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The importance of behavioral integrity in a multicultural workplace

Tony Simons
Cornell University, tls11@cornell.edu

Ray Friedman
Vanderbilt University, ray.friedman@owen.vanderbilt.edu

Leigh Anne Liu
Georgia State University, laliu@gsu.edu

Judi McLean Parks
Washington University St. Louis, mcleanparks@wustl.edu

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Tony Simons Ph.D.
Cornell University, tls11@cornell.edu

Ray Friedman Ph.D.

Leigh A. Liu Ph.D.

Judi M. Parks Ph.D.

The Importance of Behavioral Integrity in a Multicultural Workplace

Abstract

The notion of "behavioral integrity" describes the extent to which one person perceives that another lives by his or her word, keeps promises, and lives by professed values. Effective management leadership depends on how employees perceive their manager's behavior on these points, because this drives credibility. Since most managers are neither saints nor demons, employees judge their managers' integrity by interpreting a mixed set of managerial actions and behavior. This study examines how different employee groups might understand and react differently to cues about their manager's consistency. We surveyed 1,944 employees at 107 hotels and found that the observer's race affects his or her perceptions of behavioral integrity. African American employees in this study were especially sensitive to violations and affirmations of behavioral integrity. Moreover, African American employees scored their African American managers more harshly than they did their non-African American managers. The study also found that senior managers' integrity trickles down to affect behavior and attitudes throughout the organization. These results suggest a need for executive training and vigilance focused on the issue of behavioral integrity, because managers' integrity affects the attitudes, conduct, and loyalty of all employees.

Keywords

behavioral integrity, management leadership, organizational attitudes and behaviors

Disciplines

Business | Hospitality Administration and Management

Comments

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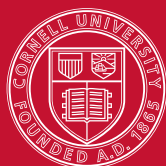# The Importance of Behavioral Integrity in a Multicultural Workplace

Cornell Hospitality Report

Vol. 8, No. 17, October 2008

by Tony Simons, Ph.D., Ray Friedman, Ph.D.,
Leigh Anne Liu, Ph.D. and Judi McLean Parks, Ph.D.

Cornell University
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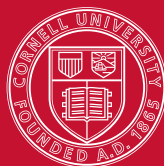
Cornell University
School of Hotel Administration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The notion of "behavioral integrity" describes the extent to which one person perceives that another lives by his or her word, keeps promises, and lives by professed values. Effective management leadership depends on how employees perceive their manager's behavior on these points, because this drives credibility. Since most managers are neither saints nor demons, employees judge their managers' integrity by interpreting a mixed set of managerial actions and behavior. This study examines how different employee groups might understand and react differently to cues about their manager's consistency. We surveyed 1,944 employees at 107 hotels and found that the observer's race affects his or her perceptions of behavioral integrity. African American employees in this study were especially sensitive to violations and affirmations of behavioral integrity. Moreover, African American employees scored their African American managers more harshly than they did their non-African American managers. The study also found that senior managers' integrity trickles down to affect behavior and attitudes throughout the organization. These results suggest a need for executive training and vigilance focused on the issue of behavioral integrity, because managers' integrity affects the attitudes, conduct, and loyalty of *all* employees.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tony Simons, Ph.D., is associate professor of management operations at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration (tls11@cornell.edu). His research focuses on trust and integrity in leadership, negotiations, and other business relationships. He has written over 28 articles for scholars and managers in such journals as *Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Harvard Business Review*, and the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*. He is the author of *The Integrity Dividend: Leading by the Power of Your Word*, recently published by Jossey Bass.

Ray Friedman, Ph.D. is holds the Brownlee O. Currey Chair at the Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University (Ray.Friedman@Vanderbilt.edu). His areas of research include negotiation and conflict management, diversity in organizations, and Chinese management. He has published in journals such *Administrative Science Quarterly, Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology*, and the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. He is past president of the International Association for Conflict Management. His book, *Front-Stage, Backstage: The Dramatic Structure of Labor Negotiations*, was published by MIT Press.

Leigh Anne Liu, Ph.D. is assistant professor of international business at Georgia State University, Robinson College of Business (laliu@gsu.edu). Her research centers on cross-cultural negotiation, conflict management, and comparative organizational behaviors. She has published in *Management and Organization Review, Journal of International Business Studies*, and *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

Judi McLean Parks, Ph.D. holds the Reuben and Anne Carpenter Taylor Endowed Professorship of Organizational Behavior at Washington University in St. Louis (McLeanParks@WUStL.edu). Her work has been appeared in such publications as the *Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Research in Organizational Behavior, Research on Negotiation in Organizations, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and the *Wake Forest Law Review*. She is editor of *Negotiation & Conflict Management Research*.

The Importance of Behavioral Integrity in a Multicultural Workplace

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Books and articles about management increasingly acknowledge the central role that trust plays in effective leadership—and with good reason: To lead, you must engage employees' hearts, but employees will not let you close enough to follow that principle if they do not trust you. The challenge for managers of winning and keeping employees' trust becomes more complex as the workforce becomes increasingly diverse. The research we report here examines employees' perceptions of their managers' behavioral integrity, which is a key foundations of trust, particularly in a multicultural workplace.

Coauthor Tony Simons defines behavioral integrity as "the perceived pattern of alignment between an actor's words and deeds."[1] The emphasis here is on perceptions, in that behavioral integrity is the extent to which people see another person as living by his or her word, keeping promises, and demonstrating the values which he or she espouses. For our purposes, integrity does not imply the whole of ethical conduct and decision-making—only that words are seen as lining up with actions. Employees' perceptions of managers' behavioral integrity has been shown to drive service delivery, employee turnover, and profitability in hotels[2] and also to affect the influence of supervisory guidance on employee conduct.[3]

Employees' perceptions of their managers' behavioral integrity are rooted both in their managers' actual conduct and in the "eye of the beholder." Different employees may see different levels of behavioral integrity in a single manager. In part this difference arises because different employees see the manager at different times and under varying circumstances. Employees' different perceptions are also driven by the contrasts between different employees' expectations and sensitivities.

We expected that race or culture would affect the way employees view their managers' integrity, because people of different backgrounds bring diverse perspectives to the workplace. In this report, we examine contrasting perceptions of employees of different races regarding their managers' behavioral integrity, based on surveys from 1,944 employees in 449 different departments at 107 hotels in the United States. We examine possible consequences of these differences and explore whether the differences emerge primarily from differential treatment on the part of management or from differential perception processes on the part of employees.

Behavioral integrity. By definition, values drive priorities. Regardless of the complications involved in operating a business, when a manager talks about one value while acting in a way that seems to violate that value, employees often infer that the manager is misrepresenting actual values, or

is failing to live up to his or her own espoused standards. Although this study focuses on behavioral integrity, we must acknowledge that integrity alone is not sufficient to earn trust. Such traits as caring and competence are also essential. We propose, though, that it is difficult to even begin to evaluate caring and competence if you cannot be certain of a person's word.

Race as an Amplifier of Behavioral Integrity Concerns

Perceptions of integrity strongly affect employees' attitudes and behavior, which in turn drive service quality and ultimately a hospitality company's financial performance. Managing integrity perceptions is complicated by the likelihood that one employee interprets a manager's behavior differently from another.[4] Some people may be personally more sensitive or care more strongly about integrity than others. Some may be quicker to judge people in terms of integrity or be more vigilant regarding hypocrisy. Also, prior expectations, known as "perceptual priming,"[5] will lead some employees to look for and collect evidence that supports their preconceived notions about a manager's integrity. The priming effect can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby suspicions lead to a perceptual bias that in turn generates evidence for the initial suspicion. In essence, some people are more "perceptually ready" to detect behavioral integrity issues than others are. Since no manager is perfect and everyone will show some degree of misalignment between word and deed, some people will notice and care about any misalignment more than others will.

In this and other studies, we see that this form of perceptual readiness seems stronger among African American employees than it is among whites. Differences in perceptions between the two races showed up, for example, in a study that tested respondents' trust of the federal government.[6] That study found that African American students were likely to believe statements that the U.S. government did things like planting the AIDS virus in the African American community, or keeping African Americans homeless so they would be less powerful. Those students averaged

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[1] See: T. Simons, "Behavioral Integrity—The Perceived Alignment between Managers' Words and Deeds as a Research Focus," *Organization Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), p. 19.

[2] T. Simons and J. McLean Parks, "The Sequential Impact of Behavioral Integrity on Trust, Commitment, Discretionary Service Behavior, Customer Satisfaction, and Profitability," National Academy of Management Conference, Toronto, Ontario, 2000.

[3] B.R. Dineen, R.J., Lewicki, and E. Tomlinson, "Supervisory Guidance and Behavioral Integrity: Relationships with Employee Citizenship and Deviant Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, forthcoming 2006

[4] Simons, *op.cit*.

[5] J.S. Bruner, "Going Beyond the Information Given," in *Contemporary Approaches to Cognition*, ed. J.S. Bruner, E. Brunswik, L. Festinger, F. Heider, K.F. Muenzinger, E.E. Osgood, and D. Rapaport (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[6] J. Crocker, R. Luhtanen, S. Broadnax, and B.E. Blaine, "Belief in U.S. Government Conspiracies against Blacks among Black and White College Students: Powerlessness or System Blame?," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 941-953.

nearly 4.0 on a 5-point scale, indicating strong belief in these statements, even though such actions would be inconsistent with government espousals of minority rights and equal opportunity. In contrast, white students were unlikely to accept such beliefs, rating their belief at an average of about 1.5 out of 5.

Such beliefs hold currency in the African American community because of the many instances where the U.S. government was indeed found to be dishonest in its dealings with African Americans, for example, when 201 African American sharecroppers in Alabama were falsely told that they were receiving treatment for syphilis between 1932 and 1972 as part of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.[7] The study was stopped only when the deception was revealed by the *New York Times* in 1972.[8] With such a radical misalignment between words (promised treatments) and deeds (no treatment), African Americans' expectations of low integrity by those in power are not surprising.[9]

Based on many cases, African Americans also have grounds to doubt the alignment of words and deeds of U.S. business leaders. At the same time that Xerox Corporation was sponsoring public television shows about African American history and strongly supporting African American causes in the early 1970s, for instance, some Xerox managers were assigning African American salesmen only to clients who bought small machines with low commission rates.[10] While Texaco widely displayed its affirmative action and diversity goals, as did all U.S. companies in the early 1990s, several of its top executives were describing African American employees as "black jelly beans" and talking about destroying documents to prevent successful discrimina-

tion suits.[11] Finally, African American employees' ability to accept their managers' statements at face value may be inhibited by the fact that white managers tend not to recognize or perceive race as an issue when African American employees almost universally experience it as such.[12]

In private business dealings, as well, similar cases have been uncovered. Car dealers have been shown to systematically charge African Americans more than whites for the same car.[13] In a 1991 study, salespeople told African American customers that their "bottom line" was a certain amount, but often quoted whites lower prices for the same cars. To make matters worse, Ayres found that the same pattern of charging African Americans more for cars was found among African American salespeople, not just white salespeople.[14] As recently as 2001, lawyers have discovered that car salespeople systematically charge African Americans higher interest rates for car loans, even controlling for customer credit risk.[15]

These types of experience, combined with dozens of everyday slights, can create widespread cynicism and suspicion. With that background, one can see why African Americans might believe in conspiracies by the U.S. government,[16] and why African Americans would be skeptical of health care providers,[17] police and courts,[18] and those in positions of

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[7] J.H. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, New and Expanded* (New York: Free Press, 1993)

[8] See: Jean Heller, "Syphilis Victims in the U.S. Study Went Untreated for 40 Years" *New York Times*, July 26, 1972, pp. 1, 8.

[9] Syphilis Study Legacy Committee, "Abstract of the Syphilis Study Legacy Committee," Final Report of May 20, 1996.; and V. Gamble, "Under the Shadow of Tuskegee: African Americans and Health Care," American *Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 87 (1997), pp. 1773-1778.

[10] R.A. Friedman, and C. Deinard, "Black Caucus Groups at Xerox," Harvard Business Case, 5-491-109 (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Division, 1991).

[11] K. Eichenwald, "Texaco Executives, on Tape, Discussed Impeding a Bias Suit," *New York Times*, November 4, 1996, p. A1; and A.S. Cancio, T.D. Evans, and D.J. Maume, "Reconsidering the Declining Significance of Race: Racial Differences in Early Career Wages," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61 (1996), pp. 541-556.

[12] D. Thomas, Mentoring and Irrationality: The Role of Racial Taboos," *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1989).

[13] I. Ayres, "Fair Driving: Gender and Race Discrimination in Retail Car Negotiation," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 104 (1991), pp. 817-872.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] D.B. Henriques, "Review of Nissan Car Loans Finds that Blacks Pay More," *New York Times*, July 4, 2001, p. A1.

[16] Crocker *et al., op.cit.*

[17] Jones, *op.cit*.

[18] C.D. Anderson, "Understanding the Inequality Problem: From Scholarly Rhetoric to Theoretical Reconstruction," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (1996), pp. 729-746.

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power and authority.[19] These factors should create, among African Americans, a higher perceptual readiness to notice gaps in alignment of word and action, and hence to question behavioral integrity.

Based on their experience, African Americans are likely to be vigilant about integrity, expecting that it is at least feasible that a given manager might speak one way and act in another. With that starting point, African Americans may be more likely to notice misalignments between words and deeds among managers since people tend to look for evidence that confirms their preexisting expectations, through perceptual priming and confirmatory bias.[20] Given the heightened vigilance suggested by these factors, coupled with the supposition that most managers are less than perfect in their alignment of word and deed alignment, we propose that:

> H1: African American employees will report lower levels of behavioral integrity by their managers than will non-African American employees.[21]

Behavioral Integrity as a Mediator

Employees' perceptions of managers' integrity are likely to affect other attitudes about the workplace, including their sense of fair treatment, their commitment, and their satisfaction.[22] A belief that the manager is unjust can give rise to dissatisfaction with the boss, the job, and ultimately

the company (because the manager represents the company). Employees who mistrust their boss are more likely to quit.

In sum, we infer that perceptions of poor behavioral integrity will affect employees' trust in management, their perceptions of interpersonal justice, their satisfaction with the job, their commitment levels, and their intent to stay with the company. These points are stated as follows:

> H2a: Lower levels of reported managerial behavioral integrity will be associated with lower levels of trust in management, interpersonal justice perceptions, global satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to stay.
> H2b: As a consequence of H1, African American employees will report lower levels of trust in management, interpersonal justice perceptions, global satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to stay.
> H2c: Also as a consequence of H1, the relationship between African American employees and trust in management, interpersonal justice perceptions, global satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to stay will be mediated by behavioral integrity perceptions. In other words, African American employees will often perceive lower behavioral integrity on the part of their managers, and this perception will drive other attitudinal consequences.

Manager's Race Makes a Difference

Just as people tend to be attracted to those who are similar to themselves,[23] social identity theory proposes that the need for self-esteem causes people to (a) identify themselves as group members, such as members of a family, organization, or demographic category such as race or gender, and (b) see their groups and other members of that group as especially worthy. Early experiments in social identity theory showed that, when shown a fuzzy picture of beans in a jar

[19] H.C. Triandes, J. Feldman, D.E. Weldon, and W. Harvey, "Eco-System Distrust in the Black Ghetto," in *Variations in Black and White Perceptions of the Social Environment*, ed. H.C. Triandes (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 118-132.

[20] S.T. Fiske and S.E. Taylor, *Social Cognition* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1991); and Simons, *op.cit*.

[21] Note that other minority groups have faced discrimination but do not seem to hold mistrust of institutions. In the sample for this study, we measured six employee perceptions and attitudes: perceived integrity, trust in management, commitment, work satisfaction, interpersonal justice, and intent to remain. African American employees differed significantly from white, Hispanic, and Asian employees on sixteen of the eighteen possible comparisons. In contrast, the remaining races differed from each other on only six of the possible comparisons. In all aggregate measures, Hispanic and Asian employee scores more closely resembled those of white employees than those of African American employees.

[22] Simons, *op.cit*.

[23] D.E. Byrne, *The Attraction Paradigm* (New York: Academic Press, 1971)..

African American employees are more sensitive to patterns of managerial inconsistency than are other employee groups.

that had supposedly been collected by one group or another, people provided higher estimates when they thought that members of their own group did the collecting.[24] By extension, one might expect positive bias in performance appraisals conducted by a member of an employee's own social or ethnic group.

Recent scholars of demography have proposed that when employees work with a boss who is more like them demographically, they are more likely to have better attitudes toward the supervisor and the company, and to be more willing to serve the company beyond formal job definitions. Based on this literature, we might expect that African American employees would give African American managers the benefit of the doubt, and might therefore be less likely to notice misalignments in word and deed. Conversely, racial differences between employee and manager might result in depressed scores for behavioral integrity and other perceptions.

This idea was supported by the results of a vignette-based study by Davidson and Friedman, who found that African American employees were more likely to accept an explanation for managerial bad behavior that came from a hypothetical African American manager than from a hypothetical white manager.[25] We should expect, then, that African Americans might be more supportive, less suspicious, and more willing to give African American managers the benefit of the doubt in ambiguous situations. Conversely, African Americans might be especially cautious in their acceptance of statements by non-African American managers. As Insko *et al.* pointed out: "Consistent behavior is more important for trustworthiness when people are from different groups than when they are from the same group."[26] For these reasons, we expect that African American employees will have more

positive perceptions of their manager's integrity when their manager is also African American. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> H3: African American employees' perceptions of their managers' behavioral integrity will be less positive when the employees are managed by non-African American managers. This effect will result in a statistical interaction between employees' race and managers' race, such that African American employees' behavioral integrity perceptions will be relatively low when they describe non-African American managers, but not when they describe African American managers.

The Trickle-down Effect

To assess whether the difference in African American employees' assessments of managers is due to perception or to actual different treatment, we sought a mechanism that could be expected to affect managers' *actual* alignment between word and deed. For this purpose, we tested the trickle-down effect.[27] Middle managers are likely to take upper-level managers as role models, and so may emulate the level of word-deed alignment they see in their superiors. In this fashion, integrity may be expected to "trickle down" from higher levels in the organization to lower levels.

The trickle-down effect should operate regardless of an employee's race, because in theory the middle manager's actual level of alignment in word and deed should be similar to that of upper managers. If African American employees are more sensitive to behavioral integrity, any increment of difference in a manager's behavior that reflects upper management's integrity should be noticed more readily by African American subordinates than by non-African American subordinates, which will magnify the trickle-down effect. In contrast, if the differences are driven by managers' differential behavior toward African American employees, the

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[24] M. Sherif and C. Hovland, *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961).

[25] M. Davidson and R.A. Friedman, "When Excuses Don't Work: The Persistent Injustice Effect among Black Managers," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 43 (1998), pp. 154-183.

[26] C.A. Insko, J. Schopler, R.H. Hoyle, G.J. Dardis, and K.A. Graetz, "Individual-group Discontinuity as a Function of Fear and Greed," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 58 (1990), pp. 68-79.

[27] S.S. Masterson, "A Trickle-down Model of Organizational Justice: Relating Employees' and Customers' Perceptions of and Reactions to Fairness," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86 (2001), pp. 594-604.

trickle-down effect will not be magnified. In that case, we can conclude that what has "trickled down" is word-deed mismatch, not racism. While there is reason to believe that a top manager's demonstrating low behavioral integrity leads to similar behavior by middle-managers, there is no reason to believe that it also leads to greater discriminatory behavior by middle managers. These points are stated as hypotheses, as follows:

> H4a: Employee perceptions of their manager's behavioral integrity will be positively associated with those managers' perceptions of upper-management's behavioral integrity.
>
> H4b: African American employees' perceptions of their manager's behavioral integrity will be associated more strongly with their managers' perceptions of upper-level management's behavioral integrity than will non-African American employees perceptions of their manager's behavioral integrity. This heightened association will lead to a significant interaction between employee race and managers' ratings of upper-level managers.

Procedure

We collected data from 111 U.S. and Canadian hotel properties run by a single large hotel management company. Paper-and-pencil surveys were offered to all 10,286 employees during company time at each hotel's location (although some questionnaires were administered aurally). We encouraged participation by conducting raffles for sweatshirts and gift certificates. We received 6,792 completed surveys, for a response rate of 66 percent. Seventy-four percent of the surveys were administered in English, 24 percent in Spanish, and the balance in Chinese, Creole French, and Vietnamese, and 7 percent were aural. The translated questionnaires were created following a standard procedure of translation, back translation, and pilot testing.

We did not, however, use the entire sample for this study. Several hypotheses focus on characteristics of the manager, including the manager's race and assessment of the integrity of his or her superior. In cases where a department had several managers, we excluded respondents from those departments, leaving only those with one identifiable manager. The result was a final sample of 1,944 line employees working under 449 managers at 107 hotels.

Measurements

All attitudinal constructs were measured with five-point Likert-style scales, anchored by 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree. Behavioral integrity was measured using eight items.[28] Sample questions are "My manager practices what he preaches" and "My manager delivers on promises." Trust in the manager was measured using three items derived from Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's conceptualization of trust as willingness to accept vulnerability to another party.[29] Sample questions in our scale include, "I would not mind putting my well-being in my manager's hands" and "I would feel good about letting my manager make decisions that seriously affect my life." Commitment was measured using a six-item scale from Mowday, Steers, and Porter.[30] Sample scale items are "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this hotel," "I care about the fate of this hotel," and "This hotel inspires me to do my best." Interpersonal justice was measured using a simplified version of the Niehoff and Moorman scale.[31] A sample item for interpersonal justice is "When hotel management staffs make decisions about my job, they treat me with kindness." Employees' intent to remain

[28] T. Simons, L.R. Friedman, L.A. Liu, and J. McLean Parks, "Racial Differences in Sensitivity to Behavioral Integrity: Attitudinal Consequences, In-group Effects, and 'Trickle Down' among Black and Non-black Employees," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2007), pp. 650-665.

[29] R.C. Mayer, J.H. Davis, and F.D. Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," *Academy of Management Review*, Vol 20 (1995), pp. 709-734.

[30] R.T. Mowday, R.M. Steers, and L.W.Porter, "The Measurement of Organizational Commitment," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 14 (1979), pp. 224-247.

[31] B.P. Niehoff and R.H. Moorman, "Justice as a Mediator between Methods of Monitoring and Organizational Citizenship Behavior," *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1993), pp. 527-556. Scale items are similar to those proposed by: J.A. Colquitt, "On the Dimensionality of Organizational Justice: A Construct Validation of a Measure," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86 (2001), pp. 386-400. (The Colquitt items were not available at the time of data collection.)

Exhibit 1

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	31-35	-												
2. Tenure	1-2 yrs	-	.45★											
3. Education	High school	-	-.14★	-.12★										
4. Gender	Male 43.6%, Female 56.4%	-	.01	-.02	-.01									
5. African American	19.1%	-	.04	-.06*	-.03	.02								
6. Willingness to Criticize	3.90	1.13	.06*	.00	.03	.03	-.03	(.95)						
7. Managers' Behavioral Integrity	3.56	.95	-.00	-.09★	.02	-.05	-.08★	.15★	(.87)					
8. Trust in Manager	3.00	1.07	.04	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.09★	.13★	.74★	(.85)				
9. Interpersonal Justice	3.73	.86	-.03	-.12★	-.02	-.02	-.06*	.18★	.59★	.47★	(.90)			
10. Satisfaction	3.73	.64	.04	-.03	-.08★	-.02	-.08**	.15★	.64★	.53★	.68★	(.91)		
11. Commitment	3.87	.81	.12★	-.00	-.12★	-.06*	-.07★	.19★	.54★	.49★	.58★	.76★	(.89)	
12. Intent to Stay	2.64	1.11	.25★	-.08★	.16**	.02	.06*	.15★	-.33★	-.35★	-.36★	-.51★	-.62★	(.75)
13. African American Manager	13.9%	--	.01	.04	-.03	.00	-.08*	.07*	-.17★	-.22★	-.15★	-.20★	-.09*	-.07*

Notes: N = 1,944. *p < .05; ** p < .01; ★p < .001. Numbers in parentheses are Cronbach's alphas for each variable.

was measured using a scale from Robinson.[32] This four-item scale asked employees to respond to three Likert-type questions about how long the employee intended to remain with the employer (5 = "more than 8 years" to 1 = "0-1 year"), the extent to which they would prefer to work for a different employer, and the extent to which they have thought about changing companies (both on a scale of 5 = "a great deal" to 1 = "not at all"), as well as one binary question ("If you had your way, would you be working for this employer three years from now?"). To address heterogeneity of variance across items, We followed Robinson's procedure of standardizing item responses prior to developing scale scores. All of the above measures demonstrated reliability at alpha = .75 or above. Exhibit 1 reports the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, and intercorrelations for all the variables.

Findings

Hypothesis 1 proposed that African American employees would report lower levels of managers' behavioral integrity than would non-African American employees. To test this hypothesis, we regressed employees' perceptions of their

direct manager's integrity on a dummy variable for race (that is, African American or not African American), as well as controls for age, tenure at hotel, education, and gender. The results, shown in Exhibit 2 (model 1), indicate, as expected, that African American employees report lower perceptions of managerial integrity than do non-African American employees.

To test hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c, We followed the method established by Barron and Kenny.[33] In each case, we retained the same controls used in model 1, with the addition of the "willingness to criticize" variable, which was included to attenuate common method variance (again, see Exhibit 2)[34] First, we ran a series of models testing whether the dummy variable "African American" was a significant predictor of trust in manager (model 2), interpersonal justice (model 4), satisfaction (model 6), organizational commitment (model 8), and intent to stay with the company (model 10), as specified in hypothesis 2b. These analyses

[32] S.L. Robinson, "Trust and Breach of the Psychological Contract," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 41 (1996), pp. 574-599.

[33] R. Baron and D. Kenney, "The Moderator-mediator Variable Distinction in Psychological Research," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 51 (1986), pp. 1173-1182.

[34] The addition or omission of this variable had no effect on the results.

Regression results

Dependent Variable	Manager's Behavioral Integrity	Trust in Manager		Interpersonal Justice		Satisfaction		Commitment		Intent to Stay	
Model	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
Age	.04	.07*	.04*	.01	-.01	.04	.02	.12★	.10★	.24★	.23★
Tenure	-.10★	-.09**	-.02	-.13★	-.08**	-.07*	-.01	-.07*	-.02	-.05	-.02
Education	.01	-.03	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.09★	-.09★	-.10★	-.11★	-.14★	-.15★
Gender	-.05*	-.05	-.01	-.03	-.00	-.05	-.02	-.06*	-.03	-.03	-.01
Willingness to Criticize	.16★	.13★	.01	.19★	.09★	.17★	.06**	.19★	.11★	.15★	.10★
African American	-.10★	-.11★	-.03	-.07**	-.00	-.09★	-.03	-.09★	-.04	-.08**	-.04
Manager's Behavioral Integrity			.74★		.56★		.62★		.52★		.33★
Overall F	12.08★	9.53★	259.15★	13.27	104.49	10.91★	134.48★	18.40★	100.05★	28.94	55.28
Adjusted R^2	.04	.04	.56	.05	.35	.04	.42	.07	.32	.11	.21
ΔR^2			.53★		.30★		.37★		.26★		.11★
df	6, 1635	6, 1547	7, 1546	6, 1450	7, 1449	6, 1417	7, 1416	6, 1607	7, 1606	6, 1589	7, 1588

Notes: Standardized regression coefficients are reported. The coefficients displayed in models 3,5,7,9 and 11 are from the step 2 models.
* 2-tailed $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ ★ $p < .001$.

showed that African American employees in this sample did report significantly lower levels of these variables. We then added to each of these models the measure of behavioral integrity (models 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11). In all cases behavioral integrity had a significant effect on the dependent variables (as specified in hypothesis 2a) and reduced the coefficient for race to nonsignificance, which is consistent with hypothesis 2c. That is, the effect of race on these dependent variables is fully mediated by integrity.

Given the cross-sectional nature of our data and the high intercorrelations among the measured attitudinal variables, one can reasonably question the order of mediation for these variables. Where the second and third links of the proposed chain A → B → C are highly intercorrelated, it remains just as feasible, given the Baron and Kenney analysis, that the true chain is A → C → B. For this reason, we tested credible rival causal chains. We reasoned that trust or interpersonal justice might be proposed as a more direct consequence of race given the arguments at the outset of this report, and that these attitudes might in turn affect integrity perceptions as well as the other attitudes examined. Trust fully mediated the effect of race on behavioral integrity, interpersonal justice, and intent to stay, but trust only partially mediated the links between race and commitment and between race and satisfaction. Interpersonal justice me-

diated the link between race and intent to stay and partially mediated the link between race and satisfaction, but did not mediate the links between race and behavioral integrity, race and trust, or race and commitment.

We thought perhaps that intent to stay might somehow be affected by race, and that this intent might affect the other attitudes and perceptions through a cognitive dissonance mechanism. This was mostly not the case. Intent to stay mediated the link between race and interpersonal justice, but did not mediate any of the other attitudinal correlates of race. In contrast, the data were consistent with the notion that behavioral integrity mediated the impact of race on all of the attitudes of interest.

In sum, trust, interpersonal justice, and intent to stay even when taken together did not appear to mediate as many of the attitudinal correlates of race as did integrity.

We used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to test hypothesis 3, which posited that African American employees would report comparatively greater positive perceptions of their manager's behavioral integrity if that manager was African American and relatively lower positive perceptions if that manager was not African American. HLM offers a statistical technique to examine relationships involving a variable that describes an individual with predictors at both the individual level and the group

EXHIBIT 3

Multilevel random coefficient models

Variable	Parameter estimate (unstandardized)	SE	t ratio (2-tailed)	p-value
Model 1				
Level 1 model (no predictor)				
Intercept	3.60	.03	112.42	.00
Level 2 model (no predictor)				
Model 2				
Level 1 model				
Intercept	3.60	.03	113.02	.00
Age	.03	.01	2.36	.02
Tenure	-.07	.02	-4.59	.00
Education	-.01	.02	-.70	.48
Gender	-.06	.05	-1.32	.19
African American	**-.15**	**.06**	**-2.40**	**.02**
Level 2 model (no predictors)				
Model 3				
Level 1 model				
Intercept	3.59	.03	113.86	.00
Age	.03	.01	2.36	.02
Tenure	-.07	.02	-4.67	.00
Education	-.01	.02	-.74	.46
Gender	-.06	.05	-1.28	.20
African American	-.09	.07	-1.42	.16
Level 2 model				
African American Manager	-.23	.09	-2.29	.02
African American Employee *African American Manager	**-.31**	**.13**	**-2.41**	**.02**
Model 4				
Level 1 model				
Intercept	3.60	.03	111.78	.00
Age	.03	.01	2.11	.04
Tenure	-.08	.02	-4.83	.00
Education	-.02	.02	-1.51	.13
Gender	-.06	.05	-1.17	.24
African American	-.13	.06	-2.15	.03
Level 2 model				
Manager Report of Upper Managers' Behavioral Integrity	**.14**	**.03**	**4.03**	**.00**
Model 5				
Level 1 model				
Intercept	3.61	.03	113.07	.00
Age	.03	.01	2.08	.04
Tenure	-.08	.02	-4.87	.00
Education	-.02	.02	-1.47	.14
Gender	-.06	.05	-1.25	.21
African American	-.07	.06	-1.18	.24
Level 2 model				
African American Manager	-.19	.10	-1.71	.07
African American Employee *African American Manager	-.30	.12	-2.38	.02
Manager Report of Upper Managers' Behavioral Integrity	.12	.03	3.79	.00
African American Employee* Manager Report of Upper Managers' Behavioral Integrity	**.13**	**.07**	**1.93**	**.05**

level.[35] In this case, race of manager is a department-level characteristic, given that all employees within a department share and describe the same manager. To test hypothesis 3, we created an interaction term between African American employee (an individual-level variable) and African American manager (a department-level variable), keeping in the model the same demographic controls used previously. As seen in Exhibit 3, model 3, the interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -.31$ $p < .05$). Contrary to the hypothesis, African American employees are more critical of the integrity of African American managers than they are of the integrity of non-African American managers (see Exhibit 4). The difference in non-African American employees' assessments of African American and non-African American managers is not significant.

We augmented the HLM model to test hypothesis 4a, that a manager's perceptions of his superior's behavioral integrity is associated with how line employees view that manager's behavioral integrity. At level 2 of the HLM, we added a measure of the manager's perceptions of the behavioral integrity of his or her own boss, an upper-level manager. This effect was significant (model 4 of Exhibit 3), indicating that perceptions of upper-level managers by middle managers do trickle down to front-line employees. That is, middle managers' perceptions of their superiors are associated with line employees' perceptions of those middle managers. Then, to test hypothesis 4b, that this trickle-down effect will occur more strongly for African American employees, We added to the HLM model an interaction between African American employee and the manager's perception of her or his upper-level manager's integrity. As shown in model 5 of Exhibit 3, this interaction term was significant and positive, which is consistent with hypothesis 4b. (Exhibit 5 displays this interaction effect.) Because this graph suggests that the main trickle-down effect found in model 4 might be due to African American employees only, we split the sample and ran the analysis separately for African American and non-African American employees. In both cases the middle manager's perceptions of upper managers' integrity had a significant effect on employees' perceptions of that middle manager's integrity regardless of the employee's race ($p < .01$). Dividing the non-African American employee sample even further, looking only at those with non-African American managers, the effect was still significant ($p < .01$). These analyses show

[35] A.S. Bryk, and S.W. Raudenbush, *Hierarchical Linear Models* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992); D.A. Hofmann, "An Overview of the Logic and Rationale of Hierarchical Linear Models," *Journal of Management*, Vol. 23 (1997), pp. 723-744.

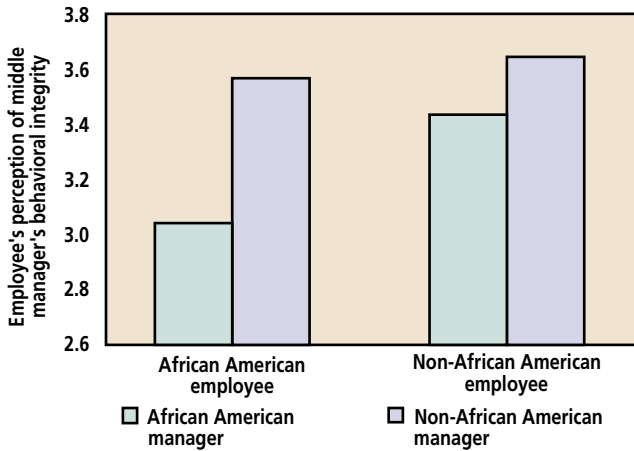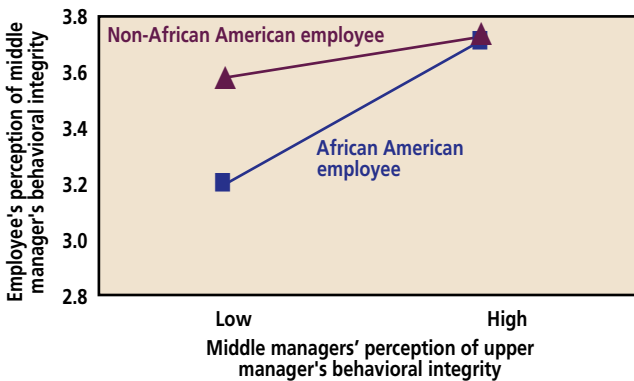## Interaction of employee's race and middle manager's race

Exhibit 5

Interaction of employee's race and upper level manager's behavioral integrity

that the trickle down effect is not limited to African American employees or to those with African American managers. Further, they show that the effects of the trickledown mechanism is enhanced for African American employees.

Main Conclusions

On balance, the data supported our hypotheses, but there were surprises, as follows:

• African American employees reported lower perceptions of their managers' behavioral integrity than did non-African American employees.

• This race-linked difference in perceived managerial integrity explained differences between African Americans and non-African Americans in trust in management,

perceptions of interpersonal justice, global satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to stay.

• Contrary to our expectations, African American employees viewed African American managers as having lower behavioral integrity than what they saw in non-African American managers. By contrast, the manager's race was not material to the assessment of behavioral integrity by non-African American employees.

• Middle managers mimicked the integrity behavior of their superiors. That is, when middle managers saw high behavioral integrity on the part of their superiors, the managers were perceived in the same way by their line staff, and the reverse was also the case. African American employees were more sensitive to "trickle down" than were non-African American employees.

Discussion and Implications

These findings suggest that African American employees are more sensitive to managers' behavioral integrity (or lack thereof) than are non-African American employees, and that this difference has profound consequences for their loyalty and commitment. African American employees in this sample tended to see lower behavioral integrity on the part of their managers. As a consequence, African American employees offered lower estimates of trust in their manager, interpersonal justice, global satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to stay with the company.

Differential perceptions of behavioral integrity between racial groups are no small matter. The results of this survey indicate that basic aspects of the relationship between employees, their managers, and the organizations are affected by their perceptions of managerial integrity. For organizations that seek to improve their diversity by retaining and promoting African American employees, alignment between managers' words and deeds is critical, given that African American employees are far more likely to leave when they perceive low management integrity at any level.

The practical implication of this finding is that managers must be attentive to behaving consistently, to setting accurate expectations, and to communicating clearly. Employees' perceptions of their managers' integrity deeply affects their loyalty, their commitment and their willingness to work hard. African American employees appear to be especially sensitive to inconsistency on the part of their managers.

These data suggest that perceptions of behavioral integrity reverberate throughout layers of an organization, "trickling down" from upper levels of management through supervisors and down to the level of first-line employees. Thus, we conclude that organizations cannot easily tolerate even

a single inconsistent executive, because that person's lack of integrity can foment far-reaching negative consequences in an organization with diverse employees. The executive's lack of alignment in word and deed will be noticed by mid-level managers, who themselves will most likely act more inconsistently. If middle managers believe their superiors do not keep promises, for example, they are more likely to break promises themselves.

Here is another area where a hotel general manager or regional executive can set the tone and shape an entire operation. Executives and middle managers are under a microscope, because lower level managers look to them for cues as to what is acceptable behavior. Organizations, therefore, cannot compromise in setting clear expectations for integrity and consistency among top managers. Acting in a way that is consistent and managing communication to maximize employees' integrity perceptions are challenging tasks that require sustained attention and skill development.

This matter is even more critical due to the effects of trickle-down dynamics on behavioral integrity, which is stronger among African Americans than for non-African Americans. This differential impact is consistent with the argument that African American employees are more sensitive to inconsistencies and broken promises than are non-African American employees. In a sense, then, African American employees may provide perceptive management with the earliest warnings about lack of alignment in word and deed, if companies were able to tap into those employees' perceptions of management.

The matter of alignment of word and deed puts particular pressure on African American managers, who are under scrutiny from their compatriots. While we can only speculate on the reasons for this, some commentators have suggested that African American employees may expect especially good treatment from African American managers, support for African American issues in the organization, or special recognition of their issues and concerns.[36] Regardless of the reason, high expectations will make whatever these African American managers do less likely to be deemed satisfactory by African American employees.

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[36] See: E.D. Irons and G.W. Moore, *Black Managers: The Case of the Banking Industry* (New York: Praeger, 1985); G. Davis and G. Watson, *Into the Mainstream: Black Life in Corporate America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982); and F. Dickens, Jr., and J.B. Dickens, *The Black Manager* (New York: Amacon, 1982), all citing pressures on African American managers to represent the African American community within their companies and provide support to other African American employees. Sometimes this idea is institutionalized in the form of employee network groups. See: R.A. Friedman, "Defining the Scope and Logic of Minority and Female Network Groups: Can Separation Enhance Integration?," in *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, ed. G. Ferris (London: JAI Press, 1996), pp. 307-349

The Value of Integrity

The conclusion to be drawn from this study is that ensuring management integrity is essential to successful operations, especially given the multicultural nature of the workplace. We have explained in detail that African American employees are particularly sensitive to breaches in integrity, but that does not mean that managers should in any way single out their African American employees for differential or discriminatory treatment. Instead, managers should be aware of their own words and behavior, as reflected by their employees' reactions.

A key finding of this study is that African American employees are not biased in their reporting. Instead, they are simply more sensitive to patterns of managerial consistency than are other employee groups, and they are less likely to stay with an organization that permits management hypocrisy. Other studies have suggested that behavioral integrity affects all employees, as well as company performance, and that consistency is thus a critical managerial virtue. Further, we have suggested elsewhere that managers will often have inaccurate perceptions of their own levels of integrity because of the need to maintain a positive and consistent self-concept. The opinions of African American employees may thus represent a critical diagnostic resource that supports managers' development. The evidence presented here suggests that attending to behavioral integrity concerns raised by African American employees is likely to improve company performance at the same time as it improves working conditions for all employee groups.

The lessons from this research are as follows:

• Actions must be consistent with words, mottos, and policies; otherwise employers will lose the support of their employees.

• Bad behavior at the top of the company does not stay within the executive suite, but spreads throughout the organization to the detriment of all.

• Employers who hire African American employees should anticipate that those employees will have higher expectations for honest and consistent behavior by their managers—and will respond to hypocritical actions by withdrawing more readily than will other employees.

• Finally, African American managers must be cognizant of and prepare for the strong likelihood that their African American employees will scrutinize their actions more closely than do their non-African American employees and may be more critical of their management style. ■

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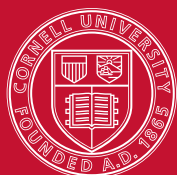
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