

Does Ethical Membership Matter? Moral Identification and Its Organizational Implications

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This research meaningfully connects the literatures on identification and business ethics by proposing the new construct of moral identification. Moral identification is defined here as the perception of oneness or belongingness associated with an organization that exhibits ethical traits (e.g., care, kindness, and compassion), which also involves a deliberate concern of the membership with an ethical organization. Integrating social identity theory with theory on the moral self, this research examines an overall theoretical model where moral identification plays a significant role in explaining employee attraction, motivation, and retention (i.e., 3 components of the overall theoretical framework). These components were examined separately in 3 empirical studies and findings from these studies first revealed that moral identification explained why job seekers with strong (vs. weak) moral identities were more attracted to a socially responsible organization (Study 1). Second, moral identification was associated with lower employee unethical proorganizational behavior (Study 2). Finally, moral identification was negatively related to employees' turnover intentions. Organizations' legal compliance moderated this relation such that it was stronger when organizations have higher (vs. lower) levels of legal compliance (Study 3). Taken together, these studies suggest that moral identification offers new insights in explaining both potential and current employees' behaviors when morality is contextually relevant and subjectively meaningful. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: moral identification, moral identity

Media reports of ethical failure by business leaders and companies have continued to multiply (e.g., Porter, 2012). For example, major companies such as Apple struggle with the labor practices and working conditions of employees in suppliers' manufacturing of their products (Duhigg & Barboza, 2012). Society has also witnessed the downfalls of multiple corporate leaders and the bankruptcy of large companies due to ethical violations. The failure of Enron in 2001 and the imprisonment of its top manage-

ment team, for example, represent one of the most infamous cases of corporate moral failings.

However, despite the increasing number of companies' questionable actions reported by the media, we are encouraged by the fact that the vast majority of businesses and employees don't behave in such callous and ruthless ways. Indeed, there are exemplary individuals in organizations who firmly and persistently uphold moral principles even when facing with considerable pressures for them to do otherwise (e.g., Enron's Sherron Watkins and Goldman Sachs's Greg Smith). Companies such as Dell, Google, eBay, and the Gap among others have been rated as "the world's most ethical companies" according to the recent Forbes report (Adams, 2014). These companies not only make generous donations to charity, but also devote tremendous time and effort to support both internal employees and external stakeholder groups.

Businesses are social organizations. The fact that companies are rated based on their ethical achievement implies that individuals are likely to socially construct characteristics of the organizations. That is, individuals attempt to comprehend what they think the organizations might represent or value. Research has suggested that individuals can be attracted to organizations that demonstrate they value ethics and morality (e.g., Caligiuri, Mencia, & Jiang, 2013; Greening & Turban, 2000; Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013; Turban & Greening, 1997). For example, Rupp, Shao, Thornton, and Skarlicki (2013) found that job applicants' perceptions of the recruiting firms' ethical dedication (in terms of cor-

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porate social responsibility) positively impacted their job pursuit intentions. The reasons for this attraction to such firms have not been fully articulated. Researchers tend to assume that individuals want to be members of ethical organizations because of a possible sense of affiliation they feel with those that support moral standards. This assumption has not been fully explored in the extant literature.

To address this limitation, the primary objectives of the present research are threefold. First, we attempt to explore the above conjecture through developing a new theoretical construct describing an individual's identification with an organization based on morality, which we label *moral identification*. Second, we then propose an overall theoretical model that demonstrates the utility of moral identification in accounting for important organizational processes (see Figure 1). Specifically, we propose that moral identification has implications not only for employee attraction, but for employee motivation and retention (Armstrong, 2000). We elaborate on this overall model in the theoretical overview section. Third, we empirically examine the three components of our overall theoretical model in three separate studies.

We believe the present research has both theoretical and practical importance. From a theoretical perspective, our research developed a new construct based on the integration of moral self theory with social identity theory, which connects the identification and business ethics literatures in a meaningful way. Second, moral identification offers new insights in explaining employee attraction, motivation, and retention, which goes beyond what existing theories and concepts can explain (e.g., moral identity, organizational identification). From a practical perspective, our research demonstrates the value for organizations and managers to emphasize ethical principles and moral standards in corporate management. As explained later, potential and current employees are likely to develop moral identification with their companies when they perceive that the companies emphasize morality and ethics. Such morality-based identification helps companies to attract, motivate, and retain employees who think and behave ethically, which is particularly important because (a) attracting and retaining valuable employees is expensive (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008); and (b) society is paying more attention to business ethics.

Theoretical Overview

Theoretical Foundation of Moral Identification

As discussed above, organizational morality and business ethics have become salient attributes and characteristics that people use to define, perceive, and evaluate a company (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), just as morality can be a salient attribute and characteristic that individuals use to define themselves (i.e., moral identities, Aquino & Reed, 2002; Lapsley & Lasky, 2001). According to social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), employees develop social identification with their organization when the attributes and characteristics of the organization are salient, important and similar to the attributes and characteristics that employees use to define themselves (Mael & Tetrick, 1992). By integrating theory on the moral self (Aquino & Freeman, 2009; Aquino & Reed, 2002; Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008) with social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown, 2000; Hogg, 2006; Tajfel, 1982),

we argue that employees might identify themselves with an organization based on the perceived similarity of the moral and ethical attributes of the firm and those they use to define themselves. To this end, we propose the new construct of *moral identification*, defined as the perception of oneness or belongingness associated with an organization that exhibits ethical traits (e.g., care, kindness, compassion), which also involves a deliberate concern of the membership with an ethical organization. Below we elaborate on how moral identification is developed through the integration of theory on the moral self and social identity theory.

We maintain that an employee's personal moral identity forms the theoretical basis for their moral identification with an organization. According to moral self theory, *moral identity* refers to "a self-schema organized around a set of moral trait associations" (Shao et al., 2008, p. 517). A person with a *high* or *self-important* moral identity is "someone for whom the moral self-schema is generally available, readily primed, and easily activated for processing social information" (Aquino & Freeman, 2009, p. 378; see also Lapsley & Lasky, 2001).¹ Employees with high or "strong" moral identities are particularly sensitive and reactive to moral and ethical issues as compared with those with low or "weak" moral identities (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007; Reed & Aquino, 2003; Rupp et al., 2013; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008).

To the extent that individuals with high (vs. low) moral identities are likely to be more sensitive to the moral attributes of an organization, they are more likely to perceive the similarity between the attributes they use to define themselves and those moral attributes of the organization (Burke, 2003; Turner, 1978). According to social identity theory (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), we would expect that moral identification will be formed on the basis of such perceived similarity. That is, those with high (vs. low) moral identities are more likely to morally "identify" with an ethical organization.

Overall Theoretical Model

We believe the construct of moral identification can contribute significantly to the extant literature. We outline in Figure 1 an overarching theoretical model that describes how the moral identification process plays significant roles in three distinct stages, namely employee attraction, motivation, and retention. These stages parallel the three main foci of management practice and research in strategic human resources management (Armstrong, 2000). We use this attraction-motivation-retention framework from Armstrong (2000) to demonstrate the utility of moral identification because employees' identification processes to a large degree determine their subsequent reactions toward the company with which they identify (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown, 2000; Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Terry, 2000). According to social identity theory, once employees identify with an organization, they tend to perceive the value and characteristics of the organization as more salient and distinctive from other organizations, and develop a stronger sense of belongingness to that organization. As a result, such an identification process leads individuals to acquire and/or

¹ This definition of moral identity is primarily rooted in the social-cognitive approach to theories of moral identity (Bandura, 2001; Shao et al., 2008).

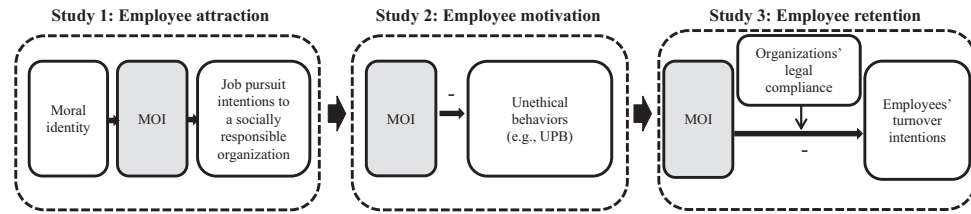


Figure 1. The Role of Moral Identification in Organizational Processes. Note: MOI = moral identification; UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior.

maintain memberships with the identified organization (i.e., employee attraction and retention; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1969). In addition, once identification is formed, individuals are motivated to choose actions that are congruent with the salient attributes and characteristics of their organization (i.e., employee motivation; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2006). Below, we elaborate on how *moral identification* can offer new insights in employee attraction, motivation, and retention when morality is contextually relevant and subjectively meaningful.

As shown in Figure 1, we first expect that moral identification sheds new light on potential employees being attracted to an ethical organization (e.g., job pursuit intentions). As theories of employee attraction (Coldwell, Billsberry, Van Meurs, & Marsh, 2008; Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Kristof, 1996; Rynes & Barber, 1990) advance over time, the role of the employer's attributes, values, and characteristics in employee attraction has received considerable attention. Research supports that job applicants' perceived supplementary fit (i.e., similarity in terms of the characteristics or values of the applicant and those of the recruiting firm; Kristof, 1996), and more specifically, person–organization (P-O) ethical fit (Coldwell et al., 2008) serve as a potent driving force in attracting applicants. We argue that moral identification serves as one possible explanatory mechanism in accounting for these established effects. Specifically, we propose that recruiting firms who value ethics and morality are more likely to attract job applicants who share similar values (e.g., those with high (vs. low) moral identities). Such a perceived fit will lead to a morality-based identification process that triggers a strong sense of belongingness which, in turn, increases individuals' job pursuit intentions to the identified firm.

Second, we expect that moral identification has relevance for employees' motivation in engaging in ethical behaviors. The self-consistency principle emphasized in moral self theory (Aquino & Freeman, 2009; Aquino & Reed, 2002; Shao et al., 2008) implies that individuals strive for the consistency between their sense of themselves and their actual behaviors. Similarly, integrating moral self theory with social identity theory, we would argue that employees holding strong moral identification are likely to behave in ways that are consistent with the values embraced within that identification domain (i.e., morality and ethics; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Third, we argue that moral identification determines employees' retention particularly when employees are faced with morality-related organizational actions. According to social identity theory, once identification is developed, employees are likely to develop a strong sense of belongingness, and exhibit positive attitudes toward the organization which, in turn, reduces their perceived

desirability of movement (i.e., turnover). It follows that employees who hold a strong *moral* identification with their organization will wish to stay. As explained above, theory on the moral self proposes that individuals will try to maintain self-consistency between their beliefs and behaviors. Integrating theory on the moral self and social identity theory, we further expect that employees who morally identify with their organization will wish to remain employed on the condition where the organization continuously values morality and ethics and behave in such ways, which will allow employees to maintain self-consistency.

To test this overall theoretical model, we conducted three studies to explore how moral identification: (a) predicts job applicants' job pursuing intentions for socially responsible firms (Study 1); (b) decreases employees' unethical proorganizational behavior (Study 2); and (c) influences employees' turnover intentions particularly when organizations have high (vs. low) levels of legal compliance (Study 3).

Study 1: Moral Identification and Employee Attraction

In Study 1, we examine whether moral identification serves as the theoretical explanatory mechanism in the relationship between individuals' moral identities and their attraction to a socially responsible organization. As explained above, moral identity refers to "a self-schema organized around a set of moral trait associations" (e.g., care, compassion, kindness; Shao et al., 2008, p. 517). Individuals with high (vs. low) moral identities are more likely to process social information from a moral lens (Aquino & Freeman, 2009; Lapsley & Lasky, 2001). In addition, according to moral self theory, individuals strive for self-consistency (i.e., the congruence between their sense of themselves and their actual behaviors, Shao et al., 2008). It follows that individuals with high moral identities tend to behave in ways that are consistent with the moral attributes that they use to define themselves (e.g., caring, generous, kind, compassionate, etc.; Aquino & Reed, 2002; Aquino et al., 2007; Reed & Aquino, 2003). Based on moral self theory, we expect that job applicants with strong (vs. weak) moral identities are more likely to be attracted to, and thus pursue a job at an employer who holds similar moral attributes and characteristics (e.g., caring, generous) because their membership with such organizations can potentially strengthen the consistency between their moral selves and behaviors.

Indeed, theories pertinent to employee attraction (e.g., Coldwell et al., 2008; Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Kristof, 1996; Rynes & Barber, 1990) provide additional support for our argument. This line of research has supported the essential roles of (a) organiza-

tions' characteristics, attributes, and values; and (b) the match between applicants' and employers' values, attributes, and characteristics in applicant attraction. As noted earlier, Kristof (1996) proposed the notion of "supplementary fit," which refers to the similarity or congruence of the values and characteristics between an individual and an organization. Such perceived P-O fit serves as a strong driving force in shaping job applicants' attraction to the employer and their job pursuit intentions (e.g., Coldwell et al., 2008). Taken together, both moral self theory and theories related to employee attraction suggest that job applicants with strong (vs. weak) moral identities are more likely to be attracted to a socially responsible firm. This is because firms' socially responsible actions involve utilization of "green" materials in production to protect environment, support for local education, and donation to the local community, among others. These actions demonstrate that the organizations care about the well-being of both the internal and external stakeholder groups, and intend to treat these various stakeholders fairly and generously (Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, & Williams, 2006). Thus, a firm's socially responsible actions can—to a large degree—demonstrate fairness, care, generosity, and its compassion and dedication toward various stakeholders of the organization (Aguinis, 2011; Rupp, 2011). In short, socially responsible actions represent similar characteristics that a strong moral identity person would use to define themselves. Given that individuals with strong (vs. weak) moral identities have higher moral standards and are more sensitive to morality issues around them (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Skarlicki & Rupp, 2010), we expect that job applicants with strong (vs. weak) moral identities are more likely to pay attention to a recruiting firm's socially responsible actions, thus, are more likely to perceive the fit between their own values and those of the company. As a result, as argued above, the formers are more likely to be attracted to such companies (e.g., Coldwell et al., 2008; Rupp et al., 2013).

We further expect moral identification to serve as the psychological mechanism underlying job applicants' attraction to a socially responsible firm. According to social identity theory, identification refers to "a cognitive linking between the definition of the organization and the definition of self" (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 242) and is usually formed "when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity" (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 239). It follows that when job applicants with strong moral identities encounter a socially responsible firm, they might perceive that this employer possesses similar attributes that they use to define themselves. Such perceived similarity forms the basis for the development of morality-based identification. That is, an individual with a strong moral identity is more likely to develop morality-based identification (i.e., moral identification) with an organization when they perceive this social collective using the same moral attributes that they value and use to define themselves. This moral identification in turn triggers a strong sense of belongingness to the recruiting firm that the job applicants (with strong moral identities) are morally identifying with (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1969), thus, leading to job pursuit intentions. Taken together, we expect that individuals with strong (vs. weak) moral identities are more likely to develop moral identification with socially responsible organizations, which in

turn affect their job pursuing intentions to such firms. In line with these arguments, we predict:

Hypothesis 1: Job applicants' moral identification mediates the relationship between applicants' moral identities and their job pursuit intentions to a socially responsible organization.

Method

Sample. A sample of 216 college students from a major Midwestern university participated in Study 1. One-hundred and 48 students were male and their mean age was 20.7. One-hundred and 76 were White/Caucasian, and 40 were minorities. Eighty-three percent of our participants were seniors who were actual job seekers about to enter job market. All participants had either part-time or full-time work experience, so that they were familiar with work-related concepts and contexts.

Procedure. Study 1 used a scenario-based methodology in which the scenarios were developed by the authors. All participants were first given hiring information from two hypothetical companies in the same industry regarding the areas of business, mission/vision, and specific employment conditions. To enhance the realism of the scenarios, hypothetical Web addresses and stock market tickers were provided for the companies. For the hiring information, the *socially responsible company* was described to emphasize high levels of societal engagement that go beyond the instrumental goal of profit maximization using language frequently appearing in Sustainability Annual Reports among the Fortune 500 (e.g., responsibility, moral, right, fair, philanthropic, etc.), whereas the *typical for-profit company* was described to seek only for profit maximization and its contingent benefits for employees. Except for the socially responsible aspects, all the other information of the two firms was identical. Next, participants were asked to rate their job pursuit intentions to these two firms. The typical for-profit company scenario was not used for hypothesis testing, just for the purpose of checking that the social responsibility manipulation was effective.

Measures. We developed a new scale of moral identification (see Appendix) for this study. Specifically, we modified five items from the *collective self* scale (Kashima & Hardie, 2000; three items related to concern for the membership of social groups and two items related to the positive states derived from in-group membership) in a way to reflect our conceptualization of moral identification and added Aquino and Reed's (2002) nine moral traits to describe the attributes of the organization and its members.

We then examined both convergent and discriminant validities of moral identification by comparing it with existing variables (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). For this purpose, we surveyed a sample of 501 full-time employees from seven Korean firms across multiple industries. We followed recommended translation and back translation techniques (Brislin, 1970). Our sample was 69% male and their average age and tenure was 37 and 9.6 years, respectively.

For the convergent validity test, we examined if a *pictorial scale* (Troop & Wright, 2001) of moral identification converged with our statement-based scale. Results revealed a significant and relatively large correlation between the two instruments, $r = .78, p < .01$, which indicated *convergent validity*. Next, we assessed the discriminant validity of moral identification by examining its

distinctiveness from other constructs such as *collective self-esteem* (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), *need for belongingness* (i.e., social connectedness and social assurance; Detrick, 1985; Lee & Robbins, 1995) and a *caring ethical climate* (Victor & Cullen, 1988). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the proposed measurement model with five factors fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2_{(160)} = 1157.33$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .95, NNFI = .94), and a series of nested χ^2 difference tests indicated that the original five-factor model fit the data significantly better than all the alternative models.

We also examined if moral identification (MOI) was distinct from both organizational identification (OI) and moral identity given their theoretical relevance. The three-factor model (MOI vs. moral identity vs. OI) fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2_{(186)} = 584.49$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .08, CFI = .96, NNFI = .96) and fit the data significantly better than all the alternative models. These results supported that: (a) all the five items of the moral identification scale loaded onto the same factor as expected; and (b) moral identification is a distinct concept from the other related constructs, indicating *discriminant validity*.

We then used this five-item scale to measure moral identification in Study 1 ($\alpha = .77$). Moral identity was measured using the 10-item scale from Aquino and Reed (2002) ($\alpha = .80$). Four items from Greening and Turban (2000) were used to assess *job pursuit intentions* ($\alpha = .90$). Control variables included age, gender, ethnicity, and academic year. Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) five-item scale of *corporate image* ($\alpha = .84$) was used to assess the socially responsible nature of the firms as a manipulation check.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates for all Study 1 variables. For the manipulation check, results demonstrated that the average rating of *corporate image* of the socially responsible firm ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 0.72$) was significantly higher than that of the typical for-profit firm ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.91$; $t = 20.974$, $p < .001$). This indicated that our manipulation was effective. Moreover, the measurement model with three factors (moral identity, MOI, and job pursuit intentions) fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2_{(167)} = 533.74$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .97, NNFI = .97; see Hu & Bentler, 1999).

To test Hypothesis 1 (i.e., the mediation effect of MOI), we performed a bootstrapping approach which involves the computa-

tion of the confidence intervals for the direct and indirect effects (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Using 1,000 bootstrap samples, the 99% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval was formed to examine whether zero is *not* included within the interval range for a significant mediating effect. We found a significant mediating effect of MOI in the moral identity-job pursuit intentions relationship (lower CI = .177 and upper CI = .536), after controlling for age, gender, ethnicity, and academic year. The confidence intervals for the *alternative* direction (MOI \rightarrow moral identity \rightarrow job pursuit intentions) *did* include zero (lower CI = -.159 and upper CI = .161), which further supports that MOI plays the mediating role (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Taken together, these findings support Hypothesis 1.

This study suggests that firms that value morality and ethics (e.g., a socially responsible firm) are likely to attract job applicants who possess similar values (e.g., applicants with strong moral identities) because such P-O ethical fit generates a sense of moral identification among job applicants, which triggers a strong desire to acquire membership. This finding extends prior theories on employee attraction (e.g., Coldwell et al., 2008; Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014) through documenting the mediating mechanism (i.e., the role of morality-based identification) between P-O ethical fit and employee attraction.

Study 2: Moral Identification and Employee Motivation

In Study 2, we examine if moral identification affects employees' motivation to engage in ethical behaviors, or refrain from engaging in unethical behaviors, at work. As discussed above, theory on the moral self proposes that individuals strive for self-consistency (Aquino & Freeman, 2009; Blasi, 1984, 2005; Shao et al., 2008). Such human tendency for maintaining self-consistency serves as a potent motive to explain the association between one's moral self-construal and one's engagement in ethical behaviors (Aquino et al., 2007; Blasi, 1984). We argue that such a tendency for self-consistency also exists among individuals who experience moral identification with their companies. According to social identity theory, once identification is formed, individuals are likely to behave in ways that are consistent with the salient attributes of their identification domain (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2006). Moreover, identification tends to generate even stronger motivation for individuals to advocate for and adhere to the values and

Table 1
Correlation Matrix for Study 1

	Mean	SD	AGE	GEN	ETH	ACA	CSR	MI	MOI
AGE	20.65	1.58	—						
GEN	1.31	.47	.05	—					
ETH	3.69	.69	.12	.14*	—				
ACA	2.98	.62	.33**	-.04	.29**	—			
CSR	5.61	.86	.27**	.28**	.16*	-.03	(.90)		
MI	5.41	.80	.21**	.36**	.23**	-.04	.44**	(.80)	
MOI	5.74	.95	.21**	.17*	.15*	-.03	.51**	.74**	(.77)

Note. $N = 216$. Scale reliability estimates (alpha) are reported in parentheses along the diagonal. GEN = gender (1 = male, 2 = female); ETH = ethnicity (1 = African American, 2 = Asian, 3 = Hispanic, 4 = White/Caucasian, 5 = Others); ACA = academic year; CSR = Job pursuit intentions for a socially responsible firm; MI = moral identity; MOI = moral identification.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

characteristics of the social collective with which they identify (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2006). This suggests that when employees are identified with their organizations based on the moral and ethical attributes of the firms (i.e., moral identification), they are likely to act in accordance with these moral attributes. Based on these arguments, we propose that employees who morally identify with their organizations will tend to maintain self-consistency between their behaviors and the moral attributes of the firm. Such a self-consistency tendency serves as a powerful self-regulatory force to restrain them from engaging in unethical behaviors at work.

In the present study, we focus on one type of unethical behaviors at work, namely unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB). UPB has been defined as "actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct" (Umphress & Bingham, 2011, p. 622). Typical examples of UPB include "acts of commission (e.g., cooking numbers to boost analyst projections and stock values) and omission (e.g., withholding information about the hazards of a pharmaceutical product) that are considered unethical by larger society" (Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010, p. 770). We focus on UPB as the outcome variable in Study 2 for two reasons. First, UPB is a recently developed construct, which has moral relevance and has attracted the attention from management scholars (e.g., Miao, Newman, Yu, & Xu, 2013). Second, UPB might be perceived as "morally equivocal" behaviors by ordinary people (i.e., those who do not hold strong moral standards) because such behaviors benefit the collective yet still violate basic moral principles. Thus, examining the effect of employees' moral identification on UPB should help demonstrate whether those who identify morally with organizations will act in ways that are consistent with the values of the identification domain as social identity theory predicts (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), rather than violating moral norms even if it benefits the organization in some ways.

We also examine the effects of moral identification on this unique type of unethical behavior after controlling for organizational identification. Prior research suggests that employees' general organizational identification is positively related to their UPB at work, particularly when they had strong positive reciprocity beliefs (Umphress et al., 2010). This finding makes sense given that organizational identification is formed based on the generally espoused and enacted values and attributes of the firm (e.g., striving for financial success and achievement, valuing ambition and aggressively pursuing goals) which might be completely unrelated to morality. We believe that by examining the proposed negative effect of moral identification on UPB while controlling for organizational identification, we can further demonstrate (a) the distinctiveness of our construct, and (b) the power of our construct in governing morality-related behaviors as implied by social identity theory and the self-consistency principle emphasized in moral self theory. In line with these arguments, we predict:

Hypothesis 2: Employees' moral identification negatively relates to their UPB.

Method

Sample. A sample of 149 full-time employees working for a Korean branch of a leading international food company partici-

pated in this study. We followed the recommended translation and back translation techniques (Brislin, 1970). In order to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), we administered our survey in two phases that were 2.5 months apart. The first wave of survey contained measures of moral identification, organizational identification, and control variables, and the second survey contained UPB. For the first wave, 300 surveys were initially distributed to employees across departments, and 189 surveys (63%) were completed and returned. For the second wave, 149 surveys (49%) were completed and returned. No survey incentive was offered. Of the 149 participants, 134 employees were male, and they had a mean age of 43.9 and tenure of 13 years. Fifty-eight percent of the participants held a bachelor's degree. Ninety-two percent of the participants were rank-and-file employees, and 8% were unit managers.

Measures. We used the same five-item scale used in Study 1 to measure moral identification ($\alpha = .87$). We adapted the six-item scale from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to assess organizational identification ($\alpha = .91$). UPB was measured by six items from Umphress, Bingham, and Mitchell (2010) ($\alpha = .93$). Based on past research, we controlled for age, gender, educational level, position, tenure, caring ethical climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988), and social desirability (Paulhus, 1991).

Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates for the variables in Study 2. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the proposed measurement model with three factors (i.e., MOI, OI, and UPB) fit the observed data well ($\chi^2_{(116)} = 782.43$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .98, NNFI = .98). We then conducted hierarchical multiple regression to test Hypothesis 2. As shown in Table 3, we first entered the control variables in Model 1. Then we entered OI in Model 2, and MOI and OI simultaneously in Model 3 to examine whether moral identification predicts UPB beyond the effect of organizational identification. Results revealed that MOI was negatively associated with UPB ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$) in the presence of a marginally positive association between organizational identification and UPB ($\beta = .13$, $p < .10$), providing support for Hypothesis 2. Moreover, the R^2 significantly increased ($\Delta R^2 = .05$, $p < .01$, moving from Model 2 to Model 3) when MOI was introduced in the regression model, which suggests that MOI explained additional variance above and beyond the effects of OI. As a post hoc analysis, we also examined if MOI interacts with OI in predicting UPB and the interaction effect was not significant.

Findings from Study 2 support that moral identification regulates employees' morality-related behaviors that go beyond what traditional global organizational identification can explain. Integrating moral self theory with social identity theory, we maintain that the self-consistency principle is likely the underlying regulatory effect of moral identification on (un)ethical behaviors. This study further connects the identification and employee motivation literatures from a moral perspective.

Study 3: Moral Identification and Employee Retention

In Study 3, we examine whether moral identification plays a significant role in employee retention, particularly when employ-

Table 2
Correlation Matrix for Study 2

	Mean	SD	AGE	GEN	EDU	TEN	POS	SOD	ECL	MOI	OI	UPB
AGE	43.86	8.19	—									
GEN	1.01	.31	-.27**	—								
EDU	2.06	0.93	-.38**	.17*	—							
TEN	12.98	7.81	.82**	-.17*	-.48**	—						
POS	3.00	1.18	.41**	-.11	.34**	.43**	—					
SOD	4.64	0.95	.13	.02	-.16*	.03	-.04	(.79)				
ECL	5.19	1.00	.04	-.06	-.13	.01	-.12	.36**	(.90)			
MOI	5.75	0.87	.10	-.05	-.09	.04	-.07	.23**	.28**	(.87)		
OI	5.20	1.07	-.14	.12	.13	-.14	-.03	.22**	.12	.28**	(.91)	
UPB	2.06	0.90	-.11	.13	.26**	-.07	.09	-.23**	-.42**	-.25**	.02	(.93)

Note. $N = 149$. Scale reliability estimates (alpha) are reported in parentheses along the diagonal. GEN = gender (1 = male, 2 = female); EDU = education level (1 = high school, 2 = associate, 3 = bachelor's, 4 = master's, 5 = doctoral); TEN = tenure (years); POS = position (1–4 = employee levels, and 5–6 = manager levels); SOD = social desirability; ECL = ethical climate; MOI = moral identification; OI = organizational identification; UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

ees are faced with organizations' morality-related actions (e.g., organizations' legal compliance). First, employees' moral identification should serve as a motivational impetus for them to remain employed in their organizations. That is, we expect that employees' moral identification will be negatively related to their turnover intentions. According to social identity theory, once identification is formed, those who identify with the organization tend to perceive the organization's values and attributes as more salient, distinct, and favorable as compared with those of other organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2006). Such perceived distinctiveness and prestige triggers a stronger sense of belongingness (Hogg & Terry, 2000) which leads to employees' desire to maintain membership. Based on these arguments, we expect that employees who morally identify with their organizations are likely to want to remain employed in these ethical organizations (i.e., have low turnover intentions) due to a strong sense of belonging.

Furthermore, we expect that there are boundary conditions for the expected negative effect of employees' moral identification on their turnover intentions. We argue that both moral self theory

(e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984) and the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; Schneider, Smith, & Goldstein, 2000) offer insights on the potential boundary condition of the effect of moral identification on employees' turnover intentions. As explained above and implied by moral self theory, employees with strong moral identification strive for self-consistency (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984, 2005; Shao et al., 2008). That is, they seek consistency between their behaviors and the values and attributes of their identification domain. Therefore, employees who morally identify with their organizations are likely to remain employed (with low turnover intentions) as long as their organizations continue to value morality and ethics. This condition allows them to maintain self-consistency. In contrast, when an organization fails to maintain its high moral standards in its actions, morally identified employees' motivation to stay with their organization would be weakened. In addition, the ASA framework provides further support for our arguments. According to Schneider and colleagues (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995),

Table 3
Results of Regression for Study 2

Variables	DV (Time 2): UPB		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Controls (Time 1)</i>			
Age	.52** (.01)	.51** (.01)	.52** (.01)
Gender	.08 (.23)	.07 (.23)	.06 (.23)
Educational level	.36** (.10)	.36** (.10)	.35** (.10)
Tenure	-.20 (.01)	-.19 (.01)	-.18 (.01)
Position	-.19† (.08)	-.21* (.08)	-.21* (.08)
Social desirability	-.09 (.07)	-.07 (.07)	-.14† (.07)
Ethical climate	-.37** (.07)	-.37** (.07)	-.33** (.07)
Organizational identification		.09 (.06)	.13† (.06)
IVs (Time 1): Moral identification			-.16* (.07)
<i>F</i>	9.57**	9.23**	9.04**
<i>R</i> ²	.28	.28	.33
ΔR^2		.00	.05**

Note. $N = 149$; IV = Independent variable; DV = Dependent variable; UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior. Standardized coefficients are listed.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

individuals tend to be attracted to and remain employed in an organization when they perceive that their characteristics and/or values match with the characteristics/values of the organization. In contrast, individuals are likely to quit or leave the company when they perceive misfit between their own values and those of their employer (e.g., Jackson et al., 1991; Ployhart, Weekley, & Baughman, 2006; Schaubroeck, Ganster, & Jones, 1998). It follows that when the organization fails to uphold moral principles, those who morally identify with the organization are likely to perceive the misfit between their own moral values and the values and actions of their employer. As a result, they are likely to leave the organization (i.e., attrition process) rather than remaining employed.

Taken together, we expect that the negative linkage between moral identification and turnover intentions will be strongest when their company maintains high moral standards and consistently follows community moral guidelines (e.g., high legal compliance). If firms fail to conform to such moral norms and principles (e.g., low legal compliance), employees' moral identification is challenged, their desire for self-consistency is threatened, and their perceived fit between their own characteristics/values and those of their employer is weakened. As a result, the effect of moral identification on employee retention will likely be attenuated. In sum, organizations' legal compliance should influence the negative relationship between employees' moral identification and their turnover intentions such that this relationship is stronger when organizations engage in high (vs. low) levels of legal compliance. Furthermore, we seek to demonstrate the robustness of this interactive effect involving moral identification on turnover intentions by controlling for any effect from the more general organizational identification. Based on the arguments above, we predict:

Hypothesis 3: Employees' moral identification is negatively related to their turnover intentions. Organizations' legal compliance moderates this negative relation such that it is stronger when organizations have high (vs. low) levels of legal compliance.

Method

Sample. For Study 3, we chose a hospital setting because employees and managers of hospitals are often sensitive to the legal/ethical obligations of the hospitals. Our research was a part of a larger data collection effort at the hospitals concerning corporate social responsibility activities (e.g., Chang, May, & Cha, 2012). We followed the recommended translation and back translation techniques for the survey (Brislin, 1970). Data were collected from medium to large Korean hospitals with more than 100 beds. Two-hundred and 31 of 669 full-time nurses recruited for the study completed and returned the survey directly to us (34.5% response rate). Two-hundred and 26 participants were female, 64% held college or university-level degrees, and 65% of the participants were field nurses; in addition, 35% held leadership positions such as head nurses, or team managers. Their average work experience was 12.7 years.

Measures. We measured *MOI* using the five-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) used in Study 1 and 2. For *organizations' legal compliance*, we used four items ($\alpha = .85$) from Maignan and Ferrell's (2001) scale for employee's perception of legal citi-

zenship behaviors of their employer. We measured *organizational identification* using three items adapted for the hospital context from Kim, Lee, Lee, and Kim (2010). *Turnover intentions* ($\alpha = .87$) were measured using three items from Konovsky and Cropanzano (1991). We controlled for *age*, *gender*, and *educational level* in our analyses. Based on past research on turnover intentions, we also controlled for *job tenure*, *work hours* (per week), *number of patients* (i.e., workload), *job position* (field nurses, head nurses, team managers, and directors—coded as a categorical variable), and number of *prior turnovers*. Further, we controlled for the participants' attitudes toward the hospital, including *affective commitment* (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and *job satisfaction* (Russell, Lin, & Smith, 2004).

Results and Discussion

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates for the study variables. According to Hu & Bentler (1999), the proposed measurement model with four factors (i.e., organizational legal compliance, MOI, OI, and turnover intentions) fit the data well ($\chi^2_{(84)} = 425.132$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .97, NNFI = .98). To test our hypothesis, we created five models to regress on nurses' turnover intentions. As shown in Table 5, we first entered the control variables in Model 1. Second, we entered the organizations' legal compliance and OI in Model 2, and organizations' legal compliance and MOI in Model 3, respectively. We then entered the interaction terms (Organizations' Legal Compliance \times OI and Organizations' Legal Compliance \times MOI) in Models 4 and 5, respectively. Finally, in Model 6 we entered both interaction terms simultaneously to examine whether organizations' legal compliance interacts with MOI in predicting employees' turnover intentions over and above the interaction effect of organizations' legal compliance and organizational identification. As shown in Table 5, the interaction between organizational legal compliance and MOI was significant ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$ in Model 5 and $\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$ in Model 6), whereas the interaction between organizational legal compliance and OI was not ($\beta = .01$, $p > .10$ in Model 4 and $\beta = .13$, $p > .10$ in Model 6). Consistent with our prediction, simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that the relationship between MOI and employees' turnover intentions was stronger among organizations with higher levels of legal compliance ($B = -1.89$, $SE = .96$, $t = -1.99$, $p < .05$) than those with lower levels of legal compliance ($B = 1.61$, $SE = .86$, $t = 1.87$, $p < .10$; see Figure 2).

This study points to the important roles of both employees' moral identification and organizations' dedication to moral actions in retaining employees who value morality. Integrating social identity theory with theory on the moral self and the ASA framework, we proposed and found that employees' moral identification was most effective in retaining employees when organizations persistently pursue moral values, which allows employees to reinforce the consistency of their moral selves in attitudes and membership behaviors, and allows them to maintain the perceived fit between their own values and the values and actions of their employer. This study also demonstrates an *interactionist* perspective of the utility of moral identification in employee retention in light of the context of organizational ethicality.

Table 4
Correlation Matrix for Study 3

	Mean	SD	AGE	GEN	EDU	TEN	HRs	PAT	PTV	AFC	SAT	ORW	MOI	OI	TOV
AGE	2.37	.91	—												
GEN	1.98	.15	.22**	—											
EDU	2.00	.81	.37**	.15*	—										
TEN	12.71	8.70	.81**	.19**	.41**	—									
HRs	41.03	9.53	.07	-.04	.09	.09	—								
PAT	24.86	19.69	.13	.09	.10	.10	.04	—							
PTV	1.54	.83	.30**	.10	-.08	.10	.03	.10	—						
AFC	4.84	1.12	.51**	.18**	.26**	.48**	.10	.13	.09	(.89)					
SAT	4.49	1.01	.39**	.13	.19**	.35**	.05	.07	-.05	.68**	(.84)				
OLC	4.89	1.05	.34**	.08	.31**	.36**	.13	.10	-.03	.59**	.63**	(.85)			
MOI	5.33	.92	.38**	.09	.29**	.39**	.07	.09	.07	.66**	.51**	.62**	(.91)		
OI	4.91	1.13	.39**	.20**	.18**	.34**	.09	.19*	.10	.78**	.63**	.50**	.58**	(.93)	
TOV	3.84	1.40	-.33**	-.07	-.17**	-.33**	-.06	-.01	.01	-.55**	-.46**	-.40**	-.38**	-.52**	(.87)

Note. $N = 231$. Scale reliability estimates (alpha) are reported in parentheses along the diagonal. AGE (ordinal: 1 = 20s, 2 = 30s, 3 = 40s, and 4 = 50s); GEN = gender (1 = male, 2 = female); EDU = educational level (1 = high school, 2 = associate, 3 = bachelor's, 4 = master's, 5 = doctoral); TEN = year of work experience (tenure); HRs = work hours per week; PAT = number of patients under the service; PTV = number of prior turnover; AFC = affective commitment; SAT = job satisfaction; MOI = moral identification; OI = organizational identification; TOV = turnover intentions; OLC = organizations' legal compliance.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

General Discussion

Prior research supports that individuals want to work in organizations who value morality and ethics (e.g., Greening & Turban, 2000; Rupp et al., 2013; Turban & Greening, 1997). This line of research assumes that membership in an ethical organization matters because individuals develop a sense of belongingness to a social collective that embraces moral virtues. To explore this assumption, we propose the new construct of *moral identification*,

which describes an individual's perception of oneness or belongingness associated with an organization that exhibits ethical traits such as care, kindness, and compassion. Integrating theory on the moral self and social identity theory, we elaborate on the formation of moral identification and propose an overall theoretical model to demonstrate the contributions of moral identification to three important organizational processes: employee attraction, motivation, and retention. Findings from three studies revealed that: (a) job

Table 5
Results of Moderation Test for Study 3

Variables	DV: Turnover intentions					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Controls						
Age	-.11 (.19)	-.12 (.19)	-.12 (.19)	-.12 (.19)	-.11 (.19)	-.13 (.19)
Gender	.06 (.64)	.08 (.64)	.06 (.64)	.08 (.64)	.06 (.64)	.07 (.64)
Educational level	.06 (.13)	.06 (.13)	.07 (.13)	.06 (.13)	.07 (.13)	.05 (.13)
Tenure	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Work hours	-.04 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.03 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Patients size	.05 (.01)	.08 (.05)	.05 (.01)	.08 (.05)	.07 (.01)	.08 (.05)
Prior turnover(s)	.07 (.13)	.08 (.12)	.06 (.13)	.08 (.13)	.07 (.13)	.09 (.13)
Commitment	-.45** (.13)	-.26* (.14)	-.40** (.15)	-.26* (.16)	-.40** (.15)	-.30* (.16)
Job satisfaction	-.08 (.13)	.03 (.14)	-.03 (.14)	.03 (.14)	-.01 (.14)	.04 (.14)
IVs						
OI		-.25* (.13)		-.26* (.14)		-.17 (.14)
MOI			-.02 (.15)		-.09 (.15)	-.09 (.15)
MoV						
OLC		-.13 (.12)	-.13 (.13)	-.13 (.12)	-.14 (.13)	-.12 (.13)
Interaction						
OI * OLC				.01 (.08)		.13 (.10)
MOI * OLC					-.14* (.09)	-.22* (.11)
F	8.07**	7.62**	6.81**	6.94**	6.69**	6.48**
R ²	.30	.34	.31	.34	.33	.36
ΔR ²		.04*	.01	.00	.02*	.03*

Note. $N = 231$; IV = independent variable; MoV = moderating variable; DV = dependent variable; MOI = moral identification; OI = organizational identification; OLC = organizations' legal compliance (with lower scores indicating low levels of compliance). Standardized coefficients are listed.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

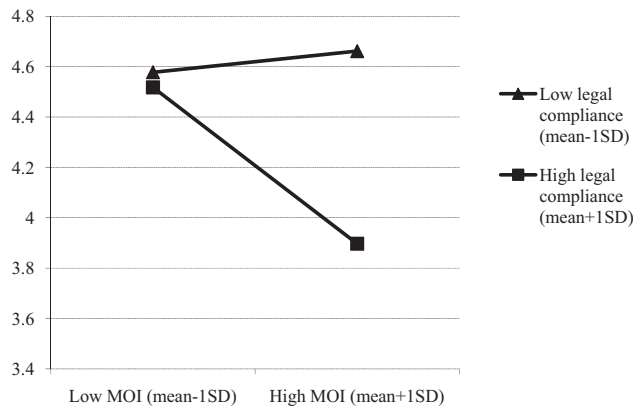


Figure 2. The Moderating Effect of Organizations' Legal Compliance on the Relation between Moral Identification and Employees' Turnover Intentions. Note: MOI = moral identification; SD = standard deviation.

applicants with strong (vs. weak) moral identities were more likely to develop moral identification with a socially responsible employer, which in turn affected their job pursuit intentions to such firms (i.e., employee attraction, Study 1); (b) employees with strong (vs. weak) moral identification were less likely to engage in unethical behaviors at work (i.e., employee motivation, Study 2); and (c) employees' moral identification reduced their turnover intentions only when organizations demonstrate conformity to moral and legal principles (i.e., employee retention, Study 3). Below, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this research as well as the limitations and future research opportunities that emerge from our work.

Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, our research contributes to the extant literature in multiple ways. First, our research explores the assumption of whether individuals develop a sense of belongingness to an ethical organization. Through integration of theory on the moral self with social identity theory, we developed the new construct of moral identification, which reflects individuals' sense of belongingness to a social collective that emphasizes morality and ethics. This new construct extends the social identification literature (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2006) through emphasizing the role of organizational morality in the formation of social identification. As demonstrated in our Study 2 and Study 3, this morality-based identification can explain employee motivation and retention over and above what traditional social identification (e.g., organizational identification) can explain. In short, our new construct connects the social identification and business ethics literatures and offers new insights on individuals' reactions when morality is contextually relevant and subjectively meaningful.

Second, moral identification sheds new light on employee attraction. Both theory on the moral self (Blasi, 1984, 2005; Shao et al., 2008) and theories related to employee attraction (Coldwell et al., 2008; Kristof, 1996) imply that employees tend to pursue jobs with employers who possess similar attributes and characteristics (e.g., morality) as themselves. Our research extends theories on employee attraction by demonstrating that such perceived P-O ethical fit (e.g., Coldwell et al., 2008) serves as basis for job

applicants to develop morality-based identification, which triggers applicants' desire to acquire membership and pursue jobs at such firms (Study 1). This finding not only supports our theoretical foundation of moral identification, but also points out the psychological mechanisms underlying the effect of P-O ethical fit on employee attraction (i.e., morality-based identification).

Third, moral identification contributes to a better understanding of employees' motivation in engaging in (un)ethical behaviors at work. Based on the integration of theory on the moral self and social identity theory, we propose that individuals' desires to maintain self-consistency accounts for the reasons why employees' moral identification can regulate their morality-related behaviors. To the extent that employees strive for self-consistency, those with strong (vs. weak) moral identification will be less likely to engage in behaviors that are deviant from the values of their identification domain (Study 2). Although prior theories predicting individuals' engagement in (un)ethical behaviors have pointed out the role of various factors from both the individual's (e.g., moral reasoning, moral intuition, moral emotions, and moral identity) and the organization's (e.g., ethical climate, ethical leadership) perspectives (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984, 2005; Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Haidt, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; Kohlberg, 1969; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994), our research complements these theories by documenting the role of morality-based identification in shaping employees' ethical behaviors at work.

Fourth, moral identification offers new insights in employee retention. As explained above, moral identification represents individuals' sense of belongingness to an ethical organization. Thus, we expect that employees with strong (vs. weak) moral identification with the organization desire to maintain membership. However, the effect of employees' moral identification in reducing their turnover intentions is subject to whether the organization can constantly maintain high moral standards in its activities (Study 3). Taking an interactionist approach, we consider the joint effect of both moral identification and organizations' conformity to legal norms of morality in determining employees' turnover intentions. Although prior research on employee retention has predominantly focused on factors pertinent to organizational practices (e.g., Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012), work characteristics (e.g., Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001a, 2001b), and the social exchange process between employees and the organization/supervisor/colleagues (e.g., Aryee & Chay, 2001), this study extends prior research through studying employee retention from both corporate morality and social identification perspectives while controlling for previously established effects (e.g., job satisfaction, affective commitment) on employee retention. Our study not only documents the role of morality-based identification in employee retention, but also highlights how the magnitude of the impact of moral identification on employee retention can be affected by the organizational context.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the present study offers useful implications to organizational managers regarding employee attraction, motivation, and retention in relation to workplace ethics. First, attracting potential employees can be challenging and expensive (Holtom et al., 2008). Our research suggests that compa-

nies who value morality and demonstrate strong dedication to ethics can attract job applicants who share similar values (e.g., those with strong moral identities). This finding supports the notion that firms' ethical dedication pays off in the recruiting process in terms of applicant attraction (e.g., Greening & Turban, 2000; Rupp et al., 2013). Thus, companies who wish to build workforces to further support its morality-related firm activities can emphasize and better communicate its ethical goals and achievements to the job applicants. This could be one of the most effective strategies to acquire morally valuable human resources.

Second, quite a few studies discuss the importance for companies to motivate employees to behave ethically at work (e.g., Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008; Trevino, den Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014; Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Our findings suggest that employees' moral identification with their employer can potentially reduce their unethical behaviors at work. Thus, organizations should take efforts to help employees develop such morality-based identification with the company. Specifically, managers and companies might try to incorporate the notion of business ethics in important management practices (e.g., employee orientation, socialization, and communication programs) to effectively convey the company's moral standards and principles. Such communication practices about ethics can help to increase (a) employees' perceived saliency and distinctiveness of the company's moral attributes, and (b) employees' sense of belongingness to a moral company. Such cultivation of employees' morality-based identification with the company may help promote ethical behaviors in the workplace. Moreover, companies and managers may combine this approach with evaluation and incentive programs (e.g., incorporate behavioral ethics in performance appraisal, rewards, or recognition for workplace ethics) and ethical leadership practices to further increase employees' motivation to behave ethically at work.

Finally, employee retention is difficult and expensive (Holtom et al., 2008). Our research revealed that employees who morally identify with the organization are more likely to want to remain employed if the organization can continuously maintain moral standards. This finding suggests that firms' ethical dedication pays off in retaining valuable employees who think and behave ethically. Thus, to build and retain an ethical workforce, managers should not only design management practices to facilitate the development of morality-based identification among employees (as discussed above), but also develop procedures (e.g., ethics policies or codes of conduct) or form particular committees or departments (e.g., ethics committee or department, ethics officer; Weaver, Trevino, & Cochran, 1999) to strictly monitor and regulate firm actions according to moral principles and standards. This will help to more effectively retain employees who value ethics.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

In addition to the theoretical and practical implications, our research has several positive features. First, we validated the construct and measure of moral identification via a series of theoretically driven investigations centered on employee attraction, motivation, and retention. Second, Studies 2 and 3 were field studies among working adults, which contributes to the generalizability of our findings to similar organizational settings. Third, Study 2 used two waves of surveys to help establish a causal link

among the variables of interest. Fourth, we controlled for numerous factors that could potentially influence our outcome variables in all of our studies.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be noted in interpreting our findings and be addressed in future research. First, Study 1 involved college students with some work experience who were about to enter the job market. Although we believe this is an appropriate sample for our research question, future research may consider if full-time employees react similarly in their job pursuit intentions to ethical organizations (e.g., socially responsible firms). Study 1 was also a scenario-based experiment, consistent with research in this area (e.g., Turban & Greening, 1997). Although the bootstrapping technique used in this study demonstrated that the plausibility of the proposed causal relationship of variables was greater than alternative causal directions (MacKinnon et al., 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008), future research may examine the mediation process between moral identity, moral identification, and job applicants' actual job pursuit behaviors in longitudinal studies, which help overcome some of the limitations of scenario-based designs (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Trevino, 2010; Trevino et al., 2006). Such research may also consider the influence of firms' ethical achievements (e.g., corporate social responsibility [CSR] activities) on the moral identities and moral identification of employees over time.

Second, Study 3 used cross-sectional, self-reported data. We believe that these self-ratings were appropriate because: (a) employee *perceptions* of organizations' legal compliance is a more powerful predictor of employee attitudes than *objective* organizational actions (Orbe & King, 2000); (b) self-ratings of such psychological constructs as moral identification, organizational identification, and turnover intentions are more valid than others' report (e.g., coworkers) because others may not have full knowledge of the focal participants' attitudes and intentions; and (c) we focus on the interaction effect in Study 3 and interaction effects are unlikely to be influenced by common method bias (Siemens, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Nevertheless, future research should collect data from multiple sources at different stages to better assess the theoretical connections between moral identification and workplace variables (see Kozlowski, 2009 and Podsakoff et al., 2012 for a discussion of these issues).

Third, Study 3 was conducted in hospital settings where organizational morality and ethics attract considerable attention. Future research should replicate and extend our research to other industries to examine the generalizability of our findings. Fourth, our research serves as one of the first attempts to propose the notion of moral identification and provide theoretical logic and empirical evidence to support its implications for employee attraction, motivation, and retention. Future research should examine the formation and development of moral identification as well as the change or variation of it across different individuals and situations. Fifth, future research may explore the interactive effect of moral identification and other variables (e.g., ethical leadership) in determining employees' reactions to ethical issues at work. Finally, future research could explore whether or when moral identification can regulate employees' more proactive moral behaviors (e.g., promoting virtuous organizational CSR actions) which may help enhance corporate reputations.

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Appendix

Moral Identification Scale

Characteristics, including *caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind*, may describe a person. The person with these characteristics could be you or it could be someone else. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer the following questions.

1. Being a member of the organization whose members have these characteristics is an important part of who I am.
2. I strongly desire to be a member of the organization whose members have these characteristics.
3. I regard myself as an organizational member who has these characteristics.
4. I would feel bad if I am a member of the organization whose members have these characteristics (reverse-scored).
5. When thinking of the organizations to which others belong, I would be proud of my affiliations with the organization whose members have these characteristics.

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