

# Leader Behavioral Integrity, Coworker Knowledge Sharing, and Employee Creativity

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## 〈Contents〉

I. Introduction	IV. Results
II. Hypothesis Development	V. Discussion
III. Method	

Drawing upon the behavioral integrity theory (Simons, 2002), the authors explain how leaders' consistent social cues facilitate employee creativity. Specifically, the authors propose that leader behavioral integrity – perceived word-deed alignment – motivates coworkers to share knowledge, which in turn fosters employee creativity. The authors found support for this hypothesis in a study using data from 187 employee – manager dyads in South Korea. The findings emphasize that leaders need to establish the social contexts necessary for employee creativity. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

## I. Introduction

The value of creativity in the workplace – the generation of novel and useful ideas about products, procedures, or processes – is well acknowledged in research and practice

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(Amabile, 1988; Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Gilson, 2008; Lee, Yun, & Srivastava, 2013; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993; Zhou & Shalley, 2008). Accordingly, one of the important questions in this area has been how leaders encourage employee creativity (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Tierney, 2008; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999), and scholars demonstrated that leaders' characteristics (e.g., general and emotional intelligence), behaviors (e.g., support, empowering and transformational leadership), and quality of relationships with their employees significantly impact employee creativity (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; Gibson, Fiedler, & Barrett, 1993; Mumford et al., 2002; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Tierney et al., 1999; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhou & George, 2003).

Nevertheless, we need further understandings of how leaders influence creativity (Tierney, 2008). Although traditional behavioral approaches have been used to examine various leader behaviors (e.g., Shin & Zhou, 2003; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), the leadership-creativity relationship is inconclusive because of mixed empirical results and lack of replications (Tierney, 2008). Particularly, we are less certain about effects of specific behavioral *patterns*; for example, whether leaders do as they say; that is, "walk their talk." This lack of understanding about the impact of leaders' behavioral patterns is surprising considering the notion that leaders need to provide consistent and well-aligned support for employee creativity (Tierney, 2008). For instance, senior and frontline leaders must align their support if employees are to remain engaged in creative processes (Tierney, 2008). Considering that even one leader's misaligned words and deeds may convey conflicting messages, obviously employee creativity requires that leaders behave with integrity, aligning their words with their deeds (i.e., behavioral integrity; Simons, 2002).

In addition, because leaders can directly and indirectly influence employee creativity, investigating the mechanism of leader influence is essential for understanding how leaders facilitate employee creativity (Amabile, 1988; Tierney, 2008). Creative outcomes rarely emerge in isolation; social contexts are critical (Amabile, 1988; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Tierney, 2008). In current team-based organizations, leaders are not the only influences; employees and coworkers interact frequently, and both are also influenced by leaders. Although coworker feedback is known to enhance employee creativity (George & Zhou, 2001; Zhou & George, 2001), we still know relatively little about how coworkers influence

creative performance. Moreover, it is uncertain how coworker and leader influences are associated with each other as the broader social context promoting creativity.

To address those issues, we suggest that leader behavioral integrity (Simons, 2002) is critical for employee creativity. However, we also recognize that coworker knowledge sharing can provide relevant cognitive resources for creativity, so our examination of leader behavioral integrity includes coworker knowledge sharing behaviors as playing a mediating role in influencing employee creativity. Our study extends current knowledge in several ways. First, we introduce the importance of leader behavioral integrity as a predictor of employee creativity. Although behavioral integrity is thought to be critical for effective leadership, the main focus has been on trust in leadership (Simons, 1999, 2002). Accordingly, relatively less attention has been paid to behavioral integrity as it affects employee creativity (Simons, Leroy, Collewaert, & Masshelein, 2015). Thus, we highlight leader behavioral integrity as an important facilitator of employee creativity. Second, we reveal that the broader leader/coworker social context plays a role in fostering employee creativity. Although we know that the social context is important for employee creativity, researchers have narrowly focused on either the leader or coworker social contexts (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), limiting understandings of their interrelations in creativity processes (Tierney, 2008). Thus, we examine how leaders influence coworkers and consequently change the level of employee creativity. Hence, analogous to the calls for research in the process of creative outcomes (e.g., Mainemelis, 2001; Mumford, 2000; Shalley & Gilson, 2004), we contribute to the leadership – creativity literature by identifying the mechanism through which leader behavioral integrity facilitates employee creativity.

## II. Hypothesis Development

### 1. Leader Behavioral Integrity

Behavioral integrity refers to “the perceived alignment between words and deeds” (Simons, 2002, p. 18); that is, the extent to which an individual appears to “practice

what they preach.” Research on behavioral integrity originated from a critique of new management fads and fashions (Simons, 1999). It mirrors earlier work highlighting the dangers of introducing new organizational practices but poorly implementing them “across the board” (Argyris, 1990), espousing one value but enacting another (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Poor implementation causes employees to react to managerial efforts to enact new practices with criticism, dissatisfaction, confusion, or even cynicism. Similar reactions occurred when managers rewarded behavior X while hoping for behavior Y (Kerr, 1975). As a result, the term “behavioral integrity” was coined to signify whether employees perceive that leaders align their words with their actions (Simons, 2002).

Behavioral integrity theory, drawn from the social cognition and trust literature, explains how employees form perceptions of their leader’s word-deed alignment and how the perceptions have consequences for employees (Simons, 2002). According to Simons’ (2002) conceptual model, leader behavioral integrity enhances followers’ trust in leadership, which then positively impacts their attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Subsequent empirical work largely supported the theory that leaders’ behavioral integrity is positively related to employee performance by fostering trust and clear communication (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011; Simons, 2009; Simons et al., 2015; Simons, Tomlinson, & Leroy, 2012). Behavioral integrity has also been shown to predict leader performance ratings (Way, Simons, Leroy, & Tuleja, 2016) and psychological safety among team members (Halbesleben et al., 2013; Leroy et al., 2012).

## 2. Leader Behavioral Integrity and Employee Creativity

Leadership – creativity research is often criticized for failing to examine how aligned senior leadership and frontline leader support influences employees’ engagement in creative processes (Tierney, 2008). The core of the critique is that social cues surrounding needs for consistency and alignment influence employee behaviors. We echo the importance of alignment, and further note that we often overlook the fact that even one leader can provide confusing cues when misalignment exists between his or her words and deeds. Therefore, in this study, we examine how leaders’ word-deed alignment (i.e.,

behavioral integrity) affects employee creativity.

Some researchers have tried to examine leader behavioral integrity as it affects employee creativity. For example, a scenario-based experimental study showed that leader behavioral integrity positively influences employee psychological safety, leading to *intentions* to think creatively and take risks (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011). Although we agree that intentions to think creatively and take risks are important aspects of the creative process, we extend the study to a field setting and investigate a more comprehensive social process, the roles of coworkers in the creative process, for actual creative performance in real team-based organizations.

The cognitive processes behind creativity include problem identification, information gathering, and idea generation (Amabile, 1988; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Shalley, 1991). To perform creatively, employee must have sufficient cognitive resources (Shin, Kim, Lee, & Bian, 2012). In current team-based organizations, coworkers can provide cognitive resources by sharing their knowledge (Argote, 1999) to “define the way that place looks, feels, and behaves” (Schneider, 1987, p. 437). Thus, coworker interactions are critical for workplace outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Consequently, coworker knowledge sharing – “sharing task-relevant ideas, information, and suggestions with each other” (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006, p. 1239) exposes employees to previously unconsidered problems, information, and ideas (Brown, Tumeo, Larey, & Paulus, 1998). Thus, when coworkers share their cognitive resources with one another, employees can benefit from these cognitive resources from coworkers to generate creative outcomes (Shin et al., 2012).

In addition, coworker knowledge sharing can signal that organizational members place value on whether employees utilize their knowledge to produce better outputs. According to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), intentions to engage in certain behaviors depend on attitudes toward the behaviors and subjective norms aligned with normative beliefs that “are concerned with the likelihood that important referent individuals or groups would approve or disapprove of performing the behavior” (Ajzen & Madden, 1986, p. 455). High levels of coworker knowledge sharing can signal approval regarding the creative use of shared knowledge. In turn, employees are encouraged to allocate more of their resources to generate creative outcomes. As such, employees

perceiving high coworker knowledge sharing are more likely to be creative, while we would expect less creativity when coworkers avoid sharing their knowledge.

We argue that leader behavioral integrity facilitates coworker knowledge sharing, a risky behavior because knowledge is often the greatest source of individual competitive advantage. Individuals who share knowledge risk being devalued (Kim, Kim, & Yun, 2015). Accordingly, trust is one of the strongest predictors of knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010) mainly because trust alleviates perceived risks (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005). When leaders are perceived to behave in alignment with what they profess, they are more like to inspire employee trust (Simons et al., 2015), which then facilitates knowledge sharing (Simons, 2002; Simons, Friedman, Liu, & Parks, 2007; Simons et al., 2015), and ultimately employee creativity. As leader behavioral integrity facilitates psychological safety and risk taking (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011), the influence may expand to multiple employees, through individual-level and team-level psychological safety (Leroy et al., 2012). Hence, we suggest that leader behavioral integrity promotes coworker knowledge sharing behavior.

In sum, our argument extends the psychological safety perspective supporting the positive influence of trust on individual creativity by including roles of leaders and coworkers in establishing social contexts (Anderson & West, 1998; Edmondson, 1999). Therefore, we hypothesize that leader behavioral integrity influences employee creativity by promoting coworker knowledge sharing.

Hypothesis. Coworker knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between leader behavioral integrity and employee creativity.

### III. Method

#### 1. Sample and Procedure

Multisource data were collected via questionnaires from fulltime employees and

their direct managers from 25 South Korean companies in diverse organizations and industries to avoid potential organizational or industry effects on the hypothesized relationship and to ensure that our findings would be generalizable. To avoid nesting issues, we recruited one employee–manager dyad from each team, so the sample consists of unique dyads. Employees were asked to voluntarily participate and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. Participants completed a questionnaire containing measures of their leader’s behavioral integrity, their coworkers’ knowledge sharing behaviors, and their demographic information. They delivered the managerial survey packet to their direct managers, who assessed the focal employee’s creativity. Managers sealed their completed survey packets before handing them over to the focal employees, and the employees sent the survey packets directly to the research team using a preaddressed reply envelope.

Survey packets were distributed to 235 employee–manager dyads, and 217 employees returned the packet (response rate = 92.34%). The responding employees averaged 31.82 years-old ( $SD = 5.46$ ); 73.8% were men. They averaged 4.89 years ( $SD = 3.68$ ) of tenure on their current team. They were involved in various jobs, including software engineering, manufacturing, and banking. Among the returned packets, 209 included the managerial survey packet. Responding managers averaged 42.30 years-old ( $SD = 6.19$ ); 90.4% were men. Most (93.6%) held at least a bachelor’s degree, and their average job tenure was 8.95 years ( $SD = 7.12$ ). After excluding questionnaires with unreliable responses or missing values, we had 187 matched employee–manager responses for our final sample.

## 2. Measures

Following Brislin’s (1980) translation-back translation procedure, all survey items were translated from English to Korean.

**Leader behavioral integrity.** Employees assessed their managers’ behavioral integrity using an eight-item scale validated by Simons et al. (2007). Sample items include: “There is a match between my manager’s words and actions” and “When my manager promises

something, I can be certain that it will happen,” answered on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .97$ ).

**Coworker knowledge sharing.** Employees assessed coworkers’ knowledge sharing behavior using a seven-item scale (Kim, Lee, & Yun, 2015; Kim & Yun, 2015; Lee, Kim, & Yun, 2018; Srivastava et al., 2006). We asked employees to assess the level of coworker knowledge sharing because we expect their perception of coworker knowledge sharing to be closely related to their creativity. Sample items are “My coworkers share their special knowledge and expertise with one another” and “My coworkers share lots of information with one another,” answered on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .97$ ).

**Employee creativity.** Managers assessed employees’ creativity using a 13-item scale from Zhou and George (2001). Sample items include “This subordinate suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives” and “This subordinate develops adequate plans and schedules for the implementation of new ideas,” answered on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .96$ ).

**Control variables.** We controlled for the quality of leader – member exchange (LMX) between managers and employees because it could influence managers’ ratings of employee creativity (e.g., Tierney et al., 1999). Moreover, controlling for LMX quality allows us to test the impact of leaders’ behavioral pattern on employee creativity over and beyond the effects of traditional leadership variables, since LMX quality is known to be one of the strongest predictors of employee creativity in the leadership domain (Tierney et al., 1999). We included a seven-item LMX scale (Scandura & Graen, 1984) in the managerial survey. A sample item is “I have enough confidence in my subordinate to defend and justify my decisions when I am not present to do so,” answered on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .88$ ).

In addition, we controlled for the team’s positive affective tone to rule out the possibility that positive team affect influences coworker knowledge sharing and employee creativity. Although our hypothesis focuses on the cognitive process of employee creativity (i.e., coworker knowledge sharing), positive affective processes are also critical

in promoting employee creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). We used five items from Mason and Griffin (2003) to measure team positive affective tone, included in the managerial survey packet. A sample item: “My team goes about its work with enthusiasm,” answered on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ ).

## IV. Results

### 1. Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Using AMOS 23.0 (Arbuckle, 1997) and the maximum likelihood method of estimation, we first conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to examine the discriminant validity of our multi-item measures and compared the fit of our theoretical model (i.e., leader behavioral integrity, coworker knowledge sharing, and creativity) to that of more parsimonious, nested models. <Table 1> shows CFA results.

The theorized three-factor model yielded a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(347) = 937.72$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.70$ , CFI = .91, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .09. This model outperformed more

<Table 1> Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Alternative Models

Model	$\chi^2$	$df$	$\chi^2/df$	$\Delta\chi^2(df)^a$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	AIC
1. Theorized, three-factor	937.72	347	2.70***		.91	.90	.09	1055.72
2. Two-factor <sup>b</sup>	2054.55	350	5.87***	1116.83(3)***	.73	.71	.16	2166.55
3. One-factor <sup>c</sup>	4200.78	352	11.93***	3263.06(5)***	.38	.34	.24	4308.78

Note. N = 187.  $df$  = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root–mean–square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike information criterion.

<sup>a</sup> All models were compared with Model 1. <sup>b</sup> Two–factor model in which employees perception of their leader behavioral integrity and coworker knowledge sharing are combined. <sup>c</sup> All items loading on a single factor.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

parsimonious models such as a two-factor model in which employee ratings of leader behavioral integrity and coworker knowledge sharing were combined ( $\Delta\chi^2[3] = 1116.83$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) and a one-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2[5] = 3263.06$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Thus, the theorized three-factor model was best, justifying our decision to retain it for subsequent analyses. In this model, standardized loadings of indicators/items on their specified constructs were all significant ( $p \leq .001$ ).

As <Table 2> shows, we conducted additional CFAs to investigate the discriminant validity of employee-rated measures (i.e., leader behavioral integrity and coworker knowledge sharing) and compared the fit indices. The two-factor model generally yielded good fit indices,  $\chi^2(89) = 380.24$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 4.27$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .13, which are better than those of the one-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2[2] = 1111.45$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ).

<Table 2> Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Alternative Models of Employee Ratings

Model	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2/df$	$\Delta\chi^2(df)^a$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	AIC
1. Theorized, two-factor	380.24	89	4.27***		.92	.91	.13	442.24
2. One-factor <sup>b</sup>	1491.69	91	16.39***	1111.45(2)***	.63	.58	.29	1549.69

Note. N = 187. *df* = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root–mean–square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike information criterion.

<sup>a</sup> The model was compared with Model 1. <sup>b</sup> All items loading on a single factor.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

<Table 3> Descriptive Statistics and Zero–Order Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. LMX quality	4.76	0.88				
2. Team positive affective tone	4.85	1.08	.60***			
3. Leader behavioral integrity	4.74	1.20	.15*	.20**		
4. Coworker knowledge sharing	4.41	1.09	.18*	.21**	.60***	
5. Employee creativity	4.37	0.97	.66***	.60***	.14*	.24***

Note. N = 187.

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

## 2. Hypothesis Testing

〈Table 3〉 shows descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of the study variables. As we expected, leader behavioral integrity was positively related to coworker knowledge sharing ( $r = .60, p \leq .001$ ) and employee creativity ( $r = .14, p \leq .05$ ), and coworker knowledge sharing was positively associated with employee creativity ( $r = .24, p \leq .001$ ).

Because our hypothesis included mediation, we followed Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes' (2007) regression-based approach to calculate the indirect effect of leader behavioral integrity on employee creativity via coworker knowledge sharing. We constructed bias-corrected confidence intervals using bootstrapping procedures. This bootstrapping procedure does not have assumptions about the shape of the sampling distribution of the test statistic. As a result, it is less influenced by sample size and thus may have greater statistical power than ordinary hierarchical regression procedures (Preacher et al., 2007). Specifically, we employed the SPSS macro (PROCESS, model 4) provided on the website *www.afhayes.com* to draw 10,000 random samples with replacement from the full sample to determine the significance of our hypothesized relationship.

〈Table 4〉 Standardized Coefficient Estimates Predicting Coworker Knowledge Sharing and Employee Creativity

Variable	Coworker knowledge sharing	Employee creativity
LMX quality	.05 (.09)	.47*** (.07)
Team positive affective tone	.06 (.08)	.30*** (.06)
Leader behavioral integrity	.58*** (.05)	-.07 (.05)
Coworker knowledge sharing		.14* (.06)
Overall F	36.52***	47.22***
R2	.37	.51

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

〈Table 5〉 Direct and Indirect Effects of Leader Behavioral Integrity on Employee Creativity

	Effect	SE	95% CI
Direct effect	-.15	.05	(-.162, .047)
Indirect effect via coworker knowledge sharing	.06	.04	(.002, .155)

〈Tables 4 and 5〉 show the results of PROCESS analysis. We found evidence to support the hypothesis that coworker knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between leader behavioral integrity and employee creativity. Leader behavioral integrity had a positive and statistically significant indirect effect on employee creativity via coworker knowledge sharing (indirect effect = .06, SE = .04, bootstrap 95% confidence interval [CI] = [.002, .155]). Interestingly, the CI of direct effect of leader behavioral integrity included zero (CI = [-.162, .047]), meaning that the direct effect was statistically meaningless and coworker knowledge sharing was the important mechanism behind the behavioral integrity effect. These results provide strong support for our hypothesis.

Our sample employees rated their leaders' behavioral integrity and coworkers' knowledge sharing simultaneously, so common-method bias may have influenced the leader behavioral integrity–coworker knowledge sharing relationship (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To explore this possibility, we asked the managers in the managerial survey to assess focal employees' level of knowledge sharing using the scale from Srivastava et al. (2006), and checked the relationship between employee-rated leader behavioral integrity and manager-rated employee knowledge sharing. The regression result suggested a positive and significant relationship ( $\beta = .14$ , SE = .06,  $p \leq .05$ ), as we expected.

## V. Discussion

In this study, we examine the influence of leader behavioral integrity on employee creativity and the mediating role of coworker knowledge sharing in the relationship.

We argue that leader behavioral integrity motivates coworkers to share knowledge, which in turn provides relevant cognitive resources and motivation for employees to engage in creative processes. Multisource survey data collected in South Korea support this argument and demonstrate that coworker knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between leader behavioral integrity and employee creativity.

### 1. Theoretical Implications

We make several contributions to research on behavioral integrity and employee creativity. First, we extend behavioral integrity research by introducing knowledge sharing and creativity as its direct and indirect workplace outcomes. Although prior research has established that behavioral integrity positively impacts traditional employee attitudes and behaviors, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and performance (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011; Simons, 2009; Simons et al., 2007, 2015), questions remain as to whether leader behavioral integrity also improves employee creativity (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011). Building on Palanski and Vogelgesang's (2011) scenario-based laboratory study showing a positive link between leader behavioral integrity and followers' intentions to think creatively, our study demonstrated the behavioral integrity – creativity relationship in a field setting measuring employees' actual creativity, rated by their leaders, as well as employee-rated leaders' behavioral integrity.

We also contribute to the creativity literature by identifying behavioral integrity as a critical leader characteristic influencing employee creativity through coworker knowledge sharing. Transformational leadership has been shown to increase employee creativity (e.g., Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Shin & Zhou, 2003), but the main argument is that transformational leadership intrinsically motivates followers to challenge the status quo regarding current work methods (Shin & Zhou, 2003). Transformational leadership theory, meanwhile, acknowledges the importance of behavioral integrity as a critical element for building employee trust and commitment, which are vital for successful creative performance (Simons, 1999). Hence, we extend

the research by highlighting the importance of leader behavioral integrity as an ascribed leadership characteristic for fostering employee creativity.

Furthermore, we suggest that a new approach for studying the leadership – creativity link is to explore nontraditional leader characteristics and behaviors. Although prior studies examined the role of leader characteristics or behaviors in fostering employee creativity (Tierney, 2008), less attention has been paid to leaders' ascribed traits or behavioral patterns. Our results imply that perhaps how others *view* the leader is more important than actual leader characteristics. Also, leaders' behavioral *patterns* may be as important as their types of behaviors. We encourage further research into these new directions to better understand the leadership – creativity relationship.

Finally, our results highlight that both leaders and coworkers significantly influence how extensively employees will show creative behaviors. That is, by examining leader behavioral integrity and coworker knowledge sharing concurrently, we provide a more comprehensive view of two social contexts (i.e., leaders and coworkers) affecting employee creativity. Although we know that social contexts are critical in promoting employee creativity (e.g., Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004), few studies have examined the roles of leaders and coworkers simultaneously. Accordingly, we are less certain about how different social contexts are interrelated, which is important in building consistent creativity-promoting social contexts. Exploring the mechanism of leadership effects on employee creativity may also answer calls for advancing leadership – creativity research (Tierney, 2008). In this study, we take an important step in examining how leaders' behavioral integrity influences coworker behaviors that then impact employee creativity. Future research will benefit by further exploring organization-level factors, such as the alignment between senior leader and front-line leader support or senior leadership changes, that influence consistent social contexts for creativity and the leadership – creativity relationship.

## 2. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

We acknowledge that a few limitations in our study design should be considered

when interpreting our findings. First, although we secured data from multiple sources, our design was cross-sectional; therefore, causality is inconclusive. In addition, our results may have limited generalizability given that our sample comprised employees and managers in South Korea. It would be intriguing to learn how different followers attribute leaders' word–deed misalignments in specific cultural contexts and when followers and leaders are from different cultures. Given that employees are increasingly working across national boundaries, the research would address growing needs to better understand how to lead culturally diverse groups.

However, our use of a South Korean sample could also be a contribution because most creativity research published in academic journals used western samples, while a few used Chinese samples. For instance, a recent meta-analytic study on the motivational mechanisms of employee creativity showed that only 4 of 191 samples were Korean (Liu, Jiang, Shalley, Keem, & Zhou, 2016). The meta-analysis also showed that cultural differences regarding individualism versus collectivism can affect the relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee creativity. Given that cross-cultural creativity investigations are still relatively scarce and that disparities in national cultures may change the effects of creativity predictors (Anderson et al., 2014), we believe this study could help creativity research accumulate empirical evidence from a non-western and non-Chinese context.

### 3. Practical Implications

Organizations are always seeking ways to foster employee creativity (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009; Oldham, 2003). So far we know that work environments must support risk taking and diverse idea generation (Shalley et al., 2004). Our results indicate two ways for leaders to build creativity-promoting social contexts. First, leaders' word-deed alignment (i.e., behavioral integrity) emerges as a critical factor along with leadership styles such as transformational leadership (e.g., Shin & Zhou, 2003). In other words, the pattern of leader behaviors, in addition to the type of leader behaviors, matters to energize employee creativity, and leaders must

send consistent social cues. They should align their behavior with their messages so that employees will trust them and, consequently, feel psychologically safe to engage in creative processes.

Second, our results show that leaders who want to stimulate employee creativity should encourage coworkers to share knowledge. Both leaders and coworkers affect employee behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). We show that social cues implying supportive climate for creativity include employees' perceptions about their leaders' behavioral integrity and the extent to which coworkers share their knowledge. That is, to provide a consistent work environment that supports employee creativity, leaders should align their words and deeds and encourage knowledge sharing.

#### 4. Conclusion

Our study demonstrates that employees' perception of the alignment between their leader's words and deeds (i.e., leader behavioral integrity) is an important source of employee creativity. In addition, we show that coworkers' knowledge sharing behaviors play a critical mediating role in the leader behavioral integrity – employee creativity link. These results together highlight the importance of social context in energizing employee creativity, with an emphasis on the role of leaders. We encourage future research to build on these results to enrich our understanding of the leadership – creativity relationship.

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## 리더의 언행일치, 동료의 지식공유, 조직구성원의 창의성에 대한 연구

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### 요 약

본 연구는 Simons(2002)의 리더 언행일치 이론(leader behavioral integrity theory)에 근거하여 리더가 조직구성원들에게 제공하는 일관된 사회적 단서들(social cues)이 그들의 창의성에 어떠한 영향을 미치는가를 실증하는 것을 그 목적으로 한다. 특히 본 연구에서는 기존 문헌에서의 결과들에 기초하여 리더의 언행일치가 조직구성원들의 동료들의 지식공유 활동을 촉진하고, 그 결과 조직구성원들의 창의성이 높아진다고 주장한다. 이 가설을 검증하기 위해 국내 25개 기업에 재직하고 있는 직원들과 그들의 상사에게 설문을 진행하였고, 최종적으로 187 직원-리더 쌍들(dyads)을 대상으로 한 실증연구 결과, 리더의 언행일치가 조직구성원들의 창의성을 높이는데 있어 동료들의 지식공유 활동이 중요한 매개역할을 하는 것으로 드러났다. 이러한 결과는 리더가 조직구성원들의 창의성에 필수적인 사회적 환경을 조성해야 함을 시사하고 있다.

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