RESEARCH STATEMENT

I. Theoretical Contribution

Within societies and organizations there are norms for appropriate behavior, which tend to focus on actions that would be described as unethical or prosocial. For example, in the United States nearly all people would agree that it is wrong to cheat, lie, steal, or harm another person, and right to donate money, volunteer, or help a friend or colleague. Further, research tells us that it is important for people to see themselves as good, ethical individuals and that most people have (overly) positive perceptions of themselves in these domains. Given that there is general agreement about what is right and wrong, and people tend to have positive conceptions of themselves as moral individuals, why does unethical behavior exist at the level that it does in organizations? In addition, given the need for prosocial behaviors in organizations such as mentoring, collaboration, and teamwork, why do so many employees feel under-valued and work in environments filled with interpersonal strife as opposed to cooperation? What explains these inconsistencies?

The layperson tends to attribute the actions of others to dispositional factors, believing that unethical behaviors in organizations are due to “bad apples” who are simply unethical people, and that some organizational members act in a prosocial manner because they are just “good eggs.” My research lens takes an alternative view of unethical and prosocial behavior in organizations. Although individual differences do matter, I believe we have underestimated the role of the social context as a potent influence on unethical and prosocial behaviors. Although social psychologists and sociologists have long accentuated the role of social context in shaping behavior, surprisingly little theory and research has attended to the impact of the organizational context on unethical and prosocial behavior in organizations.

The crux of my novel theoretical contribution lies in examining the processes through which the organizational context influences unethical and prosocial behavior in organizations. This is a new theoretical orientation within the domain of ethics, as ethics research in organizations has traditionally taken a philosophical (i.e., normative) lens. My orientation is consistent with the emerging field of **behavioral ethics** that takes an empirical approach to address questions regarding how and why organizational members do behave, as opposed to specifying how they **should** behave. Thus, I am interested in how organizational characteristics (e.g., top management, supervisors, coworkers, climate, structure) influence psychological processes (e.g., social learning, social information processing, social exchange, justice perceptions, moral disengagement, ethical fading) that ultimately result in unethical and/or prosocial behavior. Thus, the theoretical contribution of my work involves demonstrating that we have underestimated the role of the organizational context as a determinant of unethical and prosocial behavior in organizations, and explaining how and why the organizational context affects these behaviors. “Good people” do “bad things” in organizations, and I believe there is great value in understanding how the organizational context contributes to this disconnect.

II. Themes of My Research

Before I discuss my research interests, I want to provide some themes that are common across the different domains of my research. First, issues of **social justice** are paramount to my research orientation. I am driven to better understand how, when, and why individuals, teams, and organizations are concerned with the collective good. Second, much of my research examines the role of **leadership** in shaping a just, ethical, and inclusive work environment. Third, my research has a strong methodological focus—particularly with
regard to levels of analysis issues—and I employ several different research methods (e.g., lab and field) and analytical approaches (e.g., HLM, SEM, factor analysis, meta-analysis, etc.) to address such issues. Fourth, I have a strong scientist-practitioner orientation. I am a firm believer in Lewin’s adage, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” Fifth, my orientation is interdisciplinary by nature. In my research, I have drawn on other management areas (e.g., strategy, marketing, entrepreneurship, etc.) and other disciplines (e.g., psychology, philosophy, sociology, education). These five themes help illustrate my identity as a scholar and my orientation to developing, testing, and applying theory. Below I describe a subset of my research interests and projects in the three aforementioned domains.

III. Research Interests

**Behavioral ethics.** My first major area of interest is behavioral ethics. Behavioral ethics is an emerging, exciting field of research. I am thrilled to be on the “ground floor” of this emerging field and recently co-edited a special issue of Business Ethics Quarterly on behavioral ethics (De Cremer, Mayer, & Schminke, forthcoming at Business Ethics Quarterly). Part of the impetus for the special issue is that whereas much of the literature on ethics has taken a philosophical perspective to ask normative questions about justice (i.e., what is ethical?), behavioral ethics scholars use a social (or behavioral) science approach to empirically examine ethics in organizations. My research on behavioral ethics generally falls into three topics: (1) ethical leadership, (2) ethical climate, and (3) prosocial behavior.

First, I am very interested in the role leaders play in influencing the level of (un)ethical behavior in organizations. I have examined the effects of a leadership construct, referred to as ethical leadership, on employee ethics-related behaviors at the individual and group levels. For example, I worked on a paper that that links ethical leadership at top management and supervisory levels to group-level deviance and OCB (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Barbes, & Salvador, 2009 at Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes) and another study that examines the effects of supervisory ethical leadership, top management ethical leadership, and coworker ethical behavior on whistle-blowing (Mayer, Treviño, Shapiro, Schminke, Kosalka, & Harned, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Journal of Applied Psychology). In addition, I have conducted research linking the leader’s moral identity to ethical leadership behavior and ultimately how that leads to decreased conflict and unethical behavior (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, revise and resubmit at the Academy of Management Journal). I have co-authored a paper that examines LMX and self-efficacy as mediators of the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance (Walumbwa, Mayer, Wang, Wang, & Workman, under review at Organization Science). I am currently involved with additional ethical leadership papers that examine how top management visibility moderates the relationship between top management ethical leadership and coworker ethical behavior and deviance (Kuenzi, Mayer, Carson, & De Cremer, manuscript in preparation for the Academy of Management Journal), and also research examining the effects of the fit between employees’ ratings of ethical leadership and supervisors’ self-ratings on employee deviant behaviors (Mayer, Brown, Priesemuth, & Kuenzi, 2008, manuscript in preparation for submission to the Journal of Applied Psychology). Finally, I am writing up a three-study paper linking ethical leadership to unethical behavior though the mediating mechanism of moral disengagement (Mayer, Kosalka, Moore, & Folger, manuscript in preparation for the Academy of Management Journal).

I have also done some work on the effects of self-sacrificial behavior of leaders. In one paper I found support that leader self-sacrifice is positively related to OCB only when
employees are high in prevention focus (De Cremer, Mayer, Schouten, Bardes, & van Dijke, 2009 at the Journal of Applied Psychology). In addition, I have examined power and belongingness needs as antecedents of leader displays of self-sacrifice (Hoogervorst, De Cremer, van Dijke, & Mayer, revise and resubmit at the Journal of Applied Psychology). Finally, I have examined how abusive supervision can trickle down from top management and influence supervisors’ abusive behavior and ultimately employees’ displays of deviance (Hoobler, Wayne, Marinova, Mayer, & Bardes, revise and resubmit at Personnel Psychology).

Second, I am in the midst of doing a large scale development project on ethical climate. Although there is considerable interest in ethical climate (over 60 articles in the past two decades), there are serious limitations in terms of measurement and the methodological rigor of much of the work. I recently developed a new theoretically derived measure of ethical climate that includes six dimensions (i.e., decision making, orientation and training, policies and codes, promotions/selection/recruitment, rewards and punishment systems, and communication). Two large group-level field studies provide support for the proposed factor structure, as well as the convergent/divergent and predictive validity of the measure (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Academy of Management Journal). In addition, I co-authored a book chapter that reviews all of the empirical literature on ethical climate and points to areas for future research (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2009).

Third, I have done considerable research in the area of prosocial behavior. I recently published a paper that examines the interaction between prosocial and impression management motives on OCB (Grant & Mayer, 2009 at the Journal of Applied Psychology). I also have a paper that examines the interaction between intrinsic and prosocial motivation on proactive citizenship behaviors (Grant, Berry, Piccolo, Priesemuth, & Mayer, under review at Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes). I have co-authored a paper examining justice and facets of conscientiousness as antecedents to taking charge (a form of innovative citizenship) (Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008 at the Journal of Applied Psychology). Finally, I co-authored a three-study paper in which we develop a measure of pro-social rule breaking and examine its link to performance (Dahling, Chau, Mayer, & Gregory, manuscript under review at the Journal of Organizational Behavior) and also worked on another paper that examines the relationship between supervisor support as a mediator of the relationship between LMX and pro-social rule breaking (Mayer, Ford, Uhl-Bien, & Bardes, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Journal of Applied Psychology).

In sum, I am interested in how leadership shapes the ethical work environment, how an ethical climate develops and influences ethical behavior in organizations, and the role of prosocial behavior in organizations. One of the exciting aspects of behavioral ethics is because the field is just emerging there are a number of potential fruitful avenues for future research. One area that I plan to focus on is examining the antecedents and consequences of ethical climate. Specifically, I plan to examine organizational characteristics as well as leadership as antecedents and unethical and prosocial behavior as consequences. In addition, I am exploring the link between ethical leadership and turnover by drawing on work on moral psychological contact violations. I am also doing some research examining how moral disengagement influences a decision to not engage in prosocial behavior. Finally, I am doing research examining the persuasiveness of various types of ethical arguments.

**Organizational justice.** A second interest is organizational justice (i.e., the study of perceptions of fairness in the workplace). My research on organizational justice generally falls into four topics: (1) leadership and justice, (2) justice climate, (3) integrating justice...
and basic human needs and identity, (4) individual differences and justice, and (5) the effects of others’ justice on one’s own reactions.

First, I am interested in the integration of leadership and justice. I have worked on research that has examined how the leader-member relationships in a work group influence interactional justice perceptions above and beyond one’s own relationship with the leader (Mayer, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Journal of Applied Psychology). In addition, I published a paper examining justice as a moderator of leadership effects on social exchange-based outcomes (Piccolo, Bardes, Mayer, & Judge, 2008 at the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology). Further, I am working on a paper that demonstrates that when group leaders are not fair (i.e., they differentiate among their employees and create high quality relationships with only some group members) group processes and ultimately group performance is less favorable (Mayer, Erdogan, Uhl-Bien, & Piccolo, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Academy of Management Journal).

In a related vein, I have conducted research demonstrating that when leaders differentiate in the relationships they develop with their employees the result is less favorable job attitudes, OCB, deviance, and performance (Mayer, Keller, Leslie, & Hanges, manuscript to be submitted to the Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes). In a three-study paper including lab and field studies, my colleagues and I found that the effects of procedural justice on trust, job attitudes, and OCB is moderated by the level of power of the leader (van Dijke, De Cremer, & Mayer, conditional acceptance at the Journal of Applied Psychology). Finally, I have explored how follower belongingness needs and leader empathy influence the display of fair behavior by leaders (Cornelis, Van Hiel, De Cremer, & Mayer, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes).

Second, I am also interested in the antecedents and consequences of shared, group-level justice perceptions (or justice climate). In terms of antecedents, I found support for leader personality (e.g., agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism) as a precursor to procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice climates (Mayer, Nishii, Schneider, & Goldstein, 2007 at Personnel Psychology). In terms of consequences, I have worked on papers that have linked justice climate to the fair behavior of coworkers (Ambrose & Mayer, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Academy of Management Journal), and the affective tone and OCB of the work group (Raver, Ehrhart, & Mayer, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Journal of Applied Psychology). In addition, I have explored how the interactional justice supervisors receive trickles down to the interactional justice climate they create and ultimately to employee’s behavior (Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to the Journal of Applied Psychology).

Third, in seeking to understand why justice matters to people, I have examined basic human needs and identity as underlying mechanisms for why justice influences employees. I found support for need satisfaction as a mediator of justice effects on employee job attitudes (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008 at the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology), and also find that objectively fair procedures are not related to justice perceptions when one’s identity is violated by a decision outcome (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2009 at the Journal of Applied Psychology). In addition, my colleagues and I found that one’s basic need for uncertainty moderated the procedural justice x outcome favorability interaction across four studies (De Cremer, Brockner, Van Olffen, Fishman, & Mayer, in press at the Journal of Applied Psychology).

Fourth, I have also examined how individual differences serve as boundary conditions for the effects of justice. For example, I completed a two-study paper that found need for closure moderated the relationship between justice and an applicant’s attraction to an
organization (Mayer, Ziegert, & Ehrhart, manuscript under revision to be submitted to the Journal of Management). In addition, I found support for goal orientation as a moderator of the relationship between providing an applicant an explanation for a hiring decision and their justice perceptions and attraction to the organization (Mayer & Ployhart, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to Personnel Psychology). I also found that the effects of leader mistreatment (i.e., interpersonal justice, abusive supervision) on negative affect and deviance is moderated by individual differences in competence need uncertainty (Mayer, Thau, De Cremer, & Workman, revise and resubmit at the Journal of Applied Psychology).

Fifth, I have examined the effects of others' justice on one's own reaction. In one paper I examined leader prototypicality as a moderator of the own x others' procedural justice interaction on a variety of outcomes (van Dijke, De Cremer, & Mayer, revise and resubmit at the Journal of Applied Psychology). I also explored how employees react when supervisors are abusive to customers (Greenbaum, Bardes, Mayer, & Priesemuth, under review at the Academy of Management Journal). Finally, using an experimental lab study and a multi-source field study, I found that individual differences (e.g., collectivism, need for closure) moderate the relationship between the fairness of treatment of another person one is working with and one's justice perceptions about the authority figure and behavioral support of the supervisor (Shteynberg, Gelfand, Imai, Mayer, & Bell, manuscript in preparation to be submitted to Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes).

In sum, I am interested in antecedents and consequences of justice (e.g., how leaders influence justice perceptions and the way justice operates at the group level of analysis), the underlying mediating mechanisms for justice effects (e.g., basic human needs and identity), and boundary conditions (moderators) of justice effects (e.g., individual differences). There are a number of research ideas that I plan to pursue with my future work in this area. One area I plan to explore in the future is developing theory regarding how justice judgments are formed and why justice matters to people by taking a basic human needs-based approach. I also plan to continue to examine the integration of leadership and organizational justice, and to examine the role of leaders in the emergence of justice climates.

**Workplace diversity.** The third area I have concentrated on is workplace diversity. My interests in workplace diversity have focused on three major topics: (1) affirmative action, (2) the performance of diverse teams, and (3) discrimination/stereotyping.

First, I am extremely interested in diversity initiatives such as affirmative action programs in organizations. I recently co-authored an article that meta-analytically summarizes the past 30 years of research on the antecedents of attitudes about affirmative action (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006 in the Journal of Applied Psychology). I also am working on a meta-analysis that examines the unintended consequences of affirmative action programs, such as the stigma of incompetence (Mayer, Leslie, & Kravitz, in preparation to be submitted to the Academy of Management Journal). Finally, I am working on a paper that examines the role of modern racism and collective relative deprivation on reactions to affirmative action programs (Shteynberg, Leslie, Knight, & Mayer, under review at Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes).

Second, I am interested in the relationship between diversity and performance in work groups. Using a sample of 348 work units, I found that the diversity (e.g., department and organization tenure, age, gender) to performance (i.e., turnover) relationships were more favorable when unit employees rated high quality leader-member exchanges—suggesting that inclusive leaders help attenuate the negative effects of diversity on turnover (Nishii & Mayer, in press at the Journal of Applied Psychology). A follow-up study identified social
processes and information elaboration as mediating processes explaining the interactive effects of LMX and diversity on group performance (Nishii, Mayer, Porter, Vestal, & Raver, manuscript in preparation for submission to the Journal of Applied Psychology). Finally, I am working on a paper that examines openness to diversity norms as moderators of the relationship between group diversity and information elaboration and performance (Raver, Mayer, Vestal, & Porter, manuscript in preparation for submission to the Academy of Management Journal).

Third, I have done some research on the effects of stereotypes in the workplace. Specifically, I examined the underlying mechanisms behind the stereotype threat effect. I found support for a number of mechanisms that link stereotype threat to performance on cognitive ability tests (Mayer & Hanges, 2003 in Human Performance).

In sum, I am interested in issues of inclusion in organizations, such as the influence of diversity initiatives like affirmative action, how leadership creates an inclusive environment that allows diversity to thrive, and discriminatory and stereotyping process. I plan to continue to do research on workplace diversity—especially on the role of diversity in team settings to better understand the underlying processes (i.e., “black box”) of diversity research, as well as the boundary conditions of diversity effects on group and organizational performance. Further, I plan to continue to try to better understand how to effectively implement diversity initiatives in organizations to create inclusion as opposed to stigmatization.

I also have some published articles and have works in progress in other areas such as customer service (Mayer, Ehrhart, & Schneider, 2009 at the Academy of Management Journal; Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005 at the Academy of Management Journal; Salvaggio, Schneider, Nishii, Mayer, Ramesh, & Lyon, 2007 at the Journal of Applied Psychology), social networks (Klein, Saltz, Lim, & Mayer, 2004 at the Academy of Management Journal), shared leadership (Ziegert, Mayer, & Piccolo, under review at Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes), and web-based recruitment (Ehrhart, Mayer, & Ziegert, under review at the Journal of International Selection and Assessment).