

Managing Corporate Integrity: An Oxbridge Tutorial Approach BUSA 552

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Course Objective: This seminar is intended to assist MBA students gain a comprehensive understanding of the Business Ethics discipline via an Oxbridge Tutorial approach centered around the writing of a major academic research paper. The seminar will utilize an online format for the majority of the class. Students, working in teams of three, will select a business ethics topic to study and research in depth during the summer. Topics may cover any time period, event, theme, or artifact(s) that deal with the field of Business Ethics. Ultimately students will produce a research paper that is publishable in an academic journal or presentable at a conference.

There are 2 required Class Meetings on Campus:

- Monday, June 3rd 8:30 pm to 10:30 pm
- Poster Presentations will take place the first week of August (more information to come)
- In addition, individual groups of students will meet with Dr. White during the semester via skype or face-to-face (based on each student group's preference)

Course Overview

BUSA 552 is designed to introduce students to empirical thinking, empirical methods, and empirical writing in business ethics. As a required course for the Master of Business Administration degree, the curriculum is built around the skills necessary to successfully understand and write academic business ethics research. Finding appropriate primary source material and learning to read this material critically, choosing a business ethics research topic, and turning a topic into a specific question and a testable hypothesis will be discussed during the first class. Students will be divided into teams of three and will spend the next 10 weeks working directly with Dr. White to produce a publishable business ethics research paper.

Classmates will assist in the research process via an online "Inklings" reading club. The Inklings were a "gathering of friends – all of them British, male, and Christian, most of them teachers at or otherwise affiliated with Oxford University – who met usually on Thursday evenings in C.S. Lewis's and J.R.R. Tolkien's college rooms in Oxford during the 1930s and 1940s *for readings and criticism of their own work, and for general conversation*" (Mythopoeic Society website). We will duplicate the Inklings concept via an online reading club.

By the end of the summer you will be ready to present the results of your business ethics research study. Since behavioral scientists often present their research either orally or using a "poster session" format at professional meetings, final projects will be presented in the business school the first week of August via the poster format. Authors of exceptional papers will be encouraged to submit their work for presentation at a major national or international conference. Some students may even have the opportunity to publish their work in an academic journal. Since Dr. White currently serves on the Editorial Review Board for the *Journal of Business*, he is in a position to help identify work that has the potential to gain publication in these types of outlets. The following article was produced in a similar class that Dr. White taught at a different university a few years ago. The student, Emily Lean, went on to earn her Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas.

The Impact of Perceived Leader Integrity on Subordinates in a Work Team Environment

Darin W. White
Emily Lean

ABSTRACT. Over the last decade, the increased use of work teams within organizations has been one of the most influential and far-reaching trends to shape the business world. At the same time, corporations have continued to struggle with increased unethical employee behavior. Very little research has been conducted that specifically examines the developmental aspects of employee ethical decision-making in a team environment. This study examines the impact of a team leader's perceived integrity on his or her subordinates' behavior. The results, which came from a survey of 245 MBA students functioning for 2 years in a work team environment, indicate an interaction between leader integrity and team member ethical intentions.

KEY WORDS: work teams, leader integrity, ethical decision-making, teammates

Abbreviations: PLIS: Perceived leader integrity scale; MCSD: MC form C social desirability scale; SDRB: Social desirability response bias

Introduction

Over the past decade, the ethical practices of corporations have received increased attention. Through mass media, the public has consistently learned about the far-reaching effects of corporate scandal in organizations like Enron, Adelphia Communications, WorldCom, and Tyco International (cf. Merritt, 2004). Increased public awareness of corporate fraud has resulted in an outcry for stiffer penalties and greater responsibility from business leaders (Carter and Borrus, 2005). Due to consumers' concerns related to these dishonorable practices, the study of corrupt behavior in organizations remains an

area of great interest among academic researchers (Loe et al., 2000). Associated with much of the differences in the observed unethical behavior among corporations is the integrity of the organization's leaders, both at the upper management level and at the lower work team level (Sims and Brinkmann, 2002). It is our contention that, irrespective of the level at which work is done, the ethical atmosphere that a leader sets has a major impact on the ethical behavior of his or her followers. Specifically, the moral reputation of an organization may be influenced at many levels by its work team leaders. As the use of teams has grown and become one of the most influential and far-reaching trends to shape the business world, the ethical influence of team leaders has increased respectively.

The term "team" refers to a working unit composed of more than two members, with at least one being a leader. Team members stress interdependence and cooperation with each other, pursue common goals, and take responsibility for the success or failure of the work (Jessup, 1990; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Lewis, 1993). Teamwork has become the basic working arrangement of most enterprises (Drucker, 1998). Approximately 68% of the 1,000 largest U.S. companies have adopted the system of teamwork design (Lawler et al., 1995). Teamwork design offers numerous benefits, such as the improvement of performance, productivity, cost reduction, and employee satisfaction (Cohen et al., 1996). One of the essential components of project-related teamwork is the team's leadership. The leadership of a team impacts everything from the successful accomplishment of team goals to various behavioral determinants of team members (George and Bettenhausen, 1990).

To be most effective, leaders should be perceived by followers as displaying a level of integrity consistent with followers' expectations and implicit leadership theories (Craig and Gustafson, 1998). According to Cheng (2000) and Shea (2000), a leader's fairness in giving rewards and punishments has a positive impact on organizational commitment, team effectiveness, and team and organizational performance. Research has also shown that an individual's ethical definitions are learned through socialization and are acquired from peers and managers (Zey-Ferrell et al., 1979). Thus, any explanation of unethical behavior must take into account that individuals do not learn values from "society" but rather from members of their immediate social networks such as leaders of their work teams. Few studies have looked at how members learn values from their work teams.

Previous approaches to the study of ethical decision-making processes in organizations tend to address either the individual role or the situational variables resulting in unethical behavior. Further, there is little empirical or theoretical research on developmental aspects of employee ethical decision-making in a team environment, and our knowledge of how employee behavior is influenced by a team leader is limited. The present study is unique in that it extends the business ethics literature by examining the important interaction between a team leader and the team members. Specifically, we evaluate the degree to which a team leader affects team members' ethical intentions in an organizational setting. By seeking to understand the degree to which employees' perceptions of their team leader influence their individual ethical decision-making, we seek to enrich our knowledge of how employee ethical behavior is developed.

In the following sections, we discuss some of the factors that may account for the impact of perceived leader integrity in a team-management environment and outline the hypotheses tested in this study.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Over the last decade, virtually all organizations, from production to commercial retailing to customer service firms, have begun utilizing the work team structure to some degree within their operations. Due to this, the work team has emerged as a key

business concept, and unified team performance is now regarded as crucial to corporate success (Williams, 2002). With this newfound influence on team performance and unity, one might hope that ethical behavior within corporations would improve since increased accountability is inherent in team environments. However, based on the constant stream of corporate scandal stories saturating our media, this obviously is not the case.

Kohlberg's model suggests that individuals define what is ethically appropriate based on the expectations of good behavior by others within their circle of influence. Other scholars have suggested that the intentions of individuals who do not believe in universal moral rules are influenced by referent others (Peterson, 2004), such as their organizational team leaders. While researchers have questioned exactly how much leaders influence the ethical attitudes of their subordinates (Minkes et al., 1999), most propose that the authority and power bestowed on leaders in organizations provide them with the means of setting the tone and ethical atmosphere of the organization (Trevino, 1986). Results from Peterson's (2002) study clearly demonstrated that deviant workplace behavior could be partially predicted from the ethical climate of an organization. Similarly, Schminke et al. (2005) found results indicating that the correlation between leader moral development and ethical climate is moderated by the degree to which the leader uses his or her moral development as well as by the age of the organization. They further found that the leader's moral development and the consistency between the leader's moral development and actions interacted to affect ethical climate. Team leaders influence their organizational environment through their management techniques and their leadership abilities; organizing assignments, tracking progress, and rewarding performance are all under the control of the work team leader (Thamhain, 2004). It is through this control that team leaders define the environment through their own actions and, thus, build either a favorable, highly moral, team-friendly environment, or one based on selfish, unethical actions designed to achieve individual goals, even in the face of conflicting team or organizational goals.

Numerous scholars have contributed to the development of the ethical leadership literature. Vitell and Davis (1990) found strong positive correlations

between employee perception of the manager's integrity and employee job satisfaction in a study that linked perceptions of leader ethics with subordinate outcomes. In their 2003 paper, VanSandt and Neck examined the possible causes of ethical gaps between the worker's sense of right and wrong and the organization's ethical code. The findings of Weeks et al. (2004) suggest that the ethical climate of an organization has either a direct or indirect effect on its sales force. Trevino and Brown (2004) recommended that the ethical conduct be managed proactively via explicit ethical leadership and conscious management of the organization's ethical culture. One implication from Forte's (2004) study on moral reasoning was that managers or executive level employees should keep in mind that gender and the industry experience of a new employee might have an impact on his or her moral reasoning. Sunderland's theory of differential association states that whether or not the learning process results in unethical behavior is contingent upon the ratio of contacts with unethical patterns to ethical patterns. Ferrell and Gresham (1985) proposed referent others as a determinant of whether an individual's behavior is ethical. Although both peers and managers fit the role of referent others, managers have been deemed more influential due to their greater authority (Baumhart, 1961; Brenner and Molander, 1977; Hunt et al., 1984). Similarly, Zey-Ferrell et al. (1979) found that while an employee may hold a fairly high standard of ethics individually, he or she may still adapt his or her moral behavior to imitate that of the primary group and/or that group's leader. In addition, association with co-workers who participate in and condone unethical behavior, as well as the opportunity to be involved in such behavior, are thought to be major predictors of an individual's behavior.

A highly cited survey from *Harvard Business Review* (Baumhart, 1961), updated by Brenner and Molander (1977) and Vitell et al. (2000), found that between the years 1960 and 2000, respondents became significantly more skeptical regarding the ethical conduct of their co-workers. Four-fifths of those surveyed by Brenner and Molander (1977) agreed that business managers should try to live up to absolute ethical standards, and most felt that sound ethics is good business. Approximately one-half of the respondents, however, reported that supervisors

rarely if ever apply these ethical standards of good business. Vitell et al. (2000) found that most employees believe that the ethical behavior of corporate leadership has the most impact on decisions in ethical situations. Respondents offered explanations for the decline in ethical standards as being management's preoccupation with increased profit, lack of reinforcement of ethical behavior, competition, and a sense that only "results" are important.

Several authors have shown a positive relationship between different dimensions of leadership and citizenship-type behavior. Farh et al. (1990) reported that, beyond the variance explained by satisfaction, leader fairness accounted for 9% of variance in altruism among individuals. Williams et al. (2002) reported that leader fairness was associated with subordinate intentions to engage in organizational citizenship behavior. Different types of leadership have also been found to be positively related to citizenship-type behaviors (Pearce and Herbig, 2004). One method of categorizing ethical issues is to classify them according to those directly affected by the unethical behavior itself. Soutar et al. (1994) reported that most unethical behavior in business environments involve acts that adversely affect one of three entities: the organization, co-workers, or the customers. In addition, Vitell et al. (2000) found that respondents held differing ethical responsibility levels for these same three entities. Although managers have begun increasing their ethical awareness and, in turn, making more ethical decisions, Premeaux (2004) reported that this is mainly due to managers' risk aversion.

In the current study, we theorize that three internal entities would be impacted by potential unethical behavior that occurs within a work team environment: work team members, the team as a cohesive unit, and the organization as a whole. Our reasoning for choosing these three entities is outlined below.

Teammates

Why unethical activity is common in some companies but not in others has been a highly debated topic among researchers (Sims and Brinkmann, 2002). The unethical behaviors found in these organizations could be from many sources: poor

hiring practices, societal ethical shifts, unclear goals, etc. Numerous studies (Deluga, 1995; Schnake et al., 1993; Wayne and Green, 1993) have shown corporate leadership to be strongly associated with employee behavior at the individual level. Researchers have speculated that the integrity of leaders may be the primary driving influence on subordinates' behaviors with regard to ethical issues involving other individuals. Based on this theory, managers develop into role models and, thus, are responsible for establishing the norms for how other individuals, such as teammates, are to be treated (Paine, 1997; Sims and Brinkmann, 2002).

When team members perceive that their leader has low integrity the atmosphere within the team will become one of independent gain as opposed to unity and progress. In this environment, we propose that team members will be more willing to engage in unethical behaviors regardless of the negative outcomes to their teammates. Similarly, if a team leader is perceived as having high integrity, his or her subordinate team members will be less willing to behave in a manner that would hurt individual team members. Following this reasoning, we posit:

Hypothesis 1 As perceptions of team leader integrity increase, team members' intentions to engage in unethical activity adversely affecting other team members will decrease.

The team as a cohesive unit

A work team's success on a project depends to a large degree on effective interactions among the team members responsible for the project. If team members have positive emotional attachments to the team and its leaders, it seems likely that they would engage in behaviors that would be beneficial to the team (Pearce and Herbig, 2004). Conversely, if the situational environment is such that the emotional attachments to the team are negative or very weak due to poor or unethical leadership practices, it is more likely that individuals would engage in behaviors harmful to the team.

As previously mentioned, Williams et al. (2002) found that leader fairness was associated with subordinate intentions to engage in organizational citizenship

behavior. Team citizenship behavior is defined as encompassing the following behaviors: altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, teamwork, and team mindedness (Pearce and Herbig, 2004). If the team leader exhibits unfair and unethical behaviors, subordinates will, we theorize, be less likely to engage in team citizenship behaviors such as civic virtue, courtesy, teamwork, and team mindedness.

Based upon this line of reasoning, we propose that the leader, through his or her own unethical behavior and the resulting harmful environment, will reduce the level of personal attachment between the individual and the team as a cohesive unit. This will result in individual team members being more likely to engage in activities having adverse outcomes to their team. If however, the manager engages in behaviors that create positive subordinate perceptions of his or her integrity, these subordinates will be less likely to engage in behaviors that would have a negative impact on the team. Accordingly, we propose:

Hypothesis 2 As perceptions of team leader integrity increase, team members' intentions to engage in unethical behavior adversely affecting the team as a whole will decrease.

The organization

Many key functions within organizations exist in teams of individuals. Both Hunt and Vitell (1986) and Trevino (1986) speculated that organizational norms are a determinant of ethical or unethical behavior. Stated differently, organizational norms identify what is and what is not appropriate behavior, thus determining the ethical environment of the organization itself. Theorists assert that leaders have the ability to establish and communicate these organizational norms as well as to offer rewards and impose sanctions in order to ensure compliance with these norms (Paine, 1997; Sims, 2000; Sims and Brinkmann, 2002).

The social exchange theory (Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997) suggests that when team members perceive that they are being treated ethically, they will feel an obligation to reciprocate this positive behavior to the organization. Therefore, if

the leader, who is perceived as an agent of the organization, creates an atmosphere of trust and loyalty through positive, personal integrity, the team member will replicate the leader's behavior by not acting in ways that would cause harm to or create negative attention for the organization. Conversely, a team leader that is perceived as having poor integrity implicitly communicates that the organization approves of an unethical environment. In this situation, it is likely that team members will take no heed of whether their actions cause adverse affects to the organization. Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 3 As perceptions of team leader integrity increase, team members' intentions to engage in unethical behavior adversely affecting the organization that the team is a part of will decrease.

Research design and methodology

Pretest

A self-report survey was used for the current study. A pretest was conducted with 41 undergraduate college students to assure that respondents would properly interpret the wording in the various scenarios and items. Based on their feedback a few slight revisions were made to the instrument. At this point, the survey instrument was deemed ready to be administered to the chosen sample frame.

Sample frame

The questionnaires were administered to MBA students from two southeastern universities over several months. The students completed the survey instrument in class when they were within 2 months of finishing the MBA program or via e-mail sometime after they had completed the program. Each student had been part of a work team that consisted of the same five to seven individuals for two consecutive years. The teams had met twice per week during the entire program to work together on projects, cases, and papers. Each team had a leader who was responsible for scheduling meetings, developing agendas, and keeping the team on track. These teams were designed by the MBA director to closely reflect work teams in real organizations.

During the 8 weeks leading up to the time when the students completed the survey instrument, the teams were engaged in an intensive business simulation game. Teams were required to function in an environment very similar to that of the real business world with extreme workloads, pressures, and responsibilities. Course participants were expected to allocate at least 8 h per week to outside-of-class activities during which time they would meet with their MBA work teams to make informed, strategic business decisions for their companies. The competitive nature of the simulation game, the feedback that it provided, and the wide open challenge it presented the students were the primary driving forces that determined the extent of their efforts. Thus, extreme pressure existed within each team for each member to pull his or her own weight. Due to the required workload, it was virtually impossible for a team to be successful unless everyone in the group significantly participated. Team leaders were given complete control of their groups with both reward power and the authority to fire poor performing members. At the end of the 8 weeks, team leaders were responsible for determining grade assignments for each member of the team based on individual and team performance measures. Team members who received a "C" or lower or were fired had to repeat the class. Insights into the culture of the class are perhaps best provided by the following quotations, which have been taken from course evaluations of previous course participants:

This is the real world, fraught with real world workloads, satisfactions, and frustrations. A course offering a lot of fun but little sleep... the most challenging course I've taken.

I found the job interviewers were fascinated, by the way, with the kinds of problems we were asked to solve – especially the organizational problems. What do you do with the free loader? How do you handle the good friend who tries hard but really doesn't perform? The study group is the most real world thing you will do here.

The scenarios

A total of 12 scenarios were written to be directly relevant to the MBA work team groups. The ethical dilemmas involved realistic situations that a MBA

work team might potentially face while in the program. In two of the scenarios, the respondents were required to project their MBA work team group into a different environment.

There were four scenarios that involved acts impacting other team members. These scenarios described a hypothetical teammate who either engaged in financial misconduct; went into the team leader's office when they were not there, opened a file marked "private" and read damaging information about teammates (Conger et al., 1995); violated the team charter in a way that impacted other team members; or pretended to be sick resulting in more work for other team members (Zey-Ferrell and Ferrell, 1982).

Four scenarios involved actions negatively impacting the team as a whole. These four scenarios described a team member who abruptly resigned without advance notice (Abratt and Penman, 2002); a team member who used group equipment without obtaining approval from the team leader (Zey-Ferrell and Ferrell, 1982); a team member who took a trip and then lied on the reimbursement documentation, thus leaving the team less budget money for the year (Zey-Ferrell and Ferrell, 1982); and a team member who decided to lie to an external party, thus negatively impacting the team.

The remaining four scenarios involved acts affecting an organization of which the team is a part. These scenarios described a team member who frequently made derogatory comments about the organization to friends and acquaintances (Peterson, 2004); a team member who drove away potential customers from the organization through unsavory conduct; a team member who falsely reported information to a regulatory agency, resulting in potential negative consequences for the organization; and a team member who hired an employee with a reputation of poor integrity, resulting in negative media coverage for the organization.

The ordering of the 12 scenarios on the survey instrument was random. Following Peterson's (2004) example, three questions followed each scenario to assess (1) the extent to which society in general is perceived to agree that the act in question was morally repugnant; (2) the degree of damage caused by the act; and (3) the behavioral intentions of the respondent ("I might take the same action" as the individual in the scenario). As a result of the

pretest, a few of the scenarios were slightly changed to ensure respondents would view the acts as "causing damage" and "morally wrong." Each of the questions was answered using a Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree). For each participant, three average behavioral intention scores were calculated relating to intended ethical behavior in teammate situations, team situations, and organizational situations. Higher values indicated lower intentions to engage in unethical behavior.

Additional measures

In addition to the scenarios and various demographic questions, the survey instrument included two well-established, highly reliable and valid measurement scales: Craig and Gustafson's (1998) 31-item perceived leader integrity scale (PLIS) and Andrews and Meyer's (2003) MC Form C social desirability scale (MCSD) originally developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1960). According to Reynolds (1982), the shortened version of the MCSD is comparable to the full version with only a slight reduction in internal consistency. For both scales, a seven point, strongly agree/strongly disagree, Likert scale was used, and responses were averaged across all items to create a mean value for each participant. Higher values indicate higher perceived leader integrity and a higher social desirability response bias (SDRB). To minimize the effect of common rater bias, we undertook numerous precautions.

On the survey instrument, we strongly assured participants of the anonymity of their responses, promised them that no identifying marks were on the survey, assured them that there was no right or wrong answer, and encouraged them to be honest with their responses. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003) these procedures can greatly reduce or even eliminate common rater effects. Second, we included the MCSD scale on our survey instrument and utilized it to control for SDRB. Social desirability response bias is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in the perceived socially acceptable way rather than with their true feelings. It is one of the most prevalent common rater effects impacting ethics research. To determine if SDRB was a problem, we utilized a Harman's one-factor test as well as a partial correlation procedure

described below. Finally, we physically distanced the MBA work team leaders from the respondents by asking them to leave the room while the survey was being completed. According to Scott (1982), this procedure has been shown to reduce social desirability bias in some situations. Respondents who completed the survey instrument via e-mail were assumed to be in a similar condition. Indeed, Booth-Kewley et al. (1992) found no SDRB difference between computer-administered and paper and pencil modes when precautions were taken with the face-to-face group.

Analysis and results

Demographics and response rate

About 249 MBA students completed the survey over the course of several months. A final sample of 245 was established after rejecting four unusable, partially completed responses. Of the respondents, 58.8% were male and 41.2% were female. The average age was 24 with a standard deviation of 2.41. Ages ranged from 21 years to 34 years old. The majority of the respondents (96%) was from the United States and was currently employed on a full-time basis (93%). The primary industries of employment included healthcare, manufacturing, services, sales, transportation, and consumer products.

The total sample frame for the in-class condition was 174, of which 169 provided us with completed usable surveys (one was incomplete and four declined to participate). This resulted in a response rate of 97.1%. Team leaders were asked to leave the class (before we announced what was going to happen) and were not included in the sample. This was done to ensure honest responses and to guard against potential unwanted leader influence regarding the leader integrity scale.

The total sample frame for the e-mail condition was 138, of which 76 provided us with completed usable surveys (three were incomplete). A total of three e-mails were sent out to each respondent over the course of 10 days. This resulted in a response rate of 55.1%. The excellent response rate was due in part to a strong relationship with the professor, high levels of involvement in the simulation course, and a general interest in the topic.

To test for possible difference between the two conditions, the 169 questionnaires received from the in-class respondents were compared to the 76 questionnaires received from the e-mail respondents. A total of 11 separate t-tests were conducted to compare the mean values of every scale for the two conditions. The 11 scales included three average behavioral intention scores for teammate, team, and organizational situations, three agreement with society scores, three degree of damage caused scores, perceived leader integrity scores, and the social desirability scores. None of the constructs were different between the two groups at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Scale reliabilities

The general psychometric characteristics of the constructs used to evaluate the hypothesized relationships are described in this section. For the 12 ethical scenario scales, we followed a traditional scale development procedure. The first step was to investigate the internal consistency of the construct items by calculating a Cronbach's alpha. The next step involved an analysis of the correlation matrix and the item-to-total correlations. This was done to identify potential scale contaminants. Items with low item-to-total correlations (below 0.3) were deleted from the scales as the low correlations suggested that the items might not fit the construct or might tap into another dimension of the construct (Churchill, 1979). The third step involved an analysis of the factor structure of each scale by carrying out a principal component analysis. An eigenvalue of one was used as a criterion for creating the dimensions (cf. Green, 1978; Hair et al., 1992). Emergence of a single factor indicates the unidimensionality of a scale (Churchill, 1979). Items that loaded on more than one factor were deleted. After all split loading items were deleted, a final principal components factor analysis was conducted to assure scale unidimensionality. Items with communality of 0.4 or greater remained in the factor solution (cf. Green, 1978). The final step was to calculate a concluding Cronbach's alpha. Ideally, the coefficient alpha for a purified scale should exceed 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

For the ethical scenarios, we utilized the behavioral intention of the respondent question for scaling purposes. In the literature review section, it was

TABLE I
Summary Statistics, Correlation Coefficients, & Scale Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	S	1	2	3	4	5
1. MCSD	4.821	1.432	(0.880)				
2. PLIS	6.091	1.114	0.146	(0.970)			
Dependent Measures							
3. Teammates	5.090	1.192	0.389**	0.201*	(0.764)		
4. Team	5.559	1.279	-0.122*	0.318**	0.073	(0.757)	
5. Organization	5.137	1.419	-0.134*	0.194*	0.278**	0.207*	(0.653)

Note: Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$

predicted that a three-factor solution would result. We theorized that respondents would view situations involving teammates, the team, and the organization differently. Three scenarios, one from each group, had to be deleted because of cross loadings. The deleted teammate scenario dealt with a violation of the team charter in a way that impacted other team members. The deleted team scenario concerned a team member who decided to lie to an external party thus negatively impacting the team. The deleted organization scenario dealt with a team member who frequently made derogatory comments about the organization to friends and acquaintances. The remaining nine scenarios loaded on their predicted factor. As Table I demonstrates, the coefficient alpha of two of the scales was above the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978). The organization ethical scenario scale fell just shy with a coefficient alpha of 0.65.

Following Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002), a principal component analysis was conducted on the PLIS to verify dimensionality. It found that a four-factor solution best fit the data. These four factors accounted for 55.89% of the variance. Similar to Craig and Gustafson (1998) and Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002), the first factor produced an eigenvalue five times larger than the second eigenvalue, indicating a latent one-factor construct. In addition, the high Cronbach's alpha (0.97) for the complete scale supports the finding of a latent one-factor construct.

As noted by Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002), the potential negative effect of heteroscedasticity

caused by highly skewed means is a weakness of the PLIS scale. However, they recognized that the scale is useful for measuring "a level of global perceived integrity" but that a ceiling effect on the positive end of the scale limits its usefulness to other types of analyses. In line with Parry and Proctor-Thomson's suggestion, we utilized the PLIS in the current study as a global measure of perceived integrity. By converting the data from Likert scale data into nominal categorical data, we minimized the impact of the ceiling effect. Individuals who rated their leader above the PLIS mean of 6.09 were placed into the high-perceived leader integrity group. Individuals who rated their leader below the mean but still within one standard deviation of the mean were placed into the medium perceived leader integrity group. Those who rated their leader more than one standard deviation below the mean were placed into the low perceived leader integrity group. This approach is logical given the characteristics of PLIS. Since the PLIS utilizes items that describe clear, unambiguous unethical acts, the presence of unethical behavior is detected when respondents rate their leader lower than the highest end of the scale. However, if all unethical behavior is completely absent, then the leader is said to act ethically and posses integrity (Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2002).

Factor analysis was not conducted on the ten-item social desirability response scale (MCSD) because its factor structure has been confirmed many times in the literature. Similar to Andrews and Meyer's (2003), the scale produced a final Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

Preliminary analyses

Before hypothesis testing could begin, two series of tests were conducted to assure that respondents believed the situations described in the scenarios would be viewed as (1) unethical by society in general and (2) harmful to the affected individual or group. Three means were calculated for the social consensus items relating to teammates (2.22), the team (2.41), and the organization (2.40). All three were below the neutral value of four, which indicates that respondents believe the situations would be viewed as unethical by society in general. In addition, three means were calculated for the magnitude of consequence items – teammates (5.39), the team (4.92), and the organization (5.16). The mean values were all above 4 indicating that respondents viewed the situations as harmful to the affected individual or group.

Hypotheses testing

The three hypotheses predicted a positive relationship would exist between a team members' perception of his leader's integrity and his own ethical intentions. To test these hypotheses, it was first necessary to identify those team members who were characterized as having very high perceptions of the team leader's integrity and those team members who were characterized as having low perceptions of the team leader's integrity. As was described above, a frequency distribution of all respondents was conducted on the mean scores of the PLIS. We then divided the respondents into one of three groups based on the PLIS mean and standard deviation: low perceived team leader integrity (PLIS-LG) – more than one standard deviation below the mean; moderate perceived team leader integrity (PLIS-MG) – less than one standard deviation below the mean yet not above the mean; and high perceived team leader integrity (PLIS-HG) – above the mean. The 128 respondents in the high group had a mean PLIS of 6.98. The 77 respondents in the middle group (PLIS-MG) had a mean PLIS of 6.41, and the 40 respondents in the low group (PLIS-LG) had a mean PLIS of 5.10.

To test the hypotheses we needed to determine whether or not each population (PLIS-HG, PLIS-MG, and PLIS-LG) had a statistically different ethical

intention mean in the three different situations. To achieve this, we conducted an ANOVA test for each of the three situational scenarios. An ANOVA test was used to find out if there was a significant difference between the three group means. The ANOVA analysis, however, simply indicated there was a difference between two or more group means; it did not indicate which means were significantly different. Thus, we performed a post hoc pairwise multiple comparison Scheffe's test to determine which means differed. Scheffe's test was selected since we had unequal group sizes.

For H1 (ethical situations impacting specific teammates), the overall relationship was significant ($F = 14.12, p < .001$). The PLIS-HG exhibited a stronger tendency toward ethical behavior with a mean of 4.94 than did the PLIS-LG with a mean of 3.71. The PLIS-MG also had a statistically lower ethical intention score of 4.49 from that of PLIS-HG. The PLIS-LG and PLIS-MG ethical intention means were not statistically different. Overall these findings lend support for H1.

For H2 (ethical situations impacting the overall team), the overall relationship was again significant ($F = 21.44, p < .001$). The PLIS-HG exhibited a stronger tendency toward ethical behavior with a mean of 6.38 than did the PLIS-LG with a mean of 4.94. The PLIS-MG had a statistically lower ethical intention score of 5.11 from that of PLIS-HG. The PLIS-LG and PLIS-MG ethical intention means were not statistically different. Overall these findings lend support for H2.

For H3 (ethical situations impacting the organization of which the team is a part), the overall relationship was significant ($F = 12.94, p < .001$). The PLIS-HG exhibited a stronger tendency toward ethical behavior with a mean of 5.69 than did the PLIS-LG with a mean of 4.46. The PLIS-MG also had a statistically lower ethical intention score of 5.23 from that of PLIS-HG. The PLIS-LG and PLIS-MG ethical intention means were also statistically different. Overall these findings lend support for H3.

Social desirability response bias

Previous research that has sought to study the relationship between the ethical attitudes of leaders and

subordinates has produced confusing results (Akaah and Riordan, 1989; Murphy et al. 1992; Trevino et al., 1999; Zey-Ferrell et al., 1979). Peterson (2004) suggests that SDRB could be partially to blame. To test for SDRB in the present study, we first performed a Harman's single-factor test. We loaded all of the variables in the study into an exploratory factor analysis and examined the unrotated factor solution. The first factor explained 45.34% of the variance which seemed to indicate the presence of one general factor that accounted for the majority of the covariance among the measures (Iverson and Maguire, 2000). Next we calculated partial correlations between the PLIS and respondent ethical intentions while controlling for MCSD. These scores were 0.186, 0.289, and 0.186 for teammates, team, and the organization scenarios respectively. We then compared these scores to the Pearson correlations of the same variables found in Table I. MCSD was not controlled for when calculating the Pearson correlations in Table I. These scores were 0.201, 0.318, and 0.194 for teammates, team, and the organization scenarios respectively. When not controlling for MCSD, the correlations were larger for all three scenario conditions. From this comparison, it appeared that SDRB might have inflated the simple correlations, which is indicative of the potential spurious impact of the SDRB (Peterson, 2004).

Discussion and conclusions

As Trevino (1986) noted in her manuscript, understanding the ethical decision-making process in organizations is significant to the development of organizational science. With the structure of traditional organizations shifting in reaction to changes in the local and global economy, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the determinants of ethics within corporations and, more importantly, in the work team environment. The contingent thesis that is proposed by this study is perceived leader integrity will influence subordinate ethical intentions in a work team environment. More specifically, it was theorized that team members who serve under a leader who is perceived as having strong integrity would be less likely to engage in unethical conduct than would team members

who serve under a leader who is perceived as having weak integrity. It was also thought that ethical intentions of team members might vary depending on who was being impacted by the unethical behavior. Three salient, internal entities were identified in the literature as: (1) team members, (2) the team as a cohesive unit, and (3) the organization as a whole.

The findings confirm that perceived leader integrity does indeed have an impact on the ethical intentions of team members in all three situations. The relationship was strongest in ethical situations impacting the team itself and the organization as a whole. This is significant in light of current events in the business world. As corporations are searching for ways to decrease unethical employee activity, it is important to note that team members who perceived their team leader to have high integrity were less likely to commit unethical acts that impact the team itself and the organization.

Most of the previous work researching the effects of leadership on subordinate behavior looked at the effects of CEO or top management ethical behavior rather than at the team level, as in the present study. By increasing the use of work teams, corporations can create a stronger sense of identity within their employees and foster an environment where employees feel they are part of something larger than themselves. In addition, work teams tend to produce accountability between team members which may help to improve ethical conduct. It was found that respondents who perceived their team leader to have high integrity reported lower intentions of committing unethical acts directed at other team members. Interestingly, however, the relationship was not as strong as it was in situations impacting the team and the organization. Only leaders who were perceived as having extremely high integrity were found to positively impact the ethical intentions of team members toward each other. This seems to lend support to Robinson and Bennett's (1995) argument that unethical acts that affect co-workers may be more explicable in terms of individual, personal factors rather than in terms of situational factors such as leader influence.

As with all empirical research, there were several limitations associated with this study. First and foremost was that a team leader's integrity was assessed strictly through a single participant's perceptions. In

order to obtain the most accurate moral reading of a team leader, it would be preferable to survey an entire team. However, in such a case, the anonymity perceived by participants may begin to diminish. Further, the actual integrity of a team leader may not be properly assessed by surveys of his or her immediate subordinates. A related issue would be that leaders are not likely to allow their integrity to be directly observed or measured. The purpose in our study, however, was to assess the relationship between the team member's ethical intentions and that member's perception of his leader's integrity as opposed to his leader's actual integrity. Thus, it is the team member's perception of his leader that is expected to influence his behavioral intentions (Vidaver-Cohen, 1998). Since all research designs contain limitations, we must caution against potential implications of this study until further inquiries can confirm our results.

No attempt was made to determine the impact that leaders external to the work team have on group members. It is likely that other leaders (spiritual, work, athletic, etc.) have significant impact as well. In the future, it would be valuable to determine the degree of influence external leaders have as compared to the internal group leader.

Another potential limitation of our study relates to the fact that the respondents provided the measure for both the PLIS and their own ethical intentions. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), a common rater effect bias can be produced when the predictor and criterion variable measures are provided by the same individual. This type of self-report bias or "artificial covariance between the predictor and criterion variable" is a potential weakness of the current study. In an effort to reduce the possibility of these types of method biases, we followed procedures recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). They state that by following two procedural remedies, researchers can greatly minimize, if not totally eliminate, the potential effects of common rater variance on the findings of their studies. First, we promised the respondents that their answers would be completely anonymous multiple times throughout the survey instrument. Second, we assured respondents that there were no wrong or right answers and encouraged them to answer the items as honestly as possible. Finally, we pointed out that no markings were used to identify the respondents on

the survey instrument. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), these procedures "should reduce people's evaluation apprehension and make them less likely to edit their responses." In addition, we physically distanced the respondents from the work team leaders (Scott, 1982).

The findings that emerged from this study, though consistent with previous studies regarding the relationship between the ethical attitudes of leaders and their subordinates, raise several questions worthy of additional research. Future research should investigate how a belief in universal moral rules by team members impacts the perceived leader integrity/ethical intentions relationship. Individuals join organizations with an individual level of cognitive moral development as well as other personal characteristics. A personal characteristic likely to moderate the influence of situational variables, such as perceived leader integrity, is the degree to which an individual believes in universal moral rules. For example, one team member may believe that certain behaviors are always unethical regardless of the situation while another team member may reject the idea of universal moral rules and believe that morality depends on situational variables or the outcome. Assessing a subordinate's level of universal moral rules may help researchers to understand exactly how much of an impact the team leader has on the subordinate's ethical intentions.

As was stated earlier, the PLIS has a tendency to produce extremely high means due to the fact that it only uses negative items. This limits the potential usefulness and the analyses it can provide. In the future, researchers should seek to deal with the potential effects of heteroscedasticity caused by the highly skewed means (Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2002).

An implication of these results, as Craig and Gustafson (1998) studied, is that researchers do not yet fully understand how a follower's impressions of leader integrity develop, how those impressions change over time, or even which leader behaviors are most influential in the perception formation process. Studying each of these issues would greatly expand the literature with regard to team members' ethical intentions as a result of their perceived leader integrity.

In summary, the present study provides needed research on the relationship between perceived leader integrity and its effect on employee behavior.

Rather than focusing on the impact of the ethical influences of top management and CEOs, as much of the previous literature has done, the present study examined how leaders of work teams affect the ethical intentions of their subordinates. It is hoped that the findings from this study can add to the conceptual base needed to develop a research agenda for future investigations of the integrity of team leaders and its effect on work team groups.

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