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Jessica A. Kennedy¹ and Laura J. Kray¹

Abstract

Women select into business school at a lower rate than men and are underrepresented in high-ranking positions in business organizations. We examined gender differences in reactions to ethical compromises as one possible explanation for these disparities. In Study 1, when reading decisions that compromised ethical values for social status and monetary gains, women reported feeling more moral outrage and perceived less business sense in the decisions than men. In Study 2, we established a causal relationship between aversion to ethical compromises and disinterest in business careers by manipulating the presence of ethical compromises in job descriptions. As hypothesized, an interaction between gender and presence of ethical compromises emerged. Only when jobs involved making ethical compromises did women report less interest in the jobs than men. Women's moral reservations mediated these effects. In Study 3, we found that women implicitly associated business with immorality more than men did.

Keywords

gender, judgment and decision making, ethics, morality

In the movie *Wall Street*, Gordon Gekko famously stated, “greed . . . is good.” To many, this mantra typifies the attitude held by businesspeople, particularly on Wall Street, where women comprise only 4% of executives (Moya & Basar, 2011). Recent data suggest that women pursue business at lower rates than men. Although women comprise nearly half of the students in law school (Catalyst, 2012a) and medical school (Catalyst, 2012b), they are underrepresented in business schools, comprising only 36% of students at the top-10 master of business administration (MBA) programs, and in high-ranking positions in business organizations, comprising only 14% of executives at Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2012c).

To explain gender segregation in employment, research has largely focused on women's lack of advancement opportunities (Kanter, 1977; Lyness & Thompson, 1997; Martin, Harrison, & Dinitto, 1983; Miller & Wheeler, 1992). Other research has highlighted gender differences in values concerning group equality (Pratto, Stallworth, Sidanius, & Siers, 1997) and communal goals (Diekmann, Brown, Johnston, & Clark, 2010). Complementing this research, we identify a novel explanation for why women are underrepresented in business careers. We propose that women, more than men, find ethical compromises unacceptable.

Conceptualizing Ethical Compromises

We conceive of an ethical compromise as a decision that subordinates ethical values (e.g., honesty or fairness) to secular

values (e.g., monetary gains). Because ethical principles constitute categorical reasons for acting (Kant, 1997)—they must be upheld unconditionally—ethical values should trump other, noncategorical considerations (Orts & Strudler, 2009). When individuals compromise their ethical values, they forfeit their integrity. For instance, if a person opposed to biological warfare decides, in a moment of financial desperation, to accept work in a laboratory that advances these technologies, this undermines the person's integrity (Williams, 1988, p. 33).

Extreme ethical compromises pose taboo trade-offs (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). Taboo trade-offs involve the sacrifice of sacred values, which are considered infinitely valuable. For instance, forfeiting one's national citizenship to save money in taxes may pose a taboo trade-off because loyalty to one's country is considered priceless and sacrificing it for money is normatively forbidden. In comparison, relocating from one's beloved hometown for a better-paying job may pose an ethical compromise. Ethical compromises may be seen by those who make them as necessary for survival in a world of scarce resources. However, like taboo

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trade-offs, even fairly commonplace ethical compromises may elicit moral outrage because they violate cherished ethical principles (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). Notably, whether a decision represents a taboo trade-off or ethical compromise is subjective and a matter of degree; what is taboo to one person may be a mere compromise for another.

Ethical Compromises in Business Organizations

Ethical compromises may be especially prevalent in business organizations because the primary goal in business is to produce profit (Friedman, 1962), a secular value (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997; Tetlock et al., 2000). Many business executives feel obligated to compromise their values to advance their careers and achieve company goals (Lincoln, Pressley, & Little, 1982). Although all careers may involve ethical compromises to some extent, the profit motive distinguishes business from other fields, such as law and medicine, which also have ethical values, such as justice and health, as underlying justifications. For instance, although law is a lucrative profession involving adversarial relations, its ultimate goal is widely understood to be advancing justice.

Further, business organizations often have hierarchical structures that incite competition for limited advancement opportunities (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Social status may therefore be another scarce currency in organizations, for which individuals sacrifice ethical values (Jackall, 1988), although no research has examined ethical compromises for social status gains to date.

Gender Differences in Ethical Socialization Histories

Gender differences in socialization may result in men and women reacting differently to ethical compromises. Women are expected to be communal and expressive, whereas men are expected to be agentic and instrumental (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Because of these prescriptions, men and women may hold themselves to different standards of behavior, with women expecting themselves to engage in behavior that is inherently good and men expecting themselves to succeed at the task at hand.

Consistent with this argument, women and men appear to differ in how they make ethical judgments. In seminal work, Gilligan (1982) proposed that men and women differ in moral orientation, with women placing greater value on care and relationships and men placing greater value on justice and impartiality. Although empirical evidence for this view is mixed (Hyde, 2005; Jaffee & Hyde, 2000), numerous studies have documented gender differences in ethical standards (Franke, Crown, & Spake, 1997). In adolescence, females report less moral disengagement than males (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Moral disengagement involves justifying bad behavior by minimizing its consequences or otherwise rationalizing it. Gender differences in ethical standards may persist into adulthood. Compared to men, women use less deception to secure monetary payoffs (Dreber

& Johannesson, 2008), accept unethical negotiating tactics less (Robinson, Lewicki, & Donahue, 2000), and are less morally pragmatic (i.e., hypocritical and egocentric) in negotiations (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012). Women also report greater proneness to the moral emotions of guilt and shame (Cohen, Wolf, Panter, & Insko, 2011). Overall, this research suggests women may react more negatively than men to ethical compromises.

Overview of Studies

In three studies, we examined whether gender differences in reactions to ethical compromises elucidate women's underrepresentation in business careers. Study 1 described ethical compromises in work settings and measured gender differences in moral outrage and perceptions of business sense. Study 2 manipulated whether ethical compromises were present in job descriptions and measured moral reservations and job interest. In Study 3, we examined whether women implicitly associated business with immorality more than men did.

This research makes at least three theoretical contributions. First, it extends knowledge of how work preferences and values differ by gender. Our research suggests men and women may differentially value not only communal goals (Diekmann et al., 2010) and group-based equality (Pratto et al., 1997), but also ethics. Second, this research is the first to examine social status as a basis for ethical compromises. Finally, this research provides a novel explanation for why women are underrepresented in MBA programs and high-ranking positions in business organizations: Women's aversion to ethical compromises may steer them away from business careers.

Study 1

Study 1 examined whether women react more negatively than men to ethical compromises for monetary or social status gains. To do so, we measured moral outrage, which captures desire to distance oneself from violations of cherished ethical principles (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Tetlock et al., 2000), and perceived business sense (Tetlock et al., 2000), which captures evaluations of instrumental utility. We included both measures to explore whether feelings of moral outrage might be attenuated by recognition of practical value in ethical compromises.

Method

Participants were 103 adults¹ (65 women) recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk. The study utilized a two-condition (type of gain: monetary, status), mixed-model design.² Type of gain varied within-subjects and gender varied between-subjects.

Participants read 14 vignettes describing compromises of ethical values (e.g., others' well-being, close relationships, honesty) for secular values (e.g., money and social status) in organizational contexts. For instance, one monetary gain vignette described using a cheap product ingredient known to cause lethal allergic reactions in some people in order to meet

financial projections and secure a performance bonus. One status gain vignette described assigning a talented subordinate to peripheral projects and publicizing the subordinate's mistakes in order to prevent this person from receiving too much respect and admiration. (For the vignettes, see Online Supplemental Material at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0tv798kj#page-2>.) After reading each vignette, participants reported their moral outrage and perceptions of business sense. Including both measures allowed us to examine reactions along moral and pragmatic dimensions.

To report their moral outrage, participants rated the extent to which the decision was disgusting, objectionable, upsetting, offensive, shameful, contemptible, and morally acceptable (reverse-scored). We averaged these items to form scales for monetary ($\alpha = .95$) and status ($\alpha = .96$) gain vignettes. Participants also rated the decision's business sense and acceptability as a business practice ($\alpha_{\text{monetary gain}} = .85$, $\alpha_{\text{status gain}} = .89$). Response scales ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Results

A pretest ($n = 37$) confirmed that the scenarios were perceived to involve ethical compromises. Using a scale of a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 11 (*strongly agree*), participants indicated their agreement that something priceless, sacred, or morally important was sacrificed for money, economic gain, or wealth ($\alpha_{\text{monetary gain}} = .84$) or to feel higher rank, obtain prestige, and admiration from others, or gain status ($\alpha_{\text{status gain}} = .87$). Means on both manipulation check scales significantly differed from the midpoint, suggesting an ethical compromise was perceived in both monetary, $M = 8.50$, $SD = 2.56$, $t(258) = 15.71$, $p < .001$, and status, $M = 7.62$, $SD = 3.06$, $t(258) = 8.52$, $p < .001$, gain vignettes.

We next examined moral outrage and business sense. Two separate mixed-model analyses of variance (ANOVAs) included gender as a between-subject factor and type of gain as a within-subject factor. A main effect of gender emerged for moral outrage. Women ($M = 3.74$) reported more moral outrage than men ($M = 3.21$) across both trade-off types, $F(1, 101) = 8.52$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .08$. No other effects were statistically significant.

For business sense, two main effects emerged. Women ($M = 3.52$) perceived less business sense than men ($M = 4.18$), $F(1, 101) = 10.61$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .10$, and participants perceived more business sense in ethical compromises for monetary ($M = 4.10$) rather than status ($M = 3.60$) gains, $F(1, 101) = 30.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$.

Finally, we examined the correlation between moral outrage and business sense. When participants reported higher moral outrage, they perceived less business sense, for both the monetary, $r(101) = -.36$, $p < .001$, and status, $r(101) = -.48$, $p < .001$, gain scenarios.

Discussion

This study described ethical compromises in work contexts and found that women reacted more negatively than men to them.

As hypothesized, women experienced more moral outrage and perceived less business sense than men when confronting ethical compromises made for either monetary or social status gains. Although both genders perceived less business sense in ethical compromises for social status rather than monetary gains, moral outrage did not vary by type of gain. Finally, because both types of gains were perceived to make moderate business sense, both monetary and status gains appear to be consistent with the goals of business in participants' minds. Nevertheless, the negative correlation between moral outrage and business sense suggests that participants did not see ethical compromises as necessary for success in business.

Notably, this study lacked a control condition without ethical compromises. Because of this limitation, alternative explanations for our results exist. Gender differences in moral outrage may have emerged because women are more inclined than men to report negative emotion or because they value money and status relatively less. We designed Study 2 to address this limitation.

Study 2

The first study found that women react more negatively than men to ethical compromises. The second study aimed to establish a causal relationship between ethical compromises and disinterest in business careers. To do so, we manipulated whether ethical compromises were present in business environments and measured the mediating role of moral reservations. We expected resolution of ethical compromises in favor of secular gains (but not ethical values) to cause gender differences in job interest. To examine whether the mere presence of an ethical conflict produced gender differences on these outcomes, we also included a control condition.

Method

Participants included 178 undergraduate students (94 men) who received course credit. The study utilized a three-condition (ethical compromise: high, low, control), between-subjects design and included gender as a nonmanipulated factor. In all conditions, participants read three job descriptions that provided task responsibilities and compensation levels in consulting, private equity, and wealth management firms. (See Online Supplemental Material at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0tv798kj#page-2>.) We collapsed across vignettes in the analyses below.

In both experimental conditions, each vignette included a description of an ethical issue—for instance, as a consultant, how to advise a client when a trade-off existed between giving honest advice and collecting fees or, as an investor, whether to fund companies that used unethical business practices to produce profits. In the low ethical compromise condition, vignettes stated that the company's norm was to choose in favor of ethics. In the high ethical compromise condition, vignettes stated that company norms favored profits. For instance, participants read either that they would be expected to forgo (low

ethical compromise condition) or make (high ethical compromise condition) investments in companies that employed unethical business practices. After reading each job description, participants reported their interest in the job.

Two items served as a manipulation check ($\alpha = .80$). Participants rated their agreement that at the firm, the ends justified the means and getting ahead required harming others at times.

We measured moral reservations with 5 items ($\alpha = .89$) gauging the extent to which participants would, if they were at the firm: experience difficulty with the moral compromises asked of them, have to compromise their ethical values to be successful, be uncomfortable with the moral trade-offs required to succeed, find it morally troubling to work there, and find it easy to maintain their moral integrity (reverse-scored).

After each vignette, participants reported how interested they were in the job (Diekmann, Clark, Johnston, Brown, & Steinberg, 2011), $\alpha = .65$. Response scales ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

Results

Manipulation Check

ANOVA indicated only a main effect of ethical compromise condition, $F(2, 172) = 7.21, p = .001, \eta^2 = .08$. Participants in the high ethical compromise condition ($M = 4.99, SD = 1.16$) perceived greater ethical compromise than those in the control ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.21, p = .03$), and low ethical compromise ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.20, p < .001$) conditions. No difference between the control and low ethical compromise conditions emerged, $p = .11$. Neither gender, $F(2, 172) = 0.33, p = .57$, nor the interaction, $F(2, 172) = 1.10, p = .34$, was statistically significant, suggesting both genders agreed about the degree to which each condition highlighted an ethical compromise.

Job Interest

We next examined whether women's job interest suffered more than men's in jobs involving ethical compromises. ANOVA showed no effect of gender, $F(1, 172) = 0.51, p = .48$, a main effect of ethical compromise condition, $F(2, 172) = 8.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$, and the predicted interaction, $F(2, 172) = 4.28, p = .02, \eta^2 = .05$. Participants showed less interest in the job in the high ethical compromise condition ($M = 4.06, SD = 1.34$) than the control ($M = 4.76, SD = 1.23, p = .001$) or low ($M = 4.83, SD = 1.14, p < .001$) ethical compromise conditions. Job interest did not vary between the control and low ethical compromise conditions, $p = .80$.

We then examined the interaction between gender and ethical compromise condition. As hypothesized, men's job interest did not vary by ethical compromise condition, $F(2, 91) = 0.33, p = .72$, but women's did, $F(2, 81) = 11.78, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$. Women had less job interest in the high ethical compromise condition ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.25$) than in the control ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.24, p < .001$) or low ethical compromise ($M = 4.97, SD = 1.10, p < .001$) conditions (see Figure 1).

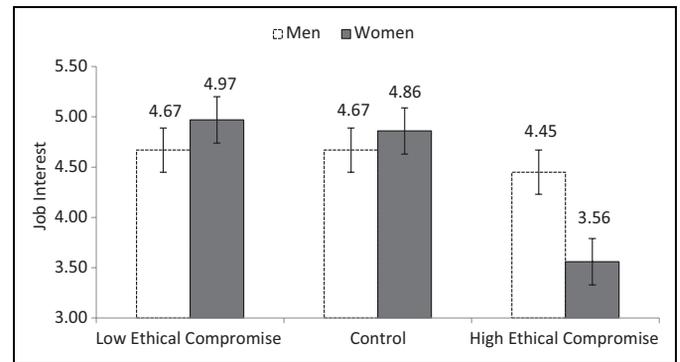


Figure 1. Job interest by gender and ethical compromise conditions in Study 2.

No difference emerged for women between the control and low ethical compromise conditions, $p = .73$. Relative to men, women showed lower job interest in the high ethical compromise condition, $t(57) = -2.66, p = .01$. In the control, $t(57) = 0.61, p = .55$, and low ethical compromise conditions, $t(58) = 1.02, p = .31$, no gender difference emerged.

Moral Reservations

A main effect of ethical compromise condition, $F(2, 172) = 8.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$, a main effect of gender, $F(1, 172) = 5.92, p = .02, \eta^2 = .03$, and a significant interaction emerged, $F(1, 172) = 5.50, p = .01, \eta^2 = .06$. Participants reported greater moral reservations in the high ethical compromise condition ($M = 4.55, SD = 1.03$) than in the control ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.98, p = .01$) or low ethical compromise ($M = 3.85, SD = 0.99, p < .001$) conditions. No difference emerged between the low ethical compromise and control conditions, $p = .18$. Women ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.02$) also reported greater moral reservations than men ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.02$). The interaction resulted from women's reactions to the high ethical compromise condition. In this condition, women ($M = 5.06, SD = 0.86$) reported greater moral reservations than men ($M = 4.04, SD = 0.93$), $t(57) = 4.33, p < .001$. No gender difference in moral reservations emerged in the low ethical compromise, $t(58) = -0.24, p = .81$, or control, $t(57) = -0.36, p = .72$ conditions.

Mediation

Finally, we examined whether women's greater moral reservations could explain the gender difference in job interest. A bootstrapping analysis of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 5,000 resamples with replacement showed a significant indirect effect of moral reservations (95% confidence interval $[-.86, -.19]$) on job interest, indicating evidence of significant mediation (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Using an experimental design, this study found, again, that women reacted more negatively than men to ethical

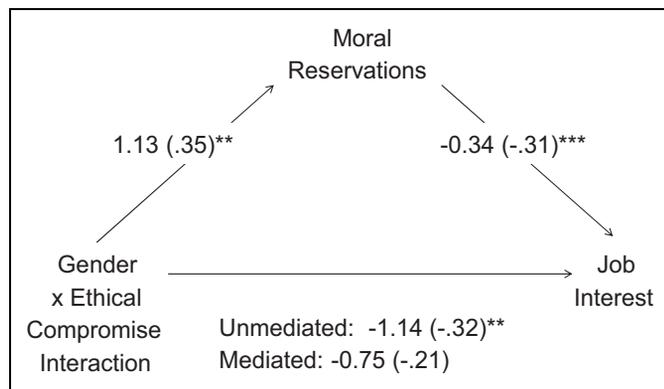


Figure 2. Mediation of gender differences in job interest by moral reservations in Study 2. Unstandardized regression coefficients appear outside of parentheses and standardized ones are given in parentheses. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

compromises. When a job entailed ethical compromises, women reported less interest in it than men did, despite exhibiting no difference in interest when the job did not entail ethical compromises. Women's greater moral reservations explained why they were less interested in jobs involving ethical compromises. No differences emerged between the control and low ethical compromise conditions, suggesting it was not the mere presence of a conflict between ethical and secular values, but the forfeiture of ethical values, that caused women's reactions.

By manipulating the presence of ethical compromises, this study addressed two limitations of Study 1. When no ethical compromise was present, women's and men's interest in business jobs did not differ, suggesting women neither explicitly value business jobs (or the money and social status they offer) less than men nor do women experience more negative emotions than men overall. Moreover, perceptions of ethical compromise did not vary between the control and low ethical compromise conditions, suggesting high ethical standards are explicitly assumed by default. When ethical compromises were highlighted, gender differences emerged. To further understand how reactions to business ethics may contribute to gender segregation in employment, we examined implicit associations. We expected that even in the absence of salient ethical lapses, women would implicitly associate business with immorality more than men do.

Study 3

The previous study established that salient ethical compromises cause gender differences in job interest. However, the lack of gender differences in job interest under baseline conditions raises the question of whether women's relatively negative reactions to business ethics depend on ethical compromises being salient. To address this concern, Study 3 examined implicit associations between business and immorality. We used an implicit measure for three reasons. First, because ethical judgments could be a socially sensitive topic, implicit measures may have more predictive validity than explicit

measures (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). Second, interest in business careers may serve as a proxy for interest in power (Pratto et al., 1997). Past research has found women's implicit beliefs to better predict interest in power than their explicit beliefs (Haines & Kray, 2005; Rudman & Heppen, 2003). Finally, if ethical views result from quick, automatic evaluations not amenable to articulation (Haidt, 2001), then they may be best measured implicitly. Consistent with these points, in a separate study ($N = 300$), we observed no gender difference in explicit attitudes toward the morality of business relative to medicine and law. Neither gender, $F(1, 294) = 0.54, p = .46$, nor the interaction between gender and career type, $F(2, 294) = 0.26, p = .78$, attained significance.

If women implicitly associate business with immorality more than men do, this would provide support for the idea that women are underrepresented in business careers because they find the domain more ethically aversive than do men. We chose law as a contrast category for business because it is another lucrative profession involving competitive relations, but its ultimate goal is to advance justice, an ethical value, rather than to produce profits, a secular value. Thus, this comparison provides a conservative test of our hypothesis.

Method

Participants ($N = 106$, 52 women) were students at a West Coast university. They completed an implicit association test ("IAT," Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) measuring associations between business and immorality. Participants classified words associated with "business" (e.g., *corporation, earnings*) and "law" (e.g., *court, litigation*) and "immorality" (e.g., *wrong, unethical*) and "morality" (e.g., *honesty, ethical*). (For word items, see Online Supplemental Material at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0tv798kj#page-2>.) Pretesting ($n = 32$) showed each word to be significantly more associated with the target category than the contrast category. The IAT was scored according to Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji's (2003) revised method, resulting in a D statistic. Higher scores represented stronger associations between immorality and business compared to law.

Results

A one-sample t -test comparing the average D score to 0 revealed a marginally significant implicit association between business and immorality overall, $D = .06, t(105) = 1.66, p = .10$. This pattern reflects an overall tendency to associate business, more than law, with immorality. More important for our hypothesis, a gender difference emerged. Women ($D = .18$) showed stronger implicit associations between business and immorality than men ($D = -.05$) did, $t(103) = 3.13, p = .002$.

Discussion

As expected, women held more negative implicit attitudes about the morality of business than men. This was true although

the contrast category, law, provided a conservative test. This difference contrasted with the results of Study 2, in which people generally assumed ethical conflicts would be resolved in favor of ethics. Women's relatively strong implicit association between business and immorality may explain why they are underrepresented in business careers.

General Discussion

This research is the first to identify gender differences in reactions to ethical compromises as an explanation of the gender gap in business careers. By examining why women are underrepresented in MBA programs and high-ranking positions in business organizations, we address a question with potentially far-reaching practical implications for women's economic well-being (Bakija, Cole, & Heim, 2012). Existing psychological research has highlighted the role of external barriers—such as stereotypes (e.g., Heilman, 2001; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), social roles (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002), and backlash (Rudman & Phelan, 2008)—in limiting women's success in masculine domains such as business. More recently, research has considered women's unique values as determinants of their career choices (Diekmann et al., 2010). Following in this vein, we propose a novel theoretical explanation: Women's unique socialization histories instill more negative reactions to ethical compromises and, therefore, reduce the appeal of business careers. Three studies provided support for this hypothesis.

In Study 1, women reported feeling more moral outrage and perceiving less business sense in ethical compromises than men did. In Study 2, when jobs involved making ethical compromises, women reported less interest in the jobs, whereas men were not affected by ethical compromises. Greater moral reservations among women explained this gender disparity. In Study 3, women showed stronger implicit associations between business and immorality than did men. Because women reacted more negatively to ethically questionable decisions aimed at increasing profit and social status, two key currencies in business organizations, this research suggests a novel explanation for women's underrepresentation in business: Women's aversion to ethical compromises may steer them away from business careers.

This research also contributes to knowledge of how work preferences differ by gender. Past research has found that women prefer collaborative work that helps other people (Diekmann et al., 2010). In addition, more women than men cite opportunities for growth, stimulation, and development as reasons they pursue their careers (Betz, O'Connell, & Shepard, 1989). Here, we found that women also prefer jobs that maintain high ethical standards. Future research should explore whether ethical appeal helps to explain sex segregation in occupations (Anker, 1998; Petersen & Morgan, 1995).

Finally, we introduced social status as a basis for ethical compromises. Past research has overlooked social status as a driver of ethical compromise, focusing instead on its ability to encourage some forms of ethical behavior, such as justice (Blader & Chen, 2012). Although status pursuit is pervasive

in business (Jackall, 1988), ethical compromises made in pursuit of status seem to make little business sense to men and women alike.

Future research should examine the implications of these differential reactions to ethical compromises in real-world contexts. Although our research suggests women may not enter business, aversion to ethical compromises could disadvantage those who do as they seek to advance. If women forgo profits in favor of ethics, they may produce fewer economic returns and garner less influence and recognition than men within business organizations, at least in the short term. If men value short-term profits and make the promotion decisions, women may struggle to advance. Even seemingly small gender differences can have considerable practical importance (Eagly, 1995; Martell, Lane, & Emrich, 1996).

Nevertheless, it does not logically follow from this evidence that women should change their values. If misfit (cf. Chatman, 1991) between women's values and business ethics exists, either women or organizations could change their values to resolve this. The negative correlation between moral outrage and business sense in Study 1 argues against ethical compromises being inherent properties of successful businesses. Raising ethical standards in business may be a more promising solution to this misfit, as many unethical business practices are self-defeating in the long term (Bowie, 1999). Future research should examine whether business organizations can ameliorate this misfit by adopting more rigorous ethical training, selecting individuals partially on the basis of their ethics, or emphasizing ethics as a core cultural value.

Moreover, this research does not suggest that women are simply opting out of business. In Study 2, women were as interested as men in business careers that did not explicitly require ethical compromises. Like inflexible workplace policies (Stephens & Levine, 2011), ethical compromises may make it unnecessarily difficult for women to participate and contribute in business organizations.

Future research could also explore the apparent contradiction between Studies 2 and 3. Study 2 found no gender differences in explicit job interest when ethical compromises were not salient. Study 3 documented a stronger implicit association between immorality and business for women than men. This difference between explicit and implicit attitudes may reflect women's heightened sensitivity to ethical issues. When ethical issues are salient, women may react more negatively than men to them. By presenting ethics-related words, the IAT may have made ethics salient. However, when ethical issues are not salient, women may not consciously perceive business to have an ethics problem. This may imply that women will select into business as readily as men, but upon discovering ethical issues, experience more dissatisfaction and desire to exit. Consistent with this, women have higher turnover rates than men (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Unconsciously perceiving business as unethical may also challenge women's organizational commitment (Mardsen, Kalleberg, & Cook, 1993).

Finally, future research should explore boundary conditions of these effects. Although we focused on business, we

acknowledge that other careers involve ethical compromises as well, even law and medicine. Future research could examine whether these gender differences emerge when gains are unrelated to money and status. For instance, it could examine women's reactions to a doctor who deceives insurance companies to save patients' lives, or to a person who betrays a sister for the sake of a romantic relationship.

We believe this research has at least one positive practical implication: Retaining more women may have positive ethical consequences for business organizations. As women occupy positions with authority, they may improve the ethical standards of the organizations in which they work, if they can maintain these standards on the way up the hierarchy.

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Notes

1. In a prior MTurk study ($N = 200$), years of managerial experience did not vary by gender, $t(173) = -1.60, p = .11$.
2. We also manipulated perspective to ensure that any gender differences were not due to women holding themselves, but not others, to high ethical standards (or vice versa). Only one significant effect for perspective emerged. Participants perceived more business sense when they imagined themselves ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.96$) rather than others ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.12$) making ethical compromises, $F(1, 99) = 3.79, p = .05, \eta_p = .04$. Thus, we collapsed across perspective subsequently.

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