

# Team Climate For Ethics



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22 FEB. 2010  
LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE  
"CSR RESEARCH DAY",  
"LOUVAIN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT"  
UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN

# Presentation

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- *Research Area 1* (dissertation):  
Behavioral ethics: ethics-related team processes.  
The dissertation will include three papers -including “Team Climate for Ethics” as the first (conceptual) paper.
- *Research Area 2*:  
Corporate governance of family firms and social performance.

# STRUCTURE of the PRESENTATION

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- 1. POSITIONING IN THE LITERATURE**
- 2. MODEL**
- 3. ANTECEDENTS OF TCE**
- 4. CONTENT**
- 5. POSSIBLE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

# POSITIONING

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- 1. MOTIVATION**
- 2. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION**
- 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

# Motivation

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- The proliferation of corporate scandals have raised interest for the study of antecedents and outcomes of ethical choices (“behavioral ethics”) (e.g., Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008).
- Yet, much remains to be understood (cf. Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010).
- Teams have become the building blocks of modern organizations (cf. Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Lawler, Mohrman, & Benson, 2001; Mohrman & Mohrman, 2008). In many organizations, the team level may matter more than the organizational level for decision making (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001).

# Expected contribution and research question

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- Much of ethics-related behavior happens in team: *sexual harassment* (Raver & Gelfand, 2005), *bullying* (Schafer et al., 2005), *general organizational deviance* (Lehman & Ramanujam, 2009).
- However, the current frameworks of ethical behavior (e.g. Victor & Cullen, 1988) do not allow explanations of team specific phenomena (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006).
- Hence, in this study, we **propose a framework that aims to explain predictors and outcomes of ethics-related decision making in work groups: the team climate for ethics (TCE).**

# Theoretical background

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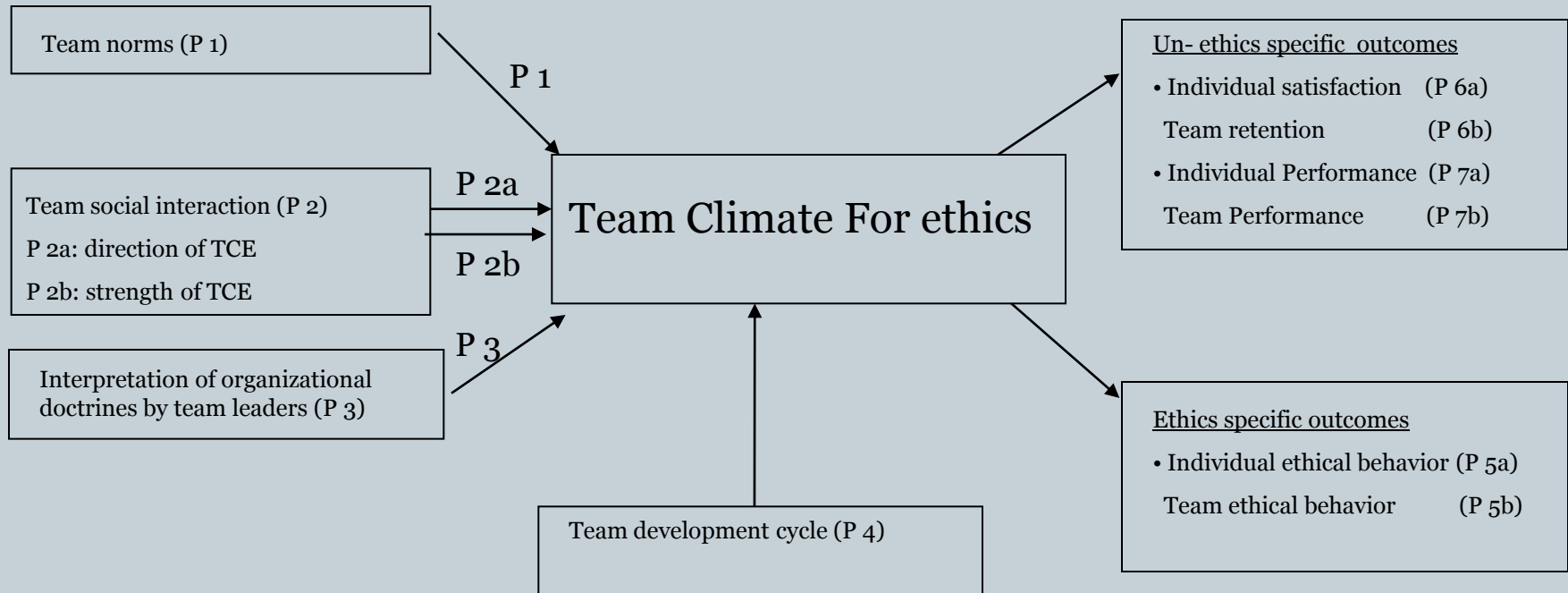
- Theoretical assumption: Person- Situation interactions' approach (Treviño, 1986).
- Situation: the construct of “climate“ relies on the assumption that individuals make sense of their environment (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2004).
- “Climate for ethics”: (ethics related) “shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices and procedures” (cf Reichers & Schneider, 1990: 22).

# MODEL

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# Team Climate for Ethics: Antecedents and outcomes

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# ANTECEDENTS OF TCE

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- 1. TEAM NORMS**
- 2. TEAM SOCIAL INTERACTION**
- 3. INTERPRETATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL DOCTRINES BY LEADERS**

# The Unique Antecedents of TCE (I): Team norms

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Team work is related to the development of specific norms about what is appropriate in the team context (Gladstein, 1984; Kozlowski et al., 2006; McGrath, 1984).

***Proposition 1: Team norms are associated with the development of specific team ethics related perceptions.***

# The Unique Antecedents of TCE (II): Team social interaction

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- Two reasons make the argument especially compelling for work in team contexts.
  1. Individuals tend to interact with people that are in the same setting: in working groups, task interdependence and common goals that are usually associated with team work (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1999) increase social interactions, and hence within-group.
  2. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1987): team membership is likely to matter more for organizational participants than higher order identities.

***Proposition 2a:* Team social interaction is associated with the “direction” of team climate for ethics (content of “climate for ethics”).**

***Proposition 2b:* Team social interaction is associated with the strength of team climate for ethics.**

# The Unique Antecedents of TCE (III): Interpretation of organizational doctrines by team leaders

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- Team supervisors are in charge of transforming corporation guidelines into situation-specific directives (Zohar, 2000; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008) because:
  1. These corporate policies cannot cover every situation, because organizational interactions result in innumerable contingencies.
  2. These procedures can present incompatibilities originating from a tension between organizational policies and the surrounding search of performance (Stein, 2000).
  3. Like any ambient stimulus (Weick, 1969/1979), these guidelines are subject to interpretation: individual participants make sense of their environment, including of formal policies.
  4. Group leaders, for geographic or cultural reasons, and especially in decentralized organizations, cannot always easily contact the top managers who have issued the procedures and ask them for clarification.

Consequently, team leaders contribute to enact the environment that surrounds the team members: they have to emphasize one specific goal among competing ones (Zohar, 2000).

***Proposition 3: Team leaders translate organizational doctrines into their own understanding of ethics, resulting in the development of a unique set of team ethics related perceptions.***

# CONTENT

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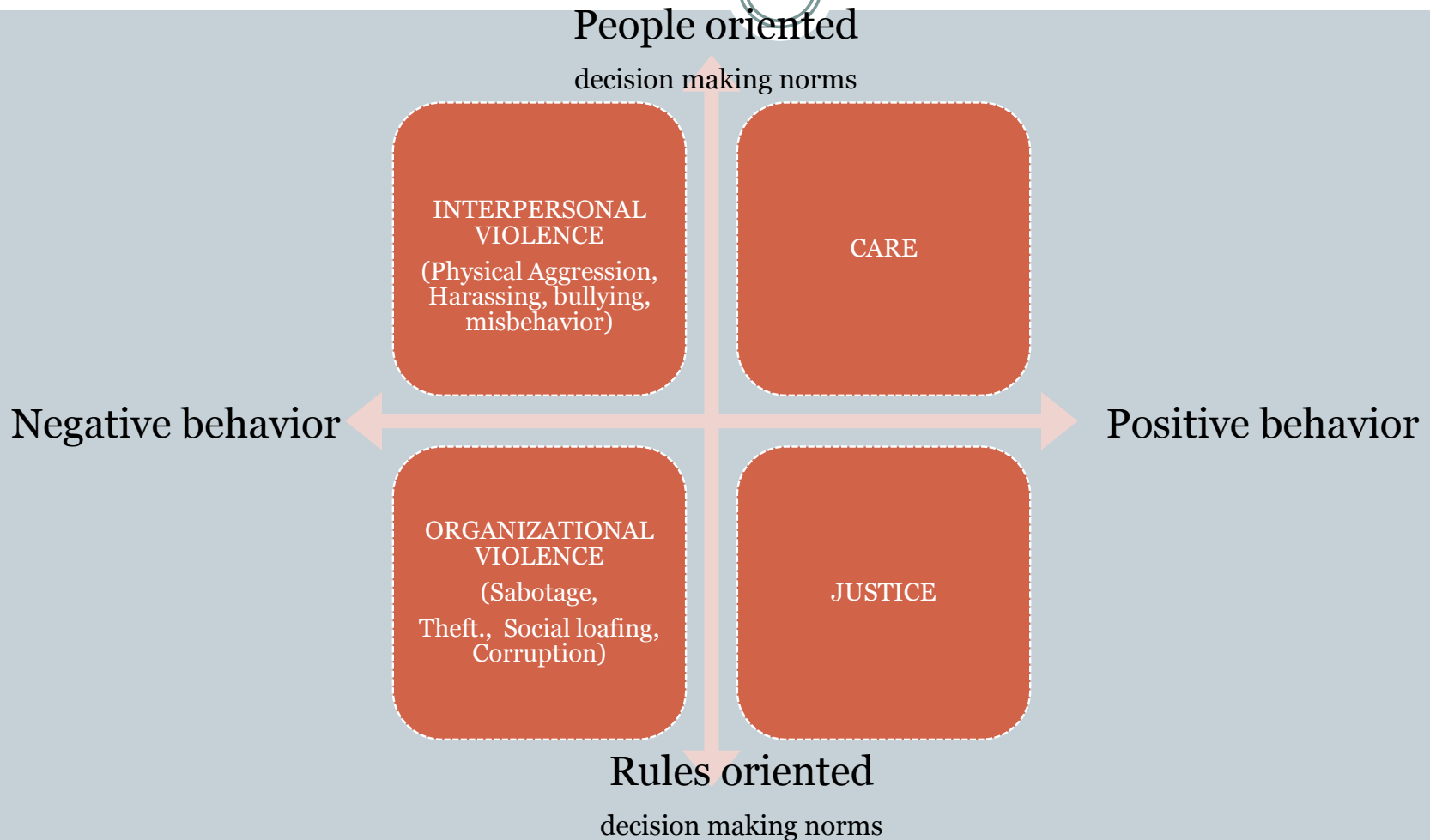
# Team Climate For Ethics: Assumptions

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- **Individual personality and content of TCE**
  - The “egoist” ethical-decision making criterion (cf Victor & Cullen, 1988) is superseded by team processes.
  - Contrastingly, the “virtue ethics” individual criteria is implicit in our model. The “golden mean rule” (Aristotle, 350 BC/1998) should help individuals detecting possible negative group behavior (e.g. bullying, sabotage, etc).
- **Individual personality and freedom**
  - We argue that the context (generally) influences individual behavior.
  - Yet, recognizing this potential influence does not exclude at all the individual agent ‘ freedom.

# Team Climate for Ethics: possible directions

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*The distinction between “Care” and Justice” sub dimensions is borrowed from Simola and colleagues (2010)*

# POSSIBLE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

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# THANK YOU!

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**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS  
ARE WELCOME**