Factors Influencing Perception of Ethical Behaviour of Peers: Time, Emotional Intelligence, and Ethical Behaviour of Self

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify individual factors contributing to the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and whether or not the perception of ethical behaviour of peers is changing over time among undergraduate students.
Participants were a convenience sample of 457 (n=457) undergraduate students from three geographically different US institutions. Data was collected in 2008 and in 2018. Multiple regression was used to see if there was a relationship between the years the data was collected on ethical behaviour of peers, the dependent variable.
*Ethical behaviour **of self (β = .37, p <.001), regulation of emotions (β =** -.10, p <.01), and **the year data was collected (β = .14,** p <.001) were all found to be significant predictors of ethical behaviour of peers. Other factors not considered in the model, a more diverse sample, self-report methodology, and the interpretation of change in years are all potential limitations to this study. This study provides a longitudinal focus on ethical decision making*

Key words*: Ethical Behaviour; ethical decision making; emotional intelligence.*

Introduction

There are constantly strong pressures and lures to cut ethical corners in business (Anand, Ashforth, & Joshi, 2004). For this reason, literature focusing on ethical behaviour in business, teaching business ethics, and factors contributing to ethical decision-making is extensive. Equally extensive, are examples of unethical behaviour in business. Facebook, Enron, Wells Fargo and the United States Olympic Committee are just a few examples of organizations that had major ethical issues in the 21st century. It is no surprise then, that research has shown managers and leaders in modern organizations to lack strong ethical foundations (Andrews, 1989; Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Longnecker, 1985; Molander, 1987; Pitt & Abratt, 1986;). Ethics, for the purpose of this paper, are defined as other researchers have defined it, as the conception of what is right and fair conduct or behaviour (Freemen & Gilbert, 1988)

The traditional response for dealing with unethical behaviour in business, and for developing ethical business leaders, was to turn to education (Beltramini, Peterson, and Kozmetsky, 1984). Starting with education is a rational place to begin as research suggests that students who are unethical in college will likely continue unethical behaviour into a professional setting as well (Carpenter, Harding, Finelli, & Passow, 2004; Nonis & Swift, 2001; Sims, 1993). **College may be students' first introduction to** ethics. For instance, an ethics course tends to be a requirement for undergraduate degrees. Business ethics, as defined by Christensen, Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & **Carrier (2007) "is a form of applied ethics that examines ethical rules and principles** within a commercial context; the various moral or ethical problems that can arise in a business setting; and any special duties or obligations that apply to persons who are **engaged in commerce" (p. 350).** If unethical issues continue to be a major issue in business, then it could be argued that the current education in ethics may be inadequate which may be due to the perception of ethics changing over time.

Researchers have called for more longitudinal research on ethical decision-making (Craft, 2013; Marta, Singhapakdi, & Kraft, 2008). The purpose of this study is to identify individual factors contributing to the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and whether or not the perception of ethical behaviour of peers is changing over time among undergraduate students. This study also re-examines the relationship between other individual factors, which are supported by literature to influence ethical behaviour. An understanding of whether or not the perception of ethical behaviour is changing over time is worthwhile because such knowledge provides a platform for further research to consider factors that may contribute to *why* the perception of ethical behaviour is changing. Also, understanding if ethical behaviour is changing over time is extremely useful to employers who may need to target new methodologies to train employees on ethics. If ethics are indeed changing over time, it could be due to generational differences. Thus, the theoretical foundation of this study is generational identity in organizations

Literature Review

There has been significant research done on generational differences pertaining to ethics. Specifically, a survey conducted by the Ethics Resource Center in 2009 reported that millennials are more likely to observe ethical misconduct, are less likely to report it, and more likely to engage in it (**"Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers: Who's** Working at your company and what do t**hink about ethics", 2009). VanM**eter, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts (2013) also found that millennials were more accepting of individual and collaborative ethical violations than previous generations.

The importance of considering time as a contributing factor to ethical decision making is founded on Dencker**, Joshi, & Martocchio's generational theory. Dencker et.** al (2008) proposed that demographic attributes and generational memories influence

behaviours and attitudes of individuals in an organization.   The researchers adopted this framework to consider individual attributes such as age, gender, education level, GPA, emotional intelligence, and many other factors to see if the year the data was collected influenced the perception of ethical behaviour of peers. The researchers **adapted Dencker, et. al's (2008)** framework to fit the context of this study and explore whether or not generational differences, as measured by time of data collection, influenced perceived ethical behaviour.

The importance of considering time, and not age in this study as a contributing factor, is because one could expect that if ethics differed due to age then you would anticipate as younger adults became older they would be more like their previous generations (Rhodes, 1983). To relate it to this study, if time was not a factor, then one would expect there to be no difference between the perception of ethical behaviour in 2008 participants compared to the 2018 participants, assuming all factors were measured the same and the same age of people were surveyed. The 2008 study participants average age was 22.9 and the average age for the 2018 data was 23.1. This study makes two key assumptions. The first assumption is that generational **memories and the entire notion of a 'generation' is represented by time in this study.** The second major assumption is that the similarity in average age between 2008 and 2018 represents two different generations. The first being the 2008 study participants (Millennials) and the second being the 2018 participants (Generation Z). To account for these assumptions, two key factors that have shown to have an influence on perception of ethical behaviour were included.

Ethical decision making and ethical behaviour have long been considered a topic of great interest in business research. It is well understood that several factors affect ethical behaviour and ethical decision making. Research regarding factors that influence ethical decision making include social factors, individual factors, and opportunistic factors (Craft, 2012; **Ford & Richardson, 1994; O'Fallon & But**terfield, 2005).   Business ethics, though still evolving, has created its own literature and gained the reputation as a legitimate academic field with a high degree of interaction and overlap from other academic fields. The interdisciplinary nature of business ethics as a field causes some **challenges. As stated by Ma (2009) "This overlapping blurs the bou**ndaries of business ethics and as a result its distinct theoretical model and analytics tools are unjustly **attributed to other competing fields" (p. 256). It is well known the study of ethics is** rooted in philosophy, however business ethics as a field, is perceived by many scholars as its own discipline (Enderle, 1996; Holland & Albrecht, 2013; Ma, 2009). It is not the intention of this paper to comprehensively discuss the theoretical or philosophical foundations of individual ethics. The following are individual factors that were considered in this study.

Ethical Behaviour of Peers

Previous empirical research suggests that the perception of ethical behaviour of peers is a more valid measure of ethical misconduct than ethical behaviour of self (Joseph, Berry, & Despande, 2009). The foundation for this assumption is based on individual behaviours being modified by peer effects. In a 2006 study on peer effects, there was significant evidence found in favor of the existence of peer effects (Falk & Ichino, 2006). Westerman, Beekun, Stedham, & Yamamura (2007) also found that peers acted as significant referents in ethical decision-making dilemmas. Other researchers have based the utilization of ethical behaviour of peers instead of self-report ethical behaviour on projection bias where people will attribute their thoughts and behaviours onto others (Andreoli & Lefkowitz, 2009). Conclusively, this study utilized the perception of ethical behaviour of peers as the dependent variable.

Test Variables

Year of data collection

Research has shown when individuals enter the workplace, they have a tendency to fall into the roles and norms set by other members (Anannd, et al., 2005). What if those roles and norms involve unethical behaviour? Researchers have found that people are likely to be less sensitive to ethical violations when violations repeatedly occur over time (Gino & Bazerman, 2009). Specifically, it has been found that if unethical behaviour develops gradually over time, people are more likely to accept the unethical behaviour (Gino & Bazerman, 2009). Keeping those results in mind, if people are continually exposed to examples of business executives being unethical, then it could be argued that people perceive unethical behaviour as a regular part of business due to repeated examples. Thus, unethical behaviour is becoming more and more accepted over time. For this reason, data collection was done on two different occasions, ten years apart. The year the data was collected, either 2008 or 2018, is a test variable in this study to identify if there is a relationship between the year the data was collected and the perception of ethical behaviour of peers. The following research question and null hypothesis are proposed.

> R1: Is there a relationship between the year the data was collected and perception of ethical behaviour of peers?
>
> $H1_0$ = There is no relationship between the year the data was collected and perception of ethical behaviour of peers.

Ethical behaviour of self

It was found that self-reported ethical behaviour is significantly correlated with ethical behaviour **of peers (Joseph, et al., 2009).** Joseph et al.'s 2008 findings suggest that perceptions of ethical behaviour **of peers could be a reflection of an individual's** self-reported ethical behaviour. This study considers self-reported ethical behaviour as a potential factor affecting the perception of ethical behaviour of peers. Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that there is relationship between how a person has self-reported ethical behaviour (ethical behaviour of self) and how they perceive others ethical behaviour (ethical behaviour of peers).

> R2: Is there a relationship between ethical behaviour of self and perception of ethical behaviour of peers?
>
> $H2_0$ = There is no relationship between ethical behaviour of self and perception of ethical behaviour of peers.

Emotional Intelligence

Another factor considered by many researchers when looking at ethical decision-making has been emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has been found to influence the ethical decision-making of individuals (Chowdhury, 2017). Researchers found in a study of 100 MBA students that emotional intelligence did influence their ethical judgments (Hopkins & Deepa, 2018). Angelidis & Ibraham (2011) also found a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and ethical ideology. Mesmer-Magnus, et al. (2008) reported that overall emotional intelligence significantly correlated with both ethical behaviours of peers and ethical behaviour of self (Mesmer-Magnus, et al., 2008). Using a sample of students, Joseph, et al. (2009) found one dimension of emotional intelligence, others emotions appraisal (OEA), to significantly impact ethical behaviour of peers. Similarly, a 2014 study found that one component of emotional intelligence, regulation of emotions (ROE), significantly influenced ethical behaviour (Fu, 2013). This research examines if there is a relationship between ethical behaviour of peers and emotional intelligence. Is there a relationship between ethical behaviour of peers and perception of ethical behaviour of self?

> R3: Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and perception of ethical behaviour of peers?
>
> $H2_0$ = There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and perception of ethical behaviour of peers.

Control Variables

GPA

Previous research looking at the relationship between grade point average (GPA) and unethical behaviour in higher education has had mixed results. Burrus, McGoldrick, & Schuhmann (2007) found unethical behaviours more prevalent among students with a lower GPA. Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, & Mothersell (2007), in their sample of business and non-business students, also report that serious cheaters had a lower GPA. Hardigan (2004) found similar results among first and third year pharmacy students. But Sikula & Costa (1995) found no relationship between GPA and unethical behaviour.

Academic major

Major has also been a highly considered factor in research surrounding unethical behaviour. Specific attention has been given to those students majoring in business. Business students have the reputation for being more unethical than other majors, though not all empirical research aligns with that notion. A 1989 study found that business students had lower ethical standards than students who were not majoring in business (Harris, 1989). McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino (2006) found that "graduate business students cheated more than their nonbusiness- **student peers" (p. 294)**. Another empirical study found that students majoring in finance had less ethical behaviour than other business majors (Brown, Sautter, Littvay, Sautter, & Bearnes, 2010). However, not all empirical research supports business students having lower ethical standards. Klein et al. (2007) reported that business students were not significantly different from students in other professional majors for serious cheaters. Gallant & Binkin (2015) found that students often reported cheating by those in different majors than theirs. Simkin & Mcleod (2010) reported that 60% of business students and 64% of non-business students admitted to cheating.

Age

Age has also been considered in research on ethical behaviour. Byrne & Trushell (2013) tested for age-related differences in unethical behaviour. Their findings indicate that there was not a significant difference between ages in regard to cheating behaviour (p. 16). Similar to GPA, empirical studies considering age as a factor related to ethical behaviour varies. Some studies report that older employees have less ethical behaviour than younger employees (Sankaran & Bui, 2003; Fu, 2014). However, a 1992 study found that older students were more ethical than younger students (Ruegger & King, 1992). Other research studies find that younger employees tend to be more unethical (Kim & Chun, 2003; Hunt & Jennings, 1997).

Gender

 Like other factors within this study, a significant amount of empirical research has been done on the relationship between gender and ethical behaviour. However, there is lack of consensus across the research in reference to the role, if any, that gender plays in regard to ethical behaviour (Robin & Babin, 1997). Some research has found that women are more ethical. Others have found that gender does not influence ethical behaviour of judgement. McCabe, Ingram, and Dato-on (2006) point out that many of the studies done on the relationship between gender and business ethics report conflicting results. Some studies have found that females display higher levels of ethical judgement (Nguyen, Basuray, Smith, Kopka, & McCulloh, 2008). Other researchers, even when utilizing the same measure as prior researchers, find that gender does not influence ethical judgement or behaviour (Landry, Moyes, & Cortes, 2004; Latif, 2001; Reidenbach & Robin, 1988, 1990).

Years of experience

The researchers in this study included the number of years a student has worked as another predictor within the model. The reason for including this predictor is because

it is possible that students who have worked longer may be more exposed to ethical training and may be less susceptible to peer group influence (Hsiao, 2014). A 2010 study considered the relationship between demographic variables, including length of experience, for ethical decision making among trainee accountants. Pierce and Sweeney (2010) state, **"The findings suggest that the relationship between length of experience** and ethicality is not a simply positive or negative one but that there may be categories of employees who perceive greater pressure and have lower ethical decision-making **skills" (p.92).**

Overclaiming

An overclaiming scale was utilized in this study to control for misrepresentation of oneself in a self-report. The use of overclaiming scales is sometimes under scrutiny because of lack of empirical evidence supporting the validity of the measure (Ludeke & Makransky, 2016). The theory behind utilizing overclaiming scales focuses on social desirability, or essentially portraying oneself in a more positive light. There is conceptual appeal in utilizing a measure that considers misrepresentation of oneself when administering a measure that is self-report (Ludeke & Makransky, 2016).

Method

Sample and Collection

A questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students at four different universities in the Midwestern and Northwestern United States on two separate occasions, ten years apart. The administration of the survey was approved by each institutions Institutional Review board (IRB). Survey administration occurred in 2007-2008 and 2017-2018 to various undergraduate classes in participating campuses. The survey administration occurred in mainly business courses. However, several of these courses were highly enrolled by non-business majors as the courses fulfilled general education requirements at the different institutions.

Students were assured of anonymity and were given class time to complete the survey. The survey took participants about fifteen minutes to complete. Surveys were administered and collected by the course instructor. There was no incentive for participants to complete the survey. Five hundred and nine surveys were collected and four hundred and fifty-seven were deemed useable, giving the researchers a response rate of 89%. If a participant did not complete the entire survey or if questions were not answered, the survey was eliminated from the sample.

Research Design

The researchers conducted a regression analysis to see if ethical behaviour of peers was changing over time. The regression model was specified by:

$$EBP_i = B_0 + B_1YR_i + B_2EBS_i + B_3AGE_i + B_4YRSX_i + B_5FEM_i + B_6GPA_i$$
$$+ B_7BBA_i + B_8SEA_i + B_9ROE_i + B_{10}UOE_i + B_{11}OEA_i + B_{12}OCLM_i + e_i$$

The test variable for the regression analysis, represented by a dichotomous variable (YR), was the year the data was collected, either 2008 or 2018 with YR = 1 representing 2018. Control variables for this regression included ethical behaviour of self (EBS), age (AGE), years of experience (YRSX), gender (FEM), grade point average (GPA), and business major (BBA). Another control variable was emotional intelligence, which consisted of four dimensions: self-emotions appraisal (SEA), regulation of emotion (ROE), use of emotion (UOE), and others emotions appraisal (OEA). The researchers also controlled for overclaiming (OCLM).

Participants

As shown in Table 1, of the 457 participants 220 respondents (48.14%) came from 2007-2008 and 237 respondents (51.86%) from 2017-2018. The sample contained a mix of business majors (49%) and non-business majors (51%). About half of the respondents were female. Table II reports other descriptive statistics. The average age of respondents was approximately 23 years. The grade point average was 3.31 on a 4.0 scale. Also, the average years of work experience for study participants was 5.86 years of experience.

Table 1:
Frequency and Percentages of Dichotomous Categorical Variables (N = 457)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (FEM) – Female	232	50.77%
Business Major (BBA) – Majoring in Business	225	49.23%
Year Collected (YR) – 2008	220	48.14%

Instruments

Ethical Behaviour of Peers and Self

The perception of ethical behaviour of peers (EBP) and ethical behaviour of self (EBS) were both measured using 12 items. These items were based on previous business ethics research and the items were same as the items utilized in the 2009 study (Joseph, et al., 2009; Jackson, 2001; Viswesvaran, Deshande, & Joseph, 2000). The questionnaire had respondents make a judgement as to the extent to which they perceive an action is ethical. The twelve items used to measure ethical behaviour are situational in nature and based on interactions with external stakeholders, loyalty to one's organization, loyalty to one's group, and conflicts between self and group. All items used represent actions that are sufficiently different in regard to ethical behaviour but together represent an overall measure of the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and self. All items utilized within the EBP and EBS portions of the survey are presented in the Appendix. All items were rated on a four-point likert-type scale with 1 representing "very frequently", 2 representing "frequently", 3 representing "infrequently, and 4 representing "very infrequently".

For ethical behaviour of self, items included questions such as "I'd make personal calls at work" or "I'd do homework for my close friends". If a student reported a 4 on the item "I'd make personal calls at work" it means they would very infrequently make personal calls at work. Conversely, a 1 would indicate they frequently make personal calls at work.

For the perception of ethical behaviour of peers, the same 12 items from ethical behaviour of self were used but in regard to their perception about other college students at their university instead of their own individual behaviour. Items included questions such as "Students make personal calls at work" or "Students do homework for close friends". If a student reported a 4 on the item "Students make personal calls at work" it means they have the perception that other students make personal calls at work very infrequently. Conversely, a 1 would indicate they frequently make personal calls at work.

Emotional Intelligence

For emotional intelligence, the Wong and Law EI Scale (WLEIS) was utilized (Law, Wong & Song, 2004). The WLEIS is a self-reported scale which consists of items used to measure the ability of a person to understand, regulate, and make use of her or

his emotions. The WLEIS scale measures the latent construct of emotional intelligence and is comprised of four dimensions. The four dimensions are self-emotions appraisal (SEA), others emotions appraisal (OEA), use of emotions (UOE), and regulation of emotions (ROE).

All items for the WLEIS scale are rated on a four-point likert-type scale with 1 representing "strongly agree", 2 representing "agree", 3 representing "disagree", and 4 representing "strongly disagree". For example, if a student reported a 4 on the item "I have good control of my emotions", it would indicate that the student strongly agrees with their own ability to control their emotions.

Overclaiming
Overclaiming (OCLM) scales were utilized to control for social desirability bias. The overclaiming scale consisted of ten items which are included in the Appendix. Overclaiming represents the participants' tendency to claim knowledge about things that do not exist, thus misrepresenting the knowledge of oneself. The respondents were asked to rate their degree of familiarity with items that were nonexistent. For example, students were asked about their familiarity with a made up TV program called "The Adventures of Johnnie". The items were rated on a three point scale with 3 being "not at all familiar", 2 representing "somewhat familiar", and 1 representing "very familiar". If a student indicated being "very familiar" with Adventures to Johnnie, a made up TV program, it would indicate the person has a tendency to misrepresent knowledge of oneself.

Table 2:
Descriptive Statistics (N = 457)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethical Behaviour of Self (EBS)	2.51	.59
Ethical Behaviour of Peers (EBP)	3.44	.39
Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA)	1.90	.58
Others Emotions Appraisal (OEA)	2.05	.55
Use of Emotions (UOE)	1.88	.60
Regulation of Emotions (ROE)	2.03	.63
Age (AGE)	22.76	5.63
Years of Experience (YRSX)	5.86	5.04
Grade Point Average (GPA)	3.31	1.34
Overclaiming (OCLM)	2.94	.16

Results

Validity

The values of Cronbach's alpha for all subscales were over .7 which suggest the study holds acceptable internal consistency for psychological constructs.   The Cronbach's alpha for overclaiming was .72. The student survey included measures of ethical behaviour of peers (EBP), ethical behaviour of self (EBS), emotional intelligence (EI), and demographic measures. There is significant research supporting the validity and reliability of the WLEIS scale (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Carvalho, Guerrero, Chambel & Gonzalez, 2016). The Cronbach's alpha for SEA, OEA, UOE, and ROE were .85, .81, .80, and .86, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha was .74 for EBP and .89 for EBS.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 indicates the correlations among variables. Ethical behaviour of peers and ethical behaviour of self were moderately correlated with each other. All components of emotional intelligence were also reasonably correlated with each other. OEA, UOE, ROE, and SOE correlations ranged from .16 to .44. Years of experience and age were significantly correlated with each other at .79, which is expected as an older individual has more opportunity to work longer. Gender and others emotions appraisal were negatively correlated with each other, which is in line with research in reference to women generally being more emotionally responsive with others than men (Evers, Fischer & Manstead, 2011). The year the data was collected was moderately correlated with ethical behaviour of peers.

Table 3:
Correlations Among Variables (N = 457)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Ethical Behavior of Peers (EBP)	1.00												
2. Ethical Behavior of Self (EBS)	.43	1.00											
3. Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA)	-.03	.01	1.00										
4. Others Emotions Appraisal (OEA)	.02	.13	.37	1.00									
5. Use of Emotions (UOE)	-.04	.07	.39	.28	1.00								
6. Regulation of Emotions (ROE)	-.13	-.12	.44	.16	.26	1.00							
7. Age (AGE)	.13	.16	-.05	-.02	-.02	.06	1.00						
8. Years of Experience (YRSX)	.14	.12	-.12	-.06	-.06	.01	.79	1.00					
9. Gender (FEM)	.08	-.16	.05	-.24	-.13	.13	.00	.01	1.00				
10. Grade Point Average (GPA)	-.01	-.06	-.02	-.04	-.06	-.03	-.02	-.01	.07	1.00			
11. Business Major (BBA)	.02	.02	.03	.03	.01	.15	.07	.01	.09	.05	1.00		
12. Overclaiming (OCLM)	.31	.10	.03	.01	.05	.02	.09	.08	.06	.02	.03	1.00	
13. Year Collected (YR)	.21	.32	.01	.10	.09	-.16	.08	.12	-.30	-.06	-.27	-.02	1.00

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the regression indicated the 12 predictors explained 31% of the variance ($R^2 = .31, F(12,439) = 16.23, p < .05$). It was found that ethical behaviour of self (β = .37, p <.001), regulation of emotions (β = -.10, p <.01), and the year data was collected (β = .14, p <.001) were all significant predictors of ethical behaviour of peers. Thus, all three null hypotheses were rejected. For hypothesis one (H1) there was found to be a statistically significant relationship between the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and the year the data was collected. For hypothesis two (H2) there was found to be a statistically significant relationship between ethical behaviour of self and perception of ethical behaviour of peers. Finally, for hypothesis three (H3) there was found to be a statistically significant relationship between the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and emotional intelligence. Table 4 highlights the regression analyses results.

Table 4:
Regression Analyses for Ethical Behaviour of Peers

Variable	β	*t*
Ethical Behaviour of Peers (EBP)		
Ethical Behaviour of Self (EBS)	.37	8.47***
Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA)	.01	.16
Others Emotions Appraisal (OEA)	.03	.71
Use of Emotions (UOE)	-.05	-1.09
Regulation of Emotions (ROE)	-.10	-2.12**
Age (AGE)	-.01	-.18
Years of Experience (YRSX)	.06	.97
Gender (FEM)	.18	4.07***
Grade Point Average (GPA)	.00	.07
Business Major (BBA)	.04	.86
Overclaiming (OCLM)	.26	6.51***
Year Collected (YR)	.14	3.11***
R^2	.31	

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$

Discussion

While this study has a number of strengths and is a significant contribution to ethical behaviour research, to fully interpret the results the limitations of the study must be addressed. The first limitation to this study is that although the selection of variables was driven by literature, there may be other factors not included in this study that influence perceived ethical behaviour. For example, factors such as personality, situational factors, and/or moral development may influence perceived ethical behaviour as well and were not included in this model.

The sample for the study could also be more diverse from an institutional perspective to better represent undergraduate educational institutions across the nation. Private institutions could be included in the study and more non-business courses could be surveyed to better represent the overall student population. Another limitation is the limited prior research that utilizes the same measure for ethical behaviour over time. Lastly, with any self-report data there comes a limitation. Though the researchers controlled for overclaiming there are many common biases that exist with self-report surveys such as selective memory, telescoping, attribution, and exaggeration.

Another limitation to this study relates to the interpretation of the change in years. Being that the data was only collected once the researchers cannot say with certainty that there is indeed a trend. The change in the perception of ethical behaviour of self could be limited to the ten years being studied.

Conclusion

The current study has offered empirical evidence that the year the data was collected had an effect on the perceived ethical behaviour of peers. The results indicated **that students' percepti**on of ethical behaviour is changing as hypothesized by the researchers. Further interpretation is that students in 2008 perceived their peers to be

more ethical than students from 2018. Thus, the results suggest that ethical behaviour may be decreasing over time which could be explained by generational differences.

Similar to many previous studies, only one of the four components of the emotional intelligence scale was significant. Regulation of emotions (ROE) was the only factor found to significantly impact the perception of ethical behaviour of peers. These results are consistent with Fu (2013). This is an important finding as it suggests those who have a stronger ability to regulate their emotions may also have a better ability to identify ethical behaviour in their peers. An inference for this finding is that educators may want to consider incorporating content or coursework on the regulation of emotions within undergraduate education. Also, educators teaching business ethics may want to focus on how the individual components of emotional intelligence can impact ethical behaviour or the identification of ethical behaviour.

Like some previous studies, the researchers found that female students perceive their peers as more ethical than males. However, many previous studies indicate that gender does not influence ethical judgement or behaviour. Perhaps an explanation for the significance of gender could be further explained by the content of the questions. Consideration should be given to the fact that gender did highly correlate (-.24) with others emotions appraisal. This could mean that women may have a higher ability to be sensitive to feelings or emotions, or to be optimistic towards the ethics of others than that of their male counterparts. Though gender was found to be a statistically significant predictor of the perceived ethical behaviour of peers the lack of consistency in empirical research on this topic left the researchers in this study with the conclusion that further research needs to be done.

Self-reported ethical behaviour, or ethical behaviour of self (EBS), was also found to be a significant predictor of the perception of ethical behaviour of peers. These findings are consistent with Joseph, et al., 2008. These results are also in line with social learning theory, which suggests people learn from those around them (Bandura, 1977). Overclaiming also had a significant impact on the perception of ethical behaviour of peers and the two variables were highly correlated. This implies that students in the study who have a propensity to overclaim tend to inflate their perception of the ethics of their peers.

There are a few significant implications that can be drawn from this research for business educators and business professionals. One major practical interpretation of this research is that students perceptions of ethical behaviour of peers has decreased compared to students from the ten years prior. This is important for teaching ethics as the current methodologies and content may not be as effective as they were in the past. If that is the case, those teaching ethical education need to examine the current education and training methodologies. Specifically, consideration, as pointed out be many previous researchers, should be given to how ethics is being taught, if a school is requiring a stand-alone ethics course, and the foundation of ethics a student enters college with (Rutherford, Parks, Cavazos, White, 2012).

Development of existing guidelines for ethical conduct is another area of practical application. Most organizations have a code of ethics to reinforce the ethical values of an organization. This research suggests ethical perceptions of others are decreasing over time which indicates organizations may want to consider monitoring and reviewing their code of ethics. An in-**depth review of a company's code of ethics could shed light** on areas that are may be unclear to employees. Furthermore, managers could identify areas that need to be added to a code of ethics based on technological or societal **changes that aren't addressed in their current code.**

Another practical application is in the perception of new and current employees. Managers should be aware of what employees consider acceptable workplace

behaviours. Hiring managers could administer annual reviews for perception of ethical behaviour. Surveys could review incoming and current employees on ethical judgement. The same survey could be administered periodically to see if ethical perceptions or judgements are changing over time. If a manager sees the judgement of employees changing over time this could be a call to action for a manager.

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Appendix

Items used to measure various constructs:
Ethical behavior of peers
   a) Students make personal calls at work.
   b) Students surf the web at work.
   c) **Students take office supplies home.**
   d) Students share music on the internet.
   e) Students download term papers off the internet.
   f) Students give friends an extra discount at a store or free food at a café/restaurant.
   g) Students sometimes help themselves to food if working at a fast food joint.
   h) Students do homework for friends.
   i) Students have used a fake ID to purchase alcohol.
   j) Students have used a fake ID to get into a bar.
   k) Students have cheated on an exam.
   l) In order to get ahead in life, students believe that one has to compromise on ethical standards.
Ethical behavior of self
   a. **I'd make personal calls at work.**
   b. **I'd surf the web at work.**
   c. **I'd take office supplies home.**
   d. **I'd share music on the internet.**
   e. I download term papers off the internet.
   f. **I'd give a friend an extra discount at a** store or free food at a café/restaurant.
   g. **I'd sometimes help myself to food if I worked at a fast food joint.**
   h. **I'd do homework for my close friends.**
   i. **I've used** a fake ID to purchase alcohol.
   j. **I've used** a fake ID to get into a bar.
   k. **I've** cheated on an exam.
   l. In order to get ahead in your future career you will have to compromise your ethical standards.
Overclaiming scales
   a. How familiar are you with each of the following movies?
      Turned to Gold
      Katherine's Mistake
   b. How familiar are you with each of the following products?
      Microsoft Statistical Assistant
      New Life Spices
   c. How familiar are you with the following albums?
      Cosmic Being
      Offender After Dark
   d. How familiar are you with each of the following TV programs?
      The Adventure of Johnnie
      Chicago Heat
   e. How familiar are you with each of the following designer labels?
      Ocean City
      Jones, L.A