

SCANDAL VS. SUGGESTION: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP ETHICS ARTICLES IN SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS VERSUS POPULAR NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the language used in articles about leadership ethics. Using content analysis software 432 scholarly articles with ethics in the title and leader or leadership in the abstract were compared to 166 popular newspaper articles, 63 popular magazine articles and 203 peer-reviewed articles with ethics in the title and leader or leadership in the first paragraph. After identifying recurring themes in the 432 articles, a 2 Way Multiple Analysis of Co-variance was run for the independent variables of publication type and year of publication and the dependent variables of the themes analyzed. The newspaper and magazine leadership and ethic articles focused on politics, politicians, and scandals. While the peer-reviewed articles focused on organizations, employees, how to solve problems and offered suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

Most individuals hold opinions on contemporary ethical questions. Whether the ethical question is broadly sweeping such as when life begins, or local such as whether certain sponsors should advertise in a school newspaper, people form ethical opinions. There are many sources of information concerning ethics. These, of course, can range from peer-reviewed literature, newspapers and magazines, to blogs and internet sites.

When conducting research about leadership and ethics it is interesting to find such a variety of ethics and leadership related articles whose authors cater to a certain type of audience. Even though leadership and ethics should be something so simple, authors for peer-reviewed journals, magazines and newspaper, are all trying to make sure that the reader continues reading their publications.

Academics and researchers regularly turn to peer-reviewed articles to form and convey ethical ideas as part of the classes they teach or the protocols they develop. On the contrary, there are those individuals who may research elsewhere such as popular magazine articles or popular newspaper articles about leadership and ethics. All individuals will have a different purpose for researching various journals, magazines or newspapers and will make their own conclusions about the information researched.

Although it is certainly feasible that academics and researchers do exhaustive searches across the spectrum of peer-reviewed literature when seeking information about leadership ethics, it is also likely that they regularly read particular journals relevant to the academic disciplines in which they teach or perform research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to determine differences in the use of leadership and ethics related language between scholarly peer-reviewed, popular magazine and popular newspaper articles.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

A thorough review of the scholarly literature found no previous studies that content analyzed differences in about how leadership ethics is discussed in different types of peer-reviewed journals. Neither were content analyses of leadership ethics articles in general found. Several articles, however, provide a foundation for the overall findings of the empirical literature that studies leadership and ethics.

META-ANALYTIC STUDIES - LEADER BEHAVIOR

Davis and Rothstein (2006) conducted a meta-analysis which reviewed 12 studies in which followers rated the integrity of their leader/manager and, in turn, completed job satisfaction instruments. Each of the individual studies reported positive relationships between perceived leader integrity and follower outcomes. The mean corrected correlation ($r_c = .48$) indicated that increased manager/leader behavioral integrity was correlated with followers who reported higher job satisfaction, higher satisfaction with the organization's leadership, and higher commitment to the organization.

META-ANALYTIC STUDIES - ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Martin (2006) conducted a meta-analysis which included 42 studies that measured leader ethics and follower job satisfaction, follower psychological well-being and dysfunctional behavior. Among the findings were that the more followers believe the organizational climate emphasizes self-interest and company profit the less job satisfaction and more dysfunction the followers reported. Conversely, the more followers believe the climate fosters ethical decisions that are based on an overarching concern for the well-being of others, the higher the followers rate their job satisfaction and psychological well-being. Michael and Buttetfield's (2005) review of 127 articles related to ethical decision making found that, generally, establishing an ethical climate positively influenced perceptions of ethical decision-making.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The following databases were included in the search for articles: Academic Search Complete, Masterfile Premier, Medline, Military & Government Collection, Business Source Complete, Computer Source, Eric, Health Source - Consumer Edition, Nursing/Academic Edition, Modern Healthcare, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (Ista), Science & Technology Collection, Medclatina, Mla International Bibliography, Psychology And Behavioral Sciences Collection, Internet And Personal Computing Abstracts, Religion And Philosophy Collection, Professional Development Collection, Research Starters - Education, Research Starters - Business, Socindex With Full Text, Teacher Reference Center, Cinahl Plus With Full Text, Human Resources, The Leadership Quarterly, Industry Week, National Journal, Lexis-Nexis, Times, U.S. News and World Report, Weekly Standard, New Republic, and Newsweek.

Within the databases the term ethic*, and leadership* were required within the abstract for the peer-reviewed articles. For the non peer-reviewed articles, the term ethic*, leadership* and leader* were required in the first paragraph. The period in which the articles reviewed were published was January 2000 to January 2011. Once the initial population of articles was obtained those that were reviews of books or short, one to two page opinion pieces were excluded. This resulted in 432 articles for review.

MANUSCRIPT FOCUS

The distribution of article foci is shown in table 1.

Table 1
Distribution by Focus of Manuscript

Manuscript Focus	Frequency
Peer Reviewed	203
Magazine	63
Newspaper	166
Total	432

CONTENT ANALYSIS THEMES

Two types of analyses were conducted. For the first analysis, the researchers coded words and phrases (meaning units) from all 432 articles into seven themes: transformational, leadership, production, consideration, ethics, management, and governmental. To ensure the validity of these words and phrases two methods of triangulation were used. First, the computer-assisted content analysis software contained a feature which displayed the sentences in which each word/phrase was used. The researchers reviewed the use of the words and phrases electronically to verify that overall the use of the meaning units was congruent with the theme into which they were placed. Second, that list of words and phrases was then vetted with 20 leadership studies doctoral students. The students were instructed to delete any word or phrase that they did not believe connoted the theme to which it was assigned. Words and phrases for which five or more students disagreed with their categorization were removed from the theme.

There were 757 words and phrases that were classified as related to transformational leadership. There were 788 words and phrases that were classified as related to the production theme, 609 words and phrases that were classified as related to the consideration theme, and 1457 words and phrases that were classified as related to ethics and morality. There were 784 words and phrases

that were classified as related to the leadership theme, 794 words and phrases that were classified as related to the manager theme, and 284 words and phrases that were classified as related to governmental theme. Once the themes were created the percentage of times the meaning units for each theme were found in each article were calculated. Percentages were used because the number of words in each article varied.

DENDROGRAMS

The second analysis run used dendrograms. The average-linkage hierarchical clustering method was used to create clusters from a similarity matrix. The results are presented in the form of dendrograms. These dendrograms illustrate which words and phrases were often found in the same sentences.

RESULTS

MULTIPLE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

A Multiple Analysis of Variance was run to analyze whether there were differences with the seven themes (leadership, transformational, production, management, consideration, ethics, and governmental) as the dependent variables and which of the manuscript foci the article fell into: peer reviewed, popular magazine and popular newspaper. The Wilk’s Lamda test was significant, indicating that differences did exist. The results of subsequent univariate tests for each theme found significance at $p < .05$ for each theme.

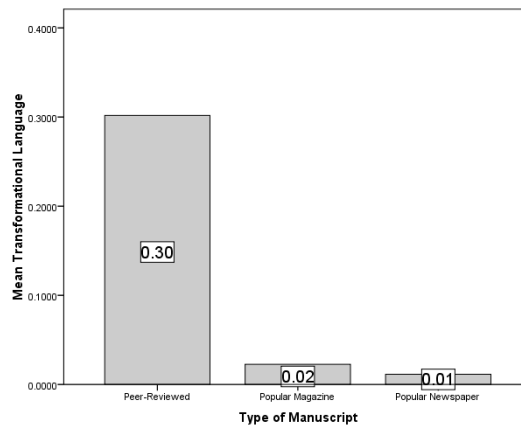
Table 2

Results of a Multiple Analysis of Covariance

Variable	Wilks' Lambda	F	Sig.
Manuscript Focus	.80	3.87	.00

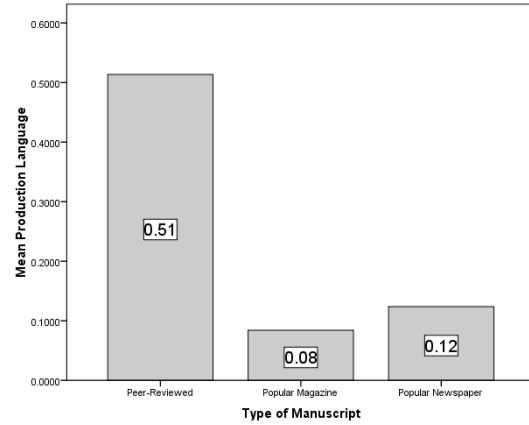
TRANSFORMATIONAL LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that transformational language was used almost triple the amount in peer-reviewed articles than in popular magazine or popular newspaper articles. At first glance, three percent of an article containing transformational language seems small. One must remember, however, how much of any sentence consist of pronouns, prepositions and other parts of speech.



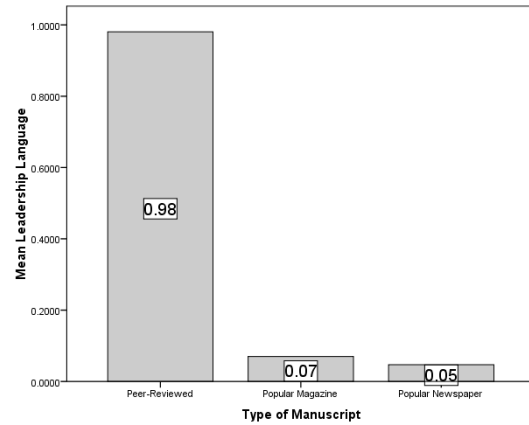
PRODUCTION LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of production oriented language used in peer-reviewed leadership ethics articles than in popular magazine and popular newspaper leadership ethics articles.



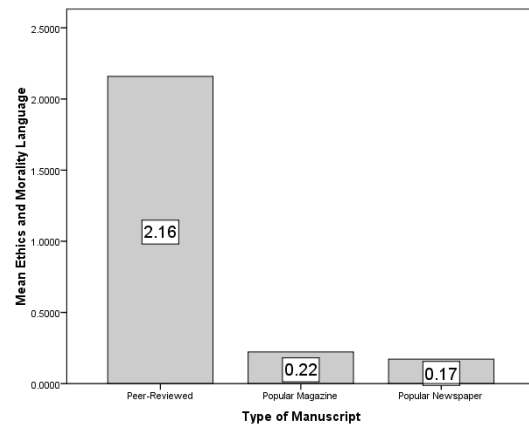
CONSIDERATION LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of consideration oriented language used in peer-reviewed leadership ethics articles than in popular magazine or popular newspaper leadership ethics articles.



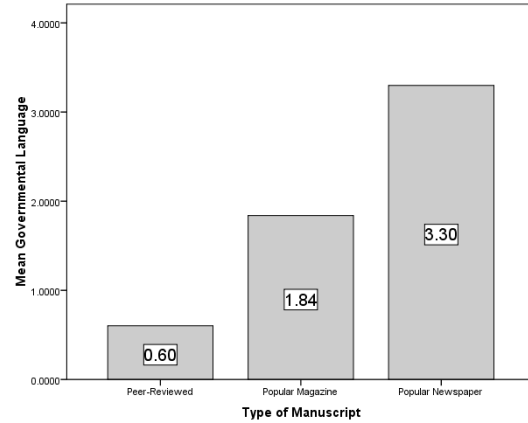
ETHICS AND MORALITY LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of ethics and morality oriented language used in peer-reviewed leadership ethics articles than in popular magazine or popular newspaper leadership ethics articles.



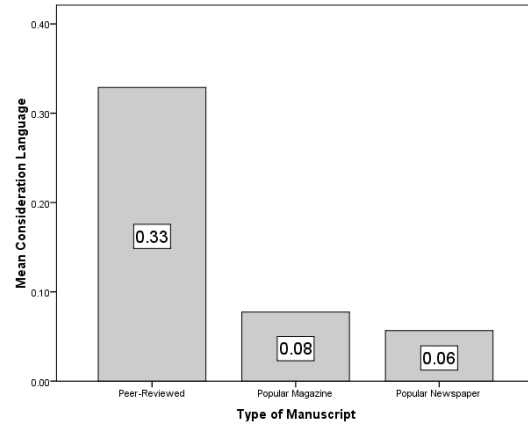
LEADERSHIP LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of leadership oriented language used in peer-reviewed leadership ethics articles than in popular magazine or popular newspaper leadership ethics articles.



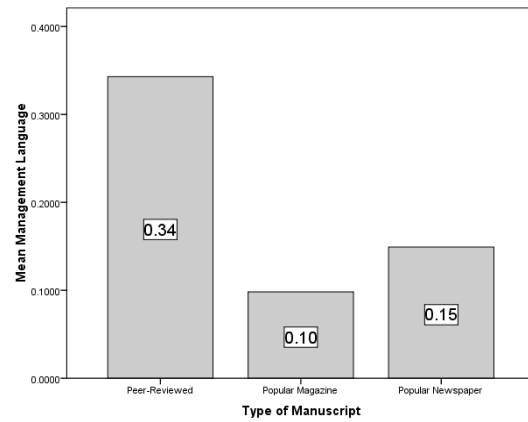
MANAGEMENT LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of management oriented language used in peer-reviewed leadership articles than in popular magazine or popular newspaper leadership ethics articles.



GOVERNMENTAL LANGUAGE

The results of a Scheffe post-hoc analysis found that there was a higher percentage of governmental oriented language used in popular newspaper than in peer-reviewed leadership ethics articles and popular magazine articles.



PEER REVIEWED DENDROGRAM

Table 3 provides a count of the most frequently used words and phrases in leadership ethics articles in peer reviewed journals. As can be seen these articles used a large number of words related to ethics, moral, and behavior. Figure 1 is a dendrogram showing which words were most frequently clustered near each other. Ideas such as act and ethically, positive and relationship and organizational and commitment tended to be clustered together in sentences in peer reviewed articles. This provides a sense of recurring themes in these types of articles on leadership ethics.

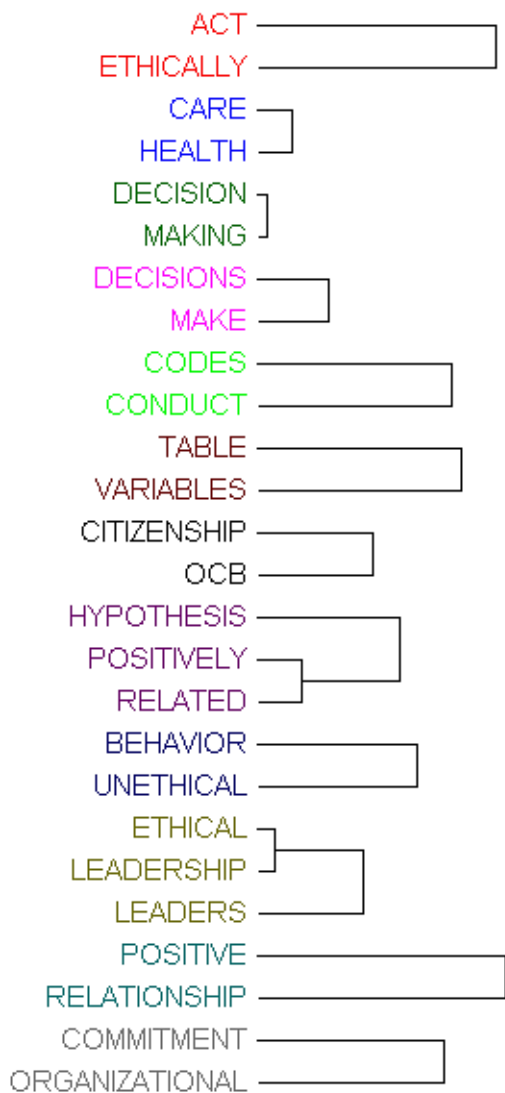


Table 3

Most Frequently Used Words and Phrases in Peer Reviewed Articles about Leadership Ethics

Word/Phrase	FREQUENCY
ETHICAL	8979
LEADERSHIP	6259
ETHICS	3670
LEADERS	2950
BUSINESS	2404
MORAL	1770
BEHAVIOR	1737
RESEARCH	1736
LEADER	1598
VALUES	1585
ORGANIZATIONAL	1478
EMPLOYEES	1423
ORGANIZATION	1363
SOCIAL	1240
WORK	1216
ORGANIZATIONS	1063
PEOPLE	983
CLIMATE	945
MANAGEMENT	938
MODEL	881
RELATIONSHIP	843
PERSONAL	829
INDIVIDUAL	818
DECISION	817

Figure 1. Dendrogram of words found in the same sentences in Peer Reviewed Articles about leadership ethics

MAGAZINE DENDROGRAM

Table 4 provides a count of the most frequently used words and phrases in magazine articles about leadership and ethics. As can be seen, these articles used a large number of words related to leaders, people, ethical and business. Figure 2 is a dendrogram showing which words were most frequently clustered near each other. Ideas such as executives, ethical, corporate tended to be clustered together in sentences in magazine articles. This provides a sense of recurring themes in these types of articles on leadership ethics.

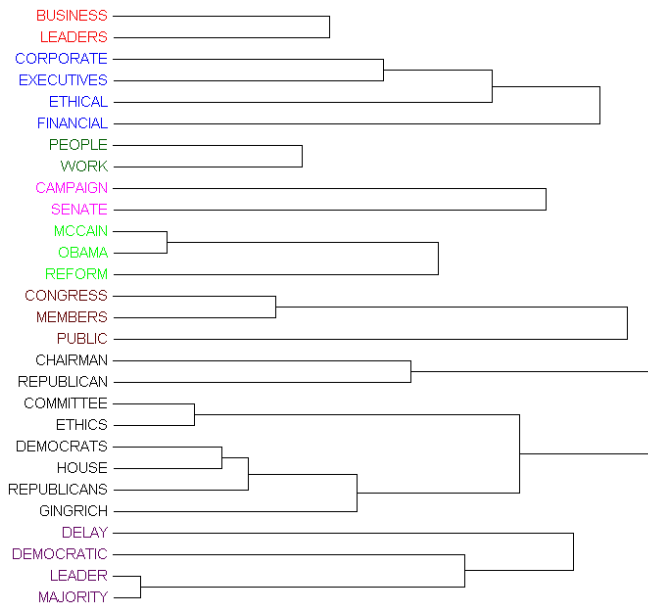


Figure 2. Dendrogram of words found in the same sentences in magazine articles about leadership ethics.

Table 4
Most Frequently Used Words and Phrases
in Leadership Ethic articles in popular
magazine about Leadership Ethics

Word/Phrase	FREQUENCY
ETHICS	302
HOUSE	227
LEADERS	158
PEOPLE	149
DEMOCRATS	140
TIME	138
BUSINESS	136
REPUBLICANS	121
OBAMA	109
GINGRICH	102
LEADERSHIP	98
MEMBERS	97
YEARS	96
PUBLIC	94
ETHICAL	90
COMMITTEE	89
REPUBLICAN	84
WORK	83
CORPORATE	79
DEMOCRATIC	79
MAKE	76
CONGRESS	75
YEAR	73

NEWSPAPER DENDROGRAM

Table 5 provides a count of the most frequently used words and phrases in leadership ethics articles with a leadership focus. These articles used a large number of words related to ethics, committee, republican, democrat, and leader. Figure 3 is a dendrogram showing which words were most frequently clustered near each other. Ideas such as house, rules, democrats, republicans, campaign tended to be clustered together in sentences in newspaper articles. This provides a sense of recurring themes in these types of articles on leadership ethics.

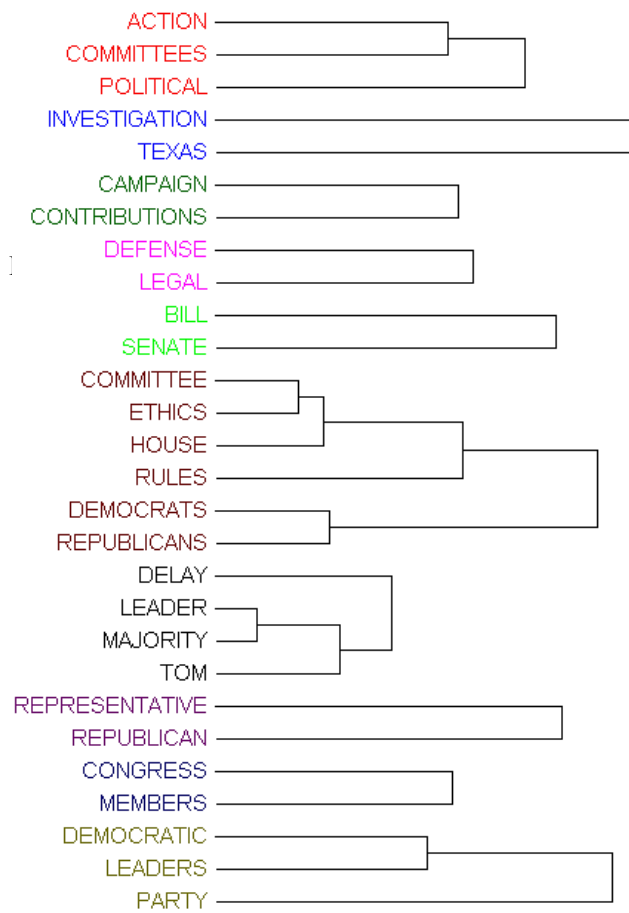


Table 5
Most Frequently Used Words and Phrases in Newspaper Articles about Leadership Ethics

Word/Phrase	FREQUENCY
HOUSE	986
ETHICS	926
COMMITTEE	661
DELAY	645
REPUBLICAN	483
REPUBLICANS	412
DEMOCRATS	405
STATE	382
MEMBERS	354
POLITICAL	335
LEADER	331
RULES	315
SENATE	311
LEADERS	302
STAFF	293
WASHINGTON	292
YEAR	284
PARTY	280
PUBLIC	278
PRESIDENT	271
MAJORITY	270
OFFICE	262
DEMOCRATIC	261

Figure 3. Dendrogram of words found in the same sentences in newspaper articles about leadership ethics

In the second session, you hear the researcher who publishes leadership and ethics related articles in popular magazines. The information he provides in the session is very similar to that of the newspaper author. It is important to give the readers what they want and try and influence and persuade opinions about a political or governmental issue or about a political leader.

In the third session, you hear the researcher who publishes leadership and ethics related articles in peer reviewed journals and the information is almost opposite of the other two presentations. This author provides information about ethics and leadership also, but the presentation provides facts, studies and offers suggestion on how one can become an ethical leader in their organization.

As you reflect upon the messages of the day you realize that ethical leadership can mean a number of different ideas depending on what one is reading. It's all business, one who looks for popular issues in politics or government will probably read the popular magazine and popular newspaper articles. While those that read the peer reviewed journals, are probably seeking suggestions from the author on how to improve and practice ethical leadership based on research and studies.

As one increases the scope of leadership over which she/he has influence, the backgrounds and worldviews of one's followers becomes more diverse.

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