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Something for the weekend

By Linda Anderson
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Wearing dark glasses on a cloudy day may do more than just partially hide your face from the world. It might also encourage you to behave morally dubiously.

In a series of experiments, academics from the **Rotman School at the University of Toronto** and **Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** discovered that wearing sunglasses - giving the illusion of darkness and a sense of anonymity led individuals to behave more selfishly. They also discovered that when faced with a series of tests linked to financial remuneration, those participants taking part in a darkened room tended to behave more dishonestly than those in a well-lit room.

“Across three studies we found that darkness, induced by room dimness or sunglasses, licensed self-interested and cheating behaviour. In addition, an illusory sense of anonymity seems to mediate this licensing effect of darkness.” say the academics.

“Darkness appears to induce a false sense of concealment, leading people to feel that their identities are hidden.”

The **research paper**, by Chen-Bo Zhong, assistant professor, organisational behaviour and human resource management at Rotman, Vanessa K Bohns, post-doctoral fellow at Rotman and Francesca Gino, a professor of organisational behaviour at Kenan-Flagler, is published in Pyschological Science.

With many bankers now receiving their annual bonuses rewards in the financial sector are making headlines once again.

But according to David De Cremer, “the need for giving bonuses within the banking world is a self-created myth”.

In his **research** of 15 leading Dutch banking executives, Prof De Cremer, a professor of behavioural business ethics at **Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University** and a visiting professor at **London Business School**, has discovered that top executives believe that bonuses are of more important to others than they are to themselves.

Prof De Cremer examined the bonus culture in the banking system. When questioned, leading executives saw big bonuses as essential for recruiting top talent, yet did not consider such rewards necessary for themselves.

When asked to choose between two types of bankers, banker A, driven by financial gain and self interest and banker B, keen on providing good service and putting the customer first, all the executives chose banker B, while earlier having said that they would appoint banker A within their own bank.

Prof De Cremer says a new type of realism is needed about the need for bonuses and talent recruitment. And he suggests that better training of financial talent would improve the quality of banking staff and reduce the need for such large bonuses.