

The Fall of a Superstar Psychologist

When one researcher breaks the rules, who pays the price?

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Directions

Answer Part 2 while you watch. Complete Parts 3 through 5 afterward, in complete sentences unless a question says otherwise. 40 points total.

Watch the video

“The Fall of a Superstar Psychologist.” Scan the QR code with your phone camera, or go to https://youtu.be/Q3tSG8h_O3A



Scan to watch

PART 1 Key terms 4 points

Read the key terms before the video. You will use them throughout.

Data fabrication	Making up data that was never collected
Data falsification	Changing real data so results look different than they were
Peer review	Experts check a study before a journal publishes it
Replication	Repeating a study to see if the same results appear
Retraction	A journal officially withdraws a published study
Normal distribution	Bell-shaped data: most scores cluster near the mean, fewer at the extremes
Uniform distribution	Flat data: every value is about equally likely
Institutional Review Board	A committee that reviews research to protect participants

1. In your own words, explain the difference between fabrication and falsification. Give an example of each.

PART 2 While you watch 12 points

Answer these while the video plays. Short answers are fine here.

1. Why was Dan Ariely considered a “superstar” in behavioral science? Name at least two sources of his influence outside of academic journals.

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2. The famous 2012 study tested whether signing an honesty pledge at the top of a form, instead of the bottom, reduced cheating. Identify the independent variable and the dependent variable.

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3. Where did the car insurance data supposedly come from, and what behavior was it measuring?

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4. Why were businesses and governments so interested in this finding? What made it appealing?

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5. List two red flags the investigators found when they examined the raw data.

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6. How did Ariely explain the problems with the data? How did the insurance company respond?

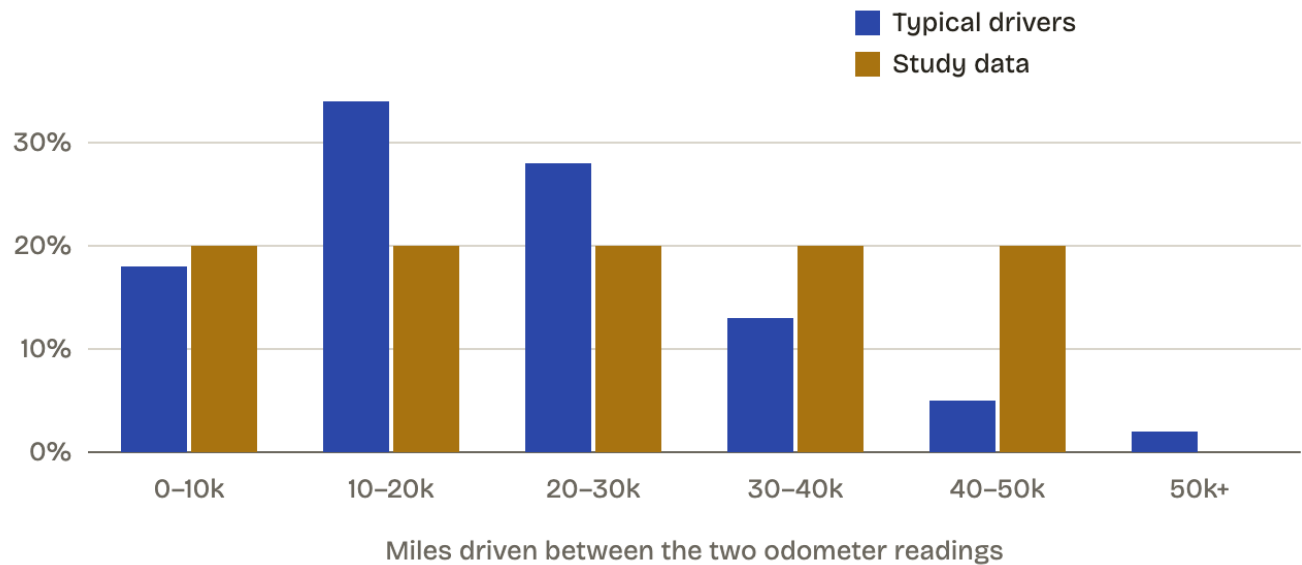
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7. What happened when researchers, including the original authors, tried to replicate the study?

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8. A second author on the same paper faced separate accusations about her part of the study. Why does this make the case even more troubling for the field?

The investigators caught the problem by looking at the shape of the data. This chart is a simplified model of what they saw.

Real driving has a hump. The study data was flat.

Share of cars by miles driven (percent)



Illustrative figures, not the actual dataset. The shapes are modeled on what the investigators reported.

1. Describe the shape of each distribution. Which one looks like a normal distribution, and which one looks uniform?

2. Explain in your own words why real-world mileage should form a hump instead of a flat line.

3. In the study data, not a single car drove more than 50,000 miles. Why is a hard cutoff like this suspicious?

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4. People who write numbers by hand tend to round (23,000 instead of 23,187). One set of mileage numbers showed normal human rounding, but the other set showed almost none. What does that suggest about where those numbers came from?
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PART 4 Apply AP concepts 8 points

1. **Ethics beyond participants.** Most research ethics rules (informed consent, protection from harm, debriefing, confidentiality) protect participants. Faking data breaks none of those rules directly. Explain why it is still one of the most serious ethical violations a researcher can commit.
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2. **Peer review.** This study passed peer review and was published in a respected journal. Why didn't reviewers catch the problem? Propose one change to how research is published that would make fraud easier to catch.
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3. **Cognitive biases.** Pick one term and explain how it may have helped the study go unquestioned for almost a decade.

Circle one: **Confirmation bias** · **Halo effect** · **Belief perseverance** · **Overconfidence**

4. **The ripple effect.** Fraud harms more than the person who commits it. For each group, explain how they were harmed.

Who was harmed?	How were they harmed?
Co-authors on the paper	
Other researchers and students	
Businesses or governments that used the finding	
The public	
Psychology as a field	

PART 5 **Personal reflection** 8 points

Choose one prompt and write 150–200 words. There is no single right answer; you are graded on how thoughtfully you reason.

Circle the prompt you chose:

- A The shortcut.** Describe a time you, or someone you know, cut a corner: in school, sports, a job, or a game. Who ended up affected besides that person? Did anyone find out, and did that change anything?
- B Trust after betrayal.** When one study is proven fake, should we stop trusting everything else the researcher published? What about the rest of the field? Explain where you would draw the line.
- C The pressure to be impressive.** Researchers are rewarded for surprising, exciting results. Where in your own life do you feel pressure to look successful instead of being honest about how things are going? How does that pressure change your choices?

Your reflection (150–200 words):

HOW PART 5 IS GRADED

Criteria	2 points	1 point	0 points
Answers the prompt	Fully addresses every part	Addresses some parts	Off topic
Specific example	Concrete, detailed example	Vague example	None
Connects to the case	Clear link to the Ariely case or research ethics	Brief mention	No link
Reasoning	Considers more than one side or consequence	One-sided	Restates only

Turning it in

Hand in this packet, or type your answers on the student answer page and upload the .txt file to the matching Canvas assignment. Label each answer with its part and number.