

Chapter 50

Development of the Leader Integrity Assessment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to develop a direct and concise perceived leader integrity instrument that is posed from a positive perspective. The integrity construct in this study is developed from the tradition of moral philosophy and virtue ethics. The integrity construct in this study incorporates two aspects of integrity found in the literature, namely value-behavior congruence and a requirement that this congruence be grounded in morality. The moral philosophy used in this study to ground the integrity construct is virtue ethics as proposed by ancient philosophy and later maintained by Christian virtue ethics in the middle ages. An expert panel was used to establish content validity and construct validity/reliability was established via analysis of three samples of Air Force personnel associated with the U-2 pilot community. Nomological validity is established by leveraging the resultant Leader Integrity Assessment 15 to investigate the hypothesized moderating effects on the relationship between leader prototypicality and follower trust in the leader as proposed in the Kalshoven and Den Hartog (2009) Ethical Leadership Model. Overall, the Leader Integrity Assessment 15 was found valid and reliable and the integrity construct was found unidimensional as hypothesized.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is a term used in management and leadership research as a “normative descriptor” (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007, p. 171). However, in common usage, the term has a “myriad of meanings” (Dunn, 2009, p. 102). Palanski and Yammarino, (2007) stated that integrity research has suffered from “too many definitions and too little theory” (p. 171). The lack of a consistent use of integrity as a normative descriptor and the varied usage in

common language, have led to narrow construct definitions that have thwarted broader theoretical development (Dunn, 2009). However, Audi and Murphy (2006) recognized that “integrity is widely considered a moral virtue” (p. 3). Accordingly, Palanski and Yammarino (2007) proposed that a formulation of integrity as a moral virtue “enables scholars to draw upon thousands of years of philosophical reflection to build a sound theoretical framework that provides an explanation of both the concept of integrity and its relationship to closely

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related terms” (p. 172). Due to the critical role that integrity plays in several emerging leadership theories such as ethical leadership (Brown, et al., 2005), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003), and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), a theoretical development of an integrity measurement scale based in virtue ethics and moral philosophy is in order.

Although functional, formulations of integrity in management and leadership research lack a common theoretical thread (Dunn, 2009). Harcourt (1998) identified integrity as “a person sticking by what that person regards as ethically necessary or worthwhile” (p. 189). Northouse (2007) defined integrity as “the quality of honesty and trustworthiness” (p. 20). Furrow (2005) described integrity as “the extent to which our various commitments form a harmonious, intact whole” (p. 136). Solomon (1999) defined integrity as “that sense of cohesion such that one is not torn apart by conflicts” (p. 38). Schlenker (2008) described integrity as “a steadfast commitment to one’s principles” (p. 1079). Yukl and Van Fleet (1990) proposed an integrated definition of integrity such that integrity “means that a person’s behavior is consistent with espoused values, and is honest and trustworthy” (p. 155). Addressing criticisms of integrity definitions allowing for immoral yet consistent behaviors, Yukl (2006) updated his definition of integrity to mean that a “person’s behavior is consistent with a set of justifiable moral principles” (p. 421). Fields (2007) similarly defined integrity as “having personal values grounded in morality” (p. 196). Although many of these definitions are quite different, there seems to be a baseline consensus among researchers that integrity involves congruence between one’s values and one’s behaviors. Musschenga (2001) labeled this aspect of integrity as “personal integrity” and also proposed the complimentary concept of “moral integrity” which is the result of “socially shared, moral identity-conferring commitments” (p. 222). Accordingly, although lacking a common

theoretical thread, many leadership researchers seem to agree in that as a minimum, integrity involves a wholeness or consistency of behavior that is simultaneously grounded in morality. However, this conceptual dualism is missing in the development of prominent perceived integrity instruments routinely used in leadership research.

Existing Integrity Instruments

In constructing one of the two prominent integrity instruments used in much leadership research, Simons (2002) defined “behavioral integrity” (BI) as “the perceived pattern of alignment between an actor’s words and deeds” (p. 19). Although this formulation captures one of the two common themes in the leadership literature (congruence between values and behaviors), it completely ignores the accompanying consensus amongst many leadership researchers that the integrity construct must be linked with morality (Fields, 2007). The BI approach implies that a clearly immoral person could be viewed as possessing integrity as long as their immoral behavior was consistent with their immoral values. In such a formulation, a genocidal Nazi or a lone wolf killer could possess integrity as long as their behavior was consistent with their sociopathic or psychopathic values. BI researchers addressed this critique by saying that although “one might not support [an immoral] colleague’s actions or seek vulnerability to him, at least one knows that he means what he says” (Simons, 2002, p. 19). This rebuttal is unsatisfying for researchers looking for an integrity instrument that addresses both value-behavior congruence and morality as seemingly identified in leadership literature (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007).

Craig and Gustafson (1998) developed a 31-item Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS) for assessing follower perceptions of leader integrity. Along with the previously discussed BI scale, the PLIS is the other widely used perceived integrity instrument in leadership research (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). The PLIS investigates seven

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