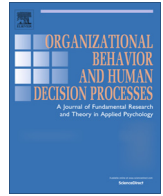




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/obhdp](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/obhdp)

## Blind loyalty? When group loyalty makes us see evil or engage in it

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 9 March 2015

Revised 1 October 2015

Accepted 14 October 2015

Available online 17 December 2015

## Keywords:

Loyalty  
Cheating  
Competition  
Unethical behavior  
Morality

## ABSTRACT

Loyalty often drives corruption. Corporate scandals, political machinations, and sports cheating highlight how loyalty's pernicious nature manifests in collusion, conspiracy, cronyism, nepotism, and other forms of cheating. Yet loyalty is also touted as an ethical principle that guides behavior. Drawing on moral psychology and behavioral ethics research, we developed hypotheses about when group loyalty fosters ethical behavior and when it fosters corruption. Across nine studies, we found that individuals primed with loyalty cheated less than those not primed (Study 1A and 1B). Members more loyal to their fraternities (Study 2A) and students more loyal to their study groups (Study 2B) also cheated less than their less loyal counterparts due to greater ethical salience when they pledged their loyalty (Studies 3A and 3B). Importantly, competition moderated these effects: when competition was high, members more loyal to their fraternities (Study 4) or individuals primed with loyalty (Studies 5A and 5B) cheated more.

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*Loyalty is the pledge of truth to oneself and others.*

[Ada Velez-Boardley]

## 1. Introduction

Loyalty often drives corruption, as highlighted by headlines about corporate scandals, political machinations, sports cheating, and gangland killings. In business and politics, loyalty to one's friends and kin manifests in cronyism and nepotism, often at the cost of actual or perceived competence and fairness (Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992; Padgett & Morris, 2000, 2005; though see Slack, 2001). Such ties demand members' collusion (Balan & Dix, 2009; Porter, 2005) and conspiracy to cover up illegality, be it wiretapping by political administrations (e.g., the Nixon White House) or accounting fraud by the corporate elite (e.g., Crazy Eddie's, Enron, and Worldcom). In sports, loyalty promotes gamesmanship, unsportsmanlike conduct, and outright cheating, as evidenced by widespread doping programs uncovered in professional baseball, cycling, and soccer (e.g., Schneider, 2006; Whitaker, Backhouse, & Long, 2014). And, in the military, police forces, street gangs, and organizations more broadly, loyalty helps foster cultures of crime by demanding members' silence to others' transgressions (Elliston, 1982; Graham & Keeley, 1992; Hacker,

1978; Jones, 2010; Rothwell & Baldwin, 2007; Skolnick, 2002). As this evidence shows, loyalty seems to pervade and corrupt many aspects of our social lives.

Yet this account of loyalty may be overly simplistic. While loyalty to one's group can encourage unethical behavior, the loyal often act unethically mainly for the benefit of their groups. For instance, when finance directors and accountants misrepresent organizations' performance, it is often for the benefits of shareholders or clients (Deis & Giroux, 1992; Mautz & Sharaf, 1961). Similarly, politicians filibuster for their party to prevent opposition legislation from being enacted, and school administrators inflate students' test scores to get bonus money for their schools (Jacob & Levitt, 2003).

Moreover, unethical behavior is not the sole purview of the loyal. People who care about morality often act unethically for the benefit of others (e.g., Gino & Pierce, 2009, 2010; Wiltermuth, 2011) but don't view themselves or their actions as immoral (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Benson, 1985) and tend to discount, rationalize, or justify the unethical actions of other members of their groups (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007).

Surprisingly, little is known about what motivates group members to engage in unethical behavior for the benefit of their groups (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010). Prior work has shown that people act unethically if they both identify with their groups and hold strong reciprocity beliefs (Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010); if they have a high need to belong but fear exclusion (Thau, Derfler-Rozin, Pitesa, Mitchell, & Pillutla, 2015); if they are in positions of positive inequity and feel guilty (Gino & Pierce,

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2009); or if they hold utilitarian ethical beliefs and believe that the beneficiaries of their unethical acts hold similar beliefs (Wiltermuth, Bennett, & Pierce, 2013). But little is known about whether, why, and when loyalty to one's group motivates unethical behavior, such as unfair actions (Dungan, Waytz, & Young, 2014).

Consistent with anecdotal evidence suggesting that loyalty plays an important role in corruption, people discount or ignore their immoral actions when it benefits their groups. Yet there is also good reason to believe that loyalty can actually foster ethicality in addition to being detrimental to it. Loyalty is among a broad set of moral values that people embrace (Fiske, 1991; Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Enshrined in national oaths of allegiance, military mottos, and business cultures, loyalty is often cast as a virtue to aspire to (e.g., Coleman, 2009; Connor, 2007; Reichheld & Teal, 2001; Souryal & McKay, 1996) and as being closely related to other moral values, such as honesty and benevolence (Schwartz, 1992). Loyalty promotes good citizenship behavior, prompting people to voice their concerns (Hirschman, 1970) and help others in their community (Powers, 2000; Rosanas & Velilla, 2003). Cast in this light, loyalty can be seen as a virtue rather than a vice.

Can loyalty foster both ethicality and drive corruption? If so, what conditions determine whether it has positive or negative effects? In the current research, we argue that the answer to this question depends critically on the *loyal imperative*, that is, whether the interests of the group to which the decision maker is a member are clear and conflict with his or her other moral concerns. While existing literature suggests loyalty and related constructs lead to unethical behavior (e.g., Thau et al., 2015; Umphress et al., 2010; Waytz, Young, & Ginges, 2014), we argue that when a group's interests are unclear, loyalty will act as an ethical principle, prompting loyal members to act more ethically by making the ethics of the situation salient. That is, loyalty activates related moral traits and cultural scripts which prompt people to behave ethically. In contrast, when the group's interests are clear and those interests conflict with other moral concerns, then the loyal imperative will drive loyal members to act unethically in the group's best interests (Rosanas & Velilla, 2003; Souryal & McKay, 1996).

In particular, in the present work we consider the effects of competition in helping to clarify group interests while also pitting those interests against other moral concerns. Past research suggests that in simple trust games in the laboratory (Shaw, DeScioli, & Olson, 2012) and in actual political, religious, and ethnic conflict and warfare (e.g., Cohen, Montoya, & Insko, 2006; Waytz et al., 2014), competition drives the loyal to act unethically to protect their groups, regardless of the consequences. We argue that loyalty imbued with competition represents a particularly explosive combination. Competition helps clarify group goals that often conflict with other moral concerns. Loyalty, in turn, drives up the stakes, demanding the loyal win no matter the cost. However, in the absence of competition, group goals are less clear; as a result, the loyal are prompted to act ethically, consistent with their ideal selves. We consider the effects of loyalty and competition on unethical behavior in the context of cheating, a commonly studied form of unethical behavior (e.g., Ayal & Gino, 2011; Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009).

The current research contributes to existing research in a number of ways. First, we provide a clear definition of loyalty that allows us to identify its unique effects on ethical behavior independent of the effects of other relational constructs. Second, by examining the effect of loyalty on actual rather than hypothetical ethical behavior, we provide the first concrete evidence that loyalty is indeed used as an ethical principle to guide behavior. Third, we identify when loyalty leads to ethical behavior and when it leads

to unethical behavior, highlighting the role of competition in undermining honesty. Fourth, we specify why loyalty improves honesty: namely, because pledging loyalty makes salient the ethical considerations of cheating in group contexts. Finally, our methodologies (i.e., using random assignment in the laboratory as well as measuring actual loyalties to existing groups) enable us to make causal inferences about the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior and to generalize our findings to real-world contexts where loyalty is either expected explicitly (e.g., in fraternal organizations) or not (e.g., in study groups).

### 1.1. Conceiving loyalty

Researchers have examined numerous constructs related to loyalty that describe different aspects and attributes of interpersonal bonds, including commitment (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), identification (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), liking (e.g., Rubin, 1973; Seligman, Fazio, & Zanna, 1980), and love (Gottman, 1999; Sternberg, 1986). Yet, the study of loyalty as a construct in and of itself has been relatively ignored by psychologists and organizational scholars alike (Coughlan, 2005). This is surprising because, as we argue, none of these related constructs fully capture the ethical nature of loyalty.

Moral psychologists contend that loyalty is an ethical principle. For example, moral foundations theory (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004, 2007) argues that loyalty is one of five innately prepared foundations of individual psychology (the others being harm, fairness, hierarchy, and sanctity). Loyalty appears implicitly within the moral code of community, one of "the Big Three [codes] of Morality" that Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) contend drive human action (the others being autonomy and divinity) and within Fiske et al.'s relational models approach to moral action (Fiske, 1991, 1992, 2004; Fiske & Haslam, 2005; Rai & Fiske, 2011). Nonetheless, most definitions of loyalty do not reference its moral aspect (e.g., Dooley & Fryxell, 1999; Hirschman, 1970; Mele, 2001; Powers, 2000; Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001; although, see Allport, 1933; Coughlan, 2005; and Oldenquist, 1982 for exceptions).

Definitions of loyalty do tend to stress the construct's inherent partiality, whether as an implicit promise or commitment to a target (e.g., Butler, 1991; Forrest, 1995; Oliver, 1999); devotion, allegiance, or an affective attitude toward an object (e.g., Axinn, 1994; Brewer & Brown, 1998; Duska, 1990; Jeurissen, 1997; Ladd, 1968; Powers, 2000; Scott, 1965); or simply membership in a group (e.g., Ewin, 1992; Hirschman, 1970). Therefore, if loyalty is an ethical principle, as moral psychologists contend, then *loyalty is the principle of partiality toward an object (e.g., a group) that gives rise to expectations of behavior on behalf of that object such as sacrifice, trustworthiness, and pro-sociality*. Loyalty therefore describes relationships in which an actor believes s/he should act in the best interests of the target of her/his loyalty because it is the right thing to do.

In this research, we focus on loyalty to people, specifically groups, but acknowledge that people can be loyal to other objects, such as a specific person, one's family or country, the institutions and organizations to which one belongs, as well as religious beliefs and abstract ideals (e.g., Fletcher, 1993; Powers, 2000; Royce, 1908; Schrag, 2001). When the object of loyalty is a person or group, then loyalty is likely to be highly correlated with collectivist constructs related to group membership, such as identification, liking, and commitment toward that person or group. Indeed, these related constructs may be natural antecedents or consequences of loyalty, though in the current work we are agnostic regarding the causal direction. Loyalty, however, imbues these collectivist prosocial motivations with principlism (Batson, 1994, 2010;

Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997), or the imperative to act in the group's interest because it is the right thing to do. That is not to say that other collectivist constructs may not have a moral component, but simply that morality lies at the heart of loyalty. One can identify, like, and feel committed to a target without believing that acting in the target's interests is the right thing to do. For example, one might identify with Caucasians, or one's friends and acquaintances, and feel committed to those to whom we are indebted based on norms of reciprocity, but that does not mean we feel compelled to act in those groups' interests on moral grounds. Moreover, one can also be loyal without liking, identifying, or even knowing the target of one's loyalty, such as members of one's extended family.

Past research has also described loyalty as an attitude (e.g., Duska, 1990; Graham, 1991; Jeurissen, 1997) or a behavior (e.g., Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), but we argue that attitudes and behaviors often ascribed to loyalty are natural downstream consequences of loyal relationships.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2. Loyalty and ethical behavior

If loyalty is an ethical principle, then behavior that is consistent with that principle is ethical by definition. However, in the current research, we will adopt the more commonly used but narrower conception of ethical behavior as that which falls within generally accepted norms of moral behavior (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Thus, ethical behavior refers to actions that are consistent with universalist ethical principles such as utilitarianism (Bentham, 1776, 1789; Mill, 1859, 1863) and deontology (e.g., Kant, 1781, 1785) that manifest in fairness, justice, honesty, and minimizing harm to the greater good. In this research, we consider situations in which there is a temptation to act unethically.

Loyalty demands the loyal act in the best interests of their group, but those interests are often unclear. Moreover, the demands of loyalty need not conflict with other moral concerns. In such situations, we argue that loyalty, rather than being a corruptive influence or no influence at all, will foster ethical behavior by making salient the ethics of the situation. That is, loyalty activates related moral traits and cultural scripts which prompt people to behave ethically, consistent with their ideal selves. In the next section, we build on research on moral identity to propose that loyalty is one of the moral traits of a person's core identity. We argue that when loyalty is primed, other related moral traits such as honesty are activated too and these, in turn, prompt people to behave more ethically. Building on research on relational schema, we also argue that loyalty is a universal cultural script that, when salient, influences how people process information automatically and implicitly. However, as we later describe, when the demands of loyalty are clear then the loyal are compelled to comply regardless of the ethical cost of such actions. In short, loyalty's virtue prompts the loyal to act ethically until loyalty's imperative dictates they act otherwise.

### 1.2.1. Loyalty as a moral trait

Trait-based conceptions of moral identity (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003) assume that moral virtues or traits such as loyalty, compassion, and honesty cluster together as a network of connected components (Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994) and can be more or less central to a person's self-concept (Blasi, 1984, 1993; Markus, 1977). Moreover, a common set of moral traits is

central to most people's moral self-concept (Blasi, 1984) and comprises their moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002), which likely includes loyalty as well as more universalist principles such as fairness, justice, and honesty (Fiske, 1991; Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Shweder et al., 1997).

Moral traits and a person's moral identity more broadly may have social referents, such as individuals, groups, and abstract ideals (Aquino & Reed, 2002), and may be more or less salient depending on the context (e.g., Abrams, 1994; Forehand, Deshpandé, & Reed, 2002; Hogg, 1992; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). When one trait is salient, then other related traits are likely to be activated as well in a process of spreading activation (Anderson, 1983). Thus, if loyalty and honesty form part of a person's moral identity, then when loyalty is salient, the connected trait of honesty may be activated as well, prompting the loyal to act more honestly.

*1.2.1.1. Loyalty as a cultural script.* Loyalty need not form part of one's core moral identity to influence one's actions. The loyal imperative – to act in the best interests of the group – is universally understood (Connor, 2007) and forms part of our cultural shared system of meaning. The cultural milieu paints loyalty as a virtue to aspire to (Coleman, 2009; Oldenquist, 1982; Souryal & McKay, 1996 but see also Baron, 1984; Ewin, 1992) and as a value closely related to other virtues, such as benevolence, honesty, and helpfulness (Schwartz, 1992).

These twin aspects of loyalty, both as an imperative and a virtue, may act as cultural scripts prescribing roles that people should act out (e.g., role theory, Stryker & Statham, 1985), particularly when such role schema are activated in some way (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). When loyalty is salient, it may inform the procedural knowledge that a person uses to process information automatically and implicitly as well as the interpersonal scripts that define stereotypical relational patterns among the loyal (Baldwin, 1992).

Such interpersonal scripts are subject to conjoint priming among a person's relational schema more broadly, meaning that when one facet of a person's relational schema is primed (e.g., a person's self-schema as a loyal person), then the other facets of the person's relational schema are also activated (i.e., other schema and interpersonal scripts). And, similar to moral traits, a person's relational schema may be activated by different reference groups (e.g., Baldwin & Holmes, 1987; Greenwald & Breckler, 1985; Schlenker, 1985; Shibutani, 1961) that exert normative control over behavior (Kelley, 1952). Thus, when loyalty is salient (e.g., a person is among his band of brothers, in her sorority, or meeting with representatives of her company), it may influence the person's actions despite not being a part of the person's core moral identity. Whether that action is ethical or not depends on which facet of loyalty is salient. When the group's interests are unclear (i.e., the expectations of loyalty are ill-defined), we argue that loyalty's role as a virtue will take precedence and foster greater ethical behavior by making the ethics of the situation more salient.

**Hypothesis 1.** When group concerns are unclear, the salience of loyalty will increase ethical behavior as compared to when loyalty is not salient.

**Hypothesis 2.** When group concerns are unclear, the positive relationship between loyalty and ethical behavior will be mediated by the salience of ethics more generally.

## 1.3. Loyalty and unethical behavior

When the interests of the group are clear, loyalty demands the loyal act in the group's best interests. And when those interests

<sup>1</sup> The construct of loyalty has been much more broadly defined in the literature (see Payne & Webber, 2006; Whiting, Podsakoff, & Pierce, 2008). To be more precise in our theorizing and conceptual development, in our work, we use a narrower definition.

conflict with other moral concerns, then loyalty compels the loyal to act unethically. We examine one context in which the demands of loyalty are clear and often in conflict with other moral concerns, namely competition.

Competition describes situations in which actors or groups vie with one another over scarce resources, situations in which their objective outcomes are opposed (Deutsch, 1949; Porter, 1980; Scherer & Ross, 1990). Prior research suggests that competition may lead to unethical behavior (e.g., Hegarty & Sims, 1978; Kohn, 1992; Perry, Kane, Bernesser, & Spicker, 1990; Vaughan, 1999), but this relationship is not conclusive (see Schwepker, 1999).

Research on rivalry suggests that as the psychological stakes associated with competition increase, so does the propensity for people to act unethically (Kilduff, Galinsky, Gallo, & Reade, 2012). Kilduff et al. (2012) conceive of psychological stakes as “the subjective importance placed upon competition outcomes achieved in a given competition (i.e., win or loss)” and rivalry as existing “when the psychological stakes are increased as a result of an existing relationship between the focal actor and target actor independent of objective stakes or other structural or situational characteristics” (Kilduff, Elfenbein, & Staw, 2010). We argue that loyalty to one’s group also increases the psychological stakes associated with competition and consequently the propensity to act unethically. However, unlike rivalry, loyalty to one’s groups is not predicated on the presence of a specific, identifiable opponent or a historical relationship with that adversary. Loyalty just demands that the loyal act on behalf of their group regardless of the cost.

The loyal imperative is clear, but so too are the consequences of failing to meet that obligation. Disloyalty—i.e., “leading others to expect they can count on your loyalty and then betraying that expectation” (Schrag, 2001: 48)—has been called “moral suicide” (Royce, 1908), eliciting disgust (Haidt, 2003), moral outrage (Averill, 1979; Bies, 1987; Steil, Tuchman, & Deutsch, 1978), and psychological stress (Rousseau, 1989). The psychological stakes associated with meeting loyal expectations are therefore high; as a result, competition that involves loyalty is more likely to lead to corruption.

**Hypothesis 3.** Competition will moderate the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior such that when competition is high (vs. low), the loyal will act less (more) ethically.

#### 1.4. Loyalty and group identification

Loyalty to a group naturally causes us to categorize people as either sharing the same loyalty or not. Such categorization encourages group identification (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and favorable social comparison of the ingroup relative to outgroups (Tajfel, 1974) in an effort to maintain positive self-esteem even when membership is determined by trivial factors, such as a coin toss. Salient group affiliations increase willingness to forgive bad behavior and social-norm violations (Bernhard, Fehr, & Fischbacher, 2006). Thus, people judge an unethical action less harshly when an in-group member, as compared to an out-group member, is responsible. Group identification can also result in prejudice, biased behavior (e.g., Brewer, 1999; Tajfel, 1981), and out-group hostility (Brown, 1996; Turner & Oakes, 1989). Furthermore, the more people identify with their groups, the more they condone and engage in outgroup (vs. ingroup) violence (Cohen et al., 2006). Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4.** Group Identification will moderate the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior such that when group identification is high (vs. low) the loyal will act less (/more) ethically.

## 2. Overview of the present research

We tested these hypotheses in nine studies. In Studies 1A, 1B, 3A, 3B, 5A, and 5B we experimentally manipulated participants’ loyalty to their groups; in Studies 2A, 2B, and 4, participants self-reported their loyalty to existing groups. After loyalty was manipulated or measured, participants were incentivized to cheat for their group on a problem-solving task.

### 2.1. Loyalty manipulation

Previous research on loyalty has relied on self-reported measures of loyalty (e.g., Boroff & Lewin, 1997; Jauch, Glueck, & Osborn, 1978), manipulations of group identity or other related constructs rather than loyalty (e.g., Adler & Adler, 1988; Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), or semantic primes using scrambled-sentence tasks (e.g., Zogmeister, Arcuri, Castelli, & Smith, 2008) in which either the whole sentence or a single word references loyalty (treatment condition) or not (control condition). Because semantic priming has had mixed results (e.g., Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Doyen, Klein, Pichon, & Cleeremans, 2012), in this research we designed a new loyalty manipulation based on a group discussion and loyalty pledge used in Studies 1A, 1B, 3A, 3B, 5A and 5B.

### 2.2. Alternative explanations

In organizational research, loyalty often has been conflated with other constructs, such as liking (Connor, 2007; Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Mele, 2001), group identification (e.g., Chen, Tsui, & Fahr, 2002; Coughlan, 2005; Hirschman, 1970; Morrow & McElroy, 1993; Powers, 2000; Werther, 1988; Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), commitment (Barry, 1974; Coughlan, 2005; Forrest, 1995; Mele, 2001; Oliver, 1999), and, more recently, identity fusion (Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009). While we acknowledge that liking, group identification, commitment, and identity fusion are natural (though not necessary) concomitants or consequences of loyalty to a group, we have argued that loyalty has a moral component that helps differentiate it from these related constructs. Analogous to the collectivist and principlist forms of prosocial motivation (Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2011), in the context of groups, loyalty imbues collectivism with morality. That is, the loyal prioritize their group not just because they belong to or identify with their group, but because they believe that doing so is the right thing to do. In particular, in the current context of unethical behavior, we expect that the effect of loyalty on cheating should be independent of the effects of these other constructs. Therefore, we collected measures of liking (all studies), group identification (Studies 1B, 2A, 2B, and 4), commitment (Studies 2A and 2B), and identity fusion (Study 3A), though they are not the primary focus of the current research, to demonstrate that the effects of loyalty are not reducible to the effects of these other collectivist motivations.

Finally, to help address the possibility that those reporting to be more loyal were also more ethical in general or that our loyalty manipulation primed self-focused concerns about morality in general rather than loyalty per se, we collected measures of general ethical behavior (Studies 2A and 2B) and moral self-identity (Study 3A).

In summary, Studies 1A and 1B demonstrated and replicated our main effect of loyalty on honesty, Studies 2A and 2B helped generalize this finding to actual relationships, Studies 3A and 3B identified potential explanations for these effects, and Studies 4, 5A and 5B demonstrated that competition moderated the relationship between loyalty and ethical behavior. Across the nine studies, we found no evidence that competing explanations—including effort, liking, group identification, commitment, identity fusion,

general ethical behavior, and moral self-identity—explained the effects.

We note that, in all our studies, we report all variables collected. No participants who completed our studies have been excluded from any of the analyses. Sample sizes were dictated by the availability of subjects (Studies 1A through 4), grant money (lab studies) and class credits (Studies 2B and 3B) available to the first author, timely access to fraternity houses (Studies 2A and 4) and with reference to prior research and the expected effect sizes (all studies).

### 3. Study 1A: Loyalty and cheating in the laboratory

The primary aim of Study 1A was to test [Hypothesis 1](#): that when group concerns are unclear, the salience of loyalty will increase ethical behavior as compared to when loyalty is not salient.

#### 3.1. Method

##### 3.1.1. Participants

Fifty-seven participants (15 male;  $M_{age} = 21.51$ ,  $SD = 3.26$ ) from a large West Coast university participated in the study for cash payment. All participants received a \$5 show-up fee and had the opportunity to earn up to \$15 more depending on their group's performance on the problem-solving task. Between three and nine participants were recruited in each experimental session and randomly assigned to one of two conditions: loyalty ( $N = 30$ ) or control ( $N = 27$ ). Experimental sessions were run back to back, and same-sex participants were recruited for each session. In each session, participants were assigned to groups of three same-condition participants.

The study included two tasks: a group discussion designed to prime loyalty in the treatment condition and an individual problem-solving task used to assess cheating. Subjects were then probed for suspicion, debriefed, and paid. During the individual problem-solving task and subsequent suspicion checks, participants sat in private cubicles and did not interact with each other.

##### 3.1.2. Loyalty manipulation

Subjects in the loyalty condition were given 10 min to discuss "loyalty" before signing a pledge of loyalty to their discussion group. Subjects in the control condition discussed the pretested neutral topic of "globalization" for 10 min and did not sign a pledge. (Stimuli included in [Appendix A](#).)

##### 3.1.3. Cheating task

Participants were then assigned to private cubicles to complete a problem-solving task ([Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011](#); [Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008a, 2008b](#)), which gave them an opportunity to falsely report their performance and potentially earn more money for their group. Participants were presented with 20 matrices on one sheet of paper. Each matrix contained three rows and four columns of three-digit numbers (e.g., 6.14). Participants were told that their task was to identify pairs of numbers in each matrix that summed to 10 and to circle these numbers. They were given five minutes to identify as many pairs of numbers as they could and were told that for each pair they identified they would earn \$0.25 for themselves and \$0.25 for each of their group members. Participants could therefore earn between \$0 and \$15 on the five-minute problem-solving task depending on their group's performance.

At the end of the task, participants were asked to self-report the number of correct pairs of numbers they had identified on a collection slip and the amount they had earned for themselves and each of their group members. They were instructed to recycle the matrix

sheet with their answers in a recycling bin and to hand the collection slip to the experimenter so that s/he could determine how much to pay the other participants. The collection slips and matrix sheets were designed to appear anonymous to participants, although numbers on both sheets allowed the experimenter to pair the collection slips and matrix sheets after the experiment was over. This enabled the experimenter to determine whether or not participants had overstated their performance. During both the group discussion task and the individual problem-solving task, the experimenter stepped out of the room, returning only to give participants a two-minute warning before time was up.

##### 3.1.4. Manipulation and suspicion checks

At the end of the laboratory session, participants completed a three-item measure of loyalty indicating the extent to which they agreed with each statement (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree): "I feel loyal to this group," "I pledged my loyalty to the group," and "I had loyal obligations to other members of the group" ( $\alpha = .75$ ). At the end of every study, participants were probed for suspicion using two-item open-ended suspicion probes ([Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001](#)): "Did you find anything strange or unusual about the experimental procedures?" and "What do you think is the purpose of this experiment?" Participants were then debriefed, thanked, and paid based on their group's reported performance as described above.

##### 3.1.5. Measure of cheating

We assessed two measures for cheating: a dichotomous variable "Cheated," coded 1 if a participant's actual score was less than their reported score and coded 0 otherwise, and a continuous variable, computed as the difference between the score participants self-reported and their actual score. In all studies, we report results for the effects of loyalty on Cheated, but note that the effects of loyalty on the amounts cheated are consistently stronger.<sup>2</sup> The results reported below are therefore conservative.

#### 3.2. Results

##### 3.2.1. Manipulation and suspicion checks

Participants' responses to the suspicion checks in the post-experiment questionnaires revealed that none guessed the hypothesis being tested in any of the studies; therefore, we report results for all participants in all nine studies. The manipulation check was also successful: participants in the loyalty condition reported being significantly more loyal ( $M = 5.44$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ )  $t(55) = 5.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.41$ .

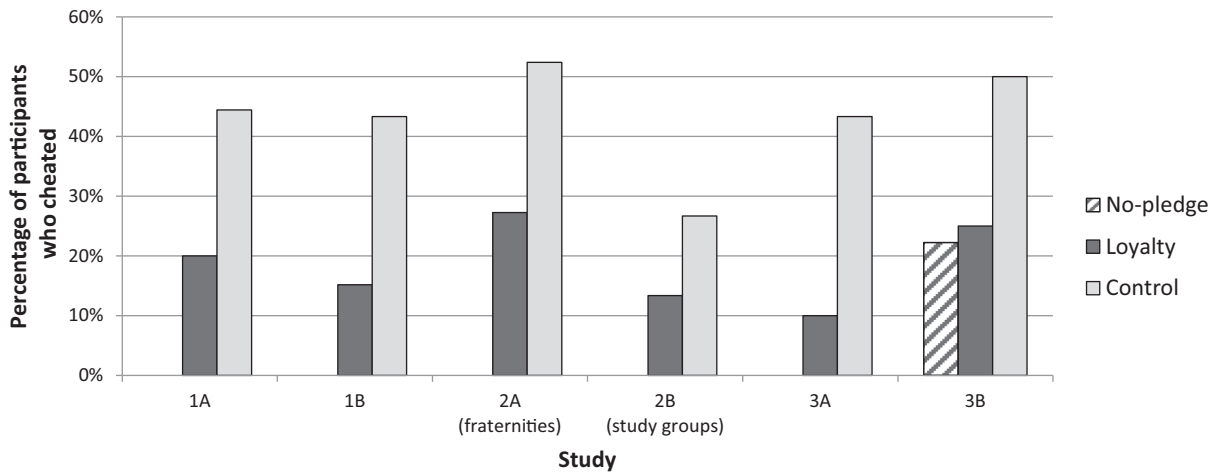
##### 3.2.2. Cheating

Fewer participants cheated in the loyalty condition (20%, 6 out of 30) as compared to the control condition (44%, 12 out of 27),  $\chi^2(1, N = 57) = 3.93$ ,  $p = .047$ . This result is consistent with the ethical salience hypothesis, which suggests that loyalty makes ethical considerations more salient, which promotes honesty. A summary of the percentage of participants who cheated or were honest broken down by condition is shown in [Fig. 1](#), together with the results of Studies 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B.

##### 3.2.3. Effort

One possible explanation for this finding is that the loyalty manipulation caused participants in the loyal condition (as

<sup>2</sup> The amount that participants cheated was significantly positively skewed and leptokurtic. Standard transformations of the data failed to adequately correct for the multivariate Normality issues. We therefore adopted the dichotomous variable Cheated (1 = cheated, 0 = didn't cheat) as our outcome measure. Results relating to the amount cheated should be interpreted with caution.



**Fig. 1.** The percentage of participants who cheated on the problem-solving task broken down by condition in each of the first six studies. *Note:* There were no loyalty or control conditions in Studies 2A and 2B. For illustrative purposes, in these studies the percentages of participants who cheated is shown separately for those whose self-reported loyalty to their groups was above the median score (represented by the “loyalty” bars in Fig. 1) and below the median score (represented by “control” bars in Fig. 1).

compared to those in the control condition) to exert more effort on the problem-solving task and consequently to perform better, earn more, and therefore not need to supplement their earnings by cheating. To mitigate this possibility, we compared the mean scores for actual performance on the problem-solving task of participants in the loyal condition and those of participants in the control condition. A *t*-test confirmed there was no significant effect of loyalty on individuals’ actual performance ( $M_{loyal} = 7.50, SD = 5.26; M_{control} = 8.15, SD = 4.32, t(55) = .505, p = .62, d = -.14$ ). Therefore, participants in the loyal condition did not appear to exert more effort on the problem-solving task than those in the control condition.

### 3.3. Discussion

The results of Study 1A show that participants primed with loyalty were less likely to cheat than other participants, consistent with our ethical salience hypothesis. Moreover, cheating was not a result of participants in the loyalty condition exerting more effort than those in the control condition.

## 4. Study 1B: Replication in the laboratory

The primary goal of Study 1B was to replicate the results of Study 1A and provide additional support for the predictions of our first hypothesis that group loyalty increases ethicality. In addition, we sought to address two obvious alternative explanations for our results: liking and group identification.

We also adopted a more conservative methodology by having participants pay themselves. Previous research suggests that when payment is deferred, people become more susceptible to cheating (Mazar et al., 2008a, 2008b). By asking participants to pay themselves immediately after completing the cheating task, we advanced the timing of payment, thus reducing participants’ susceptibility to cheat.

### 4.1. Method

#### 4.1.1. Participants

Sixty-three participants (22 male;  $M_{age} = 20.57, SD = 2.08$ ) from a large West Coast university participated in the study for pay (a minimum \$5 show-up fee and the opportunity to earn additional money in the individual task outlined below). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: loyalty and control.

Experimental sessions were run back to back, but only same-sex participants were recruited for each session. In each session, participants were assigned to groups of three participants, one group per condition.

Participants completed the same group discussion and individual problem-solving tasks used in Study 1A. However, in Study 1B, at the start of the individual problem-solving task, participants were handed an envelope containing \$5 and instructed to pay themselves based on their performance at the end of the task and return any remaining money to the experimenter.

#### 4.1.2. Post-task questionnaire

Participants then completed a post-experiment survey designed to elicit measures of liking and group identification. Participants first completed a four-item measure of liking (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003) for themselves and for each of the other participants in their group using a round-robin design by responding to the following statements (1 = not at all, 9 = very): “How friendly was this person?” “Would you like to spend more time with the person?” “How comfortable were you with the person?” and “How smoothly did your interaction go with the person?” ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Participants then completed Henry, Arrow, and Carini’s (1999) 12-item measure of group identification ( $\alpha = .87$ ) by rating the extent to which they agreed with 12 statements using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = disagree strongly, 7 = agree strongly). Example items included “I would prefer to be in a different group” (Reverse-scored) and “I think of this group as part of who I am.”

### 4.2. Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics of the main variables measured in the study is included in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 1B.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1.	Loyalty dummy <sup>a</sup>	0.52	0.50			
2.	Liking	7.06	1.24	.16		
3.	Group Identification	4.64	0.81	.19	.65***	
4.	Cheated dummy <sup>b</sup>	0.29	0.46	-.31 <sup>*</sup>	-.01	-.09

<sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$ .

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ .

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Loyalty dummy coded 1 = loyalty, 0 = control.

<sup>b</sup> Cheated dummy coded 1 = cheated, 0 = did not cheat.

#### 4.2.1. Cheating

Consistent with the findings of Study 1A, a smaller percentage of participants cheated by overstating their performance on the problem-solving task in the loyalty condition (15%, 5 out of 33) as compared to the control condition (43%, 13 out of 30),  $\chi^2(1, N = 63) = 6.12, p = .013$  (see Fig. 1).

#### 4.2.2. Liking and group identification

The average level of group liking scores for participants in the loyalty condition ( $M = 7.25, SD = 1.20$ ) was not significantly different from that of participants in the control condition ( $M = 6.84, SD = 1.28$ )  $t(61) = 1.29, p = .20, d = .32$ . Similarly, participants in the loyalty condition did not identify with their groups any more than participants in the control condition did ( $M_{loyal} = 4.78, SD = .77; M_{control} = 4.49, SD = .83$ )  $t(60) = 1.46, p = .149, d = .37$ . Neither liking nor group identification was significantly related to cheating or affected the relationship between loyalty and cheating.

#### 4.3. Discussion

Consistent with the findings of Study 1A and in support of Hypothesis 1, the results of Study 1B revealed that participants primed with loyalty were less likely to cheat than those in the control condition. Additional analyses found no evidence that differences in liking or group identification explained or moderated the effects of loyalty on cheating (thus not supporting Hypothesis 4).

### 5. Overview of Studies 2A and 2B

The results of Studies 1A and 1B provide evidence that the more loyal people are to their group, the less likely they are to engage in unethical behavior on behalf of the group. However, both studies used the same experimental methodology and are therefore open to the critique of common method bias. Moreover, given that group loyalty often develops naturally in groups, studying it in a field setting would increase the validity of our findings. Therefore, the primary aim of Studies 2A and 2B was to increase both the internal and external validity of our findings by using an alternative measure of loyalty (i.e., self-reported loyalty to a group) based on existing loyalties to groups that people already held, namely fraternities (Study 2A) and study groups (Study 2B).

We also sought to generalize the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior by considering an alternative measure of unethical behavior: whistleblowing intention. Recent research by Waytz, Dungan, and Young (2013) found that people driven by loyalty (vs. fairness) concerns are less likely to report unethical behavior. While Waytz et al.'s research considers the effects of the fairness-loyalty tradeoff rather than loyalty per se, it highlights that our findings on the effects of loyalty may be limited to the specific context of cheating. To mitigate this possibility, we included a scenario about an ethical dilemma and an alternative measure of unethical behavior: i.e., whistleblowing. In both Studies 2A and 2B, we therefore collected two measures of unethical behavior: actual cheating and whistleblowing intention.

### 6. Study 2A: Loyalty and cheating in fraternities

#### 6.1. Method

##### 6.1.1. Participants

Eighty-nine male subjects ( $M_{age} = 19.69, SD = 1.28$ ) recruited from three fraternities at a large West Coast university were paid \$5 for participating in the study and given the opportunity to earn additional money for their fraternity depending on their performance on the problem-solving task described below.

The study comprised three tasks: a pre-experiment questionnaire designed to elicit self-reported measures of general ethical behavior, as well as liking, identification, and commitment to the group; the problem-solving task (used to assess cheating); and a whistle-blowing scenario and questionnaire.

##### 6.1.2. Pre-experiment questionnaire

Several days prior to the main experiment, participants were emailed a link to an online survey designed to solicit their participation and elicit measures of liking, group identification, organizational commitment, and general ethical behavior.<sup>3</sup>

##### 6.1.3. Liking

Participants were asked to rate how much they liked themselves and four other members of their fraternity house by rating the extent to which they agreed with the statement (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) "I like this person" for each person. The names of the four other members of their house were randomly selected (for each participant) from a list of all the names of the members of their respective fraternity.

##### 6.1.4. General ethical behavior

Participants also rated the extent to which they agreed with the statement "This person sometimes behaves unethically" for themselves and for the same four people using the same scale. The item was reverse-scored to create a measure of general ethical behavior.

##### 6.1.5. Group identification

A three-item version of the group-identification scale (Henry et al., 1999) used in Study 1B was adapted so that the target of identification was the fraternity member's house. Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the following statements (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree): "I would prefer to be in a different house" (reverse scored), "In this house, members don't have to rely on one another" (reverse scored), and "I think of this house as part of who I am," respectively.

##### 6.1.6. Commitment to the group

We adapted a four-item version of Allen and Meyer's (1990) Organizational Commitment Scale as amended by Jaros (2007) to focus on commitment to the house rather than an organization. Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the following statements (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree): "I do not feel emotionally attached to this house," "Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave my house now," "I feel that I owe this house quite a bit because of what it has done for me," and "I feel it is morally correct to dedicate myself to this house."

#### 6.2. Experiment

The main experiment was conducted at each of the three fraternity houses immediately prior to their respective weekly chapter meetings. The experimenters were male undergraduate students, approved by the university's Institutional Review Board to conduct research, whose demographic characteristics were similar to those of the participants, except that they did not belong to the relevant fraternity.

<sup>3</sup> Consultation with members of the Greek community revealed that participants were unlikely to complete the survey or take it seriously if the survey was too long. We therefore used single-item measures of liking and general ethical behavior, an abbreviated version of the group-identification scale used in Study 1B, and an abbreviated version of the organizational commitment scale cited.

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 2A.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Loyalty (Overall)	5.55	1.09								
2.	Loyalty (Attitudinal)	5.59	1.21	.92***							
3.	Loyalty (Applied)	5.51	1.16	.92***	.70***						
4.	General ethical behavior	5.57	1.40	.31**	.29**	.27*					
5.	Liking	6.15	0.67	.17	.08	.24*	.03				
6.	Group Identification	5.99	0.75	.14	.20	.05	.15	.08			
7.	Commitment	5.31	0.99	.31**	.34**	.22*	.01	-.15	.38***		
8.	Cheated dummy	0.39	0.49	-.20	-.14	-.24*	.14	-.09	-.01	-.08	
9.	Whistleblowing Intent	4.51	1.74	-.22*	.20	.21	.19	.16	-.03	.23*	-.04

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### 6.2.1. Cheating task

Participants completed the same problem-solving task used in Studies 1A and 1B and were told that for every correct matrix puzzle they solved, their fraternity would earn \$1 for a possible total of \$20 each for their fraternity. They were also told that two other fraternities, whose identities were not disclosed, were completing the same task and that the fraternities with the highest and second-highest average performance on the task would receive bonuses of \$200 and \$100, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

### 6.2.2. Whistleblowing scenario

Participants read a scenario about hazing at a fraternity taken from Richardson, Wang, and Hall (2012) and indicated their whistleblowing intent by rating the extent to which they agreed with the following statement (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely): "I intend to report the hazing incident to someone who could affect action."

### 6.2.3. Loyalty measure

Participants then completed a six-item measure of loyalty adapted from Coughlan (2005). The three items related to Attitudinal Loyalty were: "My behavior at school reflects the moral principles supported by my fraternity," "In resolving ethical dilemmas in school, I use the standards of my fraternity as guidelines," and "I feel a sense of loyalty to my fraternity" ( $\alpha = .80$ ). The three items related to Applied Loyalty were: "I expect other members of my fraternity to deal directly with suspected unethical behavior in our group," "My moral values and the moral values of my fraternity are very similar," and "One of the most important factors in work is the potential effect of my actions on other members of my fraternity" ( $\alpha = .79$ ) (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A factor analysis (using varimax rotation) indicated that the six items loaded onto one factor ( $\alpha = .87$ ), so we created a measure of *overall loyalty* by averaging responses to the six items. We also present the effects of attitudinal and applied loyalty separately for completeness. The measure of loyalty was collected at a different point in time than measures of liking, group identification, and commitment to eliminate the possibility that ratings of loyalty might influence ratings of these other constructs or vice versa.

## 6.3. Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics for the measures used in Study 2A is included in Table 2.

<sup>4</sup> The incentive structure was designed after consultation with members of the Greek community. Feedback suggested that \$1 per matrix and additional bonus payments (rather than penalties) to the house would be sufficient to motivate members of fraternities to take the task seriously.

### 6.3.1. Cheating

We conducted a logistic regression analysis of the impact of overall loyalty on cheating. The analysis revealed a marginally significant relationship between overall loyalty and less cheating, such that the more loyal brothers were to their fraternity, the less likely they were to cheat ( $B = -.39$ ,  $SE = .21$ ,  $Wald = 3.36$ ,  $p = .067$ ). The sub-measure of applied loyalty was also significantly related to less cheating ( $B = -.43$ ,  $SE = .20$ ,  $Wald = 4.54$ ,  $p = .033$ ), whereas attitudinal loyalty was not ( $B = -.25$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $Wald = 1.73$ ,  $p = .189$ ). The single item "I feel a sense of loyalty to my fraternity" was also significantly related to a lower probability of cheating ( $B = -.33$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $Wald = 3.85$ ,  $p = .050$ ).

### 6.3.2. Whistleblowing

A linear regression analysis of whistleblowing intention on loyalty revealed that the more loyal brothers were to their fraternity, the more likely they were to claim that they would blow the whistle on unethical behavior,  $F(1, 86) = 4.49$ ,  $p = .037$ , *Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .039 (applied loyalty  $F(1, 86) = 3.95$ ,  $p = .050$ , *Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .033; attitudinal loyalty  $F(1, 86) = 3.62$ ,  $p = .060$ , *Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .029).

### 6.3.3. Liking, group identification, commitment and general ethical behavior

Additional analyses confirmed that liking, group identification, commitment and self-reported general ethical behavior did not explain the effects of loyalty on cheating or whistleblowing intent.

### 6.3.4. Summary

Using self-reported measures of loyalty to fraternities, the results of Study 2A revealed that loyalty was significantly related to less cheating and greater intention to blow the whistle on unethical behavior. Moreover, liking, group identification, commitment, and self-reported general ethical behavior did not explain the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior.

## 7. Study 2B: Loyalty and cheating in study groups

The primary aim of Study 2B was to replicate the findings of Study 2A using participants who work together but who have not pledged loyalty to one another, in contrast to the fraternal organizations in Study 2A and as manipulated in Studies 1A and 1B (loyalty conditions).

### 7.1. Method

#### 7.1.1. Participants

Ninety subjects (45 Male,  $M_{age} = 21.1$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) were recruited from an undergraduate marketing class at the business school of a large West Coast university and received class credit for



**Table 3**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 2B.

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Loyalty (Overall)	4.60	0.97								
2.	Loyalty (Attitudinal)	4.44	1.09	.91***							
3.	Loyalty (Applied)	4.76	1.05	.91***	.66***						
4.	General ethical behavior	5.68	1.79	.21	.13	.25*					
5.	Liking	5.74	1.29	.11	.09	.11	.35***				
6.	Group Identification	5.26	0.74	.42***	.34**	.44***	.30**	.30**			
7.	Commitment	3.88	1.07	.30**	.26*	.29**	.19	.18	.55***		
8.	Cheated dummy	0.20	0.40	-.22*	-.15	-.25*	-.18	.09	-.21	-.09	
9.	Whistleblowing Intent	4.40	1.87	.27**	.26*	.24*	.07	.02	.10	.01	-.03

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

participating in the study. Participants had previously formed project teams to complete a group assignment for the class and were recruited in their project groups near the end of the semester after they had worked together for about two months. Twenty-one project groups ranging from three to six members took part in the experiment and were given the opportunity to receive bonus class credits depending on their group's performance on the main task described below. Participants completed the following five tasks in their project groups: (1) a group discussion task; (2) a questionnaire eliciting measures of liking, group identification, and organizational commitment; (3) the problem-solving task used in previous studies; (4) the whistleblowing task used in Study 2; and (5) a measure of loyalty to their group.

#### 7.1.2. Group discussion task

Participants read a scenario about a hypothetical group dilemma (see Appendix B) and were given 10 min to discuss the task in their project groups and submit a collective response. This task was used to ensure participants were engaged in the experiment and conscious of their group membership.

#### 7.1.3. Questionnaire

Participants were then assigned to individual cubicles to complete a questionnaire designed to elicit measures of general ethical behavior, liking, group identification, and commitment. Each participant was assigned an ID (U, V, W, X, Y, or Z) and asked to indicate the extent to which he or she liked each of the other members of their group, according to ID, by rating the statement "I like this person" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Participants also completed the measure of general ethical behavior used in Study 2, the full 12-item version of the group-identification scale used in Study 1B ( $\alpha = .79$ ), and the abbreviated four-item version of the commitment scale used in Study 2 ( $\alpha = .69$ ), which were adapted to focus on the study group rather than the fraternity house.

#### 7.1.4. Cheating task

Participants completed the same problem-solving task used in previous studies and were given the opportunity to falsely report their performance. Participants were told that two other project groups were completing the task at the same time and that the group with the highest average score on the problem-solving task would receive double the class credits for the experiment.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise the task was identical to Study 1B, except that participants did not pay themselves.

<sup>5</sup> At the time the study was conducted, all participants needed several research credits to complete their class credit requirements and had limited time or opportunities left to do so. Discussions with other members of the class indicated that this incentive was sufficient to motivate performance.

#### 7.1.5. Whistleblowing scenario

Participants then completed the same whistleblowing scenario and measure of whistleblowing intent used in Study 2A. Finally, participants completed the two three-item measures of applied loyalty ( $\alpha = .69$ ) and attitudinal loyalty ( $\alpha = .67$ ) used in Study 2A, which were combined into a measure of overall loyalty, as a factor analysis (with varimax rotation) again revealed the six items loaded onto one factor ( $\alpha = .80$ ), consistent with Study 2A. As an exploratory variable, we also collected a 6-item measure of status certainty.<sup>6</sup>

### 7.2. Results

Descriptive statistics for Study 2B are shown in Table 3.

#### 7.2.1. Cheating

Study group members who reported being more loyal to their groups were less likely to cheat on the problem-solving task than those who were less loyal ( $B = -.60$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $Wald = 4.66$ ,  $p = .031$ ). Similarly, the sub-measure of applied loyalty was significantly related to less cheating ( $B = -.61$ ,  $SE = .27$ ,  $Wald = 5.20$ ,  $p = .023$ ), and the sub-measure attitudinal loyalty was not ( $B = -.42$ ,  $SE = .25$ ,  $Wald = 2.81$ ,  $p = .095$ ). The single item "I feel a sense of loyalty to my study group" was also significantly related to a lower likelihood of cheating ( $B = -.41$ ,  $SE = .20$ ,  $Wald = 4.46$ ,  $p = .035$ ).

#### 7.2.2. Whistleblowing

Members of study groups who reported being more loyal to their groups were more likely to blow the whistle,  $F(1,88) = 7.027$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $Adjusted R^2 = .063$  (applied loyalty  $F(1,88) = 5.289$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $Adjusted R^2 = .046$ ; attitudinal loyalty  $F(1,88) = 6.213$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $Adjusted R^2 = .055$ ).

#### 7.2.3. Liking, group identification, commitment, and general ethical behavior

Additional analyses confirmed that liking, group identification, commitment and self-reported general ethical behavior did not explain the effects of loyalty on cheating or whistleblowing intent.

#### 7.2.4. Summary

Consistent with Study 2A, the results of Study 2B revealed that loyalty was significantly related to less cheating and greater intention to blow the whistle on unethical behavior. Also consistent with Study 2A, liking, group identification, commitment, and

<sup>6</sup> While our measure of status certainty was significantly correlated with Loyalty ( $r = .264$ ,  $p = .012$ ), it was not significantly related to cheating ( $B = -.385$ ,  $SE = .317$ ,  $p = .225$ ) and did not explain or moderate the significant relationship between loyalty and cheating.

self-reported general ethical behavior did not explain the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior.

### 7.3. Discussion

Studies 2A and 2B help to generalize the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior beyond the laboratory to contexts involving actual loyalties to groups where such loyalty is expected (Study 2A fraternities) or not (Study 2B study groups), thus lending additional support for [Hypothesis 1](#). Moreover, Studies 2A and 2B demonstrate that the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior are not limited to cheating but apply to proactive ethical behavior (whistleblowing) as well. In contrast to the finding of [Waytz et al. \(2013\)](#) that the hypothetical tradeoff between loyalty and fairness leads to greater unethical behavior, this study revealed that when such ethical tradeoffs are not salient, then loyalty to an actual group promotes ethical behavior.

In both studies we were able to address a number of alternative explanations and potential mediators for these effects, including the possibility that the most loyal participants exerted the most effort on the cheating task, liked each other the most, felt the most committed to their groups, identified the most with their groups (again not supporting [Hypothesis 4](#)), and believed they acted the most ethically in general. Next, we examine why loyalty reduces unethical behavior.

## 8. Overview of Studies 3A and 3B

The primary aim of Studies 3A and 3B is to identify a potential mediator for the relationship between loyalty and unethical behavior. Studies 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B provide evidence in support of our first hypothesis, namely that loyalty reduces the likelihood that a person will act unethically (i.e., cheat or fail to blow the whistle) despite such unethical actions benefiting the group. In developing this hypothesis, we alluded to one potential mechanism, i.e., ethical saliency, which we test in Study 3A. That is, the moral aspect of loyalty might make the ethics of a situation more salient, which in turn might reduce an individual's propensity to cheat. In Study 3B, we examine whether the effect of loyalty on ethical behavior is driven by pledging loyalty rather than loyalty per se. While the results of Studies 2A (fraternities) and 2B (study groups) suggest that the pledge is not necessary, both studies are correlational in nature and neither speak to the role of ethical saliency. In Study 3B, we therefore adapted the more rigorous laboratory methodology of Study 3A by using a different pledge and adding a third condition in which participants discussed loyalty but did not pledge their loyalty to their group. We also revisited the role of ethical saliency in explaining the relationship between loyalty and ethical behavior.

## 9. Study 3A: Mediation in the laboratory

### 9.1. Method

#### 9.1.1. Participants

Sixty subjects (30 male;  $M_{age} = 19.28$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) from a large West Coast university participated in the study for pay (a minimum \$5 show-up fee and the opportunity to earn additional money in the individual task outlined below). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: loyalty ( $N = 30$ ) and control ( $N = 30$ ). Experimental sessions were run back to back, but only same-sex participants were recruited for each session. In each session, participants were assigned to groups of three participants, one group per condition.

The study employed the same procedure as Study 1A with two differences: First, following completion of the group discussion but

before the individual problem-solving task, participants completed a measure of ethical saliency. Second, after the individual problem-solving task, participants completed a brief questionnaire designed to elicit measures of identity-fusion liking and moral self-identity.

#### 9.1.2. Ethical saliency

Participants completed a measure of ethical saliency (adapted from [Shu, Mazar, Gino, Ariely, & Bazerman, 2012](#)). Participants were given a word-completion task in which they were asked to complete 11 word fragments with the first words that came to mind. Four of the word fragments (\_\_\_RAL, \_I\_\_\_E, E\_\_\_C\_\_\_, and T\_\_\_H) could potentially be completed with words relating to ethics (moral, virtue, ethical, and truth) or with neutral words (viral, minute, effects, and tooth), and one word (H\_\_\_E\_T) could only be completed with an ethical word (i.e., honest). The remaining six word fragments could be completed with neutral words. Participants were given two minutes to complete this task. A dichotomous variable of Ethical Saliency was coded 1 if the participant identified at least one of the five ethical words and 0 if they did not. (The conclusions of the mediation results reported below do not change if a continuous measure of ethical saliency is used instead.)

#### 9.1.3. Post-task questionnaire

Participants then completed the three-item loyalty manipulation used in Study 1A, ( $\alpha = .75$ ), as well as a three-item measure of liking – “I liked the members of the group,” “I disliked at least one member of the group” (reverse-scored), “If I could, I would work with the group on a future task” – using the same scale ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

Participants then completed a pictorial measure of identity fusion ([Swann et al., 2009](#)), which depicted the self and the group as separate entities (i.e., two circles) that overlapped to different degrees from not at all (Picture 1 of 5) to completely (Picture 5 of 5). Participants indicated which picture best depicted their relationship with their group during the experiment, and these responses were converted into a measure of identity fusion (1 = no identity fusion, 5 = complete identity fusion).

Finally, participants completed a measure of moral self-identity adapted from [Aquino and Reed \(2002\)](#). They were presented with nine traits (caring, compassionate, helpful, hard-working, friendly, fair, generous, honest, and kind) and asked to indicate “how closely you behaved during this experiment compared to your ideal on each trait” (1 = much less than the person I want to be, 9 = much more than the person I want to be). Responses were averaged into a combined measure of moral self-identity ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

## 9.2. Results

[Table 4](#) reports the descriptive statistics for the main variables measured in this study.

#### 9.2.1. Manipulation check

Participants in the loyalty condition reported being more loyal ( $M = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ )  $t(58) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.03$ .

#### 9.2.2. Cheating

As shown in [Fig. 1](#), consistent with the results of previous studies, fewer participants in the loyalty condition cheated by overstating their performance on the problem-solving task (10%, 3 out of 30) as compared to those in the control condition (43%, 13 out of 30),  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 8.52$ ,  $p = .004$ .

**Table 4**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 3A.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Loyalty dummy	0.50	0.50					
2. Liking	5.70	1.04	-.11				
3. Identity fusion	3.09	1.15	-.05	.39**			
4. Moral self-identity	6.09	1.27	-.00	.31*	.28*		
5. Ethical salience	0.43	0.50	.47***	.05	-.00	.05	
6. Cheated dummy	0.27	0.45	-.38**	.05	-.12	-.03	-.53***

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### 9.2.3. Ethical salience

Significantly more participants in the loyalty condition (67%, 20 out of 30 subjects) identified at least one ethical word as compared to participants in the control condition (20%, 6 out of 30)  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 13.30, p < .001$ . Moreover, our measure of ethical salience was significantly related to participants' propensity to cheat. None of the participants who identified an ethical word (0 out of 26) cheated, whereas 53% (18 of 34 subjects) who failed to identify an ethical word cheated,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 16.68, p < .001$ . To test whether our measure of ethical salience mediated the effect of loyalty on cheating, we used a Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Selig & Preacher, 2008) and ran 20,000 simulations for the indirect effect of loyalty on cheating through ethical salience. The 95% confidence interval  $[-8.88, -.32]$  excluded zero, confirming that ethical salience mediated the relationship between loyalty and cheating; that is, participants in the loyalty condition cheated less because ethical salience was higher for them.

### 9.2.4. Alternative explanations

The average level of liking and identity fusion and moral self-identity scores for participants in the loyalty condition did not differ significantly from the respective average scores of participants in the control condition. Moreover, liking, identity fusion, and moral self-identity were not significantly related to cheating and did not significantly affect the relationship between loyalty and cheating when added as a covariate in the logistic regression of loyalty predicting cheating.

## 9.3. Discussion

The results of Study 3A again revealed that participants primed with loyalty were less likely to cheat and had higher ethical-salience scores than those in the control condition. We also found that greater ethical salience mediated the effects of loyalty on less cheating, thus supporting Hypothesis 2. The study also did not find evidence for the potential additional explanations that loyal participants might feel more fused to their groups or that the loyalty manipulation might cause the loyal to hold more self-focused conscious concerns about being moral.

## 10. Study 3B: Pledging loyalty vs. loyalty per se

It is possible that the salience of ethics (the mediator identified in Study 3A) is merely an artifact of reading and signing the pledge and that other mechanisms underpin the relationship between loyalty per se and ethical behavior. Thus, in Study 3B, we identified and measured three additional potential mechanisms, including (1) the salience of values related to loyalty ("values salience"),

(2) the salience of cheating ("cheating salience"), and (3) expectations arising from loyalty ("loyal expectations").

Loyalty has long been considered a value that people hold dear (Allport, 1933; Jones, 2010; Oldenquist, 1982). Discussions of loyalty in groups may prompt people to think of specific values related to loyalty rather than ethics more generally, and these related values may more directly affect ethical conduct. For example, Schwartz (1992) identified a cluster of values that he termed "benevolence," including loyalty as well as honesty, forgiveness, helpfulness, responsibility, mature love, and true friendship. Closely related to benevolence were the value clusters of "respect for tradition" and "universalism." To test whether loyalty makes specific related values salient, we developed the measure *values salience*, analogous to that used for ethical salience. Specifically, we used a word-fragment task that included the five target words associated with loyalty-related values, including honesty, helpfulness, respect, and fairness, as well as purity, a further value cluster that Haidt and colleagues (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004, 2007) had identified.

While loyalty is often considered a virtue (Coleman, 2009; Souryal & McKay, 1996), many have highlighted its darker side (Axinn, 1994; Carbone, 1997; Ewin, 1992). Discussions of loyalty may also make salient the negative consequences of loyalty, such as cheating and lying about one's performance if it benefits the group. Loyalty may therefore act as a precautionary measure by making salient the potential negative consequences of one's actions and serving as a deterrent of such actions. We therefore created the measure *cheating salience* using a word-fragment task with the target words cheating, lied, and the related words false, fraud, and wrong.

Finally, loyalty, as defined, gives rise to expectations that may affect behavior. In a pilot study, 92 subjects identified expectations arising from loyalty; the five most cited expectations were caring, commitment, consistency, support and trust. We created the measure *loyal expectations* using a word-fragment task with these five target words.

## 10.1. Method

### 10.1.1. Participants

One hundred eight subjects (57 male;  $M_{age} = 20.40, SD = 1.685$ ) from a large West Coast university participated in the study for pay (either class credit or a \$5 show up-fee plus and the opportunity to earn additional money in the numbers game used in Study 1A). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: loyalty pledge ("pledge,"  $N = 33$ ), loyalty no pledge ("no pledge,"  $N = 39$ ), and control ("control,"  $N = 36$ ). Experimental sessions were run back to back, but only same-sex participants were recruited for each session. In each session, participants were assigned to groups of three participants, one group per condition.

The study employed the same procedure as Study 3A with three differences: first participants in the pledge condition signed a pledge that simply stated, "I pledge my loyalty to my group for the duration of this study," without reference to other moral values, thus removing a potential confound of the previous pledge. Second, following completion of the group discussion but before the individual problem-solving task, participants completed measures of loyal expectations and values salience. Third, after the individual problem-solving task, participants completed a brief questionnaire that included measures of ethical salience and cheating salience.

### 10.1.2. Questionnaires

Pilot testing of word-fragment tasks with all four salience measures (20 target words and 10 filler words) revealed that participants suffered fatigue and rarely attempted to answer later

**Table 5**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 3B.

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Loyalty dummy <sup>a</sup>	0.67	0.47							
2.	Pledge dummy <sup>b</sup>	0.48	0.50	1.00***						
3.	No Pledge dummy <sup>c</sup>	0.52	0.50	1.00***	–					
4.	Values Saliency	0.44	0.50	.07	.04	.10				
5.	Cheating Saliency	0.71	0.45	.12	.16	.08	.19+			
6.	Ethical saliency	0.40	0.49	.25**	.36**	.20+	.20 <sup>†</sup>	–.03		
7.	Loyal expectations	0.54	0.50	.29**	.27*	.33**	.14	.07	.11	
8.	Cheated	0.31	0.47	–.28**	–.27*	–.31**	–.11	–.19*	–.31**	–.33***

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ .

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Loyalty dummy coded 1 = Pledge or No Pledge, 0 = Control.

<sup>b</sup> Pledge dummy coded 1 = Pledge, 0 = Control, Missing = No Pledge.

<sup>c</sup> No Pledge dummy coded 1 = No Pledge, 0 = Control, Missing = Pledge.

fragments. We therefore split the word-fragment task into two 15-word fragments with the first deployed immediately after the group discussion task but before the numbers game, including measures of values saliency and loyal expectations, and the second deployed after the numbers game, including measures of ethical saliency and cheating saliency (see Appendix C).

After completing the second word-fragment task, participants completed the three-item loyalty manipulation used in Study 1A ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

## 10.2. Results

Table 5 reports the descriptive statistics for the main variables measured in this study.

### 10.2.1. Manipulation check

Participants in the loyalty conditions reported being more loyal ( $M_{combined\ loyalty} = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M_{control} = 3.31$  ( $SD = 1.60$ ),  $t(106) = 3.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### 10.2.2. Cheating

Fewer participants in the pledge (24%, 8 out of 33) and non-pledge (21%, 8 out of 39) conditions cheated as compared to those in the control condition (50%, 18 out of 36),  $\chi^2(2, N = 108) = 8.70$ ,  $p = .013$ . Planned contrasts confirmed that participants in either loyalty condition alone cheated less than those in the control condition. A summary of the results of the first six studies is shown in Fig. 1.

### 10.2.3. Potential mediators

Significantly more participants in the loyalty conditions as compared to the control condition identified at least one word associated with ethical saliency (pledge: 58%, 19 out of 33 subjects; non-pledge: 41%, 16 out of 39 subjects; control: 22%, 8 out of 36 subjects)  $\chi^2(2, N = 108) = 9.02$   $p = .011$ , and at least one word associated with loyal expectations (pledge: 61%, 20 out of 33 subjects; non-pledge: 67%, 26 out of 39 subjects; control: 33%, 12 out of 36 subjects)  $\chi^2(2, N = 108) = 9.40$ ,  $p = .009$ . However, no significant differences emerged between participants reporting at least one word associated with cheating saliency (pledge: 79%, 26 out of 33 subjects; non-pledge: 72%, 28 out of 39 subjects; control: 64%, 23 out of 36 subjects),  $\chi^2(2, n = 108) = 1.87$   $p = ns$ , or at least one word associated with values saliency (pledge: 42%, 14 out of 33 subjects; non-pledge: 49%, 19 out of 39 subjects; control: 39%, 14 out of 36 subjects),  $\chi^2(2, N = 108) = .76$ ,  $p = ns$ .

Our measures of ethical saliency and loyal expectations were also significantly related to subjects' propensity to cheat,  $\chi^2(1,$

$N = 108) = 8.87$ ,  $p = .003$  and  $\chi^2(1, N = 108) = 10.39$ ,  $p = .001$  respectfully. However, cheating saliency was only marginally significantly related to actual cheating,  $\chi^2(1, N = 108) = 2.94$ ,  $p = .087$  perhaps because a large number of participants in all conditions identified at least one target word. Values saliency was not significantly related to cheating,  $\chi^2(1, N = 108) = .92$ ,  $p = ns$ .

### 10.2.4. Mediation analyses

We tested whether our measures of ethical saliency and loyal expectations mediated the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior. A Monte Carlo model examining the effects of loyalty (combined treatment conditions vs. control condition) on cheating including both potential mediators was run with 20,000 simulations and revealed that the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of ethical saliency excluded zero [ $-3.737, -.174$ ] as did the indirect effect of loyal expectations [ $-3.599, -.269$ ]. Therefore, consistent with the findings of Study 3A, ethical saliency mediated the relationship between loyalty and cheating. Moreover, our measure of expectations also mediated the effect of loyalty on cheating.

We tested the robustness of these findings to alternative model specifications including (1) rerunning the model with just one mediator at a time; (2) running the model separately for our pledge and non-pledge loyalty conditions; and (3) using an alternative measure of ethical saliency, i.e. the number of words related to ethics that participants identified (i.e., their "ethical saliency number"). The mediation results held up to these alternative model specifications, thus providing additional support for our second hypothesis.

## 10.3. Discussion

The results of Study 3B extend the findings of Study 3A and paint a more nuanced picture of the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior. Loyalty, whether it is pledged explicitly or merely an implicit expectation, raises the saliency of ethics and gives rise to expectations of support and commitment. When loyalty is explicit (i.e., pledged), it is the saliency of ethics that seems to drive ethical behavior, whereas when it is implicit (i.e., not pledged), the evidence is mixed: ethical saliency as well as expectations of support both play a role in reducing unethical behavior, providing additional support for Hypothesis 2.

## 11. Overview of Studies 4, 5A and 5B

In Studies 4, 5A and 5B we test our third hypothesis regarding the role of competition as a potential moderator for the relationship between loyalty and unethical behavior. Specifically, we pre-

dict that competition moderates the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior such that when competition is high (vs. low), the loyal will act less (more) ethically.

Studies 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B provided evidence that loyalty reduces the likelihood that a person will act unethically. However, in all these studies, the demands of loyalty were relatively unclear. In Studies 4, 5A and 5B, we consider a context (i.e., competition) in which the demands of loyalty are clear and conflict with other ethical concerns. In Study 4 we returned to the fraternities and randomly assigned participants to receive a high- or low-competition manipulation before completing the cheating task we used in prior studies. We manipulated competition between participants via a call to arms from the house presidents, whereas loyalty was self-reported in the same manner described in Study 2A. In Study 5A subjects from an online pool were randomly assigned to chat rooms to discuss and pledge loyalty to their group or to discuss the weather. They were also randomly assigned to receive a high- or low-competition manipulation before completing the cheating task we used in prior studies. In Study 5B, we employed the same design and procedure and recruited participants from the same subject pool as used in Study 5A but used a different manipulation of competition in the control condition.

**12. Study 4: Loyalty, competition, and cheating in fraternities**

We recruited members of extant groups, i.e., fraternities, and adapted the methodology used in Study 2A to include a manipulation of competition.

*12.1. Method*

*12.1.1. Participants*

One hundred twenty male subjects ( $M_{age} = 19.89, SD = 1.28$ ) recruited from four fraternities at a large West Coast university were paid \$5 for participating in the study and given the opportunity to earn additional money for their fraternity depending on their performance on the same problem-solving task used in prior studies.

The study design was similar to that used in Study 2A except for the following changes: (1) the pre-experiment survey also included a measure of loyalty to the house; (2) prior to the problem-solving task, participants from each house were randomly assigned to receive one of two messages from their house president, as described in the competition manipulation below; and (3) the final questionnaire did not include the whistle-blowing scenario.

*12.1.2. Pre-experiment questionnaire*

Participants completed measures of loyalty and general ethical behavior as well as the measures of group identification and commitment to the group used in Study 2A. The measure of general ethical behavior was embedded within the Ten-Item Personality

Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003) to reduce the likelihood that participants would make the connection between loyalty and ethical behavior in the main study.

*12.1.3. Loyalty to the house*

Participants completed a three-item measure of loyalty to the house by rating the extent to which they agreed with the statements “I am loyal to my house,” “I’m NOT at all loyal to my fraternity” (reverse-scored), and “I feel strong loyalty to the brothers in the house” (1 disagree strongly, 7 agree strongly). The items were combined into a measure of loyalty ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

*12.1.4. General ethical behavior*

Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the statement “I see myself as ethical, moral” (1 disagree strongly, 7 agree strongly).

*12.2. Experiment*

The main experiment was conducted at each of the four fraternity houses immediately prior to their respective weekly chapter meetings. Each fraternity was aware that at least two other fraternities were taking part, but the identity of the other fraternities was not disclosed. Participants completed the same problem-solving task used in prior studies as well as the post-task questionnaire. The incentive structure was the same as that described in Study 2A.

*12.2.1. Competition manipulation*

After participants provided consent, they were randomly assigned within each fraternity to receive one of two messages from their house president, which was included with the instructions for the problem-solving task. In the *low-competition condition*, participants received the message “Please take these tasks seriously. Good Luck!” In the *high-competition condition*, participants received the message “Please take these tasks seriously. A reminder that the better you perform on these tasks the more our house will earn. We’re in competition with two other houses and the winning house will receive a big bonus. **It is tough competition, but I know we can win.** Good luck!” (Emphasis in the stimuli).

*12.3. Results*

Table 6 reports the descriptive statistics of the main variables measured in the study.

*12.3.1. Loyalty*

Our measure of loyalty to the house was negatively skewed and highly leptokurtic because 45% (54/120) of subjects self-rated their loyalty using the maximum ratings possible. We therefore created two measures of loyalty, including the dichotomous measure

**Table 6**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 4.

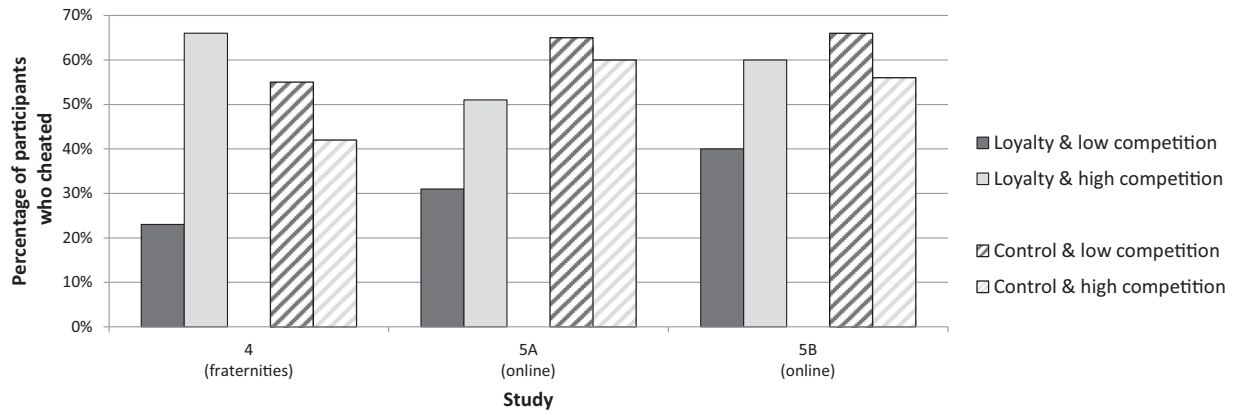
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Loyalty	6.46	0.75						
2. StrongLoyalty	0.45	0.50	.65***					
3. ExpLoyalty	767.00	340.00	.90***	.88***				
4. Competition dummy <sup>a</sup>	0.54	0.50	.09	.09	.08			
5. Group Identification	5.66	0.94	.67***	.42***	.61***	.11		
6. Commitment	5.20	1.28	.57***	.47***	.56***	.15	.62***	
7. Cheated dummy	0.48	0.50	-.09	-.00	-.08	.12	-.07	.07

\*  $p < .05$ ;

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Competition dummy coded 1 = high competition, 0 = low competition.



**Fig. 2.** The percentage of participants who cheated on the problem-solving task broken down by condition in the last three studies. *Note:* For illustrative purposes, in Study 4 the percentages of participants who cheated is shown separately for those who self-reported strong loyalty to their houses (represented by the “loyalty” bars in Fig. 2) and those who self-reported lower loyalty (represented by “control” bars in Fig. 2).

*StrongLoyalty*, coded 1 if participants rated themselves as strongly loyal to their house (i.e., used the maximum possible ratings) and 0 otherwise, and the transformed measure of *ExpLoyalty* by taking the exponent of the loyalty measure, which removed the skewness and kurtosis.

### 12.3.2. Cheating

For participants in the low-competition condition, those who self-rated as strongly loyal to their fraternity (23%, 5 out of 22) were less likely to cheat compared to those who self-rated lower loyalty to their house (55%, 18 out of 33),  $\chi^2(1, N = 55) = 5.49$ ,  $p = .026$ . In contrast, for participants in the high-competition condition, those who self-rated as strongly loyal to their fraternity (66%, 21 out of 32) were marginally more likely to cheat than those who self-rated lower loyalty to their house (42%, 14 out of 33)  $\chi^2(1, N = 65) = 3.52$ ,  $p = .083$  (see Fig. 2).

There was no effect of competition on the propensity to cheat for those less loyal to the house,  $\chi^2(1, N = 66) = .971$ ,  $p = .460$ . However, competition significantly increased the propensity to cheat for those strongly loyal to their house,  $\chi^2(1, N = 54) = 9.61$ ,  $p = .002$ .

We also conducted a logistic regression analysis of the impact of *ExpLoyalty* on cheating. For participants in the low-competition condition, the analysis revealed a significant relationship between *ExpLoyalty* and less cheating, such that the more loyal brothers were to their fraternity, the less likely they were to cheat ( $B = -.002$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $Wald = 5.83$ ,  $p = .016$ ). In contrast, for participants in the high-competition condition, there was not a significant relationship between *ExpLoyalty* and cheating ( $B = .001$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $Wald = 1.15$ ,  $p = .283$ ).

### 12.3.3. Group identification, commitment and self-ratings of ethicality

Additional analyses confirmed that group identification, commitment and self-reported ethicality did not explain the effects of loyalty on cheating.

## 12.4. Discussion

Using self-reported measures of loyalty to fraternities and varying the salience of competition between houses, the results of Study 4 revealed that loyalty was significantly related to less cheating when the salience of competition was low, but when competition was high, those more loyal to their fraternities cheated more. Thus, the results of Study 4 provide evidence in support of Hypothesis 3. Group identification, commitment, and general

ethicality did not explain the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior.

## 13. Study 5A: Loyalty, competition, and cheating online

To conceptually replicate and generalize the findings of Study 4, we conducted a study using participants from an online subject pool (Amazon Mechanical Turk). We randomly assigned participants to both treatment conditions (i.e., loyalty vs. control and competition vs. control) allowing for causal inference and manipulated competition in a similar manner to that described in Study 4.

### 13.1. Method

#### 13.1.1. Participants

Two hundred eight subjects (105 female,  $M_{age} = 35.35$ ,  $SD = 11.17$ ) recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk were paid \$0.50 for participating in the study and given the opportunity to earn additional money for themselves and their groups depending on their performance on the problem-solving task used in prior studies.

The study design was comprised of a prescreening questionnaire, a group discussion task, a cheating task, and a post-task questionnaire, all embedded in a survey. Subjects were randomly assigned to a 2 (loyalty vs. control discussion task)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low competition) between-subjects design.

#### 13.1.2. Pre-screening questionnaire

Participants who signed up for the study first completed a questionnaire designed to test whether they were paying attention or not. Two target questions told participants to select particular responses to demonstrate they were paying attention. Those participants who failed to select the appropriate responses were automatically removed from the study and prevented from taking the study again. Their responses were not collected.

#### 13.1.3. Group discussion task

Participants who passed the attention checks were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: loyalty or control. Participants were told that they would be taking part in a group discussion with two other participants and that the discussion would commence the moment two other participants had signed in. They were told that they if the two other participants did not sign in within three minutes, then the study would end and they would be paid the participation fee.

A chat room was embedded in the survey and designed to “go live” the moment three participants from the same condition reached the group discussion task. If after three minutes three participants from the same condition had not reached that the group discussion task, then the chat room did not open, the study ended, and participants were paid for their participation. Again, their data was not collected. If three participants from the same condition reached the group discussion task within three minutes of each other, the chat room went live, and participants were able to communicate with each other via text for three minutes before the chat room closed again. Participants in the *loyalty* condition were told that their discussion topic was loyalty and, given the same prompts used in our prior laboratory studies, those in the *control* condition were told to discuss the weather and given the same prompts related to the weather. All participants were provided with anonymous IDs during the group discussion task and could see everyone else’s comments. At the end of the group discussion task, participants in the loyalty condition were asked to pledge their loyalty to their group for the duration of the study by writing “I pledge my loyalty to my group.”

#### 13.1.4. Cheating task

Participants completed the same cheating task used in prior studies but were given just three minutes to complete the task. Instead of circling a pair of numbers that added to 10, participants were asked to type either of the two numbers that added to 10 into a response box. Participants could earn \$0.05 for each of the 20 puzzles they solved. They were told that two other groups were completing the same task and that members of the group with the highest average score would each earn an additional \$1 bonus. After completing the task, participants self-reported their own performance, which provided them with an opportunity to cheat.

#### 13.1.5. Competition manipulation

Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of two messages included in the instructions for the problem-solving task. In the *low-competition condition*, participants received the message “Please take these tasks seriously. Good Luck!” In the *high-competition condition*, participants received the message “Please take these tasks seriously. The better you perform on these tasks the more your group will earn. You’re in competition with two other groups and the winning group will receive a big bonus. **It is tough competition, but you can win.** Good luck!” (Emphasis was included in the stimuli).

#### 13.1.6. Post-task questionnaire

Participants completed measures of loyalty, competition, and ethicality (used in Study 4) as well as measures of group identification and liking.

#### 13.1.7. Manipulation check #1: Loyalty

As a manipulation check, participants completed a three-item measure of loyalty. They rated the extent to which they agreed with the statements “I feel loyal to this group,” “I pledged my loyalty to my group,” and “I had obligations to my group” (1 disagree strongly, 7 agree strongly). The items were averaged together to create a measure of loyalty ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

#### 13.1.8. Manipulation check #2: Competition

Participants completed a three-item measure of competition designed to test the effectiveness of our competition manipulation. They rated the extent to which they agreed with the statements “It was a tough competition,” “Competition did not matter” (reverse scored), and “It was important that my group won” (1 disagree

strongly, 7 agree strongly). The items were averaged together to create a measure of competition ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

#### 13.1.9. Group identification

Participants completed the same 12-item measure of group identification used in Studies 1B and 2B. The items were combined into a measure of Group Identification ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### 13.1.10. Liking

Participants completed the three-item measure of liking used in Study 2B. The items were average together to create a measure of liking ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

### 13.2. Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics of the main variables measured in the study is presented in [Table 7](#).

#### 13.2.1. Manipulation checks

Participants in the loyalty condition reported feeling more loyal ( $M = 5.99$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ )  $t(206) = 10.543$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.46$ . Participants in the high-competition condition felt more competitive ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) than those in the low-competition condition ( $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ )  $t(206) = 2.137$ ,  $p = .034$ ,  $d = .30$ .

#### 13.2.2. Cheating

For participants in the low-competition condition, those in the loyalty condition were less likely to cheat (31%, 15 out of 48) than those in the control condition (65%, 34 out of 52),  $\chi^2(1, N = 106) = 11.64$ ,  $p = .001$ . In contrast, for participants in the high-competition condition, there was not a significant difference in the level of cheating between those in the loyalty condition (51%, 26 out of 51) and those in the control condition (60%, 33 out of 55),  $\chi^2(1, N = 106) = .872$ ,  $ns$  (see [Fig. 2](#)).

There was no effect of competition on the propensity to cheat for those in the control conditions  $\chi^2(1, N = 107) = .331$ ,  $ns$ . However, competition significantly increased the propensity to cheat for those in the loyalty condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 99) = 3.967$ ,  $p = .046$ .

#### 13.2.3. Group identification, liking and general ethicality

Additional analyses confirmed that while group identification was significantly related to loyalty, it was not related to cheating in either competition condition. Liking was significantly related to loyalty in the low-competition condition but not the high-competition condition, but was not significantly related to cheating in either competition condition. Moreover, neither group identification nor liking explained or moderated the effects of loyalty on cheating, again failing to provide support for [Hypothesis 4](#). Sim-

**Table 7**  
Descriptive statistics for Study 5A.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Loyalty dummy	0.48	0.50					
2. Competition dummy	0.51	0.50	.01				
3. Group Identification	4.54	1.07	.26***	.00			
4. Liked	5.06	1.50	.17*	-.02	.76***		
5. Ethical	6.09	0.84	.02	.05	.20**	.18*	
6. Cheated dummy	0.52	0.50	-.21**	.07	-.03	.03	.00

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

ilarly self-reported ethicality did not explain the effects of loyalty on cheating.

### 13.3. Discussion

Competition again moderated the effects of loyalty on cheating providing further support for [Hypothesis 3](#). Loyalty was significantly related to less cheating when competition was low, but not when competition was high. Group identification, liking and general ethicality did not explain the effects of loyalty on unethical behavior.

## 14. Study 5B: Loyalty, competition, and cheating online

We employed the same design and recruited subjects from the same online pool as that used in Study 5A but employed a different manipulation of competition to enhance internal validity.

### 14.1. Method

#### 14.1.1. Participants

Two hundred nine subjects (119 female,  $M_{age} = 33.39$ ,  $SD = 11.06$ ) recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk were paid \$0.50 for participating in the study and given the opportunity to earn additional money for themselves and their groups depending on their performance on the problem-solving task used in prior studies.

The study design and tasks were identical to those used in Study 5A except for two changes including (1) a revised competition manipulation and (2) a post-task questionnaire with measures of loyalty, competition and liking but not ethicality or group identification.

#### 14.1.2. Competition manipulation

The manipulation of competition was the same as that used in Study 5A except the message communicated to participants in the control condition. In this study, the message stated “Please take these tasks seriously. The better you perform on these tasks the more your group will earn. It is tough, but you can win. Good luck!”

### 14.2. Results

#### 14.2.1. Manipulation checks

Participants in the loyalty condition reported feeling more loyal ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ )  $t(207) = 10.790$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.46$ . Participants in the high-competition condition felt more competitive ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than those in the low-competition condition ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ )  $t(207) = 2.732$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $d = .38$ .

#### 14.2.2. Cheating

For participants in the low-competition condition, those in the loyalty condition were less likely to cheat (40%, 20 out of 50) than those in the control condition (66%, 36 out of 55),  $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 6.818$ ,  $p = .009$ . In contrast, for participants in the high-competition condition, there was not a significant difference in the level of cheating between those in the loyalty condition (60%, 32 out of 53) and those in the control condition (56%, 28 out of 50),  $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = .203$ ,  $ns$  (see [Fig. 2](#)).

There was no effect of competition on the propensity to cheat for those in the control conditions  $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = .321$ ,  $ns$ . However, competition significantly increased the propensity to cheat for those in the loyalty condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = 4.274$ ,  $p = .039$ .

#### 14.2.3. Liking

Liking was not significantly related to loyalty, competition or cheating and did not explain or moderate the effects of loyalty on cheating.

### 14.3. Discussion

Consistent with the findings of Studies 4 and 5A, competition moderated the effects of loyalty on cheating. Loyalty was significantly related to less cheating when competition was low, but not when competition was high.

## 15. General discussion

The current research tested the counterintuitive hypothesis that the more loyal a person is to a group, the more likely she is to act ethically, even if acting unethically would benefit the group. Across six studies, we found consistent support for this hypothesis.

In Studies 1A and 1B, participants primed with loyalty were less likely to cheat than participants in the control condition on a problem-solving task. Studies 2A and 2B help to generalize these findings to settings outside of the laboratory involving actual relationships where loyalty is an explicit expectation (i.e., fraternities in Study 2A) and where it is not (i.e., study groups in Study 2B). Members who reported feeling more loyalty to their fraternities or study groups were less likely to cheat than those who felt less loyal on the same problem-solving task used in Studies 1A and 1B. Moreover, loyal members were more likely than others to blow the whistle on unethical behavior, a finding that demonstrates that the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior are not limited to cheating. In Studies 3A and 3B, we returned to the laboratory to identify a potential explanation for these findings: Participants in the loyalty conditions were less likely to cheat than those in the control conditions because loyalty increased the salience of ethical considerations in the problem-solving tasks (Studies 3A and 3B) and increased expectations of support from the group (Study 3B non-pledge condition). Finally, three additional studies identified competition as a moderator of these effects. When competition was low, members who reported feeling more loyal to their fraternities (Study 4) and individuals who pledged their loyalty to each other online (Studies 5A and 5B) were less likely to cheat than those who felt less loyal or had not pledged their loyalty to each other. However, these effects of loyalty on unethical behavior disappeared when competition was high.

Our data has a number of strengths. First, in six of the studies (1A, 1B, 3A, 3B, 5A and 5B) we randomly assigned participants to conditions, allowing for causal inference of the effects of loyalty on cheating. Second, we used an objective measure of unethical behavior in every study (i.e., actual cheating on a problem-solving task) rather than relying on subjective self-reports of unethical behavior based on hypothetical scenarios, the predominant paradigm used in previous research on loyalty, which suffer from self-reporting desirability biases. Third, we replicated the laboratory findings of Studies 1A, 1B, 3A, and 3B in contexts involving actual loyalties (Studies 2A, 2B, and 4) and with people from an online pool (Studies 5A and 5B), enhancing the generalizability and external validity of our findings. Finally, we were able to address a number of alternative explanations for our results: There was no evidence that the effects of loyalty on cheating were due to loyal participants exerting more effort than others on the problem-solving task (all studies except Study 1B),<sup>7</sup> liking each other more

<sup>7</sup> Study 1B was the only study in which we found a marginally significant effect of loyalty on individuals' actual performance ( $M_{loyal} = 9.36$ ,  $SD = 4.93$ ;  $M_{control} = 7.23$ ,  $SD = 3.84$ ),  $F(1,61) = 3.610$ ,  $p = .062$ ,  $\eta^2 = .056$ .



(all nine studies), identifying with their groups more (Studies 1B, 2A, 2B, 4 and 5A), being more committed to their groups (Studies 2A, 2B and 4), feeling more fused to their groups (Study 3A), acting more ethically in general (Studies 2A, 2B, 4 and 5A), or holding self-focused concerns about being moral (Study 3A).

### 15.1. Theoretical implications

Until recently, loyalty has largely been ignored by organizational researchers and social psychologists, who have treated it synonymously with other constructs, such as identification and commitment (Coughlan, 2005; Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001) or dismissed it as an inherently biased vice inconsistent with universalist conceptions of morality (Blamires, 1963; Carbone, 1997; Coleman, 2009; Kant, 1797; Kleinig, 1994). The current research builds on recent advances in moral psychology to emphasize the importance of loyalty to individual psychology and provides evidence that loyalty can have positive benefits.

We advance a definition of loyalty that is consistent with its conception as an ethical principle (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Graham, 2007) and also with its manifest partial nature, which is inherent in many definitions of the construct (e.g., Butler, 1991; Hirschman, 1970; Oliver, 1999; Scott, 1965). This definition enables us to differentiate loyalty from related constructs and demonstrate that loyalty affects individual behavior independent of the effects of such constructs.

The current research is the first to demonstrate that loyalty affects actual ethical behavior. In contrast to the lay theory that loyalty corrupts, we find that loyalty can increase ethical behavior when group goals are unclear, be it by reducing dishonesty in the context of cheating or increasing the propensity to take action against the unethical behavior of others. These findings therefore suggest an upside to loyalty's inherent bias. The results are surprising given the many real-world examples in which loyalty is associated with unethical behavior, from nepotistic selection or promotion processes to failing to blow the whistle on hazing or fraud. The current research also identifies when loyalty leads to ethical and unethical behavior. In contexts when the expectations of loyalty are not explicit, then loyalty acts as a virtue, prompting people to consider the ethics of the situation. In contrast, when expectations of loyalty are more explicit, such as when loyalty is called upon and when it comes into conflict with another ethical principle, such as fairness in selection and promotion processes or not causing harm to the greater good in whistleblowing contexts, then loyalty may give rise to unethical behavior.

Our work also contributes to existing research on behavioral ethics, which has identified several factors that lead even good people to engage in unethical behavior. We build on this research by showing that priming people with loyalty or reminding them of this construct can subsequently make them more likely to act honestly.

### 15.2. Limitations and future directions

In addition to its strengths, the current data has weaknesses that should be addressed in future studies. First, we considered the effects of loyalty on a limited set of ethical behaviors and in contexts where people faced the temptation to act unethically, i.e., cheating on a type of problem-solving task commonly used in behavioral ethics research and on whistleblowing intention in a hypothetical scenario. Future research should consider the effects of loyalty on a broader range of ethical and unethical behaviors, such as lying, stealing, coercion and fraud as well as examining other forms of loyalty and contexts in which people are not tempted to act unethically.

A second limitation of the current research is that the loyalties we measured were either primed in the lab or present in situations in which participants had known each other for only a limited amount of time (less than one semester in study groups or a couple of years in fraternities). It is therefore unclear whether the effects of loyalty we observed would hold in contexts where loyalties are stronger (e.g., in families or the military) or in organizational contexts where more explicit institutional constraints may dictate behavior and mitigate the positive effects of loyalty found in this research.

Third, most of our participants were U.S. citizens. Prior research suggests that Americans may demonstrate greater in-group identification and loyalty than individuals in some Asian countries (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Yuki, 2003) but less so than individuals from some European countries (Swann et al., 2009). Further research is needed to test the cross-national generalizability of the current findings.

Finally, future research could investigate the extent to which the effects of loyalty on ethical behavior differ between individuals. Though moral psychologists have argued that loyalty is one of a few ethical principles that govern individual behavior (e.g., Fiske, 1991; Greene, 2014; Haidt & Joseph, 2007; Shweder et al., 1997), the extent to which individuals embrace loyalty over other ethical principles may vary depending on an individual's cognitive moral development (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984), gender (e.g., Melnyk, Van Osselaer, & Bijmolt, 2009), or political beliefs (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007). While in our studies we observed no consistent differences in the effect of gender or age on the relationship between loyalty and ethical behavior, future research should examine whether other demographic or political factors may moderate these effects.

## 16. Conclusion

Our research examined the relationship between loyalty and unethical behavior. Across nine studies, we found that loyalty reduces cheating when group goals are unclear: Individuals primed with loyalty or reporting greater loyalty to their groups were less likely to cheat than those not primed or those who were less loyal. We advanced a definition of loyalty consistent with moral psychology, which helped differentiate loyalty from related constructs. We demonstrated that loyalty affected individual ethical behavior independent of the effects of the related constructs of liking, group identification and commitment. The positive effects of loyalty on less cheating were explained by loyalty making the ethics of the situation more salient, consistent with loyalty's role as an ethical principle. Importantly, we also examined a boundary condition for these effects and found that competition moderated the relationship between loyalty and unethical behavior. Thus, blind loyalty may actually make us see evil more clearly.

## Author note

This research was supported in part by grants from the Management of Organizations Behavioral Lab and by the Research Participation Program at the Haas School of Business. We thank the Associate Editor Stefan Thau and three anonymous reviewers for their guidance and constructive comments which helped improve this manuscript. We also thank members of our research lab, particularly Eric Andersen, Melisa Bintoro, Joy Chen, Andrew Fang, Collin Gallagher, Kapil Gururangan, Stephen Hwang, Erika Oblea, Arushi Saxena and Tommy Shi who provided invaluable help with the research. All data, syntax, and materials are available upon request from the first author.

## Appendix A. Loyalty manipulation used in Studies 1A, 1B, 3A and 3B

### Group discussion – instructions [loyalty (control) condition]

The topic your group will discuss is Loyalty (Globalization).

You will have 10 min to discuss this topic with your group. To help start your discussions, we suggest you introduce yourselves to each other and then share some past incidents in which each of you experienced loyalty (globalization). What happened, what did it feel like?

You should also consider what the key aspects of loyalty are. To that end, you may wish to consider the following questions:

What is the definition of loyalty (globalization)?

[4 blank lines to complete]

How does loyalty (globalization) manifest itself in real-world settings?

[4 blank lines to complete]

How can loyalty (globalization) be applied to your particular group's situation?

[4 blank lines to complete]

[Loyalty condition only: At the end of your group's discussion, we will ask each of you to **sign a loyalty pledge** to your group. A copy of this pledge is attached.]

Please raise your hand if you have any questions and the experimenter will come to answer them.

### Loyalty pledge [used in pledge conditions of Studies 1A, 1B and 3A]

#### Pledge of Loyalty to Our Group

*I solemnly swear to support our group and preserve the principles of honor and integrity during these studies. I promise to give unselfishly of my time and energy to strive to protect the interests of the group. I will perform my duties as a member of our group to the best of my ability and understanding. Should I at any time by my actions demonstrate disloyalty to the group, I agree to receive appropriate consequences.*

[space for participants to print their names and sign the pledge]

### Loyalty pledge (used in pledge conditions of studies 3B, 5A and 5B)

#### Pledge of Loyalty to Our Group

*I pledge my loyalty to my group for the duration of this study.*

[space for participants to print their names and sign the pledge]

## Appendix B. Group task used in Study 2B

### Group activity

Directions: As a group, please read the scenario below and discuss or answer the questions posed. You have 10 min to complete this task as a group. The experimenter will collect ONE group answer.

*Your class is told to form groups to work on a semester long group project. You decide to team up with other people you already know, since you are already friends. Your group is designated weekly assignments to be completed by the group and it is up to the individuals in the group to determine how the work is divided. Your group distributes an equal amount of work to every member each week. One of your members consistently does not complete their work on time, which forces other members of the group to step up and take over some of his responsibility. Upon completion of the project, the teacher informs you that you must rate each of your fellow group members' performances. After class, the particular irresponsible friend comes up to the rest of your group and says he/she really needs a good grade on this project to help his GPA, since he/she will be applying to law school next year.*

*Do you give your friend a high score even though he/she was performing badly throughout the course? If the class was curved, how does your decision change?*

Please outline your group's response to these questions in the space provided below.

Group (Circle): Blue Red Green Yellow Pink

Response: [16 blank lines for response]

### Appendix C. Word fragment tasks used in Study 3B

Please complete the following word fragments with the first word that comes to mind. Try to work quickly, spending no more than a few seconds on each word.

[Fragments used prior to Numbers Game]

S P T
COM ENT
ELE ION
RI G
T ST
S AGE
CON SN
H TY
E A Y
ELL
E UL
F R
ESP
RITY
CR S

[Fragments used after Number Game]

S E TE
E AT
T H
FR D
C CH
H E
F A
WR
A SE
RAL
I E
B S
E C
IED
UR LE

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