

Marketing Research Seminar Series | Department of Marketing | WU Vienna

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*Stranger Danger: When and Why Consumer Dyads
Behave Less Ethically than Individuals*

While joint ethical violations are fairly common in the marketplace, workplace, sports teams, and academic settings, little research has studied such collaborative wrongdoings. This work compares the joint ethical decisions of pairs of people (i.e., dyads) to those of individual decision-makers. Four experiments conducted with real decision-making dyads across various ethical dilemmas demonstrate that dyads in which the partners do not share a social bond with each other behave less ethically than individuals do. The authors propose that this effect occurs because joint ethical violations offer a means to socially bond with others. In line with this theory, they demonstrate that the dyads' sub-ethicality relative to individuals is attenuated (1) if the dyad partners establish rapport prior to the joint decision-making, and (2) in decision-making contexts in which social bonding goals are less active (i.e., making a decision with an out-group vs. in-group member). Taken together, this research provides novel theoretical insights into the social aspects of unethical behavior and specifically joint ethical decision-making, as well as raises interesting questions for future research.