to reaffirm people's core values and their loyalties to the moral order. As such, the model predicts that people who merely contemplate moral transgressions will engage in symbolic acts of moral cleansing to reaffirm their attachment to the moral order. For example, Tetlock and co-authors (2000) show that people exposed to taboo trade-offs or secular-sacred trade-offs (e.g., allocating a massive amount a money to save the life of a single child who needs an organ transplantation or sacrificing the child but allocating this money to make the hospital better) were more likely to engage in moral cleansing such as volunteering for an organ-donation campaign than people exposed to secular trade-offs. For Tetlock and colleagues (2000), moral cleansing is a way for people to distance themselves from morally forbidden trade-offs. The term "moral cleansing"

[3] This other paper argues that inauthenticity leads to moral impurity, which is confusing: Inauthenticity cannot be both part of the "moral impurity" construct and be an antecedent of it.

here refers to symbolic, and not literal, cleansing: It refers to the set of actions people engage in to reestablish moral order.

On the contrary, Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) claim that "cleansing" is more than symbolic. Based on the observations that, in many religions, physical cleansing ceremonies serve to purify the soul and clean the conscience of the faithful, they expect a psychological association between moral purity and physical purity. They predict that people who feel morally threatened, will feel physically contaminated and will experience a need for cleansing. However, not only this idea has failed to replicate (Earp et al., 2014; Fayard et al., 2009; Gámez et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Siev et al., 2018), but it also seems to have little theoretical foundation beyond the religious metaphor.

It therefore appears that, until strong evidence is provided, moral cleansing should be understood as a symbolic action allowing people to cope with moral violations, rather than as a literal action through which people are tempted to wash their body so as to cleanse their moral self.

Predictions at Odds with the Literature

Some predictions of CGK raise questions. CGK distinguishes two dimensions of social interactions: the approach (spontaneous vs. instrumental) and the content (personal vs. professional). The paper argues that the moral violation of approaching someone instrumentally (vs. spontaneously) will be lessened in the context of personal (vs. professional) interactions. This claim is justified by the fact that personal interactions are more altruistic than professional interactions, which would lessen the perceived moral violation of an instrumental approach.

However, this prediction appears at odds with theory. Indeed, the literature on taboo trade-offs (Tetlock et al., 2000) and relational schemata (Fiske, 1992) argue the opposite: Instrumentally approaching someone to build personal ties would be more objectionable than

instrumentally approaching someone to build professional ties (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997; McGraw & Tetlock, 2005).

Since personal ties are communal-affective relationships (i.e., characterized by a general obligation to care for the welfare of others, and free of calculus and costs-benefits considerations), they are not supposed to be built with ulterior motives. Strategically building personal ties by placing a value on one's friendships is morally questionable. This kind of trade-off calculus not only undermines the relationship but also degrades one's moral standing. As such, the more personal the content of the interaction is, the more offensive an instrumental approach should be perceived. This inconsistency further limits CGK's argument.

CONCLUSION

Several studies had suggested that people are typically reluctant to engage in networking efforts (Bensaou et al., 2014; de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Ferrazzi, 2005; Ibarra, 2016; Ibarra et al., 2010; Kuwabara et al., 2018; Trefalt, 2014; Wanberg et al., 2000). The strength of CGK was to provide a psychological mechanism explaining this reluctance, and to offer causal empirical evidence for this mechanism. However, a direct replication of its main effect as well as a systemic review of the theory and methods cast doubt on the conclusion. I conclude that there is no evidence that networking triggers feelings of dirtiness, and that the Macbeth effect is not the correct psychological framework to explain people's reluctance to network.

Finally, it is unclear what to conclude of the strong discrepancy between the original results and the results of the replication. On the one hand, given the very low p-value of the original effect, it is unlikely that this effect was obtained by random chance. On the other hand, the effect sizes reported in the replication show that the original effect is psychologically implausible, and implausibly larger than the effect obtained when directly manipulating physical dirtiness. Since the replication was run using the paper's original materials, it is highly

unlikely that procedural differences account for these discrepancies, but other unobserved factors might explain them.

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