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"I GO HERE…BUT I DON'T NECESSARILY BELONG": THE PROCESS OF TRANSGRESSOR REINTEGRATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

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When organizational members violate important organizational standards, they may face termination, or they may instead be retained by the organization and given a second chance. Retained transgressors experience the tension of liminality: they maintain their affiliation to the organization, making them structural insiders, but they have committed a transgression, making them moral outsiders. How might transgressors attempt to reintegrate and feel like full organizational insiders once again? And what makes transgressors feel more, or less, reintegrated? Previous work has studied reintegration from victims' or third-parties' perspectives, but little is known about transgressor reintegration. To build theory on transgressor reintegration, I studied transgressors at a military service academy. Through waves of qualitative data collection and inductive analyses, I find that transgressions threaten transgressors' integration, leading transgressors to feel precarious in their perceptions of membership and their feelings of belonging. Transgressors attempt to restore both elements, but use distinct approaches for each. Because belonging restoration requires positive interactions with many organizational actors, transgressors can—and, in my data, frequently do—experience restoration of membership but not belonging. Therefore, it may be relatively rare for transgressors to feel highly reintegrated following transgressions, even in organizations that devote considerable resources to reintegration.

Humans are fallible creatures; they make mistakes and fall short of their own or others' standards. As a result, transgressions—violations of norms, values, or expectations (Vidmar & Miller, 1980)—are ubiquitous in organizations. Though transgressors can be fired and removed from organizations, some reports have indicated that less than 1% of employees suspected of misconduct are actually terminated (Thompson, 2018; Yoder, 2017), suggesting that many transgressors remain at workplaces following violations. Organizations may have many reasons for retaining transgressors, but, at least in some cases, it is because transgressors genuinely want to redeem themselves, and organizations are willing to give them a second chance.

When organizations retain transgressors, transgressors face a dilemma: they maintain their formal affiliation to the organization, making them "structural insiders," but they have violated the core values of the organization, making transgressors "moral outsiders." In other words, although transgressors remain members of the organization, they may feel like partial insiders and partial outsiders (Lapalme, Stamper, Simard, & Tremblay, 2009; Stamper & Masterson, 2002). Feeling like partial outsiders disrupts transgressors' perceptions of integration—that is, their feelings of inclusion in a collective (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). This is problematic for organizations, because when organizational members do not feel integrated, they are less engaged, have lower productivity, and may even undermine the organization (Guillaume, Brodbeck, & Riketta, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Xong, 2013; Knapp, Smith, & Sprinkle, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Smith, Smith, Olian, Sims, O'Bannon, & Scully, 1994). It is therefore

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important to understand how, if at all, retained transgressors come to feel reintegrated after transgressions, and what makes them feel more, or less, reintegrated.

While scholars have begun to explore the concept of reintegration (Goodstein & Butterfield, 2010; Goodstein, Butterfield, Pfarrer, & Wicks, 2014; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014; Okimoto, Wenzel, & Platow, 2010), most research has examined reintegration from the perspective of third-parties or victims, not transgressors. Understanding what makes victims or third-parties believe that reintegration has occurred is important, but research has suggested that transgressors have very different experiences of transgressions than do victims or third-parties (Adams, 2016). Therefore, the processes and conditions that foster a sense of reintegration are likely to be very different for transgressors; yet, to date, no research has explored the experience of transgressors as they attempt to reintegrate back into organizations.

Our limited understanding of transgressor reintegration is linked to an even more critical shortcoming in organizational scholarship: we have rarely viewed *integration* itself as a dynamic construct. Prior research has treated integration as relatively static (e.g., Guillaume et al., 2012; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Smith et al., 1994; Van Der Vegt, Bunderson, & Kuipers, 2010), and, as a result, scholars do not actually know what makes feelings of integration change over time. Given the link between perceptions of integration and employee engagement, organizational scholars need to understand why and how individuals' feelings of integration ebb and flow. *Re*integration necessarily involves change and evolution in one's sense of integration; thus, while studying transgressors' experience of reintegration is important in its own right, doing so may also lead to a deeper understanding of the fundamental dynamics of integration.

To understand transgressors' experiences of reintegration—and the dynamics of integration in general—I conducted a longitudinal, qualitative, inductive study of cadets who had committed transgressions at a military service academy (referred to here as "the Academy" to preserve confidentiality). These transgressors violated an important organizational code, and could have been terminated from the Academy. Instead they were retained, but were required to complete a reintegration program lasting several months. By following transgressors over time and comparing their reintegration outcomes, I theorize the process of transgressor reintegration: how transgressors seek reinclusion and attempt to reestablish themselves as both structural and moral insiders.

This study makes several contributions to organizational scholarship. I describe the process of transgressor reintegration and articulate how transgressors come to feel reintegrated (or not) following transgressions. By doing so, I offer a novel conceptualization of transgressor reintegration and explain why reintegration may be so difficult for transgressors to achieve—even in organizations that expend significant resources on reintegration. I also contribute to organizational scholars' understanding of integration and belonging in organizations by differentiating between institutional belonging and relational belonging, and show how both are necessary for overall reintegration. Due to the inductive nature of this research, the bulk of the theorizing will be presented at the end of this paper. However, to orient the reader, I start by reviewing the existing literature on reintegration and integration in organizations. I then describe the context and the methods that I used, and present my findings and theorizing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Reintegration in Organizations

Scholars have argued that reintegration[1] is crucial to understand because it has been linked to a variety of desirable organizational outcomes, including reduced turnover, reduced recidivism, and greater employee connection and commitment (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Goodstein, Aquino, & Skarlicki, 2011; Goodstein et al., 2014). Though no single definition of "reintegration" currently exists, most scholars have recognized reintegration as a "process" (Goodstein et al., 2014: 316; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014: 412–413) that leads to "reinclusion of the offender within the broader work community" (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014: 457). Though organizational scholars have recognized that reintegration involves

[1] The term "reintegration" has been used to describe a number of phenomena, including how ex-felons rejoin societies following incarceration (e.g., Braithwaite & Mugford, 1994), how employees experience reentry into organizations following illness, extended leave, or time as an expat (e.g., Dunstan & MacEachen, 2013), how organizations regain legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders following corruption (Pfarrer, Decelles, Smith, & Taylor, 2008), and how employees who have committed a transgression are reincluded by the organization and its members (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010). We adopt the latter conceptualization for this research.

multiple actors—offenders, victims, and third-party observers such as coworkers, supervisors, or "members of the organizational community" (Gromet & Okimoto, 2014: 412–413)—scholars have typically emphasized the perspectives of third-party observers. Indeed, researchers have argued that reintegration "depends to a great extent on the perceptions and actions of third parties" (Goodstein et al., 2014: 316), and that third-parties "must want to work and interact with the offender … for [offenders] to once again be truly included as members of the organization" (Gromet & Okimoto, 2014: 411).

Most empirical research has focused on reintegration following interpersonal transgressions—that is, violations that involve both a transgressor and a victim. Studying interpersonal transgressions has enabled scholars to explore reintegration from multiple actors' perspectives (De Vel-Palumbo, Wenzel, & Woodyatt, 2019; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014), though most studies have typically measured reintegration by asking victims or third-parties about *their* perceptions of a transgressor's reintegration (De Vel-Palumbo et al., 2019; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014). This work has shown that for victims and third-parties to feel that reintegration has occurred, they must see transgressors engaging in reparative actions (Andiappan & Treviño, 2011; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014), such as offering apologies (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Schumann, 2018), making amends (Goodstein, Butterfield, & Neale, 2016; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014), or asking for forgiveness (Bies, Barclay, Tripp, & Aquino, 2016; Eaton, Struthers, & Santelli, 2006; Goodstein & Aquino, 2010).

Although most reintegration research has focused on interpersonal transgressions, these are just one type of transgression. Individuals can also commit violations against an organization (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). In these cases, actions like apologies or asking for forgiveness may be less applicable, as there is not a single "victim" to direct these actions toward. How transgressors attempt to reintegrate following violations against organizations remains unclear, however, because existing literature has rarely considered reintegration following these types of transgressions.

Our understanding of reintegration remains limited in another way as well. Although we know what actions make *third-parties* feel that transgressors have been reintegrated, we do not know what makes *transgressors* feel reintegrated, because prior research has rarely focused on transgressors' perspectives. Even scholarship specific to "offender reintegration" has focused on "*peers*' reintegration of the offender" (Gromet & Okimoto, 2014: 415, emphasis added) or the "willingness of *others* to maintain or develop new working relationships with an individual who has violated" (Goodstein et al., 2011: 75, emphasis added). While it may be tempting to assume that transgressors' perceptions of reintegration simply mirror the perceptions of third-parties, this is unlikely to be the case. Research has shown that transgressors perceive transgressions in dramatically different ways than victims or third-parties do (Adams, 2016); for example, transgressors and victims hold divergent perceptions of transgression severity and intentionality (Adams & Inesi, 2016; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990), of the importance of apologies and forgiveness (Adams & Inesi, 2016), and of what must be repaired following transgressions (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). If transgressors perceive transgressions in fundamentally different ways than third-parties do, transgressors' perceptions about their own reintegration may also differ considerably from third-parties' perceptions.

Integration in Organizations

Although existing research has not investigated transgressors' reintegration experiences, the extensive literature on *integration* may provide insights into how transgressors become insiders again after transgressions. Integration describes an individual's feelings of inclusion in an organization (Guillaume et al., 2012; Morrison, 1993, 2002; O'Reilly et al., 1989). This mirrors how reintegration has been conceptualized: integration pertains to feelings of inclusion, while *re*integration pertains to feelings of *re*inclusion.

Prior work has examined both the indicators and the outcomes of integration. The indicators of integration include "attraction to the group, satisfaction with other members of the group, and social interaction among the group members" (O'Reilly et al., 1989: 22). When individuals are more integrated, they feel like they fit in and are accepted by other organizational members (Morrison, 1993, 2002), they have positive, high-quality social interactions and relationships with other members (Morrison, 1993; O'Reilly et al., 1989), and they have higher satisfaction with the collective (O'Reilly et al., 1989). Research on integration outcomes has suggested that highly integrated individuals perform better (Smith et al., 1994), are more effective (Guillaume et al., 2012), and have lower turnover intentions (O'Reilly et al.,

1989)—indicating that integration is essential for employee well-being and organizational functioning.

The present research focuses on transgressors' experiences of *re*integration; reintegration implies a situation in which integration has declined but then been restored. Thus, understanding how integration changes over time is vital. To the best of my knowledge, existing integration scholarship has been silent on this question. The closest that scholars have come to studying changes in integration has been in the study of socialization. Socialization is the process by which organizational outsiders become organizational insiders (Van Maanen & Schein, 1978). Through a combination of organizational tactics (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007) and individual actions (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), socialization fosters a sense of integration and inclusion (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ellis, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2015; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 2002). Thus, socialization may be viewed as the process by which individuals become initially integrated into organizations (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013; Morrison, 1993, 2002; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

Socialization scholars have made considerable contributions to our understanding of integration by identifying two additional components of integration: membership and belonging (Van Maanen & Schein, 1978). Membership refers to an individual's formal affiliation to an organization (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Masterson & Stamper, 2003). Membership is structural; it pertains to an "individual's position in [the] social space" of an organization (Pfeffer, 1991: 789). Individuals form perceptions about their membership based on the work roles and titles they are assigned (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Wright, 2009), their participation in the core work of the organization (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005), and promises of ongoing employment (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005).

Belonging, in contrast, describes the feeling of being valued and accepted by other organizational members (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2013; Hogg, 2001). Individuals feel like they belong when they have affirming relationships with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), when they feel sought out by others at the organization (Leary, 2010: 870), and when they are treated "positively" (Thau, Aquino, & Poortvliet, 2007: 841). Such positive interactions make individuals believe that others see them as good colleagues, reinforcing the idea that they are organizational insiders.

Socialization turns organizational outsiders into organizational insiders by cementing membership in an organization (Burke, Kraut, & Joyce, 2010; Moreland & Levine, 2002), and by engendering feelings of belonging to it (Ellis et al., 2015; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Scholars have assumed that the single "steady" process of socialization (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007: 6) generates both membership and belonging simultaneously. As a result, scholars have often used these concepts interchangeably (see, e.g., Burke et al., 2010; Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2013; Moreland & Levine, 2002; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Although both membership and belonging are highly related to integration, these concepts are theoretically distinct. Membership fosters a sense of integration based on an individual's structural affiliation at an organization (Leary, 2010: 865), while belonging fosters a sense of integration through relationships that make individuals feel valued by the organization and its members.

Despite providing important insights about the components of integration (membership and belonging), socialization research cannot explain the process of *re*integration, for two reasons. First, socialization has generally focused on the process by which complete outsiders become complete insiders. It cannot speak to the dilemma that transgressors face: how individuals who were once full insiders—but whose transgressions have made them structural insiders but moral outsiders—reestablish themselves as full insiders once again.

Socialization research is unable to explain the process of reintegration for a second reason: socialization scholars have implicitly assumed that, once formed, integration persists. For example, studies have often linked socialization to turnover (Allen, 2006; Allen & Shanock, 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000); scholars have repeatedly shown that when individuals experience "under-socialization" (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007: 51) and do not feel fully integrated at the beginning of their tenure, they are more likely to leave the organization later. Socialization is assumed to happen when an individual first enters an organization, while turnover is an outcome marking the end of an individual's tenure. Linking the extent of socialization and integration to temporally distant outcomes like turnover means that socialization scholars have generally assumed that integration is a static concept that does not change over time. As a result, existing socialization literature has not explained how or why individuals experience changes in integration, or what makes

individuals come to feel reintegrated into organizations following transgressions. To better understand transgressors' experiences of reintegration, I studied transgressors at a military service academy who attempted to reintegrate back into the organization after committing a serious violation.

METHODS

Research Context

The setting of this study is a military service academy in the United States ("the Academy"). The Academy trains future military officers ("cadets") and has a strict honor code that forbids cadets from lying, cheating, or stealing in both their professional and their personal lives. When accused of an honor violation, a cadet's guilt is determined by a jury of peers; if found guilty, the superintendent, the highest-ranking military official at the Academy, determines the cadet's punishment. Although cadets can be permanently expelled from the Academy, most cadets are retained, but face severe punishments. Their graduation is delayed by six to 12 months, and their standing at the Academy is temporarily diminished: cadets lose their rank and privileges for a period of time, meaning that they become the lowest-status members of the Academy, and are not allowed to leave the Academy, participate in many Academy activities, or wear civilian clothes.

cadets are also enrolled in a six-month-long remediation program designed to strengthen their character and reintegrate them back into the Academy. cadets are required to complete the program in order to return to full standing and graduate. In the remediation program, cadets are paired with a high-ranking officer who serves as their mentor. cadets complete a large number of activities, including writing reflective journal entries and teaching honor classes to other cadets (see Appendix A for a descriptive timeline of the program). Once completed, their work is reviewed by the administration. If approved, the Academy formally sets a graduation date for the cadet, restores the cadet's rank and privileges, and allows the cadet to participate fully at the Academy, all of which signal that the cadet is once again a member in good standing.

The stated objective of the remediation program is to help cadets "identify habits that are dysfunctional or incongruent with [Academy] values" (Academy Honor Handbook, 2009: 6-2) and "examine and modify [their] own actions, thoughts, values, and beliefs" (Academy Honor Handbook, 2009: Appendix 3-1-2). Officers responsible for administering the program also added that they wanted the program to make transgressing cadets "feel guilty and be humbled . . . .[but] we don't want cadets to be ostracized—that's the last thing that we want . . . We want them to feel like they're part of this profession, we want them to be in this profession" (Honor Officer 1). The focus on wanting to make cadets feel like they are "part" of a collective underscores the reintegrative intent of the program.

It is the existence of this highly formalized, highly utilized process—an honor officer indicated that he had seen over 100 honor cases in less than two years at the Academy (Captain George, honor officer)—that makes the Academy an "extreme exemplar" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1994) of structural insiders but moral outsiders attempting to become full insiders, and an ideal setting to study reintegration. Because so many transgressors go through this reintegration process, and because the reintegration program takes about six months to complete, this is a setting in which an unusually large number of organizational members are attempting to reintegrate over an extended period of time. By following multiple cadets, I was able to observe the process of reintegration in great detail, revealing dynamics of reintegration that usually remain hidden in organizations. In addition, the existence and intent of this highly formalized reintegration program suggests that most transgressors should have felt highly reintegrated by the end of the process; thus, potential variation in outcomes offers opportunities to understand the conditions under which transgressors feel more, or less, reintegrated.

Data and Participants

Ultimately, 23 cadets, 10 of their mentors,[2] and four honor officers agreed to participate in this research. In my sample, roughly 70% of the honor violations were related to academic issues (academic cheating, insufficient citations, plagiarism, etc.). The rest involved some type of lying, such as lying to supervising officers to get special accommodations or to avoid trouble. Although the self-perceived

[2] In accordance with Institutional Review Board policies, I only collected data from cadets, mentors, and honor officers who volunteered to participate in this study. As such, my data did not include every cadet or mentor who completed the remediation program, but only those that agreed to participate and gave consent. Mentors were only invited to participate if their cadet mentee was recruited. Not every mentor agreed to participate, resulting in more cadets than mentors in the sample.

severity of the transgression varied, the variation in perceived severity appeared unrelated to cadets' reintegration outcomes or experiences (see Appendix B for additional baseline information for each cadet). All cadets in my sample successfully completed the remediation program and had their formal standing restored.

To understand cadets' experiences as they completed the reintegration program, I collected several types of primary longitudinal, qualitative data from participating cadets, mentors, and honor officers (see Appendix A. I conducted hour-long, semistructured interviews with each cadet at up to five points in time (see Appendix C for interview protocol). These interviews were conducted at roughly the beginning, middle, and end of the remediation program, with the final interview occurring after the cadet had been returned to full formal standing. The first interview focused on the cadet's background, violation, and experiences as their case was adjudicated. The middle interview(s) focused on the cadet's experiences during the course of the remediation program, while the final interview explored each cadet's experiences after the superintendent restored their rank and privileges.

I also conducted up to three interviews with each participating mentor, roughly at the beginning, middle, and end of the program. I used the mentor data primarily as a point of comparison for the narratives that cadets shared with me. For example, I found that in some cases, cadets' perceptions of how they were being treated diverged from mentors' perspectives. These differences led to the insight that transgressor reintegration is an intrapsychic process driven by cadets' *perceptions* about what they are experiencing.

In addition, I conducted interviews with several honor officers[3] in charge of administering the Honor Program. These interviews deepened my understanding of the reintegration process from the perspective of the Academy, including why the program existed, what it aimed to achieve, and how the Academy defined "success." Ultimately, I conducted 111 interviews from participating cadets, mentors, and honor officers over the course of 48 months.

To more deeply understand cadet experiences, I supplemented the interview data with secondary data (see Appendix A). cadets completed a survey at the beginning of the program that collected data about the violation, their backgrounds, and how they felt at the Academy. I used this survey to prepare for the first interview, so that I had some familiarity with the cadets' violations and Academy experiences. Some cadets also provided copies of journal entries they wrote for the remediation program; I used these to gain an understanding of the "product" that the Academy leadership would see. I also spent time at the Academy informally observing and participating in athletic events, officer get-togethers, promotion ceremonies, and graduation activities. Attending graduation, for example, helped me understand why it was such an important benchmark for cadets, and why having a set graduation date makes them feel like organizational insiders.

Analysis

To analyze my data, I used an approach informed by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), iterating between data and theory to understand my data and identify emerging themes. This process played out over several phases, as detailed below.

Open coding. After completing about one third of the interviews,[4] I began systematically coding the transcripts by adopting an "open coding" approach (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I developed codes that were close to the data, which allowed me to stay open to themes and patterns that emerged (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Some of these open

[3] Honor officers were recruited 24 months after the cadet and mentor interviews were completed; thus, the honor officers interviewed were not the officers that oversaw the cases of the particular cadets in my sample. This helped protect the privacy and confidentiality of the cadets who agreed to participate. However, this also meant that I could not "triangulate" or "verify" a *specific* cadet's experience with data from these honor officers. As a result, honor officer interviews were primarily used to situate cadets' narratives in the larger institutional context.

[4] I recruited cadets for this research as they began the remediation program; however, because cadets began the program at different times (roughly two cadets began the program each month), I conducted the last interview for some cadets well before I had conducted the first interview for others. I began coding when I had collected about one third of the *total* interviews, which means that I had completed all the interviews for some of the first cadets I recruited, only one or two interviews for cadets that had been recruited later, and none for the last cadets that were recruited for this research. This meant that the themes that emerged from coding the first third of interviews informed the questions that I asked in interviews with cadets who were recruited later.

codes included "feeling like part of the corps," "fitting in with other kids," "treated like a 'normal' cadet," and "not allowed to represent the Academy." Because of the longitudinal nature of my data, I looked at the open codes that were generated in each cadet's interview, and considered how these changed or remained the same across the cadet's subsequent interviews. Consistent with a grounded theory approach, the insights that emerged from this open coding also prompted me to refine my interview protocol for the remaining interviews (Spradley, 1979). For example, the open coding revealed that the concept of "fitting in with other kids," "sense of belonging," and "feeling like a part of the corps" were significant parts of cadets' experiences. In the remaining interviews, I therefore asked cadets explicitly about their feelings of belonging.

Visualizing the narratives. After I finished the final interview for each cadet, I adopted an approach suggested by Langley (1999) to develop detailed narratives for each cadet. I read each cadet's transcripts chronologically to infer how the cadet felt about their experience at various points in time. This helped me identify the "high" and "low" points of their experiences. I mapped these highs and lows on timelines to visualize each cadet's trajectory. From this, I began to notice patterns in integration. All cadets appeared to have similar experiences for most of the remediation program, but variation appeared at the end: some cadets finished the program feeling highly reintegrated, while others felt less so.

Axial coding. Once the initial open coding was complete and I had a nuanced understanding of cadets' narratives and trajectories, I grouped the open codes into categories. For example, codes like "feeling included by friends," "allowed to play on athletic team," and "fitting in with others in corps" I grouped into the category of "feeling integrated," as these codes all had to do with feelings of inclusion in a collective (O'Reilly et al., 1989). I compared these categories against the data to ensure that the categories captured cadets' experiences; doing so led me to occasionally modify, divide, or combine categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

During this axial coding phase, I noticed that cadets talked about their integration at the Academy differently as they described their experiences before and after the transgression. In particular, I noticed that after their transgression, cadets talked about feeling precarious in their integration (a category that contained open codes like "uncertainty about being at Academy," "felt like outsider," and "in limbo"). However, there appeared to be two distinct domains that cadets felt precarious about. One set of open codes focused on insecurity about cadets' future affiliation or structural position at the Academy (e.g., "feeling like 'second class citizen,'" "not allowed to have leadership role," and "unsure when he would graduate"). Consistent with scholarship about the indicators of membership (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Wright, 2009), these open codes were placed into a category called precarious membership. However, there was a second domain of precariousness, which contained open codes that were more emotionally based and related to feelings of not being valued or accepted by others (e.g., "feels like he didn't belong," "friend stopped talking to her," "felt like 'leper'"). Drawing on existing scholarship about the indicators of belonging (e.g., Leary, 2010), these open codes were subsumed into a category called precarious belonging.

For each cadet, I tracked how each theoretical category—including the categories of precarious membership and precarious belonging—evolved from the first interview with the cadet to the last. I also compared these categories across cadets. Comparing the categories across time and cadets helped me move to higher levels of abstraction and decipher deeper structures underlying the theoretical categories. For example, I saw significant similarities across all cadets' experiences until the very end of the remediation program, confirming that all cadets in my sample experienced highly similar processes, with some variation at the end. I engaged in memo-writing as a way of recording these emerging themes and patterns.

Building theory. In this phase, I configured my data into a coherent framework. I moved between data, themes, concepts, dimensions, and existing theory to develop a coherent framework that tied the emergent themes and categories together, making sure that the framework chronologically reflected the cadets' experiences. It was in this phase that I realized that cadets responded to precarious membership with one set of actions (the category of "compliance" appeared highly linked to precarious membership), and they responded to precarious belonging with another (the category of "investment behaviors").

The process of developing a framework occasionally led me to revise some of my earlier understandings. For example, I realized that the category labeled "perceptions of restored belonging" actually had two subcomponents: relational belonging and institutional belonging. I used informal member checks and my primary and secondary data—mentor interviews, honor officer interviews, and cadets'

journal entries—to further corroborate, disprove, or modify this framework. For example, I asked honor officers about their treatment of transgressing cadets, and how they saw others interacting with cadets. This revealed that the emerging theory was truly a perceptual process that was based on cadets' interpretations of interactions, rather than on "objective" behaviors that were triangulated and agreed upon by all involved parties.

FINDINGS

My data suggest that all transgressing cadets experienced the same *process* of reintegration. This process involved perceiving initial integration, experiencing liminality and the decoupling of membership and belonging, attempting to restore membership, attempting to restore belonging, and perceiving reintegration. However, it became clear that there was *variation in how cadets experienced restoration in belonging*, which ultimately led some cadets to feel much less reintegrated than others. Because cadets "experienced the same general process in different ways" (Crosina & Pratt, 2019: 73), I present a process-with-variance model of transgressor reintegration. Figure 1 illustrates the process of reintegration that all transgressing cadets went through, and I elaborate on each phase of this process below. To underscore the longitudinal process of reintegration and to illustrate variation in it, I highlight the experiences of three archetypical cadets—Cadet Kila, Cadet Romo, and Cadet Ecker—throughout each phase of the process. I also supplement these three cadets' experiences with additional data from other participants, in order to more fully articulate the dynamics of the reintegration process. Table 1 also provides supplementary data for each part of the process.

Integration, Membership, and Belonging

When reflecting on their experiences at the Academy before their violations, all cadets recalled similar levels of integration. Some cadets described how, prior to their transgressions, they felt like they were "a really good fit" (Goff, *B*)[5] at the Academy, while others recalled feeling like they were "part of something bigger" than themselves (Hote, *B*).

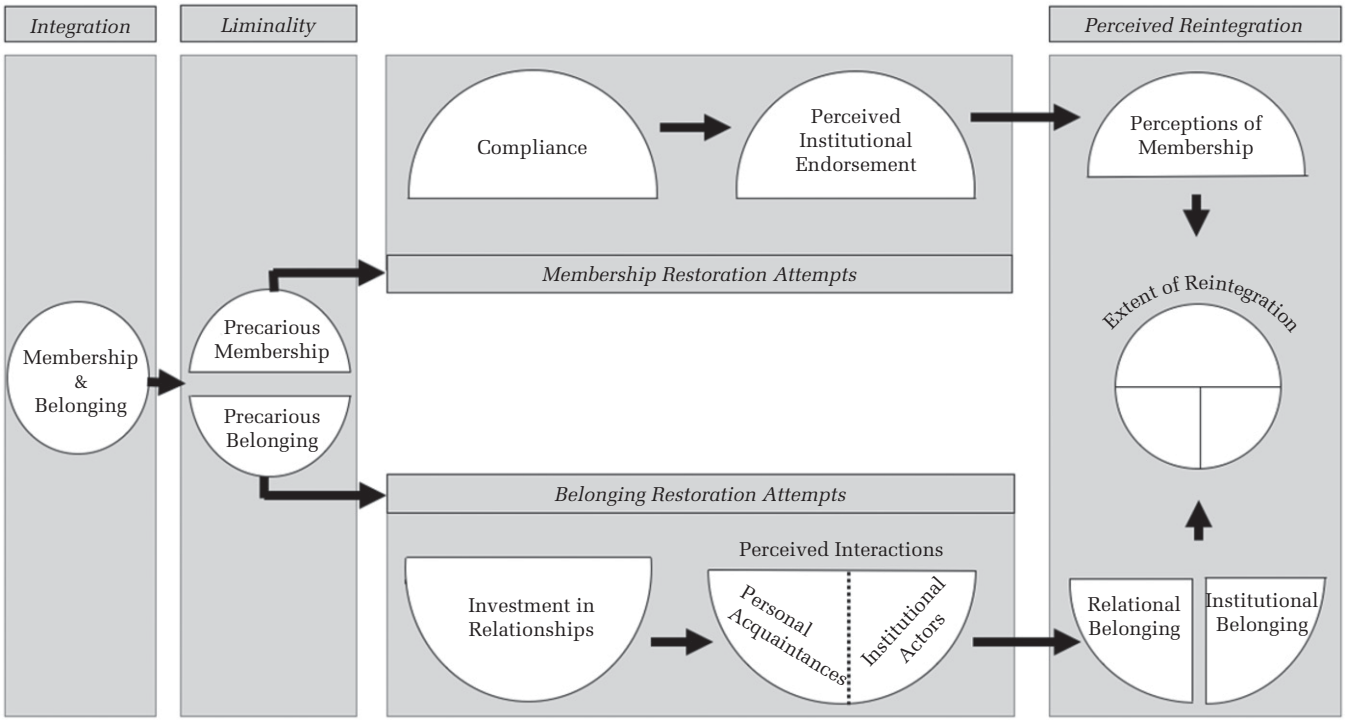
Cadets' integration at the Academy was not only apparent through explicit statements about inclusion; cadets also talked about experiencing both the antecedents of integration (positive relationships [Morrison, 1993, 2002]) and the outcomes of it (commitment and satisfaction with the organization [O'Reilly et al., 1989]). Cadet Kila—whose experience I will repeatedly draw on—mentioned, "before this whole thing [violation] happened, I had a solid best friend" (Kila, *E*). In part because of these strong positive relationships, Cadet Kila recalled that, prior to the transgression, she "always wanted to be here [at the Academy]" (Kila, *B*). Cadet Ecker—another cadet who I will repeatedly reference—also had positive relationships and was highly committed to the Academy. Before his violation, Cadet Ecker said happily that he had "made a lot of good friends, a lot of relationships" and "I was fully committed … I really loved it. I really knew that this is what I want to do" (Ecker, *B*). Cadet Romo—the third cadet I will reference throughout—also felt committed to the Academy before his transgression, saying emphatically, "I was really bought in … I think I bought in 100%" (Romo, *B*). As these and the additional quotes in Table 1 illustrate ("Perceptions of pre-violation integration"), cadets not only explicitly recalled their feelings of integration at the Academy but also remembered experiencing both antecedents and outcomes associated with integration.

Consistent with prior research linking integration, perceptions[6] of membership, and feelings of belonging (e.g., Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Van Maanen & Schein, 1978), cadets recalled feeling secure in their membership at the Academy prior to their violation. They mentioned that they were allowed to "represent the Academy" (Fox, *B*) at external events and athletic competitions, indicating that they participated fully in the activities of the Academy. Cadets also emphasized that they "took every leadership role" (Oscar, *B*) they could. Being assigned roles and titles, and participating in the core work of the organization, are

[5] I identify the source of each quote through parenthetical citations; the first part of the citation indicates the cadet's pseudonym (e.g., "Kila," "Romo," or "Ecker") and the second part of the citation indicates when the quote was provided: *B* (an interview at the *beginning* of the program), *M* (an interview during the *middle* of the program), or *E* (an interview after the program *ended*).

[6] I use the term "*perceptions* of membership" (Bartel & Dutton, 2001) throughout the Findings to emphasize that it is cadets' subjective interpretations of their affiliation to the Academy that drive the reintegration process, not necessarily the "objective" legal or contractual relationship they have to it. As will be seen, cadets can perceive their membership at the Academy to be insecure, even though the Academy administration has formally stated that the cadet will remain a member of the Academy.

FIGURE 1
Process of Transgressor Reintegration



indicators of membership (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Wright, 2009). With so many indicators of membership, it is unsurprising that cadets assumed that their membership at the Academy was "for sure" (Xeno, *B*); some even recalled believing "it's guaranteed" (Lima, *B*). The cadets in my sample felt so integrated and secure in their perceptions of membership that they did not even consider that their membership at the Academy would be questioned.

Most cadets also recalled having strong feelings of belonging prior to their transgressions. Some cadets explicitly said, "I felt like I belonged … I knew that I fit with the other kids" (Oscar, *B*). Though not all cadets used the word "belong," they all remembered feeling valued and accepted by others, which are indicators of belonging (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). For example, Cadet Ecker recalled how his subordinates treated him, saying, "my squad … they were like, 'we want to be like [Cadet Ecker]! He knows what he's doing, we love [Cadet Ecker]'" (Ecker, *B*). Such expressions of admiration and affection made Cadet Ecker believe that others valued and accepted him. Because feelings of belonging and integration are so tightly linked, this underscores how integrated cadets felt prior to their transgressions.

Cadets experienced all of these indicators of integration as intertwined. They did not appear to make psychological distinctions between feelings of belonging, perceptions of membership, or the antecedents (relationships) or outcomes (commitment and satisfaction) of integration. For example, when talking about his experiences at the Academy prior to his violation, one cadet explained with pride,

> I got to be a squad leader … And that's when everything kind of came together for me … it was like, "Okay, this is it, this is why I'm here" … I had a lot of good friends … I felt like I had more purpose at [the Academy]. I felt like I had more seniority, and I felt like things were starting to finally come together. (Dolan, *B*)

In a single response, this cadet explained why he felt integrated by mentioning his organizational role ("squad leader"), which is linked to perceptions of membership; his feelings of commitment to the Academy ("this is why I'm here"), which is an outcome of integration; his positive relationships

TABLE 1
Additional Quotes Illustrating the Process of Transgressor Reintegration

Stage	Experience	Quote
Pre-Violation Integration	Perceptions of pre-violation integration	"Everyone now knew me, and I was that kid in the class. I just had so many friends here and I was loving it … being [in a leadership position] and being on the [athletic] team, that was who I was … [when I entered] into a stadium … there was definitely an audible response, my classmates cheering." (Udell, *B*)
		"My plebe year I was a really good cadet … I did well physically. I was kind of the go-to star cadet of the company, if you will. Or star plebe." (Kila, *B*)
		"In my first year at the academy, I kind of loved it." (Lima, *B*)
		"Everyone … endorsed me. They thought I was fit to come here." (Nova, Journal 8)
		"I remember thinking, 'I'll keep this up, and when May, whatever comes, I'll be ready to commission.'" (Udell, *B*)
		"I was like 'I really like this place'... I don't know how to describe it but I felt like I belonged." (Sierra, *B*)
		"When you get to [the Academy], everybody's the same." (Dolan, *B*)
Liminality	Precarious membership	"It's like climbing a mountain … You do all these little things and then you get to the top of the mountain. The other side of the mountain is freedom … [But] at any point, [the Academy] can come in, a huge blizzard comes in, and you're killed off the mountain essentially. You're kicked out and you're not entirely free until you're off the mountain." (Alf, *E*)
		"One day I was certain I was going to get kicked out. Next day, I was like 'Oh it wasn't that bad' … I had no idea to be honest." (Romo, *B*)
		"If I get in any more trouble, I'm gonna be kicked out, so I just keep to myself as much as possible. You're kind of scared, walking around." (Wisk, *B*)
	Precarious belonging	"When you commit an honor violation or you're approached, it just feels like you don't belong at the Academy." (Charlie, *B*)
		"I really feel my relation to the corps has changed … it felt like at times like no one here cares … Some of my company mates cared, but not all of them." (Paupa, *B*)
		"I stayed in my room. I went to formation, and I stayed in my room … interacting with people, building relationships, making friends, never did that. It was just me and them." (Yan, *B*)
Membership Restoration Attempts	Compliance	"She recommended separation. And she told me that flat out. She's like, 'I don't think you deserve to be here' in the meeting …. I switched from that to, 'Okay. This is damage control now. I'm just trying to stay out of as much trouble as I can.' So … I was just giving super generic answers like, 'I shouldn't have done it. It was stupid. I was just being selfish' kind of things. In my eyes, I was just trying to answer in a way that would satisfy her ….I think my TAC [supervising officer] had warned me about it, kind of. 'Cause he knows I don't believe that I was in violation of the honor code. But he was like, 'Look man. You can't let people know you think like that' … after that it was kinda like, 'Okay. My TAC was right. They're not messing around with this stuff' … It was just like, 'Okay. I can't fight this anymore. I have to roll over' … Because I did not want to get kicked out." (Yan, *B*)
		"If you talk to anyone who's been under suspended separation, they'll tell you, 'I'm the best cadet there is because I want to graduate. Not because I did all these papers and assignment and really grew as an individual.' I think the growth comes from looking over your shoulder every minute of the day and thinking about every single thing that you do, 'Will this get me kicked out?' That's why there is this artificial sense that kids who have the honor boards are the best cadets." (Alf, *E*)
		"I'm really paranoid not to get kicked out. I feel like a lot of people are like, 'Yeah, he's walking on eggshells … He really does everything by the book.'" (Charlie, *E*)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Stage	Experience	Quote
	Institutional endorsements	"I waited until [date] to meet with the superintendent again … He was relatively happy to give me my rank back and everything, so that was cool." (Xeno, *E*)
		"Then [the superintendent] said, 'You've met all the requirements' … I've been 21 for the whole year but I couldn't drink because I was on restriction. We were walking up the stairs to our rooms and [officer] was like, '[Cadet Lima], are you 21?' I was like, 'Yes sir, I am' … He's like, 'You need a beer.' He signed the card and gave it to me. He's like, 'Go have a drink tonight.'" (Lima, *E*)
		"They put me in charge of the headquarters platoon … .it's an entire platoon of staff officers, of juniors and seniors. They put me in charge of that platoon because the new company commander and my [supervising officer] recognize … how I've handled the honor situation." (Dolan, *M*)
	Perceptions of restored membership	"[Things are] back to normal now … Things are just easier now 'cause I don't have to worry about tiptoeing around things … [or about] the loss of privileges." (Fox, *E*)
		"It's over now, and I'm just a normal person again and moving on with my life." (Dolan, *E*)
		"Just be a normal cadet … obviously I haven't felt normal for a while." (Hote, *M*)
Belonging Restoration Attempts	Investment in relationships	"The relationships, that's putting both feet in. … I spent a lot of time with the company and just understanding how people just fed off of that presence of just me being around like that. It was like, 'Oh man you've been gone for so long, you're always gone. I didn't even know who you were and now that you're here I'm going to finally learn who you are.' … Someone was actually paying attention and that put my foot more into the door too. Like, okay people are actually paying attention and they see who I am. They see that I have potential … . one day I was walking through and the plebes they started calling me by what all my friends call me, like [nickname] and stuff. They always joke, 'You're such an awesome leader. I want to be just like you.' Just little things like them calling me [nickname]. That just was like, I really am making some sort of impact on these underclassmen or just everyone around me … believing that they're looking up to you and people are actually watching, and looking up to you to be the example, set the example, and be that rock." (Hote, *E*)
		"What I've taken away is: it's not about being the best, but it's about being the best for the people around you … Before, if people came to me for help, I would be like, 'Sorry, I'm busy working on my own homework.' I actually do all the tutoring now." (Sierra, *M*)
		"I'm nice to the plebes … I try to be as reasonable as possible. I try to put in good work for the [unit] and lead by example but also lead with kindness." (Kila, *E*)
		"I just try to be helpful." (Romo, *E*)
	Perceived positive treatment and perception others see transgressor as a good person (moral insider)	"I felt like [mentor] never judged me for anything, and she was one of the few people who agreed that … my honor violation doesn't make me a dishonorable person. She doesn't believe I was [dishonorable] beforehand. I made a mistake." (Tang, *E*)
		"People tell me [I'm] genuine and caring. My one friend calls me 'mom' … People … [think] I made a mistake, but that doesn't mean I'm a bad person." (Goff, *M*)
		"[Mentor] hasn't acted for a single time like he was judging me for [the honor violation]. He's never treated me like I might be a bad person … we're honest with each other. He's opened up to me … just like a confidant kind of thing." (Dolan, *M*)
		"And there was a girl in my company who … asked me to be her cadet advisor and I was like, 'Okay, well maybe people don't think that I'm a

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Stage	Experience	Quote
		horrible person. Maybe they think they can learn something from me.'" (Fox, *E*)
		"[Other cadets] tell me that they still think that I'm a good person … [people] said that they thought that this was more of a misunderstanding than it was an honor violation … I think that's partially because I am so bound to the [military] values. I go out of my way to help people, and I try to be positive." (Xeno, *E*)
	Perceived negative treatment and perception others see transgressors as a bad person (moral outsider)	"[Officer's] like, 'Well what you have to understand is that you don't have any rights, you don't have any say in any of this, and you're going to do whatever we tell you to do' … And it's just getting really frustrating … [because it feels like he's] making me pay for this … [and] keep remembering that I'm a shitty person." (Dolan, *M*)
		"They [other cadets] just make you feel like a shitty person, continuously … they would kind of look at me … you'll say hi, and they'll keep walking." (Lima, *B*)
		"People look at you like 'that person obviously did something wrong' … everyone looks at you like, 'yeah you messed up' … [they think] I'm a horrible person because I messed up … Some people who don't even know me are going to look at me with a negative connotation." (Quinn, *M*)
Patterns of Belonging Restoration	Perceptions of restored relational belonging	"You don't understand until you see your classmates all go, how connected you are to your class here. It's not just the kids in your company, it's all the other kids—my old teammates, all my friends from classes, or just anyone. And when they leave, you're here at the start of the year, and you're like, 'Oh man, this is going to be a long year.' But I had a really great group of guys in my company, 10 or 12 guys who just picked me up. I didn't even realize they were really cool guys. We've done weekends together, we're going to [City] and [City]. They've picked me up really well, so the company overall has been really, really good." (Oscar, *E*)
		"Most of the people I surround myself with know my story, and they don't treat me any differently. Sometimes they do forget that I'm [on restriction], like when they make weekend plans, and like 'Oh I can't go with you guys.' Yeah, it sucks, but then it also, it feels good to know that they don't automatically associate me with the [violation]. It's like they still consider me, and then they forget that I'm [on restriction]." (Tang, *M*)
		"I met with my TAC at the end of the semester and he asked me how I felt about my case or something and I said, 'My actions were disgusting, and who I was at that point was disgusting.' And he was like, '[Lima], I never want you to say that again … your actions are not who you are. Do not let them define you. People make mistakes, and it's not the mistakes that define them, it's how they come back from them' … the fact that he kind of said that, because he had been involved in the whole case from the beginning, so it was probably pretty hard for him to stay objective, just because … I had kind of lied to him. So for him to kind of be on my side, or kind of talk me out of feeling like I was a bad person, kind of hit me. Like, 'Hey if he can still think that I have potential, and who I am as a person is still someone who he wants in his [military], then maybe I can actually come back from this.' So that helped a little bit." (Lima, *B*)
	Perceptions of unrestored relational belonging	"So I just feel like a fish out of water, I just don't belong. I'm too old to be with the young guys, and I was on my way out last year, so I didn't really fit in with them, so I've always been on a different frequency, since this whole thing happened, and it's just made it difficult, and it's made it hard to mesh … .when you're on a different wavelength." (Julian, *E*)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Stage	Experience	Quote
		"I knew that my true friends would be highlighted throughout this process...but now that we are under 100 days from [friends'] graduation, even my closest, closest friends are unable … to deal with the broken life, the weak wheel [*gesturing to himself*] … .when they're around me they try not to be like, 'Yea man, preparing for graduation.' And it's definitely easier for them, even my closest, closest buddies, definitely easier for them to just be like, 'Hey, let's go celebrate on our own on weekends. Let's go, because it's too hard to deal with [Cadet Udell]' … So, that's been kind of sad. And I think very, very shocking. Cuz those people were my rocks … I'm now losing friendships over this. And relationships simply will never be the same." (Udell, *E*)
		"They definitely looked at me differently. There were people in my neighboring company that I had known. Normally we'd be like really friendly, like say hi to each other, but afterwards and after [the honor violation] they definitely stopped talking to me because of it. Even when I would say hi to them they would just not respond." (Xeno, *B*)
	Perceptions of restored institutional belonging	"I met with the Supe, who said my [remediation] packet was one of the best he had ever seen and asked me to put my final essay into the core newsletter, which he did. He was super impressed with what I wrote. It was a good feeling about that." [Later in the interview] "I still feel a sense of connection to the school." (Alf, *E*)
		"Kind of just making a point to be upfront and be like, 'This is what happened.' In a way it kind of paid dividends. One of my [instructors] last semester ... he asked me [about the situation] … . and we talked about it. It turned out he is on the Supe's committee for honor and for a while chaired it. So because of the conversation we had, he was like, 'Wow, I'm so impressed. She's gonna finish [the remediation program] and she's done this well.' And he now made me be on the Supe's honor committee as a cadet advisor. When I ask him for my appeal packet to write something, he wrote a very nice, like, 'She's very upfront, it's clear she's learned.'" (Goff, *E*)
		"Was nice to have him [the superintendent] care … ..he is a three star general so he has a lot more on his plate than to read my packet. It kind of caught me off guard because I was like, 'He's not going to read this. He has so much other stuff to do.' … He actually took the time to read what I'd written and it made me feel better … gave me a little faith that there's people here that care." (Lima, *E*)
	Perceptions of unrestored institutional belonging	"I've been working hard … ..I haven't given up … .But even if I do, so, I would graduate in December, having never attended the [ceremonial event] that weekend, having never been to a [ceremonial event], or [another ceremonial event], or [ceremonial event]. All these milestone things that connect people to [the Academy] and make officers in the [military], [the Academy] officers first, it's just U.S. [military] officers, or ROTC [military training at civilian colleges]. And I will graduate without all that." (Udell, *E*)
		"How they [Academy leadership] handle issues. Seems a little inconsistent … And because of those inconsistencies I kind of have a sour taste in my mouth about the [military] … I don't want to be a part of an organization like this." (Nova, *E*)
		"Everything good and American about [the Academy] is just kind of corrupted in my head now, because I realize that if something can take one of its—I view myself as [an Academy] employee I guess, or as someone who has given a lot to [the Academy], and the fact that they treat me so poorly off of a mistake or off of a violation, regardless of how completely clean my record was before and how high-performing my record was before, the fact that they could take someone like me and put them through such a horrible negative experience—I view [the

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Stage	Experience	Quote
		Academy] as much more toxic than I viewed it before. [The Academy] changes people, and [the Academy] definitely takes away a lot of people's optimistic outlooks. [The Academy] can ruin people pretty deeply. And I think it's horrible what they do to some people here." (Dolan *M*)
Perceived Extent of Reintegration	High reintegration—Full restoration in relational and institutional belonging	"With everything that's happened I'm definitely all in … just through the different things and my situation, and everyone that has come into my life, it's starting to become more and more apparent that this is what I was supposed to do. Just being here at the Academy and understanding how good it is for me, the development and everything. Just buying into it has helped me out so much and made me a better person." (Hote, *E*)
		"I'm still an advocate of [the Academy] as one of the better, or one of the best, leadership institutions. And I feel really thankful … So I do feel really committed … definitely feel committed to this institution." (Xeno, *E*)
	Partial reintegration—Restoration in relational belonging,	"Like we don't feel like we're part of the [Academy] yet, because they … treat us differently. Our friends who know our situations, they don't treat us any differently, but others who don't know our case and don't bother asking us why, they give us weird looks or stuff like that. They won't, they won't approach us, so we feel disconnected." (Tang, *E*)
	but not institutional; or restoration in institutional belonging but not relational;	"I feel disconnected from the upper echelons of leadership here … .The core is fine. I really enjoyed my time here as a cadet. It's just, the organization as a whole … .This place tried to bring me down and ruin my life but I still made it out … . I'm kind of like a disgruntled employee right now. But it might come out to be like I end up enjoying this place." (Nova, *E*)
	or partial restoration in both	"I love the people here, for the most part, and I'm genuinely happy that I'm here, but I think the biggest frustration that I have, and I think a lot of people have, is they [the Academy officers] don't really care about ... cadets … [the Academy], it's a great place to be from but a horrible place to be … As for how I feel about [the Academy], I can't say that I hate it because I don't." (Lima, *E*)
		"I'm much more bought into the school itself. I'm still proud of the ring and graduating from here. I still feel a sense of connection to the school … I'm still proud of it. [But] I think there'll always be that piece that I've missed out on in graduating with my friends." (Alf, *E*)
	Lack of reintegration—No restoration in either relational or institutional belonging	"I guess just [the Academy] itself, what it's become as far as 'this is where we want you to be, if any of us see you as being anywhere other than there, we're going to treat you like garbage.' How I was treated and what I went through, I've never seen another human being be treated like that. And the fact that I am going to have a college degree from here and that diploma is going to be hanging on my wall, my [Academy] ring and being associated with that—it seems kind of wrong. I've seen parts of the system that most other cadets don't even know exist." (Dolan, *M*)
		"I view [the Academy] as—I'm disappointed a little bit because it's supposed to be this pinnacle of American ingenuity and creativity and leadership. Everything good and American about [the Academy] is just kind of corrupted in my head now, because I realize that if something can take one of its—I view myself as [an Academy] employee I guess, or as someone who has given a lot to [the Academy], and the fact that they treat me so poorly off of a mistake or off of a violation, regardless of how completely clean my record was before and how high-performing my record was before, the fact that they could take someone like me and put them through such a horrible negative experience—I view [the Academy] as much more toxic than I viewed it before. [The Academy] changes people, and [the Academy] definitely takes away a lot of people's optimistic outlooks. [The Academy] can ruin people pretty

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Stage	Experience	Quote
		deeply. And I think it's horrible what they do to some people here." (Dolan, *E*)
		"I definitely went through a very [emotionally difficult phase] because of all this, and I'm never gonna forgive the Academy for that. … [the Academy] took the happiest, most dedicated cadet and just crushed that. Crushed that liveliness, and that energy, and that spirit." (Udell, *E*)
		"I don't see myself healing stronger … Maybe getting back to where I once was, most likely getting back to a slightly below but still acceptable level. And that's just what I've come to accept in regards to my level of happiness here. It's never gonna be what it once was. I'm at a point where it's okay, I enjoy waking up, being alive. I value my life. But it's just constant. There's just something. There's a stain." (Udell, *E*)

("good friends"), which are antecedents of integration; feeling valued ("I had more purpose"), which is linked to feelings of belonging; and occupying a structural position at the Academy ("seniority"), which is related to perceptions of membership. Because perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging were likely formed during socialization into the Academy), these components appear to have been psychologically coupled, with cadets experiencing all of them simply as "integration."

Liminality: Decoupling of Membership and Belonging

When cadets were accused of honor violations, they knew that they could be terminated from the Academy. Cadet Romo recalled, wide-eyed, that the officer who confronted him about his violation "was telling me I was going to get kicked out" (Romo, *B*). Cadet Ecker echoed this fear; he said that after being accused, "I was so shocked … I thought about separation" (Ecker, *B*). If they were terminated from the Academy, cadets would become both structural and moral outsiders: they would no longer have a formal affiliation to the organization, and they would be marked as "a shitty person" (Lima, *B*) who violated a core standard of the Academy. The possibility of becoming an outsider threatened cadets' feelings of integration. One cadet recalled how uncomfortable it felt to not know whether he would remain at the Academy: "it was like waiting for an impending doom to happen … it almost felt like being on death row, waiting for them to put the needle in" (Paupa, *B*).

All cadets in my sample were eventually retained by the organization, but were required to complete a remediation program. Being retained meant that cadets were still formally affiliated with the Academy; Cadet Ecker said with relief, "I'm still … here. I'm still a Cadet" (Ecker, *B*). Because cadets' affiliation to the Academy (as "cadets") remained intact, cadets continued to be structural insiders at the organization.

However, although cadets remained structural insiders, they no longer felt fully integrated at the Academy. Even after finding out that he would be retained, Cadet Romo told me that he "felt like a leper walking around" (Romo, *B*). Other cadets felt equally unintegrated, even though they knew they would remain at the Academy. During my first interview with one cadet, she explained with frustration, "I want to be a part of [the Academy], but … [I've been] breaking the rules, I can't be super aligned" (Goff, *B*). She did not feel integrated at the Academy because she knew she had violated the honor code of the organization, and therefore she felt like a moral outsider. Sometimes interactions with others reinforced cadets' feelings of being moral outsiders; Cadet Kila explained that when she was accused of an honor violation, an officer berated her, saying, "'You're a poison to the company' and just listing off reasons *A* through *Z* why I'm a terrible person" (Kila, *B*). From this encounter, Cadet Kila began to feel like "it's me versus them" (Kila, *B*). This mentality highlights the lack of integration she felt, and the fact that she remembered being called a "a terrible person" suggests that she felt like a moral outsider. Thus, although cadets remained at the Academy and continued to be structural insiders, they no longer felt integrated, because they felt like moral outsiders.

Cadets described the feeling of being structural insiders but moral outsiders as being "in limbo"

(Ecker, *B*; Romo, *M*; Charlie, *B*; Nova, *B*; Quinn, *M*) or being in "purgatory" (Julian, *M*; Myles, *M*; Xeno, *B*). As neither completely insider nor completely outsider, cadets were experiencing *liminality* (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016; Turner, 1967, 1969, 1987) in their integration at the Academy, or feeling "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967, 1969, 1987) insider and outsider status.

My data suggest that all cadets experienced this liminality in two distinct ways. First, all cadets described how the liminality made them feel precarious in their belonging at the Academy. One cadet summarized this, saying bitterly, "obviously I felt like I didn't belong here" (Xeno, *B*). Another cadet felt like he "went from one of the top-tier cadets … to just being completely in the slums as far as cadets are concerned" (Dolan, *M*). By saying that he was in "the slums," this cadet hinted that he felt unvalued by others at the Academy. Cadet Romo also said with frustration that he "felt disowned by everyone" (Romo, *B*), illustrating how liminality led cadets to feel precarious in belonging.

All cadets had a second distinct experience of liminality as well: they all felt insecure in their perceptions of membership. Even though they had been retained at the Academy and they therefore remained structural insiders, cadets still *felt* precarious about their membership at the Academy and their future affiliation to it. Cadet Kila expressed trepidation about her future membership at the Academy, even months after she found out that she would be retained. She explained that if she got in trouble again, she would "get kicked out … I have a lot of anxiety … it's not like I'm always 'Oh my god, I'm going to get kicked out,' but it makes you uneasy" (Kila, *M*). Feeling precarious in their perceptions of membership—especially their future membership—left cadets feeling that "there's always [this] reservation, because … this could all get taken away" (Dolan, *B*). Thus, despite remaining structural insiders, all cadets in my sample experienced precarious perceptions of membership (see Table 1 "Precarious membership" for additional examples).

In contrast to the coupled way that cadets had experienced integration prior to transgressions, during liminality cadets appeared to decompose "integration" into distinct experiences of membership and belonging. For example, when Cadet Ecker talked about how integrated he felt at the Academy, he remarked that although he felt "grateful for the chance to still be here … I am merely a spectator" (Ecker, Journal 10). Liminality—feeling like structural insiders but moral outsiders—may have prompted cadets to realize they could be structural insiders of the Academy ("a chance to still be here"), without feeling like they belonged at it ("merely a spectator"), leading cadets to talk about—and experience—perceptions of membership as distinct from feelings of belonging.

Membership Restoration through Compliance and Institutional Endorsements

Seeking institutional endorsements. Cadets desperately wanted to feel like "a normal person in the corps" (Goff, E) again, and therefore took steps to feel more secure in their perceptions membership at the Academy. In particular, cadets sought *institutional endorsements*, or signals indicating that the Academy and its leaders viewed the cadets to be undisputed organizational members. Most cadets mentioned that "getting [their] rank back" (Dolan, *M*; Goff, *M*; Charlie, E) was an institutional endorsement they sought, because "there's something somewhere that says you can rejoin your class … once you earn your rank back" (Kila, E). Rejoining their class was a structural indicator that the Academy leadership saw cadets as normal members; thus, cadets believed that regaining rank would make them more secure in their perceptions of membership.

Another institutional endorsement that cadets sought was receiving a set graduation date. While they were completing the remediation program, cadets' exact graduation date was in question. Cadets wanted the Academy to set their graduation date—even if it was later than the rest of their peers—because they knew it would be a signal that the Academy felt cadets "were fully qualified" (Ecker, *M*) and were "good enough to graduate" (Alf, *E*). One cadet explained, "whether it be six months later, a year later after my normal graduation date, or on time, as long as I graduate … [I] can say, 'yes, I did go to the Academy'" (Charlie, *E*). Cadets saw a set graduation date as an assurance they would complete their time at the Academy, and believed it would make them feel more secure in their perceptions of membership.

Cadets also sought other types of institutional endorsements, including being "able to rejoin [an athletic] team" (Udell, *B*) or being given "leadership opportunities" (Lima, *M*), such as "commander for [summer] program" (Julian, *M*). Cadets also viewed institutional endorsements to include regaining Academy-approved "privileges" (Kila, E), which involved "being allowed to leave [the base] … being allowed to wear civilian clothes, or walk … outside

the gate" (Alf, *M*). Such endorsements were viewed as structural indicators that the Academy leadership saw cadets as normal organizational members, making cadets' perceptions of membership more secure.

Compliance behaviors. Cadets believed that the Academy would only provide such endorsements if they behaved in the ways that the Academy wanted. Academy officers were often the people that planted this idea in cadets' minds; for example, one officer told cadets who committed honor violations:

> Everything that you do and write and say builds this entire picture of you. And … whether you know it or not, they're [the Academy leadership] building a picture of you. And at the end of this, they're going to say, "Oh, this is the picture, and you're good, or you're not good." (Mentor Gavin)

All cadets in my sample appeared to internalize the idea that their behavior was being monitored, and they were highly aware that the Academy leadership was expecting them to act in certain ways and say certain things. As Cadet Kila explained, "I know my audience … I know what they are going to want to hear" (Kila, E). Cadets believed that if they conformed their behavior to what the Academy leadership expected, they would eventually receive institutional endorsements. One cadet articulated this connection, saying, "the reason why I went about doing the requirements with such tenacity was that I wanted to … get my rank back and hold a leadership position" (Dolan, *M*). By "doing the requirements" that the Academy expected of him, this cadet believed that he would be given institutional endorsements like leadership positions and regaining his rank.

Thus, to obtain institutional endorsements, cadets engaged in *compliance behaviors*. Cadet Romo explained how he chose his words based on what others expected of him, saying,

> Every single thing [you do] is going to be reviewed by your chain of command … If they don't like what's in there, you're kicked out of [the Academy] … [so I] just put down the responses somebody would want to hear. (Romo, *M*)

Like cadet Romo, Cadet Kila also deliberately chose her words based on what she thought Academy leadership wanted, saying, "I'm just going to … say what they want me to say" (Kila, *M*). Even months later, Cadet Kila said that there was still "a lot of stuff I had to say … that I don't necessarily think I legitimately believe" (Kila, E).

Not only did cadets use words to show that they were being compliant, but they used their behaviors as well. They talked about the pressure "to be the best Cadet … in order to prove to them that you should graduate" (Oscar, E). Cadet Kila gave an example of how she was acting like the "best cadet," saying,

> I've read through every memo, every [policy], every rule. I know them … Previously I might have thought, "I don't want to go to that brief[ing], it's not technically lying if I just don't go and just say this [excuse]." I don't think like that anymore … You tell me when to do something, I'm just going to do it … after this whole thing, I'm definitely more of a rule follower. (Kila, *M*)

Cadets felt that by behaving in ways the Academy wanted—knowing and following all rules, attending all mandatory events—they would be able to "blend in and be a cadet … just being a man among the masses" (Wisk, *E*). Cadets believed that, through compliance, Academy leaders would see them as any other cadet ("a man among the masses"), and would therefore provide them with institutional endorsements—and more security in their perceptions of membership.

Ultimately, all cadets in my sample received institutional endorsements. The Academy leadership told all cadets that they could "slap some rank on" (Julian, *E*), meaning that cadets were returned to their original rank at the Academy. All cadets were eventually given explicit graduation dates; as one told me, "I know for a fact I'm graduating in May" (Nova, *E*). The Academy leadership also showed their endorsement by taking cadets "off restriction" (Ecker, *E*), allowing all cadets in my sample to once again leave the base, wear civilian clothes, and exercise other privileges. Some cadets received additional institutional endorsements as well: being given high-status leadership roles like "First Sergeant" (Alf, *E*), or being able to "go back to [their] team" and compete in athletic events (Goff, E).

Regardless of the number of institutional endorsements cadets received, they all described feeling more secure in their perceptions of membership. Cadets said that they were "treated like a normal officer" (Ecker, *E*), making them feel like they were "normal, like any other cadet … just a normal person in the corps" (Goff, *E*). Some added that it felt "pretty great not being a second-class citizen" anymore (Alf, *E*). Although cadets had technically remained structural insiders throughout the process, it was only after receiving institutional endorsements that they *felt* more secure in their perceptions of membership.

Belonging Restoration through Investment and Interpersonal Interactions

Investments in relationships. Cadets were highly motivated to restore their precarious feelings of belonging; they yearned for confirmation that people at the Academy "care about you" (Fox, *M*). In order to feel more secure in their feelings of belonging, cadets focused not on institutional endorsements, but on the relationships they had with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As Cadet Kila explained, when attempting to restore feelings of belonging

> the largest factor [is] how your direct chain of command, and your friends, and the people that are close to you treat you … the biggest influence on how connected a cadet feels is the support and the feedback they get [from] a lot different people. It's your classmates, it's your [supervising officers], your close friends, your instructors. (Kila, *E*)

Because cadets believed that positive treatment would make them feel more secure in their feelings of belonging, cadets began to act in ways that they believed would elicit positive responses from others. Cadets began to put more time and effort into their relationships with others; as one cadet said, "I'm just trying to be a lot more aware of the people around me and how I'm treating them. I try to put my need second to others" (Yan, *B*).

These relationship *investment behaviors* took a variety of forms. For example, cadets went to great lengths to spend more time with their friends and close colleagues. Cadet Ecker described how he was putting in more effort to see

> people I've always been friends with, and even ones that I haven't kept up with all my years. I'm just trying to reach out to them … I'll go to brunch with them on Sunday. I'll go to dinner with them on the weekdays. I'm trying to maximize the amount of interaction … I get with them. (Ecker, *B*)

Cadets also invested in relationships by engaging in voluntary, prosocial behaviors toward their peers, military units, and the other groups they were a part of. Cadet Ecker explained that since his honor violation, "I've gotten more involved in my [military unit]. I help with morning workouts … [and] with pretty much all the other jobs in my [unit]" (Ecker, *B*). He explained why he was investing, saying, "ever since this honor case, I've been noticing how … if you are involved with something, you have to care about it … so that's what I'm doing with my [unit] now" (Ecker, *B*). Table 1 ("Investment behaviors") provides additional examples of how cadets invested in relationships.

Monitoring interpersonal interactions. Because restoration of belonging was intimately linked to treatment from others, nearly every cadet in my sample talked about how they were highly attuned to whether others "treat me the same" (Sierra, *M*), "treat [me] differently … [or] don't treat [me] any differently" (Tang, E). When cadets believed that others were treating them positively, they did indeed feel more secure in their feelings of belonging. For example, Cadet Kila recalled proudly,

> I had multiple instructors that articulated to me, "Hey, just because this happened, you're still a good cadet." I had an instructor … she said, "I think you're an outstanding cadet. I think you're doing really well. Despite all of what's happening, you're going to come out such a better leader and officer." (Kila, E)

Cadet Kila went on to explain, "having interactions with the Academy leadership is certainly further connect[ing] me to … the institution" (Kila, *E*), indicating that positive interactions made cadets feel connected to the Academy and its members, and more restored in belonging.

Another cadet also explained how positive treatment from others made him feel a greater sense of belonging, saying,

> I belong … I've got this black mark on my record, just a string away from getting kicked out, [but] I think I definitely deserve to be here … *It's been mentioned to me a lot*. People have noticed the difference in my attitude and how I behave around them. I think they definitely see me as a much better person than I was before. Especially people in my [unit]. (Yan, E, emphasis added)

Following investments in relationships ("difference in … how I behave around them"), this cadet felt positively treated by peers in his military unit, leading him to feel more secure in belonging.

In both cases, the positive treatment from others led cadets to conclude that others did not see their violation as an indicator of bad character. Cadet Kila recounted the officer saying, "it doesn't mean you're a bad kid," while Cadet Yan hinted that positive treatment from his peers meant that they viewed him as "a much better person." Inferring that others believed that cadets were good people may have led cadets to conclude that others were increasingly seeing them as "moral insiders" once again.

Conversely, when cadets perceived others to treat them negatively, they did not experience restoration in their feelings of belonging. One cadet, who

believed that he had been "dedicating" himself to his friends (Udell, *M*), often felt excluded by them. He shared,

> even my closest buddies … [they're] like, "Hey, let's go celebrate on our own … because it's too hard to deal with [Cadet Udell's honor situation]" … that's been kind of sad. And very, very shocking. Because those people were my rocks … I understand their lack of desire to put up with me … [but] I'm now losing friendships over this [honor violation] … [I feel] no belonging. (Udell, *E*)

Exclusion from peers not only lead cadets to feel a continued lack of belonging, but negative treatment from officers and Academy leaders had similar effects. Another cadet recalled an interaction she had with a high-ranking officer in her chain of command, saying,

> Everything [Officer *Z*] said was, "You didn't follow the rule, you didn't follow this rule … You're a rule breaker, you had an honor violation, so you … don't fit the mold to be an officer" … I was like, "I'm done. I should just start packing my stuff." (Goff, *M*)

In being called a "rule breaker" and being told that she did not "fit the mold," this cadet felt so unrestored in belonging that she considered "packing [her] stuff" and leaving the Academy. In addition, explicitly recalling the label "rule breaker" hints that this cadet believed that others continued to see her as a moral outsider. Table 1 ("Perceived positive treatment and perception others see transgressor as good person" and "Perceived negative treatment and perception others see transgressors as a bad person") offers more examples of the link between negative treatment, belonging, and perceptions of the transgressor as a moral outsider.

Importantly, it was the *perception* of positive or negative treatment that made cadets feel more, or less, restored in their feelings of belonging. My data suggest that officers and cadets sometimes held differing views about how others were treating cadets. For example, Cadet Romo stated that his peers in his military unit were "very toxic" (Romo, *B*), and had developed "a consistent pattern of … [telling me] I am a terrible person. I have no character. I have no moral standards. I was stupid" (Romo, *B*). This led Cadet Romo to conclude that "cadets … when they see [you've had an honor violation], their perception of you automatically drops … they look down upon you" (Romo, *M*). However, Cadet Romo's mentor thought that many of Cadet Romo's peers and personal acquaintances were actually attempting to treat Cadet Romo positively, but Cadet Romo did not or could not see that positive treatment. His mentor summarized a meeting she had with Cadet Romo, saying,

> [Cadet Romo] was like, "I'm just tired of being looked at" … I told him … "You feel like everybody's looking at your file, trying to find something … it must feel that way sometimes, but there's a lot of people who are cutting for you too, *you just don't see that*." (Mentor Ryan, emphasis added)

Cadet Romo's mentor believed that people were treating Cadet Romo positively, and yet Cadet Romo still felt a lack of belonging because he *perceived* others to treat him negatively.

This raises a puzzle: Why was there variation in cadets' perceptions of how others treated them? The explanation may lie in how cadets interpreted ambiguous interactions. Some treatment from others is unambiguously positive or unambiguously negative; being called "a jackass" (Romo, *E*) is unambiguously negative treatment, while being recognized as "the top staffer" in a military unit (Oscar, *E*) is unambiguously positive. However, many interactions cadets had were ambiguous, leaving them wondering, "What does that even mean?" (Wisk, *M*).

Cadets appeared to draw on different heuristics (beliefs) when interpreting these ambiguous interactions. Some cadets—like Cadet Kila—appeared to believe that others' intentions were generally benevolent, and that their actions were intended to be fair and developmental. She believed that "this truly is a developmental system. It's not out to get you … it show[s] care for the individual" (Kila, *E*). She added that when others hear about a cadet having an honor violation, in general "there's not the reaction of 'you're a shitty person.' People realize shit happens" (Kila, *B*). Because she believed that others' attitudes and actions would generally be developmental and benevolent, she used this as a heuristic to guide how she interpreted others' ambiguous behavior. Cadet Kila explained, "throughout my entire process I've tried to be as positive as possible in talking to people … I was always willing to *try to see the good*" during interactions (Kila, *E*, emphasis added), whether with peer or officers.

In contrast, other cadets—like Cadet Ecker—believed that others' intentions were generally malicious, and their interactions with cadets would usually be unfair or self-interested. Cadet Ecker explained how officers' explicit statements shaped the heuristic he used to interpret ambiguous behavior, recalling bitterly,

> all the honor [officers] would say, "you will always be marked. You're always going to be an honor violator. You'll always have to rise above your classmates … just to prove you have changed." (Ecker, *E*)

Based on this, Cadet Ecker adopted the heuristic that "what you did here will be remembered by your classmates … [you will] be continually forgotten and pushed down" (Ecker, *E*), which predisposed him to see ambiguous interactions in a negative light. Cadet Ecker hinted that he did not always use this heuristic; he recalled, "when I came in [to the Academy], I was just optimistic, I was so positive. [But] that's just not life" (Ecker, *E*). However, by the end of his time in the remediation program, he said that when interpreting others' behaviors, "I struggle with negativity … [when] dealing with other cadets" (Ecker, Journal 4).

Many cadets appeared to hold mixed heuristics: they believed that some types of actors were benevolent and would treat them developmentally, while other types of actors were malicious and would treat them unfairly. For example, Cadet Romo believed that "[cadets] are going to always try to screw you. There's just people like that out there. There's just bad people" (Romo, *M*). Although he believed that peers would "always try to screw" him, Cadet Romo did not hold this belief about officers. He said that interactions with officers were focused on "development" (Romo, *B*), and that officers "for the most part are just seeing that I'm a good guy" (Romo, *B*). Thus, some cadets appeared to have different heuristics for interpreting the behavior of personal acquaintances and organizational leaders, which may have predisposed them to interpret ambiguous interactions with one kind of actor in positive ways, and interactions with another kind of actor more negatively.

Differentiating between Relational Belonging and Institutional Belonging

Though not every cadet held different heuristics about personal acquaintances and organizational leaders, all cadets in my sample did appear to make a distinction between these two types of actors, particularly when assessing their feelings of belonging. As one cadet voiced: "I feel like I belong … It's just that the [organization] *isn't all the same person to me anymore*" (Xeno, *E*, emphasis added).

All cadets appeared to make a distinction between *personal acquaintances*—organizational members with whom cadets had ongoing personal relationships, such as peers and friends—and *institutional actors*, or people whom transgressors did not know on a personal level, but who were seen as representatives of the organization, such as officers and Academy leaders. Because cadets differentiated between these two groups of actors, they separately assessed the treatment they received from each group. For example, Cadet Romo—who held negative heuristics about treatment from personal acquaintances, as described above—perceived personal acquaintances to treat him negatively. He talked about being "socially mistreated" (Romo, *M*) by other cadets and having "issues with friends" (Romo, *M*) after his honor violation. Cadet Romo summarized the negative treatment from personal acquaintances, saying:

> before my honor board, I had a clean record. Totally squeaky clean … [I] Get in trouble, and so the [cadets] that are real sticklers for the rules … had negative opinions about me because I got in trouble. Whereas the people who are traditionally troublemakers don't necessarily like me because they know I'm one for the rules. (Romo, E)

This negative treatment from personal acquaintances led Cadet Romo to continue to feel precarious in his belonging vis-à-vis his personal acquaintances. He said dejectedly, "I don't really feel like there's a sense of belonging to be honest … And I think that came from the … cadets [who] had negative opinions about me" (Romo, *E*).

However, although Cadet Romo continued to feel a lack of belonging regarding personal acquaintances, he did appear to feel more restored in his belonging vis-à-vis institutional actors. Cadet Romo perceived institutional actors to treat him far more positively than personal acquaintances, perhaps buoyed by the positive heuristics he held about interactions with officers and Academy leaders. Proudly, Cadet Romo recalled, "my [supervising] officers … they apparently said a lot of nice things about me" (Romo, *B*). He also added that the superintendent of the Academy told him, "I don't think any less of you [because of the honor violation]. Everyone makes mistakes" (Romo, *B*). Such positive interactions led Cadet Romo to feel that his "officer–cadet relationship[s] … [are] positive … [I'm] friendlier with them [officers] than … other people" (Romo, *M*). As time went on, Cadet Romo chose to spend more of his time "working and speaking with many different officers" (Romo, *E*) and added that officers had "been the majority of my interaction lately, [so I] feel like I took on their mentality more" (Romo, *E*). Feeling "friendlier" with institutional actors, spending more time with them, and feeling like he "took on their

mentality" all hint that Cadet Romo felt more belonging with institutional actors, as compared to personal acquaintances.

Cadet Romo's experience demonstrates that as cadets began to differentiate between treatment from personal acquaintances and institutional actors, they also began to differentiate between *relational belonging*—feelings of belonging with respect to relationships, stemming from positive treatment from personal acquaintances—and *institutional belonging*—feelings of being valued by the organization as a whole, triggered by positive treatment from institutional actors.

While some cadets—like Cadet Romo—felt more restored in one type of belonging but less restored in another, other cadets experienced significant restoration in both relational and institutional belonging. For example, Cadet Kila—who held positive heuristics regarding interactions with both personal acquaintances and institutional actors—perceived positive treatment from both types of actors. With respect to personal acquaintances, she talked about how "friends … [were] like, 'I'm so proud of the changes you've made'" (Kila, *M*). This made her feel "validated" (Kila, *M*) and like "I'm part of my friend group" (Kila, *E*), illustrating that she felt more secure in her feelings of relational belonging.

Cadet Kila also recalled the positive treatment she received from Academy leaders, saying with pride,

> I've been spoken of in very high regard … [Colonel *Z*], the head of the [honor center], has brought me up before in meetings and used me as an example of what "right" looks like. Then I've had people from within the [honor] center tell me, "Hey, you're doing a great job. Keep up the good work." (Kila, *E*)

Such positive treatment from institutional actors made Cadet Kila "feel like I'm part of the [Academy] again. I'm not this weird outsider" (Kila, *E*). Feeling "part of" the broader organization indicates that Cadet Kila felt more secure in institutional belonging as well.

Some cadets perceived negative treatment by both personal acquaintances and institutional actors, and ultimately experienced very little restoration in either relational or institutional belonging. For example, Cadet Ecker—who heuristically believed that interactions with others would be characterized by "negativity" (Ecker, *E*)—interpreted ambiguous interactions from personal acquaintances in negative ways. He gave an example of an interaction he had with a fellow cadet who was planning an event:

> She sent me a passive-aggressive email … telling me "You cannot just blatantly say that you are not going to take part" … I was like, "Yeah, this girl really just doesn't care [about me]" … At this point, she's not talking to me. (Ecker, *E*)

Repeatedly perceiving "passive-aggressive" and negative treatment from personal acquaintances made Cadet Ecker feel like he "can't really connect" to other cadets (Ecker, *E*). He eventually concluded: "at [the Academy], they really instill in you the desire to form those connections with your classmates. [But] I have been forging my connections back with my [high school] friends, making sure that's stronger … I will go make other friends" (Ecker, *E*). By pursuing outside relationships, Cadet Ecker hinted that he felt unvalued vis-à-vis personal acquaintances, and therefore felt a lack of relational belonging at the Academy.

He also perceived negative treatment from institutional actors. Cadet Ecker described one encounter he had with an officer, saying defeatedly,

> Even when I [was coming to the interview] right now, when I was leaving the barracks, my [supervising officer] saw me … he was like, "Oh, where are you going?" … But normally, if it was someone else, they wouldn't have asked the question. They'd go, "Oh, hey, see you" … you lose your trust [after an honor violation]. (Ecker, *M*)

Cadet Ecker interpreted an ambiguous interaction—an officer asking where he was going—as a sign that the officer did not trust him, reinforcing Cadet Ecker's belief that he was being treated negatively by institutional actors. When asked how he viewed his place at the Academy, Cadet Ecker said dejectedly, "I don't feel like a part of it" (Ecker, *E*), and later added, "the [Academy] as a whole … they are their own entity and I am my entity" (Ecker, *E*), demonstrating just how little institutional belonging he felt.

Patterns of Belonging Restoration and Reintegration

To illustrate how patterns of belonging restoration influenced cadets' perceptions of reintegration, I explain the reintegration outcomes of the three archetypal cadets highlighted above: Cadet Kila felt highly restored in both relational and institutional belonging, and eventually felt highly reintegrated; Cadet Romo experienced restoration in only one type of belonging, and experienced only partial reintegration; and Cadet Ecker felt a lack of restoration in

both relational and institutional belonging, and ultimately experienced very little reintegration.

High reintegration: Restoration in both relational and institutional belonging. As described above, by the end of the process Cadet Kila felt "very much connected to friends and people … very connected with some of the officers … connected to my team" (Kila, *E*); in short, she felt more secure in both relational and institutional belonging. In addition, Cadet Kila—like all cadets in my sample—also received institutional endorsements from the Academy. She explained that in return for her compliance behaviors, "I got my rank back, so there's no longer any administrative sanction against me" (Kila, *E*). By no longer being under organizational sanctions, Cadet Kila also felt more secure in her perceptions of membership.

This trifecta—feeling highly restored in perceptions of membership, feeling a sense of institutional belonging, and feeling a sense of relational belonging—ultimately led Cadet Kila to feel highly reintegrated by the end of the process. At the end of the experience, she emphatically stated multiple times that she was "100% bought in" to the Academy (Kila, *E*). She said that she had "more good relationships … with various officers and civilian staff … [and] some relationships have gotten stronger" (Kila, *E*). Cadet Kila was also highly engaged at the Academy, even serving on a "committee that advises the superintendent on honor issues" (Kila, *E*). She summarized her experience by saying, "I'm not this weird outsider [anymore]" (Kila, *E*). In short, Cadet Kila felt highly reintegrated, and felt like both a structural and a moral insider once again.

Interestingly, although Cadet Kila felt highly restored in her perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging, these two elements did not appear to become recoupled in her mind in the way they had been prior to her violation. During our last interview, Cadet Kila referred to another cadet who had committed a violation, but who had not yet completed the remediation program, saying that the other cadet "is going to get her rank back … [But I was] like … 'I don't know who you're going to hang out with when you get your rank back'" (Kila, *E*). Even though Cadet Kila herself felt highly restored in both membership and belonging, she still differentiated between signals of membership (rank) and signs of belonging ("who you're going to hang out with"), at least when it came to assessing other cadets' integration at the Academy. This hints at the possibility that once perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging become decoupled during the liminal period, cadets may not psychologically recouple these constructs in their mind—even if they eventually become highly reintegrated.

Partial reintegration: Restoration in one type of belonging, but not the other. Like other cadets, Cadet Romo too received institutional endorsements—he said happily that he was "technically free" of sanctions (Romo, *E*)—which made him feel more secure in his perceptions of membership. However, as detailed above, Cadet Romo experienced some restoration in institutional belonging but very little restoration in relational belonging, leading Cadet Romo to conclude, "I go here … but I don't necessarily belong" (Romo, *E*). A lack of restoration in even one type of belonging prevented Cadet Romo from feeling like a full moral insider once again.

This led Cadet Romo to feel only partially reintegrated by the end of the process. He did not share Cadet Kila's enthusiasm for the Academy, saying instead, "I can't say that I like being here, but I also can't say that I'd want to leave" (Romo, *E*) and "you hate it but you couldn't see yourself being anywhere else" (Romo, *E*). Partial reintegration also occurred under two other circumstances: when transgressors felt more secure in their relational belonging but not institutional belonging (Cadet Nova is an example of this, see Table 1), or when cadets felt only somewhat restored in both types of belonging (as Cadet Lima did, see Table 1).

Low reintegration: Lack of restoration in both relational and institutional belonging. Some cadets—like Cadet Ecker—experienced a lack of restoration in both relational and institutional belonging. The lack of restoration in belonging led Cadet Ecker to ultimately feel that he had not reintegrated back into the Academy. Even though he felt highly restored in his perceptions of membership—he described how being "off restriction" (Ecker, *E*) made him feel like he was "treated like a normal officer" (Ecker, *E*)—Cadet Ecker said bitterly,

> I stand in the back of formation with the other two [former honor violators] … No one really checks up on us … I don't know that many people here, so they don't look for me. It's quiet … Just me and my roommate, who doesn't have a good grasp of English. No one hangs out with him, either. The two of us are just tucked away in a little room and we're fine with it. It's kind of nice to be forgotten. I'm able to look at [the Academy] and see all the cadets doing their things and not take part in it. (Ecker, E)

By saying that "no one hangs out" with him, Cadet Ecker implied that he had a lack of relationships at the Academy, and by saying that he felt "forgotten"

and he did "not take part," he suggested that he did not feel included—both of which are indicators of a lack of (re)integration. His lack of reintegration was also apparent in his commitment and connection to the Academy. During our last conversation, Cadet Ecker concluded dejectedly, "I came in, I was 19, loved [the Academy]. Now I'm leaving, I'm 24, and I don't [anymore]" (Ecker, *E*).

DISCUSSION

A Model of Transgressor Reintegration

Building on these findings, I propose a theoretical model of transgressor reintegration (see Figure 1). Transgressor reintegration is the process by which transgressors seek reinclusion; it is how structural insiders who have become moral outsiders attempt to reestablish themselves as moral insiders in an organization. Transgressor reintegration involves two parallel processes: transgressors' attempts to restore their perceptions of membership (tied to their formal affiliation to the organization) and their attempts to restore feelings of belonging (linked to feeling accepted and valued by other organizational actors).

Before their violations, transgressors experience the two components of integration—perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging—as nearly indistinguishable. Because they are typically formed at the same time during socialization (Burke et al., 2010; Ellis, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2015; Moreland & Levine, 2002; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), transgressors may cognitively group the concepts of membership, belonging, and integration together, as elements that are strongly associated with one another are often treated as unitary cognitive constructs (Chase & Simon, 1973; Gobet et al., 2001; Simon, 1974)

When transgressors are accused of violations but are retained by organizations, they experience a state of liminality (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016; Turner, 1967): though they remain structural insiders, they have become moral outsiders. Transgressors feel "betwixt and between," (Turner, 1967) as neither fully insider nor fully outsider. Seeing oneself as a moral outsider makes transgressors feel precarious in their feelings of belonging and in their perceptions of membership—even though they remain at the organization. The fact that transgressors have these dual experiences suggests that liminality may prompt transgressors to cognitively decouple their perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging, thereby reorganizing their schema for what it means to be integrated in an organization.

Transgressor reintegration requires dual but parallel processes to restore perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging. Because social rejection is deeply painful (Baumeister, Brewer, Tice, & Twenge, 2007; Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009), individuals instinctively engage in behaviors to obtain reacceptance into the group (e.g., Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007) when they feel that their membership or belonging are threatened. However, the steps transgressors take to feel more secure in their perceptions of membership (compliance, perceptions of institutional endorsements) are different than the steps they pursue to restore feelings of belonging (relationship investment, perceptions of positive treatment from personal acquaintances and institutional actors). This is because indicators of membership are tied to organizationally conferred institutional endorsements, while feelings of belonging are fostered through positive interpersonal relationships with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Because perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging are restored through different approaches, transgressors experience these as psychologically distinct throughout the reintegration process.

The extent to which belonging is restored depends on transgressors' perceptions of treatment from other organizational members. Positive treatment makes transgressors feel valued and accepted, engendering feelings of belonging. Positive treatment also leads transgressors to believe that others see them as "good people," making transgressors feel more like moral insiders once again. In contrast, perceived negative treatment from others makes transgressors feel unvalued and unaccepted, which prevents transgressors from experiencing restored belonging.

Although individuals generally pay careful attention to social cues when they experience threats to belonging (Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004), my data suggest that transgressors do not always accurately perceive how others treat them. Many social interactions are ambiguous (Pickett et al., 2004), and individuals generally rely on heuristics—particularly fairness heuristics (Lind, 2002; van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2012)—to help them interpret ambiguous interactions (Proudfoot & Lind, 2015). Fairness heuristics are judgments about whether individuals will be treated fairly or unfairly (or positively or negatively) in a given context (van den Bos et al., 2012), and they can bias individuals' interpretations of ambiguous behavior. For example, if a transgressor has formed a heuristic that they will always be treated unfairly and negatively by others, that

heuristic will predispose the transgressor to see many ambiguous interactions as negative and unfair, even if others are actually intending to treat the transgressor positively.

Although the present research was not designed to explain why particular transgressors hold positive or negative heuristics, previous studies have pointed to several factors that may influence whether an individual adopts more positive or more negative fairness heuristics. First, individual differences may play a role. Some individuals are more prone to negativity biases than others (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), which may predispose certain transgressors to heuristically interpret ambiguous interactions in negative ways. Alternatively, individuals' attachment styles may also influence the fairness heuristics they use (Harms, 2011; Petriglieri & Obodaru, 2019); individuals with insecure attachment styles may be more likely to assume that others will treat them in dismissive and uncaring ways. Second, early experiences—especially when those experiences involve social comparisons (van den Bos, 2001)—have a disproportionate influence on the heuristics individuals hold (Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 2001). During transgressors' first few weeks or months at an organization, they may come to realize that are being treated better than or worse than their peers; such social comparisons could then trigger the formation of heuristics that would make transgressors believe that they will always be treated relatively positively or negatively. Third, even if transgressors formed heuristics from early experiences, unexpected shocks can prompt individuals to reevaluate their prior judgments and update the heuristics they use (Proudfoot & Lind, 2015). Thus, even if individuals believe that others will generally treat them positively, a shock—like being accused of a transgression—may put them into a heuristic reevaluation state (Proudfoot & Lind, 2015), and could lead them to change their heuristics, eventually coming to expect negative treatment from some types of actors.

My findings also suggest that transgressors do not see all "others" as the same, and different interaction partners influence restoration of different types of belonging. Transgressors differentiate relational belonging, which stems from relationships with personal acquaintances, from institutional belonging, which arises from interactions with institutional actors. Institutional belonging makes transgressors feel like they belong *to* an organization as a whole; relational belonging makes transgressors feel like they belong *with* the people it. Institutional belonging is distinct from perceptions of membership; perceptions of membership describe transgressors' security in their formal affiliation to the organization, while institutional belonging reflects whether transgressors feel valued by the organization and its representatives.

Although transgressors in my sample did not explain why they began to differentiate between treatment from personal acquaintances and institutional actors—and between relational and institutional belonging—prior research may have hinted at an answer. While many threats can be soothed by affirmations in another domain (e.g., threats to one's intelligence may be soothed by focusing on one's superior athleticism [Steele, 1988; Tesser, 2000]), threats to *belonging* cannot be eased by affirmations in other domains (Knowles, Lucas, Molden, Gardner, & Dean, 2010). As a result, when transgressing cadets felt insecure in their belonging, they could not alleviate the threat by focusing on their membership or on performance in other domains. Because transgressors can only restore their belonging through perceptions of positive treatment from others, dividing the social world—and sources of belonging—into more fine-grained categories may help transgressors perceive positive treatment from some sources and groups, even if they experience rejection from others. Prior research has suggested that individuals naturally perceive the organizational world both "globally" and "locally"—globally when they consider the institution as a whole, and locally through relationships with identifiable others (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Crosina & Pratt, 2019; Eury, Kreiner, Treviño, & Gioia, 2018; Petriglieri, Petriglieri, & Wood, 2018). If transgressors cleave their social world to increase their chances of feeling like they belong in some way, it may be natural for transgressors to categorize organizational members into local "personal acquaintances" and global "institutional actors"—leading to differentiated perceptions of more local relational belonging and more global institutional belonging.

Transgressors experience high reintegration when they feel highly restored in their perceptions of membership *and* feelings of relational belonging *and* feelings of institutional belonging. Transgressors feel partially reintegrated when they experience significant restoration in perceptions of membership and in one type of belonging but not the other, or when they feel only partially restored in both types of belonging. In addition, transgressors experience low reintegration when they feel highly restored in their perceptions of membership, but experience a

lack of restoration in both relational and institutional belonging.

This pattern suggests that relational and institutional belonging are complements, rather than substitutes: transgressors must experience restoration in belonging *both with and to* an organization in order to feel highly reintegrated. This raises the question of why a lack of restoration in just one type of belonging may prevent transgressors from experiencing high reintegration. There are two possibilities. First, the pain from rejection in even a single type of belonging (Baumeister et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2010) may trigger coping strategies that actually undermine transgressors' reintegration. For example, transgressors who remain insecure in relational belonging may seek relational belonging outside of the organization by attempting to form new relationships with nonorganizational members (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maner et al., 2007), as Cadet Ecker did. Forming relationships outside of the organization may lead transgressors to feel less included—and therefore less reintegrated—in the organization.

A lack of restoration in just one type of belonging may prevent transgressors from feeling highly reintegrated for another reason. Belonging is a relational experience, and relational experiences are known to have spillover effects: employees "extrapolate" (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019: 254) or generalize (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008) the feelings they have about their workplace relationships to their feelings about an organization as a whole. Because relational experiences can influence how individuals feel about an entire organization, feeling a lack of restoration in even one type of belonging may make transgressors feel less included vis-à-vis the organization as a whole, leading transgressors to feel only partially reintegrated.

If any amount of unrestored belonging can "generalize" (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008) and negatively impact how transgressors feel in relation to an organization as a whole, then this may explain why it was so rare for transgressors to feel highly reintegrated—even in organizations that devote considerable resources to reintegrating transgressors. Indeed, only three out of the 23 cadets in my sample felt highly reintegrated by the end of the process.

Interestingly, my data suggest that even when transgressors feel highly reintegrated, they continue to treat membership and belonging as psychologically distinct. Membership and belonging did not appear to become "recoupled" during the reintegration process, even for those transgressors that felt highly restored in membership and both types of belonging. As researchers have pointed out, "once one sees a pattern, it is challenging to 'unsee' it; discovering structure alters processing" (Hard, Meyer, & Baldwin, 2019: 17). My data suggest that perceptions of integration may be no different; once integration has been psychologically decomposed into constituent parts of membership and belonging, those constituent parts may never be "unseen" again, even when transgressors feel highly reintegrated.

Theoretical Contributions

This research makes several important theoretical contributions. Most importantly, I theorize the process of reintegration from the perspective of the transgressor. By doing so, I offer a novel conceptualization of *transgressor* reintegration—that is, the process by which structural insiders but moral outsiders seek reinclusion in an organization through attempts to restore perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging. Conceptualizing transgressor reintegration in this way is a departure from how scholars have previously thought about reintegration in general. Existing conceptualizations have primarily considered reintegration from the perspective of third-parties. Even research on "offender reintegration" (Goodstein et al., 2011; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014) has defined this construct as "*peers*' reintegration of the offender" (Gromet & Okimoto, 2014: 415, emphasis added) or the "willingness of *others*" to reintegrate the transgressor (Goodstein et al., 2011: 75). My conceptualization, in contrast, focuses on *transgressors*' perceptions of reintegration, and articulates the unique process they go through to reintegrate. By shifting the focus to the transgressor, my conceptualization also highlights the liminal starting point of transgressor reintegration (structural insiders but moral outsiders)—a point that has been largely overlooked by reintegration scholars.

This new conceptualization also goes beyond listing features of reintegration—which is prevalent in many definitions of general reintegration (e.g., Goodstein et al., 2014)—and instead focuses on the driving forces underlying transgressors' actions: to restore perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging. In doing so, it challenges existing research about the reparative actions transgressors take, such as making amends and repairing relationships (e.g., Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014). My findings suggest that transgressors may

engage in reparative actions for two different reasons: either for compliance reasons, to obtain institutional endorsements and feel more secure in perceptions of membership; or for relational investment reasons, to strengthen feelings of belonging. Although scholars have frequently grouped multiple reparative actions together (as "amends" [Goodstein et al., 2014]), my data suggest that amends enacted out of compliance (and in the service of restoring membership) may actually be quite different than amends pursued for relational investment reasons (to restore feelings of belonging). Future scholarship on amends and reintegration should be mindful of this difference.

Previous conceptualizations of reintegration have also made victims central players in reintegration processes (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Gromet & Okimoto, 2014), and highlighted the importance of actions such as apologies and forgiveness between victims and transgressors (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). However, my findings—which focus on reintegration following victimless transgressions—show that transgressor reintegration does not necessarily require victim involvement or victim-directed amends (like apologies) at all. This does not negate the fact that apologies may still be important for victims' and third-parties' perceptions of reintegration; my data simply suggest that these are not necessarily central features of *transgressors*' reintegration experiences. The fact that transgressors' reintegration processes hinge on different features than the processes of victims or third-parties has implications for how scholars conceptualize reintegration going forward. Specifically, my findings suggest that definitions of reintegration should either be unique to the various parties (transgressors, victims, third-parties), or a single definition of reintegration should be offered that captures the processes and elements that are common across all parties.

I also explain why it may be so difficult for transgressors to feel highly reintegrated, even in organizations that devote considerable resources toward reintegrating offenders. To achieve high reintegration, transgressors must experience substantial restoration in membership, relational belonging, *and* institutional belonging; each requires endorsement or affirmation from distinct organizational actors. Perceived or actual negative treatment by just a few organizational actors can prevent transgressors from feeling highly restored in one or more of these elements, and lack of restoration in just one element prevents transgressors from feeling highly reintegrated. Meeting all of these conditions is likely to be a challenge for transgressors, who can only do so much to influence others' behaviors toward them, or who may use negative fairness heuristics to interpret ambiguous behavior (Lind et al., 2001; Proudfoot & Lind, 2015).

Not only do my findings pioneer a new way of thinking about reintegration, but they deepen organizational scholars' understanding of the basic dynamics of *integration* in three fundamental ways. First, this work revises our understanding of integration from a static construct to a more dynamic process. Most previous work has assumed that once organizational members feel integrated, they continue to feel integrated throughout their tenure. This may be an artifact of research that measured integration at single points in time (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 1989), or because integration is most often studied in conjunction with socialization, which focuses on how individuals become organizational insiders but largely ignores what happens after the period of initial socialization (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). The present research shows that integration is a dynamic perception that can be formed, threatened, modified, and regained.

Second, my findings may help scholars understand situations in which individuals experience "under-socialization" (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007: 51) and do not feel fully integrated into organizations, even after extensive onboarding processes. My data offer two possible explanations for undersocialization. First, undersocialization may arise if one of the elements unearthed in my data (perceptions of membership, relational belonging, or institutional belonging) is missing from the initial integration process. Integration and socialization scholars have generally treated integration as a unitary construct (e.g., Guillaume et al., 2012; O'Reilly et al., 1989), and have been vague about the relationship between integration, membership, and belonging. Indeed, cadets in my sample appeared to "chunk" (Gobet et al., 2001; Simon, 1974) these concepts prior to their transgressions. However, even though individuals may be unaware of the distinctions between these elements during socialization, that does not necessarily mean that each element might not be important to overall feelings of initial integration. By showing that perceptions of membership, relational belonging, and institutional belonging complement—but do not substitute for—one another during reintegration, my findings raise the possibility that these three elements may also be necessary for successful *initial* integration.

The present research also offers a second reason why undersocialization may exist: individuals may fail to experience initial integration if they enter new organizations with heuristics that predispose them to interpret ambiguous treatment in negative ways (Proudfoot & Lind, 2015; van den Bos, 2001). This may prevent newcomers from developing feelings of belonging, and may prevent them from feeling fully integrated. Taken together, my research gives scholars a set of concepts through which to reexamine socialization processes, so as to understand why undersocialization may occur.

The present research expands our understanding of integration in a third way: it highlights that, like *re*integration, integration is also a perceptual and negotiated construct. Individuals' feelings of integration likely depend not just on their own active attempts to feel like organizational insiders, but also on their perceptions of how others (personal acquaintances, organizational representatives, or institutional leaders) respond to their actions. As a result, organizational actors may think they are interacting with individuals in certain ways, but the individuals' feelings of integration may depend entirely on their perceptions of others' behaviors—even if these perceptions are inaccurate from the perspective of others.

Expanding our understanding of integration in these ways has important implications for scholars studying other organizational phenomena, such as diversity and inclusion. There has been increasing interest in the question of how to make marginalized workers feel included and integrated into organizations (Hekman et al., 2017; Ramarajan & Reid, 2019; Smith, Baskerville, Ladge, & Carlton, 2019). My theorizing points to three elements (perceptions of membership, relational belonging, and institutional belonging) that marginalized employees may need to feel (re)integrated into an organization. In addition, it shows that integration can change over time—that even if employees feel highly integrated at one point in time, they may feel less integrated at other points, and may even go through periods of liminality where they feel like neither full insiders nor full outsiders. Though the present research only explored one trigger of changes in integration (a transgression) there may be other events that prompt employees to experience changes in their sense of integration—for example, becoming a member of a stigmatized or low-status group, downsizing and the loss of personal acquaintances, or changes in leadership that affect the conferral of institutional endorsements. Although the specific trigger of threatened integration may vary, this research provides starting points for scholars studying diversity and inclusion as they consider interventions to decrease marginalization.

In addition, scholars studying nontraditional work arrangements—such as the gig economy and virtual workers (e.g., Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019)—may benefit from insights about the tripartite nature of (re)integration. For example, the importance of institutional endorsements, such as titles and roles, for feelings of membership may explain why Uber drivers wish to be called "employees" rather than "contractors"; "employees" is a sign of institutional endorsement and therefore may foster greater feelings of membership and integration.

By theorizing the process of transgressor reintegration, I also deepen our understanding of belonging in organizations. While the vast majority of organizational research has treated a sense of belonging as a monolithic construct (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2013; Hogg, 2001), or has measured a sense of belonging with respect to a single entity (e.g., Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012), I show that there are actually two types of belonging that become important in the aftermath of transgressions: relational and institutional. My data show that these two types of belonging are complements, not substitutes, for one another. This insight may have implications for a number of areas of management research that focus on nested phenomena (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008), when individuals are situated in relationships, and those relationships are situated within organizations. For example, research on relational attachment (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019) has shown that employees' relationships are very important for organizational outcomes. However, scholars studying relational attachment have not yet differentiated between employees' relationships with personal acquaintances and institutional actors. Mirroring my findings that different types of belonging arise from interactions with different types of organizational actors, it may be that different types of relational attachment also exist, depending on the types of organizational actors that employees have relationships with (personal acquaintances or institutional actors). Differentiating between types of organizational actors may help researchers better understand the dynamics of attachment, as well as other nested phenomena in organizations.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

As with many qualitative studies, participants had to "opt in" to this research, and therefore not all

transgressors at the Academy agreed to be part of the study. I was initially concerned about biases from self-selection and thought that transgressors who agreed to participate would systematically differ from those that did not. However, conversations with Academy officers suggested that the transgressors in my sample were highly similar to nonparticipants. In addition, the participants had a range of demographic backgrounds, prior experiences, and reintegration outcomes (see Appendix B), suggesting that my sample had a great deal of heterogeneity.

The model of transgressor reintegration that I theorize begins with transgressors' perceptions of initial integration; however, given that I conducted the first interview with cadets after their violations, the data I have about transgressors' pre-violation integration is retrospective. Cadets' recollections of initial integration may have been inaccurate or colored by the feelings they had during the first interview. Although inaccurate memories of initial integration would not change the conclusions I draw—because I focus on transgressors' *perceptions* of reintegration—future survey-based quantitative research could explore whether transgressors' recollections of pre-transgression integration are accurate.

The present research emphasizes that transgressor reintegration depends on perceptions of interactions with others, but I was unable to collect data from transgressors' personal acquaintances or many relevant institutional actors. The lack of data from interaction partners leaves open an important question: Are transgressors' perceptions generally accurate or inaccurate? If future work reveals that transgressors' perceptions are generally accurate, this raises the issue of why some organizational members treat transgressors in affirming ways while others do not—an avenue for future research. On the other hand, if future work reveals that transgressors systematically *mis*perceive others' actions, this suggests there may be systematic misalignments in various parties' perceptions about whether reintegration occurs: transgressors may tend to feel that reintegration has not occurred, while third-parties—who may feel that they have treated transgressors well—may consistently think it has. Such an insight may motivate future work exploring how misalignments between parties could be reduced or eliminated.

Additionally, although my data hint that distinct organizational actors are associated with distinct types of belonging, my data are not fine-grained enough to definitively assert this relationship. Some actors appear to affect both types of belonging (e.g., long-standing supervising officers), suggesting that the relationship between specific types of actors and types of belonging is not always clear-cut. Future research could more systematically explore what types or features of organizational actors foster different types of belonging.

Lastly, the reintegration process at the Academy was highly formalized, and most other organizations do not have such regimented programs for employee reintegration in the wake of transgressions. Therefore, the dynamics observed here may be more muted in other organizational contexts. To understand the extent to which formalized processes matter for reintegration outcomes, future research could explore how experiences differ in organizations that have little or no structure around transgressor reintegration.

Practical Implications

My findings provide insights into what managers can do to help employees reintegrate into organizations following transgressions. If managers truly want to give employees a second chance, managers must do things to foster the dual processes of restoring perceptions of membership and feelings of belonging. Managers are particularly well-poised to help employees become more secure in their perceptions of membership, because managers often have the authority to bestow institutional endorsements (e.g., desirable work assignments, promotions, access to "perks"). Managers may have less direct control over belonging restoration—which ultimately involves interactions between the transgressor and other organizational members—but there are still things they can do to help transgressors feel more secure in their relational or institutional belonging. Managers could coach others in the organization—such as employees' peers and supervisors—about how to interact with and affirm employees. Managers could also attempt to shape transgressors' perceptions of how others treat them.

Of course, managers should also be cognizant of the effects on good-standing members of the organization. If managers—or personal acquaintances or other institutional actors—attempt to affirm transgressors too much or too soon, good-standing members of the community may perceive such treatment as unfair or unjust (Blader, Wiesenfeld, Fortin, & Wheeler-Smith, 2013; Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998), which could result in backlash or undermining by these good-standing members (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; O'Reilly, Aquino, & Skarlicki, 2016). This may be particularly true if victims exist,

as victims may feel unrestored if they believe a transgressor has been underpunished (Goode & Smith, 2016; Leunissen, De Cremer, Reinders, & Van Dijke, 2013; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). However, if organizations can find a balance between observer justice perceptions and transgressor affirmation, the present research suggests that transgressors can feel highly reintegrated in organizations, which in turn will foster both transgressor recovery and organizational functioning.

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APPENDIX A
DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ACADEMY'S REMEDIATION PROGRAM AND DATA COLLECTION

TABLE A1
Timeline of Academy's Remediation Program

Phase	Duration	Cadet Status	Honor Program Processes	Cadet Experiences	Research Activities
Pre-Violation	0–3.5 years	Full rank and privileges, based on class year	–	Full participation in all normal cadet activities (as allowed by rank and privileges)	–
Accusation	1 day	Full rank and privileges, based on class year	Confrontation by officer or cadet; investigation begins	Anxiety about what will happen; concerns about separation and what others will think	–
Investigation	1–6 months	Full rank and privileges, based on class year	Investigation by cadets or officers administering honor program	Anxiety about what will happen; concerns about separation; concerns about what others will think if or when they find out; information-seeking about what will happen; preparing for trial	–

TABLE A1
(Continued)

Phase	Duration	Cadet Status	Honor Program Processes	Cadet Experiences	Research Activities
Honor Board ("Trial")	1 day	If found guilty, rank and privileges suspended	Trial by peers (if contesting accusation) or by "judge" (if admitted to violation)	Attempting to persuade peers; attempting to reduce severity of outcome; anxiety about outcome (if contesting)	–
Waiting for Final Punishment Decision	2 weeks–3 months	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Waiting for meetings with commandant and superintendent	Preparing for meetings; anxiety about outcome (separation, severity of punishment, etc.)	–
Meeting with Commandant and Superintendent	1 day each; 1 week to 1 month apart	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Commandant and superintendent decide punishment (separation, reintegration program, delayed graduation, etc.)	Attempting to make favorable impression; relief at being retained; disappointment if they feel they got harsher punishment than they expected	If retained and enrolled in reintegration program, cadet is informed about research opportunity
Waiting for Reintegration Program to Begin	1–3 weeks	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Cadet nominates mentors	Waiting; gathering information about program from other cadets	If cadet agrees to participate in research, cadet meets with researcher and signs consent form (separate meeting)
In-Brief for Reintegration Program	1 day	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Cadet assigned to mentor; honor officers explain reintegration program and requirements to cadet and mentor; mentor shares expectations with cadet	Meet mentor; figuring out program timeline and requirements	–
Reintegration Program	About 6 months	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Honor officers monitoring cadets in program; cadet and mentors meet weekly; cadets write 30 journal entries; cadets complete role model interviews; cadets teach honor class to younger cadets	*See Findings*	Initial survey; interviews with cadet at beginning, middle, and end of program; reflection exercises by cadet; interviews with mentor; reflection exercises by mentor; collecting cadet journal entries; informal observations

TABLE A1
(Continued)

Phase	Duration	Cadet Status	Honor Program Processes	Cadet Experiences	Research Activities
End of Remediation Program	1–3 months	Reduced standing (rank and privileges suspended)	Cadet submits finalized "packet" to honor officers and Academy leadership	Waiting for superintendent to approve packet	–
Out-Brief with Superintendent	1 hour	Returned to full standing (full rank and privileges restored)	Cadet determined to have successfully completed program and is given finalized graduation date	Relief; accomplishment or anticlimax	–
Post-Reintegration Program	Until graduation	Full rank and privileges, based on class year	–	Cadet allowed to participate in all normal cadet activities again; cadet worried about making additional mistakes (fears being kicked out for minor errors)	Final cadet interview
Follow-Up	24 months after cadet interviews	–	–	–	Honor officer interviews

TABLE A2
Sources of Data and Uses

PRIMARY DATA		
Data Source	**Description**	**How Utilized**
Cadet interviews	Up to 5 interviews were conducted with each cadet, at roughly the beginning, middle, and end of the remediation program. The final interview was typically conducted after the program was over and the cadet had been returned to full rank and standing.	These were a primary source of data, to determine cadets' experiences as they attempted to reintegrate back into the Academy.
Mentor interviews	Up to 3 interviews were conducted with each consenting mentor, at roughly the beginning, middle, and end of the remediation program. Interviews focused on mentor's perceptions of cadets' actions and progress through the program, and on mentor's philosophies about mentorship and remediation.	These were a primary source of data, to provide an "outside" perspective on the cadets' experiences of reintegration.
Honor officer interviews	Single interviews were conducted with honor officers who were in charge of administering the honor program. These interviews were conducted at least two years after the author finished interviewing cadets and mentors; thus, these honor officers did not have intimate knowledge of any of the cadets in the sample.	These interviews were used to understand the Academy's intentions and goals with respect to the remediation program. They also provided insights about officers' perceptions of how they treat cadets who are in the remediation program.

TABLE A2
(Continued)

SECONDARY DATA		
Data Source	**Description**	**How Utilized**
Initial survey	After cadets consented to the research, they were emailed a link to the online survey. This asked questions about their extracurricular involvement at the Academy, for a brief description of the violation, and contained a number of scales about ethical judgments, moral identity, and commitment.	Answers were used familiarize the author with each cadet prior to the first interview.
Cadet and mentor reflection exercises	Adapted from Kahneman and colleague's *Day Reconstruction Method* (2004). The link was emailed to the cadet (and, when applicable, their mentor) at up to 3 points in time—roughly the beginning, middle, and end of the remediation program. It asked cadets (and when applicable, their mentors) to recall their most recent meeting, and write down everything that happened at the meeting.	Intended to collect fine-grained data about the most recent meeting cadets had with their mentors. This information was used to get a general sense of what cadet–mentor meetings were like, and to generate questions for the next interview.
Cadet journal entries	cadets were encouraged to provide copies of their journal entries to the author, but were not required to. Four cadets provided at least one journal entry to the author.	These were read by Academy leadership, so they were used to get a sense of the "product" that cadets were providing to the Academy. They also allowed the author to see how cadets were portraying their case and development to the Academy, versus how they were discussing it in interviews.
Informal observations	The author spent 200+ hours on-site at the Academy, attending classes, meals, athletic events, officer get-togethers, officer promotions, and graduation events.	These were used to develop a deep sense of the Academy norms, and to understand the contextually embedded meanings of particular events and occurrences.

APPENDIX B
DEMOGRAPHICS, PRE-VIOLATION INTEGRATION, AND REINTEGRATION OUTCOMES FOR EACH CADET

TABLE B1
Table of Demographics, Previolation Integration, and Reintegration Outcomes for each Cadet

	Cadet	Reintegration Outcome	Minority gender, racial, ethnic?	Tenure in years, at time of violation	Type of violation	Severity of violation (self-perceived)	Pre-violation social integration—Individual indicators			Pre-violation overall integration
							Attraction to Org	*Satisfaction with Org*	*Social Interactions*	
High Reintegration	Hote (008)	**High**	No	3	Academic plagiarism	High	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Kila (011)	**High**	Yes	2	Lying	Low	High	Mid	Mid–high	High
	Xeno (024)	**High**	Yes	3	Lying	Low–mid	High	Mid–high	Low–mid	Mid
Partial Reintegration	Alf (001)	**Partial**	No	3	Insufficient academic citations	Low	Mid	Mid	High	Mid
	Brava (002)	**Partial**	Yes	3	Lying	Mid–high	Mid	Low	Low	Low–mid
	Charlie (003)	**Partial**	No	2	Insufficient academic citations	Mid–high	Mid	Mid	High	Mid
	Fox (006)	**Partial**	Yes	1	Insufficient academic citations	Mid	Mid–high	Mid–high	Low–mid	Mid
	Goff (007)	**Partial**	Yes	1	Insufficient academic citations	Low	Low–mid	Low	Mid	Low–mid
	Lima (012)	**Partial**	Yes	2	Lying	High	High	High	Mid	High
	Myles (013)	**Partial**	No	2	Insufficient academic citations	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Nova (014)	**Partial**	Yes	4	Lying	Low	Mid–high	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Oscar (015)	**Partial**	No	4	Insufficient academic citations	Low	Mid	Low–mid	High	Mid
	Paupa (016)	**Partial**	Yes	3	Insufficient academic citations	Mid	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Que (017)	**Partial**	No	1	Academic cheating	Mid	Low–mid	Mid	Low–mid	Low–mid
	Romo (018)	**Partial**	No	2	Lying	Mid–high	High	Low	Low	Low
	Sierra (019)	**Partial**	No	1	Insufficient academic citations	Low	High	Mid	Low	Mid
	Tang (020)	**Partial**	Yes	2	Academic cheating	Low	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Wisk (023)	**Partial**	No	1	Insufficient academic citations	Low–mid	Low–mid	Low	Mid	Low–mid
	Yan (025)	**Partial**	No	1	Lying	Low	Low–mid	Low	Low	Low
Low Reintegration	Dolan (004)	**Low**	No	3	Insufficient academic citations	Low	Mid–high	Mid	Mid	Mid
	Ecker (005)	**Low**	Yes	3	Insufficient academic citations	Mid	Mid	Low	High	Mid
	Julian (010)	**Low**	No	3	Insufficient academic citations	Mid	Low–mid	Mid	Low	Low–mid
	Udell (021)	**Low**	No	3	Insufficient academic citations	Mid–high	High	High	High	High

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Cadet Interview 1

Background:

- Can you tell me about your background? How did you end up at the Academy?
- What were your first few [months/years] like at the Academy?

Honor Violation:

- In as much detail as possible, can you tell me about the events leading up to your honor violation?
- Can you tell me about the approach for clarification?
- What did you do after you were approached?
- What was the time between the approach for clarification and the honor board like?
- Can you tell me about the investigation/honor board?
- Can you tell me about the meeting with the commandant? The meeting with the superintendent?
- How did you choose your mentor?

General Responses to Honor Violation:

- Who, if anyone, did you talk to about the honor violation?
- What, if anything, have you taken away from this experience?
- How do you feel about the Academy?

Cadet Interviews 2–4

General Life at Academy:

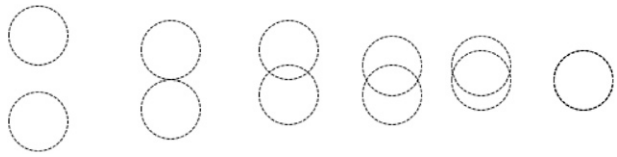
- Can you tell me about your experiences being at the Academy since the [board/superintendents' meeting/starting the program]?

Program:

- Can you tell me what it's like to interact with your mentor?
- Can you tell me about your most recent meeting with your mentor?
- In your own words, what do you think the Academy views as the purpose of the program?
- Speaking from your experience, what do you think actually happens in the program?

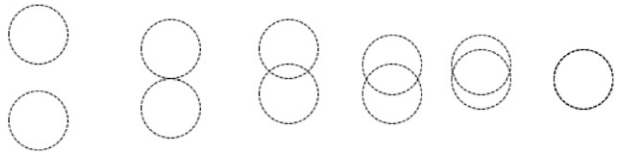
General Experiences Related to Honor Situation:

- What have you taken away from this experience, if anything?
- How would you compare yourself to before you got an honor board?
- Can you comment on the role of friends, family, peers in this experience?
- If one circle was you at the time of your honor violation and the other circle is you now, which of the following best describes you?



About the Academy/Other cadets:

- How do you feel about the Academy?
- How bought into the program are you? Into the Academy? Into becoming an officer? *[Added later, based on coding]*
- How do people view cadets in the program? How do people view you? *[Added later, based on coding]*
- How much a part of the Academy do you feel? *[Added later, based on coding]*
- If one circle is you and the other circle is the Academy, which of these bests describes how you feel right now?



[Note: In the early stages of data collection, interviews 2—4 also asked cadets about the specifics of the remediation program, including:

- Can you tell me about a particularly memorable journal entry you wrote?
- Can you tell me about [teaching the honor class, the final project, the character role model interview, other program requirements, etc.]?
- Can you tell me about a memorable meeting with your mentor?
- How would you describe your mentor?

- o If you had a subordinate who experienced something similar to your honor violation, how would you handle it?]

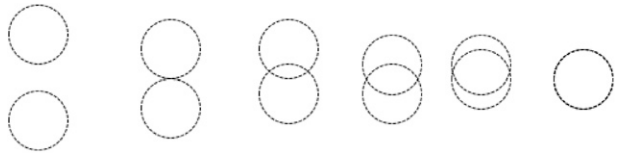
Cadet Interview 5

Experiences Post–Remediation Program:

- o Can you tell me about the meeting with the superintendent?
- o How are you feeling now that you have gotten your rank and privileges back again?
- o In your own words, what do you think the Academy views as the purpose of the remediation program?
- o Speaking from your experience, what do you think actually happens in the remediation program?
- o How are you thinking and feeling about the future?

General Experiences from Honor Situation:

- o Looking back on this experience, what have you taken away from it, if anything?
- o How would you compare yourself to before you got an honor board?
- o Can you comment on the role of friends, family, peers in this experience?
- o If one circle was you at the time of your honor violation and the other circle is you now, which of the following best describes you?



About the Academy/Other cadets:

- o How do you feel about the Academy?
- o How bought into the remediation program are you? Into the Academy? Into becoming an officer?
- o How do people view cadets in the remediation program? How do people view you?
- o How much a part of the Academy do you feel?
- o If one circle is you and the other circle is the Academy, which of these bests describes how you feel?