# LOOK UP TO THE TEAM?

# TEAM CLIMATE FOR ETHICS:

# MEASURE, ANTECEDENTS, AND OUTCOMES.

PhD Research Project Proposal

Submitted for the CSR research day (Feb. 22nd, 2010, Louvain School of Management)

Sébastien Fosse

IE Business School, Madrid, Spain.

# LOOK UP TO THE TEAM?

# TEAM CLIMATE FOR ETHICS:

# MEASURE, ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES.

Abstract This outline of doctoral project proposes to describe the ethical facets of the team social context and to identify its main antecedents as well as its key ethical and performance outcomes, both at the individual and team levels. Ultimately, this project aims to propose a psychometric measure of this new construct, named "team climate for ethics". This construct is expected to be especially useful to explain and predict individual behaviors in team based organizations. The research design will use a concurrent embedded research design, with a quantitative survey (first study) and an experiment (second study) as leading methods and qualitative observations (third study) as a supporting method. Noteworthy, in the first study, the model will be tested in a repeated measures design with about 100 project development and action teams, measuring predictor variables at Time 1, and outcome variables both at Time 1 and some months later at Time 2 (i.e. after the team midpoint transition).

Key words: behavioral ethics, climate for ethics, teams, sense making process.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The goal of this dissertation is to describe, and investigate the main antecedents and outcomes of the Team Climate for Ethics (TCE) at both the individual and the collective levels. Specifically, we will propose and validate a psychometric scale to measure this new construct of team climate for ethics. Adapting the landmark definition of Victor and Cullen (1988: 110) from the organizational level to the team level, we define the Team Climate For Ethics (TCE) as the "decision making norms with direct links to supporting forms of ethical reasoning" at the *team* level. In short, the TCE aims to explain why members of a work group decide that a given action is morally wrong or good.

## EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE DISSERTATION

Many academic studies have investigated the antecedents of ethical unethical behavior in organizations (Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Yet, hardly a day goes by without a report of a new corporate scandal. This discrepancy between the efforts displayed by researchers to investigate organizational misconduct and this litany of business scandals is intriguing. One compelling explanation of this paradox may be the current lack of appropriate theoretical tools to take hold of these complex processes.

This doctoral research aims at contributing to fill this important gap in the behavioral ethics literature. First, while the most devastating phenomena in the ethics field do occur at the group level (e.g. bullying, harassing, accounting fraud, etc), there is a dearth of tools to analyze the processes that might lead to this collective negative actions. Yet, the fact that numerous ethical (or unethical) outcomes occur at the team level suggests that their antecedents should happen at the same level. Second, from an academic perspective, the widespread adoption of the organization as a general level of analysis has made very difficult the systematic investigation of the link between ethical behavior and performance. Indeed, this analysis would in fact require a finer grain approach and hence a lower level of analysis. Third, from a managerial perspective, the recent emergence of teams as a centerpiece of modern organizations urges us to rethink the way we model the influence of the environment on ethical or unethical behavior. Indeed, the development of each team is associated with idiosyncratic processes (including team norms, team mental models) that are likely to influence its members in a completely different way than the members of other teams in the same organization.

This need to analyze the antecedents of ethical and unethical behavior in organizations at a more appropriate level leads us to introduce the construct of *team climate for ethics.* By adapting the construct of organizational climate for ethics (Victor et al., 1988) to the group level, we answer the recent calls from both work climate and ethics fields to focus on the adequate level of analysis (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Treviño et al., 2006).

## POSITIONING IN THE LITERATURE:

### Teams are fast becoming the foundation of businesses

During the last decades, the rise of globalization and the diffusion of new technologies have been at the origin of new organizational forms (Daft & Lewin, 1993; Gully & Devine, 1995). The large-scale implementation of team-based practices (Gerard, 1995; Lawler, Mohrman, & Benson, 2001; Mohrman & Mohrman, 2008; Rentsch, 1990; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) can be described as one of the major organizational changes over the last decades. In some specific organizational settings (e.g. research and development cross-functional teams in the automotive sector, or project teams in the information technology and consulting industry), teamwork is even the basic unit through which work is carried out.

### Team as a new focus of attachment

Revisiting the literature on organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985), organizations theorists have analyzed the consequences of these recent organizational changes (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1987), they suggest that lower order identities (and especially the workgroup`s one) are becoming more and more salient to individuals for three main reasons (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). First, individuals interact mostly with members of their own group: then, as predicted by the social information processing model (Salancik et al., 1978; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Weick, 1969/1979), through interaction processes, people in the same setting tend to agree about the attributes of it. In sum, the statement that "the people make the place" (Schneider, 1987) applies not only to the organizations as a whole, but also to the group level. This argument is all the more important for work teams, where tasks interdependence and common goals contribute to increase within-agreement. Second, using Brewer´s optimal distinctiveness theory (1991), the team may be viewed as the place where individuals can both share an identity with other

members while reaching distinctiveness within the organization (Ashforth et al., 2001): in teams, individuals can be "the same and different at the same time" (Brewer, 1991:475). Third, workgroup´s identity is more *exclusive* (workgroup membership generally results from a selection process), more *concrete (*it is at the ultimate level of the "means-end chain"(March & Simon, 1958) and more *proximal* (its impact is more direct and immediate) than higher-order ones (Ashforth et al., 2001).

**The influence of teams on individuals depends on the organization type**

The subjective dimension of the lowest order identity is expected to increase when the organization is decentralized (Lawler, 1992). More specifically, in "*ideographic*" organizations - which integrate their subunits in a common identity (e.g. IBM), the level of identification to lower organizational levels should be lower than in "*holographic*" ones (e.g. General Electric) - which incorporate many differentiated identities (Albert et al., 1985; Ashforth et al., 2001). In such holographic organizations, lower levels such as *division*, *department* (Weber, 1995; Weber & Seger, 2002), or *team* will be more salient to individuals than the organization as a whole.

---

Insert Figure 1 about here

---

## TEAM CLIMATE FOR ETHICS: MULTI LEVEL JUSTIFICATION

### What is team climate for ethics?

*Theoretical background*

The construct of climate relies on both the interactionist theory and the functionalist theory (Schneider, 1975). First, following the Gestalt school of psychology, the interactionist theory (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939) posits that individuals try to make sense of their environment (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2004): this person-situation approach assumes that the behavior of the individual in groups

depends on his or her individual characteristics, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the setting in which he or she acts (Tagiuri, 1968). Second, the functionalist theory proposes that people seek information so that they can adapt to their environment (Ryan, 1970). From this perspective, it follows that climate is shaped by strategic imperatives: it should be a climate *for* something. The list of the investigated facets includes: the climate for *service* (Schneider & Bowen, 1985; Schneider, Bowen, Ehrhart, & Holcombe, 2000; Schneider, Parkington, & Buxton, 1980), *for innovation* (Anderson & West, 1998; Klein & Sorra, 1996; West & Anderson, 1996), *for safety* (Zohar, 2000; Zohar & Luria, 2005; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008), *for sexual harassment* (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Raver & Gelfand, 2005), *for justice* (Naumann & Bennett, 2000), *for citizenship behavior* (Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994), etc... In the present paper, we examine the application of the person-situation interactionist perspective to the general field of ethics (Treviño, 1986), building on the landmark papers about climate for *ethics* at the organizational level (Cullen & Victor, 1993; Victor et al., 1988; Victor, Cullen, & Frederick, 1987).

*Definition*

Climate for ethics refers to the "shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled" (Victor et al., 1987). This construct currently relies on "organizational bases" (Victor et al., 1988: 101). Yet, switching the level of analysis from the organizational level to the team level would make sense for several reasons.

*The justification of team as a level of analysis (I): the team leader transforms organizational guidelines into situation specific directives*

Noteworthy, teams supervisors are in charge of transforming corporation guidelines into situation-specific directives (Zohar, 2000). The implementation of these policies is subject to supervisor discretion for several reasons (Zohar et al., 2005). First, these guidelines cannot cover every

situation, because organizational interactions result in innumerable contingencies. Second, these procedures can present incompatibilities originating from an alleged tension between organizational policies and performance. Third, like any ambient stimulus (Weick, 1969/1979), these guidelines are subject to interpretation. Specifically, 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.

As a consequence, team leaders contribute to enact the environment that surrounds the team members: they will emphasis one specific goal among competing ones (Zohar, 2000). This judgment of supervisors plays a critical role when individual team participants face two organizational competing goals (e.g. safety versus cost reduction). Team climate reflects a consensual priority of one focal facet along a specific dimension. For instance, team climate for safety results from consensus among team members that safety is more important than cost reduction (Zohar, 2000). In turn, team climate for ethics will reflect a consensual priority of ethical facets (e.g. accounting transparency over winning a new client).

*The justification of team as a level of analysis (II): the team has its own development distinct from the one of the organization*

Recent studies have viewed team development as a way of enhancing team processes and hence performance. Team development refers to "the informal process by which group members attempt to create effective social structures and work processes on their own" (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006: 105). The two main developmental approaches of teams are the *stage model* (Tuckman, 1965) and the *shift approach*- or Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988). Both models imply that the development of a team differs from the one of the surrounding organization. Moreover, the punctuated equilibrium proposes that teams will not evolve according to a smooth and linear pattern (like organizations), but rather in a discontinuous way. More specifically, Gersick (1988) has observed that at around the

midpoint of team´s lifecycle, a dramatic shift generally occurs: teams redesign task, change the roles allocation, and tremendously increase their effort to meet project goals. Such an idiosyncratic environment decoupled from the one of the organization is a factor of development of unique team climates.

**TCE Level of origin: the individual**

One central tenet of the interactionist perspective is that the individual has a major role in deciding what he or she is going to do while been subject to the environment´s influence. This assumption is especially relevant for ethical issues: for instance, the mainstream framework to analyze ethical decision making (Treviño, 1986; Victor et al., 1988; 1987) draws on the construct of individual moral development. In sum, echoing the consensus among researchers on this specific point (Kozlowski et al., 2006), we propose that the team climate for ethics originates within the person. This proposition related to the level of origin of the construct converges with the early approach of organizational climate for ethics of Victor and Cullen (1988).

**TCE Level of analysis: the team**

Since the early work on climate of Lewin and his colleagues (1939), much progress has been done to understand the mutual influences between individuals and the different organizational levels. Some recent theory developments (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000b) have allowed the researchers to elaborate powerful statistical methods to investigate multilevel phenomena. Some of these relatively new methods allow calculating the extent of consensus among team members. This degree of consensus is assessed by different statistical methods, such as the within and between analysis (Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000). The application of these statistical techniques to our phenomenon of interest (team climate for ethics) will allow us to determine whether it makes sense or not to aggregate perceptions at the team level. Here, we depart from previous researches on climate for ethics: indeed,

we are not aware of any previous attempts to look at climate for ethics through multilevel lenses. Indeed, to our best knowledge, appropriate justification of the aggregation level is missing in past studies: both at the organizational level (Victor et al., 1988), and at the agency or departmental level (Wimbush, Shepard, & Markham, 1997). In sum, we will aggregate the individual data at the team level, providing that the related statistical tests are conclusive. This approach would complement the "traditional" perspective of climate for ethics (Victor et al., 1988), which has assumed (but has failed to prove due to this previous methodological gap) that the organizational level is the correct perspective to analyze climate for ethics.

### Manner of emergence: composition

Previous research on climate for ethics has often considered that climate results from the aggregation of individual perceptions (Jones & James, 1979). Such a phenomenon is generally measured by the average of perceptions, provided that the level of agreement reaches a satisfying threshold. In this approach, individual perceptions (i.e. psychological climate) and shared perceptions (i.e. team climate and organizational climate) refer to the same content and meaning (Chan, 1998; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000a). This *composition model* relies on the assumption that individual and group constructs are isomorphic.

## FACETS OF TEAM CLIMATE FOR ETHICS

### Preliminary comment: the issue of intentionality

While moral philosophers approach ethical issues with the central assumption that human behavior is guided by intentional acts, social scientists (and especially behavioral ethicists) focus more on cognitive biases- that may operate at a subconscious level (Treviño et al., 2006). This difference of perspectives represents an issue of the model of organizational climate for ethics (Victor et al., 1988) : it tries to merge an ethical criterion approach (that assumes intentionality) with the cognitive moral

development perspective (Kohlberg, 1969) – whose quite rigid stage progression does not give much space to intentionality)[1]. Contrastingly, our model of team climate for ethics does not preclude intentionality: it only assumes that context generally influences ethical decision making.

## Team development

*Team development as a key proxy of the context*

As previously mentioned the team represents a key focus of attachment for employees in organizations. Hence, since these developmental stages are considered as a key parameter of team members' socialization process (Kozlowski et al., 2006), the developmental stage of the team to which the employee belongs should be considered as a primary context for her or him.

*The main stages of the team development*

Following the suggestion of recent work on group development (Chang, Bordia, & Duck, 2003), we propose that the stage model (Tuckman, 1965), on the one hand, and the punctuated equilibrium model (Gersick, 1988), on the other, are complementary rather than competing. Hence, we combine these two approaches in retaining their main features. From Tuckman´s model (1965), we retain the extreme stages of "forming" and "performing". From Gersick´s approach (Gersick, 1988), we borrow the central stage of "shift".

## Ethical criterion

The two main ethical approaches are the *consequentialist* one (that states that whether an action is right depends on its consequences perspective) and its common form of *utilitarianism*, and the

[1] Moreover, as noted by Gilligan (1993), Kohlberg`s approach is not neutral, but rather inspired by the formalist (Kantian) ethical theory; this trait raises in question its compatibility with other ethical criteria (such as the consequentialist one), and hence casts another validity concern on Victor and Cullen´ model of theoretical ethical climates types.

*deontological or formalist* one (that posits that whether an action is right or not depends on its characteristics) (De George, 2006). Yet, as noted by some philosophers including Williams (1985), there is not clear cut-off between those two approaches. Hence, recent normative ethical approaches, building on Ancient Greek philosophy (Aristotle, 1998), have focused on moral life of individuals (Gilligan, 1993; MacIntyre, 1967/1998). This approach called *virtue approach* emphasizes the importance of the development of the moral character. In sum, *Utilitarianist, formalist, and virtue ethics* approaches are considered to be the three main normative ethical theories (De George, 2006; Hursthouse, 2009).

### A two-dimensional approach theoretical typology of ethical climates

Hence, we propose the following two-dimensional alternative model to Victor and Cullen ´one (1988) (figure 1). The first dimension represents the ethical decision making criterion (i.e. utilitarianist, formalist, and virtue ethics). The second dimension represents the team developmental stage (i.e. forming, shift, and performing).

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

## THE SPECIFIC METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES THAT THE PROJECT RESEARCH DESIGN AIMS TO ADDRESS

### The validity of the construct of climate for ethics

*Content validity: Showing evidence of Team Climate for Ethics*

Content validity refers to "the degree to which inferences can be legitimately made from the operationalization to the theoretical construct on which this operationalization is made" (Trochim, 2001). Many studies have described the climate for ethics at the *organizational* level, but only very

few have examined climate at the *group* level (Martin et al., 2006). Thus, our study hopes to fill a significant gap in the literature, by defining and describing the climate for ethics at the *group* level. For that purpose, following the classical methodological guidelines (Klein, Conn, Smith, & Sorra, 2001; Ostroff et al., 2004), we have to prove that it makes sense to aggregate the individual perceptions ("psychological climate") to the team level ("team climate"). In statistical terms, we must show that there is more variance of individual perceptions *between* the teams than *within* the teams.

*Criterion-related validity of "team climate for ethics"*

From a *criterion-related validity* perspective, we have to check how the operationalization of the construct of "team climate for ethics" performs in relation to some other measures based on our theory (Trochim, 2001). Three sub factors compose the criterion-related validity.

First, *predictive validity* means that the operationalization of the construct can predict a phenomenon that it should theoretically be able to predict (Trochim, 2001). Our model proposes a twofold effect of team climate for ethics on team and individual outcomes. On the one hand, ethical climate should trigger ethic-specific outcomes at both the individual and team levels (Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001; Wimbush et al., 1997). On the other hand, team climate for ethics is expected to have substantial effects on team effectiveness outcomes as a whole, affecting both individual (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Riketta) and collective outcomes (Hackman, 1987). Similarly to the organizational level´s outcomes, these effects are expected to pertain both to ethical (e.g. ethical behavior) and non ethical domains (e.g. performance, satisfaction level). In sum, by contributing to detect these expected effects of team climate for ethics, our research design should demonstrate the predictive validity of this construct.

Second, if the construct of team climate for ethics presents *concurrent validity*, we should be able to distinguish empirically between groups that are theoretically distinct (Trochim, 2001). For instance, we should be able to discriminate the teams whose shared ethical values (team climate for

ethics) rest on "consequentialist" ethical normative frameworks (e.g.: utilitarian) from those whose shared values are based on "non consequentialist" frameworks (e.g.: deontological) (Crane & Matten, 2006).

Third, in *convergent validity*, we examine the degree to which the operationalization of team climate for ethics is similar to other operationalizations to which it should be similar (Trochim, 2001). Two sources of benchmark can be used. On the one hand, we will look at the studies that examine team climate (Bosch, Dijkstra, Wensing, van der Weijden, & Grol, 2008; Peiro, Gonzalez-Roma, & Ramos, 1992; Sexton et al., 2006). On the other hand, we will compare team climate for ethics with some other constructs related to ethics (e.g. compliance with organizational values). When using quantitative methods, we will use the factor analysis technique (Kline, 1994) to analyze similarities between related constructs, as well as their dissimilarities.

In *discriminant validity*, we examine the degree to which the operationalization of team climate for ethics diverges from other operationalizations to which it should theoretically not be similar. In the specific case of our study, "culture" is probably the construct that presents the biggest overlap with our focal construct of "climate" (Denison, 1996; Ostroff et al., 2004; Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Rentsch, 1990). Thus, our research design should especially avoid any contamination of the results of our study about *climate* by some issues pertaining to *culture*. Submitting the tentative questionnaire to a selected panel of experts will allow answering the question.

**Internal validity**

Since our study tries to establish a causal relationship, *internal validity* is highly relevant for our research design (Trochim, 2001). Indeed, the truth of the causality link between team climate for ethics and performance is a key issue of our study. In particular, our research design should meet the three following basic criteria: *no plausible alternative explanations*, *temporal precedence*, and *co variation of the cause and the effect* (Trochim, 2001). Experimental setting represents a privileged way of ruling

out the possible influence of undesirable factors (Trochim, 2001) and thus to exclude *plausible alternative explanations*. The *temporal precedence* effect will be established through a longitudinal design of the study. The measurement method used in our study should allow us to detect *co variation of the cause and the effect*. Particularly, the time intervals between the measures should be large enough to allow co-variations of team climate for ethics: while this lag can be very short in an experimental design, it should probably represent interval of several months when it comes to analyzing the processes of natural setting teams. Indeed, since climate results from the interaction between team members and its related sense making processes (Schneider, 1983), the emergence of team climate for ethics is time dependent.

**External validity and sampling strategy**

*External validity* refers to the degree to which the conclusion of our study would hold for other persons in other places and at other times (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; Trochim, 2001). In our specific study, our sampling should allow us to generalize our findings to the population of work groups in general. For the first (quantitative survey) and the third study (qualitative study), the sample will include natural-occurring teams assembled specifically to do projects within a limited time period. They will come from at least four different organizations, including two universities (graduate students' groups). Following to our theoretical argument, the selected teams will exhibit strong autonomy and will come of decentralized organizations. More specifically, using the four categories taxonomy of work teams by Sundstrom and colleagues (1999), we will focus on "projects and development" teams (e.g. consulting teams), and "action and negotiation teams" (e.g. student teams, medical teams): the team climate for ethics is expected to be especially salient in groups with much autonomy. Contrastingly, teams with relatively limited autonomy, such as "advice and involvement" teams (e.g. quality circles, etc) and standard "production and service" teams (e.g. first line employees) will be used essentially as control groups.

**Combining different research methods to get the best possible design**

*A mixed methods design: main aspects*

For this doctoral research, we will use a mixed methods design. The advantage of this design is that it capitalizes on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Creswell, 2009). Different important aspects of any mixed methods design should be considered (Creswell, 2009; Hammersley, 1996): *weighting*, *respective purposes*, *temporal order* and degree of integration ("mixing"). These elements will be summarized through a *visual model*.

---

Insert Figure 2 about here

---

*Weighting (priority decision)*

The research design will emphasize quantitative methods for several reasons. First, this doctoral project primarily aims at validating of scale measuring climate for ethics at the team level: pursuing this goal implies to use classical psychometric methods and especially quantitative survey procedures. This approach will be usefully complemented by the experimental perspective- that has been used since the early beginning of the climate literature (Lewin et al., 1939). Second, this quantitative approach will suit the traditional audience of work climate studies: indeed, most researchers are used to this traditional survey-based approach. Hence, they are likely to better understand and hopefully appreciate studies using this method. Third, the need to use an inductive approach to explore the central phenomenon of interest of this dissertation (team climate for ethics) is not so pressing. Indeed, on the one hand, many studies have been conducted on work climates (for a review, see Kuenzi et al., 2009),

and, on the other, research on teams already incorporates a well recognized qualitative perspective (e.g. Gersick, 1988).

*Respective purposes of the chosen methods*

First, the *quantitative survey* will make two important contributions. On the one hand, it increases the external validity of the results. On the other hand, it helps to estimate the magnitude of the expected effects of team climate for ethics. Second, an *experimental study*, by focusing on the cause-effect relationship under controlled conditions, will strengthen the internal validity of our model. Third, as a complement, the *qualitative approach* will meet the "lived meanings" features of the phenomena of interest (Miles & Huberman, 1994), because the perspectives of people are central to the construct of team climate for ethics. Indeed, as the construct of climate draws on social constructivism and sense making processes (Weick, 2001), it has a highly subjective content. Moreover, its underlying rationale considers each surveyed participant as an individual and independent observer of the organization (Glick, 1985). In sum, while the quantitative survey and the experimental studies will give us insight about the outcomes of team climate for ethics, the following qualitative study will inform us about the process underlying the causality link.

---

Insert Table 2 about here

---

*Temporal order and visual model*

For logistical reasons, data for the three studies will be collected concurrently. Yet, as discussed, the three studies have different objectives and try to answer different research questions. Hence, they do not need to be connected during the analysis step: integration will occur only at the interpretation stage, then providing a an overall assessment of the research problem with help of these

three pictures (Creswell, 2009). The project will use quantitative methods (survey and experiment) as primary methods to lead the project, and qualitative method (grounded theory) as a supporting qualitative procedure: The qualitative approach will be embedded in the quantitative dominant design. In sum, using Creswell´s taxonomy, the design of the research will be a "***concurrent embedded design"*** (2009) (see figure 2).

**The quantitative field study**

*Description*

For both feasibility and methodological reasons, we suggest conducting a pilot quantitative survey in a national business unit with a sample of approximately 30 teams. This pilot study will help to calibrate the questionnaire, and to adjust the research design (especially the timing of the measures) before implementing it on a large scale. The reduced cultural variance inherent to this single national environment will facilitate this preliminary step.

Then, in a second step, we will extend our survey to a cross- national scale and increase the number of the participating teams to one hundred. This relatively high number of participating teams will present some advantages in terms of statistical power and choice of quantitative methods of analysis (including Structural Equation Modeling). The use of control variables allows limiting the influence of phenomena that are not of interest. For instance, as our final sample will be cross-cultural, we will control for the influence of culture. Each team will be coded on the basis of its affiliated geographical area, and then related to one of the major cultural areas (Hofstede, 2003; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

Since we are surveying teams, we need to obtain a satisfying participation rate of not only teams as a whole, but also of its members. For this reason, the support of the top management will be crucial. We propose that the top management nominates the team that will participate to this survey. This sampling process will probably generate a bias (for example, the top management might be

willing to choose the teams whose leaders have good reputations in terms of ethics). Yet, since this potential bias will be systematic, it will not hurt the external validity of our research design.

In this longitudinal research design, measurement will be central to establish the internal validity of this quantitative field study. On the one hand, the time intervals between measures should not be too long. Indeed, as project teams have generally a limited life (about one or two years), an excessive duration of the study would entail a high *mortality threat*: many teams would disappear before the end of the study for several reasons (including the termination of the group tasks, the attrition rate of individual participants). The average duration of consulting project teams is roughly one year. On the other hand, if the intervals are too short, we may fail to observe co-variance. Additionally, as described by the Punctuated Equilibrium Model (Gersick, 1988), teams are expected to experience a dramatic shift after the mid-point transition. Given these constraints, we propose to measure both antecedents and outcomes at two time points: the first one at the beginning, the second one after the team project midpoint. In practical terms, regarding consulting teams, measures will be separated by an interval of 7 months. This design should enable us to capture co-variation of the cause and the effect.

Ethical and performance outcomes will be measured by both subjective and objective indicators. First, subjective indicators will be chosen to avoid common source bias: individual performance will be both assessed by the team leader and peers, and team performance will be measured by the line manager and the client. Job satisfaction will be assessed through self-ratings. Unethical behavior will be assessed by the level of team ambient sexual harassment, measured by the 16 items questionnaire of Raver and Gelfand (2005). Second, a set of objective indicators will reflect performance (through the measure of project profitability) and ethical behavior (through the standardized amount of travelling expenses).

As computer access should be ubiquitous in the investigated organizations – information technology companies and business schools, we should not face any bias linked to the use of recent electronic survey techniques (Dillman, 2007). Thus, the more appropriate option is to administer questionnaires through a Web based survey. Practically, we will have to push e-mail reminders in order to "pull" the respondents to the appropriate Web page (Trochim, 2001).

*Benefits versus drawbacks*

This quantitative field survey will present considerable strengths in terms of *content* validity and *criterion-related* validity. First, as to *content validity*, the possibility of applying established aggregation rules (e.g.: within and between analysis: Dansereau et al., 2000) will represent a strength. Second, as to *criterion-related validity*, the possibility of estimating the magnitude of the variation of the cause and the effect will be helpful. Furthermore, statistic inference rules will allow us to estimate the *external validity*. Moreover, we will be able to estimate the *reliability* of the construct, by calculating the correlation values among the questions (and by using the "Cronbach alpha" index).

However, the main drawback of this method is that it will not allow us to fully understand the process that links the cause and the effect.

**The experimental approach**

*Description*

This experiment would draw on an analysis of covariance design (3*3 factors), crossing ethical criterion, and team development stage, as summarized in the figure nº 1. The manipulation will be done through some guidelines transmitted by the experimenter to the different teams (using scripts and vignettes, and checking that the guidelines have been correctly understood). Participants (MBA students) will have to play an online supply chain management simulator (the MIT Beer game), where

each team member will be in charge of one stage of the supply chain[2]. Team performance will be measured through two objective and unobtrusive measures (back orders and inventory). Individual performance will be assessed through these two objective measures as well. In addition, individual performance will be subjectively assessed by the team leader and an expert (acting as the line manager), who will rate the individual contributions of the team members to team performance (according to creativity, team spirit, etc).

*Benefits versus drawbacks*

This experimental method will strongly contribute to the internal validity of our design since by design it will allow us to rule out the influence of undesirable factors. However, its external validity will be weak.

**The qualitative approach: structural observations of team meetings**

*Description*

As a third study, we propose to conduct a set of participant observations of the ethical facets of different team social contexts. Using a procedure similar to the one of Gersick (1988), we will observe about 8 groups (including some composed of graduate students) by attending all their meetings. The researcher will observe team meetings: he will play a complete observer role (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative inductive method of "grounded theory" (Glaser, 1967) will be used to compare and contrast team ethical climates and continuously check emerging hypotheses against original data.

Contrasting with the previous quantitative study, the sampling here will essentially target polar cases (Eisenhardt, 1995). In practical terms, we should search for evidence of contrasting collective climates in settings where people work together on common tasks while being in relatively separated locations (Patterson, Payne, & West, 1996), and where there is a high degree of social interaction and

[2] The goal of the game is to meet customer demand for cases of beer, while minimizing back orders and inventory.

work interdependence (Klein et al., 2001). Moreover, we will choose extremes based on the ethical issues: on the one hand, those who feel strongly about some decision being right (or respectively wrong), and, on the other, those who are in a moral disengagement process (Bandura, 1986). The total number of groups observed will be subject to the theoretical saturation rule, as proposed by the grounded theory (Glaser, 1967).

*Benefits versus drawbacks*

This qualitative approach will increase the content validity of the construct of Team Climate of Ethics (TCE), by giving more insights about its content. In the same way, it will help to understand how the operationalization of TCE performs in relation to some other measures (*criterion-related validity*), especially from both perspectives of *concurrent validity* (through an etiology of TCEs) and *discriminant validity* (for instance by distinguishing "culture" and "climate"). Another major contribution of this second study will be to sustain causal inferences (Miles et al., 1994), and thus to increase the *internal validity* of our design. Indeed, as qualitative research is well appropriated for interpreting phenomena (Lee, 1999), it should help us to describe and understand the antecedents of team climate for ethics, its process of emergence, and how it causes the studied outcomes. Moreover, this qualitative approach will help to suggest some managerial actions (Miles et al., 1994), which may maintain and even increase the commitment of our sponsor company. The main drawback of this method will be a low degree of generalization (i.e. weak *external validity*).

In sum, our mixed method research design tries to capitalize on the different strengths of these three different research methods.

---

# REFERENCES


Albert, S., Ashforth, B. E., & Dutton, J. E. 2000. Organizational identity and identification: charting new waters and building new bridges. ***Academy of Management Review***, 25(1): 13-17.

Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. 1985. Organizational identity. ***Research in Organizational Behavior***, 7: 263.

Anderson, N. R., & West, M. A. 1998. Measuring climate for work group innovation: Development and validation of the team climate inventory. ***Journal of Organizational Behavior***, 19(3): 235-258.

Aristotle. 1998. ***The Nicomachean ethics*** (D. Ross, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.

Ashforth, B. E., & Johnson, S. A. 2001. Which hat to wear? The relative salience of multiple identities in organizational contexts. In M. A. Hogg, & D. J. Terry (Eds.), ***Social identity processes in organizational contexts***: xiv, 339 p. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Bandura, A. 1986. ***Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*** Englewood Cliffs:NJ Prentice Hall.

Bosch, M., Dijkstra, R., Wensing, M., van der Weijden, T., & Grol, R. 2008. Organizational culture, team climate and diabetes care in small office-based practices ***Bmc Health Services Research***, 8: 180-180.

Brewer, M. B. 1991. On being the same and different at the same time, ***Personality & Social Psychology Review***, Vol. 17: 475-482. New-York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Crane, A., & Matten, D. 2006. ***Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalization*** Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W. 2009. ***Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*** (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clarck, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. 2003. Advanced mixed methods research designs In A. Tashakkori, & C. Teddlie (Eds.), ***Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research***: 209-240. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Cullen, J. B., & Victor, B. 1993. The Ethical Climate Questionnaire: An assessment of its development and validity. ***Psychological Reports***, 73(2): 667.

Chan, D. 1998. Functional relations among constructs in the same content domain at different levels of analysis: A typology of composition models. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 83(2): 234-246.

Chang, A., Bordia, P., & Duck, J. 2003. Punctuated equilibrium and linear progression: Toward a new understanding of group development. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 46(1): 106-117.

Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. 1993. Where are the theories for the "new" organizational forms? An editorial essay. ***Organization Science***, 4(4): i-vi.

Dansereau, F., & Yammarino, F. J. 2000. Within and between analysis: The varient paradigm as an underlying approach to theory building and testing. In K. J. Klein, & S. W. J. Kozlowski (Eds.), ***Multilevel Theory, Research, and Methods in Organizations: Foundations, Extensions, and New Directions.***: 425-466. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

De George, R. T. 2006. Business Ethics 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.

Denison, D. R. 1996. What is the Difference between Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate? A Native's Point of View on a Decade of Paradigm War. ***Academy of Management Review***, 21(3): 619-654.

Dickson, M. W., Smith, D. B., Grojean, M. W., & Ehrhart, M. 2001. An organizational climate regarding ethics: the outcome of leader values and the practices that reflect them. ***Leadership Quarterly***, 12(2): 197.

Dillman, D. A. 2007. ***Mail and Internet surveys : the tailored design method*** (updated ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley ; Chichester : John Wiley distributor.

Eisenhardt, K. M. 1995. Building theories from case study research In G. P. Huber, & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), ***Longitudinal field research methods : studying processes of organizational change***: 65-90. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Drasgow, F., Hulin, C. L., Gelfand, M. J., & Magley, V. J. 1997. Antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment in organizations: a test of an integrated model. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 82(4): 578-589.

Gerard, R. J. 1995. Teaming up: making the transition to a self-directed, team-based organization. ***Academy of Management Executive***, 9(3): 91-93.

Gersick, C. J. G. 1988. Time and transition in work teams: Toward a new model of group development. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 31(1): 9-41.

Gilligan, C. 1993. ***In a different voice : psychological theory and women's development*** (6th ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Glaser, B. G. 1967. ***The discovery of grounded theory; strategies for qualitative research***. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Glick, W. H. 1985. Conceptualizing and measuring organizational and psychological climate: Pitfalls in multilevel research. ***Academy of Management Review***, 10(3): 601-616.

Gully, S. M., & Devine, D. J. 1995. A meta-analysis of cohesion and performance. ***Small Group Research***, 26(4): 497.

Hackman, J. R. 1987. The design of work teams. In J. W. Lorsch (Ed.), ***Handbook of organizational behavior***: 315-342. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Hammersley, M. 1996. The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research: Paradigm loyalty versus methodological eclecticism. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), ***Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences***: 159-174. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Hofstede, G. 2003. ***Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*** (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (Eds.). 2004. ***Culture, leadership, and organizations : the GLOBE study of 62 societies*** Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Hursthouse, R. 2009. Virtue ethics. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), ***The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 edition)***. Stanford: URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

Jones, A. P., & James, L. R. 1979. Psychological climate: Dimensions and relationships of individual and aggregated work environment perceptions. ***Organizational Behavior & Human Performance***, 23(2): 201-250.

Klein, K. J., Conn, A. B., Smith, D. B., & Sorra, J. S. 2001. Is everyone in agreement? An exploration of within-group agreement in employee perceptions of the work environment. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 86(1): 3-16.

Klein, K. J., & Sorra, J. S. 1996. The challenge of innovation implementation. ***Academy of Management Review***, 21(4): 1055-1080.

Kline, P. 1994. ***An easy guide to factor analysis***. London ; New York: Routledge.

Kohlberg, L. 1969. Stage and sequence: The cognitive development approach to socialization. In D. A. Goslin (Ed.), ***Handbook of socialization: Theory and tesearch*** 347-480 Chicago: Rand McNally.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Ilgen, D. R. 2006. Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams. ***Psychological Science in the Public Interest***, 7(3): 77-124.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Klein, K. J. 2000a. A multilevel approach to theory and research in organizations: Contextual, temporal, and emergent processes: foundations, extensions, and new directions. In S. W. J. Kozlowski, & K. J. Klein (Eds.), ***Multilevel theory, research, and methods in organizations: Foundations, extensions, and new directions***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Klein, K. J. 2000b. ***Multilevel theory, research, and methods in organizations: Foundations, extensions, and new directions***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuenzi, M., & Schminke, M. 2009. Assembling fragments into a lens: A review, critique, and proposed research agenda for the organizational work climate literature. ***Journal of Management***, 35(3): 634-717.

Lawler, E. E., Mohrman, S. A., & Benson, G. 2001. ***Organizing for high performance : employee involvement, TQM, reengineering, and knowledge management in the Fortune 1000 : the CEO report***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lawler, E. J. 1992. Affective attachments to nested groups: A choice-process theory. ***American Sociological Review***, 57(3): 327-336.

Lee, T. W. 1999. ***Using qualitative methods in organizational research***. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., & White, R. K. 1939. Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates. ***Journal of Social Psychology***, 10: 271-299.

MacIntyre, A. 1967/1998. ***A Short History of Ethics***. London and New-York: Routledge.

March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. 1958. ***Organizations*** New York: Wiley.

Martin, K., & Cullen, J. 2006. Continuities and extensions of ethical climate theory: A meta-analytic review. ***Journal of Business Ethics***, 69(2): 175-194.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. 1994. ***Qualitative data analysis : an expanded sourcebook*** (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Mohrman, S. A., & Mohrman, A. M. 2008. ***Designing and leading team-based organizations. A workbook for organizational self-design***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Naumann, S. E., & Bennett, N. 2000. A case for procedural justice climate: development and test of a multilevel model. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 43(5): 881-889.

Ostroff, C., Kinicki, A. J., & Tamkins, M. M. 2004. Organizational culture and climate. In W. C. Borman, D. R. Ilgen, & R. J. Klimoski (Eds.), ***Handbook of Psychology***, Vol. 12: 565-594. New-York: Wiley & Sons.

Parker, S. K., Williams, H. M., & Turner, N. 2006. Modeling the antecedents of proactive behavior at work. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 91(3): 636-652.

Patterson, M., Payne, R., & West, M. 1996. Collective climates: a test of their sociopsychological significance. ***The Academy of Management Journal***, 39(6): 1675-1691.

Peiro, J. M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Ramos, J. 1992. The influence of work-team climate on role stress, tension, satisfaction and leadership perceptions. ***European Review of Applied Psychology-Revue Europeenne De Psychologie Appliquee***, 42(1): 49-58.

Raver, J. L., & Gelfand, M. J. 2005. Beyond the individual victim: Linking sexual harassment, team processes, and team performance. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 48(3): 387-400.

Reichers, A. E., & Schneider, B. 1990. Climate and culture: An evolution of constructs. In B. Schneider (Ed.), ***Organizational Climate and Culture***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rentsch, J. R. 1990. Climate and culture: interaction and qualitative differences in organizational meanings. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 75(6): 668-681.

Riketta, M. 2008. The causal relation between job attitudes and performance: A meta-analysis of panel studies. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 93(2): 472-481.

Ryan, T. A. 1970. ***Intentional behavior: An approach to human motivation***. New York: Ronald Press.

Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. 1978. A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design. ***Administrative Science Quarterly***, 23(2): 224-253.

Schneider, B. 1975. Organizational climate: An essay. ***Personnel Psychology***, 28(4): 447-479.

Schneider, B. 1983. Work climates: An interactionist perspective. In F. Nickolaus, & G. E. Scott (Eds.), ***Environmental psychology : directions and perspectives***: 106-128. New York, NY: Praeger.

Schneider, B. 1987. The people make the place. ***Personnel Psychology***, 40(3): 437-453.

Schneider, B., & Bowen, D. E. 1985. Employee and customer perceptions of service in banks: Replication and extension. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 70(3): 423-433.

Schneider, B., Bowen, D. E., Ehrhart, M. G., & Holcombe, K. M. 2000. The climate for service: Evolution of a construct. In N. M. W. Ashkanasy, Celeste; Peterson, Mark F (Ed.), ***Handbook of organizational culture and climate***. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Schneider, B., Gunnarson, S. K., & Niles-Jolly, K. 1994. Creating the climate and culture of success. ***Organizational Dynamics***, 23(1): 17-29.

Schneider, B., Parkington, J. J., & Buxton, V. M. 1980. Employee and customer perceptions of service in banks. ***Administrative Science Quarterly***, 25(2): 252-267.

Schneider, B., & Reichers, A. E. 1983. On the etiology of climates. ***Personnel Psychology***, 36(1): 19-39.

Sexton, J. B., Holzmueller, C. G., Pronovost, P. J., Thomas, E. J., McFerran, S., Nunes, J., Thompson, D. A., Knight, A. P., Penning, D. H., & Fox, H. E. 2006. Variation in caregiver perceptions of teamwork climate in labor and delivery units. ***Journal of Perinatology***, 26(8): 463-470.

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. 2002. ***Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference***. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Sundstrom, E., De Meuse, K. P., & Futrell, D. 1999. Work teams: Applications and effectiveness. ***American Psychologist***, 45(2): 120-133.

Tagiuri, R. 1968. The concept of organizational climate. In R. Tagiuri, & G. H. Litwin (Eds.), ***Organizational climate: Explorations of a concept.*** Boston: Division of Research.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. 1979. An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), ***The social psychology of intergroup relations***: xii, 369 ill. 325 cm. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

Treviño, L. K. 1986. Ethical decision making in organizations: A person-situation interactionist model. ***Academy of Management Review***, 11(3): 601-617.

Treviño, L. K., Weaver, G. R., & Reynolds, S. J. 2006. Behavioral ethics in organizations: a review. ***Journal of Management***, 32(6): 951-990.

Trochim, W. M. K. 2001. ***Research methods knowledge base*** (2nd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing.

Tuckman, B. W. 1965. Developmental sequence in small groups. ***Psychological Bulletin***, 63(6): 384-399.

Turner, J. C. 1987. ***Rediscovering the social group : a self-categorization theory***. Oxford, UK ; New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell.

Victor, B., & Cullen, J. B. 1988. The organizational bases of ethical work climates. ***Administrative Science Quarterly***, 33(1): 101-125.

Victor, B., Cullen, J. B., & Frederick, W. C. 1987. A theory and measure of ethical climate in organizations, ***Empirical Studies of Business Ethics and Values***, Vol. 9: 51-71. Greenwich, Conn. and London: JAI Press.

Weber, J. 1995. Influences upon organizational ethical subclimates: a multi-departmental analysis of a single firm. ***Organization Science***, 6(5): 509-523.

Weber, J., & Seger, J. E. 2002. Influences upon organizational ethical subclimates: A replication study of a single firm at two points in time. ***Journal of Business Ethics***, 41(1/2): 69-84.

Weick, K. E. 1969/1979. ***The social psychology of organizing*** (2nd ed.). New-York: Random House.

Weick, K. E. 2001. ***Making Sense of the Organization***. Maiden, MA: Blackwell.

West, M. A., & Anderson, N. R. 1996. Innovation in top management teams. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 81(6): 680.

Williams, B. 1985. ***Ethics and the limits of philosophy***. Cambridge:MA: Harvard University Press.

Wimbush, J. C., Shepard, J. M., & Markham, S. E. 1997. An empirical examination of the relationship between ethical climate and ethical behavior from multiple levels of analysis. ***Journal of Business Ethics***, 16(16): 1705-1716.

Zohar, D. 2000. A group-level model of safety climate: Testing the effect of group climate on microaccidents in manufacturing jobs. ***Journal of Applied Psychology*** 85(4): 587-596.

Zohar, D., & Luria, G. 2005. A multilevel model of safety climate: Cross-level relationships between organization and group-level climates. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 90(4): 616-628.

Zohar, D., & Tenne-Gazit, O. 2008. Transformational leadership and group interaction as climate antecedents: A social network analysis. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 93(4): 744-757.

Table 1: Theoretical types of team climates for ethics

| | | Team development stage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Forming** | **Shift** | **Performing** |
| **Ethical Criterion** | **Utilitarianism** | | | |
| | **Formalism** | | | |
| | **Virtue Ethics** | | | |

Table 2: Strengths and weaknesses of the three methods included in the research design

| Type of Validity | Questionnaire Based Survey | Experimental Design | Qualitative observations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Content Validity** | ** | * | *** |
| **Criterion Related Validity** | | | |
| Predictive | *** | *** | * |
| Concurrent | ** | * | *** |
| Convergent | ** | * | ** |
| Discriminant | ** | * | ** |
| **Internal Validity** | * | *** | ** |
| **External Validity** | *** | * | * |

Figure 1: Antecedents and outcomes of Team Climate For Ethics

: *Predictor or outcome similar in nature to the ones of Climate for Ethics at org. level*

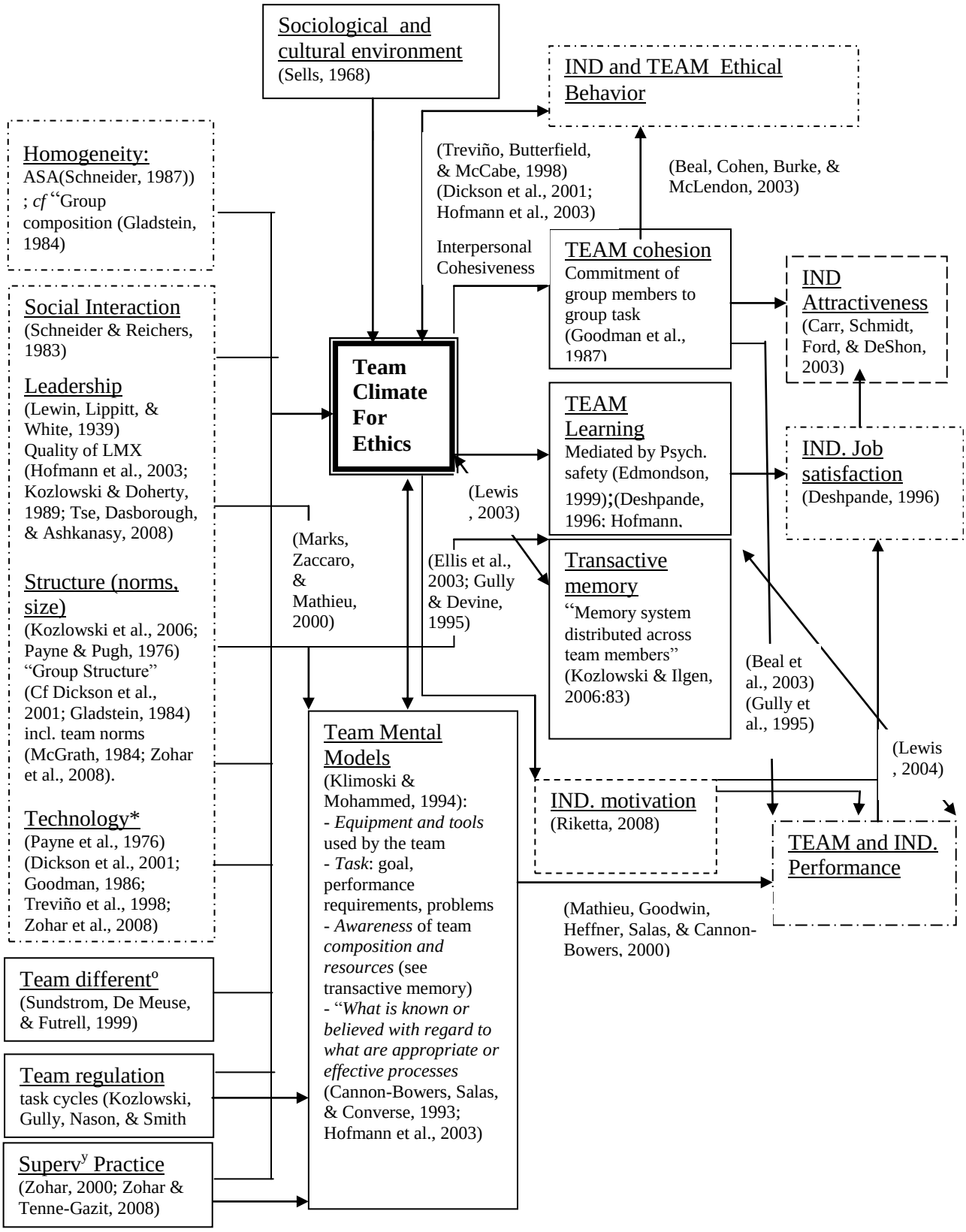

Figure 2: Visual model of the proposed methodology: concurrent embedded design.

*The notation follows usual guidelines of Creswell et al (2003) "qual" stands for qualitative methods; "QUAN": for quantitative methods. Capitalization here indicates a priority of the quantitative methods on qualitative ones).*