

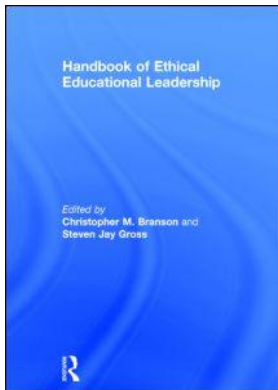
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Publisher: *Routledge*

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## **Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership**

Christopher M. Branson, Steven Jay Gross

### **A Measure of Ethics**

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203747582.ch21>

Lyse Langlois, Claire Lapointe

**Published online on: 16 May 2014**

**How to cite :-** Lyse Langlois, Claire Lapointe. 16 May 2014, *A Measure of Ethics from: Handbook of Ethical Educational Leadership* Routledge

Accessed on: 11 Dec 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203747582.ch21>

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# 21

## A MEASURE OF ETHICS

LYSE LANGLOIS AND CLAIRE LAPOINTE

Change experienced by some democracies can be considered as the transformation of their models of governance. In Western societies, legislation serves as the basis for governing social cohabitation. However, financial scandals and corruption have highlighted the limitations of such an approach, raising complex, challenging issues. These situations have led to concern for integrity, ethics, and standards of transparency and leadership. As a result, there is renewed interest in applied ethics. Far from being abstract concepts, organizational context and work culture are integrated into practical ethics to permeate organizational structures. Consequently, ethical leadership has served as leverage to promote proper governance. Based on research projects conducted within a number of public organizations (schools, municipalities, police, hospitals, and community organizations), we have found that ethical leadership is a specific method of governance. It serves as a complementary means to compensate for legislative shortfalls and resolve current issues so as to ensure harmonious cohabitation in current individualistic and pluralistic societies. In this chapter, we discuss ethical leadership as a new method of governance and its relationship with organizational culture. We also present some of our most recent observations.

### **TOWARD A NEW WAY OF GOVERNING: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

Educational administration has not eluded the wave of ethical concern currently sweeping the business world and professional circles. Ethics is omnipresent and garnering increasingly stronger interest. This ethical trend has gained momentum in the wake of scandals of corruption and collusion occurring in the corporate world. Ethics is on the agenda of many organizations, whether public or private. However, in educational administration, interest in ethics did not stem from deviant conduct or corruption, but from reaction to greater state standardization and surveillance that emerged in the

1970s. These disruptions, due to economic conditions, have affected the quality of school administration, and people are speaking up on dehumanizing climates, lack of concern in training, and staff losing motivation. Researchers such as Halpin (1957), Willower (1961), Hodgkinson (1978), Griffiths (1979), Foster (1980, 1985, 1989), and Greenfield (1981, 1987) have alerted the scientific community regarding the shifting—in certain cases, the absence—of values in educational administration. These two movements will drive a new research current on applied ethics in educational leadership.

This chapter highlights factors that are linked to the emergence and development of ethics in educational organizations, particularly in Canada. To do so, we define the main concepts revolving around ethics and its institutionalization within public organizations. More particularly, we address ethical leadership, a concept that has been the greater focus of our research program for more than 15 years. We also look into the characteristics enabling the actualization of ethical leadership in the workplace and the conditions required to better support it. Through studies conducted in the field of educational administration, and our own work undertaken in the field of applied ethics, we have observed the emergence of a different mode of governance in education, a form of management more considerate of current issues and more authentic toward those who are committed to promoting a quality education.

## GOVERNING EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Current conditions in educational administration require capacities that are quite different from those required some 40 years ago. Decision makers work in an unruly world where the single stable element is *turbulence* (Shapiro & Gross, 2012). Reality becomes more complex and different logics create confusion. Pretty much everywhere in the world of education, reforms are conducted at breakneck speed. Those reforms have introduced various measures of decentralization and, in certain regards, a hierarchical deconcentration of power and responsibilities. It is all the more important to act using better judgment in a world in crisis where points of reference are hard to find. Professional associations have played a significant support role regarding these changes in education, but such support has often been more reactive than proactive.

For instance, during the 1990s, the Quebec provincial government introduced a major education reform. From an administrative viewpoint, this reform allowed a new distribution of powers among the minister, school boards, and elementary and secondary schools. From an administrative viewpoint, this reform provided greater autonomy to the schools, as under Quebec's Education Act each school is now required to establish a council that represents the political branch of the educational system. This council, made up mostly of parents, has many prerogatives and defines up to 25% of curricula. As a result of these prerogatives, the political sphere is increasingly present in school principals' work. Several issues and restraints are involved in making strategic decisions, which will affect, in the long term, choices that will be made by schools and school districts.

However, everyone is not always on the same wavelength in terms of ethical consciousness regarding the impact of decisions on students, teachers, and parents.

Everyone does not have the same *modus operandi* to address sensitive cases, such as school closure and student transfers. Relationships of power arise and deviant conduct and conflicts of interest occur, not always correctly detected by school administrators. Cohabitation of administration, pedagogy, and politics entails acquiring a new outlook on the world involving heightened awareness of ethics.

## THE RISE OF ETHICS

Interest in the ethical aspects of administration is partly justified by a wish to win back the public's trust in people in authority. Maintaining integrity in the workplace and improving conduct become vital objectives for organizations committed to institutionalizing ethics. In Canada, the institutionalization of ethics took place in public administration under the impetus of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1996). Implemented in federal and provincial public administration, this movement also reached municipalities and universities, as well as other educational organizations. According to Boisvert, "the institutionalization of ethics is a process through which a social setting seeks to standardize, through the implementation of mechanisms, the conduct of stakeholders involved in activities specific to their areas for action" (2011, p. 6; our translation). The purpose of such mechanisms is to counter deviant conduct and improve the public's trust.

### *The Positioning and Occurrence of Ethics in Educational Structures*

In Quebec, institutionalization primarily occurs through mechanisms such as value statements and codes of conduct intended for school personnel. Some organizations also implement an ethics committee with a role and functions to improve support provided to school staff in complex situations such as ethical dilemmas. Sometimes committees also have to evaluate requests submitted by university faculty in order to conduct research in schools. Within this strong movement involving the formalization and institutionalization of ethics, a major asymmetry can be observed between the implementation of ethics mechanisms and educational leaders' legal perception of ethics. Faced with complex situations and an increasingly restrictive normative framework, these administrators sometimes fail to understand what ethical logic implies. The means to remove such an asymmetry consists in a better understanding of one's ethical reasoning as well as appropriate training, resulting in renewed ways of governing. Before discussing these elements any further, we will clarify how the concepts of ethics, law, and deontology are understood and developed in Canada under the impetus of the OECD's work.

## ETHICS: A MODE OF SOCIAL REGULATION

Several concepts are related to ethics, such as deontology, morality, and mores. All share a common element, as they are all related to conduct, but they do not share the same end. For the purposes of this chapter, we will clarify some of them.

### *Deontology*

The origin of the term “deontology” is the Greek word *deon*, which means “duty,” and *logos*, which means, “reason.” Deontology is related to the concepts of duty and responsibility incumbent upon any professional. It stresses the aspects of duty and the obligation to act according to standards of practices, represented by a code of conduct. Respect for the code of conduct is considered in this logic as a command or order, as an imperative, and professional conduct is based on unconditional compliance with duty.

The concept of deontology is often considered as an integral part of ethics. Some people believe that their code of conduct is the same as a code of ethics. However, the comparison is to be nuanced. In a code of conduct, there are certain elements related to ethics, such as respect for professional secrecy. This value is defined in terms of a standard of conduct aimed at heightening professionals’ awareness of the importance to preserve the confidentiality of specific information. Deontology is often integrated into the norms of a profession or trade aimed at guiding professionals’ conduct. In Canada, for instance, several provincial teachers’ associations now have a code identifying professional norms and standards. Social regulation imposed by deontology, through a code, is part of a concept referred to as *hetero-regulation*, where professionals are guided by a code of conduct that commands compliance to norms expected by their profession.

### *Hetero-regulation*

Hetero-regulation stems from a set of rules imposed by an outside authority. These rules are part of a vision of control and are restrictive in nature. Those who do not abide by these rules are imposed sanctions. The rules are also legal in nature and control the conduct of those who are subjected to them. Boisvert (2003) defines the concept of hetero-regulation in these terms:

A movement of regulation established and imposed from the outside; in other words, external authority dictates individuals what to decide or how to act. From a heteronomous perspective, the regulation of conduct is defined as the observance of rules enacted by authority and the fear of sanction in cases of non-compliance.

(p. 27, our translation)

For instance, if we fail to respect road signs or stop at a red traffic light, we are liable to a fine. Hence, the fine is the means allowing the outside authority to better regulate the conduct of individuals, with the purpose of ensuring public safety. However, individuals have relative autonomy; in this case, they can choose to respect or not respect road signs, while considering the potential consequences in case of noncompliance. Ward (2007) observed two orientations in the philosophy of codes of conduct: The first philosophy does not involve disciplinary procedures in case of misconduct, while the second philosophy comprises disciplinary measures. However, both philosophies are related to the hetero-regulatory mode.

### *Morality or Ethics*

The concepts of morality and ethics are sometimes used indistinctly. Etymologically speaking, the two terms mean morals, or mores. The Latin origin of the word “morality” is *mores*, while the word “ethics” comes from the Greek word *ethos*. Some authors consider them as opposed, others consider them as cognates and interdependent (Ricoeur, 1990). In our research work, we adopted the second position, where the concepts of morality and ethics are used without any major distinctions, both referring to individual conduct.

The concept proposed in this chapter defines ethics as a reflective process providing enhanced guidance on the conduct to adopt. This reflection is based on personal, professional, and organizational values as much as rules, norms, and procedures, with the purpose of finding a path to identifying morally acceptable behavior (Paquet, 2011). Hence, ethics will operate a thinking and discernment process based on these elements while raising the following questions: Does this norm or rule still fairly apply in the current context? What value should be promoted? How should I behave in a particular situation? Is it the best decision to make, given the context? What will be the consequences of my decision for me, and others? Through a meticulous examination of conscience, ethical reflection will attempt to identify particular values meaningful to an individual. As ethics is anchored in reality and adapts to given circumstances, it is characterized as flexible in comparison with rights and deontology, which are rather static. Hence, several authors identify ethics as a mode of interrogation and questioning aimed at finding moral certainties, which nonetheless remain uncertain (Bourgeault, 2004; Legault, 2004).

### *Self-Regulation: Exercising Free Will*

Rules, principles, and values that individuals decide to apply in an autonomous and free manner are part of a mode referred to as self-regulation. This perspective encourages individuals to exhibit responsible conduct without the pressure of sanctions. To do so, individuals use their will to regulate their own conduct in order to take on responsibility toward others. These were Foucault’s (2008) words in 1982–83 as reported in his teaching notes *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres*. For Boisvert, Campeau, and Jutras (2004), ethics has a double nature. “Although fundamentally self-regulatory, which means that ethics fosters self-control and autonomous behaviour, yet, ethics does not lead to radical individualism” (p. 29; our translation). Rather, this self-governance is attached to life in community. Ethics is not expressed in a disembodied world; it is deployed within an organization with all that it entails: ethics is challenged, dismantled, and rebuilt once more through contact with others. Hence, ethics should not be considered as a cutting knife, but rather as a needle that patiently weaves its work with others, like a community working on a collective patchwork (Langlois, 2011).

Fundamentally, ethics is considered from a perspective of autonomy because it requires a certain level of leeway for individuals to exercise their capacity of discernment and judgment. Leeway is one of the essential conditions to exercising ethical

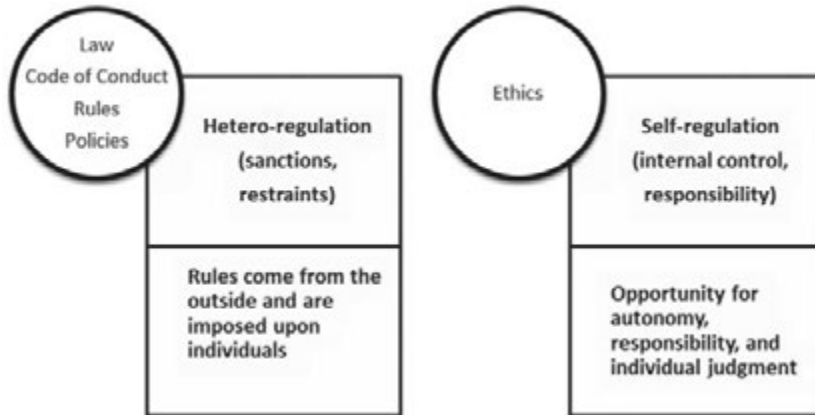


Figure 21.1 Regulatory modes of conduct.

reflection in a mode of self-regulation. Figure 21.1 shows the two regulatory modes of conduct and serves to better clarify the elements underlying this movement of institutionalization currently being implemented, and the logic targeted.

### *Ethical Leadership*

In light of our literature review, we can assert that the concept of care, as developed by Gilligan (1982) and later by Noddings (1984), has influenced most scholars interested in the application of ethical leadership in the field of educational administration. The earliest researchers were Kimbrough (1985), Lakomski (1987), Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1988), Crowson (1992), Greenfield (1981), Starratt (1991), Kirby, Paradise, and Protti (1990), Sergiovanni (1992), Beck (1992, 1994), Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1993), Larocque and Coleman (1993), Crogan (1996), Langlois (1997), Bhindi and Duignan (1997), Brunner (1998), and Begley (1999). Moreover, Starratt (1991) and Sergiovanni (1992) initiated a major breakthrough by integrating moral dimensions into the concept of ethical leadership while proposing a new mode of governance. Another wave of researchers, all the more insightful, then contributed to this emerging field (e.g., Fullan, 2003; Maxcy, 2002; Murphy, 2002; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Their contribution has helped to gain a better understanding of the actualization of ethics in educational administration.

## **APPLIED RESEARCH ON ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION**

Although the field of ethics in educational administration is under ongoing development, its understanding is mainly based on qualitative research. Most of the time, samples include fewer than 20 participants, and in certain cases, results are generalized in spite of those small samples. Empirical aspects are limited and remain relatively exploratory.

Furthermore, regarding their epistemological stand, most studies use a mixed perspective of ethics based on social regulation. Some authors identify their concepts more closely with a hetero-regulatory model of conformity, while others tend toward a notion of self-regulation in which ethics is considered as a process aiming at autonomy. Although we are still far from an operational definition of ethics likely to create a consensus among researchers in educational administration, Starratt's three-dimensional model of ethics remains a major reference.

## DEFINING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

In his book *Leadership*, Burns (1978) states that ethics is a major component of leadership. He came to this conclusion by realizing that some people were considered leaders despite exhibiting questionable conduct. He proposed three types of ethical leadership: (a) ethical leadership anchored in traditional ethical values such as temperance, chastity, kindness, and altruism (Judeo-Christian values); (b) ethical leadership based on personal rules of conduct and ethical values such as honesty, integrity, reciprocity, and responsibility; and (c) ethical leadership based on moral values such as freedom, equality, justice, and community solidarity. Adopting the third perspective, Starratt (1991) proposed a concept of ethical leadership deployed in three dimensions: justice, critique, and care. Subsequently, he completed his vision of ethical leadership with a concern for ethics based on presence and authenticity (Starratt, 2004).

Our initial interest in ethical leadership was reinforced after reading Starratt's 1991 paper not long after its publication, as it represented, at the time, the most consistent and innovative theoretical framework. Our intent in our own work and contribution to the field was to gain a better understanding of these dimensions in the study of real-life administrative practices. The first step consisted of defining moral actions associated with each dimension of ethical leadership. Research conducted by Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), and Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, and Miller (1988), as well as the work of critique theory philosophers, was very useful. Once the moral actions were identified, hundreds of interviews were conducted with educational leaders (Langlois, 2004, 2011; Langlois & Lapointe, 2007). Based on the qualitative results, a questionnaire was developed to measure Starratt's three dimensions in the exercise of ethical leadership, as well as ethical sensitivity (Langlois & Lapointe, 2010; Langlois, Lapointe, Valois, & de Leeuw, in press). Our current quantitative database for the sector of education contains more than 800 participants.

## THE PARAMETERS OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

In light of our empirical data, a definition of ethical leadership emerged:

Ethical leadership is a social practice that integrates autonomous professional judgement. Ethical leadership is as much a resource based on three ethical dimensions (care, justice, and critique), as a capacity and power to act in a responsible and acceptable manner.

(Langlois, 2013, our translation)



Three major aspects emerge from this definition. The first highlights the fact that the exercise of ethical leadership arises from applied ethics, which in turn facilitates the exercise of professional judgment. Such an affirmation implies that exercising ethical leadership requires autonomy and flexibility in decision making. The second aspect involves the word *resource*. This word is important, as it implies that ethical leadership becomes a resource for individuals who are aware of their own ethical leadership profile. In the absence of such knowledge, exercising ethical leadership becomes difficult. Once this knowledge is acquired, individuals are in a better position to analyze and discern the aspects related to one or all three ethical dimensions. Knowledge is acquired by heightening the awareness of one's ethical sensitivity, which is defined threefold: care, justice, and critique. These resources represent opportunities for ethical analysis. In turn, knowledge leads to the last important aspect: capacity, understood as the power to act (Le Boterf, 2006), which provides leeway and opportunities to choose and act in any political, social, or economic situation, as well as the power to make better decisions.

During one of our research projects conducted in Canada, we met educational leaders who appeared not to have the leeway required to actualize and exercise their ethical leadership. This led to the realization that a key factor in allowing the exercise of ethical leadership was the presence of an organizational culture supporting ethical self-regulation. Therefore, we investigated more in-depth the organizational conditions needed to facilitate the actualization of ethical leadership. The last section of this chapter sheds light on the following question: What kind of support is needed in order for leaders to deploy ethical leadership and what governing practices hinder enacting it?

## **HOW DOES ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE INFLUENCE THE EXERCISE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP?**

As mentioned earlier, over the last 10 years, we have had the opportunity to engage hundreds of educational leaders throughout Canada in meaningful conversations about ethics at work. Based on these conversations, we realized that the kind of culture permeating organizations in which leaders work has a strong influence on the emergence and actualization of their ethical sensitivity and ethical competency. In fact, we observed that certain organizational cultures nurture leaders' awareness of ethically challenging situations and promote their empowerment as ethical leaders, whereas other cultures hinder educational leaders' capacity to recognize those situations or prevent them from developing their capacity to act ethically. Our most recent exploratory work using the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire confirmed these initial observations and provided insightful preliminary results on the relationship between organizational culture and the enactment of ethical leadership.

In this section of the chapter, we will briefly review the concept of organizational culture and its applications in educational administration and discuss some of the most recent literature on the subject. Afterward, we will reflect on the relationship observed between different kinds of organizational cultures and the exercise of ethical leadership.

### *The Concept of Organizational Culture*

The earliest literature defining organizational culture as an area of study was developed in the early 1970s. This literature was primarily based on analyses that compared management models applied in Japanese and American businesses (Martin, Frost, & O’Neil, 2004; Morgan, 1986). These analyses highlighted the fact that human-related characteristics found in Japanese industries best explain Japan’s outstanding commercial success, as opposed to structural aspects (Martin et al., 2004; Ouchi, 1981).

Interest in the cultural component of organizations soon emerged among educational administration researchers and practitioners (e.g., Deblois & Corriveau, 1994; Erikson, 1987; Pettigrew, 1979; Sarason, 1971; Steinhoff & Owens, 1989). In fact, Pettigrew was the one to make the first applications in this field. In his article published in 1979, he defined key concepts and methodological processes associated with an organizational culture theory. He reported the results of a study into the impact on their culture and climate of amalgamating a public school with a private school. Interest in studying organizational culture in educational contexts continues to grow today, as shown by an overview of recent publications (Balci, Özdemir, Apaydın, & Özen, 2012; Fabricio, Labrie, & Lapointe, 2008; Frick, 2009; Höög & Johansson, 2005; Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyriakides, 2010; Somech & Ron, 2007; Sun-Keung Pang, 2006; van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, & Coetsee, 2005).

When defining organizational culture, it is interesting to note that today’s key scholars (e.g., Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2002; Schein, 2004) still refer to definitions provided by founding researchers such as Clegg (1981), Smircich (1983), Schein (1985), and Mills (1988). According to Martin and colleagues (2004), the culture of an organization represents a unique configuration of rule-bound activities, such as procedures and human resource management policies. This way of organizational life is characterized by specific rules of conduct and values, ranging from formal codes of ethics to informal value statements. Martin in 1992 (Martin et al., 2004) also stated that rules are not only applied and followed, they may also be resisted or questioned by individuals or groups. Hence, there are some dimensions of reality that must be taken into account when studying the influence of organizational culture on the school leader’s ethical sensitivity and conduct, including: (1) Members of an organization neither follow organizational rules in the same way nor do so to the same extent; and (2) higher authority within an organization may impose a given definition of a situation on its leaders, limiting their capacity to exercise their own professional judgment and impacting on the development of their ethical leadership.

### **AN EXPLORATORY TYPOLOGY OF ETHICAL CULTURE**

In previous publications, we described how the exercise of ethical leadership is anchored in leaders’ decision-making processes when faced with ethical dilemmas (e.g., Langlois, 2004, 2013; Langlois & Lapointe, 2007). During challenging—and often heart-wrenching—situations, the presence of ethical sensitivity is tested. When this sensitivity is awakened and developed, leaders demonstrate a stronger capacity to properly discern issues and values at stake. By using this capacity in an optimal

way, they can make ethically fair and responsible decisions. However, in order for this ethical reflection to translate into action, authenticity toward one's declared values as well as moral courage are required (Cooper, 1990).

Over the last 20 years, data collected through our mixed-method research program has shown that most organizations adhere either to a hetero-regulated vision of ethics, where an external form of control is imposed upon leaders, or to a self-regulated vision of ethics, where leaders use their own regulations in their decisions and actions. This characteristic of organizations appears to impact the emergence and actualization of ethical sensitivity and conduct among leaders, whose capacity to exercise ethical judgment depends heavily on the leeway allowed by their superiors (Langlois & Lapointe, 2007).

Our first insight on the significant influence of organizational culture on the emergence and actualization of ethical leadership came about in 2002–2005 during a study for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of the distinctive experience of school leaders in official-language minority settings in Canada. Using an open-ended interview guide on ethical dilemma, 47 school principals from seven different provinces were asked to describe the tensions and possibilities related to ethical leadership in their specific contexts. We were surprised when, in a particular region, participants told us they had never encountered any ethical dilemmas, explaining that rules and policies were clearly defined by the higher authority and that all they had to do was to implement these directives. Examining more closely how superintendents and educational department officials governed in that province, we noticed the presence of a particularly high degree of control over school principals, which left almost no leeway for individual reflection and action.

A few years later, as we were conducting an action-research project with educational administrators and teacher leaders working within the same organization, we gained a deeper understanding of the interactions among ethics, individual transformation, and organizational culture. We noticed that as a result of regular group reflection on action, subcultures present within the organization appeared to shift from an oppositional to an interrelational stand due to participants seeking a common meaning with regard to ethical leadership. Practices were realigned so that managerial modes became less hierarchical and more dialogical, hence initiating a process toward the institutionalization of ethics.

Acknowledging the existence of different kinds of organizational culture with regard to ethics, we created a three-dimensional typology of school culture based on the presence of a hetero-regulatory or an auto-regulatory vision of ethics. The typology comprises three archetypes of conduct that superiors might show when leaders under their responsibility are faced with ethical dilemmas.

- The Supporting Culture, where leaders are encouraged to consult with their superiors, all the while having leeway to exercise their professional judgment and being expected to make their own decisions
- The Controlling Culture, where leaders must defer to their superiors, who will make the decision
- The Indifferent Culture, where leaders are left to fend for themselves

Items predicting the occurrence of each of the three cultures were added to the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire<sup>1</sup> (Lapointe, Langlois, Centeno, & Giasson, 2012). Although still at an exploratory stage, results reveal intriguing links between organizational culture and ethical leadership. First, we observed a statistically significant relationship between a controlling type of organizational culture, where leaders must comply with their superiors' decisions, and the presence of all three ethics (justice, care, and critique), with higher scores for the presence of a controlling culture linked to higher scores for each of the three ethics. These results are in line with our previous observations derived from more than 200 open-ended interviews and an action-research project showing that individual ethical sensitivity can trigger the decision to question normative and controlling rules and standards. This might be more the case when individual conduct is rooted in the ethics of critique. In fact, we believe that individuals whose ethical leadership is more developed also possess a more acute awareness of abuse of power and can experience feelings of disempowerment when pressured to comply with their superiors' norms.

Second, results also indicated a significant relationship between a supporting culture and the ethic of justice, with higher scores for a supporting culture being linked to higher scores for the ethic of justice. These results might be linked to the present trend toward the institutionalization of ethics within organizations, which promotes respect for authority and social order. Organizations sharing this vision often adopt ethics programs, codes of ethics, and other deontological tools, which help frame leaders' ethical reflection. Such a trend might reinforce leaders' propensity and capacity to apply the ethic of justice in their decision-making processes. However, it might also weaken their ability to call upon the ethics of critique and care. Further research is needed in order to shed more light on these results.

## CONCLUSION

Scholars and practitioners from different fields, including education, have stressed the pressing need for a better understanding of ethical leadership and the means to learn and enact this concept (Langlois & Lapointe, 2011). Some have also insisted on the urgency to encourage organizations to become more ethical. The proposed concept of ethical leadership that we defined, and validated through several research projects, possesses a significant ability to rise to current complex challenges. Deviant behavior at work can be enacted through organizational mimesis and permissiveness, as much as ethical conduct can build on an ethical leadership model through mimesis. Research has unquestionably proven that leaders remain models of ethical conduct for employees. Leaders send a message about what is tolerated or unacceptable conduct. Encouraging people to emulate ethical leaders is vital in empowering them to "rise above" and develop responsible conduct and abilities.

Organizational culture is, we believe, a promising pathway toward ethical transformation. Our research shows that ethical cultures will emerge through individuals' commitment to building collective ethical capacity. At the same time, we noticed that different organizational cultures seem to impact on individuals differently, triggering

reactions rooted in their personal ethical stands. This seems to be particularly true with the ethics of justice and of critique.

Based on observations from our applied and action research, we strongly believe that individuals and groups of people who engage earnestly and actively in learning about ethics can become strong agents of change in their organizations. In doing so, they help transform organizational culture and modify the ethical principles at the basis of governance models and decision-making mechanisms.

In conclusion, we hope that the development of ethical environments through ethical leadership and culture will influence good practices as much as conduct. For once, we will be in a position to take positive advantage of mimesis, a mechanism so highly valued by society and organizations.

## NOTE

1. The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire is an instrument that predicts the dimensions of ethical leadership proposed by Starratt (1991) and validated by Langlois (1997), as well as ethical sensitivity.

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