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Ethical Leadership and Communication

Jacquelynne Jordan
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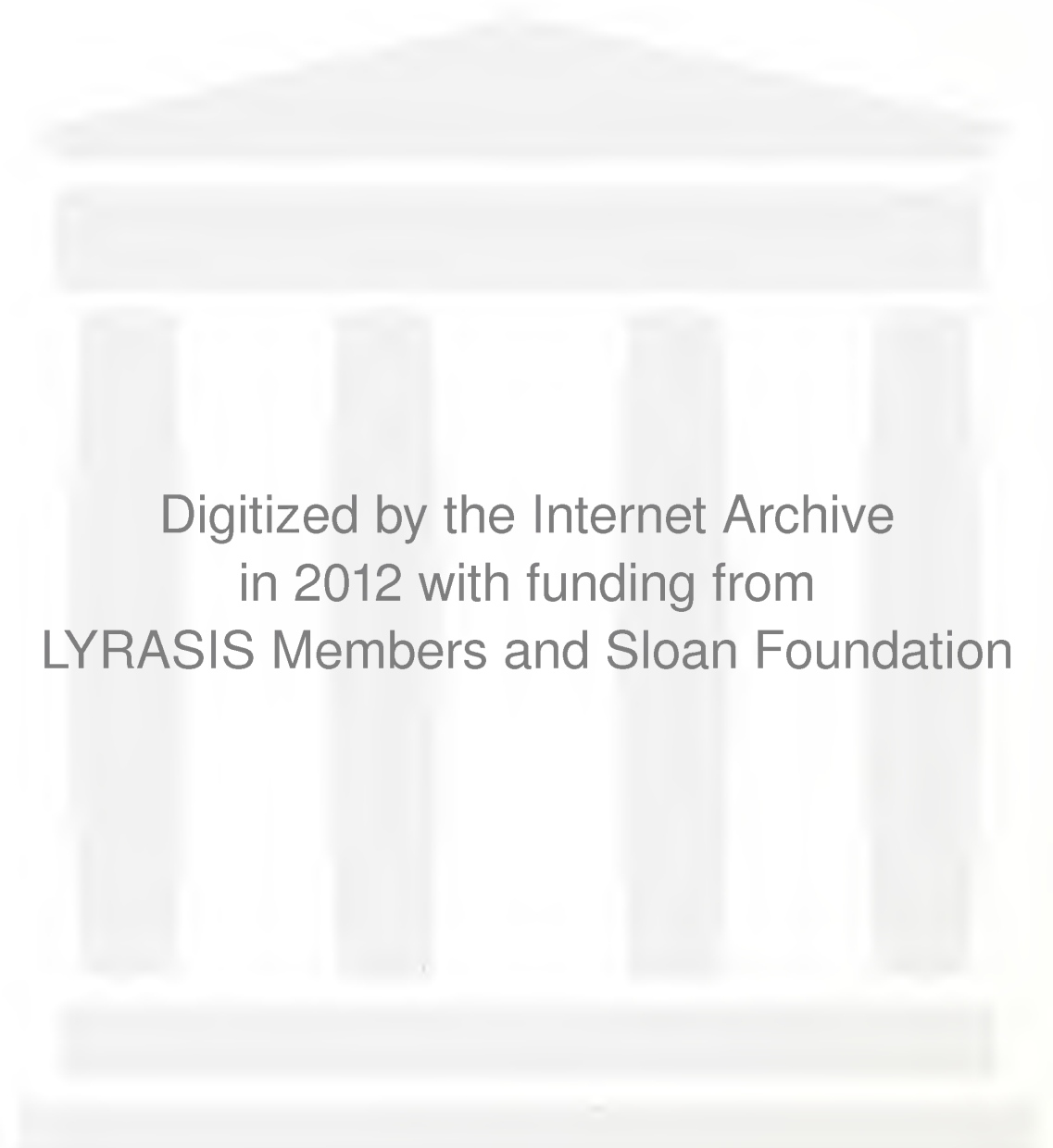

Ethical Leadership and Communication

by Jacquelynne Jordan

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Running head: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

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Senior Thesis

Director: Professor Tamara Bollis

To the professors who so generously give of themselves to their students.

In particular, to those who most inspired this work:

To Dr. Hunt, for the incredible motivation and leadership she both possesses and instills,

To Dr. Long, the inspiration for the communication aspects of leadership, and

To Dr. Johnson, whose passion for ethics sparked an undying interest within me.

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Abstract

This analysis of leadership and communication research argues that effective leadership is manifested through the ethical communication a leader practices with group members. This paper approaches leadership as an interactional process and corroborates this view with supporting research and theory from the fields of business and communication. Ethical communication is used as a framework for how groups can communicate more effectively. A review of extant literature concluded that effective leadership does not exist with the leader's hands alone, but is created through communication and interaction within the group. Findings indicated that the more effective and productive managers approach their positions as interactive, supporting roles within the group. Communicative styles and behaviors of ethical and unethical leaders were determined. Personality factors were found to predispose leaders to engage in ethical or unethical behavior. Situational factors found to foster unethical behavior were leadership style, superior-subordinate relationship, supervisor immediacy, the threat of getting caught, and moral character. Implications for groups and organizations are discussed.

Contents

Introduction

An enormous amount of research, literature, and "how-to" books address aspects of leadership in an attempt to capture the essence of a true leader. In the evolution of the organization and leadership styles in our own country, we can see how the mere definition of leadership continually changes over time. Numerous scholars argue that the ability to lead effectively comes from personal characteristics or situational factors (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Buckley & Weise, 1998). Even the determining personal characteristics cannot be agreed upon. The question of ethical leadership adds another complexity to the definition of effective leadership. What is ethical leadership? How can the ethical leader be discerned from the unethical leader? Are effective leaders necessarily ethical as well? With our present society focused so strongly on production and results, often the ethical choice is not the most profitable one. However, research continually shows that ethical leadership proves to be more efficient, reliable, and profitable over time (Howell & Avolio, 1998; Eriksen, 2001).

Despite the timeless debate over whether leadership emerges from internal or external factors, this analysis of leadership and communication research argues that effective, ethical leadership is manifested through the leader's communication with others in the group. The leader is recognized as an interactive group member, a necessary piece of the puzzle in group work. Just as leadership does not exist without followers, leadership is not created purely through the actions of a single individual (Tennenbaum, Weschler, & Masaryk, 1961; Eriksen, 2001). Instead, leadership should focus on effective communication and interaction within the group (Barge, 1994). Based

on research from the fields of business and communication, this paper agrees with the assessment of leadership as an interactional process, and corroborates this view with extant research and theory.

The original purpose of this research was to analyze a leader's communication and interaction within the context of a small group. However, the majority of leadership research comes from studies on businesses and employee/employer relationships. Using this body of research from the field of business, along with studies of communication and small group interaction, the findings of this analysis hold significance for both highly structured working groups, as well as the less formal small groups that exist within organizations, families, schools, and leisure activities. Ethical communication is used as a framework for how a group or organization can communicate and interact more effectively for the success of both the individual and organization.

In light of the current knowledge of leadership and the direction scholarship in the field has taken, the current analysis seeks to address the following questions:

RQ1: Do current theories of effective and ethical leadership carry competing or complimentary assumptions? That is, are the theories mutually exclusive, or do they inform each other?

RQ2: What are the communicative styles and behaviors of effective leaders?

RQ3: What are the communicative styles and behaviors of both ethical and unethical leaders?

RQ4: Do personality factors predispose a leader to engage in ethical or unethical behaviors?

RQ5: What situational factors foster unethical behavior?

RQ6: How can communication be used to encourage and/or promote ethical behavior?

Effective Leadership

Effective leadership is easily achieved in times of prosperity and complacency. However, the true measure of a leader comes when situational factors are not favorable, and strong, collaborative leadership is most needed (Brass, Butterfield, and Skaggs, 1998; Howell & Avolio, 1998; McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Therefore, to recognize more clearly effective leadership styles, we should take a closer look at 'how leaders lead' when the pressure is on.

Why do leaders choose to engage in constructive or destructive behaviors? What predisposes a leader to react to a situation in a given way? While some research indicates that personality characteristics are a predictor of leadership, a number of studies indicate that other variables, such as situational factors, are more predictive of how a leader will interact with other group members (Travino & Youngblood, 1990; Infante, 1987; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Richmond & McCrosky, 2000). This timeless debate is seen in the contrasting leadership theories, arguing the different sources and styles of leadership.

Existing Theories of Leadership

Styles of leadership have long been studied and examined in an attempt to determine which styles are most effective. While some styles prove to be more useful than others, varying styles and theories embody their own strengths and weaknesses. The main bodies of leadership theory can be divided under two umbrellas of leadership: *personal characteristics*, or traits, and *situations*, or situational factors that influence leadership ability and direction.

Trait Theories

The trait theories maintain that leaders are born with the ability to lead. Trait theory asserts that leaders share a unique set of traits, abilities, and characteristics (Barge, 1994). It is this set of traits that allows leaders to be effective. While studies have indicated that traits alone cannot predict leadership, recent research shows that successful leaders usually do possess a stable set of characteristics, including drive, desire, perseverance, moral character, self confidence, and cognitive capability (Barge, 1994).

Fiedler (1993) altered this theory with the contingency trait theory, recognizing the important role of situational factors. Contingency trait theory finds that the traits of a leader must match the situation in order for the leader to be effective. While this theory also contends that leadership originates from an innate ability to lead, the demands of different situations are also considered in leadership effectiveness.

Situational Theories

Situational theories maintain that the situation defines the effectiveness of a leader, and a leader must adapt to the situation in order to be successful. Established by Hersey and Blanchard (1982), situational leadership theory follows a grid of four leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. According to the grid, a manager should adjust his or her leadership style in response to followers' maturity. Hersey and Blanchard refer to maturity as a worker's knowledge, experience, and ability to carry out a task, as well as the worker's confidence, motivation, and belief that he or she can carry out a task (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). This theory holds that leaders must select the appropriate leadership style to match the maturity of subordinates.

Transformational leadership concentrates on knowing the needs of followers, motivating and inspiring followers to greater heights, and fulfilling followers' needs (Bass, 1990). This style of leadership encourages followers to concentrate on the group's needs instead of personal needs, and encourages them to become leaders themselves. Transactional leadership takes a different approach. It is centered on a process of exchange: Good performance is rewarded, and poor performance is punished. In fact, according to Bass (1985), most leader-follower relationships more closely follow the transactional model than the transformational model, although the transformational model proves to be more effective.

McGregor (1960) defined leadership differently, organizing management into a dichotomy of two approaches which he labeled Theory X and Theory Y, both of which are based on the holdings of human behavior. Theory X assumes that workers generally dislike work and are unmotivated to perform well. Theory X leaders believe they must control, coerce and even threaten followers to gain compliance. Work supervision is highly valued, while individual needs are disregarded. Theory Y assumes that workers find satisfaction in their work, and naturally take responsibility for their efforts. Theory Y managers focus on the individuals performing the tasks and invest commitment and pride as modes of encouragement.

Behavioral theory argues that tasks and relationships are dealt with separately, and in various combinations. Little connection is made in behavior when dealing with tasks and relationships, and the behavior for each is distinctly different (Hersey and Blanchard, 1979). This theory is useful as it makes the distinction between leaders' responsibility for task and relationship and acknowledges the importance of both.

However, this theory is also limiting, as it views these behaviors separately and independently.

While all of these theories embody their own strengths and weaknesses, strong arguments, adequately supported with research, have been made for each. How is it possible to have so many varying theories of leadership, and still researchers are unable to see one theory over another? The inadequacy of these leadership theories has been to concentrate on the role of the leader, rather than how the leader fits in with the rest of the group. Barge (1994) proposes that leadership is a form of mediation, "an interactional process that helps people in organizations manage their environment" (p. 13). By this definition, there are no defining traits or formulas for behavior that are uniform across the board. Barge (1994) contends that leaders must not only possess the knowledge to resolve problems threatening the organization, but must also be able to communicate that knowledge to others within the group. This description allows for different styles of leadership to be equally valued, with an emphasis on the quality of communication the leader engages in and elicits from his or her organization.

While Barge's view of leadership differs significantly from previously existing theories, it is important to note that it is not a new idea, but one which has been around for centuries. Pericles held this same viewpoint, and understood that an effective leader must have a vision and then relay that vision to others. In a speech to the citizens of Athens, he expressed this belief, stating, "A man who has the knowledge but lacks the power clearly to express it is no better than if he never has any ideas at all" (Thucydides, 59). He described himself as "one who has at least as much ability as anyone else to see what ought to be done and explain what he sees" (Thucydides, 64). By operating under

this belief, Pericles exemplified the power of communicating throughout his leadership of Greece.

The importance of this attitude is apparent even in current research on organizations. Without the ability to communicate clearly specific goals, a group is left without a defined course of direction (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Williams, 2000).

RQ1: Do current theories of effective and ethical leadership carry competing or complimentary assumptions? That is, are the theories mutually exclusive, or do they inform each other?

After considering the existing leadership theories of personal characteristics and situational factors, as well as theories and research on the role of communication and leadership, it is clear that personality characteristics and situational factors do not operate independently to determine effectiveness. Instead, they compliment each other, suggesting that personal characteristics influence how one will react to situational factors. The introduction of communication and interaction into the theory of leadership adds an important, often ignored, component to this body of theory. Based on the research presented, effective leadership does not exist in the hands of one person, but is instead created through communication and interaction within the group.

Effective Leadership and Communication

Organizations are composed of departments and groups of individuals, who operate through structured and unstructured relationships. The most basic unit of any organization is the interpersonal relationship between two coworkers, and is the fundamental level at which leaders operate. It is through relationships with coworkers and subordinates that managers communicate, delegate, empower, and motivate (Eriksen,

2001). Granovetter (1973) notes that institutionalized trust is sustained by interpersonal trust, created through interaction and deliberation. An effective organization begins first with effective interpersonal relationships. Support, closeness, trust, and understanding develop when relationships are strong (Granovetter, 1973).

The Leader as an Integral Part of the Group

Systems theory (Thomas, 1975) and interactional theory (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967) both stress the interconnectedness of group members. Systems theory maintains that the success of individuals within the group is largely impacted by the actions of others in the group (Harris, 1993). It is impossible for one person to act independently without affecting other group members. Interactional theory also stresses that the actions of one person influence all other actors in the group process (Graen & Scandura, 1987). Based on the holdings of both theories, the leader must operate as an interactive group member to most effectively lead group members toward a common goal.

Tennenbaum, Weschler, and Msasryk (1961) define leadership as an interpersonal influence applied in a situation to guide efforts toward a unified goal. This definition stresses the leader as an integral part of the group that uses communication to achieve group goals. This is unlike many leadership theories which focus solely on the actions of a leader and assume that the group's success is determined primarily by the leader's actions. Barge (1994), in the examination of leadership theories, makes the observation that "this underlying assumption of many leadership theories may actually decrease rather than increase employees' motivation by minimizing the importance of their skills and abilities" (p. 5).

In fact, much research shows that the success of a leader depends largely on the success of the group as a whole. Eriksen (2001) contends that "leadership is a matter of cooperation," and asserts that a leader's success is defined by the quality of interaction and cooperation leaders develop with subordinates. He maintains that leadership is contingent on the relationships between individuals who are interdependent, and who must rely on one another to accomplish goals. These leader-follower relationships are what allow for the leader to influence subordinates and influence the action of the group (Eriksen, 2001).

Barge (1989) questioned whether the behavior of the individual leader or the behavior of the group as a whole was more influential on group productivity. The study concluded that the behavior of the group was a much stronger predictor of group productivity than the individual leader's behavior. This suggests that organizational outcome should be credited to the function of the group as a whole, rather than to the individual leader. These studies demonstrate than an effective leader is one who can positively harness the power of the group, collaborating to facilitate its actions toward a single, cohesive goal. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the leader's main function is to serve the group, and efforts should be placed on encouraging positive group interaction.

Greenleaf (1991) revolutionizes this idea in his essay, "The Servant as Leader," in which he coined the term '*servant leadership*.' In this writing, Greenleaf argues that the highest goal of a leader should be to serve others' needs. Greenleaf proposes that this can be tested with four questions: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become

servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? By providing a specific measure, Greenleaf provides a more solid foundation for the abstract concept of servant leadership. Greenleaf also stated that to lead effectively, one must have developed listening and understanding skills. Servant leadership stresses the importance of interpersonal communication, individual consideration, and group interaction.

Effective Leadership Styles

As we have moved into the post-modern era, leadership research and theories have begun to progress in this direction, approaching leadership as an interactive, supporting role rather than one of dictatorship. This is due, in part, to our nation's shift from manual labor to professional and technical jobs requiring "increasingly complex, analytic, and even abstract work" (Perlow, 1998, p. 3). Research has shown that people employed in these types of jobs cannot be managed in the same ways manual laborers are managed (Dertouzos, Lester, & Solow, 1989). Eriksen (2001) makes the point that workers in the modern era cannot be effectively motivated through demands alone but are motivated more by having a shared goal and understanding the worth of their efforts and the goals for which they are striving. Dertouzos, Lester, and Solow (1989) caution that coercion cannot be used to elicit loyalty, reliability, and intelligence essential to the success of knowledge-based companies. Handy (1989) instead suggests that managers strive to empower, inform, encourage, and advise knowledge workers, while allowing for original ideas, as well as mistakes which can result in learning experiences. Lawler (1986) and Walton (1985) suggest managers engage in interaction which gives employees more freedom and responsibility, encourages individual contribution, and

generates job satisfaction. Eriksen (2001) stresses that reciprocal cooperation and communication are essential in modern organizations. Studies have shown that the most effective and successful leaders are those who have cultivated the communicative skills to interact closely and positively within the group (Barge, 1989, Eriksen, 2001, Herb, Leslie & Price, 2001).

Leadership, Cooperation, and Communication

Eriksen (2001) states that effective leadership involves dealing with internal and external organizational problems through cooperation achieved with interpersonal interaction. Here, Eriksen stresses that while situational factors do impact a leader's behavior, the effective leader will continue to interact with others and cooperate with coworkers to create the best possible solution. Eriksen (2001) maintains that a leader's role is not to dictate, but to guide both themselves and others through communication, based on the supposition that subordinates are more motivated through discussions, recommendations, and mentoring. Leaders who lead through cooperation instead of coercion are rewarded with respect and trust, resulting in more effective decision-making abilities of the group (Eriksen, 2001).

Eriksen tested the theory of leadership as a mode of cooperation in 1990-1992 at the Tromso Regional Hospital in Norway (Eriksen, 1999). This study introduced a new style of management based on democracy and participation, and was contrasted with the previous style of management employed at the hospital termed the New Public Management Approach, which focused on leading by objectives. The new leadership style, which we will call cooperative leadership, was characterized by decentralization, group decision-making, delegation, and dispersed power. The implementation of

cooperative leadership resulted in increased group interaction, increased efficiency, better job satisfaction, group mentality, and participation. The hospital's productivity was also improved, resulting in more effective treatment of patients, budget use, and institutional benefits. More successful groups were marked by leaders who engaged in a greater tendency to encourage various viewpoints from group members and improved communication (Eriksen, 1999). This study has a number of implications for leadership. First, it exemplifies the realistic possibility for an organization to transition effectively from an objectives-based mode of leadership to a cooperative, interactive mode of leadership. This study concludes that leadership focused on group decision-making is more effective and efficient than a more traditional, top-down style of leadership. It also highlights the value of group communication and participation in the workplace, showing these qualities to be present in the most effective groups.

RQ2: What are the communicative styles and behaviors of effective leaders?

The research presented has indicates that the more effective and productive managers must approach their position as an interactive, supporting role within the group process. Leaders must also strive to create strong relationships characterized by trust and open communication to develop support, closeness, trust, and understanding with other group members. By engaging in open communication, exhibiting support for group members, and cooperating with others in the group, leaders can establish these constructive communicative styles and promote group decision-making, efficiency, and satisfaction.

The Role of Ethical Behavior in Effective Leadership

In defining an effective leader, we must discern between leaders who truly collaborate with their team to foster positive interaction and group effectiveness, and manipulative leaders who control and constrain interaction to force productivity. To make this distinction, we must first recognize ethics and ethical behavior within the group process.

Ethics and Ethical Behavior

Ethics is the collection of principles or values by which a person or group defines right and wrong (Williams, 2000). In line with this definition, ethical behavior is described as behavior that is in line with the society's moral principles (Williams, 2000). Unfortunately, research indicates that unethical behavior is common in the workplace (Jackson, 1997). Micholas (1995) says that the concept of business ethics is problematic because many think the very phrase is an oxymoron. Sadly, studies show that this opinion is not always far from the truth. A study of 1,324 executives, managers, and workers from a number of industries found that 48 percent of the participants had engaged in an unethical or illegal behavior within the past year, including counterfeiting expense accounts, discriminating against others in the workplace, giving and receiving kickbacks, and infringing on environmental laws (Jackson, 1997). This study also found that managers' commitment to ethics could drastically improve the ethical behavior of employees in this study. This demonstrates the large impact leaders have on the ethical behavior of employees at several levels. Williams states that because managers model behavioral standards for subordinates, they must be careful to exhibit ethical behavior (Williams, 2000). In addition, management must avoid unintentionally promoting

unethical conduct by avoiding policies or goals which may inadvertently reward unethical tactics. An example of this oversight is seen in Bausch & Lomb's efforts to reach significant revenue increases annually. Because of commitment to this goal, the company pressured customers into purchasing unwanted products with their glasses and contacts. Worse yet, in reaction to the introduction of disposable contact lenses to the market, Bausch & Lomb began packaging their regular contact lenses as disposable contact lenses to capture a portion of the market share. This unethical action resulted in a $68 million class action suit against the company, for which they paid dearly with their profits and image.

To avoid falling prey to a culture promoting unethical behavior, Laczniak (1983) provides five standards to measure ethical behavior:

> The Golden Rule Standard: Would I want to be treated in this way by others?
>
> The Professional Ethic: How would an impartial jury of professionals judge this behavior?
>
> Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative: If everyone engaged in this behavior, could our society still function?
>
> The Utilitarian Rule: Will this behavior benefit the most people in the long run?
>
> The "60 Minutes" Test: Would you feel at ease describing your behavior on this television show for millions of viewers?

By being conscious of ethics and using these standards to evaluate the nature of behavior, leaders can minimize unethical behavior and promote ethical behavior within their groups and organizations.

Ethical versus Unethical Leadership

We can differentiate between ethical and unethical leaders by discerning between those who are ethical and those who are unethical in their leadership styles. Again, the ethical or unethical aspect of leadership is manifested through the communication a leader engages in with other group members. While both the ethical leader and the unethical leader will elicit work and productivity from the group with which they work, the ethical leader will ultimately have a more positive, involved, cohesive, and successful team (Howell & Avolio, 1992).

Based on interaction theory, we can hypothesize that when a leader is presented with favorable situations, both the ethical leader and unethical leader will display constructive behaviors; but when a leader experiences unfavorable or stressful situation, his or her "true nature" will shine through.

Ethical leadership is crucial to the success of a group, the satisfaction of group members, and the effectiveness of group processes (Barge, 1994). It is important to acknowledge the value of ethical leadership, especially in this time when unethical leadership is not uncommon. A study of 2,795 workers conducted by Walker Information found that only 48 percent of those polled felt top managers exhibited high levels of integrity, and only 46 percent felt ethical problems in the workplace were handled thoroughly and fairly (Weaver, 2001). This study shows that the disparity between the acknowledgement of ethical leadership and the application of ethical leadership in our culture today is great.

Howell and Avolio (1992) differentiate between ethical charismatic leaders and unethical charismatic leaders, and cite the effects of both on the people and organizations

with whom they work. Howell and Avolio make the distinction that while Mahatma Gandhi and Adolf Hitler were both effective leaders, the difference - and importance - of ethical leadership can clearly be seen when comparing the two. While both were charismatic, the effects of ethics and leadership display a marked difference between the two.

A Framework for Ethical and Unethical Leadership

In discerning between the ethical and unethical leader, Howell and Avolio distinguish five essential areas in which a leader will exhibit ethical or unethical behaviors (1992). These areas are the use of power, establishing visions, communication with subordinates, intellectually motivating subordinates, and moral character (Howell & Avolio, 1994). To provide a framework for ethical and unethical leadership, Howell and Avolio's dichotomy of ethical and unethical leadership will be briefly discussed.

An ethical leader is described as one who uses power constructively, with sensitivity to the well-being of subordinates. This description reiterates the concept of servant leadership. Conversely, the unethical leader uses power for personal gain; to dominate, control, and promote personal status.

In establishing a vision, ethical leaders implement a vision that serves the interests of the entire group or organization, taking into account all parties involved, and motivating actors to adopt this vision. Unethical leaders tend to establish goals that promote their own interests, despite - and, at times, at the cost of - those with whom they work (Howell & Avolio, 1998).

This difference in the creation of visions has strong implications for the different ways ethical and unethical leaders communicate, demonstrating the tendency of the

ethical leader to engage in meaningful communication with others, while the unethical leader refrains from such open communication. According to Howell and Avolio (1998), ethical leaders use communication to elicit different ideas, viewpoints, reactions, and wishes of others. Communication in organizations led by ethical leaders is characterized by two-way communication. Unethical leaders generally do not invite feedback, and prefer instead to engage in one-way communication. These differences in communication set the stage for how a leader will react to feedback.

Ethical leaders are open to feedback, as well as ideas that differ from their own (Howell and Avolio, 1998). They take this opportunity to learn from feedback and develop realistic perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, and create ways to compensate for their weaknesses (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Unethical leaders, with their style of one-way communication, tend to be unaccepting of negative feedback or criticism (Howell and Avolio, 1998), and inflated egos serve as a fatal flaw which prevents them from accepting or learning from less-than-glowing opinions (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Intellectually motivating subordinates is an important component of effective leadership, and ethical leaders strive to provide followers with a rationale for decisions and invite them to question and improve the ideas set forth (Eriksen, 2001). Unethical leaders impose demands on subordinates and expect their decisions to be accepted without question (Howell and Avolio, 1998).

The ways in which ethical and unethical leaders develop followers differ greatly. Unethical leaders put their own needs and objectives first, expect subordinates to work toward their goals, and often claim the full glory when accomplishments are met (Howell and Avolio, 1998). This style of leadership encourages followers to be dependent and

obedient. Discouraging followers from taking on new roles or exploring new ideas can lead to a feeling of stagnation and boredom from group members, resulting in poorer performance (Herb, Leslie, & Price, 2001). Ethical leaders tend to motivate, empower, encourage subordinates' personal goals, model moral behavior, and share the credit when a goal is reached (Howell and Avolio, 1998). These communicative strategies elicit greater job satisfaction from group members, increased group interaction and participation, increased efficiency, group mentality, and loyalty from group members (Eriksen, 2001).

Moral character, the final dimension of leadership, is an area that has been studied extensively with no firm conclusions, illustrating that this component of leadership is not composed of a certain set of traits and does not exist in a vacuum. Nevertheless, researchers do agree that ethical leaders have an internal sense of right and wrong, which they employ when faced with ethical dilemmas. By adhering to their own personal values, ethical leaders cultivate the ethical values, ideals, and behaviors of their subordinates (Andrews, 1989).

Howell and Avolio identify elements of moral character: courage, a sense of fairness, and integrity (1992). Tillich (1950) defines courage as the determination to follow one's internal sense of right and wrong even when it means opposing unethical or unreasonable leadership. Courage is necessary for the ethical leader to follow his or her personal values even when those values may be unpopular or will not yield the same profitability as a less ethical decision. A sense of fairness goes hand-in-hand with a sense of right and wrong and is essential if leaders are to be respected by subordinates.

All five areas of leadership described above require ethical leaders to communicate effectively and interact positively with others. It is through this communication and interaction that ethical leaders establish a culture of ethical behavior, a climate in which subordinates can realize and reach their full potential, and an atmosphere where leaders can collaborate with others to formulate the most innovative ideas and objectives for the success of the group and organization.

Ethical Leadership and Communication

Ethics can be effectively promoted through communication (Jackson, 1997). In a large study of businesspeople, 60 percent believed that better communication and consistent dedication from managers could improve ethical behavior (Jackson, 1997). Supporting the definition of an effective leader as one who collaborates to facilitate the group's actions toward a goal, Howell and Avolio (1992) describe the ethical charismatic leader as one who relates goals to others in the group, assists the well-being and interests of others, encourages and utilizes both suggestions and criticism, cultivates open and honest two-way communication, gives recognition to those who contribute, and makes decisions based on personal moral standards.

Brass, Butterfield, and Skaggs (1998) state that ethical leaders make efforts to promote interaction and develop relationships, thereby encouraging communication. In contrast, unethical leaders place efforts on outcomes instead of relationships. When relationships are weak, there are minimal consequences for unethical behavior (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998). By restraining from engaging in interpersonal relationships with coworkers, leaders create an environment where unethical behavior is easier and more acceptable.

Arrivers versus Derailers

The tremendous effects of ethical and unethical leadership are clearly marked in McCall and Lombardo's (1983) review of several U.S. and British studies of management styles, which pinpointed the factors that cause a leader to be successful or unsuccessful. McCall and Lombardo labeled managers who successfully climbed the corporate ladder to the top of their organizations as "arrivers". Managers who were initially successful in their career but did not progress past middle management were labeled "derailers". The first finding of these studies was that the arrivers and derailers had much in common. In fact, both meet the previous description of "charismatic" leaders. However, these studies revealed that derailers possessed two or more "fatal flaws." Arrivers, on the other hand, usually had no more than one of these fatal flaws and had taken measures to diminish the impact their flaws had on others. This distinction shows two important factors: arrivers not only had fewer fatal flaws, but they also had the ability to recognize their flaws and make efforts to compensate for these flaws. This correlates with the findings of Howell and Avolio (1998) who state that ethical leaders are accepting of feedback and learn from it.

The "fatal flaws" found in these studies are as follows (McCall & Lombardo, 1983):

1. Insensitive to others: abrasive, intimidating, bullying style.
2. Cold, aloof, arrogant.
3. Betrayal of trust.
4. Overly ambitious: thinking of next job, playing politics.
5. Specific performance problems with the business.
6. Overmanaging: unable to delegate or build a team.
7. Unable to staff effectively.
8. Unable to think strategically.
9. Unable to adapt to a boss with a different style.
10. Overdependent on advocate or mentor.

The fatal flaws are listed above in descending order, with number one being the most frequently occurring flaw. These clearly embody interaction and communication behaviors, and have strong implications for how managers interact with those they work with. In fact, 25 percent of the derailers were rated as having good people skills, while 75 percent of the arrivers possessed strong people skills (McCall &Lombardo, 1983). These findings are similar to Howell and Avolio's research on the differences between ethical charismatic leaders and unethical charismatic leaders, which stressed the importance of constructive communication. Through these studies, the importance and implications for ethical management can become clear. While unethical managers have the charisma to put them in leadership positions, their flaws in the way they interact with others ultimately become their downfall. Successful managers must not only have the charisma to lead, but the communication skills to interact effectively and constructively with others to accomplish the goals of the organization.

RQ3: What are the communicative styles and behaviors of both ethical and unethical leaders?

Ethical leadership is characterized by a communication style that uses power to promote a vision that serves the needs of all group members. These leaders empower others, encourage subordinates' personal goals, model moral behavior, and share the credit. Efforts are placed on promoting interaction and developing relationships. Two-way communication is used to elicit different ideas, viewpoints, reactions, and honest feedback from group members. Finally, the communication and behavior of ethical leaders show evidence of a strong moral character.

Unethical leadership is characterized by a communication style that uses power to obtain personal goals over the interests of others. One-way communication places demands on subordinates without regard for their viewpoints or rationale for the demands. Focus is placed on outcomes instead of people, and ethics may be ignored in favor of achieving goals.

Personality versus Situation

After discerning the ethical leader from the unethical leader, one must ask; what causes some leaders to be ethical and others unethical? What makes some leaders arrivers and some leaders derailers? Why do arrivers react to situations with constructive communication skills while derailers fail to rise to the occasion, and instead employ destructive tactics? A number of studies have been conducted to determine what factors predispose an individual to act with a certain propensity in a given situation. The results from these studies hold important implications for leaders, and help us to understand why leaders react to situations in a given way. While situational factors clearly influence leadership, certain characteristics will predict, to an extent, how a leader will react to different situational factors (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Therefore, it is important to consider these predisposing character traits when evaluating leadership ability and effectiveness.

Research indicates that personality characteristics often determine how one will react to conflicts (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Snyder & Ickes, 1985; Ford & Richardson, 1994; Travino & Youngblood, 1990). Studies have found that introverted individuals tend to avoid conflict or react with collaborative tactics (Chanin & Schneer, 1984), individuals with a need for control tend to engage in competitive or assertive behaviors

(Kabanoff, 1987), and those with agreeable dispositions often use power tactics (Graziano, 1996).

However, research also shows us that personality alone will not determine an individual's behavior (Ohnbuchi & Fukushima, 1997). Situational factors do play a role in how a leader will choose to interact with others (Hegarty & Sims, 1978; Travino & Youngblood, 1990). Infante (1986) makes the distinction between personality characteristics of argumentative behavior and verbally aggressive behavior, but points out that such behaviors will only be demonstrated when an individual perceives a conflict (1986).

This mode of thinking can also be seen in Mischel and Shoda's (1995) cognitive-affective system theory embodying these concepts. This theory asserts that a personality characteristic will only present itself when situational stimuli are present, but these behavioral characteristics will not be seen when not elicited by certain situational factors.

Canary, Cupach, and Serpe (2001) examined interpersonal conflict and found integrative tactics to be related to competent and satisfying communication, while distributive tactics were associated with incompetent and dissatisfying communication. This study also found a tendency in individuals to employ the same conflict tactics over time in different situations. This supports the theory that individuals are predisposed to react in a certain way to situational factors.

These theories are important to consider while examining the behavior of leaders. In determining why certain leaders act in constructive, positive, and collaborative ways and others in destructive, negative, and competing ways, we need to investigate what personality characteristics predispose a leader to engage in these behaviors. The

personality variables predisposing leaders to react to situational factors, and what situational factors foster unethical behavior, are also significant to consider.

Personality and Unethical Leadership

The following research demonstrates how different personality characteristics are involved in determining a leader's interaction within a group. Infante (1987) differentiated between two types of aggressive communication traits, verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness. Infante defined verbal aggressiveness as "attacking the self-concept of another person instead of, or in addition to, the person's position on a topic of communication" (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Infante identified this behavior as destructive, and suggested that verbal aggressiveness leads to escalated aggressiveness and damage to the self-concept of the other person, producing relationship damage or termination and diminished trust. Argumentativeness, on the other hand, was labeled constructive, and referred to a tendency to argue competently about controversial issues. Further research found a strong correlation between argumentativeness and subordinates' effectiveness (Infante & Gordon, 1989). Clearly, verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness are predictors of how a leader will react to a given situation, and will affect how they choose to interact with others. These behaviors clearly affect how effective a leader will be within the context of a group. Eriksen (2001) concurs with this assertion, stating that democratic leadership is characterized by argumentation, allowing for group discussion and decision-making.

Ohbuchi and Fukishima (1997) examined how an individual would react to perceived impoliteness (a situational factor), and how this reaction correlated with aggressiveness and self-monitoring. The results revealed a strong correlation between

aggressiveness and confrontation, when an individual was presented with perceived impoliteness. In the absence of an impolite stimulus, aggressive and non-aggressive persons respond similarly, without confrontation. The results of the study also indicated that high self-monitors were more likely to engage in integrative strategies than low self-monitors. This study also found that time pressure and verbal aggressiveness (situational factors) as stimuli escalated the emotional level of response. These findings indicate that low self-monitors can control their responses in favorable situations, but this control is limited when their cognitive functions are impaired by a stressful situation. A study conducted by Buckley and Weise (1998) also found that hostility and aggression were strong predictors of both the likelihood for an individual to engage in unethical behavior, and the perception that others would engage in unethical behavior.

This study echoes the findings of Baron's study (1989), which concluded that aggressiveness had a positive correlation with confrontational tactics in response to a perceived conflict. These findings indicate that individuals who are low self-monitors and/or aggressive are more likely to react negatively to unfavorable situational factors. This is an important characteristic to consider when determining the characteristics of a leader. These same qualities in a leader would have implications for an entire group or organization when the leader is under time pressure or other unfavorable circumstances.

Kasing and Avtgis (1999) conducted a study to examine the relationship between dissent and aggressive communication. Dissent was characterized by confrontational and aggressive behaviors. Results showed that expressed use of dissent was correlated most significantly with argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, and organizational position. These findings confirm that individual differences, especially with regard to aggressive

communication characteristics, are accurate predictors of expressed dissent. Again, this is an example of personal characteristics seeming to predispose individuals to react to unfavorable situational factors.

Gender and ethical behavior

Research on gender differences suggests that men and women have different tendencies to behave unethically. Several studies exhibit differences in the ethical behavior of men and women. These studies maintained that gender socialization was linked to an individual's propensity to behave ethically or unethically. Buckley and Weise (1998) relate these findings to the expectation for women in our society to be passive, compliant, and dependent, and the expectation for men to be assertive, aggressive, and independent. These social roles predispose women to conform to rules and obey authority, and men to make decisions based on how their behavior will affect themselves and others. These studies found that men tended to engage in unethical behaviors more often and more readily than their female counterparts in business. While gender is not a sole predictor of ethical or unethical behavior, it is important to note the pattern of findings in this area correlating behavior to gender.

Moral character and ethical behavior

The common thread in almost all research on ethical leadership stresses the importance of a leader's personal ethics, integrity, values, morals, or a number of other interchangeable terms (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Eriksen, 2001; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Moral Character is the set of values and beliefs developed through interactions within the family, personal relationships, professional relationships, and social settings (1992). Because individuals first learn to communicate and interact within their family circles,

this is where most ethics are developed (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). This set of ethics becomes the "default" for many situations, especially those in which an individual is under stress or extenuating circumstances. These are the qualities that will truly determine how leaders lead when the pressure is on. Although family communication research maintains that one's ethics, learned from the family, are one's primary set of ethics, research has found that individuals actually develop two sets of ethics – one for personal life and another for professional life (Carr, 1981). Fraedrich (1988) confirmed this argument, and actually concluded that individuals may actually possess several sets of ethics. Research conducted at the University of Pittsburgh conducted by William Frederick studied the ethics and behaviors of 6,000 managers (1988) and found that a staggering 70 percent of the managers reported that often they would compromise personal ethics to conform to the corporate culture (Fraedrich, 1988). These results support the notion that individuals have differing sets of ethics for personal and professional situations. Despite these findings, much research supports the notion that effective, ethical leaders possess a strong personal moral character that they also exhibit in the workplace (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Eriksen, 2001; Barge, 1992).

RQ4: Do personality factors predispose a leader to engage in ethical or unethical behaviors?

Based on the research above, we can conclude that personality factors do predispose a leader to engage in ethical or unethical behavior. Most significantly, verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness are predictors of how a leader will react to a given situation when presented with confrontation. However, extant research indicates that these personality traits will only emerge when stressful situational stimuli are present.

These findings have implications for the entire group or organization, as when the leader is presented with stressful or unfavorable circumstances. Gender is also indicative to whether or not leader will engage in unethical behavior. The research reviewed shows that males are more likely than females to perform unethical acts. Finally, the moral character of a leader can determine whether or not a leader will choose to engage in unethical behavior.

Situational Factors and Unethical Leadership

While personality clearly affects how individuals communicate with other group members, a great amount of research indicates that situational factors also play a large part in how and why individuals choose certain behaviors (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Barge, 1994). These situational factors include the relationships they have with others, supervisor immediacy, and the threat of getting caught.

Research has indicated that the leader's style of communication is the strongest factor in a subordinate's decision to communicate with the leader, and also determines how a subordinate will communicate with the leader (Madzar, 2001). This research also shows that the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate positively correlates with constructive communication and productivity. These findings are explained by the self-efficacy theory, which maintains that an individual's outcome expectations and belief that efforts will bring about desired results influence the likelihood for the individual to enter into conflict (Bandura, 1977; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). This situational factor is largely under the control of the leader. By exhibiting an ethical style of leadership, a leader can encourage constructive communication and give group members confidence that their voices will be heard.

Relationships and communication

As noted earlier, leaders have the opportunity to cultivate their relationships with group members, and can communicate and interact with others to create relationships that are either strong or weak. Ethical leaders cultivate strong relationships with group members that are characterized by support, trust, and understanding (Granovetter, 1973). Eriksen (2001) points out that the repercussions for unethical behavior are much greater in strong relationships versus weak relationships. This holds implications for the ethical behavior of leaders, but also demonstrates how leaders can encourage ethical behavior from subordinates by engaging them in strong relationships. Vetleson (1994) found that emotional intensity and closeness of relationships correlate negatively with the likelihood for unethical behavior to occur. Jones' (1994) findings were similar in a study showing that psychological, social, and physical proximity promote ethical behavior. Based on these findings, we can conclude that strong relationships promote trust, empathy and proximity, and diminish the likelihood of unethical behavior.

Supervisor immediacy and communication

Richmond and McCrosky (2000) examined the effects of immediacy on relational and organizational factors, and found that supervisor immediacy is positively correlated with positive relationships, resulting in perceived credibility and interpersonal attraction. Nonverbal immediacy of the supervisor was related to an impression of competence, kindness, honesty, and interpersonal and task attractiveness. Other studies have also concluded that the communicative behaviors used by supervisors impact subordinates' perception of the supervisor, contentment with supervision, and general job satisfaction (Eriksen, 2001; Granovetter, 1973; Kassing & Avtgis,1999). These studies highlight the

impact a leaders' behavior has on subordinates. These findings support the argument that the leader's main function is to serve the group as an interactive member, and efforts should be placed on encouraging positive group interaction (Eriksen, 2001; Granovetter, 1973; Kassing & Avtgis,1999).

The threat of getting caught

Other mitigating factors also predict unethical behavior. Deterrence Theory is based on the preposition that the decision to engage in (unethical) behavior is directly related to the perceived likelihood of getting caught, and the perceived severity of punishment (Beccaria, 1963). A number of studies have confirmed this theory, concluding that the possibility of getting caught had a strong negative correlation with the decision to engage in unethical behavior (McGabe and Traveno, 1993; Leming, 1980; Buckley & Weise, 1998, Zey-Farrell & Farrell, 1982; Michaels & Miethe, 1989; Gellerman, 2001). Social Exchange Theory (Emerson, 1976) also has important implications for unethical behavior, as leaders weigh the risks and benefits of engaging in unethical behavior.

RQ5: What situational factors foster unethical behavior?

As noted earlier, situational factors do influence ethical and unethical behavior. Situational factors found to foster unethical behavior include the superior's leadership style and the relationship between superior and subordinate. As these situational factors can be largely influenced by the communication and interaction of the leader, it is important to engage in ethical communication to promote ethical behavior. As supervisor immediacy affects perceptions of the supervisor as well as group behavior, this is a

significant situational factor. The threat of getting caught clearly presents a situational factor that can provide the opportunity for, or deter, unethical behavior.

Communication and Unethical Leadership

These factors have strong implications for leadership and group communication. Because leadership is manifested through the communication and interaction a leader and group engage in, the personality of the leader will significantly impact the interactions of the entire group. It will affect how other group members relate to the leader, their willingness to interact with the leader, the effectiveness of group communication, and satisfaction of group members. However, as McCall and Lombardo (1983) point out, effective leaders are not doomed by "fatal flaws" or personality characteristics; Effective, ethical leaders can recognize and compensate for unfavorable personality characteristics. As noted by Infante (1986), by becoming a more skilled communicator, individuals can effectively overcome personality characteristics to interact constructively with others.

Many of the studies mentioned above have important implications for how a leader will interact with others. According to McCall and Lombardo's (1983) study of arrivers and derailers, the ways in which leaders interact with others can ultimately determine whether these leaders will be successful in their organizations and careers. The inability to interact ethically with others in the organization resulted in fatal flaws, which ultimately led to the demise of leaders' careers. In line with this idea of "fatal flaws," Brass, Butterfield, and Skaggs (1998) concluded that when situations present low risks for unethical behavior, the moral character of the actor will be the determining agent of behavior. An individual with "high moral character" may not recognize the opportunity to benefit from unethical behavior in a given situation, or may simply choose

not to engage in this behavior, whereas someone of low moral character may decide to engage in unethical behavior if presented with the same situation.

Leadership and the Interactive Group

Effective leadership is a dynamic contingent on the interaction of the group (Eriksen, 2001). Although many leadership theories focus on the leader's ability to lead, much research points to the successful interaction of group members as an indication of success. Herb, Leslie, and Price (2001) stress the importance of the interactive group as it exists in upper-level management teams within an organization. They noted that these teams have a larger and stronger effect on the organization than does the CEO. They also found that if positive interaction were lacking, these leadership teams created competing agendas office politics within the organization. Conversely, an interactive, cohesive top management team can create coherence and a unified focus for the organization (Herb, Leslie, & Price, 2001). An interactive group is not characterized by one standard vision or opinion, but by a focus of working together. In fact, healthy conflict within groups can breed new ideas and spark inspirations in group members (Peters, 1987). If handled as a positive aspect of group interaction, conflict can be a productive group.

Implications for Groups and Organizations

In creating effective, ethical group behavior, both communication and interaction should be plentiful and constructive (Herb, Leslie, & Price, 2001). Communication refers to the exchange of information and ideas, while interaction refers to the behaviors and relationships between group members. Herb, Leslie, and Price (2001) point out that while a high volume of dialogue characterizes many groups, effective communication isn't necessarily implied. Withholding important information, not sharing opinions or

exchanging feedback, or acquiescing to questionable agendas due to groupthink or fear of criticism can result in distrust, unsatisfied group members, and conflicting agendas. Open and honest two-way communication is essential for groups to succeed and work toward a unified goal. The interaction of group members is equally important. Tolerance and support for different ideas and differing viewpoints is crucial to developing a culture that breeds original ideas and constructive interaction. A lack of positive interaction can result in groupthink, alienating individuals, or scapegoating group members (Williams, 2000).

Creating and Sustaining an Ethical Culture

Much research has pointed to the leader as the number one influence on a group or organization's culture. Williams (2000) points out that after the organizational culture is defined by the founder, managers are the primary source for developing and sustaining the culture. The culture is comprised of the values, interactions, and shared principles and ideas of the collective group. According to Fraedrich (1992), the culture fostered by the leader and maintained by the group determines how individuals must act to become and remain successful. While some sources point to an organization's leader in creating and perpetuating unethical conduct, leaders may take actions that change the nature of an organization's culture. An excellent example is seen in the measures taken by one Chrysler Corporation president (Schlesinger, 1987). When Lee Iacocca (president) realized that some of the company executives had driven new Chryslers with the odometers disengaged, and then later sold the cars as brand new to unsuspecting customers, he took action to dispel this unethical conduct and a culture which fostered such behavior (Schlesinger, 1987). Iacocca disclosed the company's unethical conduct at

a national press conference, and created a compensation plan for customers who had purchased these cars. Furthermore, he printed a two-page ad in USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times to apologize for the company's actions. Iacocca's efforts to change his company's culture and resulting image are best summed up in the apology, stating, "The only thing we are recalling here is our integrity" (Schlesinger, 1987). This is an excellent example of how a leader can take action to change the culture, and set a new standard for ethical interaction within the company.

According to Schein (1985), a group or organization's culture is created and maintained by four factors: behaviors taught, coached, and exemplified by leaders; what leaders focus on, evaluate, and control; how leaders respond to pressure and crises; and the measure leaders use as a basis for giving recognition and rewards (Ruhe, 2001). By making efforts to engage in ethical communication and interaction while carrying out these leadership duties, a leader can create a culture characterized by open communication and ethical behavior.

Administering Constructive Feedback

Feedback is an essential component of the successful leader-follower relationship. Feedback not only evaluates behavior and interaction, it supplies information on whether the behavior or role taken is appropriate. Feedback is also a channel for motivation, as it provides subordinates with information about their progress and their standing within a group. Morrison (1993) notes that style of feedback affects individual performance, the relationship between manager and subordinate, and attitudes about the group or organization. Madzar (2001) maintains that a superior's style of leadership determines subordinates' likelihood to seek out feedback. Barge (1994) offers these guidelines for

giving feedback: Before providing feedback, try to determine the cause of a particular behavior; Avoid the attributing fault to an individual's personal factors, and take into consideration external factors; When negative feedback is necessary, be descriptive rather than accusative and provide information; Back up statements with specific examples; Choose statements that address task performance, not personal characteristics; For the greatest effectiveness, give feedback about a particular behavior in a timely fashion after the behavior has been displayed. These guidelines focus attention on the issue and not the person. By using feedback regularly, carefully, consciously, and constructively, it can be used as a tool to strengthen the relationship between leader and follower, reduce ambiguity, and increase effectiveness.

The Value of Reflection

A vital function of effective ethical leadership and group interaction is reflection. Unfortunately, many groups and organizations overlook this opportunity and fail to see the great value in it. According to Hamel, managers spend less than three percent of their time reflecting on experiences and planning for the future (Hamel & Prahalad, 1996). The importance of reflecting on decisions, objectives, outcomes, and actions of the group are noted by Herb, Leslie and Price (2001). Reflection encourages feedback, facilitates change, provides the opportunity to learn from failures and successes, refines decision-making skills, and improves group interaction. This practice embodies the characteristics of ethical leadership set forth by Howell and Avolio (1992) that are employed as the framework for ethical leadership in this paper. While in the midst of a crisis, the line between ethical and unethical can blur; however, most managers can usually tell, in retrospect, where that line should have been drawn (Gellerman, 2001). The use of

reflection can help managers realize where the fine line between ethical and unethical behavior lies, and develop an ability to recognize this line when dealing with future dilemmas and crises.

Through reflection, groups can also recognize opportunities and threats, both internal and external. Reflection also encourages the open and honest communication that characterizes effective, ethical groups. Focusing on decisions and actions after the fact also allows group members to analyze situations without the threat of overt criticism or personal confrontation (Herb, Leslie & Price, 2001). This constructive climate allows group members to validate differing points of view and consider the possibility of other courses of action for the future. Constructive reflection results in a group climate that is both challenging and supportive (Herb, Leslie & Price, 2001). A case study by Herb, Leslie, and Price tested the effectiveness of group reflection. Within three months of implementing regular reflection sessions, the test group displayed improved group performance, including a unified corporate strategy, greater group participation, individual effectiveness, and more creative results. Participants reported that the resulting group culture was "more relaxed and at the same time more openly challenging" ((Herb, Leslie & Price, 2001, p. 11). Reflection is an excellent practice to ensure positive communication and interaction, therefore manifesting and eliciting ethical behavior and leadership within the group.

Remaining Ethical in Unethical Situations

What should individuals do when they are presented with situations that call for the courage, justice, and integrity of moral character? Should one take action, and if so, which type of action will be most effective? Tillich (1950) recognized that acting against

unethical behavior can result in harsh consequences. The decision to act against an unethical situation is one that is usually made carefully, weighing the consequences against the benefits. Often this decision is made on one's belief that their actions will be effective.

Makoul and Roloff (1998) studied how outcome expectations and efficacy expectations influence the likelihood for a confrontation to ensue. Results demonstrated that relational satisfaction and commitment impacted the decision to withhold complaints. An individual's belief that he or she could execute the appropriate behavior also determined whether an individual would enter into conflict. Outcome and efficacy expectations had independent negative effects on withholding and separate positive affects on relational satisfaction. This study indicated that individuals are more inclined to enact confrontation when they believe in their ability to successfully do so. This has important implications for both leaders and subordinates, and the possibility of opposing unethical behavior. Given open, two-way communication and positive interaction encouraged by ethical leaders, individuals can have greater faith that their opinions will be recognized and harsh sanctions will not ensue for the subordinate who raises a question (Howell and Avolio, 1998). On the contrary, in the authoritarian, coercive, and oppressive culture established through one-way communication of the unethical leader, subordinates will easily recognize the threat of sanctions if they voice opposition. Unfortunately, as noted by Nielson (1989), many people do not act out against unethical behavior even when they do not personally agree with it. This often stems from a lack of confidence that it is possible to enact such a change.

Acting Out Against Unethical Behavior

Despite the mitigating circumstances, the decision to act out against unethical decisions is not easily made and should be carefully considered before action is taken. The courage to act against unethical behavior is important for anyone involved in the group process, but is especially important for leaders to embody and exemplify, as they communicate what is and is not acceptable to other group members. By choosing to act against unethical behavior or submitting to it, the leader also impacts the organizational climate, setting the tone for future behavior. Tillich (1950) describes two methods for speaking out against unethical behavior; acting as an individual, or acting as a part of a group. Acting as an individual entails going against individuals or organizations to put an end to their unethical behavior. Acting as a part of a group involves enacting and facilitating an ethical change within the organization by collaborating with others. While one or both approaches may be best suited for a given situation, several possibilities for acting as an individual or part of a group will be discussed.

Acting as an individual

Acting as an individual often involves acting against others within the group or organization, or even against the organization itself. This can be necessary when the group condones or encourages unethical measures. Often this type of action is most arduous because it poses the threat of negative consequences from the group, ranging from opposition and negativity to unmet goals, loss of profits, and even unemployment. Because these costs are so great, acting as an individual is often a difficult choice. However, the result of acquiescing to such unethical behavior can lead to the attainment

of unethical measures, a cultural climate which allows unethical behavior (Nielsen, 1998), legal implications, and in some cases, the termination of an organization.

Tillich (1950) offers several methods for acting as an individual. One method is "blowing the whistle" within the organization. Even threatening the offending parties with whistle-blowing is enough incentive to halt unethical behavior (Tillich, 1950). In a case detailed by Neilsen (1988), this method proved successful for a salesperson working at an insurance company in Boston. In weekly sales meetings, the manager of the sales force continually suggested sales tactics the salesperson felt were unethical. In an effort to change this mode of training, the salesperson wrote a letter to the manager demanding he recant his unethical suggestions in subsequent meetings. The salesperson also threatened to mail a copy of the sales instructions, detailing unethical tactics, to the Boston Globe newspaper if the manager failed to meet these demands. In the next meeting, the manager complied with the salesperson's ultimatum (Nielsen, 1988). In another case, a woman working for a university in Boston spoke with an upper-level office manager about a middle manager's sexual harassment toward several female workers in the same office (Neilsen, 2001). When the office manager failed to take any action, the woman told the manager and several coworkers that unless the office manager took action, she would report the behavior to the personnel office. After voicing this threat, the office manager warned the offender that if the harassment didn't cease, the personnel office would intervene. Although this put an end to the offensive behavior, the middle manager and a number of coworkers began avoiding the woman. Eventually, she felt she had to leave the university (Neilsen, 2001). This case illustrates the benefits and consequences that can come of acting out against unethical behavior. While this woman

was able to put a stop to the unethical behavior, her actions led to unpleasant implications. It is important to recognize that these consequences – being avoided by the manager and coworkers – are another form of unethical behavior, which was exhibited and condoned by management. In this case, it is easy to recognize a group climate of unethical behavior, a climate sustained – if not created by – the manager's interaction and communication with this woman, the middle manager, and other coworkers.

Another tactic for disrupting unethical behavior is sabotaging the execution of unethical actions (Tillich, 1950). While this tactic can be effective, it is especially important to use caution and act inconspicuously to avoid detection. Although Tillich (1950) offers this method for acting against unethical behavior, it is not wisely condoned, as it borders on being unethical in itself because it restricts open and honest communication. This tactic promotes unethical behavior and does little to change the mind set of the group or discourage future unethical decisions (Nielsen, 1998). Instead, ethical efforts should be made with integrity in an effort to stop unethical actions within the group and communicate a desire for ethical behavior in the future.

Another, more ethical, suggestion offered by Tillich (1950) is conscientiously disagreeing with an unethical situation and letting others know you will not go along with it. By choosing this route, ethical behavior is used to discourage unethical actions and to let others know their actions are unacceptable. This route also challenges the unethical interactions and choices made by group members and creates the possibility for the group that the stated (unethical) course of action is not the best or only choice.

A last measure is whistle-blowing outside of the group or organization (Tillich, 1950). As noted by Neilsen (2001), Earnest A. Fitzgerald, Lockheed CEO, resorted to

this method when he announced to Congress that the U.S. Air Force and Lockheed, a cargo plane manufacturer, conspired on a number of occasions for Lockheed to win Air Force contracts (Glaberson, 1985). Lockheed would underbid the contracts, and later bill the Air Force for outstanding expenses. Fitzgerald lost his job by blowing this public whistle, but was given his job back when all was said and done. His efforts prevented the continuation of this conspiracy (Glaberson, 1985). This case exemplifies how an ethical decision risks much but prevents the perpetuation of unethical conduct. Fitzgerald put his job in jeopardy but put an end to his company's unethical actions and set the tone for future interactions with the U.S. Air Force. By acting ethically and with integrity, Fitzgerald effectively eradicated the unethical situation.

Acting as a part

Tillich (1950) defines 'acting as a part' as participating with others to bring about change one believes to be right and ethical. This approach is most supported by this paper, as the emphasis of this research is on ethical communication and action and the role of the ethical leader as an integral part of the group. In this approach, the organization is not attacked, nor individuals engaging in unethical behavior. Efforts are not aimed at working against others or stopping the unethical behavior. Instead, one interacts *with* others in the group to create more ethical practices. The result, if effective, is a more ethical group that makes ethical choices and engages in ethical interaction.

Neilsen (2001) offers an example where a sales manager for a Boston-area insurance company became aware of his supervisor's refusal to employ female sales-people. Instead of threatening his supervisor or blowing the whistle, the sales manager decided to work with his supervisor to bring about a change in hiring practices.

Operating from the knowledge that the supervisor believed women would not be effective salespeople, the manager proposed a six-month experimental hire of a single female salesperson, just to test the waters. The woman hired targeted her selling to married women and became one of the top salespeople within the office. Realizing the asset of female salespeople, the supervisor began hiring more female salespeople. By working with others within the organization, the manager acted ethically to reverse unethical practices and bring about positive change. Risks were low, and benefits were high. This example also emphasizes the importance of constructive interaction and communication with other group members, and highlights the importance and effectiveness of open communication.

Obviously, the effectiveness of acting as a part is also contingent on the willingness of others in the group to collaborate and respond with ethical interaction and communication. Systems theory asserts that an individual is reliant on other actors in the group and emphasizes the interconnectedness of group members (Harris, 1993). Operating on the basis of systems theory, while an individual can initiate change by acting as a part, his/her effectiveness will largely be determined by the willingness of others in the group to collaborate.

While acting as an individual and acting as a part both have certain benefits and drawbacks, Nielson (1989) acknowledges that the effectiveness of either strategy is contingent not only on the communication employed to bring about a change, but also on the personal characteristics of the actor, as well as the situational factors. Nielson recommends that efforts should first be made to act as a part, collaborating with the group or organization to bring about change and provide a solution that is both beneficial and

ethical. This approach supports the view of the ethical leader as one who interacts with other group members to elicit and engage in ethical behavior. Acting as a part generally tends to be the more constructive approach, yielding less consequences and greater benefits both for the individual and the group or organization. However, if this approach proves unsuccessful, one must find the courage to act as an individual and uphold ethical standards.

The Decision to Take Action

If individuals do have the power to change unethical behavior, why do many choose not to make efforts in creating ethical behavioral changes? In a study of 2,795 government, business, and nonprofit employees, only 39 percent of workers indicated that they would report any unethical behavior if they witnessed it (Weaver, 2001). Neilsen (2001) contends this is because they do not believe in their ability to exact change. This is further explained via self-efficacy theory, which maintains that individuals are more inclined to enact confrontation when they believe in their ability to be successful. An individual's belief that he or she can execute the appropriate behavior largely impacts the decision to voice a complaint. Bandura (1977) noted that outcome expectations are equivalent to an individual's belief that an action on his or her part can elicit the desired results. Therefore, efficacy expectations reflect an individual's belief that he or she can carry out the necessary behavior to produce a desired result. According to Baumeister, Stillwell, and Wotman (1990), most individuals will not immediately confront the offending party, and even when angered, most people will not immediately react to their opponent. Instead, the individual takes time to decide whether or not to challenge the antagonist and how to approach this confrontation. This gives an individual

time to consider all of the possibilities, from being effective to being ineffective, as well as the possibilities that the opponent will attempt to take revenge (Stutman & Newell, 1990). Makoul and Roloff (1998) tested this theory and confirmed that relational satisfaction and commitment were strong indications of a person's decision to voice complaints, and that there is a stronger likelihood for individuals to confront an antagonist when they believe in their ability to bring about a desired outcome.

How do managers rationalize behaviors that disagree with their personal set of ethics? Gellerman (2001) suggests several explanations: The unethical action is necessary for the greater good of the individual or the organization; the organization will support the unethical action because it is to their benefit; the unethical action will never be detected; or the action isn't "really" unethical or illegal (Gellerman, 2001). To avoid these ethical pitfalls, leaders should refer to Laczniak's (1983) five standards for measuring ethical behavior: The Golden Rule Standard, The Professional Ethic, Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, The Utilitarian Rule, and The "60 Minutes" Test. By consciously evaluating the ethical nature of their behavior, leaders can evade unethical behavior and promote ethical behavior through their own actions and their communication and interaction with others within the group and organization.

RQ6: How can communication be used to encourage and promote ethical behavior?

Communication between the leader and other group members can be used to develop strong relationships that promote trust, empathy and proximity, and diminish the likelihood of unethical behavior. Leaders can take actions that influence the group or organization's culture and promote ethical conduct. By using ethical communication to teach and model behaviors, evaluate and control tasks and behaviors, respond to pressure

and crises, and give recognition and rewards, a leader can create a culture characterized by open communication and ethical behavior. Tolerance and support for different ideas and viewpoints is crucial to developing a culture that breeds original ideas and constructive interaction.

Limitations and Future Research

This analysis of research on effective and ethical leadership was limited by the small scope of research that has examined the link between ethical behavior and leadership style. Because the view of leadership as an interactive component of the group is relatively new, a limited number of theories consider interaction and the group process in their analysis of leadership effectiveness. This research is further limited by the imbalance of demographics in the majority of studies. While many studies fail to give the demographics of participants, we can confidently assume that the studies included a majority of men, as research studies show that men are more likely than women to be placed in leadership roles (Sapp, Harrod, & Zhao, 1996; Zaremba & Fluck, 1995; Lockheed & Hall, 1976). The communication orientation of this research is limited, as few models of ethical behavior have focused on such subject matters as the type and structure of interpersonal relationships.

Future research is needed to provide a more complete picture of how communication between leaders and group members affect ethical behaviors. Specifically, styles of communication and behaviors of leaders need to be isolated as independent variables to determine how they impact subordinates and group members and how communication and interaction can be utilized to encourage or inhibit ethical behavior, constructive communication, and effectiveness within the group process.

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