The negative impact of chameleon-inducing personalities on employees' ethical work intentions: The mediating role of Machiavellianism

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ABSTRACT

Self-interested moves, such as manipulation and deception in interpersonal relationships with parties inside and outside the workplace, constitute a serious concern for management. Machiavellianism is often directly blamed for such ethical failures, but more generic individual differences, such as those linked to the use of chameleon-like approaches to match an immediate cultural or social environment (i.e., external locus of control, relativistic beliefs), may have indirect influences. Because these chameleon-inducing personalities may foster self-interested decisions, by prompting the abandonment of strict moral codes, this study investigates Machiavellianism as a potential mechanism by which these personalities relate negatively to ethical work intentions. The results, obtained with a sample of 436 banking employees from Spain, reveal that external locus of control and relativistic beliefs relate positively to Machiavellianism, and that Machiavellianism mediates the negative influence of chameleon-inducing personalities on ethical work intentions. The study thus provides novel information for managers interested in reducing employees' Machiavellian tendencies and offers appropriate strategies for deterring their unethical work behaviors.

1. Introduction

Increasingly, world business leaders cite ethics as a cornerstone of social and economic success. For example, Paul Polman, Unilever's chief executive officer, recently emphasized the need to incorporate environmental and social motives into ways of doing business, to transform capitalism into a force for good (Scott, 2013). Yet surveys of business professionals highlight their lack of interest in ethics when it comes to daily business activities and labor relations (Ross, 2013), and employees acknowledge that they continue to observe high rates of unethical behavior at work (Institute of Business Ethics, 2012). That is, even when strong ethics policies are implemented in the organization, employees still seem to make unethical decisions, directed either inside or outside the workplace (Pater & Van Gils, 2003). Thus, organizations still need to better understand how and why employees engage in unethical behaviors, with the recognition that this type of behavior harms employees' well-being, interpersonal relationships (Dahling, Kugumcu, & Librizzi, 2012), customer satisfaction (Roman, 2003), and corporate reputation (Cravens, Goad-Oliver, & Ramamoorti, 2003).

Most ethical decision-making reseearch focuses on personal variables as antecedents (Craft, 2013), due to their strong ability to determine people's ethical standards, inform their perceptions of ethical problems, and establish their ethical orientations (Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996). In psychological terms, these factors provide "*regularities and consistencies in the behavior of individuals … across contexts, over time and between domains*" (Snyder, 1983, p. 497). As such, it is not surprising that empirical research largely focuses on analyzing the influence of such personal features on Rest's (1986) four, sequentially ordered, ethical decision-making process steps: awareness, judgment, intent, and behavior (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Despite calls for investigations of the common foundations of these personality variables though (e.g., self-interest; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), few studies examine whether any interrelationships arise, prior to their influence on ethical decision making. Kish-Gephart

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et al. (2010) document moderate correlations of some personal features (i.e., external locus of control, relativistic beliefs) with Machiavellianism (hereafter, Mach). But we still do not understand the correlations of either external locus of control (LOC) or relativistic beliefs with Mach. In this interesting but unexplored research area, the findings could help managers direct workplace relationships and ethical behaviors more effectively.

In particular, Mach has received widespread attention as a determinant of ethical decision making (Liu, 2008), with a strong negative influence observed often in organizational behavior research (Craft, 2013; Dahling et al., 2012; Grover & Enz, 2005; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). It features detrimental characteristics, such as manipulation, untruthful behavior, deceitful tactics, and cool detachment (e.g., Liu, 2008), but little is known about its links to other personal features, even though identifying them could help managers realize both its presence and its potential effects in the workplace. Because Mach is a personal variable that prompts specific, direct, self-interested actions (Grover & Enz, 2005; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), we posit that other demographic (i.e., level of education; Christie & Geis, 1970) or generic personal features might influence its presence. For example, Liu (2008) suggests that a more malleable and unstable person, in terms of values to follow and aspire to in working life, is more likely to exhibit Mach tendencies. This, therefore, leaves open the possibility that other related personal variables influence this psychological variable.

Two critical and related personal variables that might link to Mach are external LOC and relativistic beliefs, which also can lead to unethical decision making (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Because both these personality elements can push people to adopt a chameleon-like approach—in which they adopt, at any given time, values perceived as dominant in the immediate cultural and social environment (e.g., Casali, 2008; Hample & Dallinger, 1987; Johnson, 1990)—their presence should lead people to make decisions oriented to attaining their own self-interests. People who use a chameleon-like approach may lack strict moral values (Casali, 2008) and behave more in line with contextual moral cues, allowing for the emergence of a self-interested mentality (Oh, Charlier, Mount, & Berry, 2014). In a social situation, such actors likely ask, "*Who does this situation want me to be, and how can I become that person?*" instead of "*Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?*" (Kilduff & Day, 1994, p. 1048, extracted from Snyder, 1979), and they seek the most convenient answer to achieve their goals. As such, because the use of such approaches might lead people to make self-interested decisions and, through Mach, influence ethical work intentions negatively, we believe we can effectively explain recent findings that Mach is highly, positively correlated with these chameleon-inducing personalities (i.e., external LOC, relativistic beliefs; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

Although both external LOC and relativistic beliefs appear negatively linked to ethical decision making (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), existing evidence is somewhat mixed (e.g. Forte, 2004; Marta, Singhapakdi, & Kraft, 2008), suggesting the possible existence of underlying mechanisms (e.g., self-interest) through which both personalities negatively influence ethical decision making (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Because external LOC and relativistic beliefs might induce holders to adopt a chameleon-like approach (e.g., Casali, 2008; Hample & Dallinger, 1987; Johnson, 1990) they may be more likely to engage in self-interested behaviors and disregard the consequences of their actions on others. Such behaviors appear closely connected with descriptions of Mach people, who are characterized by their use of chameleon-like approaches (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Snyder, 1974) and situational manipulations to secure personal gains at the expense of others' well-being (Dahling et al., 2012; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). The notion that Mach, an overwhelming personal feature (Grover &

Enz, 2005), might be the mechanism by which chameleon-inducing personalities relate negatively to employees' ethical decision making thus appears feasible (e.g. Bass, Barnett, & Brown, 1999). With this study we seek to explore this possibility more closely by investigating employees' ethical work intention, which constitutes the penultimate step in the overall decision-making process (i.e., awareness, judgment, intention, behavior; Rest, 1986) and also offers a widely accepted proxy for ethical work behavior (e.g., Azjen & Fishbein, 1980; Elango, Paul, Kundu, & Paudel, 2010; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

In business ethics literature, ethical intention occurs after the recognition that the situation involves moral implications (awareness) and after formulating a decision about what is ethically right (judgment), to provide a teleological grounding of future action and a sense of purpose or meaning about what is to be done (Bright, Alzola, Stansbury, & Stavros, 2011). Because ethical intention immediately precedes taking some action consistent with that intent (behavior) (Jones, 1991; Rest, 1986; Treviño, 1986), we define ethical work intentions as anticipated behaviors at work that can lead to human growth and flourishing (Guillen, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2015), in accordance with universal moral principles that judge a future action as good, right, fair, honest, just (Goldman, 1993), praiseworthy, virtuous (Beauchamp, 1982), and that aim to be morally acceptable by the larger community (Jones, 1991). Thus, in this article, we explore the negative direct influence of external LOC and relativistic beliefs on employees' ethical work intentions, or what employees intend to do (anticipated behavior) when confronted with ethical dilemmas in social interactions at work. Then we examine the mediating role of Mach in these relationships, shedding light on the path by which external LOC and relativistic beliefs can harm ethical work intentions.

Examining these mediated relationships is also important because Mach underlies multiple unethical actions (e.g., verbal and nonverbal aggression, deception, manipulative communications, exploitative tactics; Beu, Buckley, & Harvey, 2003), all of which can damage workplace well-being (Dahling et al., 2012). Because Mach is a personal orientation defined in specific, manipulative, interpersonal terms (Allsopp, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1991; Christie & Geis, 1970), it remains difficult to assess; measures often suffer from social desirability biases (Corral & Calvete, 2000). However, with a clearer understanding of its correlates with other personal features, managers might be able to detect the Mach tendencies of job candidates and current employees, and then plan appropriate strategies for dealing with (un)ethical behavior and well-being issues in the workplace.

Finally, because prior studies have focused on the direct effects of psychological variables on ethical decision making (Beu et al., 2003; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), this study contributes by explaining the interrelationships of those variables and their effects on ethical work intentions. In response to Kish-Gephart et al.'s (2010) call to identify the key drivers of unethical behavior at work, we theoretically address the psycho-cognitive mechanisms that might underlie the negative effects of external LOC, relativistic beliefs, and Mach on ethical work intentions. Consistent with their suggestions, we argue that people's self-interested unconscious motives (Hobbes, 1651/1991; Smith, 1776/1998) play a role and are more susceptible to occur with a chameleon-like approach.

1.1. Theoretical framework

The idea that humans are driven by both self-interest and other-orientation motives has long permeated organizational psychology and organizational behavior research (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009). However, despite existing research into human motivations based on moral and social grounds (Guillen et al., 2015), automatic and

unconscious self-interest remains a central motivation of individual action (De Cremer & Bakker, 2003; Grover & Hui, 1994), according to economic and political theory (Hobbes, 1651/1991; Smith, 1776/1998). The notion of *homo economicus*—the rational, informed, egocentric, utility maximizing, and autonomous person—has dominated many well-known management theories (e.g., trans-action—cost, principal—agent, games) and resulting business practices, and appears responsible for most unethical decisions in today's business arena (Alderson & Kakabadse, 1994; Ghosal, 2005; Piff, Stancato, Coté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012).

People who put self-interests before other motives and others' welfare, and are less cognizant of others' emotions, are more susceptible to committing unethical behaviors (e.g., manipulation, deception, meanness; Piff et al., 2012), especially in interpersonal relationships. For example, people are more inclined to commit unethical acts in their pursuit of personal gain (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009; Grover & Hui, 1994), particularly if they can remain anonymous (De Cremer & Bakker, 2003). However, various other elements could help prevent ego from dominating personal decision making in an unethical direction. That is, ego is less likely to lead to unethical behavior if people strongly adhere to good moral values (Smith, 1759/1984) and attitudes (e.g., altruism, self-control; Goleman, 1995), which make them more conscious of their self-identity structures and feel connected with humanity at large (Rozuel & Kakabadse, 2010). The ability to understand and be sensitive to others' emotions and needs is a key tactic for defeating egoism (Goleman, 1995) and avoiding unethical work behavior (Piff et al., 2012).

When adherence to moral values and attitudes is stable and consolidated, employees can rely on self-regulatory mechanisms (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007; Smith, 1759/1984) to overcome their often unconscious self-interested orientation and remove their egos from decision making. Personal features that bring out the chameleon instead might increase employees' susceptibility to external influences (Casali, 2008; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) and impede their adherence to selected moral values. Merely perceiving or thinking about others' behaviors, traits, or values creates a strong tendency to engage unconsciously in similar or associated behaviors (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), but individual differences also might exert stronger influences, especially if they encourage chameleon-like effects (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). External LOC and relativistic beliefs are, for example, two personal features that could push employees to use chameleon-like approaches in their decision making. External LOCs suggest the need for context-dependent decisions (Solar & Bruehl, 1971), and relativistic beliefs are not anchored in any universal moral principles (Bright et al., 2011). Thus, these personal features are more compatible with the use of chameleon-like approaches (Casali, 2008; Hample & Dallinger, 1987; Johnson, 1990). Although self-interest is not essentially characteristic of these individuals *per se*, we argue that they are more susceptible to be driven by this motive, for several reasons.

Using chameleon-like approaches involves analyzing the immediate environment to make the most appropriate decision, according to each particular situation. This approach is not related *per se* to opportunism, which is defined as self-interest seeking with guile (Williamson, 1975), but it could encourage decision-making patterns that reflect pragmatic, calculated adaptations to the context to meet others' expectations. This pragmatic response mode tends to involve adhesion to behaviors enforced or practiced in a particular context, but not to a *telos* or narrative that defines a transcendent response mode founded on virtue (e.g., human growth and flourishing, Bright et al., 2011). By using these chameleon-like approaches, people with external LOC and relativists likely develop an unarticulated, incomplete vision of "the

good." If they rely exclusively on imitating behaviors to attain a particular, positive end, which appears to be the case (e.g. Kilduff & Day, 1994; Oh et al., 2014), they likely cannot develop good habits oriented to the good itself (Fowers, 2008) that build up their character and produce social betterment around them, that is, virtues (Bright et al., 2011). Virtues, defined as sustainable habits that reflect the character traits of the actor (Bañón-Gomis, Guillén-Parra, Hoffman, & Mcnulty, 2011), are less likely to develop in such scenarios, and thus so is a way of being that is good in itself (Solomon, 1992), involves considerations of others' needs (e.g., Bright et al., 2011; McKinnon, 1999), and seeks to think, feel, and act autonomously in a manner that benefits the self and others (McKinnon, 1999). As a result, and because people with chameleon-inducing personalities (i.e., external LOC, relativistic beliefs) typically lack a particular moral position (e.g. Casali, 2008), ego's influence might be strong enough to prompt these people to be self-interested driven. This is an important ingredient to form a dark personality (i.e., Mach; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), characterized by adopting win-at-all-costs mindsets (Ryckman, Thornton, & Butler, 1994) and manipulative tactics (Beu et al., 2003) in social interactions. Thus, noting their connections to self-interest—centered decision-making patterns, we predict that external LOC and relativistic beliefs relate positively to Mach and that, through Mach, they negatively affect employees' ethical work intentions (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

1.2. External LOC and ethical work intentions

Locus of control pertains to the degree to which people believe they can control the outcomes and events affecting their lives (Rotter, 1966). People with an internal LOC believe that they control their lives through their own actions and decisions; those with an external LOC believe that fate, luck, and destiny define their decision making and consequent outcomes (Adams, Kalliny, de los Santos, & Wang, 2008; Beu et al., 2003; Rotter, 1966). Because the latter group tend to attribute personal outcomes to external forces, they rarely perceive any relationship between their decisions and consequent outcomes (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Ng, Sorense, & Elly, 2006); rather, they adopt a *passive victim lifestyle* (Adams et al., 2008), avoid taking responsibility for their decisions, and rely on external cues rather than their own value structures to identify the right course of action (Beu et al., 2003; Treviño, 1986). We thus anticipate a sense of disconnection from aspired values among people with external LOC, who offload blame onto someone or something else, fail to assume accountability for their own decisions (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), and show little concern about how their behavior affects others, which fuels self-interested behavior (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009; Piff et al., 2012). As a result, they likely express fewer ethical work choices, in line with previous findings (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Formally.

Hypothesis 1. An external LOC relates negatively to employee ethical work intentions.

1.3. Relativistic beliefs and ethical work intentions

According to relativists, right and wrong are relative concepts (i.e., "it all depends"), and moral standards are relative to the society and culture in which each person lives. Relativists believe that moral judgments and actions arise from socio-cultural norms and customs, or even personal preferences (Napal, 2005), so they reject universal moral standards (Forsyth, 1980), believe that ethical choices are driven by circumstances (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), and put up little resistance to social pressures to adhere to certain values (Blasi, 1980). As such, relativists have multiple moral

reference points available, so they do not aspire strongly to any particular set of life values. Instead, they may adhere to moral references that best favor their self-interest at the time (Woodbine, Fan, & Scully, 2013), even if doing so trespasses on others' rights. Because their decision-making patterns are context focused, rather than anchored in universal purposes (Bright et al., 2011), they often exhibit deceitful tendencies and seek to gain at the expense of others (Al-Khatib, Malshe, Sailors, & Clark, 2011). The lack of strict moral guidelines also makes unethical work intentions easier to rationalize (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Accordingly, relativists are more likely to make unethical choices (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005), and we predict:

Hypothesis 2. Relativistic beliefs relate negatively to employee ethical work intentions.

1.4. Mach and ethical work intentions

Mach involves behavioral patterns that reflect no consideration of conventional morals (Beu et al., 2003) and describes the extent to which values and ethical considerations are ignored when the ends justify the means (Grover & Enz, 2005). Although the aim of Mach actors is not expressly to behave unethically, in their dealings with others, they likely use unethical means to achieve their own goals (Beu et al., 2003; Christie & Geis, 1970; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996). They are predisposed to egoistic and instrumental reasoning (Beu et al., 2003; Grover & Enz, 2005), strive to attain material things and achievements in the short run, and prioritize others' needs, feelings, and rights behind their own (Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996). As such, Mach actors employ aggressive, manipulative, exploitative, and devious moves in their interpersonal relationships to achieve personal interests (Beu et al., 2003). Furthermore, driven by self-interest, they tend to engage in unethical behaviors at work (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. Mach relates negatively to employee ethical work intentions.

Indirect effects of external LOC and relativistic beliefs on ethical work intentions: mediating role of Mach.

Self-interest might be a common driver of the connections of these three personal features with unethical work intentions. Self-interest pushes employees with these personalities to behave unethically in the workplace (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). However, though self-interest is an implicit feature of Mach (Beu et al., 2003; Christie & Geis, 1970; Liu, 2008; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996), its presence among people with external LOC and relativists is less direct and obvious and may arise for other reasons.

Self-interest is a common feature of Mach-oriented people (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), who tend to ignore the needs and rights of others (Winter, Stylianou, & Giacalone, 2004); the construct reflects a conceptualization based on studies of how leaders have manipulated others to meet their own self-interests (e.g., Christie & Geis, 1970). Mach-oriented people also tend to adopt utilitarian reasoning in personal interactions (Beu et al., 2003; Grover & Enz, 2005), which increases the probability that self-interest drives their decision making. With utilitarian reasoning (Mill, 1863/2001), people evaluate an action's moral quality according to whether its outcomes maximize utility (Ayios, Jeurissen, Manning, & Spence, 2014). As a moral scheme, it aims to maximize the good (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1993) and positive outcomes for everyone affected (Greenwood, 2002), and although shares with ethical egoism (Sidgwick, 1874/1981) a focus on maximizing positive outcomes, rather than on the process, abstract

rights, or moral principles followed, the positive outcomes pursued by utilitarian people are not required to be self-interested (e.g., Sidgwick, 1874/1981). However, its outcome orientation (Windsor, 2006) might lead to the rationalization that the greater gains of some can compensate for the lesser losses of others, regardless of the harm to individual rights (Greenwood, 2002). Taken to the extreme, a utilitarian moral scheme systematically creates a risk of ignoring others' rights. Therefore, utilitarian people might focus exclusively on satisfying their own preferences (Alfano, 2012) and instrumental needs, which appears to be a common outcome (Martos-Partal & González-Benito, 2013).

Self-interest does not necessarily define the actions of people with external LOC or relativists in and of itself. Rather, self-interest motives seem to arise as a result of their use of chameleon-like approaches (e.g., Casali, 2008; Hample & Dallinger, 1987; Johnson, 1990), which leads them to make decisions depending on the context and be less conscious of or connected to the values to which they aspire. Chameleon-like people generally engage in less independent and autonomous decision making and frequently adopt moral practices observed in their surroundings, because they lack any particular moral position (Casali, 2008). They ask themselves what the situation demands from them, and then adapt their behavior accordingly (Oh et al., 2014). Paying careful attention to social cues, trying to be what others expect, and molding their appearance as disparate situations dictate, are common practices of these people (Goleman, 1985). As a result, their moral cognitive development is relatively low, because defining a right action depends solely on what others have decided, rather than on their own active efforts to dialog with others, interact with the environment, or rationalize (Kohlberg, 1976). In these situations in which people yield more easily to the pressure of social conformity and relinquish their personal responsibility for decisions, ego takes over the focus of consciousness more readily (Rozuel & Kakabadse, 2010), makes people seek for the moral reference that best serves their own interests and encourages more self-interested decisions regardless of the human meaning or value of those decisions (Kohlberg, 1976). A primary attribute of using chameleon-like approaches is the pursuit of self-interests (Oh et al., 2014); attaining the respect of or fitting the expectations of others constitute common immediate interests, pursued through the use of such approaches (e.g., Day & Sleicher, 2006). In turn, it is not surprising that the habitual use of these approaches incorporates the self-interest criterion as a principal guide in decision making.

External LOC and relativistic beliefs thus may constitute personal features that are closely linked to Mach personalities in the workplace. Their connections with the use of chameleon-like approaches (e.g., Casali, 2008; Hample & Dallinger, 1987; Johnson, 1990) seem to underlie their positive relationship with a Mach orientation. Mach people are characterized by their efforts to locate control over what happens to them to external forces (Mudrack, 1990; O'Connor & Morrison, 2001), and they embrace of a philosophy of ethical relativism (Forsyth, 1980), as meta-analytical research has confirmed (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

On the one hand, because people with an external LOC perceive that what happens to them is due to forces outside their control (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Rotter, 1966), they doubt their ability to control events and outcomes following an action, depend less on their own value structure (Beu et al., 2003), and seek to harmonize with the environment, looking to and trusting others' judgments to discern what constitutes appropriate behavior (Forte, 2004; Cherry, 2006). These assessments of the correctness of their actions are also situational, rather than based on rules or duties (Cherry & Fraedrich, 2000), so they use chameleon-like approaches in their lives, in the form of both reliance on external cues in each particular situation and disengagement from any particular set of internalized

values (Casali, 2008; Oh et al., 2014; Snyder, 1974). Thus, through the use of chameleon-like approaches that allow for the ready emergence of a self-interested mentality (Oh et al., 2014), manipulative and deceitful tactics, such as those that Mach people adopt in interpersonal relationships, might arise more easily. Some studies do indeed reason that self-interest could underlie a positive correlation between external LOC and Mach and help support a positive influence of external LOC on Mach (i.e., Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). It is true that Mach people also expect to be in control when dealing with other people (i.e., internal LOC, Paulhus & Van Selst, 1990). However, because people with an internal LOC usually recognize and take personal responsibility for outcomes (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), rely on deontological reasoning and rules-based decision making (Cherry & Fraedrich, 2000), reason at higher moral cognitive levels (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005), and engage in ethical decision making (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), they appear to conflict with Mach people's disdain for conventional morality and acceptance of deceitful, exploitative, or manipulative tactics (Christie & Geis, 1970). Thus, the positive relationship between Mach and internal LOC in interpersonal relationships (e.g., Paulhus & Van Selst, 1990) might rather arise only after Mach people have leveraged their manipulative tactics and come to recognize their powerful influence on others.

On the other hand, relativists lack strict moral guidelines and believe that moral principles should be situationally determined (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), which leads them to weigh the circumstances surrounding their decisions more heavily (Forsyth, 1992). Relativists question the validity of universal rules and regulations and embrace a situational perspective when making decisions (Woodbine et al., 2013). In applying different sets of rules to interpret different situations, they can readily adopt chameleon-like approaches to discern an appropriate decision (Casali, 2008). Therefore, relativists feel justified in changing their moral positions if operational norms run counter to their own self-interests (Al-Khatib et al., 2011), or they can more easily rationalize self-interested behaviors involving the manipulation or exploitation of others in interpersonal relationships (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Because high relativists rarely maintain consistency when they respond to various circumstances, they may be more receptive to the use of opportunistic behaviors to fulfill their own self-interests (Al-Khatib et al., 2011)—a tendency that is very characteristic of Mach behavioral styles (Christie & Geis, 1970).

In summary, adhesion to external cues or guidelines (external LOC) and a rejection of universal ethical standards (relativistic beliefs) may favor manipulative, opportunistic decisions to attain power or desired interests (Mach). Mach is latently consistent with the opportunistic use of interpersonal relationships to meet self-interests (Beu et al., 2003; Liu, 2008; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), but external LOC and relativistic beliefs are more generic personalities that, through other, more overarching personalities, such as Mach (e.g., Grover & Enz, 2005), may induce specific unethical actions. Through the use of chameleon-like approaches, people with external LOC and relativists can become more self-interest driven and, in turn, more associated with Mach-oriented personalities. Because chameleons tend to respond to various contexts in pragmatic manners, through adaptation to observed clues (Kilduff & Day, 1994), they may have more difficulty in enacting character traits based on virtue (Bright et al., 2011) or taking others' needs into consideration in decision making (McKinnon, 1999). Instead, this pragmatic mode of decision making induces a greater tendency to use self-interested tactics, such as social manipulation (Snyder, 1974; Suchman, 1995). Overall, these arguments suggest that chameleon-inducing personal features relate negatively to ethical work intentions through Mach. In other words, Mach is the mechanism by which external LOC and relativistic beliefs relate negatively to ethical work intentions. Formally:

Hypothesis 4. Mach mediates the relationships of (a) external LOC and (b) relativistic beliefs with ethical work intentions.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Sample and procedure

To test these relationships, we focused on employees working in the banking industry, which has been implicated in serious moral failures, both in the recent past (Graafland & Van De Ven, 2011) and today (Irwin, 2014; Jenkins, 2015). This population thus seems likely to exhibit particularities when it comes to relativistic beliefs, Mach traits, and ethical work intentions. We pilot tested the survey used for this study among human resource managers in the financial services industry and a convenience sample of 38 banking employees, to confirm its clarity, comprehension, readability, and suitability. The pilot test indicated no need for further revisions, so we distributed the survey to 4164 white-collar employees of large branches of various Spanish banking corporations. The questionnaires were either distributed directly to them, after gaining the consent of the branch manager, or mailed with the approval of a regional director. The 436 usable surveys we received represented an acceptable response rate (10.5%), considering the sensitivity of the issue studied (e.g., Valentine, Greller, & Richtermeyer, 2006).

Because the study was cross-sectional and used self-reports measures, common method bias (CMB), evaluation apprehension, and social desirability biases (SDB) represented clear concerns (Conway & Lance, 2010). The questionnaire design followed Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff's (2003) and Conway and Lance's (2010) suggestions for mitigating these issues. A cover letter emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and that honest responses were appreciated. To further encourage honest responses, the questionnaire also guaranteed anonymity, both individually and for the firm, such that respondents did not have to reveal their names, job positions, or employing firms. In addition to emphasizing confidentiality, we noted that the results were only for academic purposes, which should reduce SDB (Nancarrow, Brace, & Wright, 2001). A cover story disguised the ethical nature of the research, with no mention of ethics in the instructions or cover letter, to reduce SDB further (Butterfield, Treviño, & Weaver, 2000). Finally, we employed three remedies to mitigate CMB specifically (Podsakoff et al., 2003). First, we ensured a psychological separation between the predictors and criterion variables in the questionnaire, to make them appear unrelated and part of different general topic areas. Second, various contextual variables appeared in the questionnaire, to serve as distracters. Third, the questionnaire items were simple, specific, and concise, according to our pilot test results.

With the assumption that late respondents are more similar to non-respondents than early respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977), we compared the first and last quartiles of submissions received. Independent sample t-tests did not reveal any significant differences for our variables, so non-response bias did not appear to be a major problem. Of the respondents who indicated their gender, most were men (63%). They also were relatively young (50% younger than 40 years), highly educated (65% had college degrees), and long tenured (60% had been with their present company for more than 10 years).

2.2. Measures

To measure our latent construct, we needed to choose between reflective and formative indicators (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics,

2009). Reflective measurements are highly correlated indicators, likely caused by the targeted latent construct, whereas formative measures feature indicators that determine the construct, without necessarily being highly correlated (Chin, 1998). In our survey, the only formative measure was for ethical work intentions, as supported in literature (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007). All the measurement items appear in the Appendix.

Mach. Allsopp et al.'s (1991) psychometrically accepted ten-item scale (Mudrack & Mason, 1995) served to measure the reflective personal characteristic of Mach. Instead of a binary "yes/no" format, we used Likert responses (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; McCutcheon, 2003). We averaged the responses for each participant, such that higher scores indicated a stronger Mach.

External LOC. The two-item reflective and reliable measure provided by Zahra (1989) served to assess the degree to which employees believe that external forces determine their outcomes. Its well-supported reliability (Zahra, 1989) and attractiveness for empirical research (i.e., requiring less space in the questionnaire, producing less fatigue in respondents) supported the adoption of this measure in this study. Respondents used a Likert format (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); after we reverse-scored the items, higher scores reflected a stronger external LOC.

Relativistic beliefs. We slightly adapted Peterson, Rhoads, and Vaught's (2001) three-item reflective relativism scale to assess the extent to which each respondent believed that ethics depends on culture or context. The scale was phrased in a five-point Likert response format (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and assessed people's beliefs that ethics are relative.

Ethical work intentions. Similar to previous research (e.g., Pater & Van Gils, 2003), we used intentions to proxy for behavior (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). In line with business ethics research (Elango et al., 2010; Fritzsche & Oz, 2007; Peterson, 2004; Valentine & Bateman, 2011), we relied on vignettes (i.e., short stories about imaginary characters in specific, realistic situations) to measure this variable, such that the formative measure reflected average responses to three vignettes adapted from previous studies: one that was a variation of one used by Fritzsche (2000) and two adapted from Peterson (2004). These vignettes were suitable for our research purposes, in that each described a hypothetical employee who had committed a questionable moral act that suggested a decision to pursue self-interests during social interactions with others. Following existing ethics research (Elango et al., 2010; Fritzsche & Oz, 2007; Peterson, 2004), the vignettes focused on distinct ethical issues (i.e., lying, dishonest defamation, and deceiving) that harm different agents (i.e., company, co-workers, and customers, respectively; Peterson, 2004). Although each vignette deals with a distinct ethical issue, we do not confront reliability or validity problems, because formative constructs do not need correlated indicators (Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003). Rather than traditional reliability and validity assessments, which are irrelevant, theoretical rationales and alternative validity criterions are recommended for formative measures (Henseler et al., 2009). We describe these alternative criterions subsequently in a later section, and they all were met satisfactorily. Using a Likert response format (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and similar to prior business ethics research, we asked participants to put themselves in the position of the character portrayed in the realistic but hypothetical scenario, then asked them what they would do (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). They indicated their agreement that, given this scenario, they would take a particular action (e.g., "I would be likely to act similarly in that situation"; Peterson, 2004). Then the scale was recoded, so that higher values indicated stronger intentions to develop ethical work behaviors.

2.3. Data analysis

We used Smart PLS 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) and PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to test the hypotheses. A powerful, robust statistical procedure (Henseler et al., 2009), partial least squares (PLS) provides causal analyses of complete situations; as a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach, it is also well suited to test mediation hypotheses (MacKinnon, Coxe, & Baraldi, 2012). Furthermore, PLS does not require demanding assumptions about the distribution of the variables (Henseler et al., 2009). It is the only SEM technique that supports the inclusion of both reflective and formative measures in the same analysis (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). As Chin (1998) recommends, we used bootstrapping (n = 500 subsamples) to generate standard errors and bootstrap t-statistics with n − 1 degrees of freedom (where n is the number of subsamples, Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). As is required for mediation analyses (MacKinnon et al., 2012), we also used the bootstrapping technique with n = 5000 subsamples in PROCESS v2.10 (Hayes, 2009, 2013). Together with our large sample size (n = 436), this method means that we can detect both mediation effects (MacKinnon et al., 2012) and medium effect sizes, with statistical power greater than 99.5% at the 0.05 significance level (Cohen, 1988).

3. Results

3.1. Common method bias

Because the effectiveness of post hoc statistical controls for CMB lack consensus (Conway & Lance, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003), we employed a combination of techniques, rather than a single one, to assess whether variance in our data could be attributed to a single factor. The principal component factor analysis associated with Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) revealed that multiple factors emerged, and the first factor did not account for a majority of the variance in the data. A theoretically unrelated marker variable also revealed minimal correlations with our study variables (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). The loadings of our single-indicator study variables also were low and non-significant on the common method factor but high and significant on their own constructs (Liang, Saraf, Hu, & Xue, 2007). On balance, we thus cautiously assert that CMB is unlikely to be a problem for this study (Conway & Lance, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.2. Measurement model

Following Conway and Lance's (2010) recommendations for ruling out CMB effects, Tables 1–3 offer evidence of the individual and construct reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of our reflective variables. Table 1 also includes indices that indicate the formative measurement of ethical work intentions was effective, and Table 2 provides correlations across all variables.

According to the findings in Table 1, the individual items that constitute the Mach construct are reliable, with two exceptions (Mach9 and Mach10) that did not reach the minimum required 0.55 threshold (Falk & Miller, 1992). We removed these two items during an item-trimming process (Barclay, Higgins, & Thomson, 1995), because their inclusion negatively affected the average variance extracted (AVE) and convergent validity of the construct. The items for the other reflective constructs all exhibited standardized loadings above the desired threshold of 0.707, indicating good reliability (Henseler et al., 2009). The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (ρ_c) values indicated good reliability and internal consistency for the reflective constructs (Table 1); the latter (ρ_c) were above the 0.80 threshold required for advanced research (Henseler

Table 1
Measurement model: item loadings and weights, construct reliability, and convergent validity.

Construct	Item	VIF	Loading	Weight	Construct reliability		AVE
					Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	
Reflective constructs							
Mach					0.87	0.90	0.53
	Mach1		0.79				
	Mach2		0.82				
	Mach3		0.70				
	Mach4		0.83				
	Mach5		0.61				
	Mach6		0.60				
	Mach7		0.63				
	Mach8		0.79				
External LOC					0.64	0.85	0.74
	ELOC1		0.83				
	ELOC2		0.88				
Relativistic beliefs					0.77	0.87	0.69
	RB1		0.82				
	RB2		0.83				
	RB3		0.84				
Formative construct							
Ethical work intentions					n.a.	n.a.	
	EWI1	1.32		0.33**			
	EWI2	1.27		0.53***			
	EWI3	1.23		0.43***			

***$p < 0.001$, $t_{(0.001; 499)} = $ **3.11**. **$p < 0.01$, $t_{(0.01; 499)} = $ **2.33**. (Student $t_{(499)}$ one-tailed test).
Notes: Bootstrapping based on n = 500 subsamples, where a bootstrap t-statistic with n − 1 degrees of freedom is used (n is the number of subsamples). VIF = variance inflation factor. AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. Mach	1.88	0.67	**0.73**			
2. External LOC	3.20	0.84	0.12	**0.86**		
3. Relativistic beliefs	2.37	0.90	0.49	0.01	**0.84**	
4. Ethical work intentions	3.62	1.04	−0.38	−0.02	−0.19	**n.a.**

Notes: All correlations above 0.12 are significant at $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Bold values on the diagonal are square roots of the AVE for each construct (variance shared between the construct and its measures). Off-diagonal elements are correlations among the constructs. n.a. = not applicable.

Table 3
Cross-loadings matrix for reflective constructs.

Items	Relativistic beliefs	External LOC	Mach
RB1	**0.81**	0.03	0.45
RB2	**0.83**	0.00	0.38
RB3	**0.84**	0.05	0.39
ELOC1	0.01	**0.83**	−0.09
ELOC2	−0.02	**0.88**	−0.11
Mach1	0.33	−0.01	**0.76**
Mach2	0.41	−0.02	**0.78**
Mach3	0.38	−0.15	**0.73**
Mach4	0.40	−0.05	**0.82**
Mach5	0.33	−0.19	**0.65**
Mach6	0.28	−0.11	**0.63**
Mach7	0.34	−0.15	**0.66**
Mach8	0.37	−0.01	**0.77**

Notes: Bold indicates that the individual measurement items loaded on their own construct. Because they are higher than their correlations with the other reflective constructs, the reflective constructs in our study are conceptually distinct (Henseler et al., 2009).

et al., 2009). The AVE for each construct also was greater than 0.50 (Table 1), indicating the convergent validity of our reflective constructs (Henseler et al., 2009).

Finally, we assessed the divergent validity of our three reflective measures with several methods. On the construct level, we assessed Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. Because the AVE for each construct was greater than the variance that each construct shared with the remaining other latent variables (Table 2), this criterion was met (Henseler et al., 2009). On the item level, we evaluated the cross-loading criterion; a cross-loading matrix showed that all items loaded on their intended constructs higher than on any others (Table 3). Furthermore, we followed Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips's (1991) well-accepted approach for conducting confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). In AMOS 22 (Arbuckle, 2013), we ran three chi-square difference tests for models that included different pairs of our three reflective constructs. In each model, the correlation between the selected pair of constructs was constrained to 1.0 and then compared with the same model after we released this correlation condition. In all three pair-wise comparisons, the chi-square differences tests were highly significant, indicating that our measures were distinct from one another (Bagozzi et al., 1991): Mach−relativistic beliefs ($\Delta\chi^2 = 112.344$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.01$),[1] Mach−external LOC ($\Delta\chi^2 = 251.162$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.01$), and external LOC−relativistic beliefs ($\Delta\chi^2 = 178.44$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, in line with Segars (1997), to assess discriminant validity, we used CFA and tested if the three-factor model fit the data better than competing models. The chi-square difference tests indicated that it fit the data better than either the two-factor model, which combined Mach and relativistic beliefs into one construct ($\Delta\chi^2 = 204.59$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.01$), or the one-factor model, which collapsed all items into just one construct ($\Delta\chi^2 = 310.951$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p < 0.01$).

The formative measurement model for ethical work intentions also fulfilled the four criteria required for theoretical support (for a detailed discussion of these criteria, see Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Jarvis, 2005). The theoretical rationales based on these four criteria advocate a formative measurement mode, and scholars' expert opinions reinforce this support (i.e., Fritzsche & Oz, 2007).

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[1] Here, $\Delta\chi^2$ and Δdf indicate the increased value for the respective chi-square statistic and degrees of freedom that stem from each specific pair-wise comparison.

Also, this formative measure satisfactorily met the recommended criteria for determining the validity of these constructs, at both the construct level (in terms of nomological and discriminant validity) and the indicator level (in terms of multicollinearity and the significance of the weights) (Henseler et al., 2009; Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). Table 4 documents the nomological validity of our formative construct, in that well-known relationships involving our formative index and alternative variables (e.g., Mach; Beu et al., 2003; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010) remained significant and strong in our model (Henseler et al., 2009). In addition, because our formative construct correlated with other constructs at a level well below 0.70 (Table 2), it differs sufficiently from those other constructs in our study (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010), in support of its discriminant validity. The tests of multicollinearity also revealed minimal collinearity, with variance inflation factors ranging between 1.23 and 1.32 (see Table 1), well below the restrictive threshold of 3.3 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). Our analysis of the condition indices and variance proportions reconfirmed that collinearity was not a concern (Belsley, 1991). Finally, all the indicators associated with this construct reached significance levels of $p < 0.01$ or better (Table 1), confirming that the indicators were relevant to the construction of this formative construct (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).

3.3. Hypothesis tests

Table 4 and Fig. 1 contain findings related to our hypotheses. Contrary to our expectations, external LOC did not relate directly to employee ethical work intentions ($\beta = -0.07$, ns; Fig. 1, Initial Model A1), so we cannot confirm Hypothesis 1. In support of Hypothesis 2, relativistic beliefs correlated negatively with ethical work intentions ($\beta = -0.20$; $p < 0.001$; Fig. 1, Initial Model A2), as did Mach ($\beta = -0.38$; $p < 0.001$; Fig. 1, Mediated Model; Table 4), in support of Hypothesis 3. The former is a small effect ($R^2_{explained} = 0.04$) (see Fig. 1, Initial Model A2), the latter provides a moderate-large effect ($R^2_{explained} = 0.14$) (Table 4), indicating that Mach is a stronger antecedent. Fig. 1 also offers empirical evidence of our mediating hypotheses: Mach mediates the influence of external LOC (Hypothesis 4a) and relativistic beliefs (Hypothesis 4b) on ethical work intentions.

For the mediation tests, we used Tippins and Sohi's (2003) procedure, which includes Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria but applies to SEM better, in that it compares an initial (not mediated) model with a mediated model to find significant differences (Fig. 1). The four-step procedure establishes four conditions for mediation (Tippins & Sohi, 2003): (1) The mediated model explains more variance in the dependent variable than does the initial model, (2)

the independent and mediating variable relate significantly, (3) the mediator and dependent variable are significantly related, and (4) any significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables becomes non-significant or weaker when the mediator is added.

For Hypothesis 4a, the first condition is met; the mediated model accounted for more variance in ethical work intentions than the initial model (Fig. 1, Mediated Model vs. Initial Model A1; Table 5). Because external LOC and Mach related significantly and positively (Fig. 1, Mediated Model; Table 4), the second requirement is also satisfied. In line with the third condition, Mach was significantly, negatively related to ethical work intentions (Fig. 1, Mediated Model; Table 4). In contrast with the fourth condition though, the effect of external LOC on ethical work intentions was not significant, either before or after the inclusion of the mediator (Fig. 1, Initial Model A1 vs. Mediated Model). An emerging consensus suggests that Baron and Kenny's (1986) requirement of a significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, before adding the mediator, is not necessary though (Kenny, 2008; MacKinnon et al., 2012; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). Rather, mediation requires that the indirect effect between these variables is significant (Zhao et al. 2010), because the mediator might exert a causal effect even if dependent and independent variables are not associated (Hayes, 2009). We applied PROCESS v2.10 (Hayes, 2013) to estimate the indirect effect of external LOC on ethical work intentions through Mach. In the bootstrap test with 5000 subsamples (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2008), the indirect effect was significant (Table 4; $a = -0.04$, $p < 0.05$), and 0 was absent from the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCA) bootstrap confidence interval. This result implies a moderate to large mediating effect of Mach between external LOC and ethical work intentions (Table 5; $f^2 = 0.16$; Chin, 1998).

In the test of Hypothesis 4b, the first and second conditions were met; the mediated model accounted for more variance (Fig. 1, Mediated Model vs. Initial Model A2; Table 5), and relativistic beliefs related significantly and positively to Mach (Fig. 1, Mediated Model; Table 4). Because we found support for Hypothesis 3, the third condition was also met. Finally, the significant, negative relationship between relativistic beliefs and ethical work intentions dropped to nearly null when we added the mediator, implying full mediation (Fig. 1, Mediated Model vs. Initial Model A2). In PROCESS v2.10 (Hayes, 2013), the bootstrap test with 5000 subsamples revealed a significant, indirect effect between the independent and dependent variable (Table 4, $b = -0.19$; $p < 0.01$; Preacher & Hayes, 2008), such that Mach fully mediated the relativistic beliefs–ethical work intentions relationship (Hypothesis 4b). This full mediating effect was moderate in size (Table 5; $f^2 = 0.12$; Chin, 1998).

Table 4
Mediated model: Direct, indirect, total effects, explained variance and effect sizes.

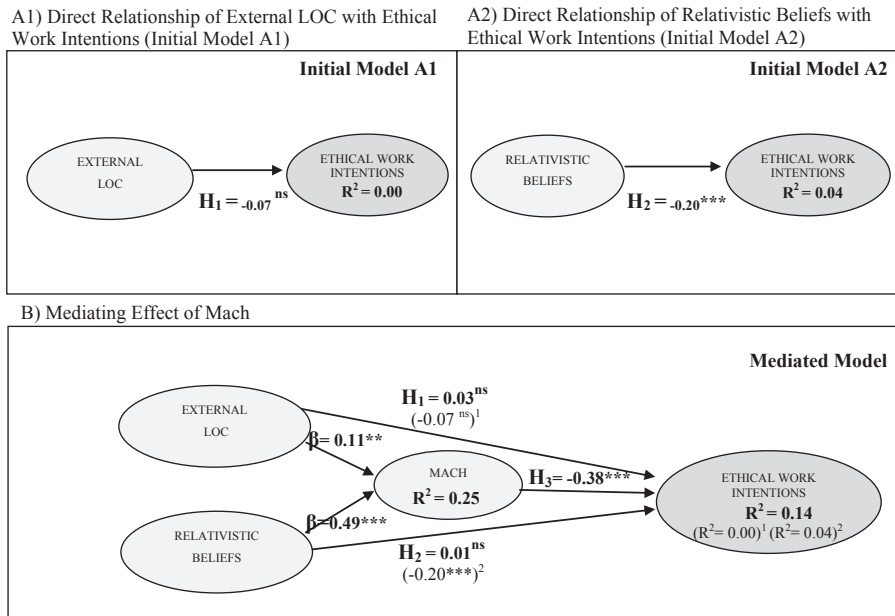| Effects on dependent variables	Direct effects (β) and *t-values*	Indirect effects	Total effects	Variance explained (R^2)	Effect sizes[c]
Mach ($R^2 = 0.25$)					
External LOC	0.11** (2.51)	—	0.11	0.01	Small
Relativistic beliefs	0.49*** (13.80)	—	0.49	0.24	Moderate-Large
Ethical work intentions ($R^2 = 0.14$)					
External LOC	0.03[ns] (0.54)	−0.04[a]	−0.01	0.00	n.a.
Relativistic beliefs	0.00[ns] (0.03)	−0.19[b]	−0.19	0.00	n.a.
Mach	−0.38*** (6.76)	—	−0.38	0.14	Moderate-Large

***$p < 0.001$: $t(499) = 3.11$. **$p < 0.01$: $t(0.01; 499) = 2.33$. ns: not significant. (Student $t(499)$ one-tailed test).

Notes: Bootstrapping is based on n = 500 subsamples, where a bootstrap t-statistic with n − 1 degrees of freedom is used (n is the number of subsamples).

[a] Significant at $p < 0.05$. Zero is not included in the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCA) confidence interval (lower level = −0.07; upper level = −0.01) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The bootstrapping is based on n = 5000 subsamples in PROCESS v2.10.

[b] Significant at $p < 0.01$. Zero is not included in the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCA) confidence interval (lower level = −0.22; upper level = −0.08) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The bootstrapping is based on n = 5000 subsamples in PROCESS v2.10.

[c] Effect sizes of $R^2 \geq 0.01$, ≥ 0.09, and ≥ 0.25 are small, moderate, and large, respectively (Cohen, 1988). n.a. = not applicable; further information on effect sizes is shown in Fig. 1.

A1) Direct Relationship of External LOC with Ethical
Work Intentions (Initial Model A1)

A2) Direct Relationship of Relativistic Beliefs with
Ethical Work Intentions (Initial Model A2)

B) Mediating Effect of Mach

[1] Coefficient value in Initial Model A1 without including the mediating effect.
[2] Coefficient value in Initial Model A2 without including the mediating effect.
Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, ns: not significant (Student $t_{(499)}$ one-tailed test): $t_{(0.001; 499)} = 3.11$ and $t_{(0.01; 499)} = 2.33$. Bootstrapping based on n= 500 subsamples, where a bootstrap t-statistic with n-1 degrees of freedom is used (n is the number of subsamples). Effect sizes of $R^2 \geq 0.01$, ≥ 0.09, and ≥ 0.25 are small, moderate, and large, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

Fig. 1. Chameleon-inducing personal features and ethical work intentions: the mediating effect of Mach.

Table 5
Initial models versus mediation model: Change in variance explained and mediation effect sizes.

Independent-dependent variable	Variance explained				Size of the mediation effect
	Initial model A1	Initial model A2	Mediated model	Δ Variance explained	(f^2)
External LOC − ethical work intentions	0.00		0.14	0.14	0.16 (moderate-large)
Relativistic beliefs − ethical work intentions		0.04	0.14	0.10	0.12 (small-moderate)

Notes: $f^2 = (R^2\text{included} - R^2\text{excluded})/(1 - R^2\text{included})$; effect sizes of $f^2 \geq 0.02$, ≥ 0.15, and ≥ 0.35 are small, moderate, and large, respectively (Chin, 1998; Cohen, 1988).

Finally, to show that external LOC and relativistic beliefs influence ethical work intentions through Mach, we used a Durbin−Wu−Hausman test to control for endogeneity (Calantone & Rubera, 2012). This test failed to reject the null hypothesis for both the external LOC−Mach ($\chi^2 = 0.616$; $p > 0.05$) and relativistic beliefs−Mach ($\chi^2 = 0.093$; $p > 0.05$) relationships, offering no evidence that endogeneity biased our results (Bascle, 2008). These results also reveal the limited chances for a potential reverse effect of Mach on either psychological variable. This test thereby confirms our predictions that both external LOC and relativistic beliefs work through the Mach mechanism to influence employees' ethical work intentions negatively.

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1. Theoretical contributions

Great emphasis has been placed on the need to better understand Mach (Liu, 2008) and clarify the drivers that link Mach, external LOC, and relativistic beliefs to ethical decision making (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), yet scant research has responded to these calls. Although considerable research has analyzed the influence of multiple psychological variables on ethical choices (Beu et al., 2003; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), few studies have sought to

explain the mechanisms by which this influence functions. To fill this gap, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the relationships of external LOC and relativistic beliefs with Mach and thereby makes two important contributions to considerations of unethical work intentions that arise in interpersonal workplace relationships.

First, consistent with prior literature (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), we show that personal variables, such as relativistic beliefs and Mach, have strong negative influences on ethical work intentions. In other words, when employees conceive of ethics as dependent on the situation or believe the use of any means (i.e., manipulation, deceit) is acceptable to attain personal self-interests, it has negative influences on their ethical work intentions. Although external LOC traditionally has been classified as a negative influence too (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), our results reveal no such direct influence (see also Forte, 2004). Rather, we demonstrate that the influence of an external LOC (i.e., belief that the results of an action do not depend entirely on one's own behavior) moves indirectly through other, more overwhelming psychological variables, including Mach.

Second, we show that Mach intervenes in the relationships between various psychological variables (i.e., external LOC, relativistic beliefs) and ethical work intentions, which helps clarify the mechanism by which these personalities relate negatively to ethical work intentions. That is, our results reveal that Mach mediates the external LOC−ethical work intentions and relativistic

beliefs—ethical work intentions relationships, indicating that these personal features do not negatively influence ethical work intentions alone. Rather, their influence primarily moves through Mach, which may explain why some research has failed to find any negative relationship of external LOC or relativistic beliefs with ethical decision making (e.g., Forte, 2004; Marta et al., 2008).

In terms of a better understanding of how ethical intentions arise in the workplace, our findings show that among the personal characteristics studied here, Mach exerts the dominant negative influence. Both external LOC and relativistic beliefs emerge as important positive correlates of Mach, which itself is a reason that the former personalities fuel unethical work intentions among employees (lying, deceiving, defaming). The mechanisms that underlie this mediated relationship appear connected to employees' higher use, when they have an external LOC and relativistic beliefs, of chameleon-like approaches to match their immediate cultural and social environments. By adopting these chameleon-like approaches, employees with these personalities become more tempted to abandon any strict moral values and adhere instead to whatever standard that seems most suitable in each situation, so as not to appear dissonant. This logic—"*to appear perfect*" rather than "*to strive to be perfect*"—makes it easier for employees to use self-interested psycho-cognitive schemas unconsciously, such that if required, they are willing to manipulate, deceive, or exploit others to meet their own self-interests (i.e., Mach).

4.2. Practical implications

Our findings confirm that Mach personal orientations prompt people to behave unethically, willingly, in social situations, which might threaten strong interpersonal relationships, both within and beyond organizational settings. For example, the strong negative association of Mach with ethical work intentions suggests it could harm the work atmosphere among colleagues, as well as the relations that high Mach employees have with external agents (i.e., clients, suppliers). This study also offers some practical implications for designing human resource management strategies that can detect and avoid this personal feature in the workforce. That is, hiring processes that seek to identify Mach candidates often are imprecise and unreliable, even with some available, useful remedies (e.g., including bogus SDB items in the questionnaire to detect fake responses; Morgeson et al., 2007). Because Mach is so difficult to detect through interviews or tests including direct self-report measures, managers might benefit from our findings by adopting more indirect measures of this personal feature during the hiring process. For example, they could inquire about the presence of other psychological variables (e.g., external LOC, relativistic beliefs) that evoke less SDB but are closely proximal correlates of Mach. Thus, indirect measuring instruments, which screen for personality correlates of Mach, could help avoid the risk of hiring candidates who are willing to use manipulative and deceitful tactics in their interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

These instruments could also help managers detect Mach among their current employees and thus assist them in addressing workplace ethics better. Noting the negative effects of Mach on employees' ethical work intentions and behaviors, and as a result, the probable harm caused to the well-being of people in the workplace (Gicalone & Promislo, 2010), managers should attempt to mitigate these detrimental effects as much as possible. For example, because Mach people feel comfortable using manipulative and exploitative tactics in unstructured workplaces, without explicitly communicated norms and rules (Becker & O'Hair, 2007) but with high opportunities for improvisation (Dahling et al., 2012), managers should establish closely supervised and structured workplaces instead. In parallel, individual punishment systems that

discourage deviance from rules or unethical behaviors should be implemented, because Mach people can detect threats of punishment and behave accordingly to avoid it (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012). The implementation of reward systems focused on encouraging ethical behavior could also be useful, if designed to draw on the perspectives of multiple raters and observers and thereby minimize the impact of social manipulation by Mach employees (Dahling et al., 2012). Moreover, because Mach employees embrace materialistic values and seek to maximize their individual rewards (i.e., love of money, Stewart & Stewart, 2006; Tang & Chen, 2008), reward structures focused on motivating teams instead of individual performance might increase Mach people's desire to either give up their use of unethical moves or leave the organization. Finally, because Mach people focus on acquiring power in social structures (Bedell, Hunter, Angie, & Vert, 2006) and manipulate more when they gain positions of power (Christie & Geis, 1970), management should undermine any of their efforts to occupy strategic positions that bridge structural holes in the organizational social network (Dahling et al., 2012). Thus, both the possibilities and the impacts of using manipulative, devious tactics and making unethical decisions could be limited more easily.

Finally, to prevent employees' unethical behaviors in interpersonal relationships, management also might seek to reduce their unconscious inclination toward self-interest while fostering a stronger adherence to high ethical standards. For example, training initiatives could focus on helping workers aspire to high ethical ideals and become aware of others' needs. Such training tactics also could attempt to foster cognitive—autonomous reasoning and prompt moral awareness, such that employees might learn to internalize the importance of moral habits (Ruiz-Palomino, Martinez-Ruiz, & Martinez-Cañas, 2013). Positive psychology coaching and mentoring might help encourage good psychological and emotional capabilities (e.g., empathy), so employees could identify both their own needs and, importantly, those of others more easily (Cilliers, 2011). In hiring processes, management also should choose servant leaders for supervisory jobs; this form of leadership enhances personal and moral growth in employees (Greenleaf, 2008) and leads to more servant-based, less unethical behaviors in the workplace (e.g., Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011; Van Dierendock, 2011).

4.3. Limitations and further research directions

This study contains several limitations. Both managers and employees tend to be reluctant to have their ethics measured, for fear of incrimination due to their potentially unethical positions (Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Accordingly, we prioritized absolute anonymity for the respondents, but that research choice meant that we lost any means to conduct longitudinal analyses (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, our cross-sectional study cannot offer strong causal inferences, and longitudinal designs could address our causality inferences more precisely.

The generalizability of this research is also a concern that could be addressed with additional studies. Our sample encompassed professionals in the unique setting of the banking industry, that has suffered some notable ethical scandals lately (e.g., deceptive selling practices, giant bonuses for packaging risky mortgages into securities that were known to be suspect, corrupt tax evasion practices, inappropriate manipulations of foreign exchange rates; Daley, 2013; Irwin, 2014; Jenkins, 2015). This is an industry that, for decades, has institutionalized the pursuit of short-term objectives (MacKenzie, Garavan, & Carbery, 2014) and promoted dishonest behaviors (Cohn, Fehr, & Maréchal, 2014) to meet the wealth-oriented motives of financial investors (Irwin, 2014). This is also a sector comprising many banks that have expanded their general

ethical and social responsibility parameters after the 2008 financial crisis (Laidroo & Sokolova, 2015), including the implementation of actions designed to increase the ethicality of professionals' decisions (e.g., training initiatives, compensation and rewards systems, performance assessment programs; Hill, 2013). Thus, the banking industry features unique conditions, such that the professionals surveyed for this study may differ in terms of their relativistic beliefs, Mach, and ethical work intention ratings compared with other professionals in other sectors. This potential difference requires consideration in interpreting our findings, as well as assessments through further research.

Our data also came from self-reports, which might create CMB concerns, despite our procedural remedies (Conway & Lance, 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003) and the lack of any real problems in the post hoc tests. Such CMB concerns should never be ignored, yet evidence also suggests they often are overstated and misconceived (Conway & Lance, 2010; Spector, 2006). To assess personalities, the use of self-reports likely provides more accurate findings than data collection techniques that can reduce CMB (i.e., others' reports), because individuals are the ones most aware of their own personal tendencies and intentions (Conway & Lance, 2010). Still, further studies of ethical work behaviors, instead of ethical work intentions, could collect both self-reported responses and supervisor or peer ratings, to address the threat of CMB even more effectively (e.g., Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). In a related note, CMB might be reduced by longitudinal designs that ensure the temporal separation of measurements (Podsakoff et al., 2003), provided they still can preserve respondents' anonymity.

Similarly, SDB might remain a problem, especially for responses related to Mach and ethical work intentions. As we described previously, we mitigated this threat somewhat, by following various proactive recommendations (e.g., Butterfield et al., 2000; Nancarrow et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2003), such as strictly protecting respondents' anonymity (Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Our dedication to ensuring that respondents perceived complete guarantees of their anonymity, on both corporate and individual levels, means that we could not conduct longitudinal analyses or separate the measurement of the variables temporally (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2003). Because we used a vignette technique to collect intentions rather than behaviors, SDB also might be less of a concern in our study (e.g., O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Wason, Polonsky, & Hyman, 2002). Vignettes are short stories about imaginary characters in realistic situations, so respondents generally can imagine themselves in the same situation and empathize with the described character (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015), which tends to reduce SDB. Even with these remedies though, we call for further studies that make formal assessments of SDB, to address this issue more fully.

As reported in the past (e.g. Zahra, 1989), we found no reliability problems in our study for our measure of external LOC. However, this measure is not as rich in content as other, longer scales are (e.g., Beretvas, Suizzo, Durham, & Yarnell, 2008). This limitation could have contributed to the non-significant correlation of this variable with ethical work intentions, even though a similar finding also has arisen in research that used longer, established measures of external LOC (e.g., Forte, 2004). The measure we adopted provides benefits—because it is shorter, it reduces the threat of respondent fatigue and the length of the questionnaire—but further research also might use Rotter's (1966) reliable, valid, 23-item forced-choice scale to measure external LOC to determine if there are any differences in the results. Furthermore, researchers might apply Paulhus's (1983) LOC instrument, which comprises three spheres (i.e., engagement-personal, sociopolitical, and interpersonal) instead of a single, global measure of LOC, to analyze whether the interpersonal LOC sphere (i.e., sense of control in personal

relationships) correlates positively with Mach (e.g., Paulhus & Van Selst, 1990). This effect might arise after Mach people recognize their ability to influence others through their use of deceptive and manipulative tactics. Such questions require additional research, which could complement our findings and perspectives on the causes and correlates of ethical work intentions.

Few studies address the mechanisms by which psychological variables affect ethical work intentions, and fewer still have analyzed whether Mach might intervene in these relationships. In this minimally developed field, several unresolved issues thus remain. Replications that include other psychological variables (e.g., Type A personalities, cognitive moral development, economic value orientation, religiosity, spirituality; Beu et al., 2003; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005) could help reveal other personal features that correlate with Mach and explain ethical work intentions better. Particular attention might center on self-monitoring, a personal variable that shares many features with Mach (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Snyder, 1974) and that is strongly identified with the use and measure of chameleon-like approaches (Kilduff & Day, 1994; Oh et al., 2014). Thus, to advance our findings, researchers could examine which interrelationships exist among these variables to influence Mach and ethical work intentions.

Moral identity also might offer an important mediating variable; moral identity implies a self-conception organized around a set of specific moral traits (e.g., caring, compassion, fairness, friendliness, generosity, helpfulness, hardworking, honesty, kindness), such that it extends sympathy toward and affiliation with a vast segment of humanity (Reed & Aquino, 2003). Because people with external LOC and relativistic beliefs tend not to adhere to strict moral values, the lack of their moral identity could be the reason that the personal features of these people influence their ethical work intentions negatively. Including moral identity also could provide an empirical test of Rozuel and Kakabadse's (2010) suggestions that full self-consciousness prompts righteous behavioral choices, because this view is needed to overcome the often unconscious inclination to pursue self-interests. Because moral identity is positively associated with prosocial behaviors (Winterich, Aquino, Mittal, & Swartz, 2013), we also recommend that researchers respond to Mudrack's (1990) call to clarify the connection of Mach with other work-related outcomes. For example, predictions of organizational citizenship behaviors using the same dynamics we have described herein could offer compelling, novel findings for business management literature.

Although Mach-oriented people appear inclined to behave unethically, this association is not always simple. The workplace environment has enormous influence on ethical decision-making processes (Alderson & Kakabadse, 1994; Grover & Enz, 2005; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2013); in particular, other referents often define influential values and norms for behavior (Grover & Hui, 1994). Highly Mach-oriented people may be less sensitive to environmental cues about ethics (e.g., company rules, ethical climate; Grover & Enz, 2005), but they appear skilled in detecting and processing threats of punishment (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012). Possibilities thus exist for deterring their behavioral orientations by thoroughly communicating and implementing reward and punishment systems. Thus, further research should continue to test interactionist frameworks (Treviño, 1986; Treviño et al., 2006), in which various other ethics program elements (i.e., rewards and punishments systems) might moderate Mach's effects on unethical behavioral choices.

In short, our findings provide new insights into the specific mechanisms (i.e., chameleon-like approaches) through which some personalities (i.e., external LOC, relativistic beliefs) might boost self-interested psycho-cognitive schemas and, ultimately, Mach orientations to influence ethical work intentions negatively. Our

research thus represents notable progress in understanding how Mach explicates the ways in which chameleon-inducing personalities fuel unethical work intentions; it also offers suggestions for managers who seek to limit the negative influences of this personal feature among their workforces. All in all, we offer novel insights into how to better manage workplace human relations and unethical behavior directed either inside or outside the workplace, offering various opportunities for continued research.

Acknowledgements

Appendix. Measures

Machiavellianism (Allsopp et al., 1991)

I would be prepared to deceive someone completely if it were to my advantage to do so.

I would be prepared to do a bad turn to someone in order to get something I particularly wanted for myself.

I often act in a cunning way in order to get what I want.

I would be prepared to "walk all over people" to get what I want.

I enjoy manipulating people.

I tend to do most things with an eye to my own advantage.

I agree that the most important thing in life is winning.

I would be prepared to be quite ruthless in order to get ahead in my job.

I would be prepared to be humble and honest rather than important and dishonest (reverse scored).

I would like to be very powerful.

External LOC (Zahra, 1989)

Whatever happens to me is the result of what I do (reverse scored).

I am the master of my own destiny (reverse scored).

Relativistic beliefs (Adapted from Peterson, Rhoads, & Vaught, 2001)

There is a difference in ethics in personal life versus ethics in the workplace.

In my opinion "what is ethical" vary with situations.

I think that an act can be unethical in one industry but ethical in other industry.

Ethical work intentions

Vignette 1. Lying to superiors to steal money from the company (Adapted from Peterson, 2004)

Ramiro and his coworkers are regularly asked to make out-of-town business trips. Management expects the employees to provide accurate reports concerning their trip expenses. However, Ramiro feels that he is always assigned to the most undesirable destinations, so he pads his expenses by 10%.

Action: Ramiro pads his expense accounts by 10%.

Vignette 2. Making dishonest defamation of other coworkers (Adapted from Fritzsche, 2000)

Ramiro is one of two candidates for an internal promotion. He came across some unfavorable personal information concerning his rival's past. Even though the information has nothing to do with job performance, Ramiro discloses the information and gets the promotion.

Action: Ramiro disclosures damaging information about a rival to get a promotion.

Vignette 3. *Deceiving to customers* (Adapted from Peterson, 2004)

As a salesman, customers typically ask Ramiro to provide specific recommendations concerning products that would best meet their needs. Regardless of actual customer needs, Ramiro always recommends the most expensive products to maximize sales commission.

Action: Ramiro recommends the most expensive products to maximize his commission.

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