

Social Identity's Affect On An Individual's Cognitive Whistle-Blowing Process

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Abstract:

A common definition shared by many whistle-blowing researchers states that the whistle-blowing process begins when a "triggering event," defined as an illegal, immoral, or illegitimate act is recognized by an organizational member and a decision is made on the part of the observer as to what to do about it. In ethical research it has long been accepted that factors exist that affect individuals' perspectives of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate activity. In stark contrast to this theoretical foundation of diverse perspectives, it appears that the whistle-blowing literature mostly rejects the premise of idiosyncrasy in perceptions of wrong-doing. Instead, the whistle-blowing research seems to accept a more universal perception of ethical judgment wherein, each observer of a questionable activity is assumed to have the same right/wrong perception and therefore, the only real ethical decision is whether or not to blow the whistle once the wrong-doing is observed. The current article suggests that while some individuals see an activity as illegal, immoral or illegitimate, thereby, constituting a "triggering event," others don't recognize that activity as such and therefore, are not rejecting their moral obligation to blow the whistle, but instead are lacking the perception that whistleblowing should be considered. In this article "social identity" is suggested as a strong influence on an individual's moral judgement perspective and therefore, would have a great effect on the individual's cognitive whistle-blowing process.