

ETHICAL AND *UN*ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERS' WELL-BEING:
EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES AND BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

by

TAYLOR ELIZABETH SPARKS

(Under the direction of Karl W. Kuhnert)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the intersection of behavioral ethics in organizational leadership and follower psychological well-being using a sample of 458 full-time employed adults occupying positions across a variety of organizations in a variety of industries. Collecting data in two waves, we investigate the distinctiveness of key leadership constructs that have been put forth in the literature as being associated with behavioral ethics. We also examine whether and how these behaviors are related to both burnout and work engagement using structural equation modeling to specify moderated mediation. Findings suggest that ethical leadership, active and passive aggressive supervision, and unethical leadership are indeed distinct leadership behavior constructs, but that only ethical leadership behavior predicts follower burnout and follower work engagement. In addition, the psychological mechanisms by which ethical leadership has these effects vary depending on the outcome. That is, ethical leadership's influence on follower work engagement operates via the social exchange mediator of LMX, while its impact on follower burnout is transmitted by both LMX and relational identification with the immediate supervisor. Perceived organizational support and organizational identification also had main effects on both outcomes; however, they did not interact with the mediating mechanisms to impact employee

well-being. This suggests that these organizational mechanisms do not serve as substitutes for ethical leadership behavior. Theoretical and practical implications, directions for future research, and study limitations are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Behavioral ethics, Ethical leadership, Unethical leadership, Abusive supervision, Employee well-being, Burnout, Work engagement, Leader-member exchange, Relational identification, Perceived organizational support, Organizational identification, Moderated mediation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Though leadership has been anecdotally touted as having a major influence on employee health and well-being, surprisingly few studies have empirically investigated the role of leadership processes as contributors to employee well-being in general, and specifically, to burnout and work engagement (Thomas & Lankau, 2009). Those that do exist predominantly focus on either initiating structure versus consideration (e.g., Duxbury, Armstrong, Drew, & Henly, 1984; Herman, 1983; Seltzer & Numerof, 1988) or more recently, transformational versus transactional leadership as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (e.g., Seltzer, Numerof, & Bass, 1989; Hetland, Sandal, & Johnsen, 2007; Tims, Bakker, Xanthopoulou, 2011; Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009). Collectively, these studies provide preliminary support for a relationship between leader behavior and follower psychological *well-being* (work engagement) and *unwell-being* (burnout). Nevertheless, many of these studies acknowledge that the occupational health literature, and especially burnout literature, has neglected the study of how leadership processes impact follower well-being.

In general, the social context in organizations has been consistently linked to employee well-being such that other people at work, especially one's supervisor, can dramatically influence the way one feels about one's work and about oneself (van Dierendonck, Hayes, Borrill & Stride, 2004). While an organization's social context may provide support, it can often constitute a source of stress. According to May (1980, p. 241), "the distinctive quality of human

anxiety arises from the fact that man is a valuing animal, who interprets life and world in terms of symbols and meanings.” Organizational leaders, in particular, play an important role in how supportive a work setting is perceived to be (Cherniss, 1995), and they are also instrumental in framing and defining the reality of others by establishing symbols and giving meaning to organizational activities (Drath & Palus, 1994; Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

Furthermore, being that many organizational environments are often characterized as being somewhat ethically ambiguous (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003), the presence of an ethical leader may serve as a resource in that this leader serves as a salient example for appropriate behavior that is consistent with normative morals and values. Therefore, employees who perceive their immediate supervisors as displaying ethical leadership behavior will likely report higher levels of work engagement and lower levels of burnout. Indeed, according to Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2009), a predominant contributor to burnout is the extent to which employees experience value inconsistency in their jobs. Employees in today’s organizations increasingly view organizational values, missions, and vision statements with skepticism (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). Moreover, there is a growing tendency among employees to fail to attribute financial instability and lack of accountability to environmental factors such as market conditions or bad luck, instead tying these experiences to corporate hypocrisy, finding it easier to pin blame on their organization’s leadership or other individuals whom they perceive to be abusing power (Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Unlike ethical leadership, displays of unethical leadership behavior therefore may represent a threat to follower work engagement and a stimulant of follower burnout. Thus, we will first discuss ethical leadership and then attempt to disentangle it from behaviors that may or may not be considered unethical leadership.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESES

Ethical versus Unethical Leadership

Ethical leadership, a topic of growing interest and relevance among both scientists and practitioners, represents a fruitful avenue for examining the impact of leader behaviors on followers' psychological well-being. Moreover, being that virtually every type of contemporary organization has ethical standards, investigating ethical (and, on the other hand, unethical) dimensions of organizational leadership as well as their impact on key outcomes such as employee work engagement and burnout is both timely and necessary (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

According to scholars in the field of organizational behavior, ethical leadership involves “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Emerging research has found that ethical leadership is positively associated with important follower outcomes such as perceptions of leader effectiveness, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with leader, and is negatively associated with abusive supervision (Brown et al., 2005). At the group level, ethical leadership is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior and negatively related to workplace deviance (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Thus, it seems that researchers have made significant advances to date in the ethical leadership arena, formally defining (Treviño et al., 2000, 2003) and developing a reliable and valid measure of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005). With these tools, researchers have been effectively equipped to study

ethical leadership; however, the same attention has not been paid to the study and measurement of *unethical* leadership (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Generally speaking, unethical behavior involves acting in a manner that is illegal and/or morally inappropriate to larger society (Jones, 1991), and research on the “dark side” of leadership has begun to shed light on a variety of leader acts that represent such behavior. Brown and Mitchell (2010, p. 588) recently provided a rather comprehensive definition of unethical leadership as “*behaviors conducted and decisions made by organizational leaders that are illegal and/or violate moral standards, and those that impose processes and structures that promote unethical conduct by followers.*”

For the most part, it is clear that leaders who engage in, enable, or foster unethical actions within their organizations do not display ethical leadership as defined outlined above (Brown et al., 2005). Nevertheless, we assert that failing to exhibit overt or intentional ethical behavior may not necessarily constitute behaving unethically. Rather, this could correspond to simply being ethically ambiguous or neutral (Treviño et al., 2000, 2003). We therefore direct our focus and conceptualization of unethical leadership behavior toward acts that are characterized by the presence of clearly *unethical* behavior instead of those that represent the absence of ethical behavior. Thus, it is leaders who actively and intentionally perpetrate (and propagate among followers) unethical behavior that display unethical leadership (Pinto, Leana, & Pil, 2008).

We further note that not all ineffective leader behaviors can be considered unethical; therefore, it is also important to distinguish unethical leadership behaviors from ineffective ones. Craig and Gustafson (1998) do so by incorporating a consideration of the leader’s *intent* or reason behind the behavior. Only those behaviors that demonstrate malicious intent are considered unethical. For example, limiting subordinates’ training opportunities to prevent them

from advancing clearly demonstrates ill intent and is therefore an example of unethical behavior, whereas failing to provide training for some other ethically neutral reason (e.g., lack of funding, time or scheduling constraints) would not be considered unethical behavior.

A variety of forms of destructive leadership behavior have been put forth in the literature; however, until recently (Brown & Mitchell, 2010), these behaviors have not been explicitly defined as “unethical.” It still remains unclear as to whether these forms of destructive leadership align with our conceptualization of unethical leader behavior that incorporates the notion of malicious intent. Nevertheless, these forms of leadership include *tyrannical leadership* (Ashforth, 1994), *toxic leadership* (Frost, 2004), *negative mentoring* (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000), and *supervisor undermining* (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), but most of the work conducted to date has employed the term *abusive supervision* (Tepper, 2000).

Tepper defined abusive supervision as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact” (2000, p. 178). Leaders who engage in abusive supervision are viewed as being manipulative, oppressive, and cruel, their actions often being perceived as intentional and harmful (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Tepper, 2007). Subordinates who perceive their supervisors as being abusive are more likely to quit their jobs, have lower job and life satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, experience greater conflict between work and family, and report increased psychological distress (for a review, see Tepper, 2007).

For the most part, previous constructs falling under the umbrella of destructive leadership, and abusive supervision in particular, emphasize the importance of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, and that violation or exploitation of this relationship often leads to negative perceptions and consequences. We argue here, though, that unethical leadership extends

beyond the interpersonal, relationship-oriented behavior that characterizes the abusive supervision construct to also include unethical task-oriented leader acts that might also be displayed in the pursuit organizational goals.

Indeed, there is over 50 years of research supporting the relevance of both task- and person-focused behavior in the leadership process (for a review, see Yukl, 2006). Optimally, leaders focus on production *and* employee needs, and this distinction is also relevant when considering the nature of a leader's ethical and unethical behavior. Brown and Treviño's (2006) definition and measure of ethical leadership include what we consider to be a person- or relationship-based dimension (i.e., moral person) and a task-oriented dimension (i.e., moral manager). Likewise, it is important to operationalize unethical leadership behavior in a manner that includes both relationship-based (i.e., *immoral person*) and task-based (i.e., *immoral manager*) dimensions.

Thus, in an effort to help clarify the nomological network of the unethical leadership construct, we examine the extent to which unethical leadership, operationalized by borrowing from the work of Craig and Gustafson (1998), is conceptually and empirically distinct from abusive supervision, operationalized by Tepper (2000), in the prediction of both work engagement and burnout. Thus another primary aim of this research is to examine whether ethical leadership, unethical leadership, and abusive supervision are empirically distinct from one another—that is, the extent to which they are discriminable constructs.

Research question 1: Are ethical leadership, unethical leadership, and abusive supervision distinct constructs?

Psychological Well-being and *Unwell-being* at Work

The concepts of burnout and, more recently, engagement have received substantial attention in the organizational and health psychology literature. Burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state of mental weariness (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Although there has been debate about the specific nature of burnout (cf., Schaufeli & Taris, 2005), the most widely used and influential conceptualization originates from Maslach (1993), who describes burnout as a three-dimensional construct that consists of: (1) *exhaustion* (i.e. the overextension or depletion of emotional and mental resources); (2) *depersonalization* or *cynicism* (i.e. callousness, indifference, or a distant attitude towards one's job); and (3) *reduced personal accomplishment* (i.e. the tendency to evaluate one's work performance negatively, resulting in feelings of incompetence, insufficiency and poor job-related self-esteem). It has been estimated that over 90 percent of studies on burnout utilize the Maslach Burnout Inventory that is based on this definition (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998, p. 71). Moreover, this conceptualization of burnout is highly relevant for the present study in that it emphasizes employees' experience with strain as one that is situated within an organization's social context and one that involves the appraisal of the self and others (Maslach, 1993).

The concept of work engagement later emerged from burnout research as an attempt to more adequately address the entire psychological spectrum from employee *unwell-being* (burnout) to employee *well-being* (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Engagement is thought to be a pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not necessarily focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In contrast to employees who suffer from burnout, engaged employees are thought to have an energizing, effective connection or attachment with their work activities and feel efficacious in their ability to deal with the demands

of their job. Specifically, Schaufeli and colleagues (2002) define work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that consists of three dimensions: (1) *vigor* (i.e. high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence in the face of difficulties); (2) *dedication* (i.e. a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge); and (3) *absorption* (i.e. being fully concentrated and engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work).

In today's fast-paced, dynamic work environment, engaged employees are thought to represent a competitive advantage in terms of human capital. There are several best-selling books that make this argument (e.g., Covey, 2004; Gratton, 2000) and a Google search of "employee engagement" will yield over 4 million hits. In contrast, using the same keywords in a PsychInfo search yields fewer than 200 scientific articles and chapters. Obviously there continues to be quite a discrepancy between popular interest and empirical research. Nevertheless, those empirical studies that do exist have found evidence that employee engagement does impact meaningful organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), in- and extra-role performance (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006), financial turnover at the end of the work shift (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009), and customer-rated service quality (Salanova, Agut, & Pieró, 2005).

In sum, burnout and engagement are not only popular topics among practitioners, but the research that does exist suggests that they both represent meaningful and organizationally-relevant phenomena. In addition, studying the determinants of these constructs as a duo represents a more comprehensive examination of the continuum of work-related experiences. In doing so, from an academic perspective, we hope to arrive at a more balanced understanding of

the phenomena of employee well-being and *unwell-being*, and from a practical perspective, we hope to provide organizations with an understanding of a priori ways to prevent burnout and promote engagement rather than approach these phenomena in a post hoc manner.

Psychological Processes Underlying the Influence of Ethical and Unethical Leadership

Beyond examining links between ethical and unethical leadership and followers' occupational health and well-being, it is also critical for researchers to uncover *how* and *why* ethical these relationships might exist—that is, to establish mediating mechanisms, and in turn, to address *when* these mediating mechanisms are more or less important in explaining the influence of ethical and unethical leadership. Recently, Walumbwa, Mayer, P. Wang, H. Wang, and Workman (2010) and Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog, and Folger (2010) began to lay the groundwork toward this goal by finding support for a variety of mediators of the relationship between ethical leadership and follower task performance. Thus, the third major aim of this study is to build on their work by identifying the psychological processes by which ethical and unethical leadership relate to psychological well-being (and unwell-being).

Both work engagement and burnout are phenomena that are thought to unravel over time as a result of prolonged exposure to the complex combination of job resources and demands that characterize contemporary organizations. The job demands-resources (JD-R; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) model has emerged as a promising theoretical framework within which to study these topics as it integrates work engagement and job burnout into a comprehensive model that explains both the well-being and ill-health of employees, as well as their related antecedents and consequences (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

In this model, *job resources* refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (1) are functional in achieving work goals, (2) may reduce job demands

and their associated physical and psychological costs, and (3) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development. *Job demands*, on the other hand, refer to the aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort (cognitive and emotional) and are therefore associated with certain physical and mental costs.

These job resources and demands are involved in triggering a *dual process* of motivation and ill-health (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The first process, a *health impairment process*, is an energy-draining process whereby chronic job demands deplete employees' mental and physical resources leading to the experience of burnout (e.g. Demerouti et al., 2001; Leiter, 1993). The second process, a *motivational process*, is presumed to occur when job resources stimulate work engagement by increasing the meaningfulness of work, holding employees responsible for work processes and outcomes, and providing employees with information about the results of their efforts (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Thus, we integrate this approach to studying occupational well-being with those that address ethical and unethical leadership.

Extant research integrating behavioral ethics and leadership has focused primarily on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) or social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986); however, social identity theory has recently emerged as an alternative explanation for the relationship between ethical leadership and its outcomes (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). We argue that two psychological processes are particularly relevant when attempting to explain the effects of ethical and unethical leadership on followers' occupational health and well-being: one that is founded in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the theoretical framework most commonly associated with ethical leadership, and relies on *leader-member exchange* (LMX); and a second approach that is based on relational identity theory (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) and relies on *relational identification with one's supervisor*. Both of these processes underscore the

notion that the supervisor-subordinate relationship has the potential to serve as a resource; however, when this resource is threatened (for example, by unethical leadership behavior), it has the potential to compromise subordinates' well-being. Notably, examining both psychological processes within the same study also affords us the unique opportunity to determine the relative importance of each of these mediators. This is particularly important being that most leadership research has progressed in a somewhat piece-meal fashion, measuring only one mediator per study.

The fourth and final major aim of this research is to extend previous research by investigating the extent to which these mediating mechanisms may be more or less important depending on several boundary conditions (i.e., moderators). Namely, we investigate the extent to which *perceived organizational support* (POS) serves as a social exchange mechanism that compensates for low-LMX, and *organizational identification* serves as an identification mechanism that compensates for low-relational identity with one's supervisor to buffer against burnout and promote work engagement. Thus, we will now discuss the two proposed theoretical routes, as well as their respective mediators and moderators, and the hypothesized relationships that correspond to this nomological network.

The Social Exchange Route

LMX represents a social exchange relationship that occurs between an employee and his or her immediate supervisor (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). That is, in terms of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), LMX constitutes a reciprocal process wherein both parties bring unique resources to exchange in the course of developing the relationship and their respective roles. For instance, whereas leaders clarify role expectations and provide formal and informal rewards to followers who meet these expectations, followers reciprocate by developing

expectations of their leaders regarding appropriate interpersonal treatment and rewards to be received for meeting the leader's expectations. Important to note, therefore, is that followers are not passive "role recipients," rather, they may be instrumental in accepting, rejecting, or renegotiating roles set forth by their leader (H. Wang, Law, Hackett, D. Wang, & Chen, 2005). Being that employees' perceptions of LMX develop vis-à-vis repeated interactions with their leaders, the behaviors and personal qualities of immediate supervisors are likely to be highly influential in enhancing or undermining followers' perceptions of LMX.

Indeed, Walumbwa and colleagues (2010) recently found support for LMX as a partial mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and follower task performance. We seek to extend their work in several ways. First, by including unethical leadership as an additional antecedent of LMX; second, by considering two organizationally-relevant criteria that are novel in this stream of research—burnout and work engagement; and third, by examining the extent to which perceived organizational support might moderate these effects.

Ethical leadership and LMX. Walumbwa and colleagues (2010) describe several ways in which ethical leadership promotes high-LMX with followers. First, as suggested by the 'moral person' dimension of ethical leadership, ethical leaders are thought to be honest and trustworthy people who make fair, principled decisions and demonstrate concern for the welfare of their employees (Brown & Treviño, 2006, Brown et al., 2005). In response to this demonstration of care and concern, employees view their supervisors as being committed to them. This, in turn, leads to high-LMX stemming from loyalty, emotional connectedness, and mutual support (Erdogan, Liden, & Kraimer, 2006; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). Ethical leaders are also more likely to attempt to build trust, a cornerstone of high-LMX, among their followers by ensuring that followers' opinions, concerns, and ideas will be heard (Brown & Treviño, 2006,

Brown et al., 2005). Finally, ethical leaders build relationships based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) by holding themselves accountable to model ethical conduct to employees, making salient the benefits of behaving in accordance with ethical standards as well as the costs of violating these standards, and then utilizing rewards and punishment appropriately to hold followers accountable (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds, 2006). Thus, it is evident that ethical leaders are more likely to develop high-LMX relationships with their followers by demonstrating concern for their well-being, building trust, encouraging employees' opinions, and following through on their ethical agenda.

Unethical leadership and LMX. In contrast to ethical leadership, we argue that unethical leadership represents a threat to LMX because it undermines the basic principles of social exchange. Unethical leaders tend to be perceived as corrupt, manipulative, abusive, and opportunistic in striving to achieve their goals at any cost (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Unethical leaders may also foster unethical behavior among followers through facilitating, rewarding, or condoning corruption, or by simply ignoring unethical behavior (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). This permission of behavior inconsistent with ethical norms and standards likely serves to undermine perceptions of leader trustworthiness. In addition, unethical leaders often focus exclusively on the end rather than the means, failing to consider appropriate interpersonal treatment of followers (Brief, Buttram, & Dukerich, 2001). Demonstrating a lack of concern for the welfare of employees in favor of achieving results at any cost likely thwarts the building of trust in supervisor-subordinate relationships.

Sims and Brinkman (2002) describe unethical leadership as focusing on short-term results, rewarding behavior that achieves these results at any cost, failing to punish employees who violate ethical standards (e.g., by breaking laws) in the pursuit of these results, and

encouraging conformity rather than seeking the potentially divergent opinions and concerns of followers. Thus, followers of unethical leaders likely receive mixed messages about expectations and standards. This behavior stands in stark contrast to fair and principled ethical leader behavior, and moreover, the capricious and opportunistic nature of unethical leader behavior clearly violates the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). This violation often leads employees to view the exchange pattern as imbalanced or exploited (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Thus, unethical leaders are more likely to develop low-LMX with followers because of their lack of trustworthiness, exploitation of the interpersonal exchange, and their failure to make employee welfare a priority.

LMX and burnout. The employee-manager social interaction has been identified as being especially important for influencing employee job stress and the process of coping (Cherniss, 1980). As discussed above, LMX directly coincides with the definition and development of organizational roles which would otherwise be ambiguously or incompletely specified (Graen, Orris, & Johnson, 1973). Employees' immediate supervisors are typically very influential in this role-defining process due to the hierarchical structure characterizing most organizations (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). To be sure, previous research has confirmed a significant negative relationship between LMX and several role stressors such as role ambiguity and conflict (Nelson, Basu & Purdie, 1998) that directly link to employee well-being in general, and specifically, to burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Moreover, Thomas and Lankau (2009) recently demonstrated that LMX buffered against emotional exhaustion, in particular, by decreasing role stress and increasing socialization.

According to the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, when chronic job demands deplete employees' mental and physical resources, this leads to the experience of burnout (e.g.

Demerouti et al., 2000, 2001; Leiter, 1993). Being that individuals reporting high-LMX experience reduced role ambiguity and role conflict, two rather influential job demands, they are likely to be less susceptible to burnout.

As discussed above, supervisors form unique relationships with their employees, and previous research suggests that the distribution of LMX within a workgroup is visible to its members, they are aware of discrepancies, and these discrepancies influence perceptions of fairness (Erdogan & Liden, 2002). Thus, whereas relationships are typically considered resources (i.e., a source of psychosocial support), individuals perceiving low-LMX may see the relationship itself as an additional role stressor that serves as a demand due to the inherent costs associated with trying to repair or manage the relationship. Thus, being that LMX appears to be a proximal influence on burnout, it likely serves as an important mechanism by which ethical and unethical leadership influence burnout. Because we also propose a second mediating mechanism based on relational identification with the supervisor, we hypothesize partial rather than full mediation.

Hypothesis 1a: Follower perceptions of LMX partially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout.

Hypothesis 1b: Follower perceptions of LMX partially mediate the relationship between unethical leadership and burnout.

LMX and work engagement. According to the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001), whereas demands lead to burnout, job resources stimulate work engagement because they increase the meaningfulness of work, hold employees responsible for work processes and outcomes, and provide employees with information about the results of their efforts (cf. Hackman & Oldham, 1980). High-LMX relationships offer several valuable job resources

including increased autonomy (Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998), participation in decision-making (Nelson et al., 1998), and more delegation from the supervisor (Schriesheim et al., 1998). In addition, the mutual respect, trust, and loyalty that characterize high-LMX relationships encourage both parties to bring additional resources to the exchange such as protection and emotional support for one another (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Employees with high-LMX also tend to receive more of the leader's time, attention, and guidance, as well as increased access to key people in the leader's social network, which can lead to the provision of even more resources and support (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Lastly, employees who have high-LMX also receive more organizational and job-related information, greater job direction, and they even receive higher objective performance ratings which positively influence perceptions of their own competence (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

Thus, when the LMX is high and therefore leads to both tangible and intangible resources, it is likely to foster increased work engagement. On the other hand, when employees experience low-LMX, and therefore, fail to receive these resources, they will become less engaged in their work. Thus, we posit that LMX (partially) mediates the relationship between ethical and unethical leadership and work engagement, but that other underlying mechanisms might be at play (e.g., relational identification).

Hypothesis 1c: Follower perceptions of LMX partially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement.

Hypothesis 1d: Follower perceptions of LMX partially mediate the relationship between unethical leadership and work engagement.

The moderating role of perceived organizational support. Whereas LMX certainly represents an influential social exchange relationship in the context of work organizations, it is

certainly not the only social exchange mechanism at play. Perceived organizational support (POS) represents another salient social exchange mechanism that likely serves similar functions (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Indeed, a review of the research on LMX and POS reveals that they are related to many of the same outcomes (Masterson et al., 2000). As such, we propose that perceptions of POS may compensate for low-LMX relationship in the prediction of burnout and work engagement. That is, in low-LMX relationships where individuals fail to receive adequate support from their leader and struggle to cope with more demands and fewer resources, individuals that perceive the broader organization as being supportive of their needs and goals (high-POS) will be less vulnerable to the consequences of low-LMX, and therefore, more immune to the experience of burnout and more likely to sustain work engagement. Thus, this represents a case of second-stage moderated mediation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) whereby the strength of the mediator's (LMX) effect on the outcome depends on the level of the moderator (POS).

POS describes the quality of employee–organization relationship as indicated by employees' perception of the extent to which their organization cares about their welfare and values their contributions (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Similar to LMX, POS can be understood in terms of social exchange and patterns of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). When employees perceive their organization as supportive, they are more likely to feel committed to achieving the organization's goals. As such, POS brings about increased in- and extra-role performance and decreased stress and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995).

According to Eisenberger and colleagues (1986), perceptions of POS stem from employees' tendency to assign human-like characteristics to their organization. This personification of the organization is reinforced by the rules, norms and policies that define appropriate role behaviors and by its inherent responsibility for the well-being of its individual employees (Levinson, 1965). Thus, to some extent, employees conceptualize their relationship with their organization in a manner that is quite similar to a relationship between themselves and a more powerful individual (i.e., their leader a la LMX).

Although literature integrating POS and occupational health outcomes is quite sparse, existing research does suggest that POS is another plausible influence on workers' well-being (i.e., work engagement) and unwell-being (i.e., burnout). Similar to support from *individuals*, support from organizations satisfies basic socioemotional needs for support, affiliation, esteem and approval (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998). A supportive organization creates a secure and predictable work environment while providing employees with helpful co-workers from whom they can solicit support (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Shore & Shore, 1995). POS also helps employees deal with workplace demands by indicating the availability of tangible resources and emotional support (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993). Thus, being that they are similar in nature and serve similar functions, we argue that high-POS may attenuate the mediating effect of LMX in the prediction of burnout and engagement.

Hypothesis 2a: LMX mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high POS attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 2b: LMX mediates the relationship between unethical leadership and burnout; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high POS attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 2c: LMX mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high POS attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 2d: LMX mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high POS attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

The Identification Route

Basing their arguments in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Walumbwa and colleagues (2010) recently found support for organizational identification as a mediator of the relationship between ethical leadership and follower task performance. Similar to Walumbwa and colleagues, the majority of scholars examining identity and identification in organizations have primarily relied on social identity theory to address the individual in relation to collectives such as a work unit, department, or an organization itself. Although this stream of research offers a wealth of knowledge about how individuals partly define themselves in terms of their organizational contexts (e.g., Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2003; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), it has largely neglected the role of *interpersonal* relationships and their influence on identity and identification in organizations (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Such a gap is surprising considering the pervasive importance of relationships, and specifically the supervisor-subordinate relationship, within organizations.

In a previous study examining the link between leadership and follower modes of identification, Kark and Shamir (2002) found that the relationship between transformational leadership and follower identification with the leader was actually stronger than the relationship between transformational leadership and social identification. House (1977) also found evidence for a link between charismatic leadership and identification with the leader. Upon reviewing these and similar findings, van Knippenberg and colleagues (D. van Knippenberg, B. van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004) conclude that research should broaden the range of leadership approaches studied in conjunction with identification by going beyond charismatic/transformational leadership. Thus, we seek to address this gap by drawing on relational identification theory (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) to investigate whether ethical and unethical leadership influence identification in the context of the supervisor-subordinate interpersonal relationship, and in turn, if this mode of identification influences worker well-being (i.e., work engagement) and unwell-being (i.e., burnout). In doing so, we aim to offer a more nuanced and holistic understanding of identity and identification in organizations, while shedding light on one psychological process underlying the relationship between ethical (and unethical) leadership and its outcomes.

Self-definition within an organizational context necessarily incorporates a consideration of the network of inter-related roles comprising the organization because the meaning of a given role is dependent on its relation to other roles (e.g., Katz & Kahn, 1978; Stryker & Statham, 1985). That is, roles, by definition, are relational and *relational identification* is the extent to which individuals (at least partially) define themselves in terms of given role-relationships (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Individuals' relational identities are constructed based on both role- and person-based identities. A role-based identity develops independently of *who* the role occupant is

and focuses on the goals, values, beliefs, norms, and interaction styles associated with the role itself (Ashforth, 2001; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Thus, the role-based identity of a supervisor might include monitoring individual and group performance, delegating tasks, planning and allocating resources, giving feedback, representing one's staff, and monitoring the business environment. Nevertheless, a relational identity focuses on the portion of the supervisory role that is more directly related to the supervisor-subordinate role-relationship, and thus, some tasks might be more relevant than others in defining the relational identity of the subordinate. A person-based identity involves the personal qualities of the role occupant that come to bear when enacting the role-based identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Thus, while organizational roles do have some inherent norms and expectations, individuals occupying these roles still tend to have some latitude in enacting the role-based identity in accordance with their own goals and preferences.

Taken together, Sluss and Ashforth (2007) argue that relational identification is a more comprehensive means of understanding identification because it implicates the influence of an interpersonal level while simultaneously tapping into both a collective level via the role-based identity and an individual level via the person-based identity. Whereas social identification emphasizes a *depersonalized* sense of self in which individuals view themselves as interchangeable prototypes of the collective identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), relational identification remains informed by individuals' person-based identities (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). As such, this form of identification remains quite *personalized* with individuals merely expanding their sense of self to include how they interact with the other rather than casting aside their individuality (Aron & Aron, 2000). Also important to note, relational identification differs from "classical identification" (Kelman, 1961, p. 63) where individuals identify with others "to

be like or actually to *be* the other person.” In becoming the other person, individuality is again suppressed; however, relational identification involves an extension of the self. Focusing on the relationship between two individuals via relational identification theory therefore provides new and unique insight into workplace identity beyond that which is addressed by the conventional focus on individual identification with a collective, a la social identity theory.

Ethical leadership and relational identification. According to Sluss and Ashforth (2007), when individuals enter into role-relationships, they evaluate the way in which the other person enacts (or is expected to enact) the relationship. This evaluation is conducted with regard to the self; that is, individuals focus on how the other’s role and personal qualities mesh with their own and, in turn, serve to influence the nature of the role-relationship. This evaluation generally leads to the perception of the role-relationship’s *valence*, or its perceived attractiveness. Relational identification involves a consideration of the valence of both the role- and person-based identities of the supervisor; if these two constituent identities are determined to be positive in valence, relational identification will likely take place (Aron & Aron, 2000).

As previously discussed, ethical leaders are strong moral persons and moral managers. The *moral person* dimension of ethical leadership evokes a leader’s person-based identity. Ethical leaders are perceived as having high moral standards and altruistic motivation, and as being fair, honest, and trustworthy (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Treviño et al., 2000; 2003). They enact their role while demonstrating a concern for their employees’ well-being, and thus, employees view them as approachable and considerate. Taken together, this suggests that the valence of an ethical leader’s person-based identity would be positive.

The *moral manager* dimension of ethical leadership refers to how the leader uses the “tools of the position” (Brown & Mitchell, 2010, p. 584) and speaks to a leader’s role-based

identity. Ethical leaders tend to behave in a manner that is consistent with normative standards for behavior; they enact their leadership role in a manner that is explicitly informed by an ethical agenda. They model ethical conduct, communicate openly regarding ethical standards, and use rewards and punishment to hold followers accountable for such standards. Such behavior instills a sense of trust and emulation among followers while also representing a fulfillment of role expectations. Thus, the way in which ethical leaders enact their role requirements would likely foster a positively-valenced role-identity. Ethical leadership therefore encourages relational identification among followers stemming from the positive valence of both the person-based and role-based identities of the leader.

Unethical leadership and relational identification. In contrast to ethical leadership, unethical leadership is unlikely to lead to the perception that either the supervisor's person- or role-based identities is positive in valence, and, in turn, this likely serves to thwart relational identification. We suggest that unethical leadership behavior perpetrated by one's immediate supervisor fosters perceptions among followers that the supervisor is qualitatively different from an ethical leader, in that he or she will be viewed as both an *immoral* person and an *immoral* manager.

In terms of their person-based identity, unethical leaders are likely to be seen as malicious, exploitative, and opportunistic. Their behavior is often viewed as being motivated by self-interest and/or malicious intent (Craig and Gustafson, 1998). In addition, whereas ethical leaders actively solicit and show concern for their employees' opinions and ideas, unethical leaders promote like-mindedness and are largely insensitive to subordinate's concerns when they challenge the leader's pursuit of his or her personal agenda (Sims & Brinkmann, 2002). In terms of their role-based identity, unethical leaders enact their role by behaving in a way that is illegal

and/or in violation of conventional moral standards (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). In addition, they often condone or promote the perpetration of unethical acts on the part of their subordinates by ignoring or even rewarding behavior that violates ethical standards or failing to create and/or enforce policies surrounding behavioral ethics. Thus, they infuse the supervisor-subordinate role-relationship with unethical personal qualities and behaviors. Thus, it is unlikely that followers would assign positive valence to either the person- or role-based identities of an unethical leader, and as such, would be less likely to report relational identification.

Relational identification and burnout. In contrast to both the individual level of identity which emphasizes independence, autonomy, and self-interest and the collective level of identity which focuses on cohesion, group norms, and depersonalized prototypes, the interpersonal level focuses on the importance of interdependence, personal connection, and intimacy. The basic motivation at this level is to ensure the welfare of the dyad, and individuals draw esteem from effectively meeting obligations that support the role-relationship (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Relational identification facilitates mutual understanding, loyalty, cooperation, and altruism; while simultaneously helping individuals to develop an expanded understanding themselves and their role. Thus, we argue that relational identification with one's immediate supervisor can be expected to impact employees' experience of burnout in several ways.

First, relational identification, like social identification, serves to reduce the job demands of role ambiguity and role conflict by helping individuals to situate themselves within the organizational context. As stated above, having a comprehensive understanding of one's own role necessitates considering it in the scheme of other roles. Uncertainty reduction takes place as individuals incorporate the role-relationship's goals and norms into their understanding of themselves and their roles (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007).

A second key function of relational identification that is largely overlooked by social identity scholars is interpersonal connection and belongingness (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Thus, experiencing relational identification with one's supervisor satisfies an individual's need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1991). If identification fails to occur, and this need therefore goes unmet, it can be quite divisive, particularly in role-relationships predicated on ongoing cooperation (e.g., the supervisor-subordinate relationship; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). In terms of the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001), relationships are beneficial (i.e., a resource) only when they provide for situational needs (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Hobfoll, 1985); however, they are harmful (i.e., a demand) when they do not (Hobfoll & London, 1986). Thus, a lack of relational identification creates a situation in which the relationship is a demand, and therefore would increase burnout.

Taken together, these points suggest that the creation of relational identification might be one way in which ethical leadership serves to reduce burnout, while the hindrance of relational identification is one explanation for why unethical leadership would serve to promote burnout. Nevertheless, relational identification is not the only psychological explanatory mechanism we examine, and therefore, we propose partial mediation.

Hypothesis 3a: Follower perceptions of relational identification with their immediate supervisor partially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout.

Hypothesis 3b: Follower perceptions of relational identification with their immediate supervisor partially mediate the relationship between unethical leadership and burnout.

Relational identification and engagement. Relational identification (or a lack thereof) is also likely to be an influential factor in triggering (or thwarting) employees' work engagement. Considering the main functions of relationship identification—uncertainty reduction and

interpersonal connection—it is evident that employees who experience greater relational identification may be privy to more and varied resources that, in accordance with the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001), stimulate levels of engagement on the job.

As previously stated, the basic motivation associated with relational identification is the dyad's welfare and individuals draw esteem from fulfilling obligations to the relationship (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). When attempting to reinforce the relationship, an individual is more likely to actively consider the other's perspective, thereby expanding their own perspective, and to rapidly share information with the other (Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006). Moreover, if the role-relationship is regarded as distinctive and prestigious, this self-expansion function flows directly into self-enhancement. Cross and Morris (2003) also found that individuals who are oriented toward relationships tend to attend to and remember the perspectives of others. In addition, a desire and propensity to access others' perspectives facilitates the self-expansion function of relational identification. This broadened perspective coupled with increased knowledge sharing represents one mechanism by which relational identification cuts down on ambiguity while facilitating growth of the self, and therefore, would be expected to promote engagement.

Another upshot of relational identification is interpersonal connection and belongingness (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). This, in turn, is likely to foster socioemotional resources such as empathy, support, cooperation, and loyalty. Moreover, as individuals expand their sense of self to incorporate features of the role-relationship, they tend to discriminate less between themselves and their partners. This, along with the tendency to adopt the partner's perspective and propensity to provide increased socioemotional resources, increases the likelihood that the relational identification will be reciprocated. As such, individuals who experience relational

identification and are therefore motivated to nurture and support the relationship, are essentially helping themselves (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007).

Taken together, these points suggest that ethical leadership serves to stimulate work engagement by way of encouraging relational identification, while impeding relational identification is one explanation for why unethical leadership would be detrimental to work engagement. However, relational identification is not the only psychological explanatory mechanism we examine, and therefore, we propose partial mediation.

Hypothesis 3c: Follower perceptions of relational identification with their immediate supervisor partially mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement.

Hypothesis 3d: Follower perceptions of relational identification with their immediate supervisor partially mediate the relationship between unethical leadership and work engagement.

The moderating effect of organizational identification. While we suggest that relational identification is an important explanatory mechanism in the relationship between ethical and unethical leadership and the outcomes of burnout and work engagement, it is possible that organizational identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) represents another relevant form of identification in this process, particularly for those individuals who experience low-relational identification. That is, we argue that organizational identification serves as a moderator in the sense that when individuals fail to identify with their supervisor, identification with their broader organization can compensate and thus the individual will be less susceptible to burnout and more likely to feel engaged at work. Being that it is important to understand how relational

identification and organizational identification converge (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), examining them in this manner takes steps toward achieving this goal.

Based in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), *organizational identification* is a specific form of identification with a collective whereby the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). In contrast to relational identification, organizational identification involves a suppression of individuality in favor of adopting a collective identity. There has been a noticeable increase over the past few years of drawing from the social identity approach when studying occupational health (e.g. see Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). In general, this stream of research suggests that when individuals identify with a collective such as their organization, this tends to be beneficial to their psychological well-being at work.

The social identity approach maintains that individuals consider salient group membership when they define their social identity, and consequently, they perceive their goals, needs and values to be interchangeable with those of other in-group members. As a result, they strive to advance the interests of other in-group members as their own (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), and are more motivated to act in a manner that advances the group's collective interests (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004). Indeed, research confirms that organizational identification predicts both in- and extra-role performance (Riketta, 2005). This approach also highlights the importance that one's social identity has in the stress appraisal process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), in that a sense of shared identity acts as a powerful regulator of the stress experience. That is, it is a critical influence over individuals' appraisals of and reactions to stressors as well as their capacity to mitigate potentially harmful stimuli (S. Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & C. Haslam, 2009a). Identification

with one's group can serve to buffer employees from the adverse effects of strain—primarily because identification is a basis for social support (Branscombe et al., 1999; Haslam, Jetten, & Waghorn, 2009b).

Haslam and colleagues (2009b) provide evidence for how organizational identification might serve to protect organizational members from experiencing burnout. Specifically, individuals exhibiting high collective identification were more willing to display organizational citizenship behaviors, and were more satisfied and proud of their work than those low in collective identification. Pertinent to the present study, high identifiers were also less likely than low identifiers to experience burnout during those phases of the study when the group was exposed to greatest strain from increasing demands. They concluded that social identification not only motivates individuals to meet collective goals (e.g., by engaging in organizational citizenship behavior), but also shields them from the stressors that they may face when trying to meet these goals. Thus, high organizational identification may attenuate the strength of the mediated relationships outlined above.

Hypothesis 4a: Relational identification mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high organizational identification attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 4b: Relational identification mediates the relationship between unethical leadership and burnout; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high organizational identification attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 4c: Relational identification mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high organizational identification attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 4d: Relational identification mediates the relationship between unethical leadership and work engagement; however, this mediated relationship is moderated such that high organizational identification attenuates the strength of the indirect effect.

In sum, although previous research has linked ethical leadership to many organizationally-relevant outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2006), there has been no systematic, empirical research linking behavioral ethics, leadership, and occupational health and well-being. In addition, the noticeable exclusion of *unethical* leadership represents a substantial gap in the existing literature. If relationships between these constructs do exist, it is important to shed light on the psychological processes underlying these effects. Here we have proposed that whereas social exchange with the leader serves as one underlying psychological mechanism for how ethical and unethical leadership influence burnout and engagement, identification with the leader represents an alternative, and equally viable psychological mechanism that serves to explain these relationships. Particularly in those situations where unethical leadership is present, it is important to understand how the perpetration of this behavior by supervisors might threaten the exchange and identification routes. In addition, it is possible that alternative psychological mechanisms that pertain to individuals' attachment to their broader organization might compensate in promoting engagement and preventing burnout. We have suggested here that, from a social exchange perspective, perceived organizational support might compensate for low-LMX, and from an identification perspective, organizational identification might compensate for low-relational identification with one's supervisor.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Undergraduate students currently enrolled in Psychology or Management courses at a large southeastern university were invited to recruit individuals who were employed full-time (30 hours or more per week) and willing to participate in this research study by completing two secure, online surveys spaced approximately three weeks apart. The undergraduate students were given an alternative option of a written paper to either fulfill a research requirement associated with their course or to earn extra credit when the course did not require research participation.

Once willing participants were identified, an email was sent to these individuals that included a link to the informed consent page followed by the Time 1 survey. Ethical and unethical leadership, abusive supervision, the organizational identification and social support moderators, and demographic variables were assessed at Time 1. Reminder emails for the first survey were sent to non-responding participants five and ten days after the initial survey email was sent.

The undergraduate students recruited an initial pool of 1,157 potential participants who were sent links to the Time 1 survey. Of these individuals, 699 completed the survey; however, 65 of these respondents did not meet the eligibility requirement of working a minimum of 30 hours per week and were removed from the sample. Thus, the final Time 1 sample size was 634, for a response rate of nearly 55%. We sent an email with a link to the Time 2 survey to these 634 participants approximately three weeks after they completed the first survey. Relational identification, LMX, burnout, engagement, and social desirability were assessed at Time 2.

Reminder emails for the second survey were again sent to non-responding participants at five and ten days after the second survey email was sent.

Of the 634 Time 1 participants, 458 returned usable Time 2 survey for a response rate of around 72.2%. This final sample of participants, representing nearly 42% of the initial pool of eligible individuals ($N = 1,092$) recruited by undergraduates to participate, was 64.4% female with a mean age of 41.92 years ($SD = 11.28$ years). Around 32% of participants occupied management positions in their organizations. Participants worked an average of 45.1 hours per week ($SD = 8.72$ hours) in organizations that spanned a wide variety of industries such as educational services, finance and insurance, health care and social assistance, and manufacturing. On average, participants have been employed by their current organizations for 8.16 years ($SD = 7.68$ years), have held their current jobs for 7.10 years ($SD = 7.27$ years), and have reported to their current immediate supervisor for 4.29 years ($SD = 4.40$ years). On average, participants reported that about 19 ($SD = 29.44$) individuals directly report to their current immediate supervisors.

Measures

Ethical leadership. Ethical leadership was assessed at Time 1 with Brown, Treviño, and Harrison's (2005) 10-item ethical leadership scale (ELS; $\alpha = .96$). The ELS was developed and its psychometric properties tested and validated in a set of seven studies (Brown et al., 2005). This measure asks participants to think about the behaviors of their immediate supervisors and respond on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Representative items include, "my supervisor discusses business ethics or values with employees" and "my supervisor makes fair and balanced decisions."

Unethical leadership. The Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS; Craig & Gustafson, 1998) was used at Time 1 to assess unethical leadership ($\alpha = .96$). The scale consists of negatively-worded items reflecting specific unethical leader behaviors of which it is expected that any subordinate in any situation would have knowledge (e.g., my supervisor “would take credit for my ideas,” “enjoys turning down requests,” “would limit my training opportunities to prevent me from advancing”). Using items that specifically describe unethical behaviors avoids the ambiguity associated with previous attempts to define unethical leadership as the absence of ethical leadership behaviors. When the presence of unethical behavior is detected, then a leader may be deemed unethical. However, as discussed above, we diverge from the measure’s authors in thinking that the absence of unethical leadership behaviors corresponds to ethical leadership. Being considered an ethical leader requires the deliberate modeling of overt or intentional ethical leadership to followers, otherwise one is likely to be perceived as being ethically neutral (Treviño et al., 2000; 2003). Thus, both ethical and unethical leadership are most appropriately assessed by measuring perceptions of the *presence* of specific leadership behaviors.

Although this instrument does seem to measure an unethical leadership style that is quite similar to abusive supervision, the PLIS is more encompassing of the full-range of person- and task-oriented unethical behaviors. While many of the items on the PLIS do focus on interpersonal relations among subordinate respondents and their leaders, some do not (e.g., “my supervisor would falsify records if it would help his/her work situation” and “my supervisor limits my training opportunities to prevent me from advancing”). Thus, to enable a more stringent examination of the empirical distinctiveness of the two measures, we removed items from the original 31-item PLIS that were explicitly semantically redundant with items on the abusive supervision measure as recommended by Stanton, Sinar, Balzer, & Smith (2002). This

resulted in a 26-item measure of perceived unethical leadership behavior. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*exactly*).

Abusive supervision. Respondents also completed Mitchell & Ambrose's (2007) 10-item version of Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale at Time 1. There are two dimensions to this version of the scale: *passive aggressive* (i.e., "My supervisor doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort;" $\alpha = .86$) and *active aggressive* (i.e., "My supervisor tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid;" $\alpha = .86$). Study participants indicated the frequency with which their immediate supervisors perform each behavior using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*I cannot remember him/her ever using this behavior with me*) to 5 (*he/she uses this behavior very often with me*).

Burnout. Burnout was assessed at Time 2 using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996) which measures burnout on three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or cynicism), and reduced personal accomplishment. The MBI has demonstrated high internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Lee & Ashforth, 1990), and is the most universally used burnout assessment (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). For the purposes of this study, we analyzed only the emotional exhaustion (five items; e.g., "I feel used up at the end of a workday") and depersonalization (five items; e.g., "I doubt the significance of my work") subscales. This is consistent with emerging burnout literature that suggests that exhaustion and cynicism represent the core of the burnout experience (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001; Green, Walkey, & Taylor, 1991; Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005; Pines & Aronson 1981; Shirom & Melamed, 2005). Respondents indicated the frequency with which they experience the symptoms captured by each statement using a

seven-point scale (0 = *Never* to 6 = *Always*). An overall burnout composite score was calculated for each participant by averaging scores on the two dimensions ($\alpha = .94$).

Work engagement. Work engagement was assessed at Time 2 with the reduced, nine-item version (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006) of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). This measure includes three subscales that reflect the underlying dimensions of engagement: vigor (three items; e.g., “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”), dedication (three items; e.g., “I am enthusiastic about my job”), and absorption (three items; e.g., “I am immersed in my work”). Respondents indicated the frequency with which they experience each statement using a seven-point scale (0 = *Never* to 6 = *Always*). Examining the measure’s construct validity, Seppälä and colleagues (2009) recently supported that the UWES-9 was factorially invariant across time and samples from different occupations. An overall engagement composite score was calculated for each participant by averaging scores on the three dimensions ($\alpha = .93$).

Leader-member exchange (LMX). To measure participants’ perception of the quality of their LMX, we used Liden, Wayne, and Stillwell’s (1993) version of the seven-item LMX member form ($\alpha = .95$) developed by Graen and colleagues (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Liden & Graen, 1980; Scandura & Graen, 1984) at Time 2. Liden and colleagues reworded the original items to accommodate the use of a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An example item is “I can count on my supervisor to ‘bail me out,’ even at his or her own expense when I really need it.” In their meta-analytic review of LMX literature, Gerstner and Day (1997) recommend the LMX-7 as the best measure of the overall exchange quality due to its demonstration of the soundest psychometric properties.

Relational identification with supervisor. Relational identification was also assessed at Time 2 using a 10-item measure ($\alpha = .96$) recently developed and psychometrically assessed by Walumbwa and Hartnell (2011). Several of the items on the scale are from Mael and Ashforth's (1992) organizational identification scale with wording changed to reflect the *supervisor* as the referent, and additional items were developed based on previous work (e.g. Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, in press). Responses were on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Perceived organizational support (POS). POS was measured at Time 1 using the eight-item ($\alpha = .93$) short form (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999) of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) originally developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa (1986). Prior studies incorporating samples from many occupations and organizations have provided evidence for the high internal reliability and validity of the SPOS in both its full and shortened versions (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Shore & Tetrick, 1991; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is "My organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor."

Identification with organization. We assessed organizational identification as a moderator using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) six-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) at Time 1. A sample item is, "When someone criticizes my company, it feels like a personal insult." Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

This scale is one of the two most widely used measures of identification (Riketta, 2005), and, unlike the other most commonly used measure (i.e., Cheney, 1983), the Mael scale is explicitly grounded in social identity theory which is appropriate given the theoretical foundation outlined above. Moreover, meta-analytic findings (Riketta, 2005) suggest that the Mael scale is indeed the preferable scale to use when assessing identification because of its representativeness of the construct with regard to empirical outcomes, the conceptual distinctiveness of its items, and its ability to produce relatively homogenous correlations across studies.

Control variables. We considered several control variable that prior research suggest might also explain the effects of ethical and/or unethical behavior on employee well-being. Specifically, we measured *social desirability* at Time 2 using an 18-item ($\alpha = .77$) short version of Paulhus' (1991) measure. Previous research indicates that individuals may respond in a socially-desirable way to survey items that are sensitive in nature. Participants responded to these items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Consistent with prior research (e.g., Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999), a survey item should be excluded from subsequent analyses if the item correlates at or above .30 with the social desirability composite. None of the items were in violation of this rule, and thus, no items were eliminated in subsequent analyses.

We also included Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's 10-item ($\alpha = .88$) measure of *negative affect*. Items asked participants to report how often they experience certain feelings (e.g., ashamed, nervous, irritable) using a scale from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Existing literature suggests that negative affect tends to be strongly correlated with perceived stress in general (e.g., Watson, 1988) and specifically, with burnout (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003). The relationship between NA and engagement is less clear.

Previous research has also found demographic variables such as gender (e.g., Jackson, 1993), age and tenure (e.g., Brewar & Shapard, 2004), hours worked per week (e.g., Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), and employment status (management vs. non-management; Schaufeli et al., 2006) to be correlated with levels of either burnout or engagement (or both), and thus, these variables were all considered as potential controls (assessed at Time 1).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Descriptives

We first determined which control variables would be included in analyses. The correlations between the potential control variables and the two criteria, burnout and work engagement, were examined. To ensure adequate power and avoid inflating results by including superfluous control variables, we only included those control variables that were significantly correlated with one or both of the outcome variables under investigation (Neter & Wasserman, 1990). Based on this criterion, the following control variables were utilized in analyses: age, hours worked per week, and negative affect. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among primary study variables Composite-level means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among predictor and criterion variables, as well as the mediator, moderator, and control variables appear in Table 1.

Based on our participant recruitment strategy, the final sample could include groups of up to three individuals that report to the same immediate supervisor if all three individuals responded to both the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys. According to Bliese (1998), responses from members in the same work group or who report to the same immediate supervisor may exhibit group effects in that their responses are more similar to each other than would be expected by chance. Thus, we also computed intraclass correlation (ICC(1); Bartko, 1976; James, 1982) values for each of the focal constructs to examine the degree of variability in responses at the individual level that could be attributed to reporting to the same immediate supervisor. These

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, intraclass correlations, and correlations of primary study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ICC(1)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Ethical Leadership	5.64	1.22	.31	(.96)												
2. Abusive Sup. (AA)	1.18	0.44	.37	-.53**	(.86)											
3. Abusive Sup. (PA)	1.30	0.64	.29	-.65**	.79**	(.86)										
4. Unethical Leadership	1.13	0.33	.36	-.64**	.79**	.82**	(.96)									
5. LMX	5.25	1.34	.33	.66**	-.46**	-.57**	-.52**	(.95)								
6. RID	4.98	1.34	.36	.69**	-.47**	-.56**	-.55**	.82**	(.96)							
7. POS	5.14	1.26	.24	.48**	-.35**	-.42**	-.38**	.49**	.50**	(.93)						
8. OID	5.55	1.18	.08	.23**	-.15**	-.17**	-.15**	.25**	.35**	.49**	(.91)					
9. Burnout	3.18	1.26	.17	-.31**	.18**	.25**	.18**	-.41**	-.44**	-.49**	-.41**	(.94)				
10. Engagement	5.38	1.02	.13	.28**	-.13**	-.13**	-.13**	.37**	.44**	.50**	.49**	-.70**	(.93)			
11. Age	41.92	11.28	.29	.01	-.01	-.02	-.06	-.02	.01	.02	.01	-.13**	.12*	1.00		
12. Hours/Week	45.10	8.72	.46	.06	.00	.06	.01	-.03	.03	-.05	.10*	.03	.14**	.01	1.00	
13. NA	1.73	0.57	.27	-.27**	.26**	.31**	.20**	-.27**	-.30**	-.37**	-.23**	.54**	-.37**	-.09*	-.01	(.88)

N = 457,

^aCoefficient alpha reliability estimates are in parentheses.** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

ICC(1) values, which also appear in Table 1, are all moderate to high (Muthén, 1997; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Stapleton, 2006). We discuss how this was taken into account in later sections.

Discriminant Validity of Leadership Behaviors

According to Graen, Rowold, and Heinitz (2010), the vast array of leadership theories has produced numerous leadership constructs; however, there have been relatively few efforts to explore how these constructs overlap or are redundant with one another. As such, not only do they encourage researchers to examine the factorial validity of these leadership constructs, but they also urge researchers to study their criterion-related validity. That is, rivaling leadership styles or behaviors should be retained in our models even if they are highly correlated if they contribute to the prediction of important outcomes. Thus, to address Research Question 1 regarding the empirical distinctiveness of ethical leadership, unethical leadership, and abusive supervision, we examined both the factorial and criterion-related validity of our four leadership behavior constructs.

We first examined the pattern of zero-order correlations among these constructs. Although all four predictors were relatively strongly intercorrelated, there were slight differences in the magnitude of the correlations. The correlation between the unethical leadership scale and the active aggressive abusive supervision scale ($r = .79, p < .01$) was almost identical to the correlation between the two abusive supervision subscales ($r = .79, p < .01$). Moreover, the correlation between the PLIS and passive aggressive abusive supervision was even stronger ($r = .82, p < .01$). Thus, this suggests that all three destructive leadership behavior dimensions are indeed highly related and potentially tap into a single underlying construct. On the other hand, the correlations of these constructs with the ethical leadership scale were uniformly lower as expected. Ethical leadership correlated with the unethical leadership scale at $r = -.63 (p < .01)$,

with the passive aggressive abusive supervision scale at $r = -.65$ ($p < .01$), and the active aggressive abusive supervision scale at $r = -.53$ ($p < .01$). The similar and lower magnitude of this group of correlations seems to provide preliminary support that ethical leadership is somewhat distinct from the three highly interrelated destructive leadership behaviors.

Next, we conducted a series of CFAs in the *Mplus* software package (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2007) to examine the factorial discriminant validity of the four leadership behaviors. Being that some individuals in the sample reported to the same immediate supervisor and the ICC(1) values for the leadership behavior constructs were all moderate to high, it was necessary to account for non-independence among responses in these analyses (Bliese, 2000). To do this, we utilized the Huber-White sandwich estimator (Huber, 1967; White, 1982). The Huber-White is as robust as bootstrapping (Muthén & Muthén, 2007) and has been used in previous organizational studies in which non-independence of observations is a concern (e.g., Boone, Van Olffen, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2005; Bottom, Holloway, Miller, Mislin, & Whitford, 2006; Kilduff, Crossland, Tsai, & Krackhardt, 2008; Little, Nelson, Quade, & Ward, 2011).

Consistent with previous literature, the ELS was modeled as a single factor (Brown et al., 2005) and the abusive supervision scale was modeled as having a 2-factor structure (passive aggressive behavior and active aggressive behavior; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Because it has been less frequently utilized or cross-validated in existing peer-reviewed studies, there is currently less evidence regarding the psychometric properties and dimensionality of the PLIS (used here to capture unethical leadership). Nevertheless, when designed and initially subjected to exploratory factor analysis, the PLIS was originally found to reflect a single dimension (Craig & Gustafson, 1998), and thus, it was modeled by a single factor in the current study. Because of the relatively small sample size to item ratio, a partial disaggregation model was used in which

we randomly assigned three to four items to parcels that served as indicators of the latent unethical leadership (PLIS) construct to preserve degrees of freedom (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000).

The fit of all CFA models was evaluated in accordance with five fit indices: (a) the chi-square goodness of fit test (χ^2), (b) the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), (c) Bentler and Bonett's (1980) nonnormed fit index (NNFI), which is a generalization of the Tucker-Lewis index (NNFI/TLI, Tucker & Lewis, 1973), (d) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), and (e) the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR; Bentler, 1995). Researchers generally agree that CFI and TLI values greater than .90 indicate adequate fit, while values at or above .95 indicate good fit; RMSEA values less than .08 and SRMR values less than .10 indicate acceptable fit, while RMSEA values below .06 and SRMR values below .08 indicate good fit (e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999; Lance & Vandenberg, 2002).

We compared the fit of measurement models specifying one-, two-, three-, and four-factors to assess the discriminant validity of the measures and found that the model specifying four factors provided the best fit to the data ($\chi^2(344) = 1743.53$, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05), and that this fit was significantly better than the fit of the other models. This finding provides preliminary support for the notion that these leadership behaviors are indeed distinguishable among followers in that they surface as discriminant constructs. Table 2 displays fit indices for each of the models as well as the results of the chi-square difference tests.¹

¹ Because the Huber-White robust estimator was used, it was necessary to adjust the normal-theory χ^2 statistic by dividing by a scaling correction to better approximate χ^2 and $\Delta\chi^2$ values under non-normality (Muthén & Muthén, 2005). Thus, these adjusted χ^2 values appear in Table 2.

Table 2: Goodness of fit indices and difference tests for model comparisons

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
1. 1-factor (Global [All scales collapsed])	<i>(did not converge)</i>					
2. 2-factor (Ethical vs. Unethical [AA, PA, PLIS collapsed])	2159.87 ^a	349	.90	.89	.06	.06
3. 3-factor (ELS, Abusive Supervision [AA& PA collapsed], PLIS)	1875.42 ^a	347	.92	.91	.05	.05
4. 4-factor (ELS, AA, PA, PLIS)	1743.53 ^a	344	.93	.92	.05	.05
Model	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δ df				
Model 2 versus Model 4	84.26 ^{b*}	5				
Model 3 versus Model 4	18.16 ^{b*}	3				

N = 458

^a χ^2 value adjusted with scaling correction to approximate Maximum Likelihood (ML) χ^2 ^b $\Delta\chi^2$ value adjusted with difference test scaling correction to approximate ML $\Delta\chi^2$ * $p < .001$

Consistent with Graen and colleagues' (2010) suggestions, after having examined the construct validity of the four leadership behaviors under investigation, we next turned to examine their criterion-oriented validity. Thus, we situated ethical leadership, abusive supervision, and unethical leadership in a structural model to examine how they function within a broader nomological network. This also enabled us to examine our substantive hypotheses regarding moderated mediation for the social exchange and identification routes.

Structural Equation Modeling

The *Mplus* software package (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2007) was utilized to specify and evaluate a structural equation model (SEM) using observed variables. SEM is superior to traditional path analysis in that it enables the researcher to estimate all hypothesized path coefficients simultaneously, taking advantage of full-information maximum likelihood estimation instead of limited information (e.g., ordinary least squares) estimation (Bollen, 1989; Jöreskog, 1970, 1971).

Mplus uses full information maximum likelihood (FIML) to address missing data. Enders and Bandalos (2001) recommend this as the most appropriate technique for handling missing data when conducting SEM. To address the hypothesized relationships between focal variables, we used Edwards and Lambert's (2007) analytical framework for combining mediation and moderation to guide the specification of our structural model. Using this method enables the researcher to pinpoint paths of a mediated model that are moderated and, moreover, facilitates statistical tests of moderation for each path. In addition, their framework expresses mediation in terms of direct, indirect, and total effects and shows how the paths that constitute these effects might vary across levels of moderator variables using Aiken and West's (1991) principle of simple slopes (Tate, 1998).

Based on the nature of our hypotheses, we tested a structural model specifying two routes that each included second stage moderated mediation (see Figure 1, Panel C in Edwards & Lambert, 2007, p.4). Thus, ethical leadership, unethical leadership, passive aggressive abusive supervision, and active aggressive abusive supervision were specified as exogenous variables, work engagement and burnout were specified as endogenous variables, relational identification with one's supervisor and LMX were specified as mediator variables, and two cross-product terms were also incorporated, such that organizational identification interacted with relational identification and perceived organizational support interacted with LMX to predict the endogenous variables. Following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991), we centered the mediators (LMX and RID) as well as the moderators (POS and OID) prior to running analyses. Non-independence of observations remained an issue in the SEM portion of data analysis, thus the Huber-White sandwich estimator was again used to produce robust standard errors to account for this.

We used *Mplus*'s effects decomposition feature to examine the hypothesized mediated relationships (H1a-d and H3a-d). A statistically significant indirect effect indicated that the relationship between the antecedent and outcome occurred through the mediator. Hypotheses 1a through 1d assessed whether LMX mediates the relationships between ethical and unethical forms of leadership (as well as both types of abusive supervision) and the outcomes of burnout and work engagement. In support of Hypothesis 1a, the indirect effect of ethical leadership on burnout mediated by LMX was significant ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .04$, $p = .03$).

The indirect effect of ethical leadership on work engagement mediated by LMX was not significant ($b = 0.04$, $SE = .03$, $p = .16$), and thus, Hypothesis 1c was not supported. Moreover, none of the indirect effects from the abusive supervision or unethical leadership behaviors

through LMX to burnout (passive: $b = 0.07$, $SE = .04$, $p = .09$; active: $b = -0.01$, $SE = .04$, $p = .78$; unethical: $b = 0.03$, $SE = .05$, $p = .62$) or to work engagement (passive: $b = -0.03$, $SE = .03$, $p = .23$; active: $b = 0.01$, $SE = .02$, $p = .78$; unethical: $b = -0.01$, $SE = .03$, $p = .63$) were significant. Thus, Hypotheses 1b and 1d were not supported.

Because the 1st stage path from ethical leadership to LMX was significant ($b = 0.54$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), it is evident that the failure to support an indirect effect from ethical leadership to engagement mediated by LMX (Hypothesis 1C) can be attributed to the non-significant 2nd stage path from LMX to engagement ($b = .08$, $SE = .05$, $p = .15$). Similarly, although the 1st stage simple path from passive aggressive abusive supervision to LMX was significant ($b = -0.43$, $SE = .20$, $p = .03$) as was the 2nd stage simple path from LMX to burnout ($b = -0.15$, $SE = .06$, $p = .01$), the combined effects did not generate a significant indirect effect from passive aggressive supervision to burnout. In addition, despite the significant 1st stage path from passive aggressive abusive supervision to LMX, the non-significant 2nd stage path from LMX to engagement mentioned above is also driving the non-significant indirect effect here. Thus, the only mediated relationship supported for the social exchange route was ethical leadership to burnout mediated by LMX (H1a).

To test our hypotheses regarding 2nd stage moderated mediation for the social exchange route (H2a-d), we examined the mediated relationships at different levels of the moderator. For this route, LMX was the mediating mechanism and perceived organizational support (POS) was the 2nd stage moderator for the relationships between ethical leadership, active aggressive abusive supervision, passive aggressive supervision, and unethical leadership and the outcomes of burnout and work engagement. A statistically significant indirect effect indicated that the relationship between the antecedent and outcome occurred through the mediator at that specified

level of the moderator. However, showing that the indirect effect does or does not differ significantly from zero is not enough to support moderated mediation. The difference between these indirect effects must also be significantly different from zero to support the moderated mediation hypothesis.

Notably, while the indirect effect of ethical leadership on burnout as mediated by LMX was not significant at low levels of POS ($b = -0.06$, $SE = .04$, $p = .13$), this effect *was* significant at high levels of POS ($b = -0.10$, $SE = .05$, $p = .02$). Nevertheless, the difference between these indirect effects ($\Delta b = 0.04$, $SE = .05$, $p = .37$) was not significant. We also examined simple slopes for the 2nd stage moderated paths and plotted the indirect effects (see Figure 1) and the 2nd stage effects (see Figure 2) by level of POS, and all pieces of evidence suggest that the simple slopes did not differ significantly from one another ($\Delta b = 0.08$, $SE = .08$, $p = .36$).

Figure 1: The effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on burnout at different levels of perceived organizational support (POS)

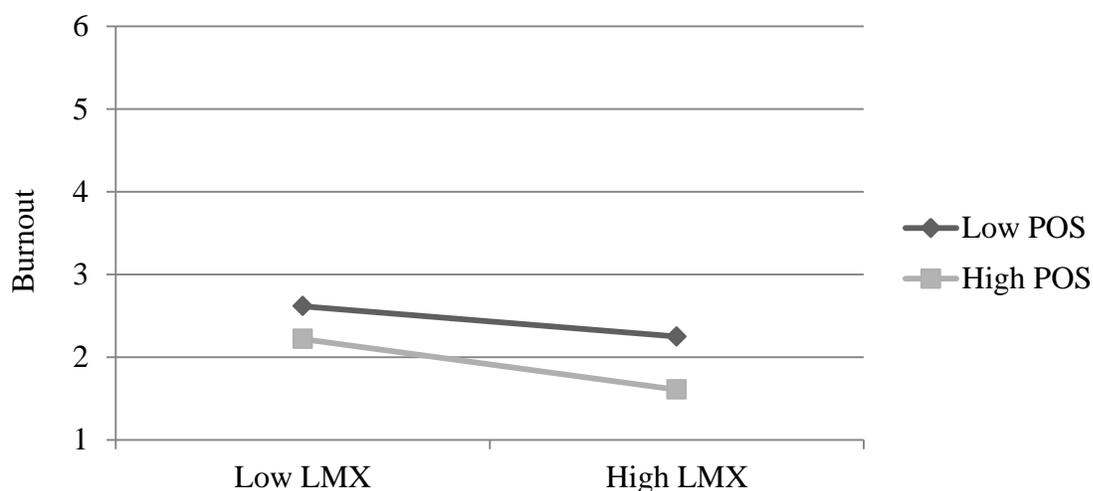
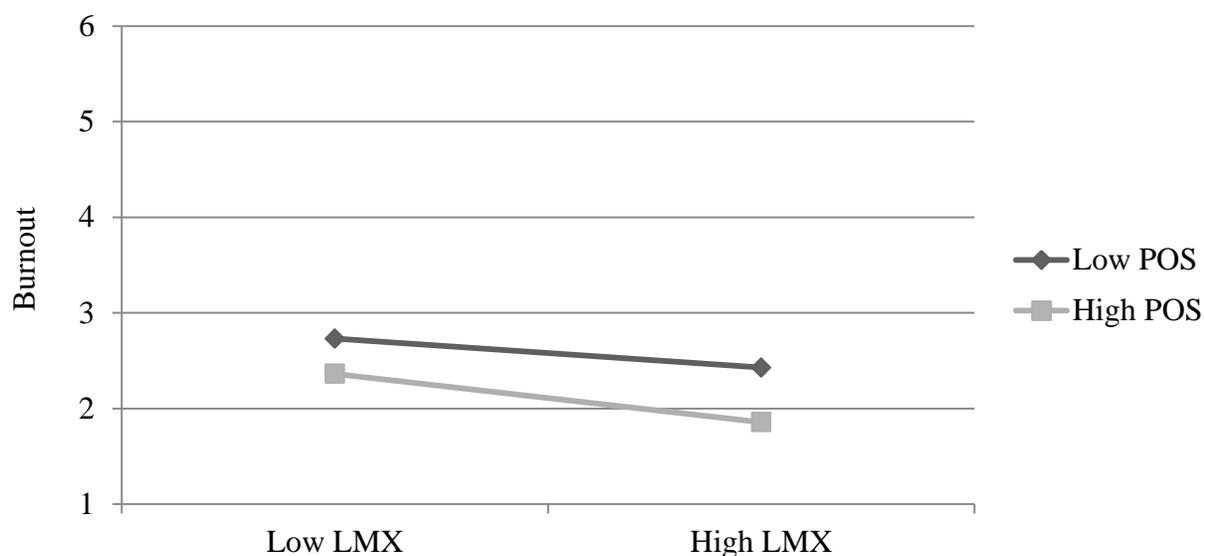


Figure 2: 2nd stage effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on engagement moderated by perceived organizational support (POS)



Thus, Hypothesis 2a regarding POS as a 2nd stage moderator of the mediated ethical leadership to LMX to burnout relationship was not supported. A full list of the simple effects for Hypothesis 2a can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Direct and indirect effects of ethical leadership on burnout mediated by LMX with POS as a 2nd stage moderator

Variable	Stages		Effects		
	First <i>b</i> (SE)	Second <i>b</i> (SE)	Direct <i>b</i> (SE)	Indirect <i>b</i> (SE)	Total <i>b</i> (SE)
POS					
Low	0.54* (.09)	-0.11 (.07)	0.01 (.05)	-0.06 (.04)	-0.05 (.06)
High	0.54* (.09)	-0.19* (.07)	0.01 (.05)	-0.10* (.05)	-0.09 (.06)
Differences	0.00 (.00)	0.08 (.08)	0.00 (.00)	0.04 (.05)	0.04 (.05)

* $p < .05$

None of the indirect effects stemming from passive aggressive or active aggressive abusive supervision or unethical leadership to either burnout or work engagement mediated by LMX were significant at either high or low levels of POS. Thus, we failed to support Hypothesis 2b or 2d. Similarly, the indirect effect of ethical leadership on engagement mediated by LMX was not significant at either high or low levels of POS. Therefore, Hypothesis 2c was not supported. Although the extent to which LMX mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and burnout did seem to vary based on high versus low POS (H2a), the magnitude of this variation was not large enough to suggest that POS is acting as a 2nd stage moderator.

Hypotheses 3a through 3d assessed whether relational identification (RID) mediates the relationships between ethical and unethical forms of leadership (as well as both types of abusive supervision) and the outcomes of burnout and work engagement. In support of Hypothesis 3a, the indirect effect from ethical leadership to burnout mediated by RID was significant ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .03$, $p = .02$). Similarly, the indirect effect from ethical leadership to engagement mediated by RID was significant ($b = 0.10$, $SE = .03$, $p = .004$) supporting Hypothesis 3c.

None of the indirect paths to burnout from passive aggressive abusive supervision ($b = 0.03$, $SE = .03$, $p = .30$), active aggressive supervision ($b = -0.002$, $SE = .03$, $p = .96$), or unethical leadership ($b = 0.06$, $SE = .06$, $p = .30$) were significant. Similarly, none of the indirect effects to work engagement from passive aggressive abusive supervision ($b = -0.04$, $SE = .04$, $p = .29$), active aggressive supervision ($b = 0.002$, $SE = .04$, $p = .96$), or unethical leadership ($b = -0.08$, $SE = .07$, $p = .28$) were significant. Thus, Hypotheses 3b and 3d were not supported. Together these findings provide some support for the identification route in that ethical leadership predicts both burnout and engagement via the mediating mechanism of RID.

Hypothesis 4a suggests that organizational identification (OID) is a 2nd stage moderator of the indirect effect of ethical leadership on burnout mediated by RID. Interestingly, the indirect effect was not significant at high levels of OID ($b = -0.06$, $SE = .04$, $p = .11$), but it *was* significant at low levels of OID ($b = -0.10$, $SE = .04$, $p = .01$). However, the difference between these indirect effects ($\Delta b = -0.04$, $SE = .04$, $p = .33$) was not significant. Moreover, the difference between the simple slopes for the 2nd stage moderated paths was not significant ($\Delta b = -0.06$, $SE = .06$, $p = .32$) and the plots of the indirect effects (see Figure 3) and the 2nd stage effects (see Figure 4) indicate that these slopes are indeed parallel.

Figure 3: The effect of relational identification (RID) on burnout at different levels of organizational Identification (OID)

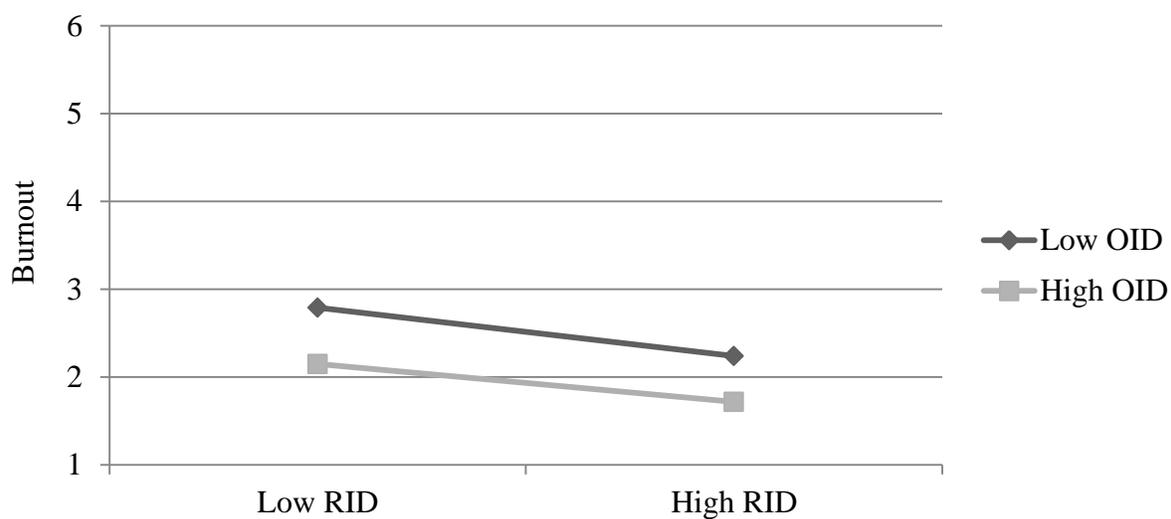
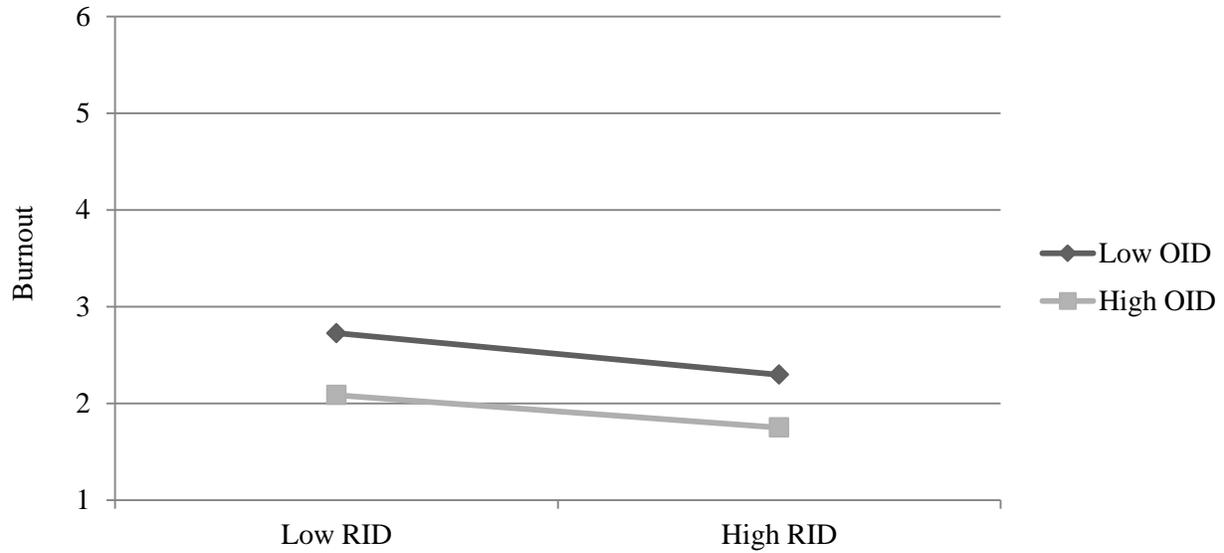


Figure 4: 2nd stage effect of relational identification (RID) on burnout moderated by organizational identification (OID)



Thus, OID does not moderate the 2nd stage of the mediated relationship from ethical leadership to RID to burnout and therefore, Hypothesis 4a was not supported. A full list of the simple effects for Hypothesis 4a can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Direct and indirect effects of ethical leadership on burnout mediated by RID with OID as a 2nd stage moderator

Variable	Stages		Effects		
	First <i>b</i> (SE)	Second <i>b</i> (SE)	Direct <i>b</i> (SE)	Indirect <i>b</i> (SE)	Total <i>b</i> (SE)
OID					
Low	0.57* (.08)	-0.17* (.06)	0.01 (.05)	-0.10* (.04)	-0.08 (.06)
High	0.57* (.08)	-0.11 (.07)	0.01 (.05)	-0.06 (.04)	-0.05 (.06)
Differences	0.00 (.00)	-0.06 (.06)	0.00 (.00)	-0.04 (.04)	-0.04 (.04)

* $p < .05$

Similarly, the indirect effect of ethical leadership on engagement mediated by RID was not significant at high levels of OID ($\beta = 0.07$, $SE = .04$, $p = .07$), but *was* significant at low levels of OID ($\beta = 0.13$, $SE = .04$, $p = .001$). Nevertheless, the difference between these indirect effects ($\Delta b = 0.06$, $SE = .03$, $p = .09$) and the difference between the 2nd stage simple slopes ($\Delta b = 0.10$, $SE = .06$, $p = .07$) were not significant, and the plots show generally parallel lines (see Figure 5 for indirect effects and Figure 6 for 2nd stage effects).

Figure 5: The effect of relational identification (RID) on engagement at different levels of organizational Identification (OID)

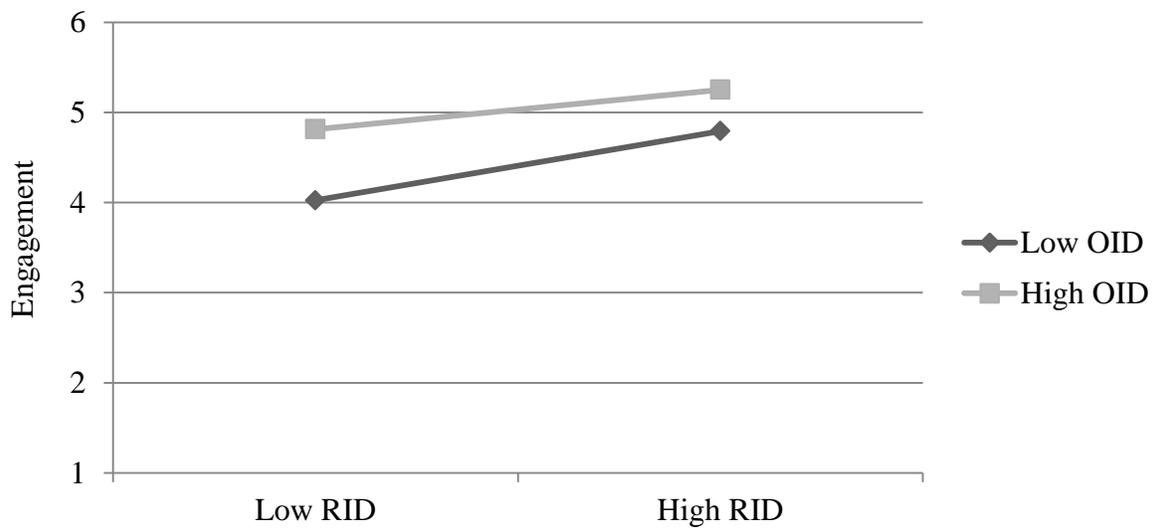
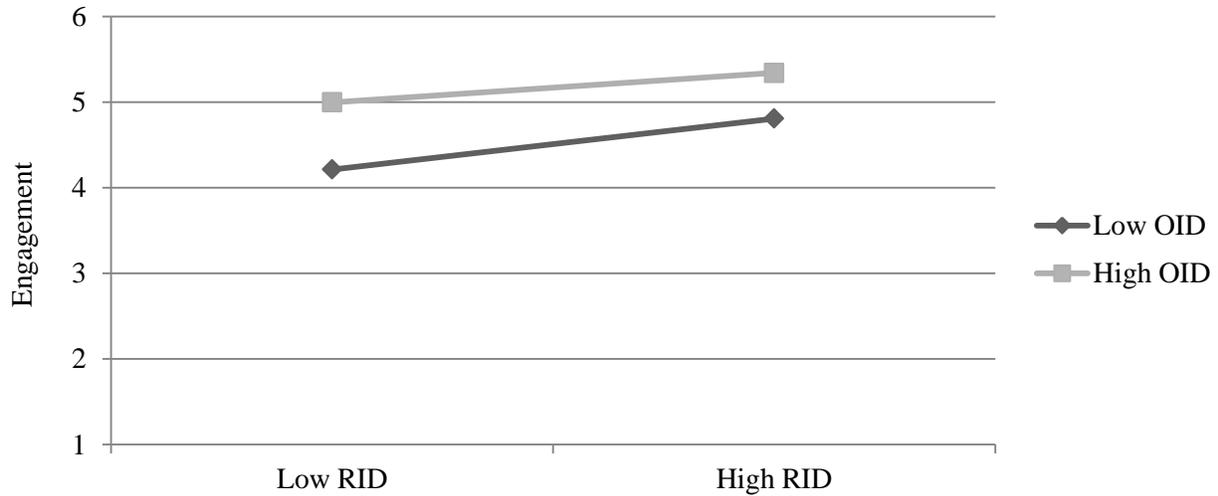


Figure 6: 2nd stage effect of relational identification (RID) on engagement moderated by organizational identification (OID)



Thus, Hypothesis 4c was not supported and OID did not moderate 2nd stage of the RID-mediated relationship between ethical leadership and engagement. A full list of the simple effects for Hypothesis 4c can be found in Table 5.

Table 5: Direct and indirect effects of ethical leadership on engagement mediated by RID with OID as a 2nd stage moderator

Variable	Stages		Effects		
	First <i>b</i> (SE)	Second <i>b</i> (SE)	Direct <i>b</i> (SE)	Indirect <i>b</i> (SE)	Total <i>b</i> (SE)
OID					
Low	0.57* (.08)	0.22* (.06)	0.00 (.05)	0.13* (.04)	0.13* (.06)
High	0.57* (.08)	0.12 (.07)	0.00 (.05)	0.07 (.04)	0.07 (.06)
Differences	0.00 (.00)	0.10 (.06)	0.00 (.00)	0.06 (.03)	0.06 (.03)

* $p < .05$

Taken together, these findings suggest that even though the indirect effects of ethical leadership on both burnout and engagement via RID did seem to vary based on level of the OID moderator, the magnitude of this variation was not quite large enough to indicate that OID is a significant 2nd stage moderator. None of the RID-mediated indirect effects stemming from passive aggressive or active aggressive abusive supervision or unethical leadership to either burnout or work engagement were significant at either high or low levels of OID. Thus, we failed to support Hypothesis 4b or 4d.

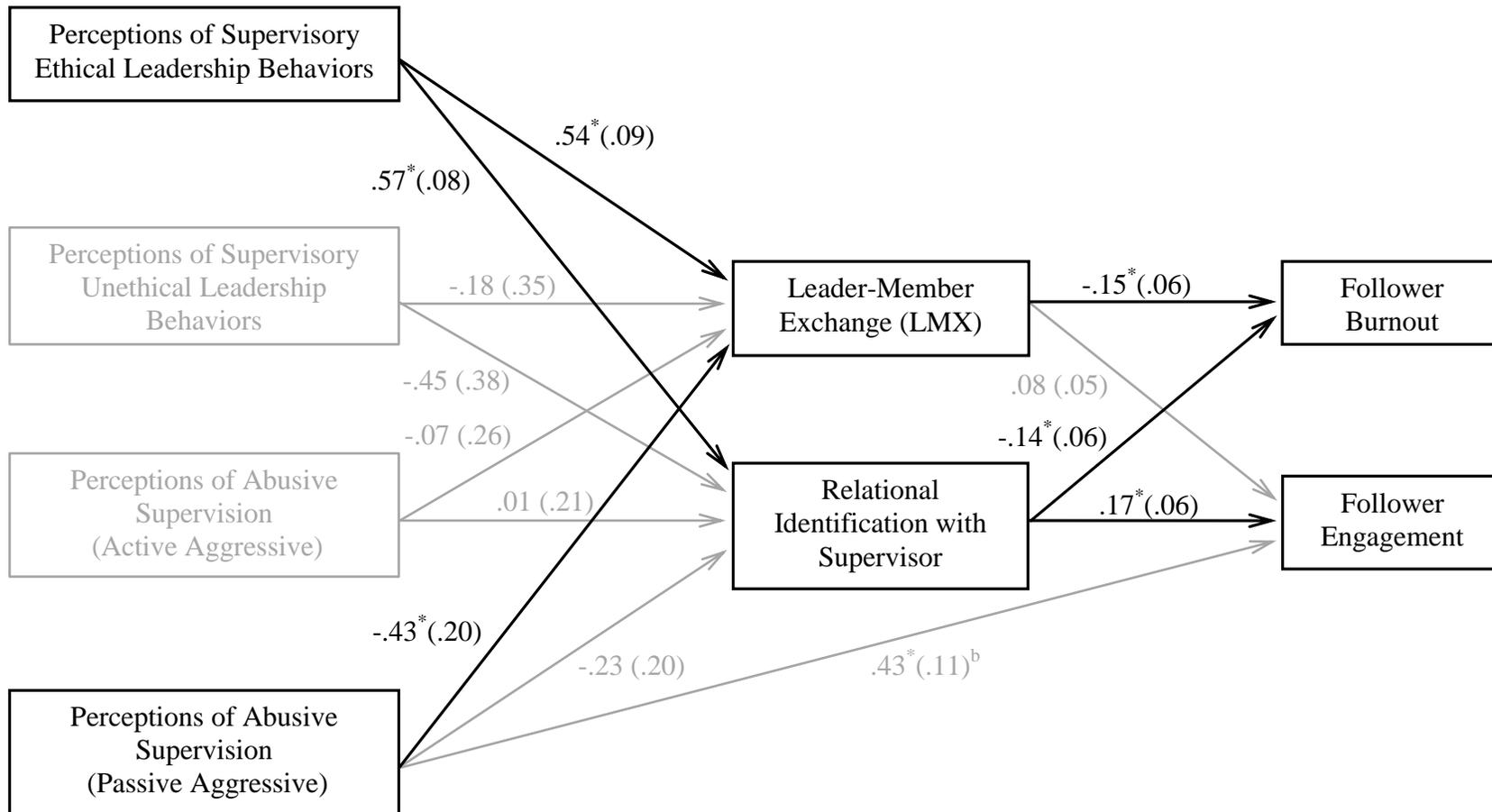
With the LMX and RID mediators in the model, there were no significant main effects of ethical leadership, active aggressive abusive supervision, or unethical leadership on either burnout or work engagement. The direct effect from passive aggressive abusive supervision to burnout was also not significant; however, passive aggressive abusive supervision did have a significant direct effect on work engagement ($b = 0.43$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$). Nevertheless, the signs of this path coefficient and of the zero-order correlation between passive aggressive abusive supervision and work engagement ($r = -.13$) are in opposition, and moreover, the magnitude of the path coefficient is over double that of the zero-order correlation suggesting the path coefficient may be artificially inflated. According to Darlington (1968), when a variable produces a nonnegative regression weight despite the fact that the correlation between the predictor and outcome variable is negative, this constitutes suppression.

Suppression has often been attributed to high multicollinearity among predictors; however, it is not always multicollinearity, but rather the pattern of bivariate correlations that can cause a change in the sign of a path coefficient (Friedman & Wall, 2005). Indeed, an examination of tolerance and VIF indices of multicollinearity for the predictor and control variables did not indicate high multicollinearity (all variables had tolerance of greater than 0.20

and VIF of less than 5.0), so the suppression appears to be stemming from the pattern of correlations of the variables in the model.

We ran some exploratory structural models with different combinations of predictors and controls and results suggest that any time either ethical leadership or the negative affect control variable are in the model, the suppression effect occurs. Without these variables in the model, the path coefficient for the direct effect of passive aggressive abusive supervision on engagement is usually negative and non-significant. Essentially, ethical leadership and negative affect are accounting for such a substantial proportion of the variance in engagement, that the residual may arguably be a substantively altered construct that is correlating positively with passive aggressive abusive supervision. Thus, this significant, positive direct effect should be interpreted with caution as it is perhaps due to a statistical artifact rather than a meaningful relationship.

Thus, being that there are no significant direct effects (aside from the suppressor effect just discussed), we found support for full mediation. That is, the relationship between ethical leadership and engagement can be fully explained by the RID mediating mechanism. The relationship between ethical leadership and burnout is also fully mediated; however, both LMX and RID significantly contribute to transmitting this effect. The final fully mediated model is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Full mediation model with unstandardized coefficients and standard errors^a

^a Path weights are unstandardized path coefficients. The values in parentheses are the standard errors. The direct effects from predictors to criteria that are not shown were not significant. The moderators and their joint effects with the mediators were included in the structural model but not depicted since no moderated mediation effects were found to be significant.

^b See discussion on pp. 53-54 regarding suppression effect.

* $p < .05$

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The primary aims of this study were to examine the distinctiveness of several key leadership constructs that have been put forth in the literature as being associated with behavioral ethics as well to gain insight into the nature of their relationship with two key indicators of employee well-being: burnout and work engagement. Three main conclusions can be reached from our findings. First, ethical leadership, active and passive aggressive supervision, and unethical leadership are indeed distinct leadership behavior constructs. Although previous theoretical work has suggested that this may be the case (e.g., Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Treviño, 2006) we provide the first empirical evidence of this claim by demonstrating that these constructs represent discriminable latent factors. Second, ethical leadership behavior impacts both follower burnout and follower work engagement. Organizational leaders have long been touted as a major influence on their followers' psychological health; however, the occupational health literature has generally neglected the study of how leadership processes impact follower well-being (Thomas & Lankau, 2009). Our findings directly address that gap. Third, the psychological mechanisms by which ethical leadership has these effects vary depending on the outcome. That is, ethical leadership's influence on follower work engagement operates via the social exchange mediator of LMX, while its impact on follower burnout is transmitted by both LMX and relational identification with the immediate supervisor.

Theoretical Implications

To our knowledge, no prior study has examined the empirical distinctiveness of ethical leadership, both dimensions of abusive supervision (active aggressive and passive aggressive),

and unethical leadership. This is an important contribution because our findings suggest that ethical leadership behaviors and more destructive or unethical leadership behaviors do not exist at opposite ends of a single continuum. Instead, these constructs are discriminable and the absence of one does not necessarily constitute the presence of another. Moreover, most of the work conducted on destructive leadership behavior to date has employed the *abusive supervision* (Tepper, 2000) conceptualization; however, we also show that the unethical leadership construct, as operationalized by Craig and Gustafson's (1998) PLIS measure, is another distinct destructive behavior that offers the advantage of also including task-based leadership behaviors in addition to relationship-based leadership behaviors.

The ethical leadership construct has received disproportionate attention in the literature, whereas both the study and measurement of *unethical* leadership has continued to lag behind (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Our comprehensive approach to examining the construct and criterion-related validity of a collection of leadership behaviors answers Graen and colleagues' (2010) recent call to explore how the many *existing* leadership constructs overlap or are redundant with one another rather than continuing to inundate the literature with "novel" leadership theories and constructs. Indeed, our findings do suggest that continuing to adopt this approach to integrating behavioral ethics and leadership to include both ethical and "dark side" or *unethical* leadership is an area ripe for further exploration and development.

We have also attempted to clarify for the first time the nature of the relationships that these leader behaviors hold with two key occupational health outcomes: burnout and work engagement. Our integration of the study of behavioral ethics in leadership with the study of occupational health and well-being represents a significant theoretical advancement. The leadership and occupational health literatures have not intersected as much as one might expect

being that previous research has shown that one's immediate supervisor can dramatically influence the way one feels about one's work and about oneself (van Dierendonck, Hayes, Borrill & Stride, 2004). Although we demonstrated that the leader behaviors did constitute unique constructs, only ethical leadership had a significant and practically meaningful impact on employee burnout and engagement among our sample of employees.

The unrivaled predictive power of ethical leadership was somewhat surprising being that previous research led us to expect effects stemming from the destructive and unethical constructs as well. One potential explanation for this finding is that either the actual or reported base rates of these phenomena differed. That is, judging by the mean scores and standard deviations, participants reported overall stronger agreement that they had experienced ethical leadership behaviors from their immediate supervisors, and moreover, they reported a decent amount of variation in their experiences with ethical leadership. In contrast, the base rates for both dimensions of abusive supervision and unethical leadership were somewhat lower, and there was less variation in respondents mean scores. It could be that this lower base rate is accurate (we would hope), but it could also be that participants are afraid to accurately report unethical or abusive behaviors. Despite including a measure of social desirability and ensuring participants that their responses were confidential, it is still possible that they exhibited response bias by underreporting on the negative leadership behaviors. So, regardless of whether participants are actually observing or merely reporting observing ethical leadership more (or at least exhibiting more variance in their responses), this could explain why it has a stronger impact, both practically and statistically speaking, on the outcomes we studied.

On the other hand, previous research across domains (for a review, see Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001) has consistently demonstrated that bad experiences tend

to outweigh good ones, and moreover, that it takes many good experiences to outweigh a single bad one. This phenomenon is known as the positive-negative asymmetry effect (Peeters, 1971). So, this suggests that the base rate argument may not be a valid explanation for our findings. Along these lines, a recent study by Detert, Treviño, Burris, and Andiappan (2007) examined the influence of ethical and unethical (operationalized solely as abusive supervision) leadership on followers' counterproductive work behaviors. Their results supported a relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive behavior but not between ethical leadership and counterproductive behavior. Our findings diverge from these and other findings that support the positive-negative asymmetry trend in that the positively valenced construct of ethical leadership behavior was far more predictive of burnout and work engagement than any of the negatively valenced behaviors examined. Thus, future research should attempt to reconcile these findings by examining additional criterion variables as well as whether followers' perceptions of frequency and/or magnitude of the ethical or unethical behavior under consideration moderate the impact of the behavior on the outcome under investigation. In addition, it may be helpful to have multiple sources rate (i.e., self-report, peer-report, boss-report) a target leader's ethical and unethical behavior to gain a broader yet more in-depth perspective of the target leader's behaviors while also overcoming idiosyncratic rater perceptions and biases.

In this study we have also continued to explore the 'black box' of how ethical leadership and unethical leadership influence psychological outcomes. Although we didn't find mediated effects stemming from any of the unethical leadership or abusive supervision behaviors, ethical leadership did have an indirect effect on both burnout and work engagement. Extant research on ethical leadership has focused almost exclusively on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) or social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986); however, social identity theory has recently

emerged as an alternative explanation for the relationship between ethical leadership and its outcomes (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Indeed, our results demonstrate that not only is identification an important mediator, but that in some ways, it is more important than social exchange in that it predicts both burnout and work engagement while LMX (our social exchange-based mediator) was only helpful in understanding ethical leadership's impact on burnout. This has a clear implication for the progression of theory and research on behavioral ethics and leadership—it is important to consider theoretical mechanisms other than social exchange and social learning. Indeed, integrating frameworks such as relational identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) theories is a promising new direction and may be able to offer new and unique insights into how ethical (or unethical) leadership behaviors influence a broader array of criterion variables.

The fact that the underlying psychological mechanisms do indeed differ for burnout versus work engagement was another rather interesting and novel finding. Our results suggest that the relationship between ethical leadership and follower work engagement can be fully explained by the extent to which the followers personally identify with their immediate supervisor. On the other hand, this identification works in conjunction with leader-member exchange quality to explain burnout among employees in the current sample. The fact that LMX did significantly predict burnout was consistent with previous research (e.g., Thomas & Lankau, 2009); however, it is curious that LMX did not have an impact on work engagement. Indeed, we are aware of only two studies that have attempted to establish this link.

First, in an attempt to empirically test the JD-R model, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) incorporated LMX as one of several composite indicators of a latent job resource variable and found this multidimensional latent variable to be significantly related to engagement.

Nevertheless, this approach makes it difficult to tease apart the unique role of LMX in triggering engagement. In another recent study, Li, Sanders, and Frenkel (in press), found a significant relationship between LMX and engagement, although they operationalized engagement by using only its vigor dimension.

High-LMX relationships are typically characterized by the provision of many valuable job resources such as autonomy (Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998), participation in decision-making (Nelson et al., 1998), protection and emotional support (Dienesch & Liden, 1986), more of the leader's time, attention, and guidance, as well as increased access to key people in the leader's social network, which can mean access to even more resources and support (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). According to the job demands-resources (JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001) model, this proliferation of resources should be expected to stimulate work engagement; however, in the current study this was not the case. This leads us to two conclusions. First, theoretical frameworks other than the JD-R model need to be considered for understanding the antecedents and psychological processes involved in eliciting engagement. LMX would appear to be a viable resource according to this model, but yet, in the presence of relational identification, its effect is negligible. Research on burnout has been going on for quite some time, and it seems that with the addition of engagement as its antipode in this model, researchers have almost exclusively relied on the same theoretical frameworks and psychological mechanisms used to explain burnout to explain engagement.

Second, perhaps the social exchange-based, transactional nature of LMX is simply not a strong enough form of attachment to one's supervisor to elicit work engagement. Drawing from work on different types of commitment that workers can feel toward their supervisors (Becker, 1992), the depth of one's commitment can be likened to the depth of the attachment they form

with their supervisor. As such, it seems that a follower must have a deeper connection based on identification with their supervisor or even internalization of their supervisor's values, which is more consistent with relational identification to elicit work engagement. Thus, it is clear that this relationship needs more attention in the literature.

Additionally, no study to our knowledge has examined the impact of LMX on *either* burnout or engagement in the presence of the additional mediating mechanism of relational identification. It is possible that LMX would have significantly impacted engagement without relational identification in the model. As such, our findings demonstrate the value of examining competing theoretical processes simultaneously when attempting to understand how and why relationships between variables exist. Directly pitting theories and their respective explanatory mechanisms against one another provides a far more rigorous test than studying them in a more piece-meal and disjointed manner across multiple studies (Graen et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Not only is this simultaneous examination of mediators more empirically informative, but we argue that it is a more accurate depiction of the complex nature of relationships. That is, multiple underlying psychological processes are typically operating in some form of synchrony as individuals navigate the formation of attachments to their immediate supervisors.

We also attempted to contribute to theory by examining whether these mediating mechanisms may be more or less important depending on several boundary conditions (i.e., moderators). To this end, we proposed that organizational mechanisms corresponding to the theoretical routes under investigation could act as second stage moderators to compensate for low levels of LMX or relational identification in predicting our outcomes. Thus, for the social exchange route, we included perceived organizational support, and for the identification route, we included organizational identification. Our findings suggest that these particular

organizational mechanisms do indeed have strong direct effects on both outcomes under investigation; however, they do not interact with the mediators to account for meaningful additional variance in either outcome. Although previous work suggests that the support and provision of resources as well as the identity-enhancing mechanisms associated with POS and OID, respectively, would benefit employees psychologically, empirical research directly examining the impact of POS and/or OID on burnout and engagement is incredibly sparse, and thus, our findings also address this gap. POS and OID are both clearly important predictors of employee burnout and work engagement; however, our findings suggest that they function independently to have this impact, not because they compensate for or augment the social exchange quality or relational identification that one experiences with one's immediate supervisor.

In sum, this study breaks new theoretical ground by showing that while ethical leadership is distinct from forms of unethical or destructive leadership, it dominates these other leadership behaviors in terms of impacting both burnout and work engagement. Moreover, these effects can be explained by somewhat differing mediating mechanisms. While ethical leadership's impact on burnout can be explained by leader-member exchange quality *and* relational identification with one's immediate supervisor, its impact on work engagement is transmitted solely through relational identification.

Practical Implications

Occupational health and well-being have significant consequences for workers and organizations through their influence on outcomes such as employee productivity, decision-making quality, and absenteeism (Boyd, 1997). Moreover, workers' physical and psychological health bear directly on an organization's bottom-line via the relationship with health insurance

costs, productivity deficits, lawsuits and compensable disorders (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In short, organizations that actively monitor and engage in proactive attempts to alleviate burnout and improve work engagement can expect benefits at both the individual and organizational level. Our findings suggest that selecting, developing, and reinforcing ethical leadership at all levels of management might be one way to do this. Beyond ethical leadership's positive impact on employees' psychological health, prior research has also linked ethical leadership to organizationally-relevant outcomes such as increased follower ethical decision-making and prosocial behavior, reduced counterproductive behavior, as well as higher levels of follower satisfaction, motivation, and commitment (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Importantly and fortunately for organizations, our findings are consistent with previous research on ethical leadership that suggest that ethical leadership is not rare (Brown et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 2000, 2003).

Brown and Treviño (2006) offer several helpful practical recommendations for selecting and developing ethical leadership. First, they suggest that organizations that endorse and enact strong ethical cultures are most likely to attract and select ethical leaders on the basis of person-organization fit (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Schneider, 1987). Thus, taking actions such as including ethical messaging in the organization's value and mission statements, speaking openly about the organization's ethical priorities during the recruitment and hiring process (e.g., during interviews), incorporating an ethical or integrity dimension in a company-wide competency model and/or performance appraisal, and encouraging open communication regarding ethics from top-management down would hopefully ensure a strong foundation upon which to build this ethical culture. An organization that actively signals an interest in ethical characteristics of its employees helps employees to better understand this expectation and potentially meet it.

After employees are hired, Brown and Treviño (2006) draw on social learning theory to encourage organizations to use role modeling to help develop and shape ethical leadership. Thus it is important to ensure that new or potential leaders have ethical role models or either formal or informal mentors at work. In addition, training programs that incorporate ethically-themed case studies, vignettes, or role play activities designed to foster moral reasoning could be an efficient means of accessing a broad employee audience. Important to note, according to Brown and Treviño (2006) employees can learn from both positive and negative examples, but that positive examples are important to counteract many negative examples of leadership available in the media and other sources (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Likewise, based on the nature of our findings, seeing what might constitute negative or unethical behavior may not provide insight into the appropriate countering ethical behavior being that employees conceptualize these as distinct behavioral constructs. Finally, although it has been shown to be distinct from transformational leadership (Brown et al., 2005), ethical leadership is clearly similar in some ways. So, it is possible that transformational leadership training that has had positive outcomes in the workplace (e.g., Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996) might be used or amended to facilitate ethical leadership training.

Another practical implication of our findings is that not only is it important to train leaders on how to engage in ethical behavior, but that they should also be trained to understand the importance of their ethical leadership in impacting their followers. According to Treviño and Brown (2004), many leaders believe their direct reports are either inherently ethical or unethical and that there is little they can do as leaders to influence this. However, previous research on the importance of role modeling and social learning, combined with our findings of how important leader-member exchange and relational identification with one's immediate supervisor are in

impacting important outcomes suggest that this perception is resoundingly wrong. Leaders' ethical behavior shapes followers' reality to some extent via its impact on the attachment they form with their leader, and in turn, this attachment impacts several critical outcomes. Moreover, it is likely that leaders actually underestimate the degree to which they are being scrutinized by others in terms of ethics (Brown & Treviño, 2006). As salient representatives of the organization, leaders are instrumental in shaping the ethical reality of their direct reports, their immediate work group, and potentially beyond.

Aside from focusing on ways to develop ethical leadership and discourage unethical leadership, organizations should be aware that employees who perceive themselves as being highly supported by their company as well as those who proudly incorporate aspects of their organization into their personal identity are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to be engaged overall. Nevertheless, these forms of attachment to the broader organization may not compensate for an employee's experience with an unethical or ethically ambiguous leader. For instance, an employee who perceives his or her broader organization as endorsing moral and ethical endeavors might still end up experiencing burnout or lack of work engagement if his or her more proximal, immediate supervisor is not actively engaging in ethical leadership behavior.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has five notable strengths. First, our sample came from individuals across a vast array of organizations and industries, and thus we believe that our sample is quite representative of the broader labor force. As such, we are confident in the generalizability of these findings; however, researchers should attempt to replicate our results in other study samples. Second, we attempted to rule out alternative explanations due to transient method biases by collecting data at two points in time separated by approximately three weeks. Third,

because our sampling strategy targeted multiple direct reports for a single supervisor, this allowed for some level of dependency in the data; however, we accounted for this by utilizing the Huber-White sandwich estimator (Huber, 1967; White, 1982) to adjust the standard errors accordingly. Fourth, we address Edwards and Lambert's (2007) concerns over the shortcomings of conventional statistical techniques when it comes to examining mediation and moderation by examining them simultaneously within a more appropriate framework outlined by Edwards and Lambert. Lastly, we also controlled for several variables such as negative affect, age, and hours worked per week that may have offered alternative explanations for the relationships under investigation. To some extent, this serves to further augment our confidence in our findings.

These strengths are accompanied by several study limitations. First, burnout and work engagement are thought to arise from chronic, sustained exposure to job resources and demands. Although data collection did occur at two points in time, our design cannot be considered longitudinal in nature, and as such, we may not be accurately or completely capturing the process by which ethical leadership influences these outcomes over time. Future research should address this with more rigorous longitudinal designs. Along similar lines, although separation of data collection across two points in time helps assuage some concerns pertaining to common method bias, our results are not completely immune to potential inflation owing to source effects because all variables were measures by the same rater (i.e., followers). However, considering the complex nature of the moderated mediation analyses we conducted, it is very unlikely that common method bias was large enough to pose a serious threat to our findings (e.g., Lance, Dawson, Birklebach, & Hoffman, 2010; Spector, 2006). Nevertheless, future research should solicit ratings on ethical and unethical leadership from multiple and innovative subjective sources (e.g., stakeholders, media; Brown & Mitchell, 2010) as well as creative archival sources

such as organizational disciplinary records, news reports, printed speeches and organizational messaging.

Additional Directions for Future Research and Conclusion

This study represents a significant contribution because it ties together a timely and relevant leadership framework that incorporates behavioral ethics with outcomes that are of significance for researchers, practitioners, organizations, and workers within these organizations. Aside from the suggestions for future research that have already been mentioned throughout the discussion, we offer several additional potential directions here.

First, we encourage future research endeavors that attempt to replicate our findings regarding conceptual distinctiveness of the leadership behavior constructs. It is evident that taking a more holistic approach to studying leadership behavior rather than one that conceptualizes unethical leadership as being low on ethical leadership is critical to understanding the nomological network underlying these variables.

Moreover, the measure that we used to operationalize unethical leadership, Craig and Gustafson's (1998) PLIS, has not received much attention in the literature despite the fact that it seems to incorporate more of the unethical behavior content domain than what appears to be captured by the abusive supervision scales (e.g., Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, 2000). In addition, the items on the PLIS were specifically designed to assess the presence of leader behaviors, whereas other measures of unethical behavior (e.g., Kaptein, 2008; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly; Suar & Khuntia, 2010) could apply to a more general actor. When the PLIS was developed, items were written to tap into many different aspects of the leadership content domain; however, the scale developers claim that the measure retains a unidimensional structure. In our factor analytic work, we had to use parcels to preserve degrees of freedom, and using this

partially-disaggregated approach we did support unidimensionality. However, a fully disaggregated model may generate different findings regarding multidimensionality. We conclude that the PLIS is a somewhat promising measure of unethical leadership but that the jury is still out. Thus, before adopting it for use in additional studies or abandoning it in favor of developing new and different measures of unethical leadership, the PLIS is in need of rigorous psychometric evaluation and validation.

Lastly, although ethical leadership was the only significant predictor of burnout and engagement within the network of relationships specified in this study, the unethical leadership or abusive supervision behaviors may exhibit unique and/or incremental criterion-related validity with different outcomes of interest. For instance, examining this collection of predictors in conjunction with multiple dimensions of work performance including task behavior, counterproductive work behavior (CWB, behavior that harms an organization) or organizational citizenship behavior (OCB, behavior that helps the organization) may shed light onto some additional interesting relationships, especially if factoring in the LMX and relational identification (or other) mediating mechanisms we considered in the present study.

In sum, this study is the first to examine the empirical distinctiveness of a specific group of leadership behaviors associated with behavioral ethics, as well as to investigate the combined mediating effects of LMX and relational identification on the relationship between this collection of leadership behaviors and the outcomes of burnout and work engagement. Understanding how, why, and when relationships exist between constructs is a critical step toward being able to understand, predict, and eventually attempt to manipulate phenomena in organizations.

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