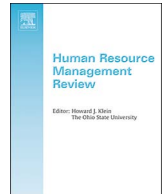




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Keep calm and carry on (ethically): Durable moral courage in the workplace

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ABSTRACT

We develop a model of factors that enable morally courageous actors to carry on even after encountering organizational opposition. The model specifies that durable moral courage facilitates continued moral action and that demoralization inhibits it, and presents the perceived manageability of the organizational response as a factor affecting the extent to which an actor experiences durable moral courage and/or demoralization. It is proposed that moral efficacy, hardiness, and planning for endurance insulate the actor before an act of moral courage, by enhancing the perceived manageability of the organizational response; and that emotional self-regulation fortifies the actor by enhancing the perceived manageability of that response once it comes. It is also posited that moral efficacy and hardiness contribute directly to durable moral courage, hardiness and planning for endurance increase durable moral courage by promoting moral efficacy, and emotional self-regulation augments planning for endurance. Implications for research and practice are offered.

1. Introduction

Unethical behavior tarnishes organizational reputations, creates legal liabilities, and reduces public trust (Burke & Cooper, 2010). Globally, fraud costs trillions of dollars each year (ACFE, 2014), and bribery and corruption persist in the private and public sectors (Ernst & Young, 2016; Ethics & Compliance Initiative, 2016). Meanwhile, within organizations, “[i]ncivility, bullying, and other bad behavior take a psychological, emotional, mental and physical toll on employees” (Porath, 2015, p. 254). Van Buren, Greenwood, and Sheehan (2011) exhort human resource managers to “take up the responsibility of being the advocates for ethical HRM analysis and practice within their organizations” (p. 217; see also, MacDonald, 2015/2016; Parkes & Davis, 2013). Human resource executives, too, call upon members of their profession to play a pivotal role in leading ethical practice (Boudreau, 2015).

Business and professional ethics education and training typically emphasize enhancing the ability to recognize ethical issues in the workplace and/or to apply ethical criteria to make appropriate decisions (see Baker, 2014; Baker & Comer, 2012). Yet, knowledge of the morally correct action does not dependably promote that action (Walker, 2004). Individuals also need to care about moral criteria more than other considerations (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1994; Rest, 1994). But even when members of organizations know the ethically correct course of action and want to behave accordingly, the negative personal consequences associated with ethical action may deter them. “A person may be morally sensitive, may make good moral judgments, and may place high priority on moral values, but if the person wilts under pressure, is easily distracted or discouraged, is a wimp and weak-willed, then moral failure occurs” (Rest,

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1994, p. 24). Beyond the desire to pursue the principled path, members of organizations require ethical strength to reach their moral destination. In short, they often need moral courage to behave ethically.

Although the topic of moral courage has begun to interest organizational researchers (Comer & Vega, 2011a; Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014; May, Luth, & Schworer, 2014; Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009; Simola, 2015a), how an actor carries on with this form of courage in the workplace has received scant attention. Organizational members seeking to promote fairness, protect the rights of others, and prevent wrongdoing need to be equipped to deal with the rejection, resistance, and/or retaliation that may follow their morally courageous behavior. Backlash is especially likely if powerful people in the organization benefit from the perpetuation of the very practices or systems ethical employees challenge. The harassment, ostracism, and other unpleasant outcomes organizational members may encounter after doing what is morally right can leave them feeling demoralized. Yet others, in similar circumstances, are able to continue with their efforts to effect positive ethical change (Martin, 2009; Rehg, Miceli, Near, & Van Scotter, 2008). What sustains moral courage in the workplace?

In this paper, we begin to address this question. After reviewing the literature on moral courage, we explain how durable moral courage, the capacity for sustained morally courageous behavior, promotes continued moral action; and how demoralization, a deflation in spirits in the face of a distressing situation, inhibits it. We identify the perceived manageability of the organizational response to an act of moral courage as a factor that moderates the extent to which durable moral courage and/or demoralization will follow that act, thereby affecting continued moral behavior. We consider how moral efficacy and hardiness contribute directly to durable moral courage, and how hardiness and planning for endurance increase durable moral courage by promoting moral efficacy. We also explore how moral efficacy, hardiness, and planning for endurance insulate the actor before the morally courageous act, boosting durable moral courage by increasing the perceived manageability of the organization's response. Then we discuss how emotional self-regulation fortifies the actor after the organizational response, bolstering durable moral courage by enhancing the perceived manageability of the organizational response; as well as how emotional self-regulation enhances planning for endurance. Our work contributes to the emerging domain of positive organizational ethics (Sekerka, Comer, & Godwin, 2014), which focuses explicitly on fostering the ethical action of individuals, groups, and organizations. In particular, we respond to the call for research that clarifies how individuals persevere while "engaging in morally courageous actions" (Sekerka et al., 2014, p. 442). That is, we do not seek to identify factors that increase the likelihood that members of organizations will behave ethically in general or, more specifically, that they will initiate morally courageous action. Instead, we explore a circumscribed set of factors that sustain a campaign of moral courage.

2. Moral courage

Moral courage is "the behavioral expression of authenticity in the face of the discomfort of dissension, disapproval, or rejection" (Lopez et al., 2010, p. 23). It requires "the willingness to speak up or take action...for oneself as well as for others" (Bronstein, Fox, Kamon, & Knolls, 2007, p. 661). Moral courage "compels or allows an individual to do what he or she believes is right, despite fear of social or economic consequences" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 216). As a result, it contributes to consistency between moral intentions and behavior (Solomon, 1992).

Most scholars of courage distinguish between types of courage in terms of what is at stake for the agent (see, e.g., Pury & Lopez, 2010; Solomon, 1992; but see Koerner, 2014). Indeed, moral courage and physical courage do not necessarily co-exist. An individual may, for example, risk social condemnation in the pursuit of a moral goal (moral courage), but face no physical danger. Conversely, a life-imperiling act (physical courage) that involves no chance of social rejection does not call for moral courage (Osswald, Greitemeyer, Fischer, & Frey, 2010; Pianalto, 2012). Moral courage, like other forms of courage, is viewed as a character virtue that can be cultivated (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011; Osswald et al., 2010; Sekerka et al., 2009). According to Aristotle (350 BCE/ Bartlett & Collins, 2011), individuals can develop virtue by behaving virtuously. Practice fosters the formation of habits that instill character. Consistent with Aristotle, contemporary moral philosophers (e.g., Moberg, 1999) assert that we can choose to become more virtuous, and personality psychologists (e.g., McAdams & Pals, 2006) explain that because courage and other virtues are tied to motivation, they are amenable to change. Indeed, empirical research confirms that moral development continues well into adulthood (Hill & Roberts, 2010).

2.1. The organizational response to morally courageous behavior

Organizational pressures, ranging from the subtle to the blatant, can discourage individuals from expressing ethical concerns (Burris, 2012; Comer & Vega, 2008, 2011a, 2011b; Detert & Treviño, 2010) and dissuade them from doing what is right (Moberg, 2006; Rossouw, 2002; Tepper, 2010). Employees who believe that candor would be unwelcome are less likely to speak up (Milliken, Schipani, Bishara, & Prado, 2015; Verhezen, 2010; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Some people, however, follow their moral convictions in spite of deterrents. In the very best of circumstances, colleagues and superiors approve a morally courageous actor's deeds and ideas for catalyzing positive organizational change. Their favorable response feeds the actor's further engagement. Koerner (2014), emphasizing the beneficial outcomes an act of workplace courage can engender, reports that those deciding not to act courageously experience "shame, regret, and frustration" (p. 73; see also Fredin, 2011). It is essential, however, not to discount the possible adverse consequences of morally courageous workplace behavior. Those who exercise moral courage knowingly assume personal risks (Kidder, 2005; Lopez, O'Byrne, & Petersen, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Pianalto, 2012). Their display of virtuous behavior may incur the resentment of coworkers, who may feel bad about their own comparatively ignoble behavior (see Monin, Sawyer, & Marquez, 2008). Morally courageous actors may also have to contend with inhospitable and even hostile reactions from

peers and managers who benefit from the unethical practices they question.

Studies of whistleblowing (see Alford, 1999, 2001; Dworkin & Baucus, 1998) reveal the unfortunate penalties that can befall those who exercise this type of moral courage. The retaliation they face has been characterized as workplace bullying (Bjørkelo, 2013). Indeed, it often involves “social isolation, threats, [or] ostracism” (McDonald & Ahern, 2002, p. 22), including colleagues' show of support in private settings but their lack of public support (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014); criticism (Glazer, 1999); suffocating supervision or job loss (Mecca et al., 2014); and even physical violence (Verschoor, 2012). Despite legal sanctions against it, organizational retaliation is all too common (Ethics & Compliance Initiative, 2016; Ethics Resource Center, 2014). Therefore, it is no surprise that some employees choose to remain silent in the face of organizational wrongdoing rather than risk reprisal (Knoll & van Dick, 2012). An organization may tout its commitment to ethics, yet penalize employees who stand up for their principles, even those the organization claims to endorse (see Snell, 2001). At the time of its implosion, Enron had a weighty code of conduct document; likewise, BP claimed that safety was its primary priority, and Volkswagen advertised its commitment to the environment.

We use the term organizational response to refer to the composite reaction of key members within the organization. In their study of the consequences of unethical auditor behavior, Hyatt and Prawitt (2011) use the phrase “organizational response” to denote the combined reaction of the auditor's immediate supervisor and of a more senior person in the firm who determines whether and how to discipline the errant auditor. Similarly, Taylor and Curtis (2013) operationalize organizational response to a whistleblowing attempt according to whether “the firm takes appropriate action and counsels or reprimands the violator” or “does not always take appropriate action and continues to promote violators within the firm” (p. 28, italics in original). These researchers refer to the larger entity of the organization to represent the collective action of occupants of important positions within that organization. Whereas the role expectations of both organizational peers and superiors exert pressures on individuals that affect their (un)ethical workplace behavior (Zey-Ferrell & Ferrell, 1982; see also Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975), the response of organizational members that have high levels of legitimate power may be especially salient to a morally courageous actor (see Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Additionally, the intensity and pervasiveness of the response matter, such that a virulent response that permeates the organization hierarchically and laterally would be more problematic than one that is weaker and/or held by only a few, and, particularly, lower-level members of the organization. (The former would be expected when the organizational culture places a premium on employees' loyalty and conformity; see Hewlin, 2003; Matt & Shahinpoor, 2011.)

Proposition 1. Morally courageous action is likely to elicit an organizational response. (Fig. 1 depicts this relationship and the others that we will consider.)

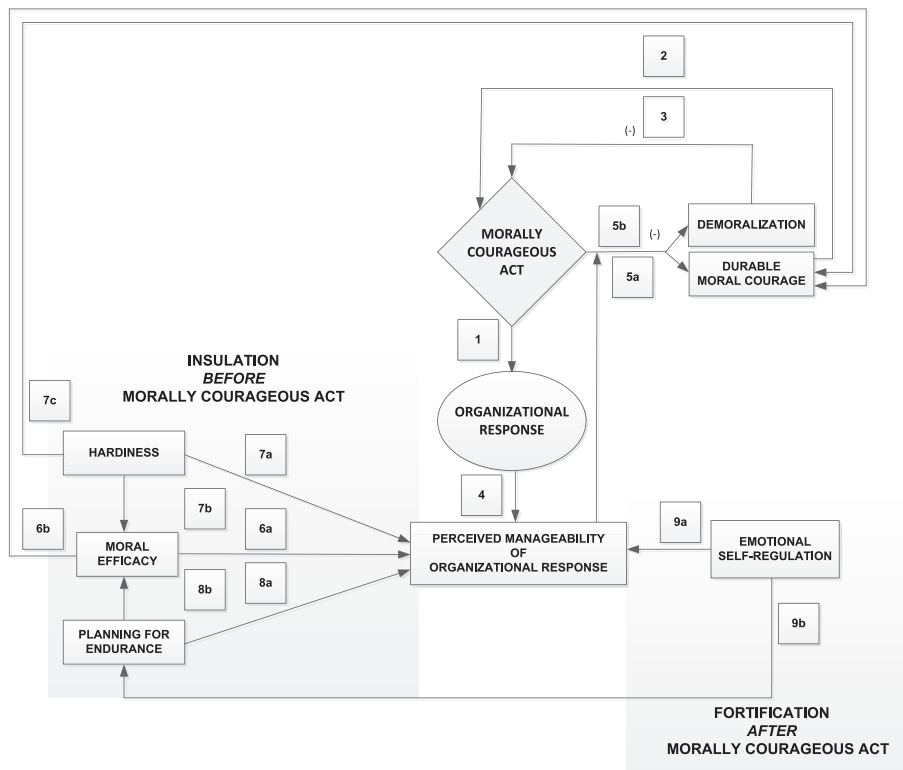


Fig. 1. Factors that contribute to durable moral courage in the workplace.

2.2. Durable moral courage

Employees may need to sustain a protracted campaign to achieve their ethical goals (Kohn, 2011; Taylor & Curtis, 2010). But if an act of moral courage is not supported, it may seem futile to continue exerting effort toward potentially unattainable results. Even those who understand at an intellectual level that they are assuming risks and sacrifices by engaging in morally courageous behavior may be ill equipped to deal with an unfavorable feedback from peers and superiors. Most people are emotionally vulnerable to negative encounters, which affect them more strongly than positive ones (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). Social rejection can be particularly daunting (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Leary et al., 2003), perhaps because it has the same neurobiological bases as physical pain (Eisenberger, 2011, 2012). Beyond the rejection is the disillusioning recognition that one works with people who are not genuinely committed to the values they claim to hold.

We define *durable moral courage* as the capacity to persist with morally courageous behavior—even when the initial act elicits rejection, resistance, and/or retaliation from within one's organization. As uncommon as moral courage is, durable moral courage is even more extraordinary. Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the pro-democracy movement in Burma, exemplifies durable moral courage in the realm of politics (White, 1998), as does Lech Wałęsa, who fought for labor rights and then played a key role in overcoming the communist regime in Poland (Lussier, 2010). Accounts of durable moral courage in organizations may be less likely to be publicized than morally courageous acts that lead to demoralization, yet there are remarkable exemplars. After 34 years of active service in the U.S. Army, General Antonio Taguba was forced into retirement, within two years of chronicling the abuses American soldiers perpetrated on detainees at Abu Ghraib prison (Hersh, 2007). Despite this blow, Taguba did not give up. Instead, he penned a report released the following year, in which he lambasted the lack of ethical leadership within the Bush administration and continued to demand accountability (Froomkin, 2008). Another model of durable moral courage is Anthony Menendez, who blew the whistle on Halliburton's inappropriate accounting practices. Although he lost his job, he sustained his campaign for a decade and was finally vindicated. He was eventually offered a position at General Motors, whose top accounting officer was impressed by his deep commitment to integrity (Eisinger, 2015). After seven years at GM, Menendez now works as a forensic accounting litigation consultant. As he reflected on his experience, “Any incremental setback just increased my resolve” (telephone communication with first author, 7/22/15).

Durable moral courage is a specific type of resilience that enables actors to continue with their morally courageous conduct, even after an undesirable organizational response occurs. (Recent research on resilience features highly context-based conceptualizations; see Holmes, Yoon, Voith, Kobulsky, & Steigerwald, 2015; Moenkemeyer, Hoegl, & Weiss, 2012; Smith-Osborne & Felderhoff, 2016; Sommer, Howell, & Hadley, 2016.) Caza and Milton (2012) view resilience as a process that occurs when adversity triggers personal development. To Mancini and Bonanno (2009), however, resilience is an outcome, the capacity to persist adaptively in the face of adversity. We likewise conceptualize durable moral courage as a positive outcome, one that can ultimately contribute to ethical organizational change. Organizational scholars generally use the term sustainability in reference to an organization's ability to meet current and future environmental, social, and economic needs (see, e.g., Junior, Best, & Cotter, 2014). Yet, social welfare theorists have described personal sustainability as the ongoing health and well-being of individuals (Hawkins, 2005). Insofar as durable moral courage in the workplace permits protracted functional effort to achieve ethical goals, it represents sustainable organizational behavior at the individual level.

Proposition 2. Durable moral courage is likely to facilitate continued moral action in the workplace.

We turn now to the concept of demoralization. Then, we explore factors that promote durable moral courage and inhibit demoralization.

3. Demoralization in organizations

Demoralization is a profound deflation in spirits that an individual may experience upon encountering an upsetting situation he or she can neither change nor avoid (Slavney, 1999). The inability to improve this predicament elicits feelings of incompetence, reduced mastery, and/or hopelessness (Clarke & Kissane, 2002; see also Griffith, 2013). Demoralization may occur after striving to achieve a cherished goal or ideal (especially a virtuous one), only to be thwarted (Gabel, 2012; Wein, 2007). Distinguishing demoralization from depression, which may have a biochemical basis, Wein (2007) notes, “demoralization is almost always used in the context of a person struggling with adversity” (p. 41; see also Connor & Walton, 2011; Griffith, 2013). The concept of demoralization appears in the literature in clinical psychology and psychiatry, often in relation to the experiences of individuals with chronic and/or terminal illnesses (Connor & Walton, 2011; Frank & Frank, 1991; Wein, 2007), or those of healthcare professionals thwarted by flawed organizational and politico-legal systems (Bhugra, 2013; Gabel, 2012). Education researchers have used the term to depict teachers' profound frustration and dissatisfaction (Santoro, 2011).

Few studies of demoralization appear in the human resource management literature. One of them describes individuals who experience demoralization because they cannot attain their “goals and aspirations as they participate in organizations” (Switzer & Switzer, 1989, p. 250). Rayburn and Rayburn (1998) cite employee demoralization as one of the negative outcomes of corporate downsizing. Cheung (2005), too, asserts that organizational restructuring contributes to workers' feelings of powerlessness, which, in turn, can produce passive demoralization rather than explicit expressions of discontent. Attention to demoralization is even more limited in the business ethics literature. Miceli, Near, Rehg, and Van Scotter (2012) report that employees who observe uncorrected or unreported wrongdoing perceive lower organizational support, which they construe as a manifestation of employee demoralization. But these scholars do not define demoralization. Moreover, they treat it as a result of employees' perception that

wrongdoing has occurred, rather than as a consequence of their attempts to remedy or report an ethical transgression.

Organizational scholars have paid negligible attention to demoralization, but they have explored the construct of burnout. Job burnout is a “psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace” (Maslach, 2003, p. 189). An unrelenting overload of demands ultimately exceeds personal resources, causing emotional exhaustion, a sense of inefficacy, and cynical detachment as a means of coping (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Both burnout and demoralization entail deep discontentment and negative affect. However, employees with burnout question their ability to perform their job responsibilities (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), whereas demoralization may be experienced by those doubting their capacity to achieve goals beyond their specific job description. Also, burnout follows a chronic accumulation of excessive work-related demands (Gunderman, 2014; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009), but demoralization can occur more acutely, such that a morally courageous actor may become demoralized not long after an unsupportive organizational response. When organizations erect systemic barriers that make it difficult to contest established practices, “individuals [are] less likely to assume moral responsibility” (Jensen, 2010, p. 426). Demoralized employees, too beleaguered to pursue seemingly unattainable ideals and principles, cannot sustain their moral effort.

Proposition 3. Demoralization is likely to inhibit continued moral action in the workplace.

4. Promoting durable moral courage and inhibiting demoralization

Quinn, Spreitzer, and Lam (2012) discuss the role of resources in enabling the expenditure of effort toward organizational goals. They explain how essential it is that members of organizations perceive they have sufficient resources to perform their tasks. Decades of research indicate that it is not a given stressor per se that matters. Instead, the extent to which an individual views the stressor as (un)manageable affects the individual's reaction to it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Leahy, 2008).

An actor needs to feel up to persisting with moral courage even after an unfavorable organizational response. Yet, social stressors—such as rejection—often contribute to strain and compromise well-being, because employees tend to think about them even when they are not at the workplace (Demsky, Ellis, & Fritz, 2014; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Because it is difficult to quantify adversity objectively (Caza & Milton, 2012), we focus on the actor's subjective perception of the organizational response to his or her act of moral courage. This perception is affected by the actual objective magnitude of disapproval encountered—i.e., the pervasiveness and severity of the disapproval and the amount of power held by those who disapprove. But it also depends on individual-level factors, as we will discuss in sections 5 and 6.

The extent to which an actor perceives the organizational response to his or her morally courageous action as manageable is expected to moderate the actor's experience of demoralization and/or durable moral courage. An actor to whom the organization's response seems overpoweringly dire and daunting is apt to experience demoralization and thus be unlikely to proceed. In contrast, to the extent that the actor regards the organizational response as surmountable, he or she will have the durable moral courage that will foster subsequent ethical behavior. We regard demoralization and durable moral courage as two dimensions, both continuous and ranging from none to a great deal.

Proposition 4. The more supportive the organizational response to morally courageous action, the greater the perceived manageability of that response is likely to be.

Proposition 5a. The greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response, the greater an actor's durable moral courage is likely to be.

Proposition 5b. The greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response, the lesser an actor's demoralization is likely to be.

In the next two sections, we identify factors that increase the perceived manageability of the organizational response to morally courageous behavior and also promote durable moral courage through other paths. First, we look at factors that can provide insulation for the actor against a potential unsupportive organizational response, before an initial act of moral courage. Then we discuss how emotional self-regulation can fortify a morally courageous actor after a negative organizational response. Some researchers have used the term protective factors to refer broadly to attributes or conditions that can reduce the likelihood of a problematic individual outcome (see, e.g., Holmes et al., 2015; Muller, Dodd, & Fiala, 2014; Smith-Osborne & Felderhoff, 2016). In contrast, we emphasize the distinction between insulating factors already in place before morally courageous action is taken and fortifying factors that come into play after the occurrence of an unsupportive organizational response to that initial act of moral courage. Fig. 1 delineates these factors and depicts the initial act of moral courage as a critical temporal event that serves “as a reference point for things that happen before and after” (Ancona, Okhuysen, & Perlow, 2001, p. 515).

5. Insulation before morally courageous action

Certain factors are likely to increase the extent to which the organizational response seems manageable, by providing insulation for an actor before his or her initial act of moral courage. We use the term insulation to convey that each of these factors—moral efficacy, hardiness, and planning for endurance—works to safeguard the actor, allowing him or her to preserve resources and avoid damage (just as insulating clothing guards against exposure to severe aspects of the environment and prevents illness and injury), should backlash ensue. We also discuss how moral efficacy and hardiness directly affect durable moral courage, and how hardiness and planning for endurance boost moral efficacy.

5.1. Moral efficacy

Self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to perform a specific behavior in a particular situation (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1997). It enables a person to take on a major challenge and see it through, even after failing to obtain a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Wood, 1989). Self-efficacy has been linked with workplace performance under stress (Hoyt, Murphy, Halverson, & Watson, 2003). Whereas self-efficacy represents an individual's perception that he or she can execute a behavior, outcome expectancies are perceptions of the likelihood that the successfully executed behavior will lead to a desired goal (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Bandura & Cervone, 1986). These outcome expectancies, based on acknowledgment and consideration of the influence of factors beyond one's skills and control, therefore also affect goals and effort (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Locke & Latham, 1990).

Hannah and Avolio (2010) define moral efficacy as a person's "belief (confidence) in his or her capabilities to organize and mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, means, and courses of action needed to attain moral performance, within a given moral domain, while persisting in the face of moral adversity" (p. 296). They draw upon Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, which explains the relationships between attitudes, perceived control, and behavior. They note that moral efficacy confers to individuals "a sense of perceived control over their behaviors and their capabilities to perform," thereby promoting behavior that accords with moral intentions (Hannah & Avolio, 2010, p. 297). Insofar as Hannah and Avolio's (2010) definition references "persisting in the face of moral adversity" (p. 296), it subsumes outcome expectancies as well as self-efficacy. Individuals with moral efficacy understand the need to contend with suboptimal conditions and believe that they will prevail against these conditions. Therefore, even if their actions do bring about an unsupportive organizational response, morally efficacious individuals are not inclined to regard that response as overly daunting.

Proposition 6a. The greater a morally courageous actor's moral efficacy, the greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response is likely to be.

Moral efficacy may also have a direct effect on durable moral courage. Morally efficacious individuals view themselves as competent to confront the challenges they may encounter after acting with moral courage in order to bring about positive ethical change in their organizations. As Caza and Milton (2012) assert, "an individual's identity may...guide behavior in times of crisis" and thereby boost resilience (p. 902). Those with moral efficacy may self-identify as having the will and the way to engage in continued moral behavior and strive to align their behavior with that identity.

Proposition 6b. The greater a morally courageous actor's moral efficacy, the greater the actor's durable moral courage is likely to be.

5.2. Hardiness

Chronic stress can impair physical health and shorten lives (Sapolsky, 1998, 2007). However, hardiness allows a person to contend with ongoing ambiguity and uncertainty without experiencing debilitating psychological or physical strain (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2002). According to Maddi (2002), hardiness comprises three key attitudes: 1) commitment—being involved (rather than detached and/or isolated); 2) control—adopting a perspective that assumes a capacity to influence (rather than feeling powerless and behaving passively); and 3) challenge—embracing change and self-development (rather than clinging to the seeming security of the status quo). Hardy individuals can process negative experiences in a productive way. They do not crumble in stressful situations, but become stronger.

Hardy individuals "believe that they can turn adversity into opportunity" (Maddi, 2002, p. 176). It is not that they are in denial. Instead, they find the silver lining in any dark cloud, positively viewing unpleasant experiences as occasions for learning and personal development (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Hardy members of organizations experience lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of subjective well-being (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Maddi, 2008). They are more likely to construe a workplace demand as a challenge they can meet than as a threat they lack the wherewithal to handle. In short, they tend to "snap back" rather than "snap" (Coutu, 2002, p. 46). They are also apt to use coping tactics that produce resolution (Cash & Gardner, 2011). Hardiness may benefit those engaged in morally courageous behavior. To the extent that a person is hardy, even an unsupportive organizational response will seem less daunting.

Proposition 7a. The greater a morally courageous actor's hardiness, the greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response is likely to be.

Hardiness may also enhance durable moral courage by means of its relationship to moral efficacy. That is, an individual's moral efficacy may mediate the relationship between the individual's hardiness and his or her perception of the organization's response. Given that hardy individuals have a tendency to greet change and influence circumstances proactively, they likely have moral efficacy, a belief in their ability to persist in seeking their moral goals in spite of any challenges.

Proposition 7b. The greater a morally courageous actor's hardiness, the greater the actor's moral efficacy is likely to be.

Moreover, insofar as hardiness is dispositional resilience (see Coutu, 2002), it is expected to have a direct effect on an actor's durable moral courage.

Proposition 7c. The greater a morally courageous actor's hardiness, the greater the actor's durable moral courage is likely to be.

5.3. Planning for endurance

So far, we have described how moral efficacy and hardiness provide insulation against a potential unsupportive organizational response. Both of these insulating factors are traits. As such, some morally courageous actors may be more predisposed to possess them than are others. We now turn to an insulating behavior, which is more readily available to employees, regardless of disposition: planning for endurance. A defining criterion of moral courage is “the willingness to endure hardship” (Kidder, 2005, p. 74). Yet, the length of the period of endurance is unknowable. When facing uncertainty in the workplace, it is important “to think proactively and realistically” (Sweeny & Ghane, 2015, p. 137). If morally courageous action is envisioned as a one-time event, and that event is not well received by the organization, the moral actor may experience a sense of loss and/or failure. Those who act with moral courage without bracing themselves sufficiently for possible opposition may be overpowered by disappointment. By anticipating and preparing purposefully for unfavorable outcomes, conceptualizing morally courageous action as an ongoing process involving more than one episode (i.e., a series of acts), and appreciating that progress toward their goal may unfold slowly, morally courageous actors can proactively insulate themselves, increasing the perceived manageability of the organizational response.

Reflection is an element of moral competency (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007). Contemplation before implementation allows actors to anticipate and prepare for the response to their act of moral courage. Like other agents of organizational change, they need to appreciate that some members of their organization will be uncomfortable with uncertainty (Carnall, 1986; Darling, 1993). Even the prospect of change can elicit negative emotions (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014; Kotter & Cohen, 2002) and active resistance (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Coghlan, 1993). Morally courageous actors must also understand the political ramifications of taking action (Nielsen, 1996; Reardon, 2007). Because the new order they seek may threaten those advantaged by the status quo (Burris, 2012; Hanson, 2014; Simola, 2015b), it is especially important that they clarify the alignment between their goals and the organization's best interests (Hoogervorst, De Cremer, & van Dijke, 2013). A morally courageous actor can contact key organizational players to glean their insights (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013), and then adjust the content and delivery of his or her message accordingly to make it more palatable to others (see Grant, 2013).

Planning may indicate the need to form a coalition. Sharing information and brainstorming with others can yield a more comprehensive strategy (Thalhammer et al., 2007), and a morally courageous coalition has the strength in numbers to achieve what a single actor could not (Comer & Baker, 2011). Organizational members are less likely to express an opinion they perceive as different from the majority opinion; over time, the inhibition of minority opinions fuels perceptions of the pervasiveness of the majority opinion, further suppressing nonconformity within the organization (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). Yet, individuals who are more certain of their attitudes are apt to express these attitudes even when they are in the minority (Matthes, Morrison, & Schemer, 2010). When they do, other minority opinion-holders, even those with less certainty about their attitudes, are more likely to join them in dissent (Levine, 1999; Wilder & Allen, 1977). A morally courageous actor can therefore attract like-minded peers as allies, and emerge as an informal leader of an empowered posse (Amos & Klimoski, 2014). Whether working alone or in a coalition, those who plan before their initial act of moral courage recognize that they may encounter an unsupportive organizational response. Their preparations may produce a more favorable response and equip them to view what does come as something they can handle.

Proposition 8a. The more the actor plans for endurance before engaging in morally courageous action, the greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response is likely to be.

In addition to directly increasing the perceived manageability of the organizational response, planning for endurance may indirectly enhance perceived manageability via its effect on moral efficacy. Specifically, the sense of preparedness that planning confers is likely to heighten actors' confidence in their ability to contend with whatever organizational response their morally courageous behavior elicits.

Proposition 8b. The more an actor plans for endurance before engaging in morally courageous action, the greater the actor's moral efficacy is likely to be.

6. Fortification after the organization responds to an initial act of moral courage

We have argued that having moral efficacy and hardiness and planning for endurance before an initial act of workplace moral courage provide insulation for the actor, making the subsequent organizational response seem more manageable. These factors are akin to the layers of thermal clothing one puts on before going outdoors for an extended period on a bitter cold day. Yet, even someone who bundles up will, after returning indoors, benefit from a hot meal or beverage before venturing outside again. Analogously, after the organizational response to their morally courageous act, actors may need to fortify themselves, to engage in reinforcing activities that help them to proceed (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Pieters, 1998).

Fortification after an organizational response can work in tandem with insulating factors (i.e., moral efficacy, hardiness, and planning for endurance) to promote durable moral courage and to inhibit demoralization. Fortification may be especially important, however, for someone who lacks key insulating attributes and makes no preparations for the possibility of an unsupportive organizational response—and then encounters one. Extending the metaphor, such a person would be underdressed for the frosty reception he or she might encounter. This person needs to reduce the chill to perceive the organizational response as manageable. Although it is understandable that someone would consider aborting a course of action that is met with organizational opposition, abandoning one's goals can create additional distress (Brandstätter, Herrmann, & Schüler, 2013). Moreover, quitting a campaign of moral courage may result in dwelling on the negative experience, thereby perpetuating the unpleasantness (Nolen-Hoeksema,

Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). Thus, the cessation of morally courageous effort may still not inhibit demoralization. Fortification, in contrast, may enable continued goal pursuit. How can morally courageous actors fortify themselves after an unsupportive organizational response?

6.1. Emotional self-regulation

Morally courageous actors can achieve fortification by engaging in emotional self-regulation. The self-regulation of emotions allows an individual to counter negative reactions with positive ones (Koole, van Dillen, & Sheppes, 2011). The individual learns to recognize unproductive automatic emotional reactions to a situation and redirect them toward more constructive reactions (Gailliot, Schmeichel, & Baumeister, 2006; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Through self-regulation, people can behave in accordance with their moral beliefs and values (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004) and achieve important life goals (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). There is a natural tendency to focus on negative events (Seligman et al., 2006). However, awareness of unproductive rumination and practice in moving on can help subdue this tendency (Hofmann, Friese, & Strack, 2009; Webb, Gallo, Miles, Gollwitzer, & Sheeran, 2012). It then becomes possible to construe a setback not as a reason to despair, but as a signal that there is more work to be done (Kappes, Oettingen, & Pak, 2012).

Self-affirmation, self-compassion, and social support are emotional self-regulation practices that can help morally courageous actors to proceed after experiencing an unsupportive organizational response.

6.1.1. Self-affirmation

When individuals confront situations that engender negative emotions, self-affirmation—purposeful reflection on their achievements in other life domains—can better equip them to undertake the challenge at hand (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). Concentration on these prior accomplishments preserves their self-concept after receiving threatening social feedback (Aronson, Blanton, & Cooper, 1995). Self-affirmation, by evoking successful experiences and positive emotions, can thus help to fortify a morally courageous actor contending with an unsupportive organizational response.

6.1.2. Self-compassion

Those who practice self-compassion treat themselves as they would treat another person in need of understanding and nurturance. When facing a painful experience, they do not wallow in self-pity or otherwise let negativity become all-consuming or paralyzing (Neff, 2003a, 2004). Nor do they try to distance themselves cognitively or emotionally from it, which could jeopardize their well-being (Molassiotis, Wilson, Blair, Howe, & Cavet, 2011; Tebb, Berg-Weger, & Rubio, 2013) and compromise their ability to perform (Balliet & Joireman, 2010). Instead, they respond in a balanced way that allows them to continue (Neff, 2003a). They permit themselves to acknowledge that they feel low because of what has happened, but then try to learn from the experience and move on. Self-compassion reduces the impact of undesirable life events by reinforcing emotional resources (see Neff & Dahm, 2015, for a review). Individuals who exercise self-compassion in the face of a failed project seem more apt to have the emotional strength to learn from what went wrong (Shepherd & Cardon, 2009). It follows that self-compassion may help morally courageous actors to sustain their efforts after an unfavorable organizational response. They can give themselves credit for doing what was right, refrain from basing their self-worth on unreceptive others' assessments of their actions, and proceed strategically.

6.1.3. Social support

Actors can also look to others for fortification. Social support encompasses encouragement, advice, information, and assistance (Cohen & Wills, 1985). It attenuates the impact of workplace stressors, enabling employees to confront negative encounters in a more productive way (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Wei-Qing, Oi-ling, Jia-Fang, Cooper, & Phillips, 2009). Supportive relationships foster trust and reciprocal commitment and accountability (Cannon, 2009; Ragins & Dutton, 2007). An unfavorable organizational response to an act of moral courage may seem less bleak to someone facing it with fellow coalition members (Comer & Baker, 2011), or with other peers or supervisors. Loyal colleagues and mentors, as well as friends and family members, can listen patiently and provide validation. By reassuring morally courageous actors that their goals and efforts are praiseworthy and imperative, these supporters can help them to replace negative emotions with positive ones and sustain their right action.

Proposition 9a. The more a morally courageous actor engages in emotional self-regulation, the greater the perceived manageability of the organizational response is likely to be.

Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) distinguish between the doing-oriented phases when individual members of organizations actively pursue goals and the transition phases during which their analysis and strategy occur. Although Marks et al. (2001) study these phase-linked processes within task groups, they draw our attention to the interplay between individual action and organizational reaction. In particular, they direct us to the ways in which the latter can prompt an individual to make necessary adjustments before taking further action. When actors channel emotions productively after encountering an inhospitable organizational response to their initial act of moral courage, they can use that response to guide correction before their next steps (see Mann, de Ridder, & Fujita, 2013). If the actor planned for a possible unsupportive organizational response before exercising the initial act of moral courage, emotional self-regulation can bolster that earlier preparation with new information and insights acquired from the organization's response to that act. If the actor did not plan, emotional self-regulation in the face of that response can underscore the need for and foster planning.

Proposition 9b. The more a morally courageous actor engages in emotional self-regulation, the more likely the actor is to plan for endurance.

7. Discussion

We have developed a model identifying factors that promote durable moral courage in the workplace. In particular, the model explains how moral efficacy, hardiness, and planning for endurance before an act of moral courage, as well as emotional self-regulation following the organizational response to that act, promote durable moral courage and inhibit demoralization. The perceived manageability of the organizational response is presented as an important factor that affects the extent to which the morally courageous actor experiences durable moral courage and/or demoralization.

7.1. Implications for research

Behavioral ethics research has illuminated why members of organizations deliberately or unwittingly do not dependably do what is right (Ambrose, Schminke, & Reynolds, 2014; Bazerman & Gino, 2012; De Cremer & Tenbrunsel, 2012). Still, little is known about the antecedents that enable some to persist in pursuit of their moral ideals in the workplace. Those that take personal risks to act in accordance with their moral values and principles distinguish themselves from their colleagues. Within this already small set of morally courageous actors are those who continue to press for ethical change, even in the face of adversity. Although negative feedback can erode one's sense of having sufficient resources to proceed (Quinn et al., 2012), durable moral courage enables functional protracted effort toward the achievement of an ethical organizational goal. Our model therefore enhances understanding of individual-level sustainability and resilience in the workplace and contributes to positive organizational ethics scholarship (Sekerka et al., 2014).

The propositional statements in our model require empirical study, perhaps using personal narratives and other self-reported data of those who have displayed durable moral courage. Valid and relevant measures are already available for moral efficacy (Hannah & Avolio, 2010), hardiness (Maddi & Khoshaba, 1998), and self-compassion (Neff, 2003b). A measure of durable moral courage can be adapted from existing scales for moral courage in the workplace (Sekerka et al., 2009). A test of the model also requires ascertaining the extent to which actors use self-affirmation after an unsupportive organizational response to their morally courageous act (see McQueen & Klein, 2006), and the extent to which they perceive social support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) and/or try to procure it. It will be necessary to develop a context-specific measure of demoralization, based on Kissane et al.'s (2004) scale; and new measures that operationalize planning for endurance and the perceived manageability of an organizational response to one's morally courageous act.

There may be other factors that contribute to durable moral courage in organizations. For example, religious or spiritual faith may enhance moral efficacy. MacDonald (2011) suggests that the faithful believe that they can meet the ongoing challenges of making sacrifices and incurring personal costs on the path to securing their long-term moral goals. White (2015) attributes the lasting efforts of the morally courageous NGO leaders she interviewed in Myanmar to their Buddhist faith, which helps them to accept that change often takes a long time and to focus on what they can do in the here and now. Other research suggests that some faithful individuals are high in hardiness. When their own morals clash with those of their organization, they see the differences as "opportunities to work for positive change" (Daniels, Diddams, & Van Duzer, 2011, p. 11).

Additionally, future research could identify factors that develop employees' capacity to fortify themselves via emotional self-regulation after an organizational response. As Nietzsche (1889/1998) said, "Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger" (p. 5). Some individuals experience positive change, as well as distress, after a traumatic event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Thinking purposely about a stressful, assumption-upending event and trying to construct meaning from it can foster personal growth (e.g., Lindstrom, Cann, Calhoun, & Tedeschi, 2013; Triplett, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun, & Reeve, 2012). Maitlis (2012) encourages scholarship on post-traumatic growth in organizational contexts. Lessons from the clinical-psychological research on post-traumatic growth could be leveraged to help those dealing with the aftermath of a singularly unsupportive organizational response to their acts of moral courage.

Another factor that may contribute to a morally courageous actor's fortification is grit. Grit is "perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining/effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, pp. 1087–1088; see also Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, & Ericsson, 2011). It is plausible that actors with high levels of grit would practice self-affirmation after encountering an unsupportive organizational response to their morally courageous behavior. Reminding themselves of their core identity as persistent pursuers of important, yet difficult goals may help them to proceed (Caza & Milton, 2012). Future research can also explore additional factors that might enhance durable moral courage in the workplace.

7.2. Implications for practice

7.2.1. What can morally courageous actors do?

Moral stress is a particularly potent form of work stress, associated with fatigue, lowered job satisfaction, and higher turnover intentions (DeTienne, Agle, Phillips, & Ingerson, 2012; see also Austin, Rankel, Kagan, Bergum, & Lemermeyer, 2005). Acting in accordance with one's conscience can reduce moral stress. Yet, there is often a price to pay for taking a stand about ethical issues in

the workplace. Actors can sustain their ethical behavior by insulating themselves before their morally courageous act and fortifying themselves after encountering the organization response.

Our examination of factors that promote durable moral courage points to the significant role of deliberation and purposeful attention. First, it is important to recognize—and to prepare for—the possibility of organizational opposition. Preparation should include an assessment of one's capacity for a sustained campaign in the face of an adverse organizational response (Moberg, 2011). Members of organizations who want to act with moral courage, but lack confidence in their ability to deal with disapproval may compensate for their deficiencies and overcome their doubts by building a coalition (Comer & Baker, 2011). Others may determine, prudently, that even within a coalition they would find organizational opposition unbearable.

Just as planning for endurance involves reflection before a morally courageous act to prepare for the eventuality of an unsupportive organizational response, emotional self-regulation does so after such a response occurs. Morally courageous actors can be advised to make an intentional effort to channel negative emotions into constructive ones. They can practice self-affirmation, recalling their successes in other spheres and situations; and exercise self-compassion, reminding themselves that—despite their organization's response—they behaved honorably. They can also turn to supportive colleagues and non-work allies for reassurance and/or advice.

Additionally, morally courageous actors can cultivate positive emotions as an everyday practice. By regularly paying attention to and collecting positive events and experiences, an actor creates a resilience-enhancing repository that allows quicker recovery and return to goal pursuit after encountering a negative situation (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Ren, Hu, Zhang, & Huang, 2010). A reservoir of positive emotions bolsters personal strength in the workplace (Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013; Sekerka, Brumbaugh, Rosa, & Cooperrider, 2006); it may fortify someone in the aftermath of an unsupportive organizational response to an act of moral courage. Routines that help generate these positive emotions include spending time in nature (Johnsen, 2011, 2013), focusing on reasons to be grateful (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), listening to or making music (Saarikallio, 2011), and engaging in meditation (Frieze, Messner, & Schaffner, 2012), progressive muscle relaxation (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Koole et al., 2011), or prayer (Bremner, Koole, & Bushman, 2011).

7.2.2. What can HR do?

An ethical organizational climate is associated with employees' ethical behavior (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Vardaman, Gondo, & Allen, 2014) and positive work attitudes (Valentine, Hollingworth, & Francis, 2013). Manroop, Singh, and Ezzedeen (2014) posit that HR systems can support an ethical climate (see also Buckley et al., 2001). Empirical research links the practices of selecting principled applicants, reinforcing honorable values, and soliciting employees' opinions and ideas for ethical improvement with ethical organizational climates (Guerci, Radaelli, Siletti, Cirella, & Shani, 2015). In addition to establishing processes and policies that generally create an ethical context, HR professionals need to aim specifically at bolstering durable moral courage. They would do well to hire candidates who are able to demonstrate that they understand the importance of deliberation before an initial act of moral courage and can learn from and proceed after difficult experiences. For example, interviewers could ask applicants to recall a workplace situation in which they took an unpopular stand, explain how they handled others' reactions, and describe how they would manage this type of situation in the future (see Sekerka & Godwin, 2010).

Training has been recommended to develop moral courage in the workplace (Sekerka & Godwin, 2010). Likewise, training can help foster durable moral courage. Although hardiness is a trait, it can be cultivated (see Maddi, 2011, for a review). Employees can also learn to plan for endurance. Continuing business and professional ethics education could incorporate multi-part cases that prompt individuals to think through the possible outcomes of an act of moral courage, to identify appropriate organizational collaborators, and to address opposition at various phases. Additionally, learners can create scripts for themselves in which they behave according to their moral principles and then participate in roleplays of these scripts to gain experience in confronting resistance (Gentile, 2010). Roleplaying can also give participants opportunities to devise strategies for redirecting negative emotional reactions more constructively, and then to practice implementing self-affirmation and self-compassion and requesting social support. Individuals that have the ability to describe and make distinctions between their experienced emotions are more proficient at emotional regulation than those who do not (Kashdan, Barrett, & McKnight, 2015). Therefore, it is worthwhile to offer workplace training to improve emotion-differentiation skills.

An ethical climate emerges when members of an organization learn that speaking up—to suggest greater transparency, to correct an unintentionally unfair process, or even to report a premeditated transgression—is truly practiced and not merely preached (see Argyris & Schön, 1974, for a distinction between espoused theories and theories in action). As Simola (2015b) argues, it is important to replace the practice of shooting the moral messenger with positive responses to acts of workplace moral courage. Beyond communicating ethical codes and standards, HR practitioners need to encourage ethical behavior and the expression of ethical concerns. They can do so by modeling morally courageous behavior themselves (Parkes & Davis, 2013). Because the effectiveness of HR initiatives depends in no small part upon the collaboration of line managers (Sikora & Ferris, 2014), HR professionals need to advise management throughout the organization to provide frequent opportunities for discussing ethical matters in their work units. When dialogue about ethics becomes routine, all members of the organization learn to address problems while they are still relatively minor and manageable (Sekerka, 2016).

7.3. Conclusion

Ideally, all organizations would appreciate and endorse their members' endeavors to act ethically on behalf of their colleagues, customers, community, and other stakeholders. Until they do, these organizational members must take care to do the right thing in a

personally sustainable way. Insulating against organizational opposition before an initial act of moral courage, and then fortifying afterwards can promote durable moral courage and thereby sustain ethical action.

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