

# How to Handle Pressure to Act Unethically

By Lisa S. Haylon, CPA; Carol C. Bishop, DBA; Douglas M. Boyle, DBA, CMA, CPA; and Dana R. Hermanson, Ph.D.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is likely that accountants will face pressure to act unethically during their careers. We offer 10 practical steps to help financial professionals prepare for and respond to the pressure to act unethically.

Imagine that you are working on a Tuesday afternoon, and your boss stops by to discuss the project that will be presented at the next day's board meeting. You have been working on the board presentation, and there are some critical assumptions underlying the project. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related supply chain disruptions, however, the validity of some of these assumptions is quite uncertain. Your boss is very focused on getting the project approved by the board of directors because it will significantly expand his role in the company. He says to you, "I want this project approved, and we don't need the board members nitpicking the details. Focus only on the big picture, and leave all of the assumptions out." You believe that hiding these assumptions from the board is misleading and unethical. Also, if you agree to hide the assumptions this time, you worry that the next directive from the boss might be to hide something in an external financial report or a press release. Ultimately, are you going to be directed to commit fraud? How do you respond?

In this article, we provide background on selected research addressing fraud and coercive pressure, and we offer 10 practical steps for finance and accounting professionals who may experience pressure to act unethically or who may observe others being subjected to such pressure. Our goal is to help professionals to be ready for the day

when they will face pressure to act unethically and to be able to help others who face this type of pressure. We also provide implications for accounting professors, focusing on how they can use the insights from this article in classroom discussions of fraud and coercive pressure.

## **BACKGROUND ON FRAUD AND COERCIVE PRESSURE**

Occupational fraud continues to be a major societal problem, with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners estimating that a typical organization's annual fraud losses amount to 5% of revenues.<sup>1</sup> PwC found a continued rise in the number of U.S. respondents indicating that they were fraud victims in the past two years.<sup>2</sup>

Further, many fraud cases involve one party coercing another party to participate in the fraud. For example, a CEO may pressure a CFO to manipulate revenue figures, or a manager may instruct an assistant to process an expense report that obviously contains personal expenses instead of business expenses.

### *Skills and Personality Types Associated with Initiating Fraud*

Many authors have developed models that help us understand the skills and personality types of individuals associated with coercive fraud. By understanding these skills and personality types, we can be on the lookout for individuals in positions of authority capable of recognizing and exploiting a fraud opportunity. David T. Wolfe and Dana R. Hermanson expanded the traditional fraud triangle's focus on incentive/pressure, opportunity, and rationalization to include a fourth element, capability, thus creating the fraud diamond.<sup>3</sup> They asserted that, for fraud to occur, there must be a person with the capability to use their position within the company to exploit internal control weaknesses and commit fraud, often by being smart enough or confident enough to coerce others to participate.

Sridhar Ramamoorti and Barry Jay Epstein summarized three "dark triad" personality types (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) that are associated with higher fraud risk.<sup>4</sup> They described

Machiavellians as individuals who frequently coerce others by manipulating and exploiting them for self-interested and deceitful purposes. Machiavellians in business have been involved in some of the most high-profile fraud cases, according to Ronald D. Parker, Douglas M. Boyle, and Brian W. Carpenter.<sup>5</sup> For instance, WorldCom CFO Scott Sullivan manipulated accountants to sign off on fraudulent entries as part of an ongoing scheme. The authors discussed how positions of power, such as high-level executive positions, may attract Machiavellians since "this personality is also driven by a need to increase power and authority over others as a means of enhancing their status while still remaining much more grounded in their sense of self when compared to the other dark personality types."<sup>6</sup>

### *Different Types of Pressure*

What types of pressure do individuals use to coerce others into committing fraud? Understanding the various pressures that exist and being able to identify them is a first step in protecting yourself from succumbing to pressure.

Researchers often focus on two forms of "social influence pressure": obedience pressure and compliance pressure. F. Todd DeZoort and Alan T. Lord described obedience pressure as "the pressure to submit to the directions of authority...from hierarchical superiors in the form of explicit instructions or directions."<sup>7</sup> Thus, obedience pressure is a direct order made by a superior to a subordinate.

A softer form of pressure is compliance pressure, which involves "the pressure to go along with explicit requests from individuals at any level."<sup>8</sup> Thus, obedience pressure reflects a *demand*, while compliance pressure reflects a *request*.

A third type of social influence pressure is conformity pressure, which is the pressure to fit in with peers or a group. Accounting research indicates that conformity pressure is less powerful than obedience pressure.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Effects of Different Types of Pressure*

Accounting researchers have examined the effects of different types of pressure. For example, Stan Davis,

DeZoort, and Lori S. Kopp found that obedience pressure is effective in influencing management accountants to create budgetary slack (excess in the budget) in violation of corporate policy.<sup>10</sup> The authors conducted an experiment in which participants assumed the role of an accounting manager. When asked whether they believe that the creation of budgetary slack is appropriate, the majority responded that creating budgetary slack is “unfair, unjust, and/or contrary to their duties.” Even so, almost half of the management accountants participating in the study went against company policy and created budgetary slack when pressured to do so by a superior. Further, those who created budgetary slack found themselves to be less responsible for their decisions than those who did not create slack.

While obedience pressure is a powerful influence on subordinates’ judgments and decision making, researchers have found that compliance pressure can be an equally effective, yet more subtle, form of pressure. Carol C. Bishop, DeZoort, and Hermanson examined the effects of CEO obedience pressure and compliance pressure on the decisions of CFOs.<sup>11</sup> In a hypothetical case completed by public company CFOs, the CEO either directs (obedience pressure) or asks (compliance pressure) the CFO to change an accounting estimate so the company can meet an earnings target. The authors found that obedience pressure and compliance pressure were equally effective in getting some CFOs to change the estimate. Yet CFOs experiencing compliance pressure felt less perceived pressure to make the change, suggesting that compliance pressure may be a less detectable form of pressure than obedience pressure. The authors also found that CFOs who have more accounting experience were less likely to adjust the estimate.

### *Factors Affecting the Response to Pressure*

Eric N. Johnson, D. Jordan Lowe, and Philip Reckers examined the role of “mood states” in influencing external audit seniors’ response to obedience pressure.<sup>12</sup> In an experiment, the researchers exposed participants to three different moods and then assessed how the participants responded to obedience pressure. They found that low arousal (positive/active)

states and high fear and insignificance can increase individuals’ intent to comply with or overlook obedience pressure. Thus, the authors found evidence that mood affects susceptibility to obedience pressure. Additionally, the study revealed that a fairly high percentage of audit seniors express their willingness to follow unethical directives.

Finally, Frank Hartmann and Victor S. Maas examined the relation between Machiavellianism and controllers’ susceptibility to social pressure from other managers.<sup>13</sup> The authors described social pressure as “pressure from both superiors and peers to go along with an explicit request.” They found evidence that controllers who rate high on Machiavellianism traits were more likely to create budgetary slack in response to social pressure when controllers were involved in making decisions for the business unit. Controllers with low Machiavellianism traits were less likely to create slack in this setting. These findings are notable as they highlight a key personality trait of the party being pressured that is associated with greater susceptibility to pressure.

### **HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF FROM PRESSURE**

It is likely, even probable, that you will one day face pressure to act unethically in your role as an accounting or finance professional. This pressure could be in the form of a demand or a request, or it could be a more subtle suggestion to go along with others. How can you defend yourself when such pressure is applied?

We offer the following 10 methods for consideration based on research of the topic as well as our experiences inside and outside the classroom (see Table 1).<sup>14</sup> We also encourage readers to share these perspectives with others who appear to be facing coercive pressure.

### *Before You Are Asked—Preparing to Say No*

**1. Plan ahead.** Perhaps the most fundamental step in defending yourself from pressure is to recognize that pressure is very likely to be applied to you at some point, so plan ahead and know how you will respond *beforehand*. For example, as accounting professors, we may have students ask us for extra credit, exam curves, or other special treatment. One way to deal

**Table 1: 10 Ways to Defend Yourself from Pressure**

<b>Before You Are Asked—Preparing to Say No</b>
1. Plan ahead
2. Practice personal financial responsibility
3. Understand the pressure and people landscapes
4. Work with others to set the right tone
5. Have some advisors
<b>When You Are Asked—Saying No</b>
6. Beware of little asks
7. Watch your tendency to be a pleaser
8. Guard against rationalization
9. Explain your role as a professional
10. Articulate the ask and the possible consequences

with these requests is to know that they will be coming and simply to say, “I understand your request, but I have to be fair to all students across all semesters. Therefore, I never provide extra credit assignments, special deals, etc. I am very happy to meet with you to discuss the course material, but as a matter of policy, I do not change the rules for individual students.” By anticipating these requests and deciding in advance how to reply, there is no decision to make when the request is made. Further, by replying with reference to a long-term policy, the discussion quickly moves from the student’s individual request to a broader policy that is easy to defend.

In a financial reporting setting, you may be asked to revisit an estimate to allow the company to meet an earnings target. One way to respond would be, “I understand the pressure you are under to meet this target. But I am a professional working under a code of ethics. As a matter of policy, I do not revisit accounting estimates because of earnings target concerns. If you believe that the estimate is flawed in some way, then I am happy to hear your specific concerns. But I will not change an estimate because we don’t like the result.” This response conveys a general policy and moves the discussion away from the specific and immediate earnings target concern. Having this type of response in mind before you face pressure

can keep you from being caught off guard and simply succumbing to the pressure.

Oliver G. Halle, a retired FBI agent, has written about the notion of “taking the harder right,” derived from the United States Military Academy West Point cadet prayer: “Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won.”<sup>15</sup> This means doing the right thing even when it is painful and costly. Make the decision to act the right way *before* the pressure is ever applied. So when pressure is applied, there is no decision to make.

**2. Practice personal financial responsibility.** Step 1 requires you to be in a position to leave a job or get fired when you refuse to comply with an order or a request to act unethically. One key to being able to leave a job is practicing personal financial responsibility. If you have several months of living expenses saved and you live reasonably, then the loss of a job is not as financially dire as it would be for a person living paycheck to paycheck. In many fraud cases, we see single parents, people earning above-market salaries, or those who are enjoying a lavish lifestyle succumb to pressure simply because they feel that they could not leave their job. No job is worth your integrity.

Practice personal financial responsibility and always be willing to walk away from a job if needed. Focus on your ethics and what is right for you, not what someone in the company is demanding now. Practicing personal financial responsibility reduces the leverage that anyone in the company can exert on you, as job loss is not as terrifying when you are not counting on the next paycheck to survive.

**3. Understand the pressure and people landscapes.** As part of the process of getting ready to deal with pressure to act unethically, it is important to understand the pressure landscape. Specifically, what is going on in the organization that may create undue pressure? Is management below its bonus targets and stretching to make the targets? Is management way over its bonus targets, such that there will be pressure to be overly conservative in financial reporting this period? Is the bank line of credit in jeopardy? Is the board considering a change of executive leadership? Is the company an acquisition target? Is the company's growth rate in jeopardy? Are there key projects that individuals are pushing? Monitoring the pressure landscape can help you predict the specific types (and direction) of pressures that may be coming your way and allow you to be better prepared for the pressure.

Another key to preparing for pressure is understanding the people in the organization, including their strengths and motivations. Are there people who appear to be very strong on the capability dimensions previously discussed? Do you see evidence of dark triad personality types, including Machiavellianism? If so, think about preparing yourself for interactions with these high-risk individuals. Further, master manipulators often focus on what makes others "tick," so be on guard for people who seem to be over the top in praising you and your abilities. Are they seeking to manipulate you? Do you have a plan to stand up to these types of people?

**4. Work with others to set the right tone.** The tone in the organization is critical, consistent with the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission's emphasis on the control environment in internal control.<sup>16</sup> One of the best tone-setting examples came from a study by Mark S. Beasley, Joseph V. Carcello, Hermanson, and Terry

L. Neal.<sup>17</sup> In their study, an audit committee chair described the method of setting the tone with new company employees at their initial company orientation session: "...the addition of several former Big 4 managers to the controller's office has helped with GAAP [Generally Accepted Accounting Principles] issues. I met with them and clearly explained that if anyone asked them to do anything inappropriate, they'd better tell the audit committee immediately—or we'd fry them in Hell." This audit committee chair made the expected standard of conduct very clear. The audit committee must be told when there is pressure applied to people in the company. Failure to report such pressure would result in dire consequences, even if the person did not succumb to the pressure.

Such tone setting can make it less likely that people will be asked or told to do something inappropriate because there is a risk that the pressure will be reported. This type of tone setting also can apply at the individual level. Make it clear that you do not entertain or tolerate inappropriate behavior, and it may help to shield you from ever being asked or told to do something inappropriate. Potential fraudsters won't consider you a possible partner or target for coercion, or they may realize that the tone in the company will make fraud much more difficult to commit.

**5. Have some advisors.** Life is not a solo endeavor, and we strongly encourage financial professionals to have advisors whom they can talk to about career issues and ultimately about pressure to act improperly. It is important to build a small group of advisors—or at least to have built some rapport with future advisors—before you face difficult issues. Discussions about career plans, advice about how to succeed, etc., can lay the groundwork for more difficult discussions later when you are facing strong pressure to act inappropriately.

Who can serve as an advisor? It can be anyone you trust who has good insights, and they may or may not be financial professionals. You might have a close friend in a related field, a relative who has always been a good sounding board, or even a former supervisor or professor who is happy to listen. Be sure that you have some trusted advisors outside your organization so that

you can get a more objective view of emerging issues.

### *When You Are Asked—Saying No*

**6. Beware of little asks.** Former HealthSouth CFO Aaron Beam recounted the story of his first day of work with CEO Richard Scrushy. At a meeting on the first day, Scrushy indicated that he and Beam had worked for several hours the night before on the contract being presented for approval. In fact, Beam had just started working with the company that morning, and there had been no work the previous night. Beam did not object to Scrushy's lie, and this may have helped to establish the foundation for their later fraud. Beam later wondered if Scrushy had been testing him with a small issue.<sup>18</sup>

In the ESM Government Securities case, Jose Gomez, former partner at Alexander Grant & Company, agreed to look the other way and allow company management to try to reverse a relatively small fraud, in the range of \$3 million, that had been missed by auditors.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, efforts to reverse the fraud failed, and it ballooned to \$300 million. Gomez went to prison for his long-term involvement in a major fraud. He had no basis to challenge things once he had agreed to the relatively small ask.

Small asks can be used by fraud leaders to gauge your ethics. Further, once you agree to participate in a small bad act, or look the other way regarding a small fraud, you are likely going to be in for the remainder of the fraud, no matter how big it gets. Once you are in, it is very tough to get out.

**7. Watch your tendency to be a pleaser.** Former WorldCom controller David Myers appeared in an EY ethics video to highlight the types of pressures that accountants can face. Myers discussed his tendency to be a pleaser, someone who always wants to make others happy. Former WorldCom CFO Scott Sullivan was able to leverage Myers's pleaser personality and get him to approve fraudulent entries as part of the fraud scheme.<sup>20</sup>

If you are a pleaser, beware of what others are asking you to do, and think very carefully about the consequences of your actions. Is it worth sacrificing your ethics to make another person happy? Have you fully considered the possible future costs of pleasing some-

one now? Have you considered or even practiced how to say "no" to someone? Some financial professionals may seek courses on negotiation to bolster their skills in standing up to demanding executives.

**8. Guard against rationalization.** Rationalization can play a key role in succumbing to pressure from someone else, as people may think, "I'm just following orders," or, "I'm doing this to help the company, and my boss wants me to do this." These types of thoughts also help people to shift responsibility to others and off themselves.

As a finance and accounting professional, you are a subject matter expert, and you are ultimately responsible for your decisions. The U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) and criminal prosecutors are likely to have little sympathy for a defense of "I was just following orders." Ask yourself, "If not for the pressure I am facing, how would I handle this situation?" Your answer is likely to be the best course of action.

Further, your advisors (see step 5) may have encountered similar pressures and may have specific advice on what to do when you are pressured. We have found that articulating an issue to someone else can be very helpful in determining (1) what is being demanded or asked and (2) what the possible consequences could be. For example, you might say to an advisor, "What if someone is being asked to change some receivables figures to allow the company to comply with its debt covenants? If this were ever detected, this person could be charged with bank fraud. What actions should this person be considering?" Simply articulating the issue often makes the right answer very clear and keeps you from rationalizing.

**9. Explain your role as a professional.** Saying no to someone who is pressuring you can be difficult, but the situation can be improved by explaining why you are saying no. For example, suppose a CEO is pressuring a controller to record January 1 sales as if they occurred on December 31. This will allow the company to meet its annual sales goal. The controller could simply refuse or could explain the broader reasoning underlying this refusal: "You hired me to keep accurate books, keep our audit costs as low as

possible, and keep us out of trouble with the SEC. While I appreciate your request, if I do what you are asking, it will go against everything you hired me to do. I am an accounting and financial reporting expert, and I want to continue to do what the company pays me to do get the accounting right. Do you want me to do the job you hired me to do?”

Be very clear about your role: why you ask the hard questions, and why you have to say no. It is not to be difficult, but rather to keep the company out of trouble. Asking hard questions and saying no are part of an accountant’s job. It is professional, not personal, when financial professionals push others to get to the right answer. Another way to think about this perspective is that you should be nice and agreeable 99% of the time, but be very firm and stand your ground when it comes to ethical issues.

#### **10. Articulate the ask and the possible consequences.**

A final strategy to defend against pressure is to restate the ask and to focus on the possible consequences. For example, if a CFO asks to revisit some estimates, the response could be, “Let’s be clear. You are asking me to alter estimates because you want to meet a target, not because you believe that the estimates are flawed. What you are asking me to do is commit accounting fraud and face SEC sanctions and possibly criminal sanctions. Is that really what you are asking me to do?”

Laying it all out on the table may cause the other party to retreat or possibly explode in anger. Either outcome is preferable to simply succumbing to the pressure. Some may view accounting and financial reporting as a game to be won, but for accountants, this is a profession where ethics are vital.

### **PUTTING THE 10 STEPS INTO ACTION**

What does it look like to apply these 10 steps? Return for a moment to the opening scenario in this article. Your boss says, “I want this project approved, and we don’t need the board members nitpicking the details. Focus only on the big picture, and leave all of the assumptions out.”

Armed with the suggestions in this article, you have prepared for this moment and are not caught off guard. Specifically, you know that pressure will come

your way someday, and you have already decided how you will respond. You have practiced personal financial responsibility, and you understand the pressure and people landscapes. In this instance, your boss is heavily pushing a new project, and his career will benefit, at least in the short run, from the project being approved. You have worked to set the right tone in the company, but it has not fully insulated you from pressure. Finally, you have a small network of trusted advisors.

With this preparation in place, discussing the matter with an advisor and considering steps 6 through 10, you can respond as follows:

“I understand the situation and pressures here, and I get that you want the project approved. But you are telling me to omit relevant information from our presentation. While omitting the assumptions from the presentation might not seem like a big deal today, it goes against what the board charges us with doing. Specifically, the board wants solid, complete information in order to make decisions. Further, you expect solid, complete information from me every day as we work to make this company successful. This company pays me to conduct thorough analyses for decision makers.

“And let’s face it, the assumptions really are critical to the project. How will things look later if the project fails with you as its leader, and the board members start asking questions about the role of COVID-19 and supply chain disruptions in the failure of the project? I can envision you as the project lead and me as the financial analysis person standing in front of the board and trying to address some very uncomfortable questions: Did you think about these issues when you advocated for this project? If not, why not? If so, why didn’t you mention these issues to us?”

“The bottom line for me is that I am a financial professional, and my name is tied to this board presentation. As such, this is our report, not just your report. I am paid to provide thorough and complete analyses, and what you are telling me to do goes against my professional role and what the company pays me to do. Further, I don’t see this ending well, as these assumptions are critical to the project. We need to be transparent with the board and let them make an informed decision.”

**Table 2: Plan for Classroom Discussion**

<b>1.</b>	At a point in the course when you have already covered some fraud cases, have the students consider the example in the opening of this article where your boss wants you to exclude important assumptions from a board presentation. Ask the class, “What would you do in this case? What are the costs and benefits of each solution that you offer?” Have an open discussion with the class and keep track of the solutions offered by the class.
<b>2.</b>	Ask the class if anyone has personally faced pressure to act unethically in the workplace. Many college students have worked part-time and may be able and willing to share disguised examples of the pressures they have already faced. As examples are offered, ask the class about possible responses to these pressures.
<b>3.</b>	Walk the students through the 10 steps in Table 1, discussing the logic of each step and asking students to react to each step. As time permits, consider using the YouTube videos in the endnotes to reinforce key points.
<b>4.</b>	Discuss the “Putting the 10 Steps into Action” section to show the students how the opening scenario could be addressed with the tips offered in this article.
<b>5.</b>	Consider wrapping up the class discussion with two key points. First, reemphasize a key message from step 1: “Make the decision to act the right way before the pressure is ever applied. Then, when pressure is applied, there is no decision to make.” Second, tell the students that now is the time to start building their group of trusted advisors (step 5). For some students, this group might include you or other students in this class.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACCOUNTING PROFESSORS**

Many accounting courses include coverage of major fraud cases, such as Enron, WorldCom, HealthSouth, and others. Such cases often involve fraud leaders who coerce others to participate in the fraud. As a first step, we believe that it is important for accounting students to understand the potential pressures that they may face during their careers. Covering notable fraud cases is very helpful in building student awareness of what pressure is possible.

Some students may indicate that they are quite unsettled to learn about the possibility of facing intense pressure to commit fraud. Therefore, we believe that a critical second step is to help students to begin preparing for their response if, or when, they are pressured to act unethically. This moves the conversation with the students from “You probably will face some pressure to act unethically” to “Let’s talk about what you can do if, or when, you face pressure to act unethically” (see Table 2). The reality of working as a financial professional is that it

is not “if” you will be asked or told to do something unethical but “when” you will be asked or told. As the parties who “keep the score,” accounting and finance professionals are very likely to face pressure from those whose careers are riding on the reported score.

In this article, we reviewed selected research on fraud and coercive pressure, and we offered 10 ways to defend yourself from coercive pressure. We hope that understanding the key findings from the research and mastering the defense tactics we discussed will place you on firm ground in dealing with the pressure you are almost certain to face at some point in your career. We also hope that accounting professors will find the implications in this article helpful as they discuss these important issues in class. ■

*Lisa S. Haylon, CPA, is an assistant professor of accounting at Southern Connecticut State University. She can be reached at [haylonl1@southernct.edu](mailto:haylonl1@southernct.edu).*



Carol C. Bishop, DBA, is an associate professor at Georgia Southwestern State University. She can be reached at [carol.bishop@gsu.edu](mailto:carol.bishop@gsu.edu).

Douglas M. Boyle, DBA, CMA, CPA, is a professor and department chair in accounting in the Kania School of Management at the University of Scranton. Doug also serves as director of the Doctorate in Business Administration program. He is a member of IMA's Pennsylvania Northeast Chapter. He can be reached at [douglas.boyle@scranton.edu](mailto:douglas.boyle@scranton.edu).

Dana R. Hermanson, Ph.D., is the Dinos Eminent Scholar Chair of Private Enterprise and a professor of accounting at Kennesaw State University. He is a member of IMA's Atlanta Chapter. He can be reached at [dhermans@kennesaw.edu](mailto:dhermans@kennesaw.edu).

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, *Report to the Nations: 2020 Global Study on Occupational Fraud and Abuse*, [bit.ly/3KtFt14](https://bit.ly/3KtFt14).
- 2 PwC, *Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey 2020*, [pwc.to/398N7RD](https://pwc.to/398N7RD).
- 3 David T. Wolfe and Dana R. Hermanson, "The Fraud Diamond: Considering the Four Elements of Fraud," *The CPA Journal*, December 2004, pp. 38-42.
- 4 Sridhar Ramamoorti and Barry Jay Epstein, "Today's Fraud Models Lack Personality," *The CPA Journal*, March 2016, pp. 15-21, [bit.ly/2SDUj1s](https://bit.ly/2SDUj1s).
- 5 Ronald D. Parker, Douglas M. Boyle, and Brian W. Carpenter, "Do Dark Personalities Lurk in Your Company?" *Strategic Finance*, June 2020, pp. 35-39, [bit.ly/3s1SKaB](https://bit.ly/3s1SKaB).
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 F. Todd DeZoort and Alan T. Lord, "A Review and Synthesis of Pressure Effects Research in Accounting," *Journal of Accounting Literature*, January 1997, pp. 28-85.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 See Alan T. Lord and F. Todd DeZoort, "The Impact of Commitment and Moral Reasoning on Auditors' Responses to Social Influence Pressure," *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, April 2001, pp. 215-235; Alisa G. Brink, Fengchun Tang, and Ling Yang, "The Impact of Estimate Source and Social Pressure on Auditors' Fair Value Estimate Choices," *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, April 2016, pp. 29-40; Alisa G. Brink, Andrea Gouldman, and Lisa M. Victoravich, "The Effects of Organizational Risk Appetite and Social Pressure on Aggressive Financial Reporting Behavior," *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, Fall 2018, pp. 23-36.
- 10 Stan Davis, F. Todd DeZoort, and Lori S. Kopp, "The Effect of Obedience Pressure and Perceived Responsibility on Management Accountants' Creation of Budgetary Slack," *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, February 2006, pp. 19-35.
- 11 Carol C. Bishop, F. Todd DeZoort, and Dana R. Hermanson, "The Effect of CEO Social Influence Pressure and CFO Accounting Experience on CFO Financial Reporting Decisions," *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, February 2017, pp. 21-41.
- 12 Eric N. Johnson, D. Jordan Lowe, and Philip Reckers, "The Influence of Mood on Subordinates' Ability to Resist Coercive Pressure in Public Accounting," *Contemporary Accounting Research*, Spring 2016, pp. 261-287.
- 13 Frank Hartmann and Victor S. Maas, "Why Business Unit Controllers Create Budget Slack: Involvement in Management, Social Pressure and Machiavellianism," *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, Fall 2010, pp. 27-49.
- 14 Some of the suggestions build upon Douglas M. Boyle, James F. Boyle, and Daniel P. Mahoney, "Avoiding the Fraud Mind-set," *Strategic Finance*, February 2015, pp. 41-46, [bit.ly/3KvP07U](https://bit.ly/3KvP07U); and Douglas M. Boyle, James F. Boyle, and Daniel P. Mahoney, "Behavioral Assessment and Modification in Fraud Mitigation Efforts," *Management Accounting Quarterly*, Fall 2018, pp. 1-11, [bit.ly/37YybVI](https://bit.ly/37YybVI). Those authors develop eight fraud-related behavioral learning objectives.
- 15 Oliver G. Halle, *Taking the Harder Right*, Concord Bridge Press 2006.
- 16 Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission, *Internal Control—Integrated Framework*.
- 17 Mark S. Beasley, Joseph V. Carcello, Dana R. Hermanson, and Terry L. Neal, "The Audit Committee Oversight Process," *Contemporary Accounting Research*, Spring 2009, pp. 65-122.
- 18 "Ethics and Fraud at HealthSouth: Lessons from Inside a Corporate Meltdown," [bit.ly/3KxvTds](https://bit.ly/3KxvTds).
- 19 "Alexander Grant Partner Jose Gomez CPA Explains Why He Went to Prison," [bit.ly/3vrMBXo](https://bit.ly/3vrMBXo).
- 20 "Worldcom," [bit.ly/38Bw7mt](https://bit.ly/38Bw7mt).