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THE EFFECT OF LEADER MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE
TACTICS ON FOLLOWER COGNITIONS AND ETHICAL SENSEMAKING

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THE EFFECT OF LEADER MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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This dissertation is dedicated to those who have aspired to achieve seemingly impossible goals and, in spite of insurmountable odds and trials at every step, steadfastly refused to abandon their dreams until they were fully realized.

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Abstract

During times of organizational crisis followers often rely on their leader's experience and knowledge to provide ethical guidance. However, crises also provide leaders increased opportunity to influence followers to commit unethical acts. The current study examined how leaders use deliberate strategies like moral disengagement and proactive influence tactics to achieve follower compliance. Using a model of ethical sensemaking, results indicate follower sensemaking processes and behaviors were significantly affected by leader strategies. Overall, a leader's use of proactive influence tactics significantly impacted follower moral disengagement, forecasting, and ethical decision making. Additionally, leader moral disengagement and specific strategy pairs significantly influenced follower conformity and collusion with their leader to act unethically. Implications regarding theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Leadership, followership, leader moral disengagement, proactive influence tactics, ethical decision making, organizational ethics

Introduction

Leadership, in its most basic form, is described as the process whereby “intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group and organization” (Yukl, 2010, p. 21). Leader influence may be as simple as leaders exercising legitimate authority to complete basic tasks, or as complex as using multiple, deliberate influence tactics to covertly impact follower behavior (Yukl, 2010). Follower behaviors desired by leaders may be positive or negative, ethical or unethical, and leaders may use influence to push followers to achieve great goals, or to commit great atrocities.

Inherent in the leader-follower dynamic, subordinates already relinquish a degree of control and responsibility to legitimate authority figures (Beu & Buckley, 2004). However, this influence may be heightened during times of ethical crisis due to their inherent complexity and ambiguity (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Mumford, 2006; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Tucker & Russell, 2004). During these times of equivocality, followers rely on the expertise, experience, and knowledge of leaders to provide guidance. Most leaders navigate ethical crises with the best intentions for the organization and their followers; they truly believe they are doing the right thing, but instead rationalize and justify unethical choices and behavior. Other leaders engage in unethical behaviors to satisfy needs for power and personal goal attainment, to cover up personal or organizational mistakes and failures, and to gain unfair competitive organizational advantage (Beu & Buckley, 2004). In short, leaders have a heightened capacity to influence followers, and in times of high-stakes

ethical crises, a “success at any cost” mentality can compel leaders to manipulate followers into unethical acts.

Two ways leaders influence follower behavior are through the use of moral disengagement mechanisms and proactive influence tactics. Leaders use disengagement mechanisms to inhibit follower self-sanctioning processes that would normally stop unethical follower behavior (Bandura, 1986; 1999; Beu & Buckley, 2004; Johnson & Buckley, 2014). Similarly, influence tactics used by leaders alter how effectively followers make sense of ethical crises, redirecting follower attention and reducing follower resistance to unethical requests. Realistically, leaders use these methods both alone and in tandem to influence follower ethical behavior. The contributions of this study to the organizational literature are two-fold. First, this study delineates the direct and joint effects of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics on follower moral disengagement and ethical decision making (EDM) in the context of organizational ethical crises. Second, this study examines the direct and additive nature of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics on follower ethical sensemaking processes and cognitions related to compliance and collusion with destructive leaders.

Ethics and Ethical Sensemaking

Leaders exercise a significant amount of influence on follower behavior in day-to-day activities, but their influence is greatly magnified during times of ethical crisis (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Mumford, 2006; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Tucker & Russell, 2004). Ethical crises are defined by ambiguity and complexity; involved parties often have competing, conflicting goals, and multiple courses of action to choose (Werhane, 2002). The current study examines

these complex decision making tasks and follower EDM as a function of ethical sensemaking. Sensemaking was first described by Weick (1988; 1995) as a method used by managers to analyze multiple streams of information and “make sense” from chaos during turbulent crisis situations. The sensemaking process has been applied to multiple areas including strategic organizational performance (Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993), organizational theory (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), and moral reasoning (Sonenshien, 2007). Sonenshien’s (2007) Sensemaking-Intuition (SI) model of moral reasoning states moral reasoning is anything but orderly and rational; individuals make situation-specific intuitive judgments in parallel with more deliberate, rational cognitive reasoning strategies. They then interpret and apply their judgments and cognitions to make sense of their moral dilemma.

Mumford and colleagues (2008; 2006) proposed successful EDM is itself a form of ethical sensemaking; a complex, cognitive process by which individuals gather, interpret, and apply complex mental models to address an ethical crisis. Through this process of sensemaking followers attempt to “make sense” of an ethical crisis in order to respond in an ethically responsible manner. Mumford and colleagues (2008; 2006) developed and validated a model of ethical sensemaking, proposing that information gathering takes place via multiple cognitive processes including causal analysis (Brock et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2012), constraint/problem analysis (Johnson et al., 2014; Mumford et al., 2007; Mumford et al., 2009), and forecasting analysis (Beeler et al., 2010; Harkrider et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2011; Stenmark et al., 2011). Information gathered via these ethical sensemaking processes is interpreted within the context of cognitive mental models to address the ethical dilemma.

Both leaders and followers independently engage in ethical sensemaking independently; however leaders also frequently impact follower sensemaking processes (Mumford, 2006; Mumford & Strange, 2002; Thiel et al., 2012). Leaders have the capacity to regulate and distort information flow, direct follower emphasis and prioritization of information, and control outcomes and consequences. While a variety of leadership behaviors negatively impact follower ethical sensemaking processes, the current study examines moral disengagement mechanisms and proactive influence tactics. Leaders may manipulate follower perceptions of on an ethical crisis by framing the situation as not being ethical in nature, disengaging the moral agency of followers. Alternatively, leaders may also use proactive influence tactics to actively manipulate follower ethical sensemaking processes. This study sought to examine the impact of leader moral disengagement and influence tactic use on follower moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking processes, and EDM.

Moral Disengagement, Leaders, and Followers

Moral Disengagement Overview

One method leaders employ to influence follower EDM is attempting to “disengage” a follower’s moral self-sanctions, thereby altering how a follower perceives or frames an ethical issue. Moral disengagement mechanisms were first identified by Albert Bandura (1986; 1999), positing that human behavior is regulated by parallel sets of external (e.g. social) and internal (e.g. cognitive) self-sanctions and reinforcements. Individuals act ethically out of fear of societal and cognitive self-sanctions, and because adhering to societal rules, values, and norms is intrinsically rewarding. Disengagement occurs when individuals use cognitive mechanisms to

“deactivate” the inhibitory self-regulatory process of self-sanctioning and prosocial reinforcement, making it easier to act unethically (Bandura 1986; 1999).

Bandura described eight cognitive mechanisms used to deactivate moral self-regulatory processes grouped into three distinct “families” (see Table 1).

Disengagement occurs by 1) cognitively reconstruing unethical conduct to appear more ethical, 2) obfuscating direct blame for unethical behavior or distorting effects of harmful consequences, or 3) reducing identification with targets of unethical actions (Bandura, 1986; 1999). The negative effects of moral disengagement on moral reasoning has been examined in many research areas including the support for war (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007), aggressive political ideologies (Jackson & Gaertner, 2010), support for the death penalty (Osofsky, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2005), acceptance of video game violence (Hartmann & Vorderer, 2010) and adolescent bullying (Obermann, 2011; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012). Furthermore, recent studies have examined the deleterious effect high levels of trait moral disengagement has on decision making in both organizational and military contexts (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008; Johnson & Connelly, under review; Moore, 2007; Palmer, 2013).

Moral disengagement exists not only at the individual level, but also at the collective, organizational level (Bandura, 1990; Brief, Buttram, & Dukerich, 2001). Organizations have used moral disengagement mechanisms to rationalize catastrophic corporate disasters (Bandura, Caprara, & Zsolnai, 2000) and the use of toxic products that put employees and consumers in serious danger (White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009). Halbesleben, Wheeler, and Buckley (2005) proposed that organizational roles,

hierarchies, and structures often promote “pluralistic ignorance”, or the mass diffusion of responsibility linked to reduced ethical standards and behavior. Organizations may also unintentionally foster moral disengagement through unhealthy organizational practices. Organizations may *initiate* unethical behavior through early acts of moral disengagement, *maintain* unethical behavior through systematic inhibition of moral awareness via continued moral disengagement, and *perpetuate* unethical behavior by intentionally or unintentionally rewarding high-level disengaged performers (Bellizzi, 2006; Moore, 2007).

In both individual and organizational contexts, evidence shows that unethical behaviors are frequently justified via moral disengagement mechanisms. What is less well known is whether or not moral disengagement is able to spread interpersonally from leaders to followers. Evidence suggests that both “hard” and “soft” indicators of organizational climate and values signal how an organization operates to both leaders and followers. Even if rules and regulations explicitly prohibit unethical behaviors, tacit approval or reward by organizational leadership can indicate that unethical behavior is both expected and desirable (Langlais & Bent, 2013; Reidenbach & Robin, 1991).

While recent literature has called for a renewed examination of moral disengagement as a multi-level phenomenon between leaders and followers (Johnson & Buckley, 2014), it is unknown whether leaders are capable of intentionally influencing follower moral disengagement and ethical behavior. The current study seeks to answer these questions about the potential impact leaders have on follower moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking processes, and EDM.

Leader and Follower Moral Disengagement

While it is established leader ethical behavior and follower perceptions of leader ethicality can influence follower performance and behavior (Mayer, Kosalka, Moore & Folger, 2010; Trevino & Brown, 2005; White & Lean, 2007; Wimbush, 1999; Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004), almost no research has examined the impact of leader moral disengagement on follower moral disengagement and EDM. A single, unpublished dissertation by Palmer (2013) examined the impact of leader disengagement on follower justification of unethical behavior. In the study, an army officer either morally justified or condemned actions observed in a hypothetical ethical dilemma using a video battlefield scenario. Results showed a significant effect of leader moral justification on participant justification or disapproval of observed unethical behavior. However, the scope of the study fell short of explicitly manipulating moral disengagement mechanism type, and failed to examine subsequent follower moral disengagement and EDM.

Historical evidence from World War II and subsequent Nuremberg war crimes trials provide evidence that leader impact on follower moral disengagement is a real phenomenon (Andrus, 1969; Milgram, 1974). In a series of studies examining the dynamics involved in obedience to authority, Stanley Milgram (1969; 1974) demonstrated most individuals willingly comply with an authority figure's request even if it makes them highly uncomfortable. In light of Bandura's SCT (1986; 1999), the original study by Milgram (1969; 1974) and recent replication by Burger (2009) establish that leader-sanctioned disengagement has the capacity to inhibit follower EDM. Organizationally, leaders may pressure followers using authority, power, status, and social influence to commit crimes of obedience (Beu & Buckley, 2004). Leaders

often use political power to justify unethical behaviors and use existing organizational structures as well as promotion/reward systems to reduce follower perceptions of negative outcomes (Beu & Buckley, 2004). However, followers are not always unwittingly manipulated, and may become active participants in a leader's unethical activities by watching, learning, and emulating a leader's propensity for destructive behavior (Liu, Lam, & Loi, 2012; Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Moral Disengagement Mechanism Selection

We identified advantageous comparison and distortion of consequences as viable moral disengagement mechanisms to explore in this study. Both mechanisms are capable of being manipulated experimentally. Additionally they are likely to be used by leaders who have high levels of informational, ecological, and legitimate power to make educated situational comparisons and forecast consequences (Yukl, 2010). Furthermore, both mechanisms have been documented in several real-world examples of organizational moral disengagement by organizational leadership (Bandura, Caprara, & Zsolnai, 2000; White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009). Both mechanisms act in fundamentally different ways on disengagement of moral agency (Bandura, 1986; 1999).

Advantageous comparison initiates disengagement via cognitive reconstrual of unethical behavior while distortion of consequences distorts or minimizes possible negative consequences of unethical behaviors.

Prior research indicates that moral disengagement has a significant impact on the cognitive processes involved with moral self-sanctioning and EDM, and historical evidence shows leader moral disengagement may impact follower behavior. Despite

historical and theoretical evidence of leader disengagement impacting follower behavior, no research has examined whether or not leader moral disengagement can impact follower moral disengagement and EDM. This dissertation research seeks to address this gap in the moral disengagement and leadership literature by examining the effects of leader moral disengagement on follower moral disengagement and EDM.

With this in mind, I hypothesized the following:

H₁: When leaders use moral disengagement mechanisms to impact follower ethical behavior, followers will have higher levels of moral disengagement and poorer EDM than when leaders do not use moral disengagement mechanisms.

The moral disengagement literature has established that moral disengagement significantly impacts EDM and alters cognitive processes through cognitive reconstrual, obfuscation, and reduction of identification. However, what is less known is which and to what extent moral disengagement impacts specific ethical sensemaking processes. To date, no studies have determined whether moral disengagement mechanisms affect ethical sensemaking processes, and the current study seeks to delineate where and to what extent these relationships exist. In light of this gap in the literature, the following research question was proposed:

R₁: When leaders use moral disengagement mechanisms to impact follower ethical behavior, to what extent will moral disengagement mechanisms impact ethical sensemaking processes?

Influence Tactics, Leaders, and Followers

Influence Tactics Overview

Leaders may also impact follower sensemaking processes and behavior by influencing how followers gather, interpret, and apply information. One well-established strategy leaders use to impact follower behavior is via targeted influence tactics. Influence tactics are specific, behavioral strategies exercising bases of power to influence the actions of others, and have been called the “essence of leadership” (Yukl, 2010, p. 198). Proactive influence tactics are used to achieve an immediate task objective such as getting a resistant target to complete a task, support a proposal, or achieve compliance with a request (Yukl, 2010). Proactive influence tactics are particularly appropriate for this study because leaders often make requests of their subordinates, and unethical requests are often met with initial follower resistance. However, influence tactic effectiveness is largely dependent upon a leader’s obtained bases of power. Power can be derived from one’s official position, personal attributes such as expertise, friendships or loyalty, or a combination of the two (French & Raven, 1959; Yukl, 2010; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Leaders with high levels of expert or informational power would likely use rational persuasion, while leaders high in referent power would use tactics like coalition building or inspirational appeals. With this in mind, how might leaders use different proactive influence tactics to influence follower moral disengagement and EDM?

Leader Influence Tactics and Followers

The impact of leader influence tactics on follower behavior is acknowledged across multiple theories of leadership through empirical research and historical evidence

(Brown & Trevino, 2006; Hunter et al., 2011; Mumford, 2006; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Historical and theoretical evidence shows the tendency to obey authority figures is universal. People frequently defer authority to religious, organizational, judicial, and political leaders because of their legitimate authority (Milgram 1969; 1974). A review by Beu and Buckley (2004) demonstrated that politically astute leaders are masters of influence and authority. As such, unethical leaders often use legitimate authority to influence follower moral disengagement and ethical behavior. These manipulative leaders often achieve their unethical goals via follower crimes of obedience using positive vision formation, incentives to “sweeten the pot”, or unfettered access to valuable information to persuade followers. In short, astute leaders deliberately, for better or worse, use influence tactics to “guide” follower behavior.

The “carrot and stick” approach to influencing follower behavior is well established in both popular media and leadership theory. In popular media, the influence of reward and punishment (or lack thereof) significantly contributed to the recent U.S. financial crisis (Denning, 2011; Thomas, Hennessey, & Holtz-Eaki, 2011). The pressure of private financial leadership to profit from the housing bubble combined with lax U.S. financial regulations led both to an investment “frenzy” and eventual U.S. housing market crash (Jickling, 2010; FCIC, 2011; Kenaga, 2012; U.S. Senate, 2011). Loe, Ferrell, and Mansfield (2000), in a review of organizational EDM, found leaders use rewards to promote both ethical and unethical behavior. Followers are so sensitive to leader rewards and punishments that even indirect observations of other leader and follower interactions can influence follower behavior (Trevino & Brown, 2005).

Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007) note leaders with the greatest ability to dominate, control, and manipulate followers are often, unfortunately, the most destructive.

Expanding on Yukl's (2010) proposition that influence is a fundamental component of leadership, to what end leaders use influence often depends on the ethical intent and mental models of the agent (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Hunter et al., 2011; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Mumford, 2006). Frequently, leader archetypes significantly differ in prescriptive mental models through which they make sense of the world. Leaders gain understanding of the world around them via these prescriptive mental models, which impacts the substantive message communicated to their followers (Mumford, 2006; Strange & Mumford, 2002; 2005). The assumption that leaders engage in and communicate via the sensemaking processes is critical to the current study. Specifically, if relevant information is filtered through organizational leaders, and those leaders make sense of the world via differing prescriptive mental models, then follower sensemaking is likely reliant on information filtered through their leaders. Research demonstrates that leaders have the capacity to engage in both ethical and unethical behavior and to influence follower EDM (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Mumford, 2006; Surie & Ashley, 2007; Yukl, 2010). Similar to using tactics that compliment bases of power, leaders often use influence tactics complimentary to their prescriptive mental models (Griffith, Connelly, & Thiel, under review; Mumford, 2006; Mumford & Van Doorn, 2001; Strange & Mumford, 2002; Thoroughgood, Hunter, & Sawyer, 2010). However, it is unknown whether leaders can use influence tactics to influence follower moral disengagement or ethical sensemaking processes in an organizational context. The current study addresses this gap by

empirically examining how organizational leaders use influence tactics to impact follower moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking, and EDM.

Influence Tactic Selection

We identified three influence tactics, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion, to explore in this study. Each influence tactic is reported to be moderately to highly effective at achieving follower compliance, and used frequently by political and organizational leaders to achieve follower compliance (Yukl, 2010).

Furthermore, each tactic originates from different bases of power: Apprising/exchange tactics originate from reward and legitimate power, inspirational appeals from referent power, and rational persuasion from expert and informational power (Yukl, 2010; Yukl & Fable, 1991). Additionally, chosen influence tactics represent basic leader archetypes with differing prescriptive mental models and preference for influence tactics (e.g. charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leaders) (Griffith, Connelly, & Thiel, under review; Mumford, 2006). Charismatic leaders generally favor inspirational appeals, ideological leaders prefer transactional tactics like apprising and exchange, and pragmatic leaders prefer tactics of logical thinking and rational persuasion (Griffith, Connelly, Thiel, & under review; Mumford, 2006). Finally, tactics chosen were robust enough to be used in multiple leader interactions without becoming repetitive, overtly negative, or oppressive to followers.

Research shows leaders purposefully use their influence to impact follower decision making and behavior (Beu & Buckley, 2004; Milgram, 1969; 1974; Russell & Gregory, 2011). While influence is integral to leadership theory in more ways than one (Mumford, 2006; Yukl, 2010), no studies have examined how leader influence tactics

impact follower moral disengagement and EDM. To address this gap, I hypothesized the following:

H₂: When leaders use influence tactics to impact follower ethical behavior, followers will have higher levels of moral disengagement and poorer EDM than when leaders do not use influence tactics.

We also wanted to determine where and to what extent leader influence tactics impact follower sensemaking processes. Leaders have been shown to engage in sensemaking, as well as communicate goals and visions to followers through unique prescriptive mental models associated with sensemaking (Griffith, Connelly, & Thiel, under review; Mumford, 2006). Therefore, leaders may further use influence tactics to affect how followers engage in sensemaking during an ethical crisis. To date there has been no empirical examination of leader influence tactic use on follower ethical sensemaking processes. In response, the following research question was proposed:

R₂: When leaders use influence tactics to impact follower ethical behavior, to what extent will influence tactics impact ethical sensemaking processes?

Moral Disengagement and Influence Tactics

Our review has so far addressed the potential individual and relative impact leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics on follower moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking, and EDM. However, leader moral disengagement and influence tactics are likely used simultaneously in a complimentary manner. Milgram (1969; 1974) framed his findings in terms of obedience to authority while Russell and Gregory (2011) interpret the Milgram study as a function of moral disengagement whereby followers displaced responsibility for harming the “learner”

onto the lab technician. Influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms thought to be used by leaders in a cohesive, additive fashion to guarantee follower compliance. For example, Beu and Buckley (2004) posit politically astute leaders use political influence tactics to promote follower “crimes of obedience” via displacement of responsibility. Specifically, a leader’s deliberate use of concurrent moral disengagement and influence tactics may simultaneously reduce follower moral self-sanctions *and* alter follower ethical sensemaking processes. The follower not only fails to activate moral self-sanctions, but also fails to adequately gather and interpret relevant ethical information leading to poor ethical sensemaking and EDM. With this realization in mind, the following was hypothesized in the current study:

H₃: The joint influence of leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics will result in higher levels of follower moral disengagement and poorer EDM than either moral disengagement or leader influence tactics alone.

It is unclear whether leader moral disengagement mechanisms and influence tactics have an additive impact on follower ethical sensemaking processes. Individually, each leadership strategy has evidence demonstrating its effectiveness on follower behavior; however, the individual, additive, and differential impact of disengagement mechanisms and influence tactics on sensemaking processes are unknown. The use of disengagement mechanisms may reduce moral self-sanctioning, causing followers to frame situations as not having ethical implications and fail to engage in subsequent ethical sensemaking. Similarly, the use of specific influence tactics may impact sensemaking processes as followers gather, interpret, and apply information during an ethical crisis. In short, these strategies may have additive influences on follower ethical

sensemaking. In response to these questions raised about the additive relationship of leader disengagement and influence tactics on ethical sensemaking processes, I proposed the following hypothesis:

R₃: When leaders use influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms to jointly impact follower ethical behavior, to what extent will the use of multiple leader strategies impact ethical sensemaking processes?

Leaders and Susceptible Follower Types

While the primary focus of this study is to examine the impact of leader influence on follower behavior, a secondary focus is to better understand to what extent followers are susceptible to leader requests. Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, and Tate (2012) developed a taxonomy of follower's attributes showing why some followers are more vulnerable than others to destructive leader influence. The authors elaborate on two archetypes of followers, conformers and colluders, who are especially susceptible to leader influence. Conformers include those who accept unethical requests of a leader out of fear of reprisal or to preserve self-interests, such as losing their job, being passed over for promotions, or for not being a "team player" (Beu & Buckley, 2004; Detert & Edmonson, 2007; Kish-Gephart et al., 2013; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). It is important to note that conformers, if asked, would likely express recognition of and displeasure with their leader's attempt to influence followers to engage in unethical behavior. However, whether due to rigid perceptions of authority, a poor self-concept, or fear of reprisal, these conforming followers quiet their objections in order to not "rock the boat" at their personal expense. Conformers may cope with perceptions of unethical leadership via reduced work performance, engaging in psychological or

physical acts of defiance, or seeking to remove themselves from conflict (Cullen & Sackett, 2003; Gualandri, 2012; Meyer & Allen, 1984; Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

In contrast, colluders actively “drink the Kool-Aid” of their destructive leaders and provide support for their destructive leader’s mission (Crossman & Crossman, 2012; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012). These followers are often highly transactional in nature, focused on what a leader can do for them, and actively share the leader’s destructive vision because it benefits them. When asked, these individuals would vocally support their leader’s request or rationale as it either matches their own mental model or is of personal benefit to them. Furthermore, colluders would be less likely to experience negative affect, fear negative repercussions, or withdraw from typical job roles. Colluders not only accept the rationale a leader provides to influence them, but actively incorporate the leader’s mental model with their own.

The current study examined how leader influence strategies of proactive influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms might impact follower cognitions associated with leader conformity or collusion. With these questions in mind, I asked the following:

R₄: To what extent will leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics exert direct and interactive effects on follower cognitions associated with destructive follower archetypes?

Method

Design

The study used a 3 moral disengagement mechanism by 4 influence tactic repeated measures, fully-crossed design. Levels of moral disengagement included leader advantageous comparison, distortion of consequences, and no manipulation condition; levels of influence tactics included apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, rational persuasion, and no manipulation conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of twelve possible conditions in which they were either given no study manipulation, one study manipulation, or both study manipulations. Treatments in each condition were identical over the course of two counterbalanced low-fidelity scenarios. Responses to questions following each scenario were rated via expert raters and, after no order effects were identified, responses were combined into a single aggregate response score.

Sample

Students from a large Midwest university participated in the study to fulfill undergraduate psychology class research requirements. This course was a general education requirement and therefore participants represented a variety of undergraduate majors. A total of 278 participants fully completed the study. Due to the nature of online studies and associated high levels of participant attrition, participant data was only included in the final dataset if critical dependent measures were completed and the study was free of rushed or random responding. Responses were considered complete if the participant finished both manipulated scenarios even if they did not complete the preceding or following covariate scales. Random responding was defined as the

detection of systematic, obvious response patterns such as selection of identical answer choices despite reverse-coded questions, or completing the 90 minute self-paced study in less than 30 minutes. A total of 49 responses were considered incomplete, and 57 either showed evidence of random responding or completed the study in less than 30 minutes.

To determine whether or not specific conditions of the study systematically prevented participant completion or encouraged random responding, we examined our sample both before and after removing unusable participant data. An average of 4.75 ($SD = 2.13$) participants were removed from each of the 12 conditions for either incompleteness or random responding, and the final sample had no fewer than 20 participants per condition. Demographics before removing data were 71% female, 29% male with an average age of 19.73 years old. Demographic data after removing unusable data was very similar to original dataset demographics with participants being 70% female, 30% male, and an average age of 19.78 years.

Procedure

Participants signed up for the study through the university's SONA Systems website which automatically sent them a link to complete the study online via survey site Qualtrics.com. Upon logging onto the Qualtrics website, participants read and consented to participate using an online informed consent form. Consenting participants first completed a covariate battery measuring relevant individual differences related to moral disengagement, influence tactics, and ethical decision making. Participants were given a temporary job role and information regarding their role as an entry-level marketing associate in a large, multinational electronics conglomerate. The use of first-

person scenarios in decision making tasks is well documented as a successful, low-fidelity approach to embed participants into complex, cognitive tasks (Motowidlo, Dunnette, & Carter, 1990) and to assess ethical sensemaking processes (Bagdasarov, MacDougall, Johnson & Mumford, in press; Thiel et al., 2012; Thiel, Connelly, & Griffith, 2011; 2012).

Participants first read a short, single-paged introduction explaining the typical job role of an entry-level marketing associate, the structure of the organization including introducing their immediate supervisor, Thomas Dunne, and their history as an employee at Horizon Group. They were then presented with two ethical scenarios dealing with a variety of issues from marketing a faulty product to potentially invading the online privacy rights of their customers. Scenario presentation was counter-balanced to reduce possible order effects. Each condition received both scenarios with the same moral disengagement mechanism and/or influence tactic manipulated in both scenarios. Participants then completed a series of manipulation check questions and a demographics form. Finally, participants were directed to a website page that debriefed them on the nature of the study.

Scenarios

The study used two original scenarios placing the participant in an entry-level marketing associate position at a large conglomerate electronics company based in Dallas, Texas called Horizon Group. In both of the scenarios, the participant's immediate supervisor, Thomas Dunne, requests participants to complete a task that could be construed as unethical. In the scenario *Product Safety*, Thomas requests participants to approve the marketing campaign for a new holiday line of Ultrabook

laptops despite them not quite meeting quality and safety standards. In the second scenario, *Social Media Advertising*, Thomas tasks participants to create a presentation to adopt a new Google advertising service that would likely violate the online privacy rights of Horizon customers. Scenarios were standardized with the exception of the second-to-last paragraph, which was manipulated to include the use of leader moral disengagement and/or influence tactics (see Appendix C).

Manipulations

Leader Moral Disengagement

Two moral disengagement mechanisms, distortion of consequences and advantageous comparison, were manipulated in the EDM scenarios. Leader statements in each scenario depicted either distortion of consequences of the problem, advantageous comparison to an even worse ethical behavior, or used no disengagement mechanisms to persuade participants to complete an unethical request. All construct definitions were based on Bandura's (1986; 1999) moral disengagement theory, and were standardized to two sentences of content in the second-to-last paragraph of each scenario. For example, distortion of consequences manipulations for the *Product Safety* scenario included:

“Thomas mentions that the research and development department has been wrong many times before. He continues that even if there was an actual issue with the Ultrabook batteries, the worst that might happen would be customers returning or exchanging the laptop for another.”

Leader Influence Tactics

Three leader influence tactics manipulations were developed for the current study. Apprising/exchange tactics were manipulated by demonstrating how compliance would benefit the target personally, advance their career, or lead to future leader reciprocity. Inspirational appeals tactics were manipulated by leaders “painting” a vision of desirable outcomes with highly-energized, affective appeals to others’ values and ideals. Finally, rational persuasion tactics were manipulated by using logical arguments and factual evidence to influence followers. Definitions of each influence tactic were based on Yukl’s (2010) 11 identified proactive influence tactics. In the ethical scenarios, Thomas either used apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, rational persuasion, or no influence tactics to influence the participant to comply with an unethical request. Similar to disengagement manipulations, leader influence tactic manipulations were standardized to two sentences of content in the second-to-last paragraph of each scenario. For example, apprising/exchange manipulations for the *Product Safety* scenario included:

“[Thomas] mentions that yearly performance reports for his employees are due soon, and that finishing this marketing campaign could mean a large end-of-the-year bonus for everyone. He also hints that giving the “okay” for such a critical campaign would result in securing a future promotion.”

Conditions in which both leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactic content were manipulated received a combined four sentences of manipulated text in the second-to-last paragraph.

Dependent Variables

Open-Ended EDM Questions

Ethical decision making variables were measured by having participants respond to a series of six open-ended questions following each scenario. In each set of open-ended questions, participants were asked to identify several aspects of the ethical dilemma such as “What are the key causes of this situation”, “What are some possible outcomes of this situation”, and “What will your next steps be in this situation”. Each of the questions was designed to address key ethical sensemaking processes identified as being critical in successful ethical decision making including forecasting analysis, ethical decision making, and rationale (Mumford et al., 2008; 2006). Additionally, the open-ended EDM questionnaire was used to assess follower cognitions, follower moral disengagement, and follower EDM quality.

EDM coding procedures. Six senior Industrial/Organizational Psychology graduate students rated participant responses. Raters underwent a 20-hour training program designed to familiarize them with scenario content, dependent variables, appropriate benchmark usage, and training against common rater errors. Random samples of participant responses were selected and both teams rated the responses. Initial inter-rater reliability analyses were conducted to assess inter-rater agreement. Following the initial rating phase, raters engaged in group discussion to reach a consensus on variable benchmarks, and the rating and consensus phase was repeated until acceptable inter-rater reliabilities were achieved between all six raters. Due to the high number of cases required to be rated, raters were split into two teams and each team rated half of the participant responses chosen at random. At this point, ratings

were completed within each three-person team, and each team's dataset was analyzed for inter-rater reliability. Results indicate that both rating team one (*Product Safety* ICC > .76, *Social Media* ICC > .82) and rating team two (*Product Safety* ICC > .75, *Social Media* ICC > .82) had satisfactory levels of inter-rater reliability. Once team-specific rater reliability was assessed, the halved datasets were recombined into a single dataset and inter-rater reliability was assessed a final time across all six raters. Inter-rater reliabilities were satisfactory for both scenario one (ICC > .76) and scenario two (ICC > .83). Reliabilities for variables rated using binary ratings (e.g. moral disengagement mechanisms and follower cognitions) were assessed using the Fleiss' Kappa procedure for three or more raters of nominal data (Fleiss, 1971), finding satisfactory reliabilities for both scenario one ($\kappa > .94$) and scenario two ($\kappa > .85$).

Forecasting Valence

Forecasting valence was the degree to which responses forecasted positive or negative affective outcomes. Identification of positive or negative outcomes has been well-researched, with results indicating both positive and negative forecasts provide important information about potential contingencies and opportunities for basic planning (Hogarth & Makridakis, 1981; Mumford, Lonergan & Scott, 2001; Vincent, Decker, & Mumford, 2002; Xiao, Milgram, & Doyle, 1997) as well as ethical sensemaking and ethical decision making (Johnson et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2011; Stenmark et al., 2011). Raters measured forecasting valence using a 5-point scale (1 = *highly negative*, 5 = *highly positive*). Inter-rater reliability was good for scenario one (ICC = .77) and high for scenario two (ICC = .88).

Forecasting Quality.

Forecasting quality was the degree to which outcomes displayed detail, relevance to the scenario, considered critical aspects, and were realistic. Forecasting quality has been identified as being an important component of improved ethical sensemaking (Mumford et al., 2008) and ethical decision making (Harkrider et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2012; Stenmark et al., 2011). Quality of forecasted outcomes were assessed using a 5-point scale (1 = *poor quality*, 5 = *very good quality*). Inter-rater reliability for both scenario one (ICC = .82) and scenario two (ICC = .86) were high.

Ethical Decision Making Quality

Ethical decision making quality referred to how effectively a participant's response 1) considered the welfare of themselves and others, 2) took into consideration personal responsibilities and duties, 3) and acknowledged one's social obligations, rules, norms, and laws (Mumford et al., 2008; 2006) Ethical decision making quality was rated by response raters on a 5-point scale (1 = *very low ethicality*, 5 = *very high ethicality*). Inter-rater reliability for scenario one (ICC = .85) and two (ICC = .84) were very good.

Moral Disengagement Variables

While the current study involved the manipulation of leader moral disengagement, one of the main goals of the current study was to determine if and how leader moral disengagement impacted follower moral disengagement (Johnson & Buckley, 2014). As a result, response raters also coded participant's final ethical response and rationale for the two moral disengagement mechanisms manipulated in the

study using Bandura's (1986; 1999) construct definitions based on moral disengagement theory.

Follower advantageous comparison. The mechanism advantageous comparison was defined as the cognitive reconstrual of unethical behavior by comparing it to an even more unethical alternative, making the original behavior appear more acceptable by comparison (Bandura, 1986; 1999). Response raters recorded whether or not advantageous comparison was present in the participant's response and rationale via a "yes" or "no" dichotomous coding format. Fleiss' Kappa reliabilities were very high for both scenario one ($\kappa = 1.00$) and scenario two ($\kappa = .89$).

Follower distortion/disregard for consequences. Disregard or distortion of consequences involved manipulating, reducing, distorting, or simply disregarding the outcomes like to result from one's unethical behavior (Bandura, 1986; 1999). Raters recorded whether or not distortion/disregard of consequences was present in a participant's response and rationale via a "yes" or "no" dichotomous coding format. Fleiss' Kappa for scenario one ($\kappa = 1.00$) and scenario two ($\kappa = .94$) were very high.

Follower Cognitions Variables

The use of open-ended participant responses also allowed for the examination of multiple employee cognitive variables relevant to moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking, and EDM. Employee cognition variables were limited to cognitions of participants indicating perception of leader threat, a desire to withdraw from the ethical dilemma or company, and evidence of conforming or colluding with the leader's proposed rationale (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Perceptions of leader threat. Perceptions of leader threat were defined as whether or not participants indicated fear of being terminated, punished, or having promotions or future benefits withheld from them as a result of declining Thomas's unethical request. Raters recorded whether or not perceptions of leader threat were present in a participant's response and rationale via a "yes" or "no" dichotomous coding format. Fleiss' Kappa reliabilities for scenario one ($\kappa = .95$) and scenario two ($\kappa = .89$) were very high.

Desire to withdraw. Desire for employees to withdraw was defined as whether or not participants indicated a desire to avoid work tasks and responsibilities, to remove one's self from the ethical conflict or organization, or thoughts/actions pertaining to disrupting organizational services via psychological or physical defiance. Raters recorded desire to withdraw in a participant's response and rationale via a "yes" or "no" dichotomous coding format. Fleiss' Kappa reliability estimates for scenario one ($\kappa = .98$) and scenario two ($\kappa = .86$) were very good.

Follower conformity. Follower conformity was defined as the degree to which participants indicated passive acceptance of Thomas's provided rationale to engage in unethical behavior. Passive acceptance did not necessarily indicate employee internalization of Thomas's rationale, but instead the acceptance of the request coming from a legitimate authority figure. Responses ranged from outright refusal to comply with Thomas to complete conformity with Thomas's rationale, and raters measured these responses via a 5-point scale (1 = *none to very little follower conformism*, 5 = *extensive follower conformism*). Inter-rater reliability for scenario one (ICC = .93) and scenario two (ICC = .92) were high.

Follower collusion. Follower collusion was defined as the degree to which participants actively internalized and championed the unethical rationale Thomas provided. Unlike follower conformity, follower collusion indicated active participation and approval of an unethical leader's agenda, and was an indicator of the degree to which individuals were willing to collude with unethical leaders (Crossman & Crossman, 2012; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Responses for follower collusion ranged from refusal to collude to enthusiastic collusion and even elaboration on top of Thomas's rationale. Raters measured participant responses of follower collusion on a 5-point scale (1 = *none to very little follower collusion*, 5 = *extensive follower collusion*). Inter-rater reliability for scenario one (ICC = .84) and two (ICC = .86) were good.

Individual Difference Covariates

Participants completed a short battery of five individual difference covariate measures known to influence moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking processes, and EDM. The first covariate measure, the Influence Behavior Questionnaire, measured a follower's leader influence tactic preference (Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez, 2008). The next three measures measured important trait levels of moral disengagement as well as two individual difference factors, trait empathy and cynicism, established to significantly impact participant trait moral disengagement (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008; Johnson & Connelly, under review; Moore et al., 2012). A final individual difference variable, gender, was included due to the propensity for females to respond more ethically than males (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008).

Leader Influence Tactic Preference

A follower's leader influence tactic preference was defined as the single or multiple proactive influence tactics followers preferred leaders to use in downward leader-follower interactions (Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez, 2008). The Target Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ-T) provided participants with 44 statements modified to indicate follower preference of a leader's use of 11 previously-validated influence tactics (Yukl, 2010; Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez, 2008). Questions related to the four relevant influence tactics in this study (e.g. apprising, exchange, rational persuasion, and inspirational appeals) were used to assess participant trait influence tactic preference. Examples of statements used included preference for a leader who "Uses facts and logic to make a persuasive case for a request or proposal" (rational persuasion) or "Describes a clear, inspiring vision of what a proposed project or change could accomplish" (inspirational appeals). Participants indicated the degree to which they preferred leaders using each tactic using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *to a great extent*). Overall scale reliability was high ($\alpha = .83$), and individual influence tactic sub-scale reliabilities ranged from acceptable to high ($\alpha = .64$ to $\alpha = .84$); sub-scale reliabilities were lower largely because they consisted of only four questions each.

Trait Moral Disengagement

Trait moral disengagement was defined as the stable, enduring levels of endorsement of eight moral disengagement mechanisms defined by Bandura (1986; 1999). Bandura's Moral Disengagement Measure (BMDM), previously adapted by Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) for use with adults, was a 32-item measure that measured all eight moral disengagement mechanisms. Questions included those such as

“It’s ok to attack someone who threatens your family’s honor” (moral justification) and “A member of a group or team should not be blamed for the trouble the team caused” (diffusion of responsibility) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Overall scale reliability was very high ($\alpha = .89$) and family clusters of disengagement mechanisms (e.g. cognitive reconstrual type, obscuring/distorting type, and identification reduction type mechanisms) also demonstrated satisfactory scale reliability ($\alpha = .72$ to $.82$).

Trait Cynicism

Trait cynicism was defined as a one’s stable, enduring level of negative expectations regarding general human behavior and innate mistrust of others (Wrightsman, 1964; 1974). Wrightsman’s 10-item Revised Philosophies of Human Nature subscale was used to assess level of participant trait cynicism, requiring participants to indicate agreement with statements such as “Most people would tell a lie if they could gain by it” on a 5-point Likert scale, (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) (Wrightsman, 1964; 1974). Reliability results indicated a high level of scale reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

Trait Empathy

Follower trait empathy was defined as one’s enduring ability to comprehend, understand, and share affective responses/states experienced by other individuals (Eisenberg, 1986; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Trait empathy was measured using a 10-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool, and participants responded to questions on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very inaccurate* to 5 = *very accurate*) such as “I

am easily moved to tears” (Goldberg et al., 2006). The IPIP trait empathy scale demonstrated high levels of scale reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

Gender

Gender referred to a participant’s self-identified biological sex. Gender has been shown to significantly impact ethical decision making quality with females being, on average, more ethical than males (Ambrose & Schminke, 1999; O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008). As a result, participants were asked to indicate their gender in a demographics form. All 278 participants in the final dataset provided their stated gender as either male or female.

Analyses

Hypotheses and research questions were tested via a series of multivariate (MANCOVA) and univariate (ANCOVA) analyses, and examined the direct and interactive impact of independent variables moral disengagement and influence tactics on dependent variables moral disengagement, ethical sensemaking, ethical decision making, and follower cognitions. Furthermore, order of presentation was initially used to test for potential order effects but proved to not be a significant covariate for any analysis. Participant scores from of both scenarios were averaged to achieve an overall score for each variable. A total of five covariates were used to partial out extraneous influences between independent and dependent variables, and only significant covariate influences are reported in final analyses. Multivariate influences were measured using the Wilk’s Lambda procedure and intergroup differences were examined using the Tukey’s LSD post-hoc comparison procedure.

Results

Prior to testing proposed hypotheses and research questions, inter-correlations between independent, covariate, and dependent variables were examined (Table 2). Several variables demonstrated a significant degree of inter-correlation between one another, indicating possible systematic differences due to study manipulations and other statistical relationships. Bearing this in mind, we proceeded with planned analyses.

Analyses were divided into three general steps. The first set of analyses addressed how the presence versus absence of leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics would direct and jointly impact dependent variables. The second set of analyses examined the relative impact of no leader strategies (e.g. control), a single leader strategy (e.g. either leader moral disengagement or influence tactic), or both leader strategies on dependent variables. The third and final set of analyses examined the direct and joint impact of specific moral disengagement mechanisms and influence tactics strategies on dependent variables (e.g. fully-articulated model).

Examination of the Impact of Leader Strategy Presence and Absence

A series of MANCOVAs and ANCOVAs were used to examine if the presence of leader moral disengagement or influence tactics, regardless of specific mechanism or tactic, had any direct or joint impact on dependent variables. To test these hypotheses and research questions, participant responses were collapsed into a 2 moral disengagement (present, absent) x 2 influence tactic (present, absent) factorial design.

Moral Disengagement Mechanisms

A MANCOVA design was used to examine the effects of leader moral disengagement and/or influence tactics on participant disengagement via advantageous

comparison and distortion of consequences. For this analysis, participant moral disengagement strategies advantageous comparison and distortion of consequences were the dependent variables, and moral disengagement (present, absent) and influence tactics (present, absent) were the independent variables.

The MANCOVA showed no significant multivariate effect of leader disengagement or influence tactic presence on either moral disengagement mechanism, nor were there univariate effects on mechanism advantageous comparison. While no univariate effect was found for advantageous comparison, ANCOVA analyses showed a significant direct effect of leader influence tactics after controlling for trait moral disengagement ($F(1, 261) = 7.34, p < .008, \eta^2_p = .03$) on dependent variable distortion of consequences, $F(1, 261) = 4.05, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .02$. Participants were significantly more likely to engage in distortion of consequences when leader influence tactics were present ($M = .08, SD = .19$) than when absent ($M = .04, SD = .16$) (Table 3). This provided partial support for hypothesis two.

Forecasting Analysis

To examine the effects of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics on participant forecasting performance we used a MANCOVA design. Forecasting valence and quality were the dependent variables while leader moral disengagement (present, absent) and leader influence tactics (present, absent) were designated independent variables. While no multivariate nor univariate effects were found for forecasting quality, there was a significant univariate trend, after controlling for the covariate influence of gender ($F(1, 259) = 9.66, p < .003, \eta^2_p = .04$), for leader influence tactics on forecasting valence, $F(1, 259) = 3.56, p = .06, \eta^2_p = .01$. When leaders used

influence tactics participants were more likely to have positive forecasts ($M = 2.30$, $SD = .72$) than when no influence tactics were used ($M = 2.12$, $SD = .74$) (Table 3). This provided information regarding research questions one and two.

Follower Cognitions

We used a MANCOVA approach to examine the effects leader moral disengagement and influence tactics had on follower cognitions. For this analysis, follower conformity and follower collusion were dependent variables, and leader moral disengagement (present, absent) and leader influence tactics (present, absent) were independent variables. Analyses found a multivariate effect approaching significance, $F(2, 262) = 2.84$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Looking at this relationship at the univariate level, a significant direct effect of leader moral disengagement was identified for both follower conformity ($F(1, 263) = 5.61$, $p < .02$, $\eta^2_p = .02$) and follower collusion ($F(1, 263) = 3.94$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .02$). Results indicate participants were more likely to conform to a leader's request when leaders used moral disengagement mechanisms ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.03$) compared to when they did not ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .79$). Furthermore, participants were also more likely to actively collude with a leader when leaders used moral disengagement mechanisms ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .74$) compared to when they did not ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .58$) (Table 4). This provided information regarding research question four.

Overall Ethicality

An ANCOVA approach was used to examine the impact moral disengagement mechanisms or influence tactics would have on overall EDM quality. For this analysis, EDM was the dependent variable and moral disengagement (present, absent) and influence tactics (present, absent) were the independent variables. Analysis results

indicated covariates trait cynicism ($F(1, 261) = 9.33, p < .003, \eta^2_p = .04$) and influence tactic preference for rational persuasion ($F(1, 261) = 7.48, p < .008, \eta^2_p = .03$) had a significant impact on EDM quality. After accounting for any significant covariate influences, analysis results approached significance for a direct effect of influence tactics, $F(1, 261) = 3.43, p = .065, \eta^2_p = .01$. Participants had higher quality EDM responses when influence tactics were absent ($M = 2.86, SD = .75$) than when influence tactics were present ($M = 2.66, SD = .72$) (Table 3). This provided partial support for hypothesis two.

Evaluation of the Additive Effect of Multiple Leader Strategies

A series of MANCOVA and ANCOVA statistical tests were used to determine the additive impact the presence of no, one, or both leader strategies on participant responses. To test this hypothesis and research question, participant responses were collapsed into three leader strategy groups: 1) no strategies present (e.g. control group), 2) one strategy present (e.g. moral disengagement *or* influence tactic) present or 3) both strategies present. This approach was used to determine the potential additive impact, regardless of specific mechanism or tactic, of both strategies on follower responses.

Moral Disengagement Mechanisms

A MANCOVA design was used to determine the impact of no leader strategy, one leader strategy, or both leader strategies on participant advantageous comparison and distortion of consequences. Multivariate as well as follow-up univariate and pairwise comparison analyses were non-significant.

Forecasting Analysis

We used a MANCOVA design to determine the relative impact of no leader strategy, one leader strategy, or both leader strategies on participant forecasting valence and quality. For this analysis, variables forecasting valence and forecasting quality were dependent variables and the presence of no leader strategy, one leader strategy, or both leader strategies was the independent variable. Results from the multivariate analysis as well as the follow-up univariate analysis was not significant for forecasting quality after accounting for the significant covariate influence of gender ($F(1, 261) = 7.31, p < .008, \eta^2_p = .03$). However, a significant trend was identified in the univariate analysis for forecasting valence, $F(2, 261) = 2.66, p = .07, \eta^2_p = .02$. Group means comparisons showed participants gave more positive forecasts when leaders used both influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms ($M = 2.33, SD = .72$) compared to when they used neither strategy ($M = 1.99, SD = .68$) (Table 5). This provided information regarding research question three.

Follower Cognitions

A MANCOVA design was used to determine the relative impact of no leader strategy, one leader strategy, or both leader strategies on participant follower cognitions. In this analysis we examined the influence of no leader strategies, one leader strategy, or both leader strategies on two sets of dependent variables: 1) perception of leader threat and desire to withdraw as well as 2) follower conformity and follower collusion. Neither multivariate nor univariate analyses were statistically significant. This provided information regarding research question four.

Overall Ethicality

An ANCOVA design was used to examine the relative impact of no leader strategy, a single leader strategy, or both leader strategies on participant EDM. Analysis results indicated a significant covariate influence of trait cynicism ($F(1,263) = 8.53, p < .006, \eta^2_p = .03$) on participant EDM. After accounting for significant covariate influences, analysis results indicated a significant direct effect of leader strategy use on EDM, $F(2, 263) = 5.31, p < .006, \eta^2_p = .04$. Group means analyses showed several significant differences between conditions. Participant EDM quality was significantly lower when exposed to both leader moral disengagement and influence tactics ($M = 2.58, SD = .73$) than when exposed to only one leader strategy ($M = 2.83, SD = .71$), or no leader strategies, ($M = 2.90, SD = .76$). While there was no significant difference found between those exposed to one leader strategy versus no leader strategies, this may be due to the relatively small sample size of those who received neither strategy ($n = 23$) (Table 5). Results provided partial support for hypothesis three.

Examination of the Full Impact of Moral Disengagement and Influence Tactics

The final set of analyses examined the direct and joint impact of all moral disengagement and influence tactics conditions on dependent variables (e.g. fully-articulated model). To test these hypotheses and research questions, a 3 moral disengagement (control, advantageous comparison, distortion of consequences) by 4 (control, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, rational persuasion) factorial design was used. A series of MANCOVA and ANCOVA designs were used to examine the direct and joint impact of the full model of moral disengagement mechanisms and leader influence tactics on study variables.

Moral Disengagement Mechanisms

A MANCOVA design was used to determine the direct and joint influence of leader moral disengagement and influence tactic conditions had on follower moral disengagement advantageous comparison and distortion of consequences. For this analysis, moral disengagement strategies advantageous comparison and distortion of consequences were the dependent variables, and moral disengagement (control, advantageous comparison, and distortion of consequences) and influence tactics (control, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion) were the independent variables.

The multivariate analysis indicated no multivariate effect of leader disengagement or influence tactic presence on overall follower moral disengagement. Additionally, after controlling trait empathy for mechanism advantageous comparison ($F(1, 261) = 9.64, p < .003, \eta^2_p = .04$) and trait moral disengagement for mechanism distortion of consequences ($F(1, 261) = 8.75, p < .004, \eta^2_p = .04$) there were no overall univariate effects. However, group means analyses delineated a single, significant difference within the variable of leader influence tactics. Specifically, participants were significantly more likely to engage in distortion of consequences when leaders used influence tactic rational persuasion ($M = .09, SD = .22$) than when leaders used no influence tactics ($M = .03, SD = .15$) (Table 6). Results provided partial support for hypothesis three.

Forecasting Analysis

A MANCOVA design was used to examine the direct and joint influence of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics conditions on forecasting analysis

variables. Participant forecasting valence and quality were dependent variables while moral disengagement (control, advantageous comparison, and distortion of consequences) and influence tactics (control, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion) were designated independent variables. While multivariate and univariate analyses yielded no results for forecasting quality, there was a significant direct impact of leader influence tactics on follower forecasting valence ($F(3, 251) = 2.97, p < .04, \eta^2_p = .03$) after factoring out the covariate influences of trait empathy ($F(1, 251) = 3.89, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .02$) and gender ($F(1, 261) = 11.83, p < .002, \eta^2_p = .05$).

Group means analyses showed that participants had significantly more positive forecasts when leaders used apprising/exchange influence tactics ($M = 2.43, SD = .62$) compared to conditions using rational persuasion ($M = 2.23, SD = .76$), inspirational appeals ($M = 2.24, SD = .77$), or no tactics ($M = 2.12, SD = .74$) (Table 6). This provided information regarding research question three.

Follower Cognitions

We used a series of MANCOVA analyses to examine the direct and joint effects of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics on two sets of variables: 1) Perception of leader threat and desire to withdraw as well as 2) follower conformity and follower collusion. In the first analysis, both perceptions of leader threat and desire to withdraw were designated as dependent variables. In the second analysis, both follower conformity and follower collusion were designated dependent variables. In both analyses moral disengagement (control, advantageous comparison, and distortion of consequences) and influence tactics (control, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion) were the independent variables.

With regard to variables perceptions of leader threat and desire to withdraw, neither the multivariate nor the univariate analyses yielded significant results. However, group means analyses delineated multiple pairwise differences between conditions of influence tactics on perceptions of leader threat. Specifically, participants had significantly higher levels of perceived threat when leaders used apprising/exchange tactics ($M = .48, SD = .39$) compared to when leaders used rational persuasion ($M = .36, SD = .41$) or inspirational appeals tactics ($M = .32, SD = .39$) (Table 6). This provided information regarding research question four.

A significant multivariate effect was found for follower conformity and collusion ($F(4, 508) = 2.69, p < .04, \eta^2_p = .02$). Examining results at the univariate level, a significant effect of leader moral disengagement was found for follower conformity ($F(2, 255) = 4.76, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .04$). Group means comparisons for follower conformity showed that when leaders used moral disengagement mechanism distortion of consequences ($M = 1.91, SD = 1.09$) participants were significantly more likely to conform to a leader's rationale than when no disengagement mechanisms were used ($M = 1.48, SD = .79$) (Table 7).

A marginal significant direct effect for moral disengagement on follower collusion was found ($F(2, 255) = 2.84, p = .06, \eta^2_p = .02$). A closer examination of leader moral disengagement on follower collusion showed participants were more likely to actively collude with a leader when leaders used distortion of consequences ($M = 1.53, SD = .82$) compared to when no mechanisms were used ($M = 1.29, SD = .58$). Furthermore, results also indicated a significant joint effect of leader moral

disengagement and leader influence tactics on follower collusion, $F(6, 255) = 2.31, p < .04, \eta^2_p = .05$.

A series of Tukey's LSD post-hoc analyses were performed to better understand the joint effect of leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics on follower collusion (Figure 1). The nature of the interaction was such that participants were significantly more likely to collude with leaders when distortion of consequences was used by itself ($M = 1.71, SD = 1.03$) than when advantageous comparison was used alone ($M = 1.31, SD = .61$), or no mechanisms were used ($M = 1.17, SD = .36$). Furthermore, participants were also more likely to collude with leaders when distortion of consequences was paired with apprising/exchange ($M = 1.71, SD = 1.02$) than when advantageous comparison was paired with apprising/exchange ($M = 1.12, SD = .37$), or apprising/exchange with no disengagement mechanism ($M = 1.35, SD = .66$). In contrast, participants were more likely to collude with leaders when advantageous comparison was paired with rational persuasion ($M = 1.54, SD = .85$) than when distortion of consequences was paired with rational persuasion ($M = 1.19, SD = .36$), but not when rational persuasion was used alone ($M = 1.25, SD = .45$) (Table 8). There were no significant differences for any moral disengagement condition paired with tactic inspirational appeals with regard to follower collusion. This provided information regarding research question four.

Overall Ethicality

An ANCOVA design was used to examine the direct and joint influences of leader moral disengagement and influence tactics on follower EDM quality. For this analysis, EDM was the dependent variable and moral disengagement (control,

advantageous comparison, and distortion of consequences) and influence tactics (control, apprising/exchange, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion) were the independent variables. After partialing out the significant covariate influences of trait cynicism ($F(1, 253) = 8.97, p < .004, \eta^2_p = .03$) and influence tactic preference for rational persuasion ($F(1, 253) = 8.08, p < .006, \eta^2_p = .03$), univariate results were not significant. However, several pairwise comparisons were significant, indicating that participants had significantly lower response ethicality when leaders used distortion of consequences ($M = 2.59, SD = .78$) than when they did not ($M = 2.84, SD = .70$). Furthermore, post-hoc analyses also showed that participants had lower response ethicality when inspirational appeals ($M = 2.59, SD = .77$) or rational persuasion ($M = 2.65, SD = .69$) were present as opposed to absent ($M = 2.86, SD = .75$) (Table 7). This provided partial support for both hypothesis one and hypothesis two.

Discussion

Key Findings

The current study examined how leader influence strategies such as moral disengagement and influence tactics impacted follower ethical sensemaking, moral disengagement, and ethical decision-making. Our findings provide valuable contributions to the fields of moral disengagement, proactive leader influence, followership, and organizational ethical decision making. Results provide evidence that leaders impact followers' ethical cognitions and decision-making during times of ethical crisis via deliberate use of moral disengagement and influence tactic strategies. Overall, study results indicated that moral disengagement mechanisms and influence tactics consistently impacted the same processes, cognitions, and behaviors. Leader moral

disengagement, leader influence tactics, and the combination of both strategies resulted in greater follower moral disengagement, more positive forecasting, destructive follower cognitions, and lower follower ethicality.

Interestingly, it was leader influence tactics not leader moral disengagement that consistently impacted follower moral disengagement. While leader moral disengagement did little to influence follower disengagement, participants consistently distorted more consequences when leaders used influence tactics compared to no tactics. Trait moral disengagement was consistently a significant covariate when looking at participant moral disengagement; removal of a participant's propensity to morally disengage may explain a lack of significant effects of leader moral disengagement on participant moral disengagement. An alternative interpretation, however, is that proactive leader influence tactics are more effective at altering participant behavior by attempting to achieve follower compliance rather than reduce the ethicality of the situation (Yukl, 2010). Regardless of the method (e.g. moral disengagement) leaders use to suggest followers pursue an unethical course of action; it is the perceived pressure to comply by the follower that likely results in unethical follower behavior (Beu & Buckley, 2004; Mumford, 2006). The current study found that rational persuasion was particularly effective at making participants morally disengage. Furthermore, rational persuasion and inspirational appeals were associated with lower ethical decision making. Interestingly, while apprising/exchange tactics simultaneously increased participant forecasting valence (e.g. positive affect) and perceived leadership threat (e.g. negative affect), rational persuasion did not. One possible explanation is that the absence of affect associated with rational persuasion

allowed participants to dismiss affective cues triggered by other affect-laden influence tactics like inspirational appeals and disengage via distortion of consequences. These results indicate that influence tactics have specific, differing effects on ethical sensemaking processes.

Leader influence tactics also had a consistent impact on follower forecasting analysis. While forecasting quality was not influenced by leader influence tactics, participant forecasts were significantly more positive when leaders used apprising/exchange tactics than when any other tactics, or no tactics were used. Interestingly, however, apprising/exchange tactic use also resulted in significantly higher levels of perceived leadership threat by participants compared to any other influence tactic condition. Participants simultaneously predicted more positive outcomes, but also considered the negative implications of failure to comply with their leader's request. It is likely participants weighed salient pros and cons of compliance (e.g. promotion, bonus) versus non-compliance (e.g. retaliation, being terminated). These findings are consistent with the destructive leadership literature which states individuals may consider compliance out of fear of reprisal or willfully collude to preserve one's self-interests (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

This explanation is further supported by a significantly higher level of collusion with leaders when leader distortion of consequences was paired with apprising/exchange tactics. This combination of influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms is likely very potent, with leader distortion of consequences allowing participants to disregard negative outcomes in favor of tangible, positive ones.

However, positive forecasts are a double-edged sword, with positive forecasts having additive utility when participants *also* forecast necessary potential negative outcomes (Patalano & Siefert, 1997; Stenmark et al., 2011). In contrast, overly-positive forecasts absent of simultaneous negative outcome identification are associated with novice, inexperienced forecasters and overall poor decision making quality (Xiao, Milgram, & Doyle, 1997). Because we did not see substantive changes in forecast quality, we categorize this increase in positive forecasts to be detrimental. An adept leader's use of incentives to influence followers who already lack developed forecasting skills is potentially very powerful, especially when paired with disengagement mechanisms that facilitate distortion of negative consequences.

Study results indicated participants were more likely to conform and collude with their leaders when leaders used moral disengagement mechanism distortion of consequences compared to when no mechanisms were used. Destructive leadership literature notes that followers often defer to the legitimate and expert authority of their leaders even when they do not agree with the leader's requests, whether out of fear of reprisal or feigned ignorance (Crossman & Crossman, 2012; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). Study results also showed an interaction between leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics on follower collusion. While participants were more likely to conform or collude when leaders used distortion of consequences, collusion results were reliant upon the influence tactics leaders used. Distortion of consequences was most effective at increasing participant collusion when used alone or with apprising/exchange tactics, but significantly less effective than mechanism advantageous comparison when paired with rational persuasion. Differences were

likely due to the manner in which distortion of consequences complimented or failed to compliment leader influence tactics.

For example, the active distortion or dismissal of negative consequences is likely more effective by itself rather than advantageous comparison, which actively compares the outcomes of two unethical courses of action (Bandura, 1986; 1999). This relative difference in mechanism efficacy is evidenced by the general domination of distortion of consequences across multiple dependent variables compared to advantageous comparison. The addition of leader apprising/exchange tactics likely also compliments the disengagement “style” of distortion of consequences by further distorting and minimizing negative outcomes. In contrast, the active comparison of unethical actions likely compliments the logical presentation of data, facts, and logic of rational persuasion. No significant differences were identified between disengagement/tactic pairs on participant collusion for inspirational appeals, but a visual examination of the data indicates inspirational appeals were similarly effective when paired with either moral disengagement mechanism or by itself (see Figure 1). Ultimately, inspirational appeals may work well with multiple disengagement mechanisms because it involves both a fixation on positive, desirable outcomes while dismissing or minimizing the focus on negative outcomes (Yukl & Michel, 2006; Yukl, 2010).

Both influence tactics and moral disengagement mechanisms significantly impacted participant ethical decision making. Participant ethicality was significantly lower when leaders used mechanism distortion of consequences, influence tactic inspirational appeals, or influence tactic rational persuasion compared to no

manipulations. However, these three significant findings were each mutually exclusive from one another as evidenced by the lack of any interaction. The causal link between moral disengagement and decreased ethical decision making is well established (Bandura, 1986; 1999; Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008; Johnson & Connelly, under review; Moore et al., 2012). Overall, it was leader distortion of consequences that drove many significant findings, including participant ethicality. This pattern may be due to the comparatively easy task of distorting/dismissing negative outcomes versus acknowledging an unethical request and actively comparing it to another unethical example. Furthermore, distortion of negative consequences is relatively absolute in contrast to advantageous comparison. While distortion/dismissal of consequences is relatively absolute, what is an adequate comparison to a leader may not be sufficient to their followers. Participants may not have agreed with the leader's comparison, lessening the effect of advantageous comparison in relation to distortion of consequences. In short, advantageous comparison may not be a viable leader moral disengagement strategy, and better suited for self-disengagement as mechanism effectiveness is reliant upon subjective comparison.

Influence tactics rational persuasion and inspirational appeals also had a significant impact on participant ethicality. Rational persuasion consistently resulted in participant moral disengagement across analyses, and higher levels of moral disengagement have been repeatedly associated with unethical decision making (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008; Johnson & Connelly, under review; Moore et al., 2012). While findings for rational persuasion are relatively straight-forward, the significant influence of inspirational appeals on ethical decision making are not. Inspirational

appeals did not significantly influence any other variable of interest, and yet participant ethicality was significantly impacted by leaders who used inspirational appeals. In fact, participants exposed to leader inspirational appeals had the lowest ethicality score of all influence tactic conditions, and this may indicate just how insidious inspirational appeals and associated personalized, charismatic leader types can be (Mumford, 2006). Personalized charismatic leaders often engage in vision formation to influence followers, and this may be a powerful influence tactic by itself as it not only distorts negative consequences of unethical behavior, but also compares a vision of success versus failure while accentuating positive affect upon goal attainment.

Because inspirational appeals is affect-laden, future studies should expand the examination of inspirational appeals paired to mechanisms likely to elicit affective responses such as dehumanization (disgust) and moral justification (anger, contempt) (Haidt, 2003). Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl (2004) examined how President George W. Bush's use of charismatic language stirred populist rhetoric and support for going to war following September 11th. Similarly, Aquino and colleagues (2007) identified how affective reactions to September 11th resulted in the dehumanization of Al-Qaeda prisoners and moral justification of war as a "holy war" (McAlister, Bandura, & Owen, 2006). Adolph Hitler, the quintessential personalized charismatic leader, often used inspirational appeals coupled with dehumanization and moral justification to "inspire" his followers and persuade them to commit horrific acts against fellow human beings (Andrus, 1969; Milgram, 1969; 1974; Mumford, 2006).

Limitations

Before discussing the theoretical and practical implication of study findings, some study limitations should first be noted. First, the current study was conducted online using a scenario-based presentation format. As a result, we experienced a high level of incomplete and random participant responses which were filtered out of our final participant sample. A comparison of our initial and final study sample, however, showed incomplete and random participant responses was primarily a function of random participant attrition and not due to systematic issues with the survey instrument or content. Future examinations should weigh the pros and cons of administering an open-ended ethical decision making study online versus in person.

Second, dependent variables were assessed using the systematic ratings of expert raters. The use of expert raters is well-established in case-based studies as a viable method of assessing in-depth, cognitive participant responses (Bagdasarov, McDougall, Johnson, & Mumford, in press; Kim et al., 2006; Mumford et al., 2008; 2006; Harkrider et al., 2012), especially with adequate frame-of-reference training (Bernardin & Buckley, 1981). Although multiple open-ended questions were used to assess steps in the ethical sensemaking processes, open-ended responses generally capture the result of cognitive processes, not the cognitive process itself. Future studies might consider alternative methods of recording participant cognitions as they occur such as think-aloud protocols or observation of interpersonal experimental manipulations.

Finally, the current study examined only two types of leader moral disengagement mechanisms and three types of leader influence tactics. There are eight

moral disengagement mechanisms (Bandura, 1986; 1999) and eleven proactive leader influence tactics (Yukl & Michel, 2006; Yukl, 2010). Therefore, it is possible participants perceived the presence of implied influence tactics or disengagement mechanisms in addition to those we explicitly manipulated and measured. Additionally, dependent variables examined moral disengagement transfer of two mechanisms to followers, but did not consider the unprompted appearance of additional, reactive disengagement mechanisms likely to originate in followers (James & Buckley, 2014). Future studies should examine whether or not destructive leader behavior can result in the “spontaneous” emergence of various moral disengagement mechanisms in followers.

Implications

Despite the noted study limitations, this study provides both theoretical and practical implications regarding the complex, interactive nature of leaders, followers, and the strategies unethical leaders rely on during ethical crises to gain follower compliance. Furthermore, this study acts as a starting point to bridge multiple fields (e.g. moral disengagement, influence tactics, sensemaking, followership) as opposed to treating them as if they exist within a vacuum. Past empirical evidence and the current study show leaders often use multiple strategies, including moral disengagement and leader influence tactics, to achieve follower compliance in unethical acts (Beu & Buckley, 2004; Milgram, 1969; 1974; Russell & Gregory, 2011). Finally, the current study provides empirical evidence that leader moral disengagement and influence tactics impact follower ethical sensemaking and decision making in differing, unique ways. Efficacy of leader strategies are likely reliant upon several factors including

follower expertise, situational elements, and overall leader effectiveness. Future studies should examine a wider array of disengagement and influence tactic pairs using high-fidelity manipulations to better understand how these phenomena interact with one another.

Additionally, this study contributes to the ethical sensemaking literature by empirically examining how leader moral disengagement and influence tactics impact specific follower sensemaking processes, cognitions, and behaviors. Study results show that where leader strategies impact follower ethical sensemaking is dependent upon the strategy being used. Some strategies, like moral disengagement mechanisms, impact early processes such as framing of an ethical dilemma and forecasting, while others covertly influence primarily final decision making. Interestingly, it was leader influence tactics and not leader disengagement that contributed to follower moral disengagement. The impact of leader moral disengagement was most predominant in follower conformity and collusion, and supports our proposition that moral disengagement assists reframing ethical dilemmas to be more palatable. Participants were not only more likely to passively conform to a leader's rationale but also actively reframe the situation to collude with the leader for mutual benefit.

Leader disengagement effectiveness on follower collusion was, in part, reliant upon which mechanisms and influence tactics were paired with one another, and this warrants further study to better understand this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the distinctions between followers passively conforming versus actively colluding with a leader are critical, especially when findings are interpreted in light of Thoroughgood and colleagues' (2012) taxonomy of followers. While both conforming and colluding

followers perpetuate the devastating effects of destructive leaders, the ability of leaders to use simple influence strategies to gain colluding followers is especially troublesome. Our initial findings suggest that propensity to conform or collude with a leader's rationale may take place early in participant's cognitive processes whereas ethical sensemaking and EDM variables may occur later within the context of the decision to conform or collude. In light of this realization, future examinations of follower conformity and collusion, especially when it involves decision making outcomes, may be more accurately portrayed as moderator variables instead of outcome variables. Specifically, a follower's decision to conform or collude may significantly moderate propensity to morally disengage, level and quality of ethical sensemaking processes, and EDM outcomes.

Practically, results of this study serve as a "jumping off" point for further investigation of how leaders use multiple strategies to influence and alter follower ethical sensemaking processes in an organizational setting. Leaders wield a great deal of influence over followers, and our results indicate leaders must not only "walk the walk", but also effectively "talk the talk" to communicate an ethical message to followers. However, current study findings also raise this question: Was this ultimately a study of leadership, followership, or both? Results indicate followers play a critical role in their compliance with a leader's unethical request. While follower ethical behavior was significantly correlated with follower conformity ($r = -.58$) and collusion ($r = -.48$), follower cognitions did not necessarily preclude followers from making ethical decisions. There were significant differences in variable patterns between follower conformity and collusion versus ultimately impacting follower EDM. Study

findings indicate followers play a significant role in whether or not they ultimately choose to carry out their leader's unethical requests. In short, followers are not an ethical *tabula rasa* to be written upon by leaders as we often picture them; they too carry part of the burden of maintaining and promoting an ethical organization. Future studies should examine other follower attributes such as vigilance and moral identity that might predict whether or not certain types of followers are easy prey for influential, unethical leaders.

Conclusion

The current study sought to better understand the relationship between leaders, followers, influence strategies, and follower ethical outcomes. Ultimately, findings indicate this relationship is extremely complex, and, as studies usually do, have left us with more questions than answers. However, it is clear that leaders have the capacity to influence followers in significant ways, and have a number of influence strategies at their disposal. This highlights the critical role leaders play as ethical agents within their organization. Even if existing rules or regulations prohibit unethical behaviors, tacit approval or reward by organizational leadership indicates unethical behavior is not only the norm but required in order to advance in the organization (Langlais & Bent, 2013; Moore, 2007; Reidenbach & Robin, 1991). In short, leaders must not only establish ethical standards, but also communicate those standards via positive influence strategies and reinforcement because their followers are certainly listening.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1
Moral Disengagement Families, Mechanisms

Family	Moral Disengagement Mechanisms	Example
Cognitive Reconstructal of Reprehensible Behavior	<i>Moral Justification</i>	Viewing the U.S. war in Afghanistan to serve a moral purpose of defending western, Christian values against Islamic attack (McAlister, Bandura, & Owen, 2006).
	<i>Euphemistic Labeling</i>	The tobacco industry using “soft language” to describe the drug-like qualities of ingredients in their product as producing “pharmacological satisfaction” (White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009).
	<i>Advantageous Comparison</i>	The lead industry minimizing the negative effects of lead-based products by comparing the relatively small number of deaths from lead-poisoning to high mortality rates of auto accidents (White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009).
Obscuring or Distorting the Effects of Harmful Actions	<i>Displacement of Responsibility</i>	Followers of leaders displacing responsibility of unethical actions on an authority figure claiming they were “following orders” (Bandura, 1999; Beu & Buckley, 2004).
	<i>Diffusion of Responsibility</i>	Jurors diffusing responsibility of convicting a defendant by seeing themselves as only one of twelve decision-makers (Bowers & Steiner, 1999).
	<i>Disregarding/Distorting Consequences</i>	Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) industry advocates dismissing research methods finding their product unsafe as “too gross to pinpoint a VC problem with any certainty” (White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009, p. 58).
Reducing Identification with the Targets of Harmful Acts	<i>Dehumanization</i>	Soldiers dismissing humanizing qualities of those they are fighting to reduce or remove the moral dilemma of taking a human life (Osofsky, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2005).
	<i>Attribution of Blame</i>	Tobacco industry advocates blaming smokers for rising health concerns, arguing that smoking is a matter of adult choice and blaming smokers for inhaling smoke too “deeply” (White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009).

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for all Study Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
1 Gender	-																		
2 Trait Cynicism	-.11	-																	
3 Trait Empathy	.32**	-.05	-																
4 Rat. Persuasion Style	.00	.03	.04	-															
5 Exchange Style	-.04	.15*	.00	.13*	-														
6 Insp. Appeals Style	.04	.06	.09	.57**	.16**	-													
7 Appraising Style	-.08	.14*	.07	.50**	.34**	.54**	-												
8 Trait Moral Disengagement	-.24**	.32**	-.13*	-.06	.13*	-.09	-.08	-											
9 Forecasting Valence	-.16**	.03	.05	.03	.01	.01	-.02	.13*	-										
10 Forecasting Quality	.02	-.18**	.18**	.21**	-.12*	.05	.12*	-.04	.24**	-									
11 Advantageous Comparison	-.02	.01	.18**	-.11	-.01	-.02	-.07	.06	.07	.08	-								
12 Distortion Consequences	-.09	.02	-.02	.02	.04	-.03	-.04	.16**	.07	.17**	.44**	-							
13 Overall Moral Disengagement	-.07	.02	.06	-.03	.03	-.03	-.06	.15*	.08	.16**	.74**	.93**	-						
14 Perception Leader Threat	-.03	.00	-.05	.08	-.07	.01	.08	-.08	-.09	.37**	.05	.09	.09	-					
15 Desire to Withdraw	.01	-.07	.03	.02	-.12	-.06	.00	-.13*	-.03	.01	-.02	-.03	-.03	.14*	-				
16 Follower Conformity	-.11	.12*	-.03	-.03	.07	-.09	-.08	.27**	.17**	.15*	.30**	.51**	.13*	-.11	-				
17 Follower Collusion	-.08	.13*	.01	.00	.09	-.07	-.04	.25**	.22**	.18**	.30**	.54**	.53**	.07	-.10	.90**	-		
18 EDM Quality	.06	-.16**	.09	.17**	-.06	.09	.15*	-.14*	.02	.39**	-.15*	-.29**	-.28**	.02	-.12*	-.58**	-.48**	-	

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Effect of Influence Tactics Presence/Absence on Dependent Variables.

Dependent Variables	Influence Tactic Present ¹		Influence Tactic Absent ²		Post-Hoc Tests
	N = 200		N = 67		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LSD
Distortion of Consequences	.08	.19	.04	.16	1v2*
Forecasting Valence	2.30	.72	2.12	.74	1v2†
Ethicality	2.66	.72	2.86	.75	1v2†

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Table 4

Effect of Moral Disengagement Presence/Absence on Dependent Variables.

Dependent Variables	Moral Disengagement Present ¹		Moral Disengagement Absent ²		Post-Hoc Tests
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	N = 174		N = 93		
Follower Conformity	1.78	1.03	1.48	.79	1v2*
Follower Collusion	1.44	.74	1.29	.58	1v2*

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Table 5

Effect of No, One, or Both Leader Strategies on Dependent Variables.

Dependent Variables	None Present ¹		One Present ²		Both Present ³		Post-Hoc Tests
	N = 23		N = 114		N = 130		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LSD
Forecasting Valence	1.99	.68	2.22	.75	2.33	.72	1v3*
Ethicality	2.90	.76	2.83	.71	2.58	.73	2v3*, 1v3**

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Table 6

Main Effect of Influence Tactic Manipulations on Dependent Variables.

Dependent Variables	Apprising/ Exchange ¹		Inspirational Appeals ²		Rational Persuasion ³		No Influence Tactic ⁴		Post- Hoc Tests
	N = 64		N = 65		N = 71		N = 67		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LSD
Distortion of Consequences	.05	.15	.08	.18	.09	.22	.03	.15	3v4*
Forecasting Valence	2.43	.62	2.24	.77	2.23	.76	2.12	.74	1v2†, 1v3*, 1v4**
Perception of Leader Threat	.48	.39	.32	.39	.36	.41	.41	.36	1v2*, 1v3*
Ethicality	2.75	.70	2.59	.77	2.65	.69	2.86	.75	2v4*, 3v4†

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Table 7

Main Effect of Moral Disengagement Manipulations on Dependent Variables.

Dependent Variables	Advantageous Comparison ¹		Distortion of Consequences ²		No Moral Disengagement ₃		Post-Hoc Tests
	N = 92		N = 82		N = 93		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	LSD
Follower Conformity	1.67	.96	1.91	1.09	1.48	.79	2v3**
Follower Collusion	1.37	.65	1.53	.82	1.29	.58	2v3*
Ethicality	2.69	.70	2.59	.78	2.84	.70	2v3*

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Table 8

Interaction of Influence Tactics and Moral Disengagement on Follower Collusion.

	No Disengagement ¹	Distortion of Consequences ²	Advantageous Comparison ³	Post- hoc Tests
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	LSD
No Influence Tactic	1.17 (.36)	1.71 (1.03)	1.31 (.61)	1v2*, 2v3
Apprising/ Exchange	1.35 (.66)	1.71 (1.02)	1.12 (.37)	1v2†, 2v3**
Inspirational Appeals	1.40 (.79)	1.52 (.68)	1.51 (.57)	None
Rational Persuasion	1.25 (.45)	1.19 (.36)	1.54 (.85)	2v3†

Note. †Highlighted pairwise comparisons approaching significance. *Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$. **Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .01$. Only significant statistical relationships are presented.

Appendix B: Figures

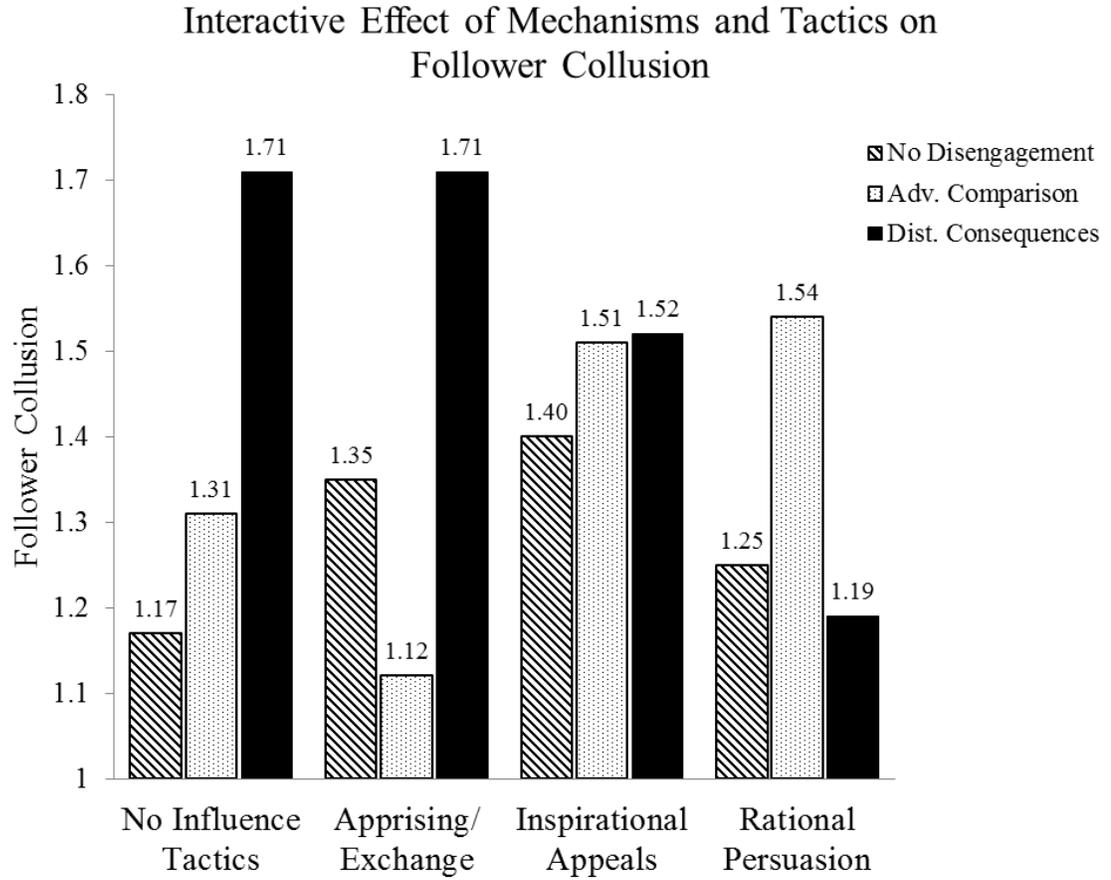


Figure 1. Interaction of leader moral disengagement and leader influence tactics on follower collusion.

Appendix C: Example Scenario

Example of Scenario with no Content Manipulations

Product Safety

Horizon Group has recently announced a new line of Ultrabook laptops. As a result, the advertising and marketing department has been working on a marketing campaign to promote the new laptops for the upcoming holiday season. The Ultrabook laptops are considered a breakthrough in portable computing technology as the battery is integrated directly into the base of the laptop, allowing the Ultrabook to be thinner and lighter than ever. You are waiting to give the “green light” on the Ultrabook holiday marketing campaign until the research and development department have determined that all of the Ultrabook’s internal components pass company safety and durability standards.

However, today you receive an email from the research and development team with unfortunate news. Repeated test results on the Ultrabook’s new battery show that it does not meet quality standards, but only by a very small margin. Specifically, in rare cases when the Ultrabook is left in hot environments like a sitting car, the battery has a small chance to overheat and expand, damaging the Ultrabook. As a result, they have recommended that additional testing of the laptop batteries to determine if this is a manufacturing issue or just a freak occurrence. You document the research and development department’s comments and bring your concerns to your general manager, Thomas Dunne.

After explaining that the product just missed quality standards, you suggest that the marketing campaign be put on hold until the bugs in the battery can be ironed out. Instead, Thomas instructs you to push it through anyway, stating that a risk of battery failure is likely to be minimal. He doesn’t want to risk delaying an entire line of products past the profitable holiday season.

(Manipulated scenario content is placed here)

Thomas senses that you are still unsure. Thomas assures you the battery issue is no big deal and sends you back to your office telling you he expects your signed approval report for the Ultrabook marketing plan on his desk by the end of the day. You wonder now what is more important, ignoring company product protocols, or going against the advice of an experienced manager.