



INVESTIGATING INTEGRITY: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

For a concept that is so widely used, the lack of scholarly consensus with respect to the meaning of integrity is striking. To better understand the foundational concept underpinning public integrity, this article investigates the academic treatment of integrity through a multi-disciplinary literature review. This review focuses on two distinct questions: how is the concept of integrity deployed across a broad range of disciplines; and, what can be learned from these disciplines about the concept of integrity? Although scholars rarely deploy the same use of the concept, five key analytic findings emerge from this study. First, academics and practitioners alike must take seriously the ethical foundations that undergird our normative concern with integrity. Second, integrity should be seen as a rational basis for trust. Third, integrity is explicitly concerned with the coherence of purposes, and the consistency of action with those stated purposes. Fourth, integrity is focussed on the cultivation of ethical culture, and not simply on rule compliance. Finally, integrity is not merely the absence of corruption. Leveraging insights from each of these areas, we provide a more stable foundation on which to develop new work on the concept of institutional integrity.

Integrity as a concept is so familiar to both practitioners and scholars that it is easy to neglect defining its meaning. Although the term is used frequently to describe individuals, whistle-blowers, judges, and even institutions, too little attention has been applied to the constituent parts of the concept and how it applies across units of analysis (Stark 2001).

Yet a complete and coherent concept of integrity is important, precisely because it has become a core part of the prescriptions that academics and practitioners make when addressing institutional and bureaucratic reforms. Particularly with respect to developing countries, international organizations such as the OECD, Transparency International and Integrity Action make constant reference to the concept. Although the need to build integrity within institutions has been identified (Heywood and Rose 2015; O'Higgins 2006), it is unclear whether scholars and practitioners are referring to the same, clearly-defined concept of integrity. Without a common understanding of what 'integrity' *is*, policy prescriptions are likely to be little more than rhetorical tools.

This paper addresses this conceptual challenge through identifying the use of the concept of 'integrity' across broad and diffuse academic literatures. Through a multi-disciplinary, systematic literature review, key insights from these multiple academic disciplines are synthesized to demonstrate how conceptions of integrity are deployed across research areas and, more importantly, where these uses concur and diverge.

In particular, this review has a dual-focus on two distinct but related questions. First, descriptively, how is the concept of integrity defined across different disciplines? Second, what can be learned from these disciplines *about* how the concept of integrity should be defined? Surveying 40 journals across seven separate disciplines – public administration, organizational science, sociology, political science, international relations, law and philosophy – these findings are combined into an analytic review of integrity and its cognates.

Our findings reveal that integrity pertains to three units of analysis: the individual, the object, and the institution. From these findings, we isolate the following five key analytic themes. First, academics and practitioners alike must take seriously the ethical foundations that undergird our normative concern with integrity. Second, integrity is a rational basis for trust. Third, integrity is explicitly concerned with the coherence of purposes, and the consistency of action with those stated purposes. Fourth, integrity is focussed on the cultivation of ethical culture, and not simply compliance. Finally, integrity is not merely the absence of corruption.

The intention of this review is not to be a comprehensive overview of all integrity-related work, but rather a productive synthesis of key findings that advances the current understanding of the concept, in order to identify the work yet to be done. Thus, this paper refocuses efforts towards building a concept of integrity that is conceptually distinct and useful in analysis of institutions and governance practices. A rigorous account of integrity, particularly within public institutions, should help provide clearer and more effective policy prescriptions by academics and practitioners alike when attempting to build integrity. A first step towards doing so is to understand and solidify its theoretical structure, which will enable future research to pursue more rigorous studies of institutional behaviour and form, and isolate the causes and consequences of integrity and its failure.

The following section outlines the method employed for the literature review – combining a systematic analysis of journal articles with focussed sampling of additional works. The next section then summarizes the findings of the review. Finally,

the analysis section isolates five key analytic themes separately, before concluding with implications and recommendations for future work on public integrity.

Method

This paper asks two related, but distinct, questions. First, how is the concept of integrity used across different disciplines? Second, what can be learned from these disciplines *about* the concept of integrity? Correspondingly, the review must meet two criteria: first, to provide a *broad* analysis of integrity's current use, and second, to isolate important, analytical elements that speak to the structure of the concept. This review therefore provides a synthesis of works on integrity and related-concepts across multiple research fields in order to better understand the conceptual structure, implications and limitations of current research on integrity (Webster and Watson 2002; Maier 2013; Pautasso 2013).

At least three previous reviews have been conducted on the concept of integrity (Menzel 2005, 2015; Huberts 2014). This literature review was designed, in part, to address specific limitations of these previous reviews. Huberts' (2014) multidisciplinary review of the concept highlights a vast array of relevant research across disciplines (from Philosophy through Neuroscience), yet the sheer breadth of his study, and the discipline-by-discipline focus, obscures the common analytical linkages across disciplines that seem most important. Conversely, Menzel's (2015) systematic review of business ethics and integrity within two public administration journals uses a compelling analytic approach but at the expense of the multidisciplinary approach that makes Huberts' (*ibid.*) review so interesting.

To address these concerns, this review was produced in two stages. First, a systematic survey of top journals in each of seven disciplines was conducted: public administration, organizational science, sociology, political science, law, philosophy and international relations. Journals were chosen based on the Scimago Journal Rankings (Scimago Lab 2017) for each topic (see Appendix). It is not assumed that any journal rankings are, in any sense, perfect. The choices simply reflect an attempt to review a wide array of works, across journals and disciplines, in an efficient and systematic manner.

Two reviewers conducted journal searches on the string "integrity" over an unbounded time period. An initial pilot review of articles generated a series of related concepts that would help to refine the article inclusion criteria. These related concepts were *trust*, *compliance*, *legitimacy*, *professionalism*, *ethics*, *accountability*, and *corruption*. For the sake of brevity, these concepts were isolated through their co-occurrence with mentions of integrity. Articles were excluded where the term "integrity" was used only colloquially. Moreover, articles referencing derivations of integrity, like "integration", were also excluded.

The second-stage of the review was a reference-led review of books and journal articles to refine the understanding of integrity and avoid research "blind spots" caused by the systematic approach. This latter survey included works from journals such as *Public Integrity*, research areas including institutional corruption and public value management, and books explicitly mentioning integrity (for example, Huberts, 2014). This dual-search design employs both a methodologically rigorous component to capture the breadth of the concept's use, while retaining a degree of flexibility to provide better analytic rigour – as recommended by Dijkers (2009).

This approach grants scope to review multiple research domains in sufficient depth to provide a rigorous analysis of conceptual structure. It ought to be noted upfront that this review is *not* designed to be a comprehensive analysis of *all* the literature on integrity. Rather it aims to synthesize a sufficiently broad and diverse array of research across disciplines to advance current understandings of the concept of integrity.

Results

Our key finding is that there is widespread variation in the deployment of the term 'integrity' both across *and* within the disciplines surveyed. Scholars are, in effect, talking passed each other. Integrity is used to denote the sovereignty, inviolability or incorruptibility of an entity (including both persons and territories); an ethical concept; as a synonym for honesty, trustworthiness, or impartiality; coherency of a process, system, or structure; and finally, as an antonym of corruption. In essence, integrity has multiple meanings across disciplines.

This conceptual variation runs in tandem to works that leave the concept undefined. Treating integrity's meaning as a given is particularly evident in empirical works, where the operationalization of integrity is often inadequate, if not ignored, despite its central role in these analyses.

Our aim is to isolate several themes under which different scholars deployed the concept of 'integrity.' First, this section addresses methodological concerns about the lack of proper operationalization. Then, the remainder demonstrates the lack of conceptual consensus among scholars while teasing out the themes that the varied use of 'integrity' point to.

Methodological concerns

Empirically, research on integrity and related concepts employs a diverse range of methods, from predominantly conceptual analyses through to case studies and quantitative research designs. Integrity itself is deployed as an independent variable in a number of empirical analyses. For example, integrity is used in novel ways as an explanatory factor of congressional incumbent success (Mondak 1995), ethical leadership (Hassan, Wright, and Yukl 2014), auditor reliability (DeZoort, Holt, and Taylor 2012) and even market participation (Yenkey 2017). Other scholars separately treat integrity as a dependent variable (McKinley, Ponemon, and Schick 1996; Snell and Tseng 2002).

However the quality of integrity's operationalization often fails to match the compelling uses of the concept in theory. Two particular concerns manifest themselves through this survey of the literature. First, some measures of integrity collapse into proxy measurements of other, related concepts. Second, quantitative studies that rely on survey data often leave integrity undefined, taking the meaning of the concept for granted.

The first issue is particularly prevalent on works related to corruption. Not only are the terms conflated conceptually, but on the level of measurement too. For instance, in Ko's study of South Korean public enterprise performance (Ko 2015b), his overall integrity index is comprised of an explicit corruption indicator and an internal integrity indicator. This latter indicator however is still partially measured with respect to the 'degree of corrupt practices and effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts' (Ko

2015b, see Appendix B). Ko's index, therefore, collapses into a measurement of corruption (or its absence). This operationalization, thus fails to make clear how integrity is a separate and distinct concept.

Moreover, taking integrity "as a given", is a frequent issue across research articles, particularly where authors rely on survey data or *perceptions* of integrity by experts or coders. For example, in McKinley, Ponemon, and Schick (1996), respondents were asked to rank firms based on their integrity of managers using Likert scales, but management integrity is never adequately defined. Similarly, in Kelleher and Wolak (2006), integrity is defined as a character trait but with minimal substantive detail. In the survey data they use, respondents were asked simply about the 'honesty and integrity' of presidents. Snell and Tseng (2002) also specifically talk of organizational integrity and discuss how we might achieve and maintain it, yet without ever formally defining the concept. A general tendency to leave integrity undefined (perhaps because the concept is so elusive), undermines the validity of researchers' findings.

The inherent problem with not operationalizing the concept properly is that, as the conceptual analysis demonstrates, what individuals may perceive as 'integrity' is wide-ranging across and within disciplines. If researchers treat the concept as a given, without giving respondents or coders a clear definition, then the measurement validity is undermined by an inability to ensure that the concept is being used consistently *between* respondents, and that even if this is the case, the measurement is consistent with respect to the underlying theory. Across disciplines, researchers need to engage more clearly with how the concept is operationalized when explaining phenomena across disciplines.

Individual-centric understandings

Empirical inconsistencies are matched by substantively different uses of the concept itself. Notably, integrity is understood in reference to different units of analysis. Within the literature surveyed, integrity is sometimes a predicate of an individual, sometimes more broadly of an object, and other times of an institution. Overall, individual-centred conceptions of integrity are the most prevalent, and perhaps the most robustly conceptualized. Although, more recently, there has been a growth in academic literature on the integrity of institutions. This section interrogates the way that integrity is deployed in different contexts. Across these varied uses, we draw out several common thematic conceptualizations.

The first recurrent theme across work, particularly within public administration and organizational psychology journals, is to frame the concept of integrity in explicitly normative terms. For example, many works focus on Aristotelian virtue ethics in an effort to explain the ethical foundations of integrity and organizational practice (ten Bos 1997; Bazerman and Moore 2011; DeZoort, Holt, and Taylor 2012; Solomon 2004; West and Bowman 2016; Gaskarth 2011; Gelfand et al. 2015). These authors treat integrity as *a virtue* (DeZoort, Holt, and Taylor 2012; Solomon 2004), stressing an individual-centric approach towards organizational ethics (Bowman and West 2009; Nieuwenburg 2007). Kouzmin, for instance, stresses the importance of 'self-regulation and a sense of moral responsibility... as a counterpoint to visible, procedural ethics within the public sphere' (Kouzmin 2010, 506). While the United Kingdom's Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995), articulate integrity as one of the seven 'Nolan' principles of public life. Similarly, (Brewer, Leung, & Scott, 2012) conceive of integrity as an essential quality for ethical leadership.

This tendency extends to the particular character traits (or, set thereof) that individuals should possess in the workplace (van Blijswijk et al. 2004; DeZoort, Holt, and Taylor 2012). This is particularly notable in the literature on 'integrity testing,' a type of psychometric test used in organizations to determine the trustworthiness of potential employees, and also in the literature on individual accountability of professionals operating in an organization, (DeZoort, Holt, and Taylor 2012; Wanek, Sackett, and Ones 2003; Hogan and Brinkmeyer 1997; J. Wu and Lebreton 2011).

Within law and criminology, political science and public administration, research integrity is often mentioned with regards to potential tensions between the ethics of an individual acting in a professional capacity, and the individual in a non-professional capacity (Stark 2001; Souryal 1999; Werhane 2007; Quinlan 1993; Dobel 1999; Stansbury 2009). For example, several authors develop role-specific instantiations of the virtue: 'police integrity,' with respect to race (Y. Wu, Lake, and Cao 2015; Y. Wu, Sun, and Smith 2011; Weitzer and Tuch 2004), 'judicial integrity,' (A. Huber and Gordon 2004; Cederbaums 1969; Schedler 2004) the integrity of prison staff (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy 2016), or the tensions inherent in the integrity of the lawyer as an advocate versus their integrity as an individual (Markovits, Erichson, Goldberg, Lahav, & Pearce, 2010). There are crucial differences between these concepts, beyond the scope of this paper, but it is noteworthy that across disciplines scholars have sought to situate integrity as a specific, professional quality.

Integrity is also treated as related (conceptually, causally or evidentially) to other qualities of the individual. Notably, trust is a specific area of focus: many scholars posit integrity as a component, precondition, or antecedent of trust (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995; Hernandez, Long, and Sitkin 2014; Nieuwenburg 2014; Wirtz and Lwin 2009; Basso and Pizzutti 2016). Integrity, although weakly defined in many of these articles, is seen as a personal characteristic that is necessary for trust relations: if an individual lacks integrity, our (rational) grounds to trust them are compromised. Others equate integrity simply with honesty (Wanek, Sackett, and Ones 2003; Schumann et al. 2010) or as an instance of trust itself (Bothner and Piezunka 2015).

A minority of authors, however, invert the relationship between trust and integrity arguing that integrity itself has, as a component, "trustworthiness". Solomon, for example, treats integrity as a 'wholeness' that includes 'company virtues as loyalty and congeniality, cooperation and trustworthiness' (Solomon 2004, 1025). In Van Wart's study of leadership, integrity has separate components of both honesty and trustworthiness (Van Wart 2013, 560). While Verhezen notes that trustworthiness can 'generate integrity... trust does not necessarily imply integrity' (Verhezen 2008, 139). These approaches are novel, but risk confusing the notion of trust as a relation versus trustworthiness as a *quality* of the individual. Whether one can be trusted, has the attributes necessary for trust, is distinct from the act of trusting itself.

Separately, other authors focus on individuals' actions and beliefs. The central motivation of this research is how (or to what extent) individuals' actions (or outcomes) are consistent with stated intentions, purposes or values (Tenenbaum 2011; McFall 1987; Monaghan 2017). This entails both coherence and consistency. For Breakey, Cadman and Sampford (2015), these two concepts form separate types of integrity. They posit that 'consistency-integrity' is the extent to which 'an agent's activities are consistent with its claimed values', whereas 'coherence-integrity' captures the enduring qualities of an agent or institution that enable them to live up to proclaimed values (Ibid, p.6). This distinction is not immediately obvious, but in essence 'consistency' is a measure of how particular actions relate to one's

values, whereas 'coherency' captures how one, in general, is able to live up to certain values.

More generally, coherence speaks to a sense of "wholeness" of the entity in question, in which identities (Olie 1994; Adams 1991; Grant 1999; McFall 1987), procedures (e.g., Hodson & Roscigno, 2004) or agents (Westphal and Khanna 2003) *cohere* collectively. This notion of wholeness is also present in works that borrow from Bernard Williams' view that integrity is an issue of maintaining identity-grounding commitments and values (Nili 2016; Adams 1991, 568; Carr 1976; White 1997).

The philosophy literature most explicitly engages with this theme of coherence and wholeness, particularly at the level of the self (McFall 1987; Goodstein 2000; Korsgaard 2009). For example Korsgaard argues that 'the way to make yourself into a particular person, who can interact well with herself and others, is to be consistent and unified and whole – to have integrity,' Korsgaard (2009, p. 214). Akeley (1934) and Aldrich (1946) similarly argue that the integrity is a concept of a 'whole' that is formulated and tested under pressure.

Still other authors across disciplines emphasize the relationship between purpose and actions. Under this guise, integrity was treated as an adherence to a set of prescriptions, values or purposes, that take place over *time*, achieving 'stability among inevitable flux' (Ghaziani and Baldassarri 2011, 179–80). Integrity is the 'consistent application across practices' of justice, courage and truthfulness (Moore and Beadle 2006, 375), the 'perceived consistency with their [individuals'] understanding of justice' (Goldman and Cropanzano 2015, 315), 'acting in accordance with moral values, standards and rules' (Paddock 2011, 321), or being 'coherent in...judgments or decisions across multiple issues and/or across time,' (List 2006, p.366). Across these definitions, integrity is the extent to which individuals' actions (or outcomes) match stated intentions, purposes or values.

Moreover, mentions of integrity often have an implicit focus on the sanctity, or inviolable nature, of the whole. These works (philosophy notwithstanding), however, often neglected more substantive, behavioural, or ethically based conceptions of integrity. Indeed, moving beyond a focus solely on agents, such research focussed on singular entities more generally.

The inviolability of the "whole" is a particularly prevalent theme in disciplines such as International Relations (IR) and Law, as it applies to matters such as sovereign territory, the physical integrity rights of an individual, or formal processes (Zacher 2001; Cole 2015; Lazar 2014). In Rixen's (2011) work on global tax governance, for instance, integrity is used to reference the strength and holism of a state's taxation system. Within the legal literature surveyed, integrity construed as wholeness is deployed in the context of judicial process, particularly judicial independence (Burns 2017), the fairness of electoral processes (Nou 2017), or the individual as a subject of law (Markovits 2016). This theme is not wholly limited to works in IR and Law, however, with scholars deploying integrity as a measure of the autonomy or inviolability of policy domains (Skelcher 2005) or the extent to which a corporate identity is preserved in the face of a mergers (Olie 1994). Yet, despite the weight authors placed on integrity, the concept in these instances is rarely developed.

Institutional/Organizational Centric Approaches

A separate strand of the overall literature focus on the role of integrity at the institutional level. This shift in focus takes two forms. The first inspects the actions or

qualities of individuals *within* institutions, while the second treats integrity as an aspect of the institution itself.

In the first strand of literature, there is a growing emphasis on constructing 'integrity management' within the public service. This work attempts to explicitly locate 'integrity' at the forefront of what institutions do. 'Integrity Management' systems claim to foster integrity-driven organizational practice (Scott and Gong 2015; Ko 2015a; Graaf 2015; De Graaf 2010; Brewer, Leung, and Scott 2015; Gallagher and Goodstein 2002; Laufer 2007). Yet the underlying conceptions of integrity, and what integrity as an organizational goal, entails is inconsistent across works. For example, while Ko (2015a) uses integrity as an antonym for corruption, Brewer, Leung, and Scott (2015, p.390) suggest that integrity based methods focus on 'self control exercised by each public servant.' Moreover, Graaf's (2015) conception of integrity is defined broadly as the quality of acting in accordance with relevant moral values, norms, and rules. It is evident from this brief discussion then, that this strand of literature is plagued by the same diversity of different usages as individual-centric works. Moreover, (particularly in political science and public administration research), there is a tendency to treat integrity as interchangeable with or as a function of the (often contested) concept of 'good governance. In the first instance, Mungiu-Pippidi is notable through directly conflating 'integrity building' with 'good governance,' (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015: 10-11).² In the second, integrity is presented as function of *other* traits of good governance. For example, some works interpret 'integrity' as the presence of transparency (Allen and Birch 2012) or impartiality or objectivity of government or the law (Rose and Heywood 2013; Rodríguez 2017). Linde and Erlingsson (2013), moreover, argue that public integrity pertains to the equal treatment of citizens, regardless of group-identity. Alternatively, others conflate integrity with the absence of corruption (Burns 2017; Navot and Cohen 2015; Linde and Erlingsson 2013; You and Khagram 2005; Batory 2012; O'Higgins 2006).

Related practitioner-based research aims to improve the quality of an institution through a focus on managing the actions of members. Their focus is almost invariably on a set of negative governance practices such as corruption or bribery (see for example, the World Economic Forum's Partnering Against Corruption Initiative, (World Economic Forum 2017)). The clearest examples come from the various 'integrity-based' strategies designed to curb corruption in the public sector. The OECD's Integrity Framework, for instance, emphasizes countering corruption and bribery, (OECD 2009; Klitgaard 2015), while Integrity Action's focus is similarly on resisting corruption in public institutions (Integrity Action 2017).

While other notable examples of this trend is in the way in which 'integrity' is used as an indicator for levels of corruption within public institutions, (Ko 2015a; Transparency International Netherlands 2017; Mungiu-Pippidi, Dadasov, and Fazekas 2016). While these works draw on important related concepts, they conflate the presence or exposure of corruption entirely with an absence of integrity, rather than conceiving of integrity as a distinct organizational quality in and of itself.

One of the more promising *conceptual* developments in the literature, however, has been to apply the concept of integrity to institutions directly. For example, work on public integrity has begun to link *institutional* integrity to the pursuit of legitimate

² Although in this work, Mungiu-Pippidi *does* move us further away from the conflation of absence of corruption and presence of integrity, and argues instead that these are two paradigms that exist at either ends of a spectrum.

purpose (Breakey, Cadman, and Sampford 2015; Gallagher and Goodstein 2002). In particular, Breakey, Cadman and Sampford argue that integrity can be broken into three constituent parts that form a Comprehensive Integrity Framework: context integrity, coherence integrity, and consistency integrity (Breakey, Cadman, and Sampford 2015). According to this view, an institution will have integrity if it adheres to its publicly declared values. Similarly, Keohane holds that integrity pertains to the 'relationship between an institution's performance and the truth' (Keohane 2011, 102),

Although such works are demonstrative of a growing literature on the normative role of institutions in the governance practice (see also Lessig 2009; Amit et al. 2017), too few works grapple with the conceptual building blocks of integrity – the necessary and sufficient conditions for institutional integrity. This analytic blindspot exists despite the fact that so much of the literature refers to the concept either as a measurement in empirical studies or as a vital part of what constitutes "good governance." This mismatch between use and conceptual development within the literature on corruption and good governance is puzzling.

In summary, uses of "integrity" remain significantly varied and often incommensurate within and across levels of analysis. It is interesting to note, however, that there are nevertheless underlying themes which scholars across disciplines use, implicitly or explicitly, to ground their deployment of the concept. In particular, five key themes can be isolated: the ethical foundations of integrity, its relation to trust, coherency and consistency, the roles of compliance and culture, and finally the prevention of corruption. The remainder of this article is dedicated to further analysis of these themes to answer the second question outlined in the introduction: what can be learned from the disciplines surveyed about the nature of integrity?

Analysis

Our results show significant variation in how the concept of integrity is used, both within and across disciplines. Yet despite this variance, we contend there are key themes upon which scholars use the concept. This section synthesizes the findings of the results section to isolate the key background concepts crucial to any use of "integrity", upon which more focused, conceptual work can be built.

Ethical Foundations

Discussions of integrity are normative: they are concerned with what individuals and institutions *should* do (Cini 2014). But these normative foundations are contested, as our results have shown. This subsection argues that a virtue ethics approach is the most compelling ethical framework through which to understand integrity. In what follows, we focus particularly on the act of whistleblowing since this is a recurring topic in research focuses on integrity (e.g. Graaf 2015; Quinlan 1993).

Intuitively, whistleblowing is an act of integrity in which members seek to prevent future ethical malpractice by informing superiors or external agencies. Therefore in whistleblowers, we see the embodiment an ethical individual. At least conceptually, they are individuals who refuse to ignore or be complicit in corporate wrongdoing or corruption. While this is a simplification of a complex process, at an abstract level this characterization helps clarify the normative foundations upon which the concept of integrity rests.³

From one perspective, whistleblowing can be characterized as a deontological duty; an individual *is obligated to* report gross violations of relevant moral norms and practice when they witness them. This treatment usefully captures some form of integrity: given that reporting malpractice is a duty, members must have a degree of steadfastness (or robustness) with which they react to unethical and uncomfortable practice.

Despite this appeal to robustness of action, however, deontological frameworks are incomplete if they fail to provide guidance on *which* rules individuals should refer to: are these specific to the institution or to society more generally (Kouzman 2010, 508)? The act of whistle-blowing itself may conflict with other duties like organizational loyalty that we expect members of an organization to abide by (Quinlan 1993). In this context, whistleblowing may be detrimental to that organization's goals if making allegations destroys the credibility and trust others place in the organization. The first problem for a deontic approach is that there is little to guide individuals on which rule takes precedence in these circumstances. The organization may be harmed through whistleblowing, but similarly individuals perhaps have a separate duty to uphold societal norms and values – to act “ethically”. As Heugens (2006) notes, the deontic approach neglects the individual-level ‘motive forces’ that drive members of organizations to act ethically, even when it is not in their or the organization's interest.

Second, we can ask: is rule-following sufficient to capture what is meant by individuals' integrity? If an individual acts simply “because I have to”, they act without reflecting on the ethical reasons for their action. Rule-following is, to that extent, compulsive rather than considered ethical action. The Aristotelian ethics approach outlined in the results section better engages with the role ethical

³ We recognize that some acts of whistleblowing are not motivated by a genuine belief of ethical wrongdoing, (Wortley, Cassematis, and Donkin 2008). Complainants can be driven by rational, non-ethical grievances, self-promotion or even misunderstandings about a workplace practice or situation. These individuals nevertheless use whistleblowing *frameworks* in an attempt to punish others or advance their own agenda. However, the concept of whistleblowing, rather than the act itself, does seem to be one that relates to ethical practice. Individuals can abuse whistleblowing practices, but that in itself does not make the concept of whistleblowing unethical. Without downplaying the significance of these non-ethical forms of complaint, our focus in this discussion is on a subset of cases – those genuinely motivated by perceptions of wrongdoing in the workplace.

reflection and contemplation play when individuals decide how to act (Kouzmin 2010; Verhezen 2008). The ethical basis of integrity must account for *what* compels members to act in ethically-problematic circumstances (Nieuwenburg 2014; Campbell and Pettigrew 1959). A concern with integrity is important because it stretches beyond blind rule-following, towards making active judgements in morally-complicated circumstances. Integrity, in this regard, relies on an ability of the moral agent to reflect on the meaning of their principles, and to understand the ethical implications of their action (Keshen 2006). An individual may nevertheless feel compelled to act, but they do so based on moral reasons and not simply because the rule tells them to act. This relies on a cultivation of moral character that virtue integrity frameworks specifically promote.

Moreover, a distinct advantage of this virtue ethics approach is that it better accommodates the tensions between societal and organizational obligations. When a would-be whistleblower considers the competing demands of society and the organization, it is the distinct capacity of a virtuous individual with integrity that allows them to square these ethical dilemmas. Rules on their own are insufficient for ethical action – rules (like virtues) can be contradictory (O'Mahoney 2013). What is required to resolve these conflicts is ethical judgement. Rule-following can, in this sense, undermine the integrity of individuals if they blindly accept the prescriptions of the organization without internal reflection of their value (ten Bos 1997). The integrity of the whistleblower stems from their refusal merely to follow the rules or norms of the organization, and to look towards the broader ethical significance of their act.⁴

Moreover, the virtue ethics approach is better able to explain how actions commonly equated with integrity occur. Virtue ethics substitutes contractual elements of agreements between agents centred around compliance with “deeper”, more demanding ethical norms internal to the agents in question (Enderle 1995; Heugens 2006; Hoekstra and Kaptein 2012). Whistleblowing, under this view, stems from an individual's contemplation of an ethical dilemma, and is a cultivatable quality of the individual, and not simply abidance to a code (Svara 2014).

Intuitively, these notions of resilience, moral fortitude and reflection on ethical dilemmas are better captured under a virtue ethics framework than under deontology. What remains to be determined is the precise relationship between integrity and virtue. Is integrity a single character trait, or a composite of more basic traits like trustworthiness, honesty and so on?

⁴ Again, it is worth also considering complicated whistleblowing cases here. An individual could correctly call out malpractice but act for personal gain – either by being promoted or pushing out a rival. In these cases, ethical considerations, while relevant, are not part of the decision calculus of the whistleblower. We are not claiming that *all* whistleblowers, in practice, act virtuously. Rather, we have in mind cases of malpractice where individuals feel compelled to act, regardless of personal gain or loss. As scholars note, whistleblowing can lead to ostracism and negatively affect the individual, (Miceli and Near 1992).

Trust

Works that cite a relationship between the concepts of integrity and trust were found across organizational science, public administration, international relations and sociology. Across *and* within these disciplines, however, the nature of this relationship between trust and integrity was shown to vary. We argue that the concept of integrity is most compatible with a moralistic understanding of trust that emphasizes typically non-rational calculation.

Trust can be construed either in strategic or moralistic terms. Strategically, A trusts B by way of a reasoned conclusion based on information and knowledge of intentions (Rathbun 2009, 346). Alternatively, trust can be “moralistic” if A trusts B non-rationally (where ‘rationality’ is defined purely by reference to perceived self-interest), based on an assessment of character (Rathbun 2009; Michel 2012, 879). In the former, strategic sense one acts because of self-interest and a belief that the other party has no rational interest to defect. Assessments of character only matter if they rationally inform your expectations of the other party’s intentions (Swärd 2016). Construing trust in this way cannot explain instances of “overtrust” (Dunning et al. 2014) – where people trust despite plausibly rational reasons to defect – and hence neglect the importance of *character* in these interactions.

Moralistic notions of trust, on the other hand, do explain situations in which trust occurs despite rationally-better options, and makes clear the linkages between trust and integrity. Agents in this understanding rely on emotional dispositions (Michel 2012), similarities between agents (B. C. Rathbun 2012) and norms surrounding whether we *should* trust (Dunning et al. 2014) when entering relationships. This approach, moreover, ties in well with virtue ethical understandings of integrity – trust becomes an inference about the virtuous qualities of the parties in a trust relation.

Trust is a relation between persons – as individuals, agents in an exchange, or leaders – but what can this discussion tell us about public institutions? If integrity is a precondition of trust, then authors argue that the integrity of officials can create and maintain public trust in organizations (van Blijswijk et al. 2004). Nieuwenberg perhaps best summarizes the relation between integrity, public trust and institutions. Integrity promotes trust, and trust promotes good governance; without integrity, public trust decreases which ‘throws sand in the wheels of the government machinery’ (Nieuwenburg 2007, 214).

Trust between agents, moreover, leads to better cooperative action between agents according to conceptual (Kouzman 2010) and experimental evidence (Murnighan, J Keith; Malhotra 2002). Legalistic, compliance mechanisms like binding contracts, can have negative effects on cooperation if they decrease interpersonal trust between actors. From an institutional perspective, increases in trust facilitate the mutual advancement of goals, and relations between actors (Bothner and Piezunka 2015).

From this discussion, integrity should be seen as serving two key purposes. First, it is transitively related to promoting effective governance through its effect on public trust. This component of trust is certainly crucial, but as subsequent sections will argue, is not the only role integrity plays regarding institutional performance. Second, trust can enhance the relations between individuals within and across organizations mitigating the need for rigid, compliance mechanisms.

Coherence and Consistency

The related concepts of coherence and consistency offer valuable insights into the concept of integrity. Coherence refers to the way in which one’s values exist

together as a whole. Consistency refers to the degree to which one's actions match their intentions of values. Accounts of integrity must explain the coherence of individuals and institutions: what their values are and how do they cohere. Measures of integrity must also account for *the extent* to which individuals and institutions have remained true to those values – how they endure over time.

Violations by external agents are a concern for the coherence of individuals and institutions alike. They threaten the "wholeness" or internal validity of an entity. This theme is key in works that stress shared purposes of members (Hodson and Roscigno 2004) and coherent procedures (Chibber 2002) as crucial to organizational effectiveness. If institutions, for instance, lack an internally valid purpose or set of values, it is hard for its members to effectively pursue that purpose.

This concern goes beyond simply justifying one's actions. Breakey, Cadman and Sampford, for instance, place great emphasis on institutions' public institutional justification (PIJ): the extent to which an institution can justify its *raison d'être* (2015, 22). However, this overt focus on *justification* detracts from the deeper issue for institutions: having a coherent purpose itself, and not merely a justification for it. O'Flynn's distinction between services (what one actually provides) and outcomes – 'higher order aspirations' of public organizations – is particularly relevant (O'Flynn 2007, 359). The notion of identity-grounding projects and values, more generally, demonstrates the importance of having clear and coherent purposes of (public and private) institutions. Since the integrity of the institution is in part dependent on the internal coherence of one's purposes, which is by no means a given, integrity is built through a conscious introspection of an institution's values.

The internal coherence of one's purposes, however, must also be met with a consistency of action. For Paddock, there is a distinction to be made between ethics as 'a collection of values and norms' and integrity as accordance with those ethics (Paddock 2011, 321). Given the discussion above, Paddock's view of integrity is too narrow and ignores the importance of setting values and purposes, but it nevertheless speaks to an important *aspect* of integrity – the degree of congruence between one's actions and values. For some authors, consistency should be measured with respect to moral virtues like justice, while others have rightly broadened the scope of consistency to include bureaucratic or organizational goals (McDonnell 2017, 82:481). Given this variance, greater attention needs to be paid to setting what the reference category for consistency is.

More broadly, our survey demonstrates that scholars often neglect what purposes are and how they ought to be formed. In the context of trust relations, for instance, the one who trusts supposedly assesses the integrity of the trustee according to a set of principles they find acceptable (Frazier, Tupper, and Fainshmidt 2016). What these principles are is left frustratingly open-ended. Similarly, while Schwepker (2005) notes that the management of a firm plays a role in codifying the sets of standards or expectations of other members, again these standards are left largely unexplained. Others take the other extreme and define purpose or principles in exceptionally broad terms, relating them to society-wide notions of "relevant" values and norms (Graaf 2015; Huberts 2014). Neither strategy is satisfying; theorists and practitioners alike should focus more on what constitutes the values, goals or purposes of individuals and institutions.

Compliance and Culture

Next, research on integrity consistently distinguishes between compliance-based and more “culture-focussed” strategies to maintaining or developing integrity within institutions (Brewer, Leung, and Scott 2015; De Graaf 2010; Graaf 2015; Ko 2015b; Scott and Gong 2015; Sharp Paine 1994). The overarching question that this dichotomy raises is how best to design and implement systems that promote ethical behaviour within an organization. This question is separate, though related, to the ethical understanding of integrity, since it asks how integrity is best *cultivated*.

Two aspects within this literature on institutional design are particularly noteworthy, primarily centred around March and Olsen’s ‘the logic of consequences’ versus ‘the logic of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen 1989, 1995). Works in public administration, specifically on “integrity management”, follow this distinction. Graaf 2015, Scott and Gong (2015), and Brewer et al. (2015), each distinguish between a rules-focussed approach and a values-based alternative. Works that stress the importance of compliance-based mechanism for ensuring ethical behaviour, follow the logic of consequences. Here, ethical behaviour is regulated by formal rules that punish defection (Sharp Paine 1994). Individuals therefore defer to a formalized and hierarchical system of rules from which they derive their role-specific organizational values – that is, values associated with a particular job (Quinlan, 1993). This approach conforms to a conception of ‘Weberian bureaucratic’ ethos (Dyck and Weber 2006).

Under this system, however, the individual member of an organization need only worry about complying with the formal guidelines that regulate how they operate. This approach is problematic. With respect to incentives, compliance is a “shallow” form of adherence (Hoekstra and Kaptein 2012). Compliance-based models are limited insofar as these systems diminish the role of the individual in exercising discretion when ethical dilemmas occur (ten Bos 1997; Nieuwenburg 2014; Heywood and Rose 2015). In essence, compliance fails to inculcate in members the institutional values that help automatically promote their purpose. As a result, enforcing compliance requires heavy regulation of individuals to ensure ethical behaviour, which often results in inefficiencies (Heywood and Rose 2015; Brewer, Leung, and Scott 2015).

In contrast, the “logic of appropriateness” suggests that the ethical climate of an organization or institution best determines the types of behaviour exhibited by members of the institution. This approach argues individuals’ behaviour can be regulated and adhered to if the organizational ‘culture’ facilitates this type of behaviour (Sharp Paine 1994; Stansbury 2009). More effective than formal prescription and rule-compliance, then, is norm-setting, which inculcates members with a sense of organizational purpose (Heywood and Rose 2015). The self-regulation implied by such cultural approaches reduces the costs of regulation, since individuals are self-inclined to support the values and purpose of the institution they belong to. It is in this second sense that integrity, as a matter of ethical self-regulation, fits best.

That is not to eschew all rules: some application of formality is important for the sake of fairness and consistency. Innovative work has explored how two-pronged approaches - the establishment of formal rules and guidelines while simultaneously ‘inculcating’ members with basic rules and values – is the best organizational approach (van Blijswijk et al. 2004; Gallagher and Goodstein 2002). Rather, rules should not be seen as the endpoint of ethical regulation in institutions. There is an important place for addressing the culture and ethical environment that the institution can promote to aid self-regulation and adherence to organizational purpose.

Corruption

The final substantive theme to emerge out of the literature review was a focus on the relationship between integrity and anti-corruption. Our results demonstrate that these two terms are often conflated, despite integrity often being treated as an antidote to corrupt practice. In this section, we focus in greater detail on how these related concepts should be distinguished, highlighting the importance of recognizing the normative aspects of institutions.

A promising development in the last decade has been to challenge this anti-corruption focus. Fighting corruption, in fact, may imply something more than simply enforcing principal-agent relations (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013). This research ties in much closer to those who engage with the normative qualities of institutions and how they themselves can promote ethical behaviour (Batory, 2012; Bukovansky, 2006). One particularly interesting corpus of scholarship has shifted the focus on corruption from an agential to an *institutional* analysis (see Amit et al. 2017). To this extent, corruption is a much broader notion:

Institutional corruption is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even currently ethical, that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution or the institution's inherent trustworthiness. (Lessig 2009, 2).

This conceptualization of corruption moves the discussion away from simply the misuse of public office for private gain, towards a focus on how institutions diverge from their purpose. Importantly, this definition captures activity that would be considered non-corrupt under the conventional corruption paradigm but which, intuitively, is problematic.

Nevertheless, this framework still treats divergences from institutional purpose as strategic actions by some actor within the institution. This form of corruption therefore cannot capture those instances where institutions and their members "sleepwalk" into failures of purpose or output. It fails to capture divergences based on poor institutional design even where there is no malpractice or intention to undermine the purpose of the organization. A building for instance may be designed with the best of intentions, and with the sole purpose of sheltering its occupants, but still lack integrity if it performs poorly under certain climatic conditions. Integrity and corruption are therefore asymmetric concepts, and thus distinct: failures of integrity need not necessarily be predicated on *strategic* divergences from purpose. In reverse, institutions with integrity can be more than simply those that lack those with non-corrupt members.

Furthermore, this idea that integrity is analytically distinct from the absence of negative behaviour, such as corruption or bribery, is beginning to see some attention by scholars. Heywood and Rose (2013; 2015) for example, tie the concept of integrity to a concern with public values. In a later work, these authors point to the conception of integrity as an iterative process: 'integrity is part of a process, not merely something that exists in temporally specific actions, like corruption' (Heywood & Rose, 2015). Integrity is therefore something that is *cultivated*, rather than simply a set of conditions under which corruption does not occur. Certainly, in some cases this may mean the absence of corrupt behaviour, yet it also may mean that an organization and its members strive to maintain a commitment to the

organization's legitimate purpose. In such instances, as discussed above, if an organization possesses integrity, it possesses *more* than the mere absence of corruption.

The cumulative direction of research in this regard is promising, moving the literature towards a more robust and analytically distinct conception of integrity. However, there is a pressing need for further research to investigate fully the distinction between anti-corruption and building public integrity. Such work ought to draw on the facets or themes of integrity highlighted in this review.

Conclusion

The primary conclusion to be drawn from this article is that despite integrity being common parlance across a wide range of research, there is very little consensus on what integrity actually *is*. While some conceptual variation is inevitable, and perhaps even useful across disciplines, this review demonstrates that we should be more mindful of the conceptual foundations of integrity. Scholars ought to be particularly aware of such a widely used concept that lacks adequate conceptualization.

Concept structure has practical implications for the measures used to identify and examine integrity, both as a dependent and independent variable. Applying rigorous, concept-first approaches (Sartori 1970; Goertz 2006) to the study of integrity will help to refine or implement new measures of integrity across institutions. This is by no means an easy task; the discussion makes clear that integrity encompasses both normative and descriptive content that is not always directly observable. However, a careful definition of integrity should allow for more robust and valid operationalizations, that do not converge onto measures of related *but distinct* concepts like corruption, or which simply rely on the presumption that there is a consistent knowledge of what integrity is across subjects.

Despite the variance of definitions within and across disciplines, there are five key themes that arise from this literature review. Authors must engage with these areas in the future to address this conceptual deficit. A virtue ethical framework seems the most promising candidate for grounding an understanding of the normative elements of integrity. These appeals, however, must be made explicit and scholars should not shy away from the moral implications of doing so. How integrity relates to trust, for instance, crucially relies on a normative understanding of character. These values in turn drive considerations of consistency and coherence.

From a practitioner's perspective, cultivating such consistency and coherence requires a deep introspection of *how* institutions operate, their values and purposes, and the consequences of rule- and norm-based approaches to ethical behaviour. This change of focus, from preventing unethical behaviour to cultivating good behaviour, highlights the utility of the integrity as a concept distinct from other aspects of good governance like anti-corruption.

The growth in works that directly engage with public integrity is promising but there is more work to be done. First, a greater effort is needed to understand how institutional membership can compel actors to independently make ethical decisions. This in turn relies on scholars making more explicit the teleological elements of institutions: can institutions have more or less integrity, how is integrity distinct from compliance concepts? Finally, given the discussions within this article on coherence and institutional purpose, what defines legitimate purposes and how does this vary across systems? These are inevitably thorny issues, ones that force

scholars and practitioners to contend with cross-cultural differences and regime types in a comparative perspective. These conceptual difficulties should be viewed as constructive, as engaging with the way the world *is*, which makes for a compelling research agenda.

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Appendix

Summary of Literature Review Search

Discipline	Journals
Public Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administrative Science Quarterly 2. Journal of Public Administration 3. Public Administration Review 4. Public Administration 5. Governance 6. International Public Management Journal 7. Regulation & Governance
Organizational Science	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academy of Management Annals 2. Organization Science 3. Personnel Psychology 4. Journal of Human Resources 5. Journal of Service Research 6. Organization Studies 7. Journal of Organizational Behavior 8. Accounting, Organizations and Society 9. Review of International Organizations 10. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes
Sociology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. American Sociological Review 2. Annual Review of Sociology 3. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 4. American Journal of Sociology
Political Science	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. American Journal of Political Science 2. American Political Science Review 3. Political Analysis 4. Journal of Politics 5. Quarterly Journal of Political Science 6. Comparative Political Science 7. European Journal Political Science 8. Political Behavior

International Relations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Security 2. International Organization 3. International Studies Quarterly 4. Review of International Political Economy 5. World Politics 6. Global Governance 7. International Affairs 8. Millennium 9. European Journal of International Relations 10. International Theory 11. Review of International Studies
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Philosophy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Philosophical Review 2. Mind 3. Nous 4. Political Psychology 5. Business Ethics Quarterly 6. Philosophers Imprint 7. Journal of Political Philosophy 8. The Journal of Philosophy 9. Ethics
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Law & Criminology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stanford Law Review 2. Criminology 3. Yale Law Review 4. Journal of Quantitative Criminology 5. Columbia Law Review 6. Justice Quarterly 7. Texas Law Review 8. Regulation and Governance 9. Journal of Law, Economics and Organization
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