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Citation

Mandates of Dishonesty: The Psychological and Social Costs of Mandated Attitude Expression

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Abstract. This paper explains and tests empirically why people employed in product promotion are less willing to trust others. Product promotion is a prototypical setting in which employees are mandated to express attitudes that are often not fully sincere. On the basis of social projection theory, we predicted that organizational agents mandated to express insincere attitudes project their self-perceived dishonesty onto others and thus become more distrustful. An initial large-scale, multi-country field study found that individuals employed in jobs requiring product promotion were less trusting than individuals employed in other jobs—particularly jobs in which honesty is highly expected. We then conducted two experiments in which people were tasked with promoting low-quality products and either were allowed to be honest or were asked to be positive (as would be expected of most salespeople). We found that mandated attitude expression reduced willingness to trust, and this effect was mediated by a decrease in the perceived honesty of the self, which, in turn, reduced the perceived honesty of other people. Our research suggests that the widely used practice of mandating attitude expression has the effect of undermining an essential ingredient of economic functioning—trust.
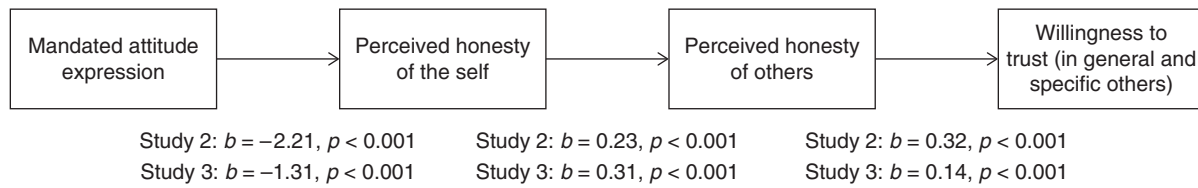
Introduction

When interacting with customers, suppliers, or partners, organizational agents are often mandated, formally or informally, to express specific attitudes irrespective of whether such attitudes are truthful. We refer to this behavior as mandated attitude expression. For example, negotiators are often advised to imply that they have alternatives even when they do not (Cohen 1980), and managers are told to give some positive feedback to employees even when their performance is not positive (Bohlander and Snell 2006). Mandated attitude expression is particularly common in the context of product promotion (Williams et al. 2009), as there is a clear directive to present products as desirable to consumers (Kotler and Armstrong 2014). Shop assistants are expected to suggest that the clothing offered in the store looks good on the customer (even when it does not), marketers are told to omit negative product properties (e.g., the sugar content in sodas), and car salespeople are instructed to inform the customer that the deal they are making is the best one they can make (while being encouraged by the management to extract as much profit as possible).

These mandates of dishonesty may be useful to achieve some organizational objectives (e.g., sales targets). However, we argue here that they come with unintended psychological and social costs. Specifically, we build on social projection theory to propose that organizational agents mandated to express attitudes that do not represent the facts come to view themselves as less honest, project this view onto general and specific others, and become more distrustful as a result (see Figure 1). Trust refers to "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor" (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 712). Trust facilitates social coordination at all levels of human interaction: it is essential for the functioning of teams (Dirks 1999), organizations (Zaheer et al. 1998), and entire economies (Zak and Knack 2001). If our theory is correct, then mandates of dishonesty hinder social coordination, which is economically beneficial to both corporations and societies. Moreover, tasking employees with activities that make them view themselves and others as more dishonest thwarts the fundamental psychological need to find the world a trustworthy and benevolent place (Stevens and Fiske 1995).

We tested our theory in three studies. In Study 1, we report an initial, large-sample, multicountry, correlational field study examining the relationship between being employed in sales (Williams et al. 2009) and the willingness to trust others, or trust propensity. The advantage of this study is that it used random sampling in 20 different countries, making it an externally valid test of the basic relationship implied by

Figure 1. Theoretical Model Tested in Studies 2 and 3

| Mandated attitude expression | → | Perceived honesty of the self | → | Perceived honesty of others | → | Willingness to trust (in general and specific others) |

Study 2: $b = -2.21$, $p < 0.001$ Study 2: $b = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$ Study 2: $b = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$
Study 3: $b = -1.31$, $p < 0.001$ Study 3: $b = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$ Study 3: $b = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$

Notes. Coefficients from structural equation modeling are displayed below relevant paths. The overall indirect effect is significant in both studies (Study 2 confidence interval: -0.26, -0.09, Study 3 confidence interval: -0.11, -0.03); see the Results sections for details.

our theory. We followed up the correlational study with two experiments (Studies 2 and 3) that sought to replicate the effect and test the psychological mechanism implied by social projection theory. Specifically, we asked participants to promote an obviously low-quality product, and we either mandated the expression of favorable (dishonest) attitudes or allowed for the expression of honest attitudes, after which we observed consequences for participants' self-perceived honesty, perceived honesty of others, and their general (Study 2) and specific (Study 3) willingness to trust others.

Our research makes several theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions. First, the findings we report are practically relevant because the organizational practice of mandating the expression of at least somewhat insincere attitudes is widespread. Take the example of the product promotion context that our studies focus on. Promoting company products or services is the core requirement of jobs in advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing (Kotler and Armstrong 2014). The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) lists over 23 million people employed in "sales occupations," such as employees in retail, wholesale, services, real estate, and insurance. This number excludes managerial and professional positions in sales and marketing, which constitute another 1.2 million executives. The sheer number of people engaged in promotion activities (the figures above add up to nearly a quarter of all full-time, year-round workers in the United States) suggest that the effect we document could have systemic consequences for organizations and economies.

We also make a theoretical contribution to research on trust in organizations. Past research that examined antecedents of trust focused almost exclusively on how characteristics of interaction partners influence trust, such as another person's benevolence and competence (Colquitt et al. 2007, Mayer et al. 1995). Yet there is evidence that employees vary greatly in how willing to trust they are across situations (see, e.g., Colquitt et al. 2007 for a meta-analysis). Differences in the propensity to trust, however, have gone largely unexplained in the organizational sciences. Individual differences of employees are predominantly seen as fixed and

serve as explanations of behavior rather than as a phenomenon deserving explanation. This is surprising considering that disciplinary personality research highlights that personality traits are susceptible to contextual influences and are likely to be shaped by work roles, life events, and social environments (Brousseau and Prince 1981, Roberts et al. 2006, Rushton et al. 2008, Srivastava et al. 2003). This past research on the flexibility of personality traits provides some indirect support for our theory that individual differences in trust propensity are subject to external influence. A meta-analysis examining changes in personality traits over the life span found considerable heterogeneity in individual changes in agreeableness (Roberts et al. 2006), a higher-order personality trait of which trust propensity is a subtrait (Costa et al. 1991). If individuals' agreeableness (and by extension, their willingness to trust) changes over time, then it is possible that some of this change is explained by people taking on specific work roles. The theoretical model we develop below suggests that organizational mandates of dishonesty influence employee self-perceptions of how trustworthy they are, a self-view they then project onto others. This process, we argue, can explain why employees in such work roles become less trusting as a result. In this way, our research draws attention not only to the utility of understanding how work roles impact employee traits but also to the fact that different organizational practices and policies commonly utilized in modern organizations might inadvertently undermine trust through this overlooked channel influencing trust propensity.

Our studies also make a contribution to the large body of research examining employees working in jobs that entail a potential discrepancy between their actual dispositions and the message they are supposed to convey to customers, including research on employee acting (Grandey 2003). This literature focused almost exclusively on the effectiveness and consequences of having to display emotions—for example, smiling when one does not feel like smiling. Our research highlights a more fundamental yet overlooked fact about such work: employees often need to be less than entirely honest to be effective at their work. In so doing, we uncover interpersonal, rather than just

intrapersonal, consequences caused by organizational policies mandating attitude expression. We also contribute to past research on employee acting by using an experimental methodology. Research on employee acting almost exclusively used passive observational studies, which are limited in their ability to disentangle the causal impact of the work itself from self-selection effects.

Finally, our work contributes to the general management literature in which promotion (defined by an expression of organizationally mandated attitudes; Kotler and Armstrong 2014, p. 428) is advocated as the first and most important component of the "marketing mix" (along with product, price, and place) through which companies increase their chances of economic success. The positive sides of effective promotion are taught in virtually every business school program. Yet this research operates on the assumption that employees engaged in promotion activities are themselves unaffected by their work. Our research suggests that the positive organizational consequences of mandated attitude expression need to be weighed against the potential systemic negative consequences that such policies may have for trust, which is essential for individual, organizational, and economic success.

Promotion Behavior and Organizationally Mandated Attitude Expression

Promotion of company products is a prototypical context for examining the consequences of mandated attitude expression because promoting products comes with a clear mandate to present products in a way that makes the products desirable to consumers (Kotler and Armstrong 2014), irrespective of the actual conditions. Employees promoting products are encouraged to present the product their organization is selling positively (Boundless 2015) and to display enthusiasm when communicating about the product (Efti 2014, Szaky 2011). Because product promotion is a motivated rather than an unbiased account, it may require employees to present the product in a way that is not entirely honest. To be sure, not all promotion behavior requires organizational agents to be dishonest. It is possible that there are products for which a matter-of-fact presentation matches all possible desired qualities that every single customer might seek. In these cases, our theory would not apply.

However, not all products are such that a completely frank presentation of the product would make all potential customers purchase the product. And even products that are objectively outstanding might not be appropriate for every single potential customer. Fulfilling the organizational mandate to present products positively and enthusiastically may thus, in many situations, require employees to express attitudes that are

somewhat insincere. The luxury dress, although made of high-quality materials, might not look very good on the customer interested in buying it. The facial cream a company sells is unlikely to halt or reverse ageing. The specialty of the day might not truly be the waiter's favorite. These examples all describe common situations in which employees who want to sell the product and perform well in their job must be less than entirely honest.

There is much anecdotal real-world evidence supporting the notion that product promotion often requires dishonest communication. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) famously reviewed some techniques that salespeople use to promote products. For example, the "low-ball technique" involves offering customers a deal that the salesperson knows is unrealistically favorable to secure initial commitment, after which the deal is modified to the detriment of the customer (who is at that point known to be more likely to purchase the product). Numerous sources of practical sales advice are also indicative of the fact that employees whose jobs involve promotion activities often feel pressured to be dishonest. For example, some sources recommend selling approaches that involve the least amount of lying possible (Francis 2015, Kaput 2013), and others suggest ways of coping with having to lie while promoting products (Ken 2014, Rotenberg 2014). Another suggestive piece of evidence is that sales-related occupations are among the most distrusted of all occupations (Gallup 2017). This perception of salespeople might be, at least in part, because promoting products effectively may require employees to express attitudes that are insincere.

How do employees respond to performing work in ways that are less than entirely honest? Cognitive dissonance research suggests that people might, to some extent, update their attitudes about the product to avoid perceiving themselves as dishonest (Festinger 1957). For example, employees tasked with promoting a low-quality product might force themselves to believe that the product is high quality to avoid seeing themselves as dishonest. However, in most instances, it is impossible to fully revise one's genuine attitudes to match those one is mandated to express. Indeed, cognitive dissonance effects tend to be negligent when attitudes are assessed at a deeper, implicit level (Gawronski and Strack 2004). Similarly, the emotional labor perspective in organizational research (Grandey 2003) suggests that people in some cases genuinely change how they feel about something, but in many cases, they are unable to do so fully (and merely engage in "surface acting"). Thus, while it is possible that people somewhat adjust their genuine attitudes to match those they are mandated to express, they are unlikely to do so fully and in all circumstances. This implies that, on average, employees who are mandated

to express insincere attitudes will come to see their behavior as less than entirely honest.

We build on social projection theory to argue that a perception that one's work behavior is less than entirely honest affects how employees view and interact with *others*. Social projection theory posits that the perceptions we hold of other people's characteristics are largely influenced by how we perceive ourselves (Cronbach 1955, Ross et al. 1977). The well-known "false consensus effect" describes people's tendency to erroneously assume that their own beliefs and attitudes are similar to others' beliefs and attitudes (Ross et al. 1977). Research on accuracy of self and other perceptions (e.g., work on close relationships and work using round-robin design in groups) also finds evidence of "assumed similarity," or the fact that "people judge other individuals to be consistent with how they judge themselves" (Kenny and West 2010, p. 196). For example, people base their perception of how other people feel (Van Boven and Loewenstein 2003) and how extreme other people are in their political attitudes (Van Boven et al. 2012) on how they currently feel themselves and how extreme their own political attitudes are. Social projection occurs because of an egocentric anchoring process, whereby people trying to ascertain others' attitudes start from their own attitudes and then serially adjust until they reach a plausible (and generally not fully accurate) assessment (Krueger et al. 2006). In support of this explanation, Epley et al. (2004) showed that people are more likely to indicate that the other person's perspective would be similar to their own under time pressure (which reduces the tendency to reevaluate the egocentric anchor) and less likely when incentives for accuracy are provided (which increases the tendency to reevaluate the egocentric anchor). Taken together, the logic of social projection suggests that if employees are mandated to express attitudes that are dishonest, the perception that their own behavior is more dishonest will make them more likely to believe that other people also generally behave more dishonestly.

The generalized view that others are more dishonest is relevant for subsequent social interactions because the perception of others' honesty is an important factor in determining people's willingness to trust others (Kramer 1999, Rotter 1971, Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Simply put, people are less willing to trust others when they perceive that others are generally lacking honesty. Changes in the generalized perception of others' honesty are less relevant with respect to people with whom one has significant prior interaction history because, in such situations, one will have more information about the other person's honesty and there will be less need to infer it (and thus be influenced by self-perceived honesty and the perception of other people's honesty in general). However, the modern economy depends on the development of trust in novel interactions, such as among members of newly formed teams (Meyerson et al. 1995) or among potential business partners (Gunia et al. 2011). In such cases, a generalized belief that other people are less honest should make people less willing to trust a specific person with whom one has not interacted yet. As Folkman (1984) noted, "In the absence of clear information, the situation is like a projective test, and the person makes inferences based on general experience and personality dispositions, which include beliefs, to understand what is happening" (p. 841). Social projection theory suggests that when trying to assess whether potential new interaction partners are honest or not, employees will draw on their self-perceptions. We thus argue that when employees are made to express attitudes that may not be reflective of their genuine attitudes, the self-perceived lack of honesty should lead them to also view other people as less honest in general, which should undermine trust in general and specific others. This is the central idea that we examine in this research.

Empirical Context and Hypotheses

We conducted an initial test of the relationship between product promotion and own trust in others (Study 1) by analyzing the large-scale International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data set. We examined levels of trust among people employed in sales-related jobs (the main task of which is to promote products and services; Kotler and Armstrong 2014), relative to people employed in all other jobs as well as relative to people employed in jobs in which honesty is expected (such as doctors and accountants; Gallup 2017). Specifically, if our argument that mandated attitude expression influences trust because it reduces the perceived honesty of the self is true, then we might see an even starker difference in levels of trust relative to people employed in jobs in which they are expected to be honest.

Hypothesis 1. *Employees in sales-related jobs exhibit lower levels of trust in others compared with employees in all other jobs and particularly compared with employees working in jobs in which honesty is highly expected.*

Although Study 1 allowed us to examine whether the real-world pattern of trust conforms with our theory, the data cannot speak to the causal impact of organizationally mandated insincerity on trust because it is possible that people who are generally less trusting self-select into jobs involving promotion. In addition, these data did not allow us to test whether our hypothesized psychological process explains the differences in trust propensity. For these reasons, we conducted two experiments that focused on situations in which the genuine features of a low-quality product and the required presentation of the product were either misaligned ("present the product positively and enthusiastically") or not ("present the product consistent

with your genuine opinions about the product"), constructed based on sales advice for conducting product promotion effectively (Efti 2014, Mandino 1968, Szaky 2011, Tracy 2004). In this way, we recreate prototypical features of situations in which the process described by our theory is likely to operate because promoting the low-quality product positively and enthusiastically (as would be expected of any salesperson promoting such a product) presents a mandate to employees to express attitudes that might be somewhat different from their genuine attitudes. Finally, after manipulating whether people were mandated to express positive attitudes or not, we examine consequences for participants' view of the self and others and of levels of trust. In the context of the design described, our theory leads to the following predictions.

Hypothesis 2. *People who are mandated to promote a product positively* (*versus honestly*) *will exhibit lower levels of trust in others.*

Hypothesis 3. *The effect of mandated attitude expression on trust is mediated by the perceived honesty of the self and, in turn, the perceived honesty of others.*

The design of Studies 2 and 3 allowed us to examine effects of social projection over and above any potential effects of attitude updating resulting from cognitive dissonance reduction processes. Specifically, people should report their self-perceived honesty to be lower following mandated attitude expression only to the extent that they perceive their behavior as somewhat dishonest. To the extent that they fully revise their attitudes to match those they are mandated to express, there is no reason why self-perceived honesty would be impacted. While it is possible that people somewhat revise their attitudes, the past work we reviewed earlier suggests that they are unlikely to do so to a large extent or fully. If so, self-perceived honesty should be impacted, triggering the resulting social projection processes, and these are the focus of the present research. One feature of these studies relevant to this concerns the fact that participants received financial compensation for their participation, which might render cognitive dissonance reduction processes less pronounced (Festinger and Carlsmith 1959). Yet this feature of our tasks is aligned with how mandated attitude expression occurs in organizations, as employees generally work for money. Finally, Study 3 also includes measures that tested for possible other psychological influences in the situation, as well as the role of initial attitudes about the product.

Across studies, we operationalize individual willingness to trust in related but somewhat different ways that were appropriate for the study setting. The Study 1 data set involved a measure of trust propensity or a generalized tendency to trust others (Colquitt et al. 2007). We measured the same construct in Study 2, in which participants engaged in the study individually and in an online context. However, Study 3 took place in a laboratory setting, so it was feasible to investigate trust in a specific other person. Consistent with our theory, we focused on the willingness to trust a novel interaction partner. Self-perceived honesty and perceptions of others' honesty should influence trust primarily in relation to people with whom one does not have much prior interaction history (Colquitt et al. 2007, Fulmer and Gelfand 2012), who are increasingly important as economic exchange partners in the modern economy (Meyerson et al. 1995). Generalized trust influences and is thus related to trust in specific novel interaction partners (Colquitt et al. 2007), so we expected similar effects across studies, but we deemed it informative to examine whether the effect holds in relation to the different operationalizations of trust.

This project has a dedicated Open Science Framework web page (https://osf.io/vwxfe/?view_only=b2763a963bbd493087855768e75c5680) containing study materials, data, and analysis syntaxes for new data collections (experiments) we conducted (Studies 2 and 3). Data used in Study 1 are publicly available at http://www.gesis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/work-orientations/2005/ (accessed March 28, 2018). The project web page contains extracted variables used in our analyses as well as the syntax for the analyses. There were no unreported exclusions in any of the studies, and neither of the two experiments included measures or manipulations apart from those described in the paper. Sample sizes for experiments were set in advance, as described in our report of the studies.

Study 1
Method
Data Set. Study 1 data were obtained from the ISSP. The ISSP is a large, cross-national survey collaboration investigating a wide range of topics in the social sciences. Several waves of surveys have been run, from 1985 to date, on topics such as politics, religion, gender roles, and others. Data were collected through mail or written or oral survey among a stratified random sample of the adult population. Our data came from the module "Work Orientations," administered in 1989, 1997, 2005, and 2015. This module addresses questions related to one's work as well as general questions measuring outlook on life. The focal question about trust was administered in 2005. The 2005 questionnaire was administered across 20 countries, including, for example, France, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. A total of 20,959 responses were available for the main analysis looking at levels of trust across occupations. Respondents' average age was 45.48 years (SD = 15.73), and 50.40% of them were women.

Measures

Occupation. In 2005, the ISSP included a detailed classification of occupations based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations created by the International Labour Organization (2015). We classified participants' jobs into those clearly involving sales duties (e.g., "shop salespersons and demonstrators," "door-to-door, telephone salespersons," "street vendors and related workers") and all others. In addition, to explore levels of trust in occupations in which the level of honesty is expected, we added another category that denoted jobs in which honesty is expected. To select occupations in which honesty is expected, we consulted the Gallup (2017) poll on perceptions of ethics in different occupations, and from this, we chose three occupations that had good representation in the data set: nurses, doctors, and accountants. This selection was also suggested by an anonymous reviewer. The selection of occupations was thus determined prior to conducting any analyses, and we made no additional unreported analyses. We coded the variable in two ways, either by combining the three occupations in which honesty is expected or by including each occupation in which honesty was expected separately (see below).

Trust Propensity. The measure *Trust propensity* was measured by asking participants whether they were "generally trusting" (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). We reversed the measure such that higher values indicate greater trust propensity.

Controls. We additionally examined whether the results are robust to controlling for key demographic variables of age, gender, education (in years), self-reported income, and marital status.

Results and Discussion

Figure 2 depicts levels of trust across different occupations. An ordinary least squares regression analysis with robust standard errors found, using indicator variables, that working in a sales-related job was associated with less trust propensity (M = 3.67, SD = 1.06) ($b = -0.08$, $p = 0.007$) and working in jobs in which honesty is expected with more trust propensity (M = 4.02, SD = 0.81) ($b = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$), compared with working in all other jobs (M = 3.75, SD = 0.98). Examining each occupation in which honesty is expected separately, we found that compared with the baseline (all other occupations), working as an accountant was associated with more trust propensity (M = 3.93, SD = 0.87) ($b = 0.18$, $p = 0.011$), working as a doctor with even more trust propensity (M = 4.01, SD = 0.87) ($b = 0.26$, $p = 0.003$), and working as a nurse with more trust propensity still (M = 4.11, SD = 0.75) ($b = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). Results were robust to controlling for the demographic variables described above. We also analyzed the data using

Figure 2. Study 1: Willingness to Trust Across Occupations
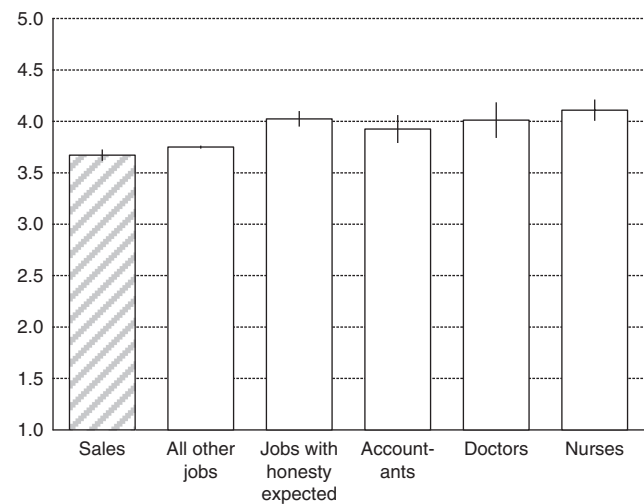
Notes. "Jobs with honesty expected" include accountants, doctors, and nurses combined, and "All other jobs" include all responses excluding sales and jobs with honesty expected. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

a multilevel model with cases nested within countries, and the results hold. Taken together, the results support Hypothesis 1.

Study 2
Method

Participants and Design. We recruited 200 employed adults (mean age = 34.03, 59.00% male; 86.50% currently employed full or part time) through Amazon's Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing platform (Buhrmester et al. 2011). These participants, called "MTurkers" performed the task in exchange for 1$. MTurkers are regularly recruited to write product reviews, oftentimes in a one-sided, positive manner, irrespective of their genuine opinions (Ipeirotis 2009). Thus, this task has both psychological and mundane realism for this population.

Procedure and Materials. Participants were randomly assigned to either the mandated attitude expression or the control condition. They were told that the purpose of the task was to help us "develop customer product reviews." Participants were informed they would be asked to write a review of a product and that we would use the reviews on a web page for further marketing purposes. We emphasized that other people would be able to read the website when considering products for purchase. The product was said to be a proprietary blend intended to help adults grow taller. We provided details about purported chemical content and reasons why the product is believed to be effective. The description was intended to parallel those found on many supplements in health stores and online. At the same time, we assumed that participants would view the product as unlikely to fulfill its purported use. If so, asking

participants to present the product positively (as most companies would expect from their employees) should require people to be somewhat dishonest and, if our theory is correct, erode perceived honesty of the self, perceived honesty of others, and finally trust.

Mandated Attitude Expression Manipulation. Participants were then asked to write a review of the product and make it positive and enthusiastic (reflective of their genuine personal opinion). We emphasized that this is necessary because we seek to distribute positive (honest) reviews, and we reminded participants that we would ostensibly present their review to potential customers on our web page. Participants then wrote their reviews in a text box. The specific content (i.e., the emphasis on presenting products in a positive and enthusiastic manner) was informed by a review of practical advice to employees engaged in promotion behavior (Mandino 1968, Tracy 2004).

A sample review a participant wrote in the control condition included, "This product is meant to help people grow taller and promote bone strength and density as well as strong joint support. While I believe the supplements would support bone strength, I would not count on actual growth. One might appear taller due to possibly posture changes from stronger bones and joints, but as height is largely determined by genetics, I wouldn't expect too much out of a supplement" (control condition). An example in the mandated attitude expression condition is, "This is an excellent product. You can expect to gain a few inches without having to do anything other than taking some pills. Not only that, it helps with your bone and joint health to boot— it's like killing two birds with one stone. You really can't go wrong with this supplement" See the data online for all reviews.

Perceived Honesty of the Self and Others. Following the manipulation, we asked participants to what extent

they perceived their behavior as "sincere," "honest," and "truthful" (1 = not at all, 5 = completely; $\alpha = 0.97$). In addition, we asked them to what extent they thought *other* people are *generally* "sincere," "honest," and "truthful" on the same scale ($\alpha = 0.95$). These items were taken from a scale used to measure morality in person perception in prior work (Wojciszke et al. 1998).

Trust Propensity. Next, participants responded to a scale measuring trust propensity (Mayer and Davis 1999). The scale consists of eight items (e.g., "One should be very cautious with strangers," "These days, you must be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you," where both items are reverse-coded; $\alpha = 0.72$). The study then ended, and participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 contains variable summaries and correlations, and Figure 3 depicts responses by condition.

Manipulation Check. We checked the effectiveness of the manipulation by examining the product reviews participants wrote. First, we had a rater, blind to the conditions, coding each essay for how (1) positively and (2) enthusiastically the product was presented (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The two items were strongly correlated ($r = 0.84$, $p < 0.001$), so we averaged them. The product was presented more positively and enthusiastically in the mandated attitude expression condition (M = 4.26, SD = 0.84) than in the control condition (M = 2.21, SD = 1.09) ($t_{198} = 14.86$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest the manipulation was effective.
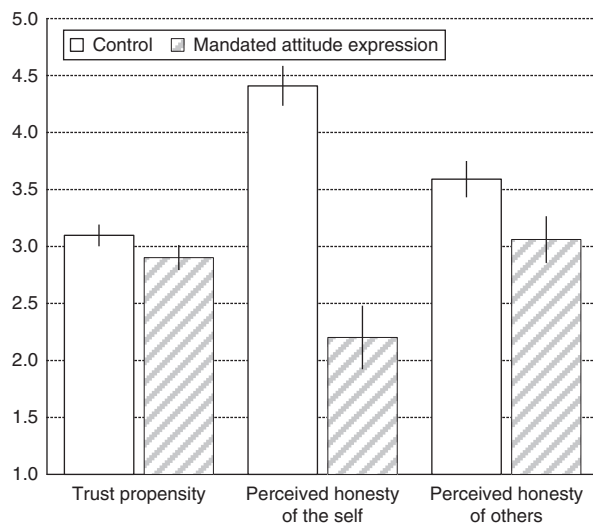
Hypothesis 2 Test. Participants in the mandated attitude expression condition displayed a lower trust propensity (M = 2.90, SD = 0.56) than did control group participants (M = 3.10, SD = 0.48) ($t_{198} = 2.64$, $p = 0.009$). The result provides support for Hypothesis 2.

Table 1. Studies 2 and 3: Variable Summaries and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Study 2								
1. *Trust*	3.00	0.53						
2. *Mandated attitude expression*	0.49	0.50	−0.18					
3. *Perceived honesty of the self*	3.32	1.61	0.16	−0.69				
4. *Perceived honesty of the others*	3.33	0.96	0.55	−0.28	0.40			
Study 3								
1. *Trust (1st measurement)*	3.29	0.80						
2. *Trust (2nd measurement)*	3.07	0.88	0.89					
3. *Mandated attitude expression*	0.49	0.50	−0.05	−0.27				
4. *Perceived honesty of the self*	3.98	1.11	0.10	0.24	−0.59			
5. *Perceived honesty of the others*	2.51	0.86	0.11	0.29	−0.29	0.44		
6. *Initial attitudes toward the product*	2.88	0.94	0.14	0.14	−0.11	0.33	0.20	
7. *Negative affect*	1.33	0.47	0.08	0.01	0.13	−0.27	−0.07	−0.15

Notes. In Study 2, $N = 200$; all correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$. In Study 3, $N = 155$; correlations above |0.15| are significant at $p < 0.05$.

Figure 3. Study 2: Responses by Condition

Note. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Hypothesis 3 Test. Participants in the mandated attitude expression condition saw themselves as behaving less honestly (M = 2.20, SD = 1.40) than control group participants did (M = 4.41, SD = 0.89) (t_{198} = 13.34, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, we found evidence of social projection of self-perceived honesty, such that the perceived honesty of the self predicted how honest others were perceived ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Others were viewed as less honest in the mandated attitude expression condition (M = 3.06, SD = 1.03) than in the control condition (M = 3.59, SD = 0.80) (t_{198} = 4.07, $p < 0.001$). Finally, the perception of the honesty of others predicted participants' trust propensity ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$).

We tested mediation by examining whether mandated attitude expression indirectly predicted trust propensity by predicting the perceived honesty of the self and, in turn, the perceived honesty of others (we controlled for the condition in each equation). Structural equation modeling was used to estimate the effects, and we constructed a bias-corrected confidence interval of the indirect effect using the bootstrap method with 5,000 bootstrap samples (Shrout and Bolger 2002). Figure 1 summarizes the model and the results. We found that mandated attitude expression was indirectly negatively associated with trust propensity through a negative association with the perceived honesty of the self and, in turn, the perceived honesty of others (95% confidence interval: −0.26, −0.09). The results provide support for Hypothesis 3.

Study 3

Study 3 was a constructive replication in the lab. We used a similar design as in Study 2 but asked participants to review a product that they were physically provided with. We alleged we would record their product review using a microphone (either involving mandated attitude expression or not), which was meant to roughly parallel a situation in which employees are mandated to express favorable attitudes about products in oral communication (telephone sales, interacting with customers in stores or restaurants, etc.). We also used a subtler manipulation such that we told participants in the mandated attitude expression condition not that they should be positive and enthusiastic (as we did in the prior study) but merely that we are looking to sell the product and that they should present the product in a way that helps sales. This instruction mapped onto job descriptions of many employees, increasing the generalizability of our conclusions to a broad range of jobs. Specifically, if employees being asked to promote the product in a way that helps sales (which is the goal of virtually all sales efforts) is sufficient to produce the negative consequences of mandated attitude expression on trust, then the effect we study is likely to operate across a wide range of sales situations. The lab setting also allowed us to measure the willingness to trust a specific other person present in the situation, which was not an option in the context of an anonymous online product review that we focused on in Study 2 and where we deemed measuring generalized willingness to trust to be more appropriate. The generalized unwillingness to trust we documented in Studies 1 and 2 should manifest itself in being unwilling to trust a novel interaction partner.

In addition to these design modifications, we also introduced a few additions that increased the internal validity of this theory test. First, we wanted to test a potential alternative explanation that the effect stems not from perception of own behavior as dishonest (and its projection onto other people) but rather from the fact that participants are asked by the experimenters to engage in somewhat dishonest behavior, which may directly signal that other people lack benevolence and integrity and should not be trusted. To test this possibility, we measured trust twice. The first time, it was measured right after receiving instructions regarding the presentation of the product (i.e., right after the mandated attitude expression manipulation) and before participants engaged in the presentation of the product. At this point, participants have not done anything personally, so the effect on trust could not be driven by their own behavior. Thus, any effect of the mandated attitude expression manipulation on trust would be due to information received about other people. The second time, we measured trust after participants completed the product promotion. Any effect driven by perception of own behavior as dishonest would be evident in this round of trust measurement.[1] We favored our explanation focusing on self-projection

because in the situation of mandated attitude expression, the information about the self is new and salient, as having to be dishonest can be an experience that can be disconcerting. On the other hand, being told to promote products in a way that helps sales is something that most people expect from those who have an interest in promoting products. Nevertheless, we deemed it informative to test this alternative explanation.

Another new feature of this study was that we measured participants' initial views about the product before instructing them how they should be reviewing the product. This allowed for a more rigorous test of the idea that the discrepancy between one's genuine attitudes about the product on the one hand and how the product was presented on the other is driving the effect on self-perceived honesty, the perceived honesty of others, and trust. Specifically, the negative effect of mandated attitude expression on trust should be most pronounced among those participants whose honest views are negative and who thus should be more dishonest compared with participants with less negative views. For participants who honestly are positive and enthusiastic about the product, there is no reason why engaging in mandated attitude expression would lead them to perceive themselves as dishonest. Thus, testing initial attitudes about the product as a moderator of the effect we study allowed for an additional way of probing our explanation and testing an important boundary condition of the effect.

Finally, we measured negative affect participants felt following the manipulation. Literature on acting suggests that having to appear in a way that is not reflective of one's genuine disposition can be emotionally aversive (Grandey 2003). Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) have shown that negative affect may influence trust because people misattribute their negative emotions to the judgment they are asked to make (Schwarz 2012). Thus, it is possible that the effect of mandated attitude expression on trust is partly due to negative affect. We thought this was a possibility, but we also thought negative affect would constitute a concurrent (rather than alternative) pathway through which mandated attitude expression influences trust. Irrespective of any role of negative affect, to the extent that people also update their view of their and others' honesty, our hypothesized process should operate. Thus, we tested whether mandated attitude expression affected negative affect and whether our effect persisted after controlling for negative affect in all the analyses.

Method

Participants. We recruited 155 participants (mean age = 23.14, 65.16% female) through a behavioral lab of a business school to participate in the study in exchange for 10€. The target sample size was determined in advance, and we communicated to the lab

manager to stop further recruitment once the sample was about 150. Participants were randomly assigned to either the mandated attitude expression condition or the control condition.

Procedure. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to help develop promotional materials that would be used in research. Participants were informed that to help in creating the promotional materials, they would present a product to potential customers verbally, which we would then give to consumers in subsequent studies on consumer decision making. All materials were in French, translated from English by individuals who translate materials for research studies as part of their work in the lab.

Participants were taken to cubicles and seated behind a desk equipped with a computer. They were provided with a low-quality MP3 player they were supposed to review. We had purposefully purchased a device that received fairly negative reviews at the online shop from which it was bought. Specifically, when we accessed the web page, there were 309 reviews by prior customers; the modal score was one star out of five (127 users gave the product the lowest score); the mean was 2.4.[2] The product was made of appreciably low-quality material that made its intended use difficult (e.g., many users reported difficulty pressing the buttons). Participants were encouraged to touch and use the MP3 player to allow them to take note of the low quality of the product. We expected that asking participants to give a positive opinion of a visibly poor product (as would nevertheless be expected of most salespeople) would reduce the perceived honesty of the self.

Initial Attitudes Regarding the Product. Participants were asked to report whether they were positive and enthusiastic about the product (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.8$).

Mandated Attitude Expression Manipulation. Next, participants used the computer to ostensibly record their product presentation. The instructions asked participants in the mandated attitude expression (control) condition to present the product in a way that helps sell the product (honestly and genuinely), and as an example, the instructions suggested that when describing the quality of the product to customers, they should have in mind that we are looking to sell the product (have in mind that they should be honest about the quality of the product).

First Willingness to Trust Measure. The context of the lab study provided a cover story for measuring individual willingness to trust a specific other person twice with minimum risk of demand effects. Specifically, we told participants that as a standard procedure implemented by the behavioral lab, we are seeking their

feedback on the lab and its staff at the beginning (following the introduction to the study) as well as at the end of the study. Participants were asked a few filler questions about lab facilities, which were followed by the focal questions about the degree to which participants trusted the experimenter. The items taken from Mayer and Davis (1999) and Mayer and Gavin (2005) were adapted to the study context. We focused on positively worded items to minimize the risk of reputational damage to the lab and to minimize suspicion regarding the questions. Specifically, participants indicated to what extent they agreed (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with the following items: "I would let the experimenter have influence over issues that are important to me," "I would be willing to let the experimenter have control over developments that concern me in this study," "I would be comfortable relying on the experimenter for a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor the experimenter's actions," "I would share my opinion about sensitive issues with the experimenter even if my opinion were unpopular," and "If the experimenter asked why a problem happened, I would speak freely even if I were partly to blame" ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Product Review and Manipulation Check. Participants were then given time to prepare their verbal presentation of the product and were provided with pen and paper if they wanted to make notes. Once ready to record the presentation, they were asked to put on a headset, position the microphone close to their mouth, and click a button, which suggested that the recording was starting. Participants had three minutes to present the product. To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, after recording the presentation, participants indicated using two items: whether they presented the product in a way that is positive and whether they presented the product in a way that is enthusiastic (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.68$).

Perceived Honesty of the Self and Others. Following the presentation of the product, participants responded to the same measures of the perceived honesty of the self ($\alpha = 0.92$) and others ($\alpha = 0.81$) used in Study 2.

Negative Affect. Next, participants responded to a version of the Negative Affect Schedule by Watson et al. (1988). Because the study was conducted in French, we opted for the five-item version of the scale validated for "international" use by Thompson (2007). This version of the scale is shorter than the original 10-item scale, which was desirable given that we had no theoretical basis for testing the effects of specific emotions but were only interested in the role of overall negative affect, and the shorter scale reduced the risk of participant fatigue. Participants indicated the extent to which at that moment they felt the following five negative affective states: "upset," "hostile," "ashamed," "nervous," and "afraid" (1 = definitely do not feel, 5 = extremely; $\alpha = 0.69$).

Second Willingness to Trust Measure. Finally, participants again responded to the same trust measure as before ($\alpha = 0.73$).

Results and Discussion

Table 1 contains variable summaries and correlations, and Figure 4 depicts responses by condition.

Manipulation Check. Participants in the mandated attitude expression reported having reviewed the product more positively and enthusiastically (M = 3.56, SD = 0.77) than did control group participants (M = 2.96, SD = 0.91) ($t_{153} = 4.45$, $p < 0.001$).

Alternative Explanations. There were no differences in the initial levels of willingness to trust the experimenter ($p = 0.502$), excluding the explanation that effects of mandated attitude expression are driven by the mere mandate to express attitudes (rather than the act of attitude expression itself). In addition, the effect of the manipulation on negative affect was not significant ($p = 0.095$). Nevertheless, we also reran all the analyses reported below (including the mediation test) controlling for negative affect, and we found that all the results held and that negative affect was not a significant mediator.

Hypothesis 2 Test. We regressed the second measure of willingness to trust on the manipulation, controlling for the first measure of willingness to trust. After reviewing the product, participants in the mandated attitude expression condition were less willing to trust the experimenter (M = 2.83, SD = 0.88) than were control group participants (M = 3.30, SD = 0.81) ($t_{152} = 6.71$, $p < 0.001$). This result provides support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 Test. Participants in the mandated attitude expression condition (M = 3.32, SD = 1.15) saw themselves as behaving less honestly than the control group participants (M = 4.63, SD = 0.55) ($t_{153} = 9.12$, $p < 0.001$). We found evidence of the social projection of self-perceived honesty, such that the perceived honesty of the self predicted how honest others were perceived to be ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). Others were viewed as less honest in the mandated attitude expression condition (M = 2.26, SD = 0.83) than in the control condition (M = 2.76, SD = 0.81) ($t_{153} = 3.80$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, the perception of the honesty of others was related to participants' willingness to trust the experimenter ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). We used the same procedure to test mediation as in Study 2 (see Figure 1 for model summary and results). We found mandated attitude expression was indirectly negatively associated with willingness

Figure 4. Study 3: Responses by Condition
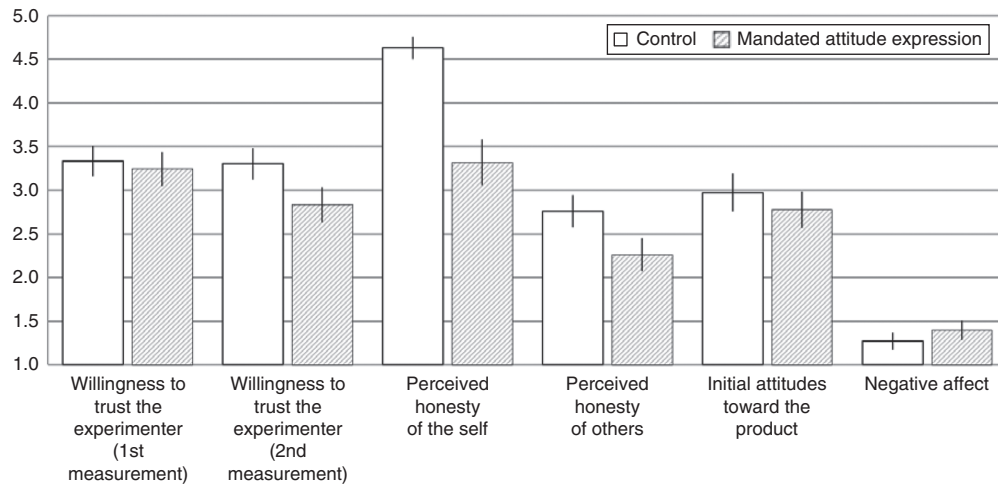
Note. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

to trust [−0.11, −0.03] through a negative association with the perceived honesty of the self and, in turn, the perceived honesty of others (controlling for condition in all equations). The results provide support for Hypothesis 3.

Role of Initial Attitudes. Next, we examined whether participants' initial attitudes moderated the effect. Consistent with expectations, we found that the effect of the mandated attitude expression manipulation on the perceived honesty of the self ($b = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$), the perceived honesty of others ($b = 0.46$, $p = 0.001$), and trust ($b = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$) was stronger among participants whose initial attitudes regarding the product were less positive than among participants whose initial attitudes were more positive (coefficients are for interactions between the manipulation and initial attitudes in predicting each outcome). The indirect effect was also significantly stronger among these participants [−0.26, −0.02] as indicated by a bootstrap test of the difference in the indirect effect between participants whose initial attitudes were 1 SD above the mean and those whose attitudes were 1 SD below the mean [0.01, 0.18].

Discussion

In a large survey, we found that individuals employed in sales jobs, in which the expression of organizationally mandated attitudes is particularly common (Williams et al. 2009), reported that they generally are less trusting than employees not involved in sales. Two experiments found causal evidence for the idea that mandating people express attitudes that may not honestly represent the state of affairs (by making them promote products positively irrespective of the products' actual features) undermines their willingness to trust

general and specific others. We used different products and tasks across the two experiments. Study 2 asked participants to promote herbal growth pills through written reviews. This product was unlikely to be effective, thus requiring participants to be dishonest when we mandated that the product be reviewed positively (as arguably most companies would require from their agents). We found that participants' self-view about honesty predicted their general view of others' honesty and their willingness to trust others. The task in Study 2 asked participants to communicate orally about an effective but rather low-quality MP3 player. Again, we found that mandating participants to present the product positively (compared with honestly) led participants to see their behavior as lacking honesty, which predicted their general view of others' honesty and their trust in a specific other person. In sum, the results are consistent with our social projection account of the effect of mandated attitude expression on trust.

Practical Implications

Our work points to potential courses of action that might help combat distrust among employees. One implication of our work is that managers should not mandate that employees be dishonest when this can be avoided. Yet we acknowledge that it may be difficult to discourage organizations from using such practices. One alternative solution is informed by the psychological mechanism identified by this research. Managers might want to organize training programs for employees that inform them of the potential negative effects of mandated attitude expression and help them ward off problematic consequences for their view of and relationships with other people.

Another practical implication of the finding that mandating employees to express certain attitudes

changes their self-perception, as well as perception of and relationship with other people, concerns the contentious issue of fair remuneration. People engage in various uncomfortable or personally harmful jobs, but the knowledge of the negative aspects of the job usually allows them to command higher compensation (Viscusi 1978). Our work suggests that there is a hitherto overlooked reason why those whose jobs involve a great deal of mandated attitude expression (e.g., sales agents) should be compensated more. This is particularly notable in light of the fact that some categories of employees who are most exposed to organizational mandates concerning attitude expression earn among the lowest wages; for instance, across the entire range of retail jobs in the United States, salespeople in 2013 earned on average just $12.20 per hour (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013).

Future Research

Our theory applies to situations in which employees must express attitudes that do not honestly represent their attitudes. This boundary condition of our theory may guide future research that can systematically identify jobs and industries in which the effect we document is more or less pronounced. One relevant observation here is that there are major differences in terms of customer satisfaction across industries. For example, healthcare service generally elicits a higher degree of customer satisfaction than does the retail and wholesale industry (Savitz 2012). In industries in which people are generally less satisfied with products, persuading potential customers to purchase products might require employees to be insincere to perform their work effectively and sell the products. A related fact is that employees working in healthcare are seen as more trustworthy than people working in sales (Gallup 2017). Taken together, these facts imply that employees working in sales jobs experience a particularly unpleasant work situation: they are more likely to interact with dissatisfied customers who do not trust them, and they also come to be less trusting because of their jobs. Interventions by organizational decision makers and policy makers might thus be particularly effective when targeting this segment of employees. Future work is needed to examine this possibility.

Future research may also examine other instances of mandated attitude expression in organizations and how these mandates shape individual differences in trust propensity, developing a richer understanding of how features of jobs shape employee personality. While we focused on the context of product promotion, employees are expected to be positive not just about products and services their organization is delivering but also about various other aspects of their organization. For example, employees are often involved in recruitment of new organizational members, and

arguably, the tacit expectation is to present the organization so that it helps the goal of recruiting the best candidates. In fact, some constructs used to conceptualize dedicated organizational members, such as organizational identification, are operationalized by measuring the extent to which employees are invested in their organization being presented positively (e.g., Mael and Ashforth 1992). Future research could thus examine how trust propensity varies as a function of various additional organizational situations that may create an implicit or explicit mandate to present the organization positively.

Our research may open new avenues of exploration on the conditions and effects of jobs that involve mandated attitude expression. Research on "acting" examined the effectiveness and consequences of customer-oriented jobs (Grandey 2003). The main concern in this literature is the fact that such jobs can be difficult to perform, which might impact both the well-being (e.g., through exhaustion and job dissatisfaction) and the effectiveness of employees performing this type of work. A more fundamental feature of much communication with customers is that organizational agents often need to be less than entirely honest. We show that this job feature may shape employees' own behavior in unrelated social interactions. The observation that employees are expected to express dishonest attitudes as part of their work may have other consequences that are worth investigating. People generally prefer to see themselves as honest (Aquino and Reed 2002). How do employees cope with the self-implications of being dishonest as part of their work? Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that employees will either revise their self-concept downward, a solution that is not acceptable to most people (Sedikides and Strube 1997); change their behavior, a solution that may not be feasible if expressing dishonest attitudes is a job requirement; or change their attitudes about the importance of honesty. Changing attitudes about the importance of honesty might be the easiest solution for most employees, yet this reasoning points to a disturbing possibility: employees who must express dishonest attitudes may experience an erosion of their moral standards. Future work is needed to test such potential consequences of organizationally mandated attitude expression. But this discussion highlights the possibility that the social consequences of mandated attitude expression go much beyond those considered thus far.

Conclusion

Many jobs in the modern economy require employees to communicate with potential customers in a way that is meant to sell rather than honestly to inform. This widespread job requirement creates fundamental tension between the ways employees are expected to behave and the values that underlie broader social

relations, most notably honesty. We show that mandating organizational agents to express attitudes that are less than entirely honest may come at a significant social cost. We hope that our work motivates a more measured and socially responsible use of mandated attitude expression by organizations, as well as further research into ways in which such work can be made less damaging to employees and the society.

Endnotes
[1] We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this design.

[2] The permanent link to the product is available at http://web.archive.org/web/20150607132937/http://www.amazon.fr/Lecteur-DICTAPHONE-MUSIQUE-enregistreur-lecteur/dp/B00BQTRYPS/ref=sr_1_35?ie=UTF8&qid=1414872121&sr=8-35&keywords=mp3.

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