

**WHO IS LEADING THE LEADER?
FOLLOWER INFLUENCE ON LEADER ETHICALITY**

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ABSTRACT

While a growing body of evidence has demonstrated how leaders play a particularly influential role in creating principled organizational contexts, relatively little theorizing has explained the effect of followers on the leader's ethicality. In this chapter, we begin to address this important gap by examining how the leader might be systematically influenced by four types of follower behaviors: modeling, eliciting, guiding, and sensemaking. In particular, we discuss how each follower behavior can influence a leader's ethicality, and outline the cognitive, affective, and behavioral causal mechanisms through which this influence can be exercised.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of how to formulate an ethical organizational environment has become a mainstay in business. Especially given the breaches of ethical conduct in recent history, ethical behavior has come to represent a cornerstone of effective organizational functioning and performance. Accordingly, in order to maintain long-term performance and avoid the hazards of ethical misconduct, organizations routinely invest an extraordinary amount of resources into understanding and implementing ethics initiatives, focusing on such elements as structure, code of ethics, and core values within organizations (e.g., Treviño, Weaver, Gibson, & Toffler, 1999; Johnson, 2007).

Scholarly research has sought to examine various factors that can promote an ethical climate, defined as “organizational members’ shared perceptions of the events, practices, and procedures and the kinds of behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected in a setting regarding ethics” (Tenbrunsel, Smith-Crowe, & Umphress, 2003: 294; cf. Schneider, 1990; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Past studies have focused on how ethical principles can be instilled within the organizational context through, for example, codes of conduct (e.g., McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 1996) and sanctioning systems (e.g., Tenbrunsel & Messick, 1999) in order to explicate how these factors influence individual behavior in ethical situations (Treviño et al., 1999).

Underscoring the importance of understanding how individuals perceive ethical situations and how they act in those situations, the field of behavioral ethics has adopted a descriptive approach to explore the factors that can promote or constrain ethical conduct within organizational environments. Thus, with a focus not on normative moral standards (i.e., what individuals *should* do), but rather on how individuals are influenced by organization systems to

interpret morality, in this chapter we investigate how individual ethical behavior emerges within organizational settings. In particular, we take a key building block of social situations—leadership—in order to examine the dynamics that can unfold within interpersonal influence processes across all levels of the organization. Leadership is theorized to represent one avenue through which morality is interpreted within the organizational environment (Treviño, 1990). In line with the descriptive approach to behavioral ethics, we seek to examine why and how individuals are likely to behave when it comes to moral problems and, in particular, what role the leader-follower relationship plays in this process.

UTILIZING A BEHAVIORAL ETHICS LENS TO COUNTER BASIC ASSUMPTIONS WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP LITERATURE

The leadership field is based on the assumption that leaders can influence organizational outcomes via their ability to influence followers, as well as affect organizational routines and norms. This assumption has played a particularly important part in determining how ethical behavior can be promoted within the organization. Notably, past work has demonstrated that leaders can influence followers' ethical behavior by demonstrating normatively appropriate conduct (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). They can influence follower cognition by shaping the ways in which followers think about moral justifiability (Beu & Buckley, 2004) and affect the moral reasoning level of a group through their own levels of principled reasoning (Dukerich, Nichols, Elm, & Vollrath, 1990). Research has also linked the moral development of the leader to the ethical climate and attitudes of the group (Schein, 1985). At the organizational level, leadership-based efforts to foster ethical behavior, such as ensuring organizationally fair procedures and structures, have been shown to reduce unethical behavior and increase employees' willingness to report problems to management (Treviño & Weaver, 2001).

Although a growing body of evidence has demonstrated the leader's influence on follower ethical behavior, relatively little theorizing has been done regarding the effect of followers on the leader's ethicality. Although peer influence in the workplace has been found to affect individual ethical behavior (Zey-Ferrell & Ferrell, 1982) through the need for moral approval from one's peers (Jones & Ryan, 1998), it is unclear how this need manifests itself in leader-follower relationships. Although one may typically conceptualize approval (moral or otherwise) as given to followers by leaders, leader behavior is most effective when leadership decisions are accepted by followers (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975). Thus, follower approval of leadership behavior may serve as a precursor to followership.

First introduced by Hollander and Webb (1955), the term followership is characterized as an interdependent relationship in which the leader's perceived legitimacy can affect the degree to which followers allow themselves to be influenced (Hollander & Julian, 1969). This early work highlights that leadership is a reciprocal relationship wherein followers play an active role not only by receiving but exerting influence (Homans, 1961), a point that has been echoed in more recent research (Avolio, 2007). Moreover, this past work emphasizes the role of social perceptions in defining the legitimacy of a leader. Defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574), we argue that the concept of legitimacy encompasses the socially construed morally normative boundaries of leadership behavior. Thus, followers' perceived legitimacy of their leader influences how they interpret the leader's ethically relevant behaviors within the context of larger social prescriptions, and determines the degree to which followers may both receive and exert influence on those behaviors.

In this chapter, we focus on how followers go beyond mere legitimization to exercising influence on their leader's ethicality (see Kelly, 1988; Useem, 2001). While acknowledging that leaders play a potentially influential agentic role, we propose that a leader's ethical behavior not only influences followers' ethical behavior, but is also influenced by it. In proposing this, we debunk the familiar notion that leaders are impervious, or more resistant than followers, to a social influence process. Indeed, they may be especially susceptible to this influence when their legitimacy is in question (Long, 2010; Long & Sitkin, 2006).

Because such little work has directly examined the influence of followers on the leader's ethicality, ours is necessarily speculative. But our goal is hardly to settle such a nascent issue, but rather to be provocative and thus stimulate more attention to theorizing about and empirically examining this potentially important and fruitful line of inquiry. In the following sections, we further discuss leader ethicality, the role of legitimacy in influencing leaders' predisposition to being influenced by followers, and outline the follower behaviors through which this influence is exercised, mainly through modeling, eliciting, guiding, and sensemaking via cognitive, affective, and behavioral causal mechanisms.

LEADER ETHICALITY

Although the topic of leadership has a long and complex history in a variety of scholarly disciplines, a focus on ethics has only recently (re)gained theoretical momentum. Nevertheless, most of the theoretical perspectives that have emerged have espoused arguments pertaining to how leaders *should* act, thereby adopting a prescriptive approach to ethical conduct. For example, ethical leadership theory (Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006) defines ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way

communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005: 120). For ethical leaders to behave morally in their roles, they should be seen as honest, caring, principled individuals who make fair decisions and promote ethical conduct in followers by helping them understand the implications for their own decision-making (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). Servant leadership adopts a similarly moral position by advocating a perspective that leaders have a responsibility to serve their followers by helping them achieve and improve, as well as by serving the interests of society and those who are disadvantaged (Greenleaf, 1977). Spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003), in which a leader's values, attitudes, and behaviors influence organizational outcomes through the fulfillment of followers' needs, is also prescriptive. Within the mainstream leadership literature, theories such as authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner, Walumba, Luthans, & May, 2004), share a focus on the normatively moral aspect of leadership. Authentic leaders are individuals “ who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character” (Avolio et al., 2004: 802-803).

Although these approaches have advanced our understanding of how ethics and morality can define whether or not leaders are perceived as more or less ethical, they remain limited in their predictive and explanatory abilities. Their focus rests on delineating the characteristics that individuals ought to possess or the behaviors they should display as a leader, rather than on the causal factors that can drive leaders to exhibit ethical or unethical conduct. In particular, it remains unclear how a leader’s attention and information processing, decision-making, and behavior as it relates to ethics can be affected by followers. An integration of a follower

perspective remains underdeveloped within the leadership field in general but, perhaps even more acutely, within this ethical space. Hence, we aim to provide a stronger theoretical basis for developing descriptive empirically-grounded insight into how and why leaders can act more or less ethically.

We begin our descriptive analysis by examining the dynamic interplay between leaders and followers and identifying how followers are able to influence leader ethicality. We define *leader ethicality* as the intention to demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct and to create an environment within which others will be encouraged to act ethically and discouraged from acting unethically. This definition implies that (1) demonstrating normatively appropriate conduct is in part determined by follower perceptions and, thus, leader intent is important; and (2) the leader exerts as well as receives influence from followers in promoting ethical behavior and, thus, creating an ethical milieu is important. Moreover, this definition takes into consideration the importance of moral perspectives; however, it also underscores the notion that ethical behavior is to some extent defined by how it is construed within the context of social prescriptions. In the following sections, we adopt this follower-based view of ethical conduct, turning our focus to explicating the causal mechanisms through which followers affect leader ethicality.

The Role of Legitimacy in Leader Vulnerability to Influence

Even though leaders exert influence on followers and have the power to shape the context, we propose that, because of their position, leaders are highly susceptible to scrutiny, to perhaps an even greater degree than are individuals without such power and status. We posit that the social perception of a leader's legitimacy may play an important role in determining how their morally relevant actions are interpreted and, subsequently, the influence exerted by followers on leaders. We conceptualize legitimacy as a socially construed phenomenon, based on

the normatively positive expectations of followers. The social context created by followers' normative expectations is thus a significant determinant of leader legitimacy, and violations of such expectations can cast doubt on the leader's position, authority, status, and influence.

The process through which legitimacy is conferred from followers to leaders has been studied in-depth within the justice domain (e.g., Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). In reviewing why individuals choose to cooperate with the police, Tyler (2004) concluded that people obey police officers because they view the police as a legitimate legal authority. Such legitimacy conferral is brought about only when individuals' assessment of police behavior is construed as abiding to their positive expectations of law enforcement (e.g., actions associated with due process). Thus, when policing behaviors conform to their expectations of process-based justice, individuals are likely to voluntarily cooperate and support the police (Tyler, 2006). This line of inquiry highlights the reciprocal dynamic that takes place between leaders and followers. In particular, Tyler (1990; Tyler & Huo, 2002) demonstrates how not only normative expectations (i.e., the ethical milieu) are important, but also how motives underlying actions are construed (i.e., ethical intent) can determine whether individuals confer legitimacy to those in a position of authority.

The social context created by followers can therefore create the lens through which leadership is interpreted (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Drawing on categorization and person perception research, Lord and colleagues posited that followers have preconceived notions (implicit theories) about what a prototypical leader looks like and, when placed within an informationally ambiguous situation, seek confirming evidence of these notions (Lord, 1977; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord, Foti, & Phillips, 1982). When leaders are viewed as prototypical of the organization or subgroup,

or as an exemplar with whom the follower can individually identify, that follower is more likely to perceive and value leader actions. Thus, if cues are found that support the prototype, the person will be perceived as a leader; if the leader provides cues that conflict with the follower prototype, the perception of leadership is not likely to occur.

Similarly, in their study of how leaders can motivate followers to display prosocial behavior, De Cremer, Mayer, van Dijke, Schouten, and Bardes (2009) found that the effectiveness of a leader may depend on specific follower characteristics. In particular, for those followers who value being dutiful and responsible, characteristics associated with a prevention focus, a leader's self-sacrificial behavior can significantly influence the emergence of similarly prosocial behavior. The congruence between the values and goals that the leader activates and followers pursue is thus a determining factor in the effectiveness of leader behavior.

The activation of specific characteristics has also been shown to flow from followers to leaders. Followers can influence a leader's ethical decisions and behavior by affecting the leader's level of self-construal (van Gils, van Quaquebeke, & van Knippenberg, 2010). Van Gils and colleagues (2010) propose that to the extent followers activate a leader's collective level of self-construal, the leader will display more collectively oriented behaviors, which followers equate with ethical behavior. In contrast, to the extent followers activate a leader's individual level of self-construal, the leader will display more self-serving behaviors, which followers equate with unethical behavior. Taken together, the dynamic interplay between leader and follower influence suggests that the very emergence of leadership may in part depend on follower perceptions (e.g., Hollander & Julian, 1969; Lord, 1977; Pfeffer, 1977).

Building on these insights, we posit that due to the socially construed nature of leader legitimacy, leaders are vulnerable to follower judgments. Leaders may gain legitimacy from

followers when they allow themselves to receive follower influence and behave in accordance with followers' normative expectations. This influence process may be either conscious or subconscious, and occur through multiple types of influence strategies over different time periods. As such, we propose that the leader-follower relationship is fundamentally affected by upward influence strategies on the part of followers, which tend to either promote or prohibit certain types of morally relevant leadership behavior.

FOLLOWER INFLUENCE ON LEADER ETHICALITY

Proposing a Typology of Follower Actions to Influence Leader Ethicality

Followers' attempts to affect leader ethicality can be directed toward increasing leader behaviors that enhance the level of ethicality or influencing leaders to forgo actions that would reduce the level of ethicality.¹ That is, followers can try to get leaders to behave more ethically or avoid doing the unethical. For followers, such attempts can involve personal and political risk, such as when whistleblowers 'go public' in order to influence their organizations to curtail unethical actions (Grant, 2002). Follower actions taken to influence leader ethicality, however, can also be perceived by leaders as a demonstration of concern and support; being what has been referred to as a "trusted advisor" (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000)

To systematize our theorizing about how followers can act to influence leader ethicality, we draw on Van Dyne et al.'s (1995) distinction between *affiliative/challenging* and *promotive/prohibitive* behaviors. The first dimension contrasts whether the behavior would likely strengthen or preserve the relationship (affiliative) or whether it creates a risk of damaging the

¹ It is important to acknowledge that whilst our focus remains on understanding how followers influence leader ethicality in beneficial ways, followers can cause leaders to go astray, whether intentionally or not. For instance, Offermann (2004) describes how followers can become a toxic influence on leaders who are especially susceptible to flattery and ingratiation. By being persuasive and united in a particular course of action, even well-meaning followers can influence a leader's decision-making in negative ways. Thus, although we constrain our analysis to how followers positively drive ethical conduct, we wish to note that our framing of follower influence could be applied equally to followers who wish to influence a leader to behave less, as well as more ethically.

relationship (challenging). The second dimension contrasts whether the behavior encourages something to occur (promotive) or to cease (prohibitive). Affiliative/promotive behaviors include helping, cooperative behaviors; challenging/promotive behaviors are those which may challenge the status quo but do so in order to improve a situation rather than criticize it. Affiliative/prohibitive behaviors aim to protect others from harm by preventing wrongdoings; and challenging/prohibitive behaviors confront wrongdoings. Accordingly, we utilize this framework in order to organize the underlying structure of follower influence actions, and propose that followers can influence leader ethicality in four distinct ways (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

Followers can encourage leader ethicality, which Van Dyne et al. (1995) refer to as “promotive behaviors,” in one of two ways: (1) by having the follower become a role model for how such behavior might look and/or be practically effective so that a leader who might not see how to be more ethical can be shown through the follower’s *modeling* actions; or (2) by *eliciting* behavior by encouraging the leader to recognize and act on his or her own values, beliefs, and capabilities. Similarly, followers can discourage poor ethicality on the part of leaders, classified under what Van Dyne et al. (1995) refer to as “prohibitive behaviors,” in two distinct ways: (1) by *guiding* the leader away from poor ethical choices; this can be accomplished by structuring a situation in a way that narrows the available options, such that poorer ethical choices are harder to see and pursue; or (2) followers can serve in a *sensemaking* role by providing information and interpretations which alter how a leader views the situation and its implications, thus helping the

leader attend to problematic ethical implications that might have been overlooked or misunderstood.

Van Dyne et al. (1995) also distinguish between affiliative and challenging behaviors; followers' actions can be viewed through such a conceptual lens in terms of whether they explicitly confront (i.e., challenge) a leader to stimulate more ethicality, or if followers take a more tacit (i.e., affiliative) approach in order to preserve their relationship with the leader (or at least expose it to less risk). For followers, *modeling* and *guiding* behaviors are affiliative in that they are indirect, implicit, and aimed at avoiding threats to the relationship while still serving as “nudges” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) toward ethicality. By modeling the desired ethical response, a follower can show the leader how to behave more ethically without unduly pushing the issue onto the leader. Similarly, follower guiding behaviors shape the situation, often without the leader's awareness, in ways that gently channel the leader toward his or her “better angels” without doing so in an explicit, confrontational, or directive way. In contrast, eliciting and sensemaking follower behaviors are more direct and confrontational, and thus challenge the leader to alter his or her behavior or beliefs through, for example, new data. Eliciting can be seen as a follower provoking the leader to engage in new or different behavior. Similarly, sensemaking can be viewed as arguing for the leader to change his or her interpretation of a morally relevant issue requiring action. This is not always problematic, but could easily be viewed as challenging a leader's authority.

Taken together, these four types of follower influence on leader ethicality can be understood to systematically affect leader ethicality in predictable ways, via explicable causal pathways. In the next section, we will explore those causal mechanisms.

Toward a Rudimentary Theory of Follower Influence on Leader Ethicality

We hypothesize that each type of follower behavior described above affects leader ethicality through a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral mechanisms. Table 2 summarizes each causal mechanism; we explain the function of each mechanism in the sections that follow. Our underlying assumption throughout is that follower influence is a complex and often challenging process, given the power disparities between leaders and followers.²

Insert Table 2 about here

Modeling. Modeling has often been conceptualized as the primary mechanism through which a leader influences followers in that followers are aided by seeing what ethical behaviors might look like, how they may be accomplished successfully (in both the logistical and political sense), and that the leader is personally committed to such actions. Also, because followers can come to admire their leaders and wish to emulate them, leader modeling can be a powerful influence on follower ethicality. Ethical leadership theory (Brown et al., 2005), for example, adopts a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977; 1986) to ethical influence, arguing that leaders influence followers through norms of reciprocity and social exchange. When the leader has developed a caring and just relationship with the follower, followers may wish to reciprocate this beneficent relationship with their own exhibition of ethical behavior (Hernandez, 2008; Treviño & Brown, 2004). In this case, followers are more likely to emulate their leaders,

² Although we examine each type of follower influence behavior and mechanism separately, interactive effects between these elements can exist. Additionally, the efficacy of each behavior and mechanism may vary, not only in relation to the leader's openness and receptivity to upward influence, but also in terms of the leader's ethical baseline, as determined, for example, by levels of moral awareness, judgment, and motivation (Rest, 1986; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Nevertheless, a discussion of the contingencies that can augment or diminish follower influence on leader ethicality is beyond the scope of the current chapter; such an examination is a fruitful area for future ethical inquiry.

positively influencing their ethical decision making and prosocial behaviors and attitudes while subsequently decreasing counterproductive work behaviors (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown et al., 2005).

Cognitive Causal Path. When a leader engages in reciprocal exchanges with the follower, the leader may want to reciprocate the follower's ethical behavior with similarly principled action. In this way, the follower can become an ethical role model for the leader. Recent findings support this notion. In their study of ethical role modeling, Weaver, Treviño, and Agle (2005) found that ethical role modeling takes place through various interpersonal behaviors that promote other-oriented concern in the context of close working relationships. Followers who exhibit self-sacrifice, responsibility for their actions, and high standards may be "looked up to" by not only other followers, but also the leader. Accordingly, followers can clarify their leader's understanding of normatively appropriate conduct by personifying moral principles.

Affective Causal Path. When followers model ethicality for their leader, their actions not only help to explain social prescriptions, but can reduce the fear of negative responses to ethically relevant behaviors. Consequently, leaders can become optimistic about the feasibility of ethicality. Past research has found that leaders can influence followers' emotions through their behavior (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Gardner & Avolio, 1998) and, in turn, the emotions leaders evoke in followers can influence the followers' own morally relevant behavior (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). We posit that follower behavior can have a similar effect on leader emotions. For example, by modeling ethicality, followers can demonstrate that they are truly committed, in deed as well as word, to the principles their ethical actions imply. Such a demonstration can encourage a similar commitment in the leader.

Behavioral Causal Path. In line with Brown et al.'s (2005) view of how ethical leaders “teach” ethical behavior to followers through their own behavior, we propose followers can influence leader ethicality through this same mechanism. In particular, followers’ ethical behaviors demonstrate to the leader that an ethical course of action is possible by revealing unexplored ethical alternatives. In addition, through modeling the feasibility of ethical actions, followers can show how leader ethicality can be practically effective. It can be difficult to enact ethical actions when one has never seen them in practice; providing a model can facilitate mimicry or extension. In this way, modeling can encompass follower attempts to enact or adhere to the leader’s instructions as a way of showing the leader how such behavior could look and work in practice, as well as its potential ramifications.

Eliciting. We propose that followers elicit ethical behavior from their leaders by engaging mindfulness with regard to morally relevant decisions, processes, and behavior. Followers can highlight a particular ethical issue in order to trigger a leader’s moral schema, ultimately connecting the ethical issue to a leader’s personal guilt, passion, or other powerful emotions. In this way, we posit, followers can stimulate leaders to undertake ethical actions either through provocation or seduction. Building on the work on social influence (e.g., Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980), Dutton and Ashford (1993) proposed that managers engage in “issue selling” as a way to direct superiors’ attention to certain issues by framing them in particular ways (e.g., Sonenshein, 2006; 2009) and by mobilizing resources and routines. Issue selling is directed at changing the organizational agenda; while it can take the form of abstract ideas, it often arises out of a sense that a particular position represents an important organizational or personal opportunity (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). Similar to

issue selling, eliciting is an upward influencing behavior that engages consideration of particular perspectives; however, we propose that eliciting is necessarily driven by normative prescriptions.

Cognitive Causal Path. “Mindlessness”, the lack of mindfulness, often entails analyzing information context-free and treating it as true regardless of the circumstances (Langer, 1989; 1997). We posit that followers can curtail this sort of automatic processing by creating awareness of multiple morally relevant facets of a situation and by challenging their leader’s habitual reaction with new information on ethically relevant factors or implications. Butterfield, Treviño and Weaver (2000) found that moral awareness could be enhanced through such factors as the use of moral language in organizational routines and practices. Thus, by increasing a leader’s sensitivity to ethical issues, followers can enhance his or her mindfulness of the moral complexities involved in decision making.

Affective Causal Path. Framing and connecting an issue to the leader’s personal concerns can arouse powerful affective reactions such as guilt or passion. In particular, followers can draw on relevant religious beliefs, personal values or priorities, and responsibilities to direct their leader’s attention to ethical issues with which they might not otherwise concern themselves. Senior male executives, for instance, might be more inclined to actively address issues of gender parity if the notion that their daughters could suffer from discrimination is highlighted. Haidt (2001; 2003) demonstrates how moral emotions such as anger and disgust (i.e., other-condemning emotions), shame and guilt (i.e., self-focused emotions), or compassion, empathy, and gratitude (i.e., other-suffering emotions) differentially influence behavior. Reconciliatory or prosocial behaviors, as well as destructive or avoidance behaviors, can be triggered through different emotive paths.

Behavioral Causal Path. Followers can incite their leaders to undertake ethical actions through the provocation or seduction of exemplars. By pointing to behavioral extremes in potential ethically relevant outcomes, or portraying actions in starkly ethical terms, followers stimulate an action response that might not otherwise be engendered. Asking a leader “you don’t want to become the next Ken Lay, do you?” or posing some similarly provocative comparison may push the leader to either forego an ethically questionable action or undertake a difficult course of action that he or she might have preferred to ignore. Similarly, the seductive power of best practice exemplars (Kaplan, 2003) can be used by followers to legitimate a particular course of action. Thus, examples of how other leaders have behaved in a particular ethical space can be utilized to encourage a specific course of action.

Guiding. Scholars have argued that individuals’ ethical judgments may be egocentrically biased through automatic processes (see Epley & Caruso, 2004). Nevertheless, Reynolds (2006) demonstrates that reflexive, intuitive processing of ethical decisions, operating at a subconscious level, is likely only when individuals find prototypes for ethical situations (i.e., an ethical issue stored in memory that matches the current situation). When individuals are faced with a novel situation, a reflective, deliberate process can take place in which the situation is actively reanalyzed and moral rules are engaged. We posit that followers can prompt leaders to identify or develop different prototypes and draw their attention to particular moral rules, which in turn can influence their biases and, ultimately, their judgment. Thus, when followers guide their leaders, they can shift the trajectory and likelihood of alternative leader ethical actions in particular directions by narrowing real or apparent options. We propose this process can take place in subtle rather than confrontational ways, often without the leader becoming aware of follower intervention.

Cognitive Causal Path. During decision making processes, followers can influence the prototype set used by the leader by increasing the valence of particular ethical issues. By stressing key aspects of the situation or key action options, followers can focus leaders on prototypes representing particular social prescriptions. In so doing, followers prime (e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Troetschel, 2001) leaders to utilize particular prototypes. After the decisions have been taken, followers may engage in dialogue with leaders aimed at understanding the resulting ethical implications. Through this deliberate processing and analysis, followers can facilitate the creation of new prototypes.

Affective Causal Path. Activating deliberate processing in leaders can also allow followers to make salient the leader's moral identity (e.g., Bergman, 2004). To the extent that leaders believe their actions are in conflict with their moral identities, they may experience cognitive dissonance and emotional discomfort (Festinger, 1957; Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Followers can prompt such dissatisfaction by emphasizing incongruent elements in the demands of the situation being faced and the outcomes experienced by the leader. Ultimately, producing slight emotional discomfort may allow followers to subtly influence the ethical options open to the leader.

Behavioral Causal Path. Much like a bowling ball travels directly down a lane when child gutters are in place, the social context created by followers can help to channel ethical behavior by constraining the field of options and protecting against ethical pitfalls. Indeed, when followers create a culture of ethics within an organization, they prolong the valence effect of specific prototypes created at the individual level with their leaders. Such social controls can form "ethical infrastructures" (Tenbrunsel, Smith-Crowe, & Umphress, 2003) that direct ethical behavior through policies, structures, and procedures designed to promulgate organizational

values within employees and the organizational culture. Thus, by collectively behaving according to normative principles within the organizational context, followers can systematically shape how a leader thinks about the situations and challenges being confronted.

Sensemaking. Sensemaking is a cognitive process to “structure the unknown” (Waterman, 1990: 41). Individuals continuously make sense of experiences both subconsciously and consciously by constructing reality based on their own perceptions, anticipations, and expectations. Sensemaking, however, is not solely an individual activity; it involves a strong social component. As expressed by Karl Weick (1995: 6), “sense may be in the eye of the beholder, but beholders vote and the majority rules.” We posit that followers can engage in sensemaking in order to challenge their leader’s interpretation of morally relevant situations.

Cognitive Causal Path. Due to the inherent subjectivity and often ambiguity involved in applying moral norms across situations, followers often provide explanations or enact processes that help leaders make sense of complex or ambiguous ethical circumstances. Follower sensemaking refers to the follower helping the leader see how action or inaction by a leader, the organization or other followers might have ethical implications. For example, a leader may be unaware that a particular action could be construed as having ethical implications, instead regarding a decision as an insignificant technical choice. A leader who does not track situational shifts closely may not recognize how a once benign situation now carries ethical implications. Through persuasive analysis, followers can foster in their leaders an enhanced understanding of the need to stop unethical behavior and/or discourage it on the part of others within the organization. For instance, followers can articulate a set of procedures, routines, or explicit criteria to which a leader’s ethical behavior might adhere. In so doing, the follower can directly

confront lapses in the leader's ethicality by explicitly comparing it to broader organizational or social prescriptions.

Affective Causal Path. When followers call into question a leader's understanding of a morally relevant situation, they bring the issue of legitimacy to the forefront. By highlighting how an action (or inaction) is incongruent with social prescriptions, the leader can be made to feel more or less fearful. Followers can fuel this insecurity in order to accentuate how the leader was unaware or erroneously interpreted morally relevant situational factors or demands in their sensemaking process. Creating such distress, though risky for the leader-follower relationship, may bring to light the defining elements of how a leader is legitimized from a follower perspective. Moreover, the "detection and correction of errors" offers the leader an important organizational learning opportunity (Argyris, 1977; Senge, 1990).

Behavioral Causal Path. Trial and error is sometimes a necessary process in determining an appropriate course of action in ambiguous and uncertain circumstances. Followers can help a leader make sense of a challenging situation by articulating the benefits and detriments of other organizational members' behavior. Particularly when the leader is new to the organization, followers can provide stories of the past experiences that created the rationales for current organizational policies and processes. In this way, followers explicitly communicate the criteria for leader ethicality that render some behaviors intuitively sensible while others may seem inappropriate or unthinkable within a given organizational context; thus, followers can chart the path for continuing behavioral patterns and routines.

CONCLUSION

Much attention has been paid to how leaders can influence the ethicality of followers. But few have asked "who is leading the leader?" This is a fundamental question if one takes

seriously the notion that leaders do not act in isolation and omnipotence concerning what is ethical. To begin to address this important issue, we have sketched some preliminary theoretical ideas and a framework for understanding how follower behavior can influence leader ethicality. We have offered not only a typology of follower influence behaviors, but have also proposed a systematic analytical framework for hypothesizing how those behaviors could affect leader ethicality. The next steps are to further develop and hone the theory and to test it empirically. If we can better understand how leaders can be positively (or negatively) influenced to behave ethically, we will have made a significant step forward in predicting and ameliorating unethical leader behavior.

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TABLE 1
A Typology of Follower Influence on Leader Ethicality*

	<i>Promotive</i>	<i>Prohibitive</i>
<i>Affiliative</i>	Modeling	Guiding
<i>Challenging</i>	Eliciting	Sensemaking

*Adapted from Van Dyne et al. (1995).

TABLE 2
Causal Mechanisms by which Follower Behavior Influences Leader Ethicality

Follower Behavior	Causal Mechanism		
	<i>Cognition</i>	<i>Affect</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
<i>Modeling</i>	Clarify Understanding	Foster Optimism	Demonstrate
<i>Eliciting</i>	Engage Mindfulness	Rouse Fervor	Stimulate
<i>Guiding</i>	Focus Attention	Prompt Dissatisfaction	Channel
<i>Sensemaking</i>	Persuade	Induce Insecurity	Routinize