



Principled leader behaviors: An integrative framework and extension of why leaders are fair, ethical, and non-abusive

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**Principled Leader Behaviors: An Integrative Framework
and Extension of Why Leaders Are Fair, Ethical, And Non-Abusive**

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**PRINCIPLED LEADER BEHAVIORS: AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK AND
EXTENSION OF WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE**

Abstract

Research to date on leader behaviors such as justice rule adherence, abusive supervision, and ethical leadership has found a clear linkage between such behaviors and employees' work attitudes and performance. Historically and surprisingly, an understanding of what initiates these impactful leader behaviors is much more limited and only recently have scholars begun to examine their antecedents. Thus, the goal of our integrative review is to advance cumulative knowledge of why leaders are fair, ethical, or non-abusive—which we refer to collectively as *principled leader behaviors*. Our review is structured around a framework of four theoretical lenses that elucidate what initiates and perpetuates such behaviors: *interpersonal motives*, focused on relational explanations; *instrumental motives*, centered on these behaviors as a means to some end goal; *moral motives*, which characterize these leader behaviors as an end in themselves; and *self-regulation and disposition*, focused on leaders' automatic inclinations and capacity to enact these behaviors. We not only synthesize previously fragmented findings of what shapes principled leader behaviors, but also highlight areas of overlap and distinction across them. Extending our framework, we highlight the interplay of lenses and critical research avenues to better understand why leaders treat followers in beneficial and not harmful ways.

Keywords: Leadership; organizational justice; ethical leadership; abusive supervision

INTRODUCTION

In his book, *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, Sutton (2012) argues that “most bosses want to be great and most employees want wonderful bosses” (p. 21). For decades, scholars and practitioners have asked what it means to be a “good” or “bad” leader and how this treatment affects employees. Broadly, “good” leaders adhere to standards and responsibilities expected of individuals in their role—that is, they behave in a principled way, which the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines as following “a rule or code of conduct.” In the organizational sciences, the notion that leaders adhere to or violate rules of conduct has been studied in three key traditions or literatures: supervisor justice rule adherence, ethical leadership, and abusive supervision, which converge around principled treatment of followers (i.e., fair, ethical, and not abusive; Folger & Bies, 1989). Conclusions from meta-analyses and prior reviews indicate that employees who perceive their leader (i.e., supervisor or manager) to be “good” or principled in terms of fair, just, ethical, or non-abusive experience higher quality social exchanges, demonstrate greater task performance and organizational citizenship behavior, and engage in less counterproductive work behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013; Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Marinko, 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2015; Rupp, Shao, Jones, & Liao, 2014; Rupp, Shapiro, Folger, Skarlicki, & Shao, 2017). This substantial body of research tells us a great deal about how employees react to leaders’ principled behaviors.

What is far less understood, however, is how leaders become “good” or why they are principled in the first place. As a result of disproportionately focusing on employee outcomes, much more is known about the receiver of these behaviors (i.e., the employee or follower) than the individual enacting them (i.e., the leader). Yet, how can organizations effectively develop principled leaders without first understanding *why* leaders are fair, ethical and non-abusive?

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3 Recently, scholars have begun to recognize the importance of investigating what initiates and
4 perpetuates these leader behaviors (e.g., Den Hartog, 2015; Graso, Camps, Schulz, & Brebels,
5 2020; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). For example, Ambrose and Schminke (2009) and Scott,
6 Colquitt, and Paddock (2009) developed theoretical models explicating motives of fairness and
7 justice. Similarly, Greenbaum, Quade, and Bonner (2015) proposed “impediments to ethical
8 leadership” and processes that encourage leaders to be amoral (p. 26). In addition, Tepper et al.
9 (2017, p. 136-137) argued that “antecedents of abusive supervision deserve special attention...it
10 is from such research that we are likely to derive insights that can inform the work of
11 practitioners who aim to eliminate or manage the effects of supervisory abuse.” Overall, it is
12 clear that scholars are increasingly drawn to studying antecedents of fair, ethical, and non-
13 abusive behaviors, given the practical and theoretical impact of such findings. However, since
14 their inception, antecedent-focused research streams in these literatures have developed in
15 parallel with one another, with very little sharing of common findings.

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33 This is surprising, considering the conceptual similarities between supervisor justice rule
34 adherence, non-abusive supervision, and ethical leadership (e.g., Cropanzano & Stein, 2009;
35 Koopman, Scott, Matta, Conlon, and Dennerlein, 2019; Mackey et al., 2017; Xu, Loi, & Ngo,
36 2016). Supervisor justice rule adherence refers to “managerial actions that act in accordance with
37 the standards” or rules corresponding to each justice dimension (Scott et al., 2009, p. 758; see
38 also Barclay, Bashshur, & Fortin, 2017). Justice dimensions and their associated rules include
39 distributive (fairness of outcomes, i.e., adhering to an equity principle), procedural (fairness of
40 decision-making processes, e.g., voice, consistency, ethicality), informational (adequate
41 explanations and honesty) and interpersonal (respect and propriety) (Colquitt, 2001; Scott et al.,
42 2009). Ethical leadership also relates to complying with standards (Lemoine, Hartnell, & Leroy,
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3 2019) and is defined as “normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions” and
4 promoting such conduct in followers (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Abusive
5 supervision refers to subordinates’ perceptions of supervisors’ “sustained display of hostile
6 verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact” (Tepper, 2000, p. 178); examples of
7 this behavior include anger, rudeness, and lying (Tepper, 2000), which connect to violations of
8 interpersonal and informational justice rules (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1993). Although these
9 three literatures and the theories and assumptions underlying them have key distinctions, they
10 also have notable similarities. For example, abusive leaders fail to display interpersonal justice
11 and leaders who enact procedural justice would likely be considered ethical; unethical leaders
12 may be both abusive and in violation of justice rules. Additionally, Koopman and colleagues
13 (2019) found that ethical leadership can operate as a substitute for justice enactment.

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32 Collectively, supervisor justice rule adherence, ethical leadership, and non-abusive supervision
33 can all be described as various forms of principled leader behavior, as suggested above.

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As a result of fragmentation across these literatures, the field lacks consensus and an
overarching understanding of why leaders follow or violate such principles. Specifically, what
has been missing to date is a synthesis of predominant antecedents of supervisor justice, ethical
leadership, and non-abusive supervision. A synthesis is important to develop because prior
research has tended to focus only on one or a small subset of antecedents, ignoring the interplay
of multiple independent variables within a larger system of principled leader behaviors (i.e., the
three forms of principled leader behavior outlined above). For instance, separate studies have
examined instrumental explanations for why leaders are abusive (Watkins, Fehr, & He, 2019)
and unfair (Qin, Ren, Zhang, & Johnson, 2018) and relational explanations for why leaders are
ethical (Hansen, Dunford, Alge, & Jackson, 2016) and fair (Zapata, Olsen, & Martins, 2013;

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3 Zhao, Chen, & Brocker, 2015). While these and other studies have been essential to growing our
4 understanding of why leaders are principled, they point to a variety of dispersed perspectives and
5 antecedents (e.g., instrumental, relational). Without synthesis, it is unclear why leaders are fair,
6 ethical, and non-abusive, and whether these antecedents differ across the three forms of
7 principled leader behaviors.
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15 To address this shortcoming, the goal of our review is to synthesize and advance research
16 on the antecedents of principled leader behaviors. By integrating these related yet fragmented
17 literatures under the umbrella of “principled leader behaviors,” we illuminate the core
18 explanations why leaders behave in principled ways (or not). In turn, we reveal areas of overlap
19 as well as distinctions regarding antecedents of supervisor justice, ethical leadership, and non-
20 abusive supervision. As the Appendix indicates, nearly 87% of the articles in our review have
21 been published since 2010 or are in press at the time of this manuscript’s submission. This
22 suggests findings regarding antecedents of principled leader behaviors are rapidly accumulating
23 and that this growing body of research is ready for an integrative review to guide future research.
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36 Our review is organized around a framework of four theoretical lenses that we develop
37 subsequently. This framework, which allows us to identify areas of overlap as well as uniqueness
38 across antecedent- or leader-focused justice, ethical leadership, and abusive supervision studies,
39 reveals insights that would not be evident from prior reviews or meta-analyses in these literatures
40 individually. Specifically, we consider whether supervisor justice rule adherence, ethical
41 leadership and abusive supervision operate similarly with respect to the four lenses or whether
42 critical differences emerge between them. Extending from this framework, we develop a
43 roadmap for future theory and research on antecedents of principled leader behaviors and
44 identify critical ways in which research in this area should advance.
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Our Framework

Our review revealed several theoretical lenses through which the antecedents of principled leadership have been studied. We refer to a lens as a cluster of theoretical foundations that offers a distinct explanation for why leaders are fair, ethical, or non-abusive. The first three lenses—interpersonal, instrumental, and moral—are grounded in Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, and Schminke’s (2001) “three roads” that summarize the theoretical underpinnings of individuals’ (i.e., recipients’) reactions to justice. Although Cropanzano et al. (2001) focused on the recipient of justice and we focus on the actor of principled leadership more broadly, the distinctions they drew between lenses offer a starting point to organize findings on antecedents of all three forms of principled leadership. Our review also uncovered an additional lens beyond the “roads” from Cropanzano and colleagues (2001): self-regulation and disposition. Our review is structured around an integrative framework of these four theoretical lenses, which is highlighted in Table 1. We briefly develop the framework below and in the following sections elaborate on each lens in turn.

Insert Table 1 about here

In Figure 1, we illustrate the four lenses and how they connect to principled leadership. The lenses are arranged on a spectrum from primarily externally driven (e.g., other individuals such as followers), somewhat externally driven (e.g., leader’s intention to improve employee performance), somewhat internally driven (e.g., leader’s belief in a just world), to primarily internally driven (e.g., leader’s personality or states). Our review uncovered several types of principled leadership antecedents, a subset of which include motives. Consistent with prior research, we define *motive* as “a reason or cause for *choosing* one action over another” (Scott et

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3 al., 2009, p. 758, emphasis added). The underlying assumption of motive-focused research is that
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5 the actor, or leader in our case, is deliberate and intentional in deciding whether to be fair,
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7 ethical, or abusive toward followers. Research adopting interpersonal, instrumental, and moral
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9 lenses comprise motive-related approaches to studying antecedents of principled leadership.
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17 Research on another type of antecedent, revealed by our review, recognizes that leaders
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19 “may not be deliberate when engaging in abusive supervision” (Mawritz, Greenbaum, Butts, &
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21 Graham, 2017, p. 1483) or may be predisposed to “do so automatically” (Scott et al., 2009, p.
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23 761). That is, scholars also recognize that principled leadership antecedents include factors other
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25 than motives. For example, leaders might not always have the capacity to be principled, due to
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27 depleted resources, and those who are highly agreeable may be predisposed to be principled. We
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29 view this subset of antecedents through a self-regulation and disposition lens. Whereas motive-
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31 related antecedents tend to be purposeful and intentional, antecedents that are related to self-
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33 regulation and disposition suggest that although motives to enact principled behavior are
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35 important, they might not always be sufficient.
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40 Our review proceeds as follows. Next, we outline our review methodology, including
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42 literature search and coding procedures. In the following sections, we unpack theoretical
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44 assumptions and synthesize prior findings for each lens, including key trends (bolded text in
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46 Figure 1). We then integrate the four lenses to reveal ways to advance research on principled
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48 leadership, including studying the overarching system of lenses, revealing areas of distinction
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50 versus overlap between the three principled behaviors, and using our framework to advance
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52 nascent research streams on variability and agreement regarding these behaviors.
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METHODOLOGY OF OUR REVIEW

Literature Search Procedure

The basis of our review includes empirical articles that examined antecedents of three constructs: supervisor justice rule adherence, ethical leadership, and abusive supervision (i.e., principled leader behaviors, or lack thereof, in regard to abusive supervision). To gather literature for this review, we (a) examined references of meta-analyses and conceptual reviews of these constructs (i.e., backward snowball method) and articles citing meta-analyses and reviews (i.e., forward snowball method), (b) conducted a broad search in the database PsycINFO, and (c) conducted manual searches in peer-reviewed journals that publish empirical research on these topics (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Personnel Psychology*). The search term used in (b) and (c) can be summarized as $\{[(\text{abusive AND } (\text{leader}^* \text{ OR } \text{supervis}^*)) \text{ OR } (\text{ethical AND } (\text{leader}^* \text{ OR } \text{supervis}^*)) \text{ OR } (\text{"organizational justice"})] \text{ AND } [\text{actor OR antecedent}^* \text{ OR motive}^* \text{ OR enactment OR adhere}^*]\}$, such that "*" indicates a wildcard to capture terms related to the stem before the "*".

Inclusion Criteria

To be included, articles were required to empirically examine antecedents of supervisor justice rule adherence or violation, ethical leadership, and/or abusive supervision. Numerous theoretical or conceptual articles have been published in these literatures (e.g., Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Siegel, & Bobocel, & Liu, 2015; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Den Hartog, 2015; Scott et al., 2009; Tepper et al., 2017). What is currently needed is an integrative understanding of the *empirical* findings across these research streams. To determine

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3 whether inclusion criteria were met, we examined article titles and abstracts. This resulted in a
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5 total of 130 empirical articles in our review.
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Coding Scheme

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10 After determining whether an article would be included, we used a coding scheme to
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12 extract key information: the behavior (i.e., supervisor justice, abusive supervision, or ethical
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14 leadership), study methodology and sample, rater of the behavior (e.g., leader self-rated,
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16 recipient-rated), theoretical foundation, and antecedents of the behavior. We then categorized
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18 antecedents into the four lenses of our framework as well as extracted core themes from each
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20 lens. Some degree of overlap in theoretical perspectives and findings exists (e.g., a theory may
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22 relate to interpersonal, moral, and instrumental lenses); however, studies were categorized into
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24 the lens with the closest theoretical fit and in several cases were included in more than one lens
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26 or motive—a point we return to when we discuss the interplay between lenses. The first and third
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28 authors iteratively conferred and reached agreement on studies viewed through each lens. Article
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30 attributes are summarized in the Appendix. Conclusions from this process underpin the critical
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32 issues, new insights, and future research implications discussed in the sections that follow.
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INTERPERSONAL LENS OF PRINCIPLED LEADER BEHAVIORS

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40 The interpersonal lens captures *relational* explanations why leaders are fair, ethical and
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42 non-abusive and emphasizes the role of others in these behaviors. A key assumption of this lens
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44 is that principled leader behavior stems from “a social process... understood vis-à-vis our
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46 relationships to other people” (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 40). Thus, motives comprising this
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48 lens primarily originate from forces external to the leader. This is the most popular lens that
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50 emerged, as 60% of studies in our review examined interpersonal antecedents to principled
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52 leadership. The two types of interpersonal relationships that are arguably most salient and
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3 influential for leaders are the ones they hold with their employees/followers (often the recipients
4 of these behaviors) and their own supervisors or superiors in the organization. Indeed, our review
5 suggests these relationships play a critical role in whether leaders are principled toward followers
6 and reflect two distinct interpersonal motives: *social exchange* and *social learning*.
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11 12 **Social Exchange Motives**

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15 *“employees can also provide supervisors with valued benefits that may obligate them to*
16 *reciprocate with justice rule adherence”* (Zapata et al., 2013, p. 3)
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19 Social exchange motives include antecedents capturing how the context of the leader-
20 employee relationship, including the leader’s feelings toward employees, as well as employees’
21 characteristics and behaviors, influence principled leadership. Our review indicates that nearly
22 two thirds of studies that adopted an interpersonal lens examined social exchange motives. The
23 logic behind these motives is grounded in social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964; Emerson,
24 1976; Gouldner, 1960), which suggests leaders are compelled to reciprocate to followers by
25 enacting principled behavior, based on prior interpersonal interactions with them. Our review
26 also revealed additional theoretical perspectives that highlight different exchange-related reasons
27 why leaders are principled, including victim precipitation theory (e.g., Curtis, 1974) and
28 belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Below we highlight these theoretical origins
29 and elaborate on the key themes that emerged from research on social exchange motives.
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44 ***Theoretical foundations.*** First, according to Cropanzano et al. (2001), social exchange
45 theory is one of the key perspectives undergirding the interpersonal “road.” One of the central
46 tenets of social exchange theory is the notion of reciprocity in interpersonal interactions, which
47 Gouldner (1960) described as the norm for equivalence in the “return of benefits” or “return of
48 injuries” between two individuals in an exchange (p. 172). In a similar vein, Blau (1964)
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3 described how social exchange “involves favors that create diffuse future obligations... and the
4 nature of the return... must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it” (p. 93). In other
5 words, social exchange revolves around the idea that individuals feel obligated to repay others
6 in-kind. Our review suggests that both sides of the social exchange coin (i.e., exchange of help
7 and harm, Lyons & Scott, 2012) motivate leaders to be principled (or not). For example, Zapata
8 et al. (2013) found that employee trustworthiness was associated with interpersonal and
9 informational justice via the leader’s felt obligation and trust toward the employee. Another
10 study found a positive linkage between employees’ hostile behavior toward the leader and
11 abusive supervision (Camps, Stouten, Euwema & De Cremer, in press).
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24 Second, victim precipitation theory (Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986) has been used to make
25 similar arguments, yet focuses more on how *unprincipled* behavior arises. The fundamental idea
26 behind victim precipitation is that “some individuals may become at risk of being victimized by
27 provoking the hostility of potential perpetrators” (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006, p.
28 104). Aquino and Lamertz (2004) proposed that victims typically adopt one of two roles that
29 make them a target of others’ harm: (1) provocative victim, who initiates aggression toward
30 others, or (2) submissive victim, who demonstrates self-deprecation or low social status, which
31 “signals to others that the person is highly vulnerable to attack or exploitation because he or she
32 lacks allies who may afford protection...and [is] unlikely to retaliate” (p. 1026). As an example
33 of the former role, time-lagged studies suggest that employee deviance predicts abusive
34 supervision (Lian, Ferris, Morrison, & Brown, 2014; Mawritz et al., 2017; Simon, Hurst, Kelley,
35 & Judge, 2015). In support of the latter role, other studies found positive relationships between
36 the employee’s neuroticism, negative affect, fear, and the leader’s abusive supervision (Henle &
37 Gross, 2014; Kiewitz, Restubog, Shoss, Raymond, Garcia & Tang, 2016; Wang, Harms, &
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3 Mackey, 2015). Victim precipitation theory has mainly been invoked to understand antecedents
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5 of abusive supervision, but its logic also explains which employees are more likely to become
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7 targets of justice rule violation or unethical behavior. For example, an employee who is
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9 ingratiating (Koopman, Matta, Scott, & Conlon, 2015) or has high status in the organization
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11 (Pucic, 2015) would likely avoid adopting the two victim roles and would thus be less likely to
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13 receive injustice or unethicity.
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17 Third, belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) also explains why leaders are
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19 principled toward specific employees. Belongingness theory suggests that “a need to belong... to
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21 form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships, is innately
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23 prepared (and hence nearly universal) among human beings” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.
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25 499). More recent research suggests that individuals vary in their intensity of this need (Leary,
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27 Kelly, Cottrell, & Schreindorfer, 2013). Nonetheless, the need to belong is expected to motivate
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29 individuals to seek out ways to satisfy it, including pursuing social bonds characterized by
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31 “stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future” (Baumeister & Leary,
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33 1995, p. 500). These ideas connect to the relational model of justice (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988),
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35 which Cropanzano et al. (2001) highlighted as one of the core theories forming the interpersonal
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37 “road.” The relational model suggests justice “signals” that individuals “have standing and
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39 dignity within a collective” whereas injustice indicates they “are not fully included as group
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41 members” (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 63). Supporting this notion, studies in our review suggest
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43 that both employees’ and leaders’ need to belong are associated with principled behaviors
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45 (Cornelis, Van Hiel, & De Cremer, 2012; Cornelis, Van Hiel, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2013;
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47 Hoogervorst, De Cremer, & van Dijke, 2013; Zhao et al., 2015).
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3 **Research trends.** First, several features of the leader-employee relationship emerged as
4 important social exchange motives of principled leadership. Multiple studies in our review found
5 that high leader-member exchange (LMX), which refers to leader-employee relationships that are
6 “characterized by a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation” (Graen & Uhl-Bien,
7 1995, p. 227), is associated with greater adherence to justice rules (Koopman et al., 2015) and
8 less abusive supervision (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011). This appears to be the
9 case when LMX is rated by leaders *or* employees. Relatedly, leaders’ desire to attain mutual trust
10 is also linked with justice (Seppälä, Lipponen, Pirttilä-Backman, & Lipsanen, 2012; Zapata et al.,
11 2013; Zhao et al., 2015). Other research found that leaders’ concern with developing positive
12 relationships with employees is associated with greater moral leadership and propriety (Long,
13 2016a) as well as decision-making surrounding fairness issues (Meindl, 1989). Given that leaders
14 are more principled toward employees with whom they have a positive relationship, it is not
15 surprising that conflict in these relationships is associated with less principled behavior, such as
16 less distributive fairness (Long, 2016b) and more abusive supervision (Graham, Mawritz, Dust,
17 Greenbaum, & Ziegert, 2019; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Further, the leader’s dependence
18 on the employee was associated with greater ethical leadership (Zhang, Zhong, & Ozer, 2020).

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21 In addition, leaders’ feelings or sentiments toward employees are linked to principled
22 behavior. Employees that leaders liked, felt positive sentiments, empathy, or compassion towards
23 were more likely to experience justice (Huang, Cropanzano, Li, Shao, Zhang, & Li, 2017; Scott,
24 Colquitt, & Zapata-Phelan, 2007), interpersonally sensitive treatment (Molinsky, Grant, &
25 Margolis, 2012), preferential treatment (Blader & Rothman, 2012), and less abusive supervision
26 (Walter, Lam, van der Vegt, Huang, & Miao, 2015) from the leader. Likewise, leaders were less
27 likely to be ethical and just and more likely to be abusive to employees toward whom they felt
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3 negatively (Qin, Huang, Hu, Schminke & Ju, 2018; Scott et al., 2007) and felt envy and hostility
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5 (Liang et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2018).
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8 Second, stable employee characteristics emerged as another predominant factor triggering
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10 the social exchange motive. Facets of employee personality, including agreeableness (Huang et
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12 al., 2017; Wang et al., 2015), conscientiousness (Henle & Gross, 2014; Huang et al., 2017; Wang
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14 et al., 2015), emotional stability (Henle & Gross, 2014), and core self-evaluations (Neves, 2014;
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16 Wu & Hu, 2009) are linked to principled leader behavior enactment. Other employee
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18 characteristics that foster principled leadership include trust propensity (Hansen et al., 2016),
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20 need to belong (Cornelis et al., 2012; Cornelis et al., 2013; Hoogervorst et al., 2013), high status
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22 in the organization (Pucic, 2015), and lower psychological entitlement (Harvey, Harris, Gillis, &
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24 Martinko, 2014). More dynamic employee characteristics, such as positive emotions (Liu, Song,
25
26 Li, & Liao, 2017), negative emotions such as “anger, anxiety, boredom, and depression” (Henle
27
28 & Gross, 2014, p. 466) and fear (Kiewitz et al., 2016) also play a role, such that leaders were
29
30 more principled toward employees who have higher positive and lower negative affect.
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35 Relatedly, a growing number of studies have examined how employee characteristics—
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37 relative to leader characteristics—influence principled leadership, by testing similarity or
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39 congruence between the leader and employee. For example, perceived deep-level dissimilarity
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41 (i.e., in personality, attitudes, or values) was positively related to abusive supervision (via
42
43 increased relationship conflict) (Tepper et al., 2011) and race similarity was positively related to
44
45 ethical leadership (Marquadt, Brown, & Casper, 2018). Another study indicated that abusive
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47 supervision is minimized (via reduced relationship conflict) when the leader and employee are
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49 equally low on dominance orientation (Graham et al., 2019).
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 Third, employee behaviors also emerged as a contributor to the social exchange motive.
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5 Several studies in our review found that poor employee performance made it *more* likely that
6
7 they would become a target of unprincipled behavior (Liang et al., 2016; Khan, Quratulain, &
8
9 Crawshaw, 2017; Tepper et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2015), whereas other research indicated this
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11 instead made them *less* likely (Khan, Moss, Quratulain, & Hameed, 2018), following logic that
12
13 leaders experience status threat from high employee performance and respond by enacting abuse.
14
15 This suggests that moderators—such as those viewed through other lenses—may be at play, as
16
17 we will discuss below. Employees who demonstrate deviant or counterproductive behavior are
18
19 also more likely to become targets of leader abuse (Camps et al., in press; Lian et al., 2014;
20
21 Mawritz et al., 2017; Simon et al., 2015). Other employee behaviors associated with principled
22
23 leadership include charisma, which includes behaviors that “create a sense of admiration and
24
25 respect” (Scott et al., 2007, p. 1602), assertiveness (Korsgaard et al., 1998), ingratiation
26
27 (Koopman et al., 2015), and cooperation with the leader (Seppälä et al., 2012), all of which
28
29 conceptually connect to the idea that leaders are more principled toward employees they like.
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Social Learning Motives

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37 *“Supervisors look to higher levels in the organization for the appropriate way to*
38
39 *behave.”* (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009, p. 3)
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42 Social learning motives center on how leaders enact principled behavior by modeling this
43
44 behavior from others, including the leader’s manager, top leadership or management team in the
45
46 organization, the organizational climate or culture, and authority figures in the leader’s
47
48 upbringing. Approximately one third of the studies in our review that adopted an interpersonal
49
50 lens focused on social learning motives. The reasoning behind social learning motives largely
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52 stems from social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), which predicts that individuals learn how to
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 behave based on observing others. Another key approach relevant to social learning motives is
4
5 social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The core argument of this
6
7 theory is that individuals adapt their behaviors to norms in the social environment, following
8
9 cues from others. Overall, social learning and information processing theories highlight how
10
11 leaders may behave fairly, ethically, or abusively from mimicking others.
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14 ***Theoretical foundations.*** First, social learning theory, which emerged as the predominant
15
16 theoretical foundation for this set of motives, posits that individuals find role models in their
17
18 environment and imitate their behavior (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986). Individuals choose as
19
20 role models those to whom they are attracted in some way, such as based on their competence,
21
22 credibility, status, or power (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986; Brown & Treviño, 2014; Mawritz,
23
24 Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012). For social learning to occur, individuals must pay
25
26 attention to the role model's behaviors and their consequences as well as retain or remember
27
28 these behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Our review points to numerous studies that have drawn from
29
30 social learning theory to explain how leaders become principled (or not) by modeling the
31
32 behavior of others, particularly their own managers or other superiors, such as top management.
33
34 Such studies argue that leaders view their superiors as role models, as they likely look up to them
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36 due to professional expertise and status in the organization, and in turn imitate their justice,
37
38 ethical leadership, or abuse (e.g., Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013; Mawritz et al., 2012;
39
40 Mayer et al., 2009; Wo, Ambrose, & Schminke, 2015). Ethical leadership is heavily rooted in
41
42 social learning theory (e.g., Lemoine et al., 2019), as illustrated in the scale item, "sets an
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44 example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics" (Brown et al., 2005).
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51 Second, social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) helps elucidate
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53 how the social environment more broadly shapes principled leader behaviors. This perspective
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 relies on the assumption that a multitude of sources in the social environment “provides norms
4 and expectations” about which behaviors and attitudes are appropriate (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978,
5 p. 227). Consequently, it can shed light on how social influences beyond the leader’s leader, such
6 as organizational culture and climate (e.g., Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014) and the leader’s
7 upbringing (e.g., Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014), affect principled behaviors. For example,
8 building from social information processing theory, Mawritz, Dust, and Resick (2014) reasoned
9 that “organizations characterized by pervasive feelings of envy, mistrust, and aggression signal
10 to members that...abusive behaviors are accepted” (p. 739).

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22 **Research trends.** First, the linkage between leaders’ perceptions of their direct managers’
23 justice (Ambrose et al., 2013; Rafferty, Restubog, Canberra, & Jimmieson, 2010; van
24 Houwelingen, van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2017; Wo et al., 2015) and abusive supervision (Gabler,
25 Nagy, & Hill, 2014; Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Mawritz et al., 2012; Tepper et al., 2006; Tu, Bono,
26 Shum, & LaMontagne, 2018) and leaders’ own enactment of these behaviors is well-established
27 and grounded in social learning arguments. In addition, leaders’ perceptions of their managers’
28 interpersonal justice (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Hoobler & Hu, 2013) and procedural
29 justice (Tepper et al., 2006) are negatively related to the leader’s abusive supervision toward
30 employees, in line with one of our core assumptions that these constructs are conceptually
31 similar. What may be more interesting and novel in this stream of research is the idea that leaders
32 might also learn from their managers what *not* to do. For example, Taylor, Griffeth, Vadera,
33 Folger, and Letwin (2019) found that leaders’ experienced abusive supervision from their own
34 manager is positively related to leaders’ relational disidentification from the manager (i.e., the
35 manager becomes a countermodel), which in turn fostered ethical leadership from leaders
36 themselves.

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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 Second, another cluster of studies in our review focused on how others at work, beyond
4 the leader's manager, represent principled role models. Multiple studies indicate a positive
5 relationship between ethical leadership of top management and the leader's own enactment of it
6 (Byun, Karau, Dai, & Lee, 2018; Mayer et al., 2009; Wang, Xu, & Liu, 2018). Moreover, Brown
7 and Treviño (2014) found that leaders' role models at work, including top management and
8 career mentors, are associated with ethical leadership. Similarly, Frisch & Huppenbauer (2014)
9 found that leaders were inspired to be ethical by their previous managers as well as by prominent
10 political, business, or religious role models (e.g., Gandhi).
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22 Third, organizational culture and climate also influence whether leaders enact (or fail to
23 enact) principled behavior. Prior research indicates that transformational culture, which
24 emphasizes trust and belonging, was positively associated with ethical leadership (Toor & Ofori,
25 2009) whereas hostile organizational climates encourage abusive supervision (Mawritz et al.,
26 2014). Another study found that organizational cultures affect the allocation rules (i.e., principles
27 of distributing resources to employees) leaders decide to use, such that those in economically-
28 oriented, relationship-, and personal development-oriented cultures were most likely to report
29 enacting equity, equality, and need distributive rules, respectively (Mannix, Neale, & Northcraft,
30 1995). Moreover, leaders who were primed to think about a manager they associated with being
31 unfair were more likely to enact interactional unfairness (Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2013).
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45 Lastly, leaders' social environment in their childhood also influences their principled
46 behavior. Specifically, our review suggests that abuse or aggression in the leader's family
47 growing up increases their likelihood of becoming an abusive supervisor (Garcia, Restubog,
48 Kiewitz, Scott, & Tang, 2014; Kiewitz, Restubog, Zagencyk, Scott, Garcia, & Tang, 2012),
49 similar to how ethical role models in childhood, such as parents, are related to ethical leadership
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 for young leaders (Brown & Treviño, 2014; Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). The leader's degree
4
5 of maternal influence also appears to play a role in ethical leadership (Rowe, 2014).
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INSTRUMENTAL LENS OF PRINCIPLED LEADER BEHAVIORS

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10 The instrumental lens characterizes principled leadership “as a means to an end”
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12 (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 11); for example, “abusive supervision can have a strategic,
13
14 instrumental side” (Walter et al., 2015, p. 1057). That is, leaders enact such behaviors in order to
15
16 achieve some end goal, such as to maximize their own rewards or improve employee
17
18 performance (e.g., Qin, Ren, et al., 2018; Long, 2016a; Watkins et al., 2019). An instrumental
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20 perspective is often assumed to involve selfish (i.e., *self-oriented*) or undesirable motives (e.g.,
21
22 leaders' personal gain), but the notion of *other-oriented* motives or benefits also emerged from
23
24 our review. This challenges the notion that instrumental motives are always undesirable or
25
26 inherently self-focused. Additionally, the distinction between self- and other-orientation is
27
28 consistent with De Dreu and Nauta's (2009) conclusion that these orientations independently
29
30 influence behavior. Other-oriented motives that help explain the instrumental lens of principled
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32 leader behaviors are externally driven, similar to the interpersonal lens in the previous section;
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34 however, self-oriented motives are more internally driven (e.g., by the leader's own benefits).
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36 Together, these motives offer a somewhat balanced perspective through this lens, compared to
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38 what prior research has assumed. That said, the instrumental lens is one of the least popular
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40 approaches, as only 15% of the studies in our review adopted the instrumental lens.
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Self-Oriented Motives

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49 *“exhibiting fair behavior...helps supervisors attain valued personal outcomes and*
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51 *enhance their welfare.” (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018, p. 228)*
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 The most well-studied perspective via the instrumental lens involves leaders' self-
4 oriented motives. Specifically, 75% of studies adopting this lens focused on self-oriented
5 motives, which center on the notion that leaders are motivated by personal gain to engage in fair,
6 ethical or non-abusive behavior toward followers. That is, leaders enact such behaviors to
7 ultimately maximize their own interests (e.g., motivation based on "what's in it for me"). The
8 key theoretical foundations relevant to this lens include social interaction theory of aggression
9 (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994) and attitude functions theory (Katz, 1960).

19 *Theoretical foundations.* The social interaction theory of aggression explicates three
20 goals that motivate behavior. The first two goals align with the instrumental lens (while the third
21 connects to the moral lens and will be discussed below). These include goals to effect
22 compliance in others and to create and maintain desired identities (Scott et al., 2009). This theory
23 suggests that principled leadership is guided by the expectation of obtaining desired outcomes
24 (e.g., compliance and identity). The instrumental goal of creating and maintaining desired
25 identities is important when considering self-oriented motives. The goal of identity maintenance
26 connects to impression management, defined as "the process by which individuals attempt to
27 control the impressions others form of them" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34). Within our
28 context, this may include leaders engaging in principled behaviors to display "identity-relevant
29 characteristics" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 38). That is, they enact principled leadership to be
30 "seen" by others as a leader—and one who is fair (Greenberg, Bies, & Eskew, 1991), ethical, or
31 not abusive. Scott, Garza, Conlon and Kim (2014) drew from the social interaction theory of
32 aggression and found that identity maintenance motives were associated with daily justice rule
33 adherence.

WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 Second, attitude functions theory (Katz, 1960) describes key motivational bases of
4 attitudes and one of these, the instrumental function, is particularly relevant to this lens. This
5 function suggests “that people strive to maximize the rewards in their external environment and
6 to minimize the penalties” (Katz, 1960, p. 170). Specifically, favorable attitudes are held toward
7 targets that facilitate satisfaction of needs (desired goal or reward) and unfavorable attitudes are
8 held toward targets that thwart one’s goals (undesirable outcome or punishment). Qin, Ren, and
9 colleagues (2018) drew from attitude functions theory to investigate supervisors’ justice
10 enactment and argued that behaving fairly or unfairly “can lead to desirable personal outcomes
11 (e.g., greater group productivity and career development opportunities)” and that the
12 instrumental function of justice “motivates supervisors to act fairly only when doing so is aligned
13 with self-interests” (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018, p. 229). In other words, principled leader behaviors
14 may not always be the easiest path for the leader’s own outcomes.
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30 **Research trends.** Studies examining self-oriented instrumental motives such as identity
31 maintenance found that leaders’ individual identity (i.e., self-interest) drives abusive
32 supervision—an effect compounded by weak collective identity (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, &
33 Chang, 2014). Another study argued that managers who make procedurally unfair decisions
34 attempted to protect their professional image through refusals (self-oriented strategies that
35 minimize time spent explaining decisions to layoff victims) and distancing from the unfairness
36 (Lavelle, Folger, & Manegold, 2016). In addition, identity maintenance was the dominant
37 predictor of leaders’ procedural justice rule adherence (Scott et al., 2014).
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49 Other research examined leaders’ motivation to maximize their rewards and minimize
50 punishments. Qin, Ren, et al. (2018) investigated how instrumental motives contributed to
51 leaders’ justice enactment and developed a scale that includes items such as, “Treating my
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3 subordinates fairly... is advantageous to my rewards and benefits... helps me minimize my
4
5 punishments and losses” (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018). This is consistent with the finding that leaders
6
7 who expected unethical behavior to be punished in their organization were more likely to be
8
9 ethical (Wang et al., 2018). Related research found that justice enactment was less likely when
10
11 leaders had high workload and few rewards for enacting justice (Sherf, Venkataramani &
12
13 Gejendran, 2019). Finally, Molinsky, Grant and Margolis (2012) found that when participants
14
15 were primed with economic schema, which emphasize rationality, efficiency and self-interest,
16
17 they were less interpersonally just and compassionate toward others in need.
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21 **Other-Oriented Motives**

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24 *“the motive to serve others...may contribute to becoming a more ethical leader” (Den*
25
26 *Hartog, 2015, p. 415)*
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29 Our review also uncovered other-oriented instrumental motives, which comprised half of
30
31 the studies invoking this lens. However, theoretical development for these motives remains
32
33 sparse, suggesting that more conceptual development is needed to draw strong conclusions. That
34
35 said, this motive focuses on the end goal of benefiting, influencing, or serving others, which may
36
37 also ultimately benefit the leader (i.e., affect the leader’s self-interests).
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40 ***Theoretical foundations.*** The goal of effecting compliance in others, specified by social
41
42 interaction theory of aggression (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), relates to leaders’ need to influence
43
44 or control employees (e.g., Zhao et al., 2015). This also connects to Tedeschi and Felson’s
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46 (1994) notion that “people who possess greater relative power than others may be encouraged to
47
48 use coercion because they expect to be successful and to incur little cost” (p. 351). For example,
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50 Scott and colleagues (2009) proposed that fairness “may be used instrumentally by managers to
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52 elicit desired levels of motivation and performance from their subordinates” (Scott et al., 2009, p.
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3 759) and is viewed by managers “as a way to prevent productivity losses and promote
4 productivity gains” from employees (Long, 2016a, p. 764). This is consistent with the argument
5 that “leaders use abuse as a means to an end and are instead motivated by more pro-
6 organizational goals,” such as “improving employee performance” (Watkins et al. 2019, p. 262).
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12 Additional conceptual support to advance research on other-oriented instrumental
13 motives can be borrowed from literature on altruistic and egoistic forms of motivation (Batson,
14 1987; Batson, Van Lange, Ahmad & Lishner, 2003). Altruistic and egoistic motivation are
15 distinguished by whether the “ultimate goal” is to “increase another’s welfare” or “increase one’s
16 own welfare,” respectively (Batson, 1987, p. 67). These goals are not mutually exclusive, as
17 individuals may help others (altruistic goal) to also benefit themselves (egoistic goals, such as
18 garnering rewards, praise, esteem and improved self-image, or avoid punishments and
19 uncomfortable situations, Batson et al., 2003). Integrating these ideas with other-oriented
20 instrumental motives in our framework points to both egoistic and altruistic goals. As examples,
21 principled behavior to aid followers’ development (Long, 2016a) is egoistic in that goal is to
22 influence others but also altruistic in that the goal is to help others. In addition, effecting
23 compliance through principled behavior (Scott et al., 2014) is egoistic in that the behavior is
24 intended to benefit oneself (by getting followers to do what the leader wants), but it is also other-
25 oriented in that it relates to controlling others’ behaviors.
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44 **Research trends.** Studies examining other-oriented instrumental motives revealed various
45 beneficiaries of principled leadership beyond the leader. Specifically, Frisch and Huppenbauer
46 (2014) found that ethical leaders considered multiple stakeholders (e.g., customers, shareholders)
47 in addition to employees. Other studies found that leaders enact procedural fairness with a goal
48 of satisfying followers’ needs (e.g., need for control; Hoogervorst et al., 2013) (other-oriented,
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3 altruistic goal) and enact moral leadership with a goal of employee development and work effort
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5 (Long, 2016a) (other-oriented, with both egoistic and altruistic goals in that leaders and
6
7 followers may both benefit). Interestingly, leaders' other-oriented intentions, such as improving
8
9 follower performance, can motivate both unprincipled (i.e., abusive supervision) (Watkins et al.,
10
11 2019) and principled behavior (Long, 2016a). Altogether, our conclusions paint a more complex
12
13 picture of instrumental motives than prior research has assumed, such that leaders are
14
15 (un)principled as a means to both self- and other-oriented goals. Future research adopting
16
17 instrumental approaches should explicitly examine the interaction between motives that are self-
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19 and other-oriented (e.g., Scott et al., 2014) and the ways in which they "involve both concern for
20
21 others and concern for oneself" (Bolino & Grant, 2016, p. 603). For example, when might
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23 leaders prioritize versus sacrifice their own welfare to influence followers using principled
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25 leadership?
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30 31 **MORAL LENS OF PRINCIPLED LEADER BEHAVIORS**

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33 The moral lens revolves around leaders' *internal drive* to be principled. Specifically,
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35 Cropanzano et al. (2001) highlighted how principled leadership "goes beyond economic or
36
37 relational calculus" to also include moral codes, such that principled behavior "transcend[s]
38
39 concrete gains and losses of a particular situation" (p. 83). Broadly, the moral lens centers on the
40
41 idea that leaders enact principled behavior as "an end in itself" (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 88;
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43 Scott et al., 2009, p. 760). Of the studies in our review, 18% adopted a moral lens. Within this set
44
45 of studies, most research has focused on how leaders act in a principled way out of *moral*
46
47 *obligation*. An emerging research stream suggests leaders *morally rationalize* their unprincipled
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49 acts—that is, believe it is justified. Prior research has assumed that moral motives unilaterally
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51 lead to principled behavior, yet our review shows such motives may also precipitate *unprincipled*
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behavior. This highlights the importance of separating leaders' motives from their behavior and exploring the assumptions behind both moral obligation and rationalization motives.

Moral Obligation Motives

“people are fair simply because it is the right thing to do” (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 87)

The key assumption of moral obligation motives is that leaders are principled because they believe they “ought to” (Cropanzano et al., 2001, p. 86)¹—an idea developed by deontological ethical scholars (Folger, 1998; Folger, 2001). Indeed, the term “deontology” stems from the Greek word for obligation or responsibility, *deon* (Cropanzano et al., 2001). In our review, nearly 80% of studies using a moral lens focused on moral obligation motives. Prior research does not tend to explicitly draw from deontological ethics to explain moral obligation motives, yet the logic and assumptions behind this lens originates from deontological principles. Kohlberg's (1969) model of cognitive moral development, which theoretically grounds several studies in our review, connects to deontological ethics, such that at the highest stage of moral reasoning, leaders are thought to be motivated by internalized principles rather than by self-interest or social expectations (Kohlberg, 1969; Cropanzano et al., 2001). More thoroughly integrating these approaches reveals new insights surrounding how leaders become morally compelled to enact principled behaviors, which we elaborate on below.

Theoretical foundations. The idea that leaders act morally simply because it is the right thing to do originates from work of the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant. He developed the “categorical imperative” suggesting the morality of actions is based on universal moral principles including honesty and respect for others (Kant, 1996)—an idea that later evolved into what is known as deontological ethics (Folger, 1998; Folger, 2001). That is,

¹ Moral obligation differs from obligation that may arise from social exchanges, as moral obligation is internally driven and obligation from social exchanges is more externally driven (i.e., by other individuals).

WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 individuals internalize normative moral principles and behave how they believe they “ought to.”
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5 Several studies in our review implicitly drew from deontological reasoning. For example, one
6
7 study found that the relationship between moral identity and granting of voice to followers was
8
9 strengthened by prevention focus, which refers to the motivation to bring oneself in line with
10
11 their “ought” self (Higgins, 1997; Brebels, De Cremer, Van Dijke, & Van Hiel, 2011).
12
13 Additionally, Qin, Ren, and colleagues’ (2018) logic that “supervisors *ought* to treat their
14
15 subordinates fairly” connects to deontological ethics (p. 226, emphasis added).
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19 The second theoretical foundation underpinning moral obligation motives is Kohlberg’s
20
21 theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1969), which outlines three moral reasoning stages
22
23 occurring during human development. The first stage is the pre-conventional level, in which
24
25 individuals are moral to gain rewards and avoid punishments, which connects to the instrumental
26
27 lens (Cropanzano et al., 2001). The second stage is the conventional level, when individuals
28
29 behave morally to attain social approval (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010), which relates to the
30
31 interpersonal lens. The third and final stage is post-conventional, characterized by individuals
32
33 behaving “in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness,
34
35 universality, and consistency” (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 55)—that is, internal obligation to be
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37 moral. Individuals in this stage are the most likely to be attentive to moral issues (Cropanzano et
38
39 al., 2001). For example, drawing from Kohlberg (1969), Patient and Skarlicki (2010) found that
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41 an empathetic induction was more effective in increasing leader attention to justice issues when
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43 the leader operated at a higher level of moral reasoning.
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49 **Research trends.** First, our review indicates that moral identity, defined as “a
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51 commitment to one’s sense of self to lines of action that promote or protect the welfare of
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53 others” (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998 p. 515), is among the most prevalent moral obligation
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 motives. Leaders high in moral identity have an intrinsic desire to pursue moral actions even in
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5 the absence of external pressures (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Moral identity has been directly linked
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7 to ethical leadership (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012; Giessner, Van Quaquebeke,
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9 van Gils, van Knippenberg, & Kollée, 2015; Zhu, Treviño, & Zheng, 2016) and supervisor
10
11 justice enactment (Brebels et al., 2011). Additionally, research has shown that leader moral
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13 identity interacts with leader pride (Sanders, Wisse, Van Yperen, & Rus, 2018) and follower
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15 moral identity (Giessner et al., 2015) to predict ethical leadership. Moreover, moral identity
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17 plays a role in motivating leaders to prevent perpetuating patterns of abuse (Taylor et al., 2019).
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22 Relatedly, moral development and internal obligation also emerged as key antecedents to
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24 principled leader behaviors. Not only is leader moral development associated with principled
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26 leadership (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010), but the relationship between leader and employee moral
27
28 development is also important, such that leaders at higher levels of moral development than their
29
30 employees are more likely to be principled (Jordan, Brown, Treviño, & Finkelstein, 2013).
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32 Leader internal obligation, defined as the intrinsic desire to do what is right, was associated with
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34 ethical leadership (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008) and overall justice (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018).
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39 Moral ideologies also compel leaders to be principled. For example, leaders'
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41 deontological views are linked to ethical leadership (Letwin et al., 2016). Another study found
42
43 that leaders high in idealism, the belief that moral standards ought to be consistently applied
44
45 across situations, and low in relativism, the extent to which an individual believes morality is
46
47 situational, are more likely to be ethical (Waldman, Wang, Hannah, & Balthazard, 2017). In a
48
49 study of reward allocation decisions, Meindl (1989) found a positive effect of the leader's justice
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51 values on enacting equity, a distribution logic based on employees' relative contributions.
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3 Lastly, research suggests that moral attentiveness relates to ethical leadership (Babalola,
4 Bligh, Ogunfowora, Guo, & Garba, 2019; Zhu et al., 2016). Moral attentiveness is defined as
5
6 “the extent to which an individual chronically perceives and considers morality and moral
7
8 elements in his or her experiences” (Reynolds, 2008, p. 1028) and is comprised of two
9
10 dimensions: perceptual and reflective. Perceptual moral attentiveness is the extent to which one
11
12 views the world through a moral lens, while reflective moral attentiveness is the extent to which
13
14 one thinks about their moral experiences. Zhu and colleagues (2016) found that both of these
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16 dimensions relate to ethical leadership. However, Babalola and colleagues (2019) found that
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18 leader moral reflectiveness is associated with ethical leadership only when the leader’s decision-
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20 making autonomy was high. These conflicting results suggest the presence of moderators and
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22 need to explore whether moral attentiveness and its dimensions also influence justice and non-
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24 abusive supervision.
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30 **Moral Rationalization Motives**

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32 *“engaging in ethical leader behavior can... license people to exhibit subsequent abusive*
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34 *behavior”* (Lin, Ma, & Johnson, 2016, p. 818)
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37 Whereas moral obligation motives focus on why leaders feel compelled to enact
38
39 principled standards, *moral rationalization* motives relate to how leaders reframe or bend these
40
41 standards (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Overall, such motives allow leaders to “comfortably
42
43 rationalize their unethical and unjust behaviors” (Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016, p. 732).
44
45 Despite the small proportion of studies focusing on these ideas—about a quarter of studies that
46
47 take a moral lens—a rich cluster of several interrelated theories explain how leaders rationalize
48
49 unprincipled behavior. Interestingly, rationalization motives suggest leaders are unprincipled
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51 because of a belief in their own virtue (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Bandura, 1991).
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3 ***Theoretical foundations.*** Theoretical approaches that support rationalization motives
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5 originated from a variety of disciplines, including moral relativism from ethics and philosophy
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7 literatures (Fletcher, 1966; Forsyth, 1980; Harman, 1975), moral self-regulation theory (Bandura,
8
9 1991) and moral licensing theory (e.g., Miller & Effron, 2010) from social psychology, as well
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11 as moral exclusion theory (e.g., Opatow, 1990) and justice motive theory (Lerner, 1980). Studies
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13 in our review that focused on rationalization motives for principled leadership drew from these
14
15 theories to make related arguments. Despite the overlap in assumptions and underlying logic in
16
17 these approaches, progress in this area has remained fragmented. In distilling commonalities
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19 across these theories, our review revealed three fundamental theoretical explanations for moral
20
21 rationalization motives: cognitive re-construal, cognitive distinctions among followers, and
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23 cognitive balance.
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28 The cognitive re-construal explanation captures how leaders frame their unprincipled
29
30 behavior in a more positive light. According to moral self-regulation theory, leaders morally
31
32 justify harmful acts, such that “detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable
33
34 by portraying it in the service of valued social or moral purposes” (Bandura, Barbaranelli,
35
36 Carprara, & Pastorelli, 1996, p. 365). That is, leaders enact “bad” behaviors for reasons they
37
38 believe to be “good” or moral. Moral self-regulation theory also suggests that leaders minimize
39
40 harmful acts via “euphemistic language” or by comparing their behaviors to those that are more
41
42 malignant, such that “injurious conduct can be rendered benign” (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 365).
43
44 For example, leaders who violate informational justice rules may think, “I might not be totally
45
46 transparent with my employee, but at least I am not going to outright lie to them.” Moral
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48 licensing theory posits that leaders with moral credentials (i.e., moral self-regard) view their
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50 “morally questionable deeds as not transgressions at all” (Miller & Effron, 2010, p. 126). Lastly,
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 leaders who espouse morally relativistic values believe that what is considered to be moral
4 depends on the situation (Forsyth, 1992). Because morally relativistic leaders perceive flexibility
5 around moral standards, they might view their unprincipled behavior as principled when dealing
6 with certain situations or followers.
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12 The second explanation arising from moral rationalization theories is the idea that leaders
13 cognitively distinguish between followers to determine who “deserves” principled treatment.
14 This notion grew out of moral exclusion theory, which argues that followers who are useful for
15 the leader’s goals are considered to be worthy of principled treatment (e.g., Tepper et al., 2011;
16 Walter et al., 2015), whereas those outside of the leader’s “scope of justice” are considered to be
17 morally excluded, making them vulnerable to unprincipled treatment (Opatow, 1995, p. 347).
18 That is, leaders who are unfair, unethical, or abusive toward specific followers may see their
19 behavior as unprincipled yet not problematic. Relatedly, moral self-regulation theory predicts
20 that “it is...difficult to mistreat humanized persons without risking personal distress and self-
21 censure” (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 366). To reduce the discomfort of treating others harmfully,
22 individuals are thought to dehumanize them, which entails “framing of the victims of one’s
23 actions as undeserving of basic human consideration... fostered by defining others as members of
24 an outgroup” (Moore, Detert, Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012, p. 5).
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42 Third, the balance explanation focuses on how leaders maintain a cognitive ledger
43 (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) of their own or others’ moral behavior. Moral licensing theory
44 suggests that leaders offset their own unprincipled behavior with principled behavior and vice
45 versa using moral credits (e.g., Lin et al., 2016). Moral credits are generated by prior moral
46 behavior, which in turn can “license” individuals to enact immoral behavior, without necessarily
47 reframing the immoral behavior itself (Miller & Effron, 2010). Other perspectives argue that
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 leaders violate principles to punish others' counter-normative behavior (Scott et al., 2009).
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5 Justice motive theory (Lerner, 1980) suggests leaders "keep the scales of justice in balance to
6
7 preserve a belief that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get" (Scott et al., 2009,
8
9 760). That is, leaders' just world belief allows them to reinstate equilibrium, even if this means
10
11 being unprincipled. This connects to the notion from moral self-regulation theory that leaders
12
13 morally disengage by blaming the victim, based on the belief that some individuals earn poor
14
15 treatment (i.e., the idiom "you reap what you sow") (Bandura, 2002). Although these ideas are
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17 functionally similar to social exchange motives, they theoretically focus on leaders' moral logic
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19 as the primary behavioral driver.
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24 **Research trends.** Findings on moral rationalization motives of principled leadership have
25
26 largely supported themes offered by the theoretical foundations outlined above. Regarding
27
28 cognitive re-construal, leaders' justification for unjust treatment was negatively associated with
29
30 both level and consistency of overall justice (Qin, Ren et al., 2018). Blader and Rothman (2014)
31
32 found those with greater empathy toward justice recipients were more likely to construe
33
34 preferential treatment as fair, which was attenuated by felt accountability or the "expectation that
35
36 one may be called on to justify one's beliefs, feelings, and actions to others" (Lerner & Tetlock,
37
38 1999, p. 66). This suggests leaders' internal justification may increase unprincipled behavior, yet
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40 the possibility of external justification to others may inhibit it. Another study revealed that
41
42 leaders who were high in moral relativism and low in moral idealism were the least likely to be
43
44 ethical (Waldman et al., 2017). Regarding balance, prior ethical leadership was positively related
45
46 to abusive supervision via moral credits and moral credentials (Lin et al., 2016). A motive to
47
48 establish fairness was positively associated with informational justice (Scott et al., 2014) but did
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50 not significantly predict the other three justice dimensions, as they were predominantly used by
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3 managers as an instrumental means to some end (e.g., to effect compliance), as opposed to an
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5 end itself. Lastly, leaders' moral disengagement more broadly was negatively associated with
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7 ethical leadership (Bonner et al., 2016).
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10 Our review indicates theoretical development and richness surrounding moral
11
12 rationalization motives exceeds current empirical progress. For example, moral disengagement
13
14 has been linked to reduced ethical leadership (Bonner et al., 2016), yet it is unclear which
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16 mechanism(s) (e.g., attribution of blame, justification, dehumanization, Bandura et al., 1996) are
17
18 responsible for these effects, and whether moral disengagement mechanisms differentially
19
20 influence the three forms of principled leadership (e.g., whether attribution of blame more
21
22 strongly predicts justice rule violations than abusive supervision or failure to demonstrate ethical
23
24 leadership). While justification of unjust behaviors (i.e., enacting "bad" behaviors for "good"
25
26 reasons) is negatively related to overall justice (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018), the specific grounds that
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28 leaders use to justify unprincipled behavior are poorly understood.
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32 33 **SELF-REGULATION AND DISPOSITION LENS OF PRINCIPLED LEADER** 34 35 **BEHAVIORS** 36 37

38 The self-regulation and disposition lens for understanding principled leadership
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40 recognizes that, in some cases, engaging in ethical leadership, justice rule adherence, or abusive
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42 supervision is the result of more internal forces within the supervisor. These forces include
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44 proximal, transient factors such as resources, moods, and emotions that can immediately prompt
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46 leaders to engage in more or less principled leader behaviors, as well as more distal, stable traits
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48 that predispose leaders to behave in a particular way. External forces are still important, insofar
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50 as they serve as sources of depletion and affective states, as well as cues regarding whether the
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52 expression of a given trait is appropriate or inappropriate. Ultimately, however, this lens assumes
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3 that behaving in principled ways rests on processes within the leader. Although such internal
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5 forces were not among the “roads” proposed by Cropanzano et al. (2001), this set of antecedents
6
7 emerged as the second most common lens in our review (44% of studies), suggesting they are an
8
9 equally important theoretical consideration in understanding why leaders are principled. As we
10
11 elaborate below, this lens encompasses internal forces including whether leaders possess the
12
13 *resources* to be principled, their momentary *affective states*, and their more enduring *personality*
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15 *traits*, which can influence principled leader behaviors in both direct and interactive ways.
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19 **Resources**

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21 *“fairness also requires time, effort, and mental energy”* (Brockner et al., 2015, p. 118)
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24 The first explanation found within work that adopts the self-regulation and disposition
25
26 lens focuses on leaders’ *capacity* to be principled, based on their resources. Resources are
27
28 defined as “objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516) and
29
30 studies in our review focused on resources as energies that enable leaders to enact principled
31
32 behavior. Of the studies adopting the self-regulation and disposition lens, 16% focused on
33
34 resources. A major assumption of the resources explanation is that “deficits in self-control can
35
36 lead to a breakdown in productive and healthy functioning” (Maranges & Baumeister, 2016, p.
37
38 44). That is, leaders’ motivation to be principled may not be sufficient if they lack the necessary
39
40 self-control to enact these behaviors.
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45 ***Theoretical foundations.*** First, ego depletion theory emerged as the main theoretical
46
47 foundation to explain resources as antecedents of principled leader behaviors. The key tenet of
48
49 ego depletion theory is that self-control, defined as the exertion of effort to override one’s urges,
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51 inclinations, or desires (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), “draws on some limited resource, akin to
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53 strength or energy” (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998, p. 1252). That is, using
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3 self-control in any context draws from one “pool” of resources, causing exertion in one situation
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5 to impair self-control in the next. For example, surface acting, an effortful behavior used to
6
7 override one’s true emotions, has been linked to subsequent abusive supervision via reduction in
8
9 self-control resources (Yam, Fehr, Keng-Highberger, Klotz, & Reynolds, 2016). Second,
10
11 conservation of resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) has also been used to explain the effect
12
13 of resource depletion on principled behaviors. The main idea of COR is that individuals are
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15 motivated to maintain and gain resources, and the threat of losing resources is stressful
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19 (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014).

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22 **Research trends.** Broadly, studies in our review found that leaders are less likely to be
23
24 principled when their resources are depleted, such as by states and ill-being, for example, poor
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26 sleep quality (Barnes et al., 2015), negative emotions (Collins & Jackson, 2015), and family-to-
27
28 work conflict (Courtright, Gardner, Smith, McCormick, & Colbert, 2016), by prior behaviors
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30 including ethical leadership (Lin et al., 2016) and surface acting (Yam et al., 2016), or by
31
32 follower deviance (Mawritz et al., 2017). Across such studies, resource depletion acted as a
33
34 mechanism linking various distal variables and unprincipled behavior. Further, neural synchrony
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36 in executive control parts of the brain, which govern inhibition of impulses, was negatively
37
38 related to abusive supervision (Waldman et al., 2018). The majority of resource-related studies in
39
40 our review used a self-report measure of depletion; however, it has also been operationalized as
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42 depression (Byrne et al., 2014) and high error rates on a math test (Collins & Jackson, 2015).
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44 Resource depletion has primarily been tested as an antecedent of abusive supervision, but it is
45
46 also linked to justice enactment and leaders’ ability to accurately appraise their justice behavior
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51 (Whiteside & Barclay, 2018).

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54 **States**
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3 *“justice rule adherence may also be driven by “hot” affective states (i.e., short- term*
4 *moods or emotions)”* (Scott et al., 2014, p. 1574)
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7 A second explanation found in studies adopting the self-regulation and disposition lens
8 focuses on leaders’ momentary feelings as proximal drivers of principled behavior enactment.
9
10 Specifically, this stream of research highlights the importance of moods, emotions, and affective
11 states (an umbrella term encompassing moods and emotions) for principled behavior. A key
12 assumption of the affective states explanation is that moods and emotions “are important causal
13 variables that can motivate and direct behavior” (Watson, 2000, p. 25). They do so by taking
14 what is referred to as *control precedence* (Frijda, 2007) relative to other concerns. Control
15 precedence captures the involuntary nature of affective impulse and describes the sovereignty of
16 affective states over attention and behavior. Affective states take control precedence because
17 they divert memory, awareness, and thought to the affective state being felt (e.g., Clore,
18 Schwarz, & Conway, 1994). In this way, affective states serve as “cognitive impenetrable
19 modules” (Frijda, 2007, p. 16), closing off information that is incompatible with their aims and
20 leading individuals to act in accordance with their current feelings. Accordingly, the affective
21 states explanation is well-suited to describe why a given leader may behave in a principled way
22 at one moment but in an unprincipled way at the next.
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42 ***Theoretical foundations.*** Several perspectives have emerged to explain the impact of
43 affective states on principled leadership. According to Affective Events Theory (AET; Weiss &
44 Cropanzano, 1996), events, which are described as “a change in what one is currently
45 experiencing” (p. 31), serve as proximal causes of affective states at work. Affective states can
46 elicit behaviors directly, or they can do so indirectly via their influence on work attitudes such as
47 job satisfaction. Given the theory’s emphasis on events, research using AET as a conceptual lens
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 has tended to treat affective states as mediators linking some critical work event or occurrence to
4 principled leadership. For example, Eissa and Lester (2017) found that perceptions of role
5 overload were associated with frustration, which in turn was associated with abusive supervision.
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10 Relatedly, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress describes the
11 process by which individuals appraise and react to events that happen to them. Primary
12 appraising is concerned with whether there is anything at stake. If events are perceived as
13 relevant to one's goals (i.e., there is something at stake), then individuals appraise the situation
14 with respect to whether it is harmful and threatening or challenging and beneficial. Secondary
15 appraising is concerned with what can be done about the situation, in terms of coping. When goal
16 incongruence exists, and individuals perceive that the situation taxes or exceeds their resources,
17 the psychological response of stress occurs, which includes negative affective states (Lazarus,
18 1999). Similar to COR and resource depletion, the key idea is that feelings of stress can cause
19 leaders to be less principled.
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33 Finally, theory on displaced aggression (e.g., Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears,
34 1939; Tedeschi & Norman, 1985) has been used to link affective states to principled leader
35 behaviors. When stressed and unable to either confront or identify the source, supervisors turn
36 toward less powerful individuals (i.e., their subordinates) and engage in less principled behaviors
37 to vent their frustrations. Accordingly, displaced aggression has been utilized to explain the
38 relationship between supervisors' stress and their engagement in abusive supervision (Burton,
39 Hoobler, & Scheuer, 2012).
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49 **Research trends.** Almost without exception, the studies in our review have found that
50 negative affective states are associated with leaders behaving in less principled ways. In addition,
51 most studies have focused on abusive supervision rather than justice rule adherence or ethical
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 leadership. However, justice (received *by* supervisors from their leaders or the organization) has
4
5 frequently been examined as an affective event or stressor that elicits negative states and
6
7 subsequent less principled behavior. For example, Hoobler and Hu (2013) found that
8
9 interactional injustice received by managers elicited feelings of negative affect, which then was
10
11 displaced to subordinates in the form of abusive supervision. Similarly, Tepper and colleagues
12
13 (2006) found that supervisors' depression mediated the relationship between their receipt of
14
15 procedural injustice from the organization and their own abusive supervision enactment. By
16
17 focusing on depression, Tepper et al. (2006) showed that negative states low in activation can
18
19 also lead to abuse, implying that valence is the more critical factor. Finally, Wo et al. (2015)
20
21 revealed that displaced aggression (operationalized as anger) explained the relationship between
22
23 supervisors' received and enacted interpersonal injustice. However, social exchange
24
25 (operationalized as perceived organizational support) explained the relationship between
26
27 supervisors' received and enacted informational injustice. Together, these findings are in line
28
29 with our earlier assertion about the conceptual similarities between abusive supervision and
30
31 interpersonal injustice. They also suggest that the provision of informational justice is based less
32
33 on affect and more on cognition. On this point, Scott and colleagues (2007) found that
34
35 supervisors' positive and negative feelings toward subordinates were associated with
36
37 interpersonal justice, but not informational justice.

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45 In addition to the receipt of injustice, negative affective states arising from other events
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47 or stressors have been linked to unprincipled leadership in the form of abusive supervision.

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49 Although these include circumstances at work, such as frustration arising from role overload
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51 (Eissa & Lester, 2017) and anger and anxiety arising from difficult goals (Mawritz, Folger, &
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53 Latham, 2014), they also include circumstances outside of work, such as hostility arising from
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3 family-to-work conflict (Courtright et al., 2016) and history of family aggression (Garcia et al.
4
5 2014).

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8 Finally, there is some evidence that negative affective states can elicit *more* principled
9
10 leader behaviors. In their study of antecedents of supervisor justice rule adherence, Scott et al.
11
12 (2014) showed that although negative affect was associated with less distributive, procedural,
13
14 and interpersonal justice, it was associated with more informational justice. As the authors noted:
15
16 “It may be that when key decisions create burdens or inconveniences for employees, managers
17
18 may experience frustration and irritation at being placed in the role of the “bearer of bad news”
19
20 (p. 1585). Furthermore, affective states were stronger drivers of justice dimensions affording
21
22 managers greater discretion in their execution (i.e., interpersonal justice and informational
23
24 justice), while more cognitive motives were stronger drivers of justice dimensions affording
25
26 managers less discretion (i.e., distributive and procedural justice). This suggests that for affective
27
28 states to take control precedence and influence principled leader behaviors, managers must have
29
30 the freedom to act on their current feelings.
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34 35 **Traits**

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38 *“based on their individual differences, different supervisors would experience unequal*
39
40 *impulses to be abusive”* (Waldman et al., 2018, p. 400)
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42
43 A final explanation in studies that adopt the self-regulation and disposition lens focuses
44
45 on leaders’ dispositions or traits as more distal influences on principled behavior enactment,
46
47 relative to resources and traits. This has been a popular area of inquiry, as 63% of studies
48
49 adopting the self-regulation and disposition lens focused on leaders’ traits. In particular, the five-
50
51 factor model of personality, or the Big Five (Goldberg, 1990) has been frequently examined in
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53 conjunction with principled leader behaviors, as we describe below. As a result of its focus on
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 differences between leaders, the traits explanation is well-suited to describe why some leaders
4 are more principled than others, on average. However, traits also have been used as moderators
5 of the relationships between resources, states, and principled leadership.
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9
10 *Theoretical foundations.* Compared to research on resources and states, research on traits
11 has relied less on prominent, specific theoretical frameworks (e.g., COR, AET), instead
12 describing how the characteristics of a particular trait (e.g., the dutifulness and detail-orientation
13 of conscientious individuals) share conceptual similarities with principled leadership (e.g., the
14 dutiful and detailed application of procedures to foster procedural justice) (e.g., Mayer, Nishii,
15 Schneider, & Goldstein, 2007). In cases where researchers have utilized the five-factor model of
16 personality to postulate direct effects on principled leader behaviors, they have used that model
17 as a “theoretical framework” (e.g., de Vries, 2012; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011).
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29 However, scholars have drawn from other frameworks to either ground the direct or
30 moderating effects of traits. For example, in terms of direct effects, Babalola et al. (2019)
31 utilized social cognitive theory’s premise that personality shapes behavior through reflective
32 mechanisms (Bandura, 1991). They argued and found that because conscientiousness influences
33 morally-oriented thoughts and behaviors, it should stimulate leaders to be morally reflective,
34 leading to higher levels of ethical leadership. In terms of moderating effects, Eissa and Lester
35 (2017) applied AET’s tenet that personality influences how reactive people are to affective
36 events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). They predicted and showed that agreeable supervisors were
37 less likely to act out on frustration (by abusing subordinates) stemming from role overload.
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49 Finally, trait activation theory (TAT; Tett & Burnett, 2003) has been mentioned as a potential
50 lens through which to understand the effects of traits and dispositions (Babalola et al., 2019).
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54 According to this theory, traits become activated (and thus influence behavior) when they match
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 or are appropriate for the situation. That is, when a situation matches a given trait's
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5 characteristics, the influence of that trait on subsequent behavior is stronger.
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8 **Research trends.** In terms of direct effects, conscientiousness has frequently been linked
9
10 to higher levels of principled leadership – especially ethical leadership (Babalola et al., 2019; de
11
12 Vries, 2012; Kalshoven et al., 2011; Xu, Yu, & Shi, 2011). As noted above, one of the reasons
13
14 for this relationship is that conscientious supervisors contemplate moral matters more than those
15
16 low in conscientiousness (Babalola et al., 2019). Conscientiousness has also been associated with
17
18 higher levels of procedural justice, although that relationship was not significant when
19
20 accounting for the remaining Big Five (Mayer et al., 2007). Regarding the remaining Big Five,
21
22 leaders high in agreeableness, emotional stability, and extraversion have been found to engage in
23
24 higher levels of ethical leadership (de Vries, 2012; Xu et al., 2011). Agreeableness and emotional
25
26 stability have also been linked to higher levels of procedural, interpersonal, and informational
27
28 justice, but extraversion was not significantly associated with those justice dimensions (Mayer et
29
30 al., 2007).
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36 Beyond the Big Five, traits including empathy, mindfulness, narcissism, and pride have
37
38 been associated with principled leadership. Specifically, empathic leaders, ostensibly through
39
40 their ability to take the perspective of others and to have high moral regard for others, engage in
41
42 higher levels of interpersonal and informational justice (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010; see also
43
44 Whiteside & Barclay, 2016). Empathy also mitigates the perception that abusive supervision can
45
46 be instrumental in improving subordinates' performance (Watkins et al., 2019). Procedural
47
48 justice enactment is higher for mindful leaders; presumably because of their tendency to have an
49
50 open mindset, a willingness to perceive, and to collect unbiased information (Schuh, Zheng, Xin,
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52 & Fernandez, 2019). Narcissistic leaders are more likely to be abusive toward subordinates,
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 unless they also possess self-control (Waldman et al., 2018). Finally, authentic pride (feeling
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5 accomplished and successful, as opposed to hubristic and conceited), has been linked to higher
6
7 levels of ethical leadership (Sanders et al., 2018) and lower levels of abusive supervision (Yeung
8
9 & Shen, 2019).

12 Regarding moderating effects, research has shown that certain individuals are less likely
13
14 to engage in unprincipled leader behaviors as a result of stressful, depleting, or otherwise
15
16 negative circumstances. For example, the relationship between frustration and abusive
17
18 supervision is weaker for agreeable supervisors (Eissa & Lester, 2017), and the relationship
19
20 between hostile climate and abusive supervision is weaker for conscientious supervisors
21
22 (Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014). Agreeableness also mitigates the relationship between
23
24 psychological power and abusive supervision (Foulk, Lanaj, Tu, Erez, & Archambeau, 2018). An
25
26 underlying reason for these trait effects may be self-control, as agreeableness and
27
28 conscientiousness subsume aspects of self-control “because they involve the ability to adapt
29
30 one’s behavior to the wishes and feelings of others and to task demands, respectively”
31
32 (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009, p. 73). Indeed, studies measuring supervisors’ self-control
33
34 directly have found that it weakens the relationship between stressful events (family
35
36 undermining; surface acting) and abusive supervision (Kiewitz et al., 2012; Yam et al., 2016).
37
38 Self-control also has been linked to lower variability (and more consistency) in interpersonally
39
40 just treatment over time, which is less stressful for subordinates (Matta, Scott, Colquitt,
41
42 Koopman, & Passantino, 2017).

49 Going beyond self-control, modeling of abusive behavior is less likely when concern for
50
51 others is high, breaking the cycle of trickle-down effects (Tu et al., 2018). Additionally, when
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53 supervisors do not hold negative reciprocity beliefs (i.e., they do not believe that negative
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3 treatment should be reciprocated in kind), they are less likely to engage in abusive supervision as
4
5 a result of perceiving psychological contract breach (Wei & Si, 2013). Finally, supervisors low
6
7 in authoritarianism are less likely to abuse their subordinates when they are treated unfairly by
8
9 their organization (Aryee et al., 2007). Overall, this area of research on the moderating role of
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11 traits reveals the dynamic interplay between traits and states in predicting principled leader
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13 behaviors (see Mischel & Shoda, 1995).
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16 17 **TOWARD AN INTEGRATION AND EXTENSION OF OUR FRAMEWORK** 18

19 Up until this point, we discussed the four theoretical lenses of principled leader behavior
20
21 independently in turn to reveal their distinct assumptions, theoretical roots, and findings. The
22
23 preceding four sections underscore the importance of separating antecedents, including motives,
24
25 from each leader behavior—an assumption that has not always been clear in prior research.
26
27 Specifically, our review indicates that leaders may be driven by negative or undesirable reasons
28
29 to enact principled behavior (e.g., self-oriented instrumental motives) or driven by potentially
30
31 positive or well-intentioned reasons to violate principled standards (e.g., moral rationalization
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33 motives). In reality, “motives underlying behavior may be mixed” (Den Hartog, 2015, p. 412).
34
35 Indeed, our review suggests that antecedents from multiple lenses concurrently influence
36
37 principled leader behavior: nearly one third of studies adopted two or more lenses. Focusing on
38
39 multiple lenses is more common in justice (40%) than in abusive supervision (30%) or ethical
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41 leadership (22%) studies. Most studies adopting moral and self-regulation lenses invoked at least
42
43 one other lens—often the interpersonal lens.
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49 In this section, we integrate the four theoretical lenses into a unified framework to
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51 highlight how research on antecedents of principled leadership needs to advance theoretically
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53 and empirically. Recent growth in this area has shaped our understanding of why leaders are fair,
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3 ethical, and non-abusive, yet it has also raised several critical issues that are important to resolve
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5 in order for this literature to progress. These issues include: how should the interplay or system
6
7 of four lenses be studied? Do the three forms of principled leadership operate similarly with
8
9 respect to the four lenses or do distinctions emerge between them? What role do situational or
10
11 contextual factors play, and how might they activate or suppress constellations of lenses? How
12
13 does the framework change our understanding of nascent streams of research on antecedents of
14
15 variability and agreement regarding principled leadership? Below, we synthesize and extend the
16
17 lenses to reveal new insights and advance research.
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21 **Interplay Among Lenses**

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24 Prior research on antecedents of principled leader behavior has been criticized for not
25
26 fully exploring the interplay between different antecedents. Specifically, studies often “draw
27
28 from multiple perspectives...to support the same argument rather than testing whether or how
29
30 they relate to one another” (Barclay et al., 2017, p. 870). Other scholars have argued that
31
32 “examining a single motive or the independent effects of multiple motives...overlooks the
33
34 possibility that one motive may influence the effect of the other motive” (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018,
35
36 p. 227). These observations point to the notion that the four lenses concurrently influence
37
38 principled behavior and may counteract or amplify effects of one on the others. As such,
39
40 examining only one type of antecedent (i.e., invoking only one lens) is deficient and tells only a
41
42 fraction of the story. Our review revealed linkages and overlap across the various antecedents of
43
44 principled leadership that can help illuminate the interplay between them. Below we elaborate on
45
46 ways in which such interplay has been empirically operationalized in prior research and propose
47
48 a path forward to theoretically integrate the overarching lenses, which informs our conclusions
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50 about how principled leadership scholarship should shift going forward.
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3 ***Empirical operationalizations of interplay among lenses.*** Studies in our review
4
5 operationalized the interplay of lenses as one moderating the effect of another (51% of multi-lens
6
7 studies), the direct effect of one lens on another (37%), lenses as multiple independent variables
8
9 (10%), and as multiple mediators (5%). In terms of one lens moderating the effect of another,
10
11 studies most commonly found that self-regulation and instrumental variables moderate
12
13 interpersonal effects on principled behavior (e.g., Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014; Qin, Ren, et
14
15 al., 2018). Regarding direct effects of one lens on another, the most popular combination found
16
17 in our review was the effect of interpersonal motives on self-regulation (e.g., Hoobler et al.,
18
19 2013; Scott et al., 2007; Tepper et al., 2007); that is, forces that are more external to the leader
20
21 influence internal processes. When the lenses have been examined as multiple independent
22
23 variables or mediators, self-regulation, instrumental, and moral lenses have typically been tested
24
25 together (e.g., Long, 2016a; Meindl, 1989; Scott et al., 2014), whereas other studies tested
26
27 multiple interpersonal motives, rather than integrating them with antecedents from the other
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29 lenses.
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35 ***Theoretical integration of the lenses.*** Although uncovering how the interplay of
36
37 antecedents has been examined in prior research offers important empirical guidance, what is
38
39 currently needed is greater theoretical integration to understand the linkages between lenses.
40
41 Principled leadership antecedents have previously been conceptualized as different “roads”
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43 (Cropanzano et al., 2001), suggesting distinct pathways that work in isolation from one another,
44
45 yet the above empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Illuminating how the lenses work together
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47 or against one another as an interconnected system requires moving beyond prior theoretical
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49 frameworks. Given the strong emphasis on motives in prior research on principled leadership
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51 antecedents, it is surprising that motivation theories have largely been ignored. Theory on
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3 motivation may shed light on how to study the lenses as a system by accounting for both internal
4 and external forces, similar to our framework in Figure 1. Broadly, work motivation is defined as
5 the “set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual’s being, to
6 initiate work-related behavior and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration”
7
8 (Latham & Pinder, 2005, p. 486). Elements of this definition align with our framework: whether
9
10 the form is ethical leadership, justice, or non-abusive supervision and the degree to which these
11
12 behaviors are enacted (or not).
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19 Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation that offers guidance on
20
21 integrating the lenses because it accounts for the role of social interactions, instrumentality,
22
23 internally driven interest, and self-regulation in motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The core forms
24
25 of motivation outlined by SDT include intrinsic motivation and several forms of extrinsic
26
27 motivation (external, introjected, and identified), which range from external to internal (Ryan &
28
29 Deci, 2000), similar to our framework (see Figure 1). External motivation is fostered by rewards
30
31 and punishment, which relates to the instrumental lens, as well as obligation from others, which
32
33 ties to the interpersonal lens. Introjected motivation occurs when a behavior is enacted to avoid
34
35 negative states such as shame, anxiety, or guilt, or to induce positive states such pride. This
36
37 connects to theory linking leaders’ justice rule violation and adherence to pride and guilt (Scott
38
39 et al., 2009) and relates to the self-regulation lens (i.e., emotions and self-regulation as
40
41 motivating forces). Identified motivation is initiated by personal values regarding the behavior
42
43 (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which ties to the moral lens in our framework.
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49 In contrast to forms of external motivation, intrinsic motivation stems from interest in the
50
51 behavior itself and is fostered by fulfillment of needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy
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53 (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The need for relatedness is satisfied by feeling connected to others, to care
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3 about and be cared about by others (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Van Den Broeck, Ferris, Cheng, &
4
5 Rosen, 2016), which ties to both social learning and social exchange motives examined through
6
7 the interpersonal lens (i.e., leaders' own leaders and their followers may be sources that fulfill
8
9 relatedness needs). The need for competence refers to feeling a sense of mastery over challenges
10
11 and skills (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016) and relates to the identity
12
13 maintenance motive viewed through the instrumental lens (e.g., Scott et al., 2014) (e.g., fostering
14
15 a professional image as a competent leader). Lastly, the need for autonomy captures the idea that
16
17 individuals have volition and freedom over their behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and ties to
18
19 situational antecedents of principled leadership, such as discretion and control, discussed below.
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24 ***Future research directions to examine interplay among lenses.*** Integrating theoretical
25
26 insights from SDT with our framework suggests a complex interplay between the lenses and
27
28 offers several promising ways to examine them as a system. According to SDT, "employees can
29
30 possess multiple motivation forms for engaging in a given behavior" (Van Den Broeck et al.,
31
32 2016, p. 1197). Research on SDT suggests that external rewards, a form of external motivation,
33
34 can undercut the benefits of intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Although
35
36 identified and intrinsic motivation are generally considered to be beneficial for self-regulation,
37
38 and external and introjected motivation are thought to be harmful for self-regulation, some work
39
40 suggests that these forms of motivation do not always work against each other, but can substitute
41
42 for one another in certain situations (e.g., controlled and introjected motivation help sustain a
43
44 behavior when intrinsic motivation is low; da Motta Veiga & Gabriel, 2016).
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49 By considering multiple forms of motivation and needs, SDT points to a variety of ways
50
51 in which the lenses in our framework may interact. On one hand, the lenses may suppress or
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53 undercut one another: self-interested motives, which map onto external motivation from SDT,
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3 could undermine moral obligation motives, which tie to intrinsic motivation or interest in the
4 principled behavior itself. Moreover, self-interested motives to attain rewards or avoid
5 punishments (i.e., external motivation) may cause leaders to feel “forced” to demonstrate the
6 behavior (i.e., lack discretion) and this may thwart autonomy needs. On the other hand, the
7 lenses may compensate for one another. For example, when more desirable drivers such as moral
8 obligation motives are lacking, perhaps self-interested motives can substitute for them—and this
9 may be preferable to a failure to demonstrate principled leadership (i.e., principled behavior for
10 the “wrong” reasons may be better than a lack of it entirely).

11
12 Fulfillment of relatedness needs may foster leaders’ social exchange and social learning
13 motives (i.e., maintaining positive, mutually beneficial relationships with followers and superiors
14 is expected to foster interpersonal motives to be principled) as well as contribute to self-
15 regulatory drivers, such as greater well-being and positive affect as well as less burnout and
16 negative affect (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). When their competence and relatedness needs are
17 not fulfilled, leaders’ motivation to be principled may be more likely to stem from a goal to
18 maintain or create an identity and self-image (self-oriented instrumental motive), in order to
19 enhance their ego and feel respected by others (introjected motivation). Yet, instrumental
20 motives may require leaders to surface act more so than other motives. This may be more
21 emotionally draining (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011), and may impair self-regulation and
22 subsequent principled behavior (Lam, Walter, & Huang, 2017). When faced with unfulfilled
23 needs (for competence, relatedness, and/or autonomy), leaders may try to self-regulate negative
24 states, such as hostile or distressed moods, to avoid behaving in an unprincipled way. How they
25 approach this could have implications for whether they are successful in enacting principled
26 behavior: surface acting may become exhausting and further thwart competence needs, but deep
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3 motives for each form, but a higher proportion of justice studies (than ethical leadership or
4
5 abusive supervision studies) focused on these motives. Social learning motives were more
6
7 commonly tested in ethical leadership studies. However, only justice and abusive supervision
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9 studies reported that the leader's perceived principled behavior from his or her own manager was
10
11 related to the leader's own principled behavior (e.g., Ambrose et al., 2013; Gabler et al., 2014),
12
13 whereas top management and the leader's childhood appear to be more influential for ethical
14
15 leadership (e.g., Brown & Treviño, 2014; Frisch & Huppenbauer, 2014). That is, for justice,
16
17 leaders' relationships with their followers and their own leaders may be strong drivers, but more
18
19 distal role models may be more influential for ethical leadership. This suggests that intervening
20
21 in poor quality leader-follower social exchanges (e.g., characterized by low LMX or high
22
23 relationship conflict) is one approach to improve principled leadership, especially justice
24
25 enactment. Moreover, prior to promotion into a leadership role, employees could be assigned an
26
27 ethical role model in the organization, who would share the ethical quandaries they have faced
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29 and resolved as a leader, in order to encourage social learning of ethical leadership.
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36 Next, a greater proportion of justice studies focused on instrumental motives than abusive
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38 supervision and ethical leadership studies did. Of studies adopting an instrumental lens, self-
39
40 oriented motives were more popular than other-oriented motives for all three forms of principled
41
42 leadership. A greater proportion (albeit small number) of justice studies, compared to ethical
43
44 leadership or abusive supervision studies, focused on other-oriented motives. This suggests that
45
46 leaders may be more inclined to behave fairly (vs. ethically or abusively) in order to influence
47
48 others. Given these insights, future interventions and training should seek to alter flawed beliefs
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50 leaders may have about using abuse or injustice as tools to improve employee performance (e.g.,
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3 Watkins et al., 2019) or compliance, and instead offer more productive and less harmful ways to
4 influence employees.
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8 Not surprisingly, moral motives were more commonly found in ethical leadership studies,
9 compared to justice and abusive supervision. Overall, moral obligation motives emerged as more
10 common than moral rationalization motives. A slightly higher proportion of ethical leadership
11 studies tested these motives and primarily focused on moral identity, reflectiveness, and
12 attentiveness (e.g., Babalola et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2016). This suggests that morality and ethics
13 training may be most helpful for increasing ethical leadership enactment. For example, future
14 research should integrate these insights with leader self-reflection interventions (Lanaj, Foulk, &
15 Erez, 2019) to examine whether moral reflectiveness training improves ethical leader behavior.
16
17 Moral rationalization motives appear to be more influential for justice than for the other two
18 forms of behavior, which is consistent with the theoretical focus of this motive on balance and
19 deservingness (e.g., Lerner 1980). Given this, we recommend future research examine the
20 specific “excuses” or justifications leaders make for their injustice behavior and their felt
21 responsibility (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Scott et al., 2009) for its impact on employees.
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25
26 Lastly, self-regulation and dispositional antecedents were found more frequently in
27 abusive supervision than in justice and ethical leadership studies. Our review revealed that
28 ethical leadership appears to be more driven by traits (than states or resources) such as
29 conscientiousness, compared to justice and abusive supervision. Thus, perhaps conscientious
30 leaders are consistently ethical, regardless of the situation. This could also be due, however, to
31 stronger conceptual overlap between ethical leadership and personality, as the trait descriptor
32 “moral” lies at the intersection of high conscientiousness and high agreeableness (Hofstee, De
33 Radd, & Goldberg, 1992). In contrast, abusive supervision appears to be more influenced by
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3 resource depletion and states, which may shape leaders' abuse variability—a possibility we
4
5 return to below. Self-awareness and mindfulness were more frequently found in justice studies.
6
7 In future intervention studies, self-awareness and mindfulness training hold the most promise for
8
9 promoting justice, whereas stress management training may be more effective in curtailing
10
11 abuse. Overall, given these distinctions, efforts that improve justice and ethicality might not
12
13 necessarily curtail abuse and vice versa.
14
15

16 17 **Other Critical Ways to Advance Research on Antecedents of Principled Leader Behavior**

18
19 The majority of studies in our review focused on antecedents of the level of principled
20
21 leader behavior and antecedents that were largely within the leader's control. However,
22
23 understanding why leaders are principled or not does not explain whether leaders are aware of
24
25 their behavior or whether they are consistent across time, situations, and followers. Indeed, our
26
27 review indicates that leaders and their followers (i.e., recipients of the behavior) do not always
28
29 agree that the leader was principled (e.g., Zapata et al., 2013) and that principled behavior varies
30
31 within-leader (e.g., Foulk et al., 2018). Moreover, a growing number of studies suggest that
32
33 elements of the leader's situation interact with the lenses we uncovered. These findings suggest
34
35 that prior approaches to research on principled leadership antecedents, including focusing only
36
37 on level—ignoring variability as well as agreement—and failing to consider the role of the
38
39 leader's situation, is insufficient.
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45 ***Role of situation in the interplay between lenses.*** Situational influences refer to systemic
46
47 elements of the leader's environment. Although situational factors do not formally comprise a
48
49 lens in our framework, they are nevertheless important to consider and were examined in 9% of
50
51 studies in our review. The primary situational element that emerged is the leader's degree of
52
53 control over enacting principled behavior, operationalized in prior research as perceived
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3 discretion, autonomy, and situational control (Babalola et al., 2019; Courtright et al., 2016;
4
5 Gilliland & Schepers, 2003; Scott et al., 2014). Another situational facet, which may hold
6
7 implications for the self-regulation and disposition lens, is the leader's job demands, such as task
8
9 and goal difficulty (Collins & Jackson, 2015; Mawritz, Latham, & Folger, 2014), workload
10
11 (Sherf et al., 2019), and span of control (Bormann, Poethke, Cohrs, & Rowold, 2018). Other
12
13 situational variables such as job insecurity, and shift or contract work may also influence
14
15 multiple lenses, such as by depleting resources, fostering burnout and negative affective states,
16
17 and activating self-oriented instrumental motives. These situational factors connect to the need
18
19 for autonomy from SDT. When leaders have little choice to enact principled behavior (Scott et
20
21 al., 2014) or are rewarded for prioritizing other responsibilities (Sherf et al., 2019), their need for
22
23 autonomy may be thwarted, which may impede principled behavior. Additionally, principled
24
25 leadership training (González-Morales, Kernan, Becker, & Eisenberger, 2018; Richter, König,
26
27 Koppermann, & Schilling, 2016) may activate moral obligation and self-regulation resources
28
29 (i.e., by improving the capability to be principled) and suppress moral rationalization and self-
30
31 oriented motives. Training on principled leadership may also satisfy leaders' competence needs
32
33 by helping leaders master skills for being fair, ethical, and non-abusive.
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40 Additionally, perhaps situational elements differentially predict the forms of principled
41
42 leadership—for example, discretion may be more influential for justice, whereas job demands
43
44 may be more influential for abusive supervision. Moreover, integrating our framework with prior
45
46 research on discretion suggests differences between the leader's ability to easily make excuses or
47
48 justify their behavior (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005; Scott et al., 2009). For instance, principled
49
50 leader behaviors that are more discretionary—abuse and interpersonal justice—may be more
51
52 difficult for leaders to justify (that is, they cannot point the finger at someone else). In contrast,
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WHY LEADERS ARE FAIR, ETHICAL, AND NON-ABUSIVE

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3 unprincipled behavior driven by other-oriented instrumental motives may be easier for leaders to
4
5 justify (suggesting a connection with moral rationalization motives), such as framing their
6
7 behavior as achieving some greater good for their employees or organization.
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10 A theoretical perspective not previously considered by prior research that can illuminate
11
12 how the situation interacts with the system of four lenses is the person-situation interaction
13
14 approach (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Treviño, 1986). This perspective centers on the idea that
15
16 behavior is the result of the individual, his or her situation, and their interaction (Mischel &
17
18 Shoda, 1995). Situational features are thought to activate or inhibit individuals' affect, goals,
19
20 expectancies, self-regulation, interpretation of the social world, and the interaction between these
21
22 processes, which influence behavior (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Treviño (1986) drew from these
23
24 ideas to propose that leaders' ego strength/depletion and moral development interact with
25
26 situational elements (e.g., time pressure, competition, and organizational cultures emphasizing
27
28 awareness of consequences and personal responsibility) to affect leaders' ethical behavior.
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33 Integrating this theoretical approach with our framework and SDT would suggest that
34
35 situational features activate or deactivate the lenses and their interplay. For example, an
36
37 organizational culture emphasizing accountability may influence social learning motives as
38
39 discussed above, but it might also satisfy leaders' autonomy needs by making them feel
40
41 responsible for and in control of their principled behavior. Depending on how leaders interpret
42
43 an accountability culture, it may either activate moral motives (e.g., obligation and intrinsic
44
45 interest in enacting principled behavior) or self-interested instrumental motives (e.g., behave in a
46
47 principled way to avoid negative consequences). In contrast, time pressure may thwart autonomy
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49 needs (e.g., leaders may feel they need to prioritize other aspects of their work above principled
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51 behavior, Sherf et al., 2019), which could contribute to moral justification motives for
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3 unprincipled behavior, as well as deplete self-regulatory resources and foster negative affective
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5 states, that in turn inhibit principled behavior. Overall, situational elements are relatively
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7 neglected, yet are important to consider because pinpointing them can help organizations
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9 “redesign jobs and work contexts” (Qin, Ren, et al., 2018, p. 227) that encourage principled
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11 leadership.
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14 ***Agreement regarding principled leader behavior.*** Most studies examined principled
15
16 leadership from the perspective of the behavior recipient (i.e., employee), which is not
17
18 surprising. What is more surprising is that so few studies (3%) simultaneously examined leader
19
20 self-ratings and recipient ratings. Moreover, these two sets of ratings are moderately correlated (r
21
22 between .26 and .46) (De Vries, 2012; Gabler et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2017; Kuenzi, Brown,
23
24 Mayer, & Priesmuth, 2019; Zapata et al., 2013), suggesting disagreement to some extent. We
25
26 define principled leadership agreement as the extent of perceptual consensus (i.e., dyadic shared
27
28 perceptions) between leaders’ and recipients’ ratings of the leader’s principled behavior.
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31 Understanding why leaders and followers agree on the leader’s behavior is important because it
32
33 connects to leaders’ self-awareness of their behavior (e.g., Whiteside & Barclay, 2016;
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35 Whiteside & Barclay, 2018). Given that “self-awareness is vital for effective self-regulation”
36
37 (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005, p. 589), leaders who are aware of their ethical,
38
39 non-abusive, or fair behaviors may have an improved ability to self-regulate these behaviors.
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41 Leader-follower agreement and self-awareness may differ based on the behavior, such that
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43 perhaps a disconnect exists with abuse (i.e., leaders may be less apt to view themselves as
44
45 abusive) but is less likely to arise with justice (i.e., leaders may more easily admit they did not
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47 share information or were inconsistent). Greater agreement would also be expected on specific
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49 justice rules vs. broad appraisals of fairness, ethicality, and abuse (Scott et al., 2009).
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3 Our framework can help shed new light on why leaders and followers agree on the
4 leader's principled behavior. For example, regarding the interpersonal lens, perhaps relationship
5 conflict between leaders and followers (Graham et al., 2019; Tepper et al., 2011) would impair
6 agreement, whereas relationship quality (e.g., LMX; Koopman et al., 2015) would facilitate it.
7 Instrumental factors such as impression management and identity maintenance (Scott et al.,
8 2014) and moral factors such as euphemistic labeling and moral credentials (Lin et al., 2016)
9 may inhibit agreement, whereas moral reflection may increase it. Self-regulation and traits such
10 as empathy, agreeableness, and mindfulness may make agreement more likely, whereas leaders
11 who are depleted may be less apt to achieve agreement. Moreover, situational factors, such as
12 training on principled leadership (González-Morales et al., 2018; Richter et al., 2016) may
13 encourage leaders' self-awareness on these behaviors, which in turn may facilitate agreement.
14 Building from recent research examining followers' attribution of leaders' justice motives
15 (Matta, Sabey, Scott, Lin, & Koopman, 2020) and the notion that justice recipients can perceive
16 insincerity in the justice actor (Bies, 1987), it is also possible that leaders and followers may at
17 times disagree about the leader's motives. For example, a leader may be motivated by moral
18 obligation, but the follower instead may perceive this behavior to be driven by self-oriented
19 instrumental motives, such as impression management (Greenberg et al., 1991). This
20 disagreement may hinder the leader's future enactment of principled behavior, via reduced self-
21 regulatory resources or negative affect, for instance.

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24 ***Variability in principled leader behaviors.*** Our review indicates that leaders are not
25 always consistent in their principled behavior over time (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015; Matta et al.,
26 2017) or across followers (Bormann et al., 2018). Integrating prior conceptualizations, we define
27 principled leadership variability as the degree of leaders' instability or inconsistency in justice,
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3 abuse, or ethical behavior. Given that 39%-80% of variability in principled behaviors is within-
4 leader (i.e., varies within rater—leader or follower) (Barnes et al., 2015; Foulk et al., 2018; Liu
5 et al., 2017; Matta et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019) and 65% of variability is
6 within-unit (i.e., across followers reporting to the same leader) (Bormann et al., 2018), it is
7 critical to understand why leaders are consistently principled, particularly since the consistency
8 of behavior appears to be as, if not more, important than the level of behavior (Matta et al., 2017;
9 Matta, Scott, Guo, & Matusik, 2020). Of the studies in our review, 6% examined variability.
10 These studies largely focused on variability's effects; studies examining its antecedents found
11 that leader trait self-control (Matta et al., 2017) and justification for unjust behavior (Qin, Ren, et
12 al., 2018) predicted leaders' justice variability over time and leaders' span of control was related
13 to greater inconsistency in ethical leadership across followers (Bormann et al., 2018). Moreover,
14 nearly half of variability in attribution of the leader's justice motives varied within-follower
15 (Matta, Sabey, et al., 2020), which points to the possibility that motives also vary within-leader.
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33 Our framework offers insights on how the limited but growing stream of research on
34 antecedents of principled leadership variability should progress. For example, the interpersonal
35 lens would suggest that relationship quality or exchange with the follower reduces within-leader
36 variability but increases within-unit variability. Viewed through the moral lens, moral credits,
37 which fluctuate (Lin et al., 2016; Miller & Effron, 2010), would be expected to increase
38 variability, whereas moral credentials, values, and identity, which are believed to be more stable
39 (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Miller & Effron, 2010), would be expected to inhibit variability. In terms
40 of the self-regulation and disposition lens, because resource depletion impairs self-regulation
41 (Baumeister et al., 1998) and neuroticism reflects emotional instability (Goldberg, 1992), they
42 may encourage variability. Additionally, lenses within our framework may vary as well—for
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3 instance, leaders may be motivated by interpersonal forces one day and by self-regulation forces
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5 the next (e.g., due to fluctuating fulfillment of needs)—which may ultimately affect their general
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7 pattern or level of principled leadership over time. Taken altogether, by integrating the four
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9 lenses, our review extends beyond synthesis to highlight critical ways in which research on
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11 principled leadership antecedents should progress.
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14 15 **DISCUSSION**

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17 Given findings showing beneficial outcomes of supervisor justice rule adherence, ethical
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19 leadership, and non-abusive supervision accumulated over decades of research (Colquitt et al.,
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21 2013; Martinko et al., 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2015), scholars are increasingly exploring why
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23 leaders are just, ethical, and abusive. However, research on antecedents of these leader behaviors
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25 has grown independently from their respective literatures, despite their commonalities. To
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27 advance this growing area of inquiry, we set out to synthesize reasons why leaders enact these
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29 behaviors. We integrated these acts under the overarching term principled leader behaviors and
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31 extended Cropanzano and colleagues' (2001) "roads" to develop a framework of four theoretical
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33 lenses explaining why leaders are principled. Our framework revealed the following lenses and
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35 types of antecedents: interpersonal lens (encompassing social exchange and social learning
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37 motives), instrumental lens (including self- and other-oriented motives), moral lens (comprising
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39 moral obligation and rationalization motives), and the self-regulation and disposition lens
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41 (capturing leaders' resources, states, and traits).
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47 After reviewing critical insights revealed by each lens, we integrated the lenses and
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49 extended our framework by highlighting the interplay between lenses and ways to theoretically
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51 and empirically study them as a system going forward, identifying distinctions between the three
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53 forms of principled leadership in terms of their antecedents, and identifying ways our framework
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3 can inform several important emerging areas of research on principled leadership, including the
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5 role of situation as well as agreement and variability. Overall, we pinpointed and addressed key
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7 assumptions in prior research to advance and shift our understanding of why leaders are
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9 principled.
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11 12 **Theoretical Implications**

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14 Our framework, as well as the synthesis and extension we derived from it, makes several
15
16 important contributions to research on principled leadership antecedents. First, we challenge the
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18 prevailing perspective that leaders are always intentional or deliberate in their enactment of
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20 principled behavior. Our review indicates the majority of research to date has focused on specific
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22 motive-related antecedents driving principled leadership, which suggests that leaders
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24 intentionally decide whether to be principled. Although motives play a critical role, focusing
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26 exclusively on motives ignores the equally important role of other antecedents: leaders' capacity,
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28 personality, and ability to behave in a principled way. That is, leaders are also influenced to be
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30 principled by their resources, states, and traits—which we viewed as a set in our framework
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32 through the self-regulation and disposition lens. Developing this lens allowed us to uncover
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34 previously overlooked distinctions in self-regulation and dispositional antecedents of principled
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36 leader behaviors, for example that abuse is more influenced by leaders' states and resources,
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38 whereas personality plays a larger role for ethical leadership.
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45 Second, research focusing on motive-related antecedents has often implicitly assumed
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47 that some motives are more desirable than others. We explored these assumptions by unpacking
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49 motives revealed by each lens. For example, prior research centered on moral approaches has
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51 assumed such motives always compel leaders to be principled. This assumption points only to
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53 moral obligation motives. While we found these motives to play an important role, our review
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3 also revealed that leaders may instead rely on moral logic to enact unprincipled behavior, driven
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5 by moral rationalization motives. This stands in contrast to prior assumptions that moral motives
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7 are unilaterally beneficial (Cropanzano et al., 2001). Additionally, studies adopting instrumental
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9 motives (e.g., Qin, Ren, et al. 2018) implicitly assumed such motives are harmful—that leaders
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11 are principled for the “wrong” reasons (e.g., advancing one’s self-interests). By developing the
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13 instrumental lens, our review revealed that instrumental motives may at times have a more
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15 benevolent side, in terms of other-oriented motives—leaders can be principled as a means to the
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17 end of influencing or helping others. These insights were uncovered only by synthesizing prior
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19 research from the vantage point of each lens individually as well as collectively.
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24 Third, while many studies in our review adopted only one lens, which implicitly assumes
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26 the lenses operate independently, our framework instead advocates that the lenses be treated as a
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28 system. Specifically, our review revealed interplay between the lenses, such that they work
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30 together or against one another or operate concurrently. To theoretically integrate the lenses and
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32 highlight how they can be studied together, we integrated our framework with SDT. For
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34 example, we mapped the lenses onto forms of motivation and needs specified by SDT to suggest
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36 ways in which the lenses may suppress or activate each other within an interconnected system.
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38 Illuminating this interplay also bridges our framework on antecedents with research on outcomes
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40 of principled leadership for leaders. Several studies found that abusive supervision is associated
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42 with a longer-term negative impact on leaders’ recovery (Qin, Huang, Johnson, Hu, & Ju, 2018),
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44 leaders’ relaxation at home (Foulek et al., 2018), and followers’ avoidance of their leader (Simon
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46 et al., 2015), all of which may play into a cycle of leaders’ abuse. In contrast, interpersonal
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48 justice was associated with greater positive affect and well-being for leaders (Bernerth,
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60 Whitman, Walker, Mitchell, & Taylor, 2016; Johnson, Lanaj, & Barnes, 2014), which may elicit

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3 future justice enactment. Moreover, aspects of ethical leadership were related to LMX with
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5 followers (Tumasjan, Strobel, & Welpel, 2011) and promotability (Letwin et al., 2016). In turn,
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7 leaders' promotions may offer greater discretion over their behavior or create job demands that
8
9 impair principled leadership.
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12 Fourth, research on antecedents of justice, ethical leadership, and abusive supervision
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14 often adopts similar theoretical perspectives and tests similar antecedents, which may point to the
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16 assumption that the lenses also operate identically across these three behaviors. However, upon
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18 integrating the lenses into a unified framework, we found that distinctions emerged. For
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20 example, ethical leadership may be more driven by moral motives, abusive supervision may be
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22 more influenced by self-regulation, and justice more affected by social exchange with followers.
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24 These and other distinctions in our review strengthen the theoretical richness of this literature
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26 and guide future research to focus on the most important and influential sets of antecedents for
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28 each form of principled leadership. This insight also suggests that different forms of principled
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30 leadership require distinct approaches for organizations to effectively manage and develop them.
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35 **Conclusion**

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37 According to our review, nearly 90% of articles on antecedents of principled leadership
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39 have been published in the last decade and point to myriad reasons why leaders are fair, ethical,
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41 and non-abusive. However, this growth has also been accompanied by fragmentation and little
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43 overarching guidance across literatures on why leaders are principled, suggesting a synthesis is
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45 needed. Toward that end, we developed an integrative framework of four theoretical lenses
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47 explaining why leaders behave in principled ways. By integrating these lenses, we uncovered
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49 cross-cutting critical insights and surfaced key approaches to advance research in this important
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3 area. Extending beyond synthesis, our review broadens and deepens how principled leadership
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5 antecedents are studied.
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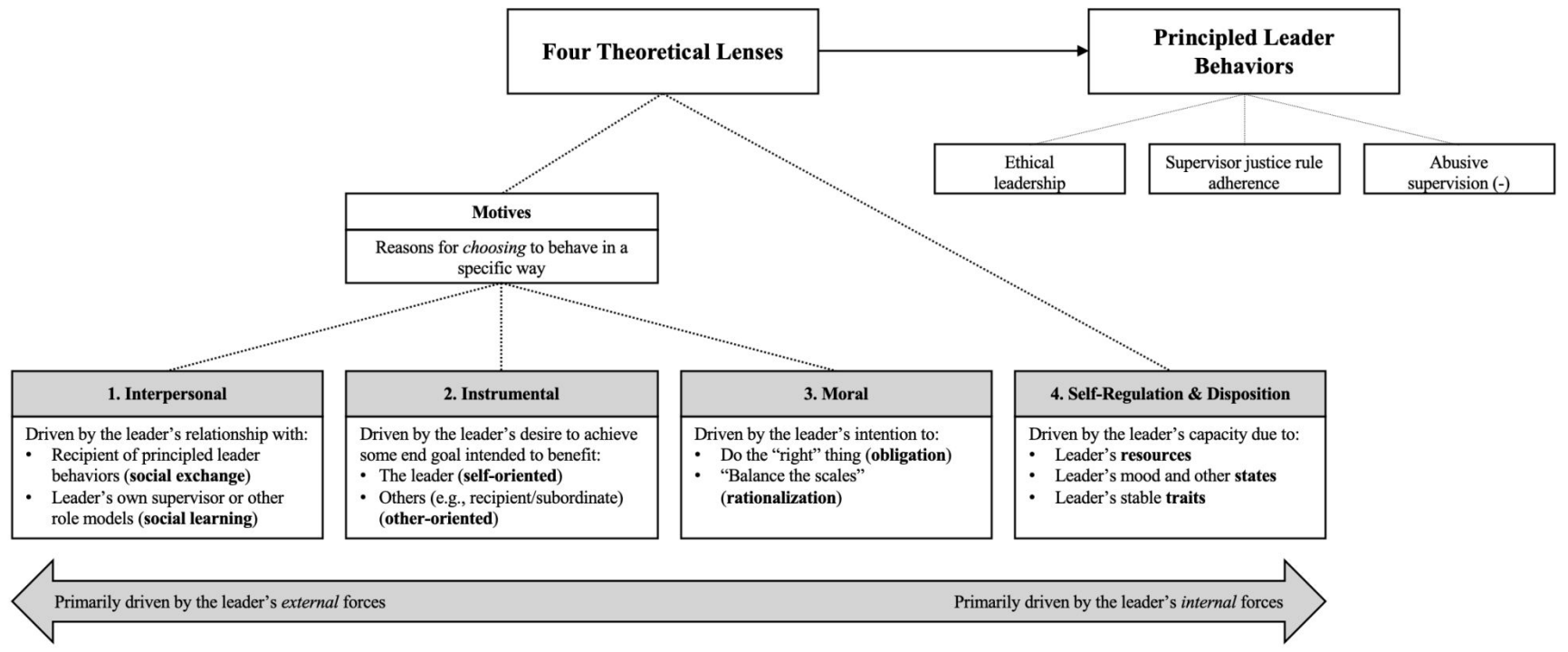
TABLE 1

What Precipitates Principled Leader Behaviors? A Framework of Four Theoretical Lenses

Theoretical Lens	Description: Leaders enact these behaviors...	Key Theoretical Foundations in Prior Research
Interpersonal Motives	...as a response to followers (social exchange motive) or by modeling others' (e.g., their own supervisor's) behavior (social learning motive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) • Victim precipitation theory (Curtis, 1974) • Belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) • Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) • Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978)
Instrumental Motives	...as a means to some end goal that may be primarily self-oriented (i.e., self-interest) or other-oriented (i.e., to benefit employee or the organization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction theory of aggression (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994) • Attitude functions theory (Katz, 1960) • Altruistic vs. egoistic motivation (Batson, 1987)
Moral Motives	... as an end in itself because it's "the right thing to do" (moral obligation motive) or is justified/deserved (moral rationalization motive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontological ethics (Kant, 1996) • Moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969) • Moral self-regulation theory (Bandura, 1991) • Moral exclusion theory (Opotow, 1990; 1995) • Moral licensing theory (Miller & Effron, 2010) • Justice motive theory (Lerner, 1980) • Moral relativism (e.g., Fletcher, 1966)
Self-Regulation and Disposition	... due to their inclination and capacity based on resources, states, or traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ego depletion theory (Baumeister et al., 1998) • Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) • Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) • Transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) • Trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003)

FIGURE 1

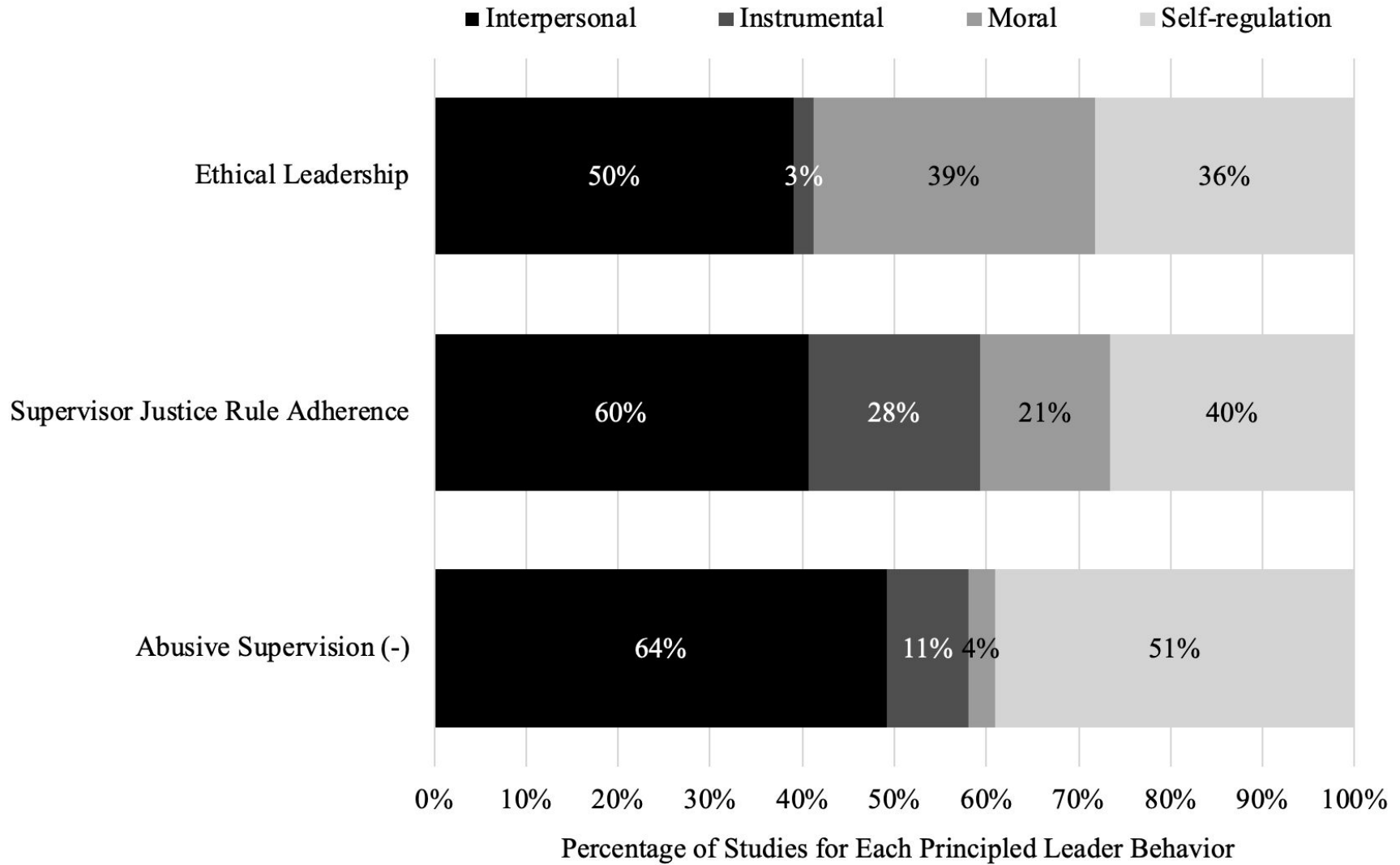
Integrative Framework of Four Theoretical Lenses Explaining Principled Leader Behaviors



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FIGURE 2

Distinctions in the Four Theoretical Lenses Across Forms of Principled Leadership



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APPENDIX

Counts of Articles Included in the Review Across Lenses

	Interpersonal Lens	Instrumental Lens	Moral Lens	Self-Regulation & Disposition Lens	Overall Count
Total number of articles	77	20	23	57	130
By literature					
Supervisor justice rule adherence (and violation)	26	12	9	17	43
Ethical leadership	18	1	14	13	36
Abusive supervision	34	6	2	27	53
By timeframe					
1970–1979	0	0	0	1	1
1980–1989	1	1	1	0	1
1990–1999	4	0	0	0	4
2000–2009	7	1	1	6	11
2010–2020	65	17	21	50	113
By methodology					
Field study: Single-source	20	7	7	11	31
Field study: Multi-source	47	8	15	43	84
Experiment	24	11	7	17	42
Qualitative	3	2	2	3	7
By rater (of the behavior)					
Recipient of behavior	61	11	15	43	100
Leader (self-ratings)	20	12	7	19	39
Recipient and leader	3	0	0	1	4
Independent rater	9	2	3	9	18
Objectively measured	6	6	4	2	9

Note. As indicated under Coding Scheme, the sum of articles across the lens columns exceeds the overall count of articles in the top right cell because many articles examined multiple lenses. González-Morales et al. (2018) and Richter et al. (2016) examined an antecedent (training) that did not cleanly fit into a lens.