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LEADER ETHICAL ERRORS: HOW CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND ATTRIBUTIONS
IMPACT SUBORDINATE PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Leaders, although unintentionally, often make errors. While research has begun to explore the effect that both relational and task errors have on subordinate perceptions, we investigated the unique effect of a third type of error, or ethical errors. This study investigated how the type of ethical error (action vs. inaction) and the target of the error affects subordinate perceptions of the leader. We found that ethical errors that stemmed from a leaders direct action were more severe than those that stemmed from inaction. Furthermore, in our exploratory analyses, we found that the reported "most frustrating" aspects of the error, as well as the perceived ability for the participant to act differently if they were in the leader's place, varied depending on who was the target of the ethical error. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, mistake, error, action, subordinate

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Organizations and researchers have sought for decades to understand what factors make leaders effective. Research over the past century has uncovered a variety of personality, organizational and behavioral aspects of leadership that relate to positive organizational outcomes (Barling, Christie & Hoption, 2010). However, while beneficial, such research has grossly narrowed the scope of leadership research. Leaders, who generally operate in extremely complex environments, often face intricate and difficult decisions. Occasionally, even with the best intentions, a leader may inadvertently make an error. These errors have far-reaching implications for their followers and organizations as a whole.

Research has begun to address the perceptions of leaders after making errors, finding that different types of errors have differential effects on follower perceptions, (Thoroughgood, Sawyer & Hunter, 2013). Additional research has begun to look at the severity of such effects, suggesting that relational errors have more severe impacts on follower's perceptions than task errors. However, the literature has failed to address the impact that a third type of error may have, or ethical errors. Given an increase in ethics research and a new focus on ethics in organizations, it is important to consider how followers may perceive leaders after making ethical errors, as well as the various factors that may affect such perceptions.

This study hopes to understand how subordinates perceive leaders who have made ethical errors. We hope to explain how ethical errors involving action, versus those that involve no

action, have different effects on error severity. Furthermore, we pose research questions about how subordinate perceptions may vary depending on the target of the ethical error.

A Review of Leadership Literature

The broad and oftentimes vague notion of "leadership" has been of great interest to scholars, organizations and the general public for decades. Leadership research has had a relatively linear history, in that new theoretical paradigms often entirely replaced old ones, generating a new focus and lens for scholars. Even before leadership had been critically researched, early theories of leadership investigated individual characteristics that differentiated leaders from their counterparts. These "trait theories" loosely managed to identify certain psychological traits, such as intelligence and self-confidence, and even physical characteristics such as gender and height, which predicted leader success (Barling, Christie & Hoption, 2011). By the 1950's, however, there was little evidence that any trait that could predict leader emergence, effectiveness or overall success.

As a result, researchers then turned to leader behaviors in an attempt to identify universal actions that effective leaders engaged in. The seminal Ohio State studies suggested that leaders who initiate structure and give consideration, or engage in task and relationship-focused behaviors, were universally more effective (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy & Stogdill, 1974). Researchers intuitively predicted that high levels of consideration and initiating structure would most positively impact follower attitudes and performance, but meta-analytic evidence is inconclusive (Judge et al., 2004), and results were generally inconsistent (Kerr et al., 1974). Thus, researchers abandoned a one-dimensional behavioral theory lens.

While no longer of scholastic interest, behavioral theories of leadership laid the groundwork for the emergence of contingency theories. These theories argued that the field should more heavily focus on how situational factors interact with a leader's behaviors and traits. Fielder's contingency theory (Fielder, 1967) famously categorized leaders as either task-motivated or relationship motived, each of which were effective or ineffective depending on the situation. The situation could vary in regards to leader-follower relations, performance goal clarity and formal authority.

While contingency theories of leadership extricated the importance of situational factors, leadership scholars sought to understand leadership as a unique relationship between the leader and their followers. These relational theories focused extensively on the leader-follower dyad. Leader-member-exchange theory (LMX) argued that while leaders clearly influence followers, a bidirectional flow exits, in that followers also exert influence on leaders (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). LMX investigated the quality of leader-follower relationships and the resulting individual and organizational outcomes. While LMX failed to provide a prescriptive means that organizations could use to better leader-follower relationships, its contribution and legacy is still evident by its prominence in current research today.

LMX may have served as the catalyst that eventually gave way to transformational leadership, today's most prominent leadership framework. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) conceptualized a leadership framework that argues that transformational leaders engage in four effective behaviors; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Transactional leaders, on the other hand, engage in behaviors such as laissez-faire leadership, active management-by-exception and contingent reward.

Transformational leadership theory has largely been regarded as one of the most impactful theories of leadership ever conceptualized (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

While organizations and researchers naturally have a stake in understanding how leaders can positively influence their organization and followers, such an approach ignores many negative aspects that stem from or relate to a leader's work. This "heroic leadership bias" frequently leaves us with a glorified and incomplete view of leadership, both in organizations and in research (Yukl, 1999).

Attempting to address this dearth of literature, research on "dark" leader behaviors has blossomed. Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007) identified a taxonomy for destructive leadership called the "Toxic Triangle," arguing that destructive leadership arises at the junction of destructive leaders, susceptible followers and conducive environments. Krasikova, Green and LeBreton (2013) define destructive leadership as "volitional behavior by a leader that can harm or intends to harm a leader's organization and/or followers," by encouraging followers to pursue goals that are contrary to the interest of the organization, or employing harmful leadership methods and influence. Such research has helped explain how leadership may have gave way to recent prominent organizational scandals, such those at Enron and Madoff Investment Securities.

When critically examining this blossoming area of leadership research, however, it may be premature to conclude that we are actively investigating all types of leader behavior. While understanding destructive and dark leader behavior is extremely important, it still is still limited in scope. One could contend that the literature has addressed the one-sided positive approach to leadership research by adding another dimension, instead of accurately depicting the nuanced nature of leadership. Negative or destructive outcomes occur in organizations nearly every day, but oftentimes at the hands of leaders with the best of intentions. In other words, any leader, not

just destructive ones, can and do cause negative or unwanted outcomes in organizations. Leaders with the best motives, for lack of a better word, are human.

Leader Error

Leaders are not immune to making errors. Such a fact is commonly understood and supported by research, (Hunter, Tate, Dzieweczynski, & Bedell-Avers, 2011). Investment bankers decide where to invest, tech developers choose which product to market and local school boards react to budget cuts. Regardless of the leader's foresight, decision-making skills and intellectual ability, leaders will inevitably make poor decisions during their tenure. While a multitude of disciplines have investigated error, Hunter et al. (2011) identified thematic similarities across all areas and analyzed the findings to create a taxonomy of *leader* error. They argued that 1) errors must have been avoidable, and cannot solely be contributed to situational factors, 2) stem from action or inaction, 3) give way to unintended consequences that usually (but not always) entail undesired outcomes and 4) may be domain specific, in that we may need to specify error types within different research domains (Hunter et al., 2011). As a result, the authors argue that a leader error occurs when "an avoidable action (or inaction) is chosen by a leader that results in an initial outcome outside the leader's original intent, goal, or prediction" (p. 240).

Applying this definition, we can see how, while possibly resulting in similar outcomes, leader error is not synonymous with destructive leadership. Specifically, their definition carefully notes that leader error involves an outcome outside of the leader's original goal. This definition

encompasses leaders who make positive goals with the intention of helping, not derailing, the organization.

This goal directed behavior is also important to consider when differentiating leader error it from leader ineffectiveness. We cannot equate leaders who take a fruitless "hands-off" approach to leadership with leaders who face similar negative outcomes after making an error, since behavior of the former is not goal directed. An error does not occur when a leader is disengaged or poorly motivated, rather, a leader makes an error when they actively attempt to make an effective decision but fail to do so effectively. While destructive leadership, laissez-faire leadership and leader errors can result in similar outcomes, the conceptualizations are still distinct.

These unique conceptualizations are also especially important when considering that leader-error does not always result in similar outcomes to that of destructive leadership, in that leader error does not have to result in a negative outcome. Hunter's (2011) definition notes that a leader error results in consequences that land outside of a leader's original intent, which can, albeit infrequently, result in a neutral or positive outcome. Although not specifically related to leadership, numerous inventions such as the post-it and penicillin were created accidentally and by mistake, but still had beneficial outcomes for the inventors and the world at large.

Types of Error

Seminal theories of leadership from the Ohio State and Michigan State studies argue that leaders can engage in task-oriented and relationship-oriented behavior (Likert, 1961, Stogdill 1974). Specifically, these studies suggested that effective leaders lead subordinates through

behavior pertaining to initiating structure and consideration. While serving as a theoretical foundation for leadership research, these studies were criticized for failing to account for leader behavior that was not directly visible by followers. Fleishman et al. (1991) proposed a four-factor model of leadership behavior, incorporating such hidden behaviors, such as planning and gathering information.

Drawing upon this work, Hunter et al. (2011) suggested that leader errors fall into four categories, relating to 1) information search and structuring, 2) information use in problem-solving, 3) managing material resources and 4) managing personnel resources. Thoroughgood et al. (2013) argued that the first three categories consist of task-related behavior, while the fourth is relationship oriented. As a result, the authors suggested that we can categorize leader-errors as either task or relationship oriented.

Specifically, a task-error occurs when a leader fails to complete job related work, or falters in regards to their competence on the job, (Yukl, 2002; Thoroughgood et al., 2013). A relationship error arises when a leader makes an error in regards to supporting, recognizing, developing or rewarding followers. (Hunter et al., 2011; Thoroughgood et al., 2013). Leaders can make relationship-oriented mistakes by lashing out or personally offending a subordinate, for example. It is important to note that studies indicate that the type of error committed has a differential effect on subordinate perceptions (Thoroughgood et al., 2013).

While task and relational errors appropriately address a large proportion of the errors that leaders make, there are unique aspects of both types of errors that warrant the consideration of a third type of error. Specifically, certain errors that leaders make, in both the task and relationship domains, may have a significant ethical component. These ethical errors are differentiable from task and relational errors in that the active consideration that leader undergoes does not just

relate to the four broad categories discussed by Hunter (2011), but is dominated by a moral

dilemma and decisions surrounding ethical, not task or relational, topics. Specifically, while

ethical errors can involve issues with task and relational behavior, these considerations become

secondary factors when entrenched in context of an ethical choice. For example, the Jerry

Sandusky scandal at Penn State involved numerous errors made by leadership. University

leaders, when faced with information concerning potential child abuse by his former defensive

coordinator, had to make a decision about whether or not to report it. This decision, however,

had a notable ethical component, in that leader behavior had ethical ramifications for the larger

Penn State community. The error that these leaders eventually made did not just impact Penn

State, but also the livelihood and well-being of a number of other individuals. Furthermore, the

error made did not encompass leader's job-related responsibilities (i.e. task error), but also was

not directed at another individual or employee (i.e. relational error). As a result, it is reasonable

to suggest that such an error exists outside of the already discussed error types. The moral

manager pillar (Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000) advises that the leader take an active role in

communicating and role-modeling ethical behavior. As was the case at Penn State, leaders do not

always uphold these specific responsibilities, providing evidence that leaders can make

significant and long lasting errors that stem from their responsibility to act ethically.

Subordinate Perceptions

Followers heavily rely on leaders for guidance, information and vision. When a leader

fails to execute correctly, it alters the follower's perception of the leader. Research on implicit

leadership theories suggests that individuals, especially followers, hold schemas regarding

expected leader behavior (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Furthermore, individuals often attribute greater blame or reward to leaders for successes or failures, regardless of their ability to legitimately influence the outcome (Lord et al., 1978). Generally, followers hold lofty expectations for leaders, presenting an interesting opportunity for researchers to understand followers' resulting perceptions of leaders who fail to meet such standards.

While research is underway to understand why leaders make errors, there is a very limited body of research that has attempted to understand how subordinates perceive leaders after they make errors. Thoroughgood et al (2013) investigated the influence of errors on perceptions of leader competence, effectiveness and desire to work for the leader, finding that task and relational errors had differing negative effects of perceptions of task and leader competence and equally damaged the followers' desire to work for the leader. Moreover, field research proposes that high organizational error management culture can boost overall organizational performance, indicating that incorrectly handled errors can have substantial negative outcomes for organizations, (Van Dyck, Frese, Baer, & Sonnentag, 2005). Ethical errors may similarly impact subordinate perceptions. Leaders, serving as positive organizational figureheads, rely heavily on follower perceptions. Followers often utilize prototypes, or a clear generalization of a category, to represent leaders mentally, (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). The expectations and schemas that followers hold of leaders do not just relate to task performance and relational expectations, but also moral goodness. Literature has even gone so far as to describe leadership as a moral relationship that entails only positive behavior and intentions (Ciulla, 2014). Clearly, leadership has an ethical component, one that followers likely perceive and expect.

Action vs. Inaction

When discussing ethical errors, we tend to think of leaders who took an action or actions that had negative or undesirable consequences. However, this broad generalization grossly limits our understanding. Leaders at Penn State were not guilty of taking action about the growing sex abuse scandal that arose; rather, they were guilty of *not* taking action. Although this type of error still fits with Hunter et al. (2011) definition of errors, this takes a drastically different perspective on errors that may stem from leader greed or disclosure of information, in that followers may generate different perceptions of the leader if they took action or failed to take action. In assessing the aftermath of the Penn State scandal, individuals tied to the university debated intensely the degree that Joe Paterno and administrators were culpable for their actions. In a 2011 episode of "This American Life," the radio show described alumni and fans attempting to reconcile the recent scandal. In the interview, one individual argued that Joe Paterno does not "deserve our sympathy right now … I walked around State College this weekend supremely pissed off that he did not live up to the standards he would like us to believe he set for himself." However, one law student stated, "It could be complete reversal. We may find out, hypothetically, that Tim Curley and Gary Schultz are telling the truth, and it's in fact Mike McQueary who is lying." Another woman stated, "Maybe, maybe he was told that things were being followed up on, and he was under the impression that they were, but they weren't." Regardless of what actually happened, this "inaction" by Penn State leaders created a sense of ambiguity among followers of the university, in that their ability to attribute blame directly appeared lessened. Attribution theory (Kelley & Michela, 1980) discusses how individuals attribute internal and external causes to others' behavior. Followers can attach a cause to a leader's behavior, which then influences the subsequent perceptions that they have of the leader.

In the case of Bernie Madoff, the results of his action were clearly attributable to his specific

behavior, leading individuals to make a potentially severe internal attribution about Madoff

himself. However, understanding the motives of individuals who make errors through inaction is

dramatically more difficult, possibly lessening the likelihood that they make an internal

attribution of their behavior. As a result, we may be more likely to give weight to situational

factors when an individual makes an ethical error through inaction, leading followers to perceive

the errors as more severe.

Hypothesis 1:

Subordinates will perceive leader errors that involve action as more severe than those

which involve inaction.

Target of Error

Ethical errors can impact a multitude of individuals, potentially altering the perception

that a subordinate has of that leader. While ethical errors can occur in various areas of

organizations, subordinates may not always be the direct target of the ethical error. For example,

how might an individual perceive a leader who makes an ethical error that does not directly

affect them, but rather their coworker? Conversely, how would a subordinate perceive a leaders

behavior if it affected both themselves and their coworkers? Specifically, the variance of

impacted parties may alter how a subordinate perceives the difficulty of the situation. Given that

subordinates can get frustrated at multiple aspects of the resulting situation that arises due to an

ethical error, it is worth exploring how this may vary due to the target of unethical behavior.

Research Question 1:

Does subordinate perception of the frustrating aspects of the ethical error vary depending

on the target of that ethical error?

Subordinates may believe that, on occasion, they would act differently if they were in the

leader's situation. However, their perception of this may vary if the ethical error directly impacts

them, in comparison to a situation where they serve as an observer to the situation. Investigating

how subordinates believe they would act, depending on the individual(s) most impact by the

ethical error, may lend itself to future research on ethical errors.

Research Question 2:

Does subordinate perception of their ability to behave differently in the leader's situation

vary depending on the target of the ethical error?

Leaders, generally, have access to a variety of organizational resources that their subordinates do

not. As a result, leaders have the ability to handle decisions and make choices with more freedom

than a subordinate. In the realm of ethical decisions, this means that a leader may have a range of

resources to refer to or utilize, ranging from organizational, interpersonal, training and more.

Subordinates are usually aware of these resources, which means that when leaders make an

unethical error, the availability of certain resources may impact the perceptions that they make

about that leader. The resources that the subordinate perceives the leader needs may vary

depending on the target of the ethical error.

Research Question 3:

Does the perception of a leader's need for specific resources vary depending on the target of the ethical error?

Chapter 2

Methods

Participants and Design

Participants for this study were drawn from a research subject pool system at a large Northeastern university. The sample included 190 undergraduate students, including 154 females and 35 males between the ages of 18 and 23 (M=19.12, SD=1.17). Participants, on average, possessed 2.83 (SD=1.85) years of work experience. Participants logged into an online study, which they were told would take about 30 minutes to complete. They provided demographic information and various covariate measures. We provided the participants with a definition of an ethical error and asked them to think of a time that a leader they worked for made an ethical error. Subsequently, participants completed various multiple choice and open-ended measures about the leader's error.

After analysis of the reported ethical-errors, we removed 106 responses (55.79%) for failure to describe an error that fit with the definition of an ethical error, leaving us with a total of 84 responses. Of the remaining responses, the sample included 69 females and 15 males between the ages of 18 and 23 (M=19.05, SD=1.239). Participants possessed, on average 1.68 years of work experience (SD=1.45).

Measures

Leader Effectiveness

Participants assessed leader effectiveness with a four-item scale. Items targeted subordinate perceptions of leader effectiveness at handling tasks, relationships and behaving ethically. Sample items include "To what extend do you think this leader is effective at handling tasks at work" and "to what extent do you think this leader is effective at behaving ethically at work?"

Willingness to Follow

Participants responded to a two-item scale designed to assess their likelihood to follow the leader in the future. A sample item was "to what extent would you follow this leader's requests?"

Attribution

To assess how participants attributed the error, they responded to a four-item measure. This measure included items such as "I was responsible for this situation" and "there were external factors responsible for this situation."

Open-Ended Questions

Participants responded to five open-ended questions. These questions were designed to further explore and understand the mechanisms that moderate the relationship between leader error and subordinate perceptions.

- What (if any) resources do you think your boss would have needed to avoid the error that they made?

- Describe in as much detail as possible, why you believe this mistake occurred.

- Do you believe that you would have acted differently than your boss and made a better decision? How so?

- What was the most frustrating part about the ethical mistake?

- What could your boss do/have done to make up for their ethical mistake?

To appropriately categorize this data, we carefully reviewed the responses for each question, identifying key themes in the responses. Responses were then coded according to our guidelines. You can see our specific coding guidelines in Appendix A.

Severity

Participant explanations of their leader's ethical error were coded for severity, on a 1 to 5 scale, with a one representing the least severe ethical errors (i.e. "would let us take hour long lunch breaks instead of the thirty minute long breaks we were expected to take) to five, ("my boss ignored a safety hazard that hospitalized a fellow employee").

Chapter 3

Results

Test of Hypothesis

Figure 1 shows the results of the regression analyses testing our hypothesis. Hypothesis 1 proposes that leader action increases ratings of error severity. When we entered leader action and regressed it against the rating of error severity, it had a significant relationship. Leader action significantly predicted subordinate ratings of leader error severity, in that errors resulting from leader action were rated as more severe. $B= -.507$, $t(82) = 2.227$, $p < .05$. Leader action also explained a significant proportion of variance in error severity, $R^2 = .057$, $F= 4,959$, $p < .05$. Thus, if a leader makes an ethical error that involves action, they are more likely to be rated as more severe. In the same vein, if leader makes an ethical error that involves inaction, the error is less likely to be perceived as severe.

Research Questions

To answer our research questions that investigated the influence of the target of the ethical error, we performed a series of Chi-Square tests of independence.

In regards to Research Question 1, we wanted to investigate of the most frustrating aspect of the error varied depending on the target of the error. The Chi-Square test found that most frustrating aspect of the ethical error varied depending on who the target of the error was. $X^2(1, N = 84) = 26.528$, $p < .05$. This suggests that an ethical error may be frustrating in

different ways for followers, depending if the individual was directly affected, witnessed a coworker be affected, or were affected with their coworker(s).

Research Question 2 investigated how participants perceived they would act differently. We found that participants reported they would have acted differently depending on whom the target of the error was. $X^2(1, N = 84) = 18.296, p < .05$. Thus, participants perceived that they would have acted differently than the leader, depending if individual was directly affected, witnessed a coworker be affected, or were affected with their coworker(s).

Research Question 3 investigated the role that perceived resource need played. Perceived need of resources were not found to vary depending on the target of the ethical error. $X^2(1, N = 84) = 9.681, p = .785$. As far as resources are concerned, there is no discernable difference in participant's perception of their leaders need for specific resources, depending on the target of the ethical error.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study investigated leader ethical errors and how a leader's inaction or inaction may affect the severity of the error. Overall, this study showed that leaders who make ethical errors might face different consequences depending on the type of ethical error that they make.

In this unique study, we managed to demonstrate that leaders who make ethical errors that involve distinct actions are more likely to have those errors be rated as more severe. Attribution theory best explains our findings (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Ethical errors that leaders make, where the outcomes are generally directly associated with the leader's action, are likely to draw a strong attribution to the leader themselves. However, when leaders make errors that involve inaction, or a failure to act, it may be tougher for followers to associate their behavior directly with the leader's internal predispositions, giving way to alternative explanations that stem from situational factors.

We conducted three Chi-Square tests of independence with our qualitative data to attempt to help guide future studies. Specifically, we wanted to consider how different qualitative answers varied according to the target of the ethical error; specifically the participant, the participant's coworker(s), or a group involving the participant and one or more coworkers. We found that the "most frustrating aspect of the error" varied depending on the person(s) that were effected. Since individuals that are not directly affected often still witness ethical errors, it is important to understand how different types of subordinates might react. Further investigating

how different individuals are frustrated by ethical errors would allow us to better understand the mechanisms that explain subordinate perceptions stemming from ethical errors.

Our next Chi-Square test investigated if participants felt they would have acted differently if they were the leader, and how that might vary by who the target of the ethical error was. We found that individuals responded differently depending on who the target of the ethical error was. This finding presents interesting implications for efficacy, in that certain groups may believe that the leader is more responsible and culpable if they are or are not directly affected by the ethical error. Heroic leadership bias (Yukl, 1999) may also explain this finding, in that subordinates may perceive leaders as "superhuman" and more culpable and capable than they actually are.

Given that participants had varying feelings of their ability to act differently than the leader, it was reasonable to suggest that participants may have differing views of what resources leaders need to avoid ethical errors. However, when we tested if the type of resource that participants reported that leaders needed varied by who the target of the ethical error was, we found no significant result. This result may suggest that participants may make broader, sweeping generalizations about what resources the leader needs based off other factors, such as if the ethical error involved action, instead of by considering or being influenced by the target of the ethical error. Furthermore, it could suggest that participants believe that leaders need specific resources depending on the leader's specific situation, and that the target of the ethical error does not influence their perception.

Practical Implications

While research is underway to understand if ethical errors are more severe than relational or task errors, this study presents unique implications for practitioners. First, when evaluating ethical errors that leaders make, it is important to consider if the error involved action or inaction. Both types of ethical errors involve negative outcomes, but subordinates might be more likely to give a pass to leaders who commit the latter. Furthermore, our exploratory findings suggest that when discussing ethical errors with subordinates, it is important to consider if they were directly affected by the error, saw a coworker be effected by the error, or both, as their perceptions of the frustrating aspects of the error and leaders culpability can vary based on these groups.

Limitations

This study, in a similar nature to any self-report online study, is not without limitations. This study was conducted online and in an unknown timeframe, giving us limited understanding of the study conditions. However, given that this study did not involve experimental manipulation, these control factors are less relevant. What is especially relevant, however, is the self-report nature of the study. Participants were asked to self-report instances where a leader they had made an unethical errors. The discretion allotted to the participants may have confounded the specific error that they chose to report, which has implications for the specific details of the error that we analyzed. Furthermore, although we attempted to correct for this issue after pilot testing, participants often reported instances of leader behavior that were not

ethical errors, ranging from task errors to abusive supervision. Caution should be taken when interpreting our results, given that over half of the responses were not used in our analyses.

Another limitation that exists in our study concerns the methodology that we used to distinguish both action/inaction, and severity. Participants did not self-report their perception of the severity of the ethical error. Given that we coded the responses for severity and action/inaction, future research should investigate how participants construe the severity of an ethical error depending on the leader's action or inaction.

Finally, care should be taken to when generalizing our results to organizations. Subjects in this study were drawn from a university research pool, and as a result had limited work experience and exposure to serving as a subordinate. However, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the mechanisms evident in this study would apply to individuals within organizations.

Conclusion

While leaders in organizations can and will make ethical errors, the action or inaction that the leader takes can have different effects on the severity of that error. Furthermore, perceptions of ethical errors can vary depending on the target of the ethical error. Care should be taken in understanding how this might influence subordinates and organizations. Finally, future research should investigate the mechanisms behind the varying subordinate perceptions.

Figure 1 Action Vs Inaction

Appendix A

Qualitative Data Coding Scheme

Question	Coding Categories
Why do you believe this mistake occurred?	Inexperience Pressure Self-Gain Misunderstanding External Factors Communication Poor Management Personality/Internal Traits
What resources do you think your boss would have needed to avoid the error they made?	Organizational Resources Support from Individuals Experience/Training Personal Development None
What was the most frustrating part about the ethical mistake?	Poor Communication Misplaced Credit Difficulty of Situation Deception Effect on me personally Effect on quality of work Attitude Personal responsibility Associated injustice
Do you believe that you would have acted differently than your boss in the same situation?	No Would have acted differently Would have gotten input from other sources Would have been an ideal leader Unsure
What could your boss have done to make up for their ethical mistake?	Apologize Improve personally Communicate Better account for different views Prevent situation Not make the same error again Report themselves Make the situation "right" Nothing

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    leadership theories. *The leadership quarterly*, *10*(2), 285-305.

Academic Vita

TIMOTHY G. KUNDRO

EDUCATION

2012-2016   **THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**   **University Park, PA**
                 SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE
                 Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Business Minor

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Leadership, emotions, ethics

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2012-Present   **LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION LAB**   **University Park, PA**
                 Dr. Samuel Hunter, Penn State Industrial/Organizational Psychology Department
                 Research Assistant (August 2012-Present); Lab Coordinator (April 2014-Present)

- Contribute to quantitative and qualitative lab projects through literature reviews, experiment design, data analysis and data collection
- Designed honors thesis investigating the role of subordinate attributions as a mediator between leader ethical errors and subordinate perceptions of leader
- Developed research hypotheses, collected/cleaned data and analyzed findings for project investigating the role of experience on leader performance
- Responsible for leading 20+ undergraduate lab members and interviewing new applicants

2013-Present   **SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY LAB**   **New Brunswick, NJ**
                 Dr. John R. Aiello, Rutgers Social Psychology Department
                 Research Assistant (Summer 2013, Summer 2014 and Summer 2015)

- Developed experimental design, generated theory driven hypotheses and performed data analysis with SPSS for study investigating moderating role of control over voice on participant anxiety and performance when electronically monitored
- Led project investigating employee assessment techniques for local organization; contributed to data collection/cleaning and multivariate regression analysis in SPSS
- Trained lab members to run laboratory sessions and clean data
- Utilized statistical programs such as SPSS and R to analyze data

| 2014-Present | **EMOTIONS RESEARCH PROJECTS** | **University Park, PA** |

Dr. Alicia Grandey, Penn State Industrial/Organizational Psychology Department
Research Assistant
- Designed and managed study investigating the role of emotional intelligence on relational errors
- Wrote grant applications, research project proposals and assessment tool applications

| 2015-Present | **PNC ASSESSMENT CENTER** | **University Park, PA** |

Dr. Rick Jacobs, PNC Financial Services, Schreyer Honors College
Research Assistant
- Create new measures to capture participants' cognitive and social competencies
- Develop behavioral assessment ranking scales (BARS)
- Generate scenarios for assessment day

| 2013-2015 | **LEAD BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM** | **University Park, PA** |

Dr. Rick Jacobs, Penn State College of the Liberal Arts & I/O Psychology Department
Research Assistant
- Interviewed and assessed participants, utilizing Bartram's Great Eight Competencies
- Created developmental feedback reports from interviews and additional assessments

PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

| Summer 2015 | **DELOITTE CONSULTING** | **Chicago, IL** |

Human Capital Summer Analyst – Organization Talent and Transformation
- Worked with public sector client to implement organizational change strategies
- Created training materials and worked with I/O psychologists to improve technology adoption process

| Summer 2014 | **TEXTRON INC.** | **Providence, RI** |

Talent Management Intern
- Supported organizational functions involving talent management practices such as performance management, training, selection and leadership development
- Analyzed and interpreted data for employee surveys

| 2012-Present | **INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SOCIETY AT PENN STATE** | **University Park, PA** |

President (August 2013-August 2014); Member (August 2012-Present)
- Managed all organizational duties, ranging from accreditation to recruiting
- Arranged and planned annual conference trip to SPSP in Austin, TX

| 2013-Present | **APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION AT PENN STATE** | **University Park, PA** |

Treasurer (May 2015-Present); Member (August 2013-Present)
- Manage budget and expenses of over $6000 for school psychology organization
- Assist in planning trip for 2016 SIOP conference in Anaheim, CA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2015   **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SENIOR SEMINAR**   **University Park, PA**
Teaching Assistant
- Assisted students with understanding research articles and statistical analyses
- Directed discussions to critically investigate emotional intelligence's validity and research claims

2013-Present   **PENN STATE PUBLIC SPEAKING CENTER**   **University Park, PA**
Speaking Tutor / Guest Speaker
- Speak at different organizations and classes to broadly present information about public speaking
- Assist students on an individual level with presentations and speeches

RESEARCH PROJECTS

2013-Present   **Leader Ethical Errors: How Contextual Factors and Attributions Shape Subordinate Perceptions**
Honors Thesis / Leadership and Innovation Lab
- Designed and managed self-directed study to examine a moderated mediation model of how subordinate perceptions of a leader are impacted by leader ethical mistakes
- Creating situational vignettes and scale measures
- Leading team of undergraduates to code qualitative responses
- To be submitted for publication and to national conferences

2013-Present   **Defense Wins Championships? Investigating Playing Experience and NFL Coaching Success**
Leadership and Innovation Lab
- Generated research hypotheses, collected and cleaned data, analyzed findings, and developed poster submission
- First author on poster submission to SIOP 2106

2015-Present   **Ability versus Efficacy Emotional Intelligence: Differing Effects on Relational Errors**
Dr. Alicia Grandey
- Designed and managed study examining how emotional intelligence (EI) is related to relationship errors in groups and the way persons are likely to respond
- Wrote multiple grant applications for access to the MSCEIT, an ability EI measure

2015-Present   **Understanding the Impact of Product Design on Innovation and Learning - NSF Grant**
Leadership and Innovation Lab
- Coding product drawings for different creativity constructs

Summer 2015   **Organizational Selection Assessment Project**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Investigated assessment methods for local organization
- Collected, cleaned and prepared data for multivariate regression analysis in SPSS
- Led and trained team members on data collection and analytical methods

Spring 2015   **Differences in Vocational Interests and Stem Careers Project**
Matthew Crayne, Penn State I/O Psychology Department
- Investigated factors influencing student interest in STEM careers
- Assisted graduate student with coding of self-report data on career aspirations over a two month period

2014-2015   **The Dark Side to Creativity: Testing an Intervention to Deter Deviance**
Leadership and Innovation Lab
- Assisted with adapting scales for study, developing study design and running data collection sessions

Summer 2014   **Nonverbal Responses to Negative Feedback Project**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Developed coding guidelines for participant nonverbal responses to negative feedback

Spring 2014   **Predictors of Service Performance Appraisal**
Dr. Lawrence Houston & Dr. Alicia Grandey
- Collaborated over three months to help create various video stimuli featuring different authenticity and race conditions
- Assisted with video implementation for experimental sessions

2013-2014   **Leadership Style and Team Creativity Project**
Leadership and Innovation Lab
- Served as a confederate participant to model specific leadership styles
- Helped develop study protocol and design

Summer 2013   **The Downside of Voice: Effects of Voice and Control Over Electronic Performance Monitoring on Performance, Stress and Satisfaction**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Developed experimental design, generated hypotheses from previous literature, and analyzed data with SPSS and R
- Facilitated data collection sessions and trained other lab members

Summer 2013   **The Effect of Negative Feedback and Peer Performance on Creativity**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Performed literature review to develop hypotheses and generate experimental design
- Implemented Guiliford's creativity assessment methods

Summer 2013   **Resource Allocation and the Tragedy of the Commons: The Moderating Role of Neuroticism**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Helped develop a simulation computer game to assess resource allocation
- Piloted software and situational saliency of game with participants

Summer 2013   **The Moderating Role of Warning on Interruptions and Task Performance**
Social and Organizational Psychology Lab
- Facilitated data collection sessions and trained lab members on study procedures

2012-2013	**Contextual Moderators of the Effects of Membership Change on Team Creativity Performance**
	Leadership and Innovation Lab

- Facilitated data collection sessions for graduate student dissertation
- Coded participant proposals for originality, quality and elegance

Fall 2012	**Tweestpiration Project**
	Leadership and Innovation Lab

- Collaborated with research assistants to develop creativity rating system
- Coded proposed product designs for creativity

SELECTED HONORS COURSEWORK

Spring 2015	**PSYCH 485H – Leadership in Work Settings**

Performed and wrote extensive literature review on destructive leadership. Presented findings to a class of 75 students and led class discussion on implications. Collaborated closely with professor, Dr. Susan Mohammed, during course.

Fall 2014	**PSYCH 484H – Work Attitudes and Motivation**

Performed and wrote extensive literature review on emotional intelligence's validity as a construct, measurement tools and utility in organizational settings. Collaborated closely with professor, Dr. Alicia Grandey, during course.

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

PSYCHOLOGY

- Graduate Seminar in Organizational Psychology
- Work Attitudes and Motivation
- Leadership in Work Settings
- Research Methods in Psychology
- Selection and Assessment in Organizations
- Introduction to I/O Psychology

STATISTICS

- Applied Statistics – Graduate Course
- Intermediate Applied Statistics (Regression, ANOVA)
- Survey Sampling Methods
- Elementary Statistics

HONORS, AWARDS AND GRANTS

2014-Present	**Schreyer Honors College**
2012-Present	**Paterno Fellows Program**
2012- Present	**Dean's List**: All semesters attended
2013-Present	**Theta Chi Highest GPA Award:** All semesters attended
2016	**Psychology Department Marshal**
	Selected to represent the Department of Psychology at graduation

2016	**Hinman Memorial Scholarship**

2015   **Liberal Arts Enrichment Funding**
For research with Dr. Alicia Grandey on emotional intelligence and relational errors

2015   **Liberal Arts Research Enrichment Award**
For research at Rutgers University under Dr. John R. Aiello

2015   **Evan Pugh Scholar Award**
Awarded to top 0.5% of junior class based on academic GPA of 3.99 or higher

2015   **University Park Allocation & College of the Liberal Arts Committee Travel Grant**
For travel expenses to attend the Society of I/O Psychology Conference in Philadelphia, PA

2014   **President's Sparks Award**
Awarded to all sophomores who achieved a 4.0 through their first 36 credits

2014   **University Park Allocation & College of the Liberal Arts Committee Travel Grant**
For travel expenses to attend the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference in Austin, TX

2013   **Liberal Arts Research Enrichment Award**
For research at Rutgers University under Dr. John R. Aiello

2013   **President's Freshman Award**
Awarded to freshmen who achieved a 4.0 through their first 15 credits

2013   **University Park Allocation & College of the Liberal Arts Committee Travel Grant**
For travel expenses to attend the Society of I/O Psychology Conference in Houston, TX

Last Updated March 31, 2016