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Egoistic norms, organizational identification, and the perceived ethicality of unethical pro-organizational behavior: A moral maturation perspective

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Abstract

Do some employees engage in unethical behavior because they actually believe it is the right thing to do? We explore this question in this article. Unlike other forms of unethical behavior, unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) is aimed at benefiting

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the perpetrator's organization. We propose that employees are increasingly likely to engage in UPB when they believe these acts are ethically appropriate, and that these ethicality beliefs are strongest among employees who work in departments with egoistic norms. Such norms lack guidance on the importance of protecting outside stakeholders' interest, and provide limited moral knowledge about the broader implications of UPB. We further propose that organizational identification strengthens these effects. Across three field studies, we find support for the hypothesized effects. Ethical judgments of UPB were positively related to both self (Studies 1 and 3) and supervisor (Study 2) ratings of employee UPB. In turn, acts of UPB were judged more ethically appropriate in departments with egoistic norms, and these positive ethical judgments mediated the relationships between egoistic norms and employee UPB (Study 2). Finally, the indirect effects of egoistic norms were strongest among employees with high levels of organizational identification (Study 3). Implications for theory and research are discussed.

Keywords
egoistic norms, ethical judgments, ethics, moral maturation, organizational identification, unethical pro-organizational behavior

> My coworker knew that the customer was entitled to have her fees reversed after she had been charged for taking her account into the negative. She lied to the customer and told her that she would not be getting the fees back. My coworker felt that holding on to the fees would be better for balancing the branch's budget, but she greatly upset the customer in the process. (Bank teller)

> More often than I care to recall, I have worked with sales people who stretched the truth about our work when talking to customers. I often refer to it as an attempt to 'sell air,' claiming that our organization has experience and capabilities that it simply does not. If confronted, the sales person would simply convey that he was expressing his utmost confidence in the company's resources, yet what he said was still dishonest and untrue. (IT consultant)

As the above examples illustrate, though many forms of ethical misconduct are overtly destructive (e.g. damaging equipment) or purely self-serving (e.g. fraudulent reporting), other forms of misconduct are meant to be of benefit to the organization. At the same time, the dishonesty exhibited in these examples violates fundamental expectations underlying the provider–customer relationship, and both perpetrators likely failed to consider the broader implications of their actions. To capture this unique form of unethical behavior, Umphress and Bingham (2011) coined the term 'unethical pro-organizational behavior' (UPB), which they defined as 'actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members (e.g. leaders) and violate core societal values, morals, laws, or standards of proper conduct' (Umphress and Bingham, 2011: 622). UPB actions such as misrepresenting the truth to portray a positive organizational image or providing a good recommendation for a poor-performing

employee to another employer to get rid of the employee are similar to pro-social citizenship behaviors in that the acts are targeted at benefiting the organization. However, these acts may ultimately result in harmful consequences such as fines, sanctions, or negative stakeholder reactions (Umphress et al., 2010), and are unethical because they violate widely accepted ethical hypernorms in society, such as fairness and care for others in one's community (Curry et al., 2019; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994).

Prior studies have suggested that individual characteristics such as organizational identification (Chen et al., 2016; Umphress et al., 2010) and Machiavellianism (Castille et al., 2018), as well as leaders' (Effelsberg et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2015; Miao et al., 2013) and coworkers' behavior (Thau et al., 2015), can play a role in encouraging UPB. However, what remains unclear is whether employees who engage in acts of UPB know that these behaviors are unethical, and if not, what factors explain this lapse in ethical judgment. This is an important theoretical issue because individuals are motivated to act in a manner that is consistent with events they perceive to be ethical (i.e. perceived ethicality), and avoid actions they judge as inappropriate (e.g. Reynolds et al., 2014; Rottig et al., 2011; Treviño et al., 2006). One explanation that has been offered in the literature is that some people use cognitive distortions (i.e. moral disengagement) to circumvent other moral cognition processes in order to engage in UPBs (Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019). However, these studies do not explicitly test the role of moral knowledge in understanding UPBs. Because UPBs involve prosocial motivations, some employees may engage in these acts because they genuinely believe the behaviors are ethical, and therefore moral knowledge should be especially relevant to UPB.

Moreover, given that UPBs are aimed at benefiting the organization, it is important to understand the role of organizational factors in cultivating false judgments of UPBs as ethical and for whom this is most likely to occur. Past research on the drivers of UPB has primarily focused on individual characteristics and coworker influences, largely neglecting the role of the organization's context. Yet, far from passive, organizations set the tone for employee ethical conduct through systems and norms that support such behaviors (Martin et al., 2014). Indeed, in their original conceptualization of the UPB construct, Umphress and Bingham (2011) proposed that organizational norms are likely to play a central role in shaping the understanding of the implications of UPB and motivating employees to engage in such acts. Organizations norms are reflective of the organization's ethical infrastructure, and Martin et al. (2014) proposed that egoistic norms (i.e. norms that encourage members to act on own self-interest) impact how members construe the ethicality of the issues they face. Egoistic norms do not directly encourage ethically questionable behavior; rather, they are amoral in nature and promote actions that have personal benefits while disregarding the concerns of outside stakeholders (Jones et al., 2007). Empirical research is needed to determine if egoistic norms shape moral knowledge and indirectly motivate acts of UPB.

Finally, while social identity arguments have been used to explain the relationship between organizational identification and UPB (Chen et al., 2016; Umphress et al., 2010), previous research does not fully explain why high organizational identification would necessarily override other moral considerations, nor has it considered the interplay between organizational norms and individual organizational identification. Therefore, drawing on Hannah et al.'s (2011) moral maturation and conation framework,

we provide an alternate perspective on UPBs by examining the role of organizational norms in motivating UPBs through their influence on employees' ethical judgments. We also consider the role of organizational identification as an important moderating factor that explains why this path of influence is stronger for some employees than for others.

In this research, we aim to make three primary contributions to the UPB literature. First, our study highlights the importance of ethical judgments in enabling or inhibiting UPB. By examining moral cognition as a failure of moral knowledge, our research offers a new perspective on the antecedents of UPB. That is, our work suggests that employees are motivated to engage in acts of UPB when they perceive these behaviors to be ethically appropriate. Understanding employees' moral knowledge related to specific behaviors provides richer insights into the cognitive processes underlying the motivation to engage in behaviors that have both unethical and ethical (e.g. prosocial) elements. Second, our study sheds light on the role of organizational norms in shaping moral knowledge and the motivation to engage in UPB. Specifically, our research suggests that egoistic norms not only encourage self-interested behavior, but also fail to provide comprehensive moral knowledge regarding the impact of UPB on external stakeholders (Hannah et al., 2011). Employees are therefore discouraged from considering the complex ethical implications of their actions and are prone to make faulty ethical judgments of behaviors that benefit internal stakeholders, including themselves.

Third, we extend the understanding of how organizational identification contributes to UPB. As self-identities become increasingly intertwined with social identities, the distinctions among various identities are blurred. Employees who strongly identify with their employer tend to see a strong connection between their own success and that of their employer (Wan-Huggins et al., 1998). When the organizational role identity is highly salient, employees are attentive to egoistic norms and less sensitive to the broader moral implications of UPB. Thus, norms are salient and bear progressive weight on how employees construe the ethicality of their actions. Therefore, our research demonstrates that moral maturation capacities in the form of norms and organizational identification indirectly influence UPB through individuals' moral knowledge related to UPB. A model of the hypothesized relationships is depicted in Figure 1.

Theoretical overview and hypothesis development

Hannah et al.'s (2011) moral maturation and moral conation framework builds on Rest and colleagues' (Rest, 1986; Rest et al., 1999) four-stage model of ethical decision making to provide an expanded view of the moral processes and underlying capacities that explain how employees construe and act on ethical dilemmas in the workplace. According to Hannah et al.'s (2011) framework, moral cognition processes (moral sensitivity and moral judgments) reflect the awareness and understanding of ethically charged issues that, in turn, guide moral conation processes (moral motivation and moral behavior), which reflect an impetus to act in an ethically responsible manner. They further identified the moral maturation factors, which involve 'the capacity to elaborate and effectively attend to, store, retrieve, process and make meaning of morally relevant information' (Hannah et al., 2011: 667). Moral maturation enables employees to effectively enact the moral cognition and conation (i.e. the ability to take responsibility and be motivated to

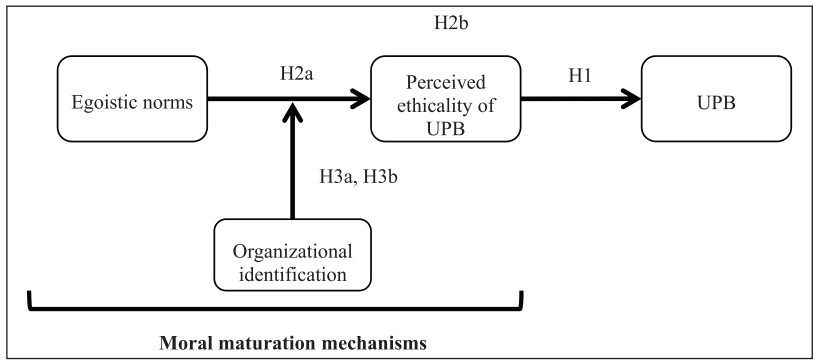

Figure 1. Model of hypothesized relationships.

engage in ethical behavior) processes. Two of those capacities are particularly relevant to the current research. First, Hannah et al. (2011) propose that individuals who possess morally complex knowledge have more information available and are able to make better moral judgments than those who possess less morally complex knowledge. We utilize these arguments for our first two sets of hypotheses. Second, they suggest that our moral identities are made up of complex sub-identities related to our various social roles. These sub-identities will affect how we process information in different domains, depending on how our social roles are activated within those domains. We build from these arguments in our final set of hypotheses.

Perceived ethicality of unethical pro-organizational behavior

Ethical cognitions play an integral role in guiding ethics-related decisions, intentions, and actions (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Hannah et al., 2011; Rest, 1986; Reynolds, 2006). In their conceptualization of UPB, Umphress and Bingham (2010) emphasized the importance of ethical cognition and highlighted the central enabling role of neutralization processes whereby employees mask or overlook the ethical implications of their actions. Several studies have demonstrated support for the role of neutralization via moral disengagement processes (Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019). However, acts of UPB also have a prosocial component aimed at enhancing or even protecting the organization's interest. Moral disengagement processes fail to consider cognitive processes involving moral knowledge and judgments, and disregard the possibility that people who engage in UPB may do so because they view these behaviors as ethically or morally appropriate. Further supporting this assertion, Reynolds et al. (2014) found that moral judgments are a primary cognitive motivator of unethical behavior. Likewise, Hannah et al. (2011) emphasized that individuals possessing rich, complex moral knowledge are better equipped to make ethically appropriate decisions than individuals with low levels of moral knowledge. In other words, poor ethical intentions often stem from incomplete and more favorable judgments surrounding an ethical issue (Kohlberg, 1986).

To capture the normative and philosophical perspectives that people draw on to judge the ethicality of their actions and decisions, Reidenbach and Robin (1990) considered ethical judgments from three perspectives, including moral equity, implied social contracts, and relativism. Among the three, moral equity judgments are the most widely used to assess ethical judgments (e.g. Bailey and Spicer, 2007) as they provide an 'almost fundamental decision rule for evaluating the moral content of business decisions' (Reidenbach and Robin, 1990: 645). Moral equity judgments are grounded in justice theory (Rawls, 1971) and deontological philosophies (Kant, 1964; Ross, 1930), and reflect the extent to which actions or decisions are viewed as fair, just, and morally appropriate. Moral equity judgments have been linked to ethics-related intentions and behavior (Resick et al., 2013; Rottig et al., 2011).

Though UPB actions such as exaggerating the truth or even withholding a refund might seem innocuous, these actions are none the less dishonest, violate stakeholders' expectations, and may even contravene a law or regulation (Umphress et al., 2011). If such actions are exposed, the longer-term consequences may include fines, lost customers, or reputational damage. Employees focusing on the immediate benefits of UPB may fail to consider the broader ramifications and erroneously judge such actions as more ethically appropriate than do employees who do consider the broader implications. When people do not consider all of the relevant information related to a moral issue, lack complex thinking surrounding UPB, and fail to be morally sensitive to all ethical implications, this is a failure of moral cognition (Hannah et al., 2011). Equipped with moral knowledge (either incomplete or complex), employees are motivated to act in a manner they view as ethically appropriate (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Hannah et al., 2011; Rest, 1986; Reynolds et al., 2014). Therefore, increasingly positive ethicality judgments of UPBs subsequently enhance the likelihood of UPB, while increasingly negative ethicality judgments diminish the willingness to engage in acts of UPB. As such, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The perceived ethicality of UPB is positively related to UPB.

Egoistic norms

Hannah et al.'s (2011) moral maturation and conation framework proposes that the complexity of individuals' mental schema is an important moral maturation capacity. They suggest that contextual cues from the organization can influence the breadth of employees' moral knowledge. They state that 'moral judgments are inherently contextualized,' with organizations providing knowledge to employees. Subsequently, 'greater complexity in a given moral domain(s) will drive more elaborate moral judgments concerning that domain' (Hannah et al., 2011: 669).

High moral complexity increases the amount of available information and helps employees to discriminate among multiple information points. The organization's ethical infrastructure and reward and control systems therefore signal to employees what is valued and expected, and through social learning and vicarious experiences, these organizational pressures influence how employees judge the ethicality of their actions (Hannah et al., 2011).

Victor and Cullen (1987) were among the first to examine how ethical norms characterizing the work context influence the actions and decisions of organizational members. They identified egoism as a key criterion used to evaluate the ethicality of business actions and decisions, along with benevolent norms and principled decision making. Organizations with benevolent norms are typically described as moral, and encourage social responsibility and concern for others, whereas principled norms involve rule-based ethical standards (Victor and Cullen, 1988). More recently, Martin et al. (2014) argued that egoistic norms are central to understanding an organization's ethical infrastructure and the contextual features that affect moral cognition, motivation, and behavior. In organizations with amoral norms, ethical expectations are often ambiguous and 'organizational norms fail to encourage ethical behavior' (Umphress and Bingham, 2011: 629). Though egoistic norms have been characterized as amoral in nature, they are also thought to promote self-interested behavior (Jones et al., 2007; Victor and Cullen, 1988). Egoistic norms send clear signals to members that maximizing the interests of a narrow set of internal stakeholders is an important criterion for evaluating success as well as the ethicality of one's actions (Jones et al., 2007; Martin and Cullen, 2006; Victor and Cullen, 1988). By encouraging members to act in their own self-interest, behaviors that are instrumental to gaining desired personal rewards are viewed as ethically appropriate, and the implications of one's actions and decisions on other stakeholder groups are overlooked (Jones et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2014; Victor and Cullen, 1988). That is, in organizations characterized by an egoistic orientation, self-interest is central to determining what constitutes ethically appropriate conduct (Jones et al., 2007; Kish-Gephart et al., 2014).

At first glance, egoistic interests appear to be at odds with the pro-organizational focus of UPB. However, a closer look indicates that employee self-interest and organizational interests are often deeply intertwined. In the vast majority of UPBs, both the individual and organization likely benefit (Thau et al., 2015; Vadera and Pratt, 2013). Organizations align employee personal goals and incentives with organizational interests as a way to encourage employees to engage in behaviors that benefit the organization (Eisenhardt, 1989), which can lead to self-interested employees being more willing to engage in UPBs (Lee et al., 2019). Moreover, egoistic norms encourage employees to engage in behaviors that benefit a narrow set of stakeholders (whose interests overlap with employees' own self-interests; Jones et al., 2007). In settings with strong egoistic norms, employees are likely to be attuned to how engaging in acts of UPB aimed at helping the organization simultaneously advance their own interests.

Accordingly, we suggest that egoistic norms encourage employees to focus on a narrow set of stakeholders' interests in determining the appropriateness of their decisions and actions, which reduces moral complexity. Egoistic norms signal to employees that factors enhancing profitability and self-interest should take precedence over concern for the impact on others. Unlike organizations with norms that provide cues and information regarding appropriate treatment of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders (and therefore increase employees' moral knowledge related to UPB), egoistic norms provide no such knowledge. Because the consideration of outside stakeholders' interest is comparatively low in egoistic organizations (Jones et al., 2007), employees are unlikely to consider the broader ethical implications of these actions. Therefore, egoistic norms

constrain the factors that employees consider when determining the ethical appropriateness of their actions, detracting from the moral complexity capacities that help employees to respond to ethical dilemmas in the workplace.

For example, when considering whether or not to reverse the customer fees, the teller in the opening example faced competing information and priorities. On the one hand, withholding the fees enhanced the branch's bottom line, potentially benefiting coworkers, the branch manager, and themselves. However, not reversing the fees harmed the customer, who is an important external stakeholder. The branch may have had egoistic norms that signaled the importance of maximizing one's own self-interests, and by extension, the interests of the organization. Such norms discourage employees from considering the broader impact of their actions, which reduces available moral information and limits employees' capacity to consider the more complex ethical implications of withholding the refund. As a result, the teller is less likely to judge such actions as ethically inappropriate. Therefore, we propose that egoistic norms provide limited moral knowledge concerning the impact of UPBs, increasing the chance that employees will erroneously judge these actions as ethically acceptable and be motivated to engage in UPB because of their faulty ethical judgments. We propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Egoistic norms are positively related to the perceived ethicality of UPB.

Hypothesis 2b: The perceived ethicality of UPB mediates the positive relationship between egoistic norms and UPB.

Organizational identification

Research has demonstrated that employee action results from the intersection of contextual (e.g. the norms of the environment) and individual factors (e.g. employee characteristics) (e.g. Aquino et al., 2004; Verbeke et al., 1996), and we next examine the exacerbating role of organizational identification. Organizational identification is defined as 'a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's success and failures as one's own' (Mael and Ashforth, 1992: 103). Organizational identification is a part of employees' social identity; when individuals see a cognitive link between themselves and their workplace, their organizational identity is considered particularly salient (Dukerich et al., 2002). Prior research has argued that organizational identification can increase the likelihood that UPB will be an attractive behavior to employees (Umphress and Bingham, 2011), either directly (e.g. Chen et al., 2016; Effelsberg and Solga, 2015; Kong, 2016) or by strengthening other effects (e.g. Lee et al., 2019; Umphress et al., 2010).

Hannah et al.'s (2011) moral maturation and conation framework proposed that both the complexity of moral knowledge and individual moral identity are important underlying capacities that enable or inhibit employees from pursuing ethically questionable behaviors. In their framework, they argue that moral identity is not necessarily a singular, stable trait. Rather, drawing from self-complexity theory (Woolfolk et al., 2004), they propose that moral identity consists of various sub-identities related to one's social roles.

In particular, they suggest that whenever an identity is activated, this can disrupt information processing and self-regulation when addressing moral situations related to that identity. For example, consultants who strongly identify with their firm may view the exaggerations of firm capabilities from account executives (such as those in the opening example) as perfectly acceptable, but discourage their children from making similar exaggerations about their experiences to their school teachers. Supporting this contention, occupation-specific identities have been found to influence how individuals make ethical judgments related to particular contexts (Leavitt et al., 2012).

Individuals who identify with their organization internalize the organization's norms and expectations (Pratt, 1998), which may inhibit them from considering the more abstract ethical complexities of their actions and decisions (Hannah et al., 2011). When a specific identity related to one's occupation is activated, an individual will be more likely to consider only a 'narrow constituency base' (Leavitt et al., 2012: 1319). In the domain of UPB, which benefits organizational members, organizational identity should be a highly relevant social role that can strengthen the ties between employee self-interests and organizational interests, as well as limit employees' considerations of outside constituencies. In settings with egoistic norms, employees who identify strongly with the organization are likely to internalize these norms and emphasize actions that benefit themselves, and simultaneously their organization, while ignoring actions that adversely impact external stakeholders (Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Umphress et al., 2010). Because these employees lack organizational norms that would otherwise provide them with the opportunity to develop morally complex knowledge (Hannah et al., 2011), their social-role identity will play an important role in how they make ethical judgments. This decrease in moral sensitivity to the broader ethical implications of UPB will lead to a stronger relationship between egoistic norms and ethical judgments of UPB for employees who have high levels of organizational identification. Conversely, individuals with lower levels of organizational identification have weaker identity ties with the firm, see less overlap between self-interests and organizational interests, and are more likely to consider competing information that would signal the unethical implications of UPB.

Taken together, prior UPB research and the moral maturation and conation framework suggest that employee organizational identification plays an important role in understanding ethical cognition processes needed to engage in acts of UPB. We extend this line of work by arguing that strong organizational identity intensifies employees' focus on organizational norms and the importance attributed to internal versus external constituents, thereby reducing employees' ability to be sensitive to the broader ethical implications of UPB. Therefore, we propose that organizational identity enhances the direct effects of egoistic norms on employees' ethical judgments of UPB and indirect effects of egoistic norms on UPB:

Hypothesis 3a: Organizational identification moderates the relationship between egoistic norms and the perceived ethicality of UPB such that the relationship is increasingly positive as organizational identification increases.

Hypothesis 3b: The indirect effect of egoistic norms on UPB through the perceived ethicality of UPB is conditional on employee organizational identification. Specifically, the indirect effect becomes positive and stronger as organizational identification increases.

Overview of studies

We tested our hypotheses across three studies, testing portions of our model in Studies 1 and 2, and our full model in Study 3. In Study 1, we use a critical incidence technique to examine the link between ethical judgments and intentions related to UPB (Hypothesis 1). In Study 2, we test the role of egoistic norms as a distal influence on UPB through ethical judgments in a multi-source, cross-sectional field study (Hypotheses 2a and 2b). Finally, in Study 3, we test the full model of relationships (including Hypotheses 3a and 3b) in a multi-wave field study.

Study 1: Method

Sample and procedure

We recruited participants using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online marketplace where registered users can complete tasks (called HITs) for a nominal payment. MTurk provides 'access to a large, stable and diverse subject pool' (Mason and Suri, 2012: 1). Several studies (e.g. Lanaj et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2014) have successfully used MTurk to access a cross-organizational, cross-occupational sample of working adults. Participation was voluntary and open to any registered member who was currently employed and working 20 hours per week or more in the United States.

We adapted a critical incident technique developed by Shapiro et al. (2011) to focus on incidents of UPB, limiting the recall window to 1 year. Specifically, after providing demographic information, participants were asked to 'Think back over the last year as an employee in your organization. Try to recall a time when you saw or heard about a coworker doing one of the following things', after which each of the six items from Umphress et al.'s (2010) scale were presented. Next, participants were asked to describe the incident in two or three sentences using an open-response format. We reminded participants that their responses were confidential, and asked them to provide an honest description. Participants then judged the ethicality of the incident and indicated their willingness to engage in UPB. This method has been used by other researchers to capture evaluations of recalled situations and also to predict participants' willingness to engage in similar behaviors (e.g. Aknin et al., 2013; Galinsky et al., 2003).

Following recommendations from Meade and Craig (2012), we screened for careless responding to include only those participants who (a) completed an attention check item accurately, (b) provided complete data, and (c) provided an example that matched the definition of UPB. A total of 151 individuals (58% female) with a mean age of 33.0 years participated in this study. Participants reported working in a wide range of occupation types [e.g. Retail Trade (17.9%), Educational Services (13.2%), Health Care and Social Assistance (10.6%)].

Consistent with Shapiro et al.'s (2011) critical incident approach, we then conducted a deductive content analysis of the open-ended responses using a prior-research-driven approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Weber, 1990) to determine the fit of each incident with the conceptual definition of UPB. Two coders read each description and coded whether the actions (a) aligned with one or more items from Umphress et al.'s (2010) six-item scale, or (b) aligned with the conceptual meaning of UPB but not with one of the specific UPB

Table 1. Match of recalled incidents to UPB scale items.

Scale item	Frequency
The employee misrepresented the truth to make the organization look good.	81 (53.6%)
The employee exaggerated the truth about the organization's products and services to customers or clients.	49 (32.5%)
The employee withheld negative information about his/her organization or its products from customers or clients.	27 (17.9%)
The employee gave a good recommendation on behalf of an incompetent employee in the hope that the person would become another organization's problem.	14 (9.3%)
The employee withheld issuing a refund to a customer or client who was accidentally overcharged.	8 (5.3%)
The employee concealed information from the public that could be damaging to the organization.	27 (17.9%)
Other. The action is related to the conceptual definition of UPB, but not to one of the items listed. *Example*: 'I worked at an electronics store and one of my coworkers was pretty technical and answered a lot of customer's questions. Every month we measured which employee made the most sales. One of the customers he was speaking to (I overheard) wasn't that technical and my coworker recommended a more expensive product to him even though the customer really didn't need it and would never fully use its functionality. He knew it, and took advantage of customer's not so technical background.'	15 (9.9%)

Frequency = number of responses matching that item; percentage of responses are included in parentheses. An incident may include behaviors that align with more than one UPB scale item; therefore, the frequencies do not add up to 151.
N = 151.

scale items. The coders first independently coded the actions described in each incident and then met to discuss each response to reach an agreement on its coding. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Measures

We assessed the perceived ethicality of UPB using three items from Reidenbach and Robin's (1990) moral equity judgments scale (see also Resick et al., 2013; Spicer et al., 2004). We asked participants to indicate the degree to which they viewed the incident they described as (a) just, (b) fair, and (c) morally right on a 1 (e.g. unjust) to 7 (e.g. just) point response scale. The scores across the three judgments were then averaged together. An acceptable internal consistency reliability was found ($\alpha = .90$).

Participants then indicated their willingness to engage in UPB by completing Umphress et al.'s (2010) six-item measure using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) response scale. A sample item was 'If it would help the organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make organization look good.' An acceptable internal consistency reliability was found ($\alpha = .87$).

Table 2. Studies 1 and 2: Zero-order correlations and descriptive statistics.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	–	−.16†	.03	−.24**	−.10
2. Gender	−.09	–	−.05	−.08	.02
3. Egoistic norms			–	.24**	.04
4. Ethical judgments	.10	−.11		–	.41**
5. UPB	.02	−.16*		.43**	–
Study 1					
M	33.03	1.58		2.65	2.68
SD	11.69	0.49		1.48	1.22
Study 2					
M	27.05	1.60	3.98	1.99	2.14
SD	5.89	0.49	1.64	1.24	1.29

Correlations from Study 1 are listed below the diagonal, and correlations from Study 2 are listed above the diagonal. Gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female.
UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior.
$N_{(study\ 1)}$ = 151. $N_{(study\ 2)}$ = 123. † $p < .10$ (two-tailed). * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Analytical approach

Following guidelines on the use of control variables (Becker et al., 2016), we carefully considered which variables would be theoretically important to use as controls. The cognitive theory of moral development (Rest, 1986) suggests that individuals develop more cognitively complex moral judgments as they age. In addition, prior research has found a relationship between age and ethical judgments (e.g. Chiu, 2003; Peterson et al., 2001) and unethical choices (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Research also suggests that women and men differentially emphasize deontological and utilitarian moral philosophies in ethical decision making (Friesdorf et al., 2015), and Kish-Gephart et al.'s (2010) meta-analysis found gender differences in unethical choices across studies. Furthermore, both age and gender have been used as controls in prior UPB research (e.g. Thau et al., 2015). Therefore, we controlled for age and gender in all analyses. We tested Hypothesis 1 using OLS regression.

Study 1: Results

We first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog and Sorbom, 2006) using maximum-likelihood estimation. No cross-loadings were estimated and all error terms were modeled independently. The two-factor model fitted the data well (χ^2 [26] = 87.48, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, SRMR = .05, p = .00) and better than a one-factor model (χ^2 [27] = 317.12, CFI = .75, TLI = .67, SRMR = .14, $\Delta\chi^2$ [1] = 229.64, p = .00).

The zero-order correlations are displayed in Table 2. Age was unrelated to both ethical judgments (r = .10, ns) and willingness to engage in UPB (r = .02, ns). Gender was unrelated to ethical judgments (r = –.11, ns), but negatively related to UPB (r = –.16, $p < .05$).

Table 3. Study 1: OLS regression analyses of the relationship between ethical judgments and UPB.

Variables	Step 1				Step 2			
	b	SE	*β*	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*β*	*p*-value
Age	.01	.01	.00	.94	.00	.01	−.03	.66
Gender	−.16*	.20	−.41*	.05	−.12	.18	−.30	.10
Ethical judgments					.42**	.06	.35**	.00
R^2			.03	.13			.20**	.00
ΔF			2.06	.13			32.29	
ΔR^2							.17	

b = Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE = Standard error. β = Standardized regression coefficient. Gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female.
N = 151. * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Women were less likely to indicate a willingness to engage in UPB. Supporting Hypothesis 1, after controlling for age and gender, ethical judgments were positively related to participants' willingness to engage in UPB ($b = .42$, SE = .06, $p = .00$, $\Delta R^2 = .17$). The results are summarized in Table 3.

Study 2: Method

Sample and procedure

Participants were recruited from MBA and upper-level undergraduate management courses at a large Northeastern university and a large West Coast university. To be eligible to participate, individuals needed to have worked in their organization over the prior 12 months for at least 20 hours a week. Participating individuals received course extra credit in exchange for completing a survey and inviting their immediate supervisor to also complete a survey. Approximately 600 individuals were invited to participate in the study. Complete data were collected from 123 employee–supervisor dyads for a 20.5% response rate. The majority of employee participants were female (60.2%). Their average age was 27.1 years and they had worked with their current supervisor for an average of 2.0 years. Approximately two-thirds of the supervisor participants were male (64.4%), and the average supervisor age was 43.2 years.

Participants were provided a link to a secure website and also instructed to send an email invitation to their immediate supervisor inviting him or her to complete a separate corresponding survey. Responses were screened to include only those participants whose supervisor did not begin the supervisor survey within 5 minutes of the employee survey to reduce the likelihood that the surveys were inaccurately completed by a single person (Marcus et al., 2017). Following Meade and Craig (2012), we also screened participants for careless responding (e.g. same response for all items) and did not remove any additional cases.

Measures

Norms. Egoistic norms were assessed with the five-item Focus on Self dimension ($\alpha = .95$) from Arnaud's (2010) ethical climate measure. A sample item is 'In my department, people's primary concern is their own personal benefit.' Participants responded using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale.

Perceived ethicality of UPB. We asked the focal employee participants to make three judgments about the behaviors depicted in Umphress et al.'s (2010) six-item measure. Applying Reidenbach and Robin's (1990) moral equity judgments scale to the six items, employees evaluated each behavior as (a) just, (b) fair, and (c) morally right, from 1 (e.g. unjust) to 7 (e.g. just), producing 18 ethical judgments. Next, we computed the mean for each judgment across the six UPB behaviors, resulting in a mean just score, a mean fair score, and a mean morally right score. We then calculated the mean of the three judgments. Higher scores indicated that the behaviors associated with UPB were judged as ethically appropriate, while lower scores indicated the behaviors were judged as ethically inappropriate. An acceptable internal consistency reliability across judgments and items was found ($\alpha = .96$).

UPB. Using Umphress et al.'s (2010) six-item measure, we asked supervisors to rate the likelihood that the focal employee would engage in acts of UPB to help the organization ($\alpha = .92$) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) response scale. We used this procedure for a number of reasons. First, third parties cannot have full knowledge of the intent of others' past behaviors, though may be able to imagine whether employees would be capable of UPB. Second, this approach is consistent with approaches used in prior studies examining observers' ratings of unethical (e.g. Greenbaum et al., 2017) and deviant inclinations (e.g. Judge et al., 2006), and helps minimize potential response biases that may occur when an employee reports on his or her potentially undesirable behaviors. Third, multi-source ratings can help minimize potential social desirability and common method biases (CMB; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al., 2003) that may occur when employees self-report both judgments and their own UPBs.

Analytical approach

To test the hypotheses, we used OLS regression and Hayes' (2018) PROCESS bootstrapping resampling procedure and macro with 5000 bootstrap re-samples. PROCESS uses OLS regression to compute coefficients for the stage 1 and stage 2 mediation paths, then computes point estimates, standard errors, probability values, and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effects. Consistent with Study 1, we controlled for age and gender.

Study 2: Results

We first conducted CFAs using maximum-likelihood estimation in *R* (Rosseel et al., 2017). To improve the parameter estimate-to-sample size ratio, we used the single-factor method outlined by Landis et al. (2000) and parceled the original six supervisor-rated

Table 4. Studies 2 and 3: OLS regression results for ethical judgments.

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
Study 2	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value						
Age	−.06**	.02	.00	−.06**	.02	.00						
Gender	−.29	.22	.20	−.26	.22	.23						
Egoistic norms				.29*	.11	.01						
	R^2*		.07	R^2**		.13						
	ΔF		4.65	ΔF		7.66						
	ΔR		.07	ΔR^2		.06						
	p-value		.01	*p*-value		.01						
Study 3	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value
Age	−.16*	.07	.03	−.13†	.07	.08	−.13†	.07	.08	−.12†	.07	.10
Gender	−.17*	.07	.02	−.16*	.07	.03	−.16*	.07	.03	−.18*	.07	.01
Egoistic norms				.15*	.07	.04	.15*	.07	.04	−.09	.08	.25
Org ID							.02	.07	.79	−.01	.07	.89
EN × Org ID										.16*	.07	.03
	R^2**		.06	R^2*		.08	R^2		.08	R^2*		.11
	ΔF		5.68	ΔF		4.13	ΔF		.07	ΔF*		4.85
	ΔR^2		.06	ΔR^2		.02	ΔR^2		.00	ΔR^2*		.03
	p-value		.00	*p*-value		.04	*p*-value		.79	*p*-value		.03

b = Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE = Standard error. EN = Egoistic norms.
Org ID = Organizational identification. Gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female.
$N_{(study\ 2)}$ = 123. $N_{(study\ 3)}$ = 182. † $p < .10$ (two-tailed). * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

UPB items into three parcels. For ethical judgments, we used the three mean judgments. Each of the five egoistic norms items was included. The three-factor model fitted the data well (χ^2 [41] = 86.08, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .04, p = .00), and better than a two-factor model with egoistic norms and ethical judgments grouped together (χ^2 [43] = 549.34, CFI = .65, TLI = .55, SRMR = .22, $\Delta\chi^2$ [2] = 463.26, p = .00) or a one-factor model (χ^2 [44] = 841.97, CFI = .44, TLI = .30, SRMR = .28, $\Delta\chi^2$ [3] = 292.63, p = .00). In all analyses, no cross-loadings were estimated and all error terms were modeled independently.

The zero-order correlations are summarized in Table 2. Ethical judgments negatively correlated with employee age (r = –.24, $p < .01$) and positively correlated with egoistic norms (r = .24, $p < .01$), and supervisor ratings of UPB were positively correlated with ethical judgments (r = .41, $p < .01$). No other zero-order correlations were statistically significant. Hypothesis 2 proposed that egoistic norms are positively related to ethical judgments of UPB (Hypothesis 2a), which in turn transmit the effect of norms to UPB (Hypothesis 2b). Accounting for the effects of employee age and gender, egoistic norms were positively related to the perceived ethicality of UPB (b = .29, SE = .11, p = .01, ΔR^2 = .06; see Table 4), supporting Hypothesis 2a. Then, after controlling for age, gender, and egoistic norms, ethical judgments were positively related to UPB (b = .55, SE = .12, p = .00, ΔR^2 = .16; see Table 5), providing additional support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 5. Studies 2 and 3: OLS regression results for UPB.

Variables	Study 2						Study 3					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	b	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value	*b*	SE	*p*-value
Age	−.02	.02	.27	.00	.02	.91	−.01*	.01	.03	−.01	.01	.09
Gender	.02	.24	.93	.14	.23	.54	−.01	.06	.86	.05	.06	.38
Egoistic norms	.06	.12	.63	−.07	.11	.52	.10	.07	.16	.06	.06	.30
Org ID							.00	.06	.99	.01	.06	.94
EN × Org ID							.11†	.06	.09	.05	.03	.38
Ethical judgments				.55***	.12	.00				.34***	.06	.00
	R^2		.01	R^2***		.17	R^2*		.08	R^2***		.23
	ΔF		.51	ΔF		22.33	ΔF		3.09	ΔF		33.03
	ΔR^2		.01	ΔR^2		.16	ΔR^2		.08	ΔR^2		.15
	p-value		.68	*p*-value		.00	*p*-value		.01	*p*-value		.00

b = Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE = Standard error. UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior. EN = Egoistic norms.
Org ID = Organizational identification. Gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female.
$N_{(study\ 2)}$ = 123. $N_{(study\ 3)}$ = 182. † $p < .10$ (two-tailed). * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Finally, results of the bootstrapping analyses in PROCESS indicate that the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effects of egoistic norms on UPB through ethical judgments did not include zero (Effect = .130, SE = .069, 95% CI [.028, .290]). Therefore, Hypothesis 2b was supported.

Study 3: Method

Sample and procedure

For Study 3, we recruited participants using Amazon's MTurk. Individuals working at least 20 hours a week were eligible to participate. Participants were asked to complete a series of three surveys over the course of 5 weeks with surveys completed during weeks one, three, and five (2-week intervals). Participants were compensated for completing each survey, and received a bonus for completing all three. At Time 1, 520 individuals completed the survey. Based on recommendations from Meade and Craig (2012), we excluded 43 individuals (8.27%) for careless responding (i.e. failing any of three attention check items, using single response patterns), reducing the useable sample to N = 477. At Time 2, 472 (98.9%) of the respondents followed through and completed the Time 2 survey. We excluded 11 respondents (2.33%) for careless responding using the same criteria as Time 1, reducing the sample to N = 461. A total of 182 respondents (35% of Time 1 responders) completed the Time 3 survey. Responses were screened for careless responding, and no additional individuals were removed. The majority of participants were female (54.5%), with a mean age of 38.0 years. The most frequent participant

industries included professional, scientific, and technical services (14.3%), followed by healthcare and social assistance (13.2%) and education services (10.4%). Participants had worked with their current supervisor for an average of 6.0 years.

Measures

At Time 1, participants provided demographic information and completed the same measure of egoistic norms (α = .93) used in Study 2. Participants responded using a seven-point scale (1 = disagree strongly, 7 = agree strongly). At Time 2, participants were asked to provide their ethical judgments of UPB using the same measure and approach used in Study 2 (α = .94). We also asked participants to complete Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification measure (α = .91) using a 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) response scale. A sample item is, 'When someone criticizes the organization where I work, it feels like a personal insult.' At Time 3, participants responded to a set of additional demographic information questions. Then, we asked participants to indicate the frequency with which they had engaged in acts of UPB by responding to Umphress et al.'s (2010) six-item measure using a 1 (never) to 7 (always) response scale (α = .88).

Analytical approach

Prior to conducting the analyses, we first standardized the variables and created the egoistic norms × organizational identification interaction term. We tested the main effect and moderation hypotheses using OLS regression analyses and the indirect and conditional indirect effects using the PROCESS bootstrapping macro.

Study 3: Results

We conducted CFAs using maximum-likelihood estimation in *R*. Consistent with Study 2, we created three parcels for UPB to improve the parameter estimate-to-sample-size ratio, and used the three mean judgments for ethical judgments and the five items for egoistic norms. Additionally, we developed three parcels for organizational identification. The four-factor model fitted the data well ($\chi^2_{[71]}$ = 88.37, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, SRMR = .03, p = .08) and better than (a) a two-factor model, with egoistic norms and organizational identification on one factor and ethical judgments and UPB on the second factor (χ^2 [76] = 773.72, CFI = .67, TLI = .61, SRMR = .16, $\Delta\chi^2$ [5] = 685.35, p = .00) and (b) a one-factor model (χ^2 [77] = 1419.54, CFI = .37, TLI = .26, SRMR = .25, $\Delta\chi^2$ [6] = 1331.17, p = .00). No cross-loadings were estimated, and all error terms were modeled independently.

The zero-order correlations are summarized in Table 6. Age was negatively correlated with egoistic norms (r = –.19, p < .05), ethical judgments (r = –.18, p < .05), and UPB (r = –.20, p < .01). Gender was negatively correlated with ethical judgments (r = –.19, p < .05), with women less likely to view UPB as ethical. Egoistic norms were negatively correlated with organizational identification (r = –.19, p < .05), and positively associated with ethical judgments (r = .19, p < .05) and UPB (r = .19, p < .05).

Table 6. Study: Zero-order correlations and descriptive statistics.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	38.03	11.44	n/a					
2. Gender	1.54	.50	.13	n/a				
3. Egoistic norms	4.34	1.41	−.19*	−.07	*(.93)*			
4. Organizational identification	4.82	1.40	.11	.05	−.19*	*(.93)*		
5. Ethical judgments	2.04	0.99	−.18*	−.19*	.19*	−.03	*(.95)*	
6. UPB	1.55	0.83	−.20**	−.03	.19*	−.02	.44**	*(.90)*

UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior. Cronbach's alphas are listed on the diagonal. Gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. $N = 182$. * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Ethical judgments were positively correlated with UPB ($r = .44$, $p < .01$). No other correlations were statistically significant. Providing further support for Hypothesis 2a, egoistic norms were positively related to ethical judgments ($b = .15$, SE = .07, $p = .04$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$; see Table 4) after controlling for employee age and gender. In step 3, organizational identification did not explain any additional incremental variance in ethical judgments ($b = .02$, SE = .07, $p = .79$, $\Delta R^2 = .00$). Finally, using the bootstrapping analyses in PROCESS, after controlling for age, gender and organizational identification, we found support for the indirect effects of egoistic norms on UPB through ethical judgments (Effect = .052, SE = .027, CI [.004, .107]). Taken together, the results again support Hypothesis 2b.

In support of Hypothesis 3a, the egoistic norms × organizational identification interaction added in step 4 explained significant incremental variance ($b = .16$, SE = .07, $p = .03$; $\Delta R^2 = .03$; see Table 4). We used the Johnson-Neyman technique (Johnson and Fay, 1950; Potthoff, 2014) to probe the interaction and identify regions of statistical significance. As displayed in Figure 2a, the 95% CI did not include zero at the 58.24 percentile of organizational identification (value = 5.21) and above. Figure 2a provides a graph of the regions of significance.

Next, we regressed UPB on ethical judgments of UPB, controlling for age, gender, egoistic norms, organizational identification and the egoistic norms by organizational identification interaction term. Ethical judgments explained a large and statistically significant amount of incremental variance in UPB ($b = .34$, SE = .06, $p = .00$; $\Delta R^2 = .15$; see Table 5), providing further support for Hypothesis 1. We calculated the conditional indirect effects using the PROCESS macro, finding that the 95% confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation did not contain zero (Index = .056; SE = .030; 95% CI [.007, .123]). This index demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between the indirect effect of egoistic norms on UPB through ethical judgments and organizational identification (Hayes, 2018). Specifically, supporting Hypothesis 3b, the indirect effects of egoistic norms on UPB through ethical judgments increased as organizational identification increased and the 95% confidence interval around the indirect effect did not include zero at the 58.24 percentile of organizational identification (value = 5.21) and above. The results are displayed in Figure 2b.

Discussion

Theoretical and practical implications

Our research makes several contributions to UPB research and provides actionable knowledge for managers. First, our research highlights the paradoxical nature of UPBs, shedding new light on factors motivating employees to engage in these behaviors. On the one hand, UPBs are prosocial in nature because they are perceived as directly benefiting the perpetrator's employing organization. On the other hand, acts of UPB are clearly unethical because they violate widely held principles, and have potentially destructive consequences for external stakeholders. Moreover, the perpetrating employee often benefits (directly or indirectly) from these behaviors; in other words, acts of UPB serve not only the interests of the organization but also one's self-interests. Rather than solely disregarding the ethical implications of UPB or disengaging from personal responsibility (Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019; Umphress and Bingham, 2011), our findings indicate that employees also engage in UPB when they consider these actions to be ethically appropriate. Employees who narrowly focus on the benefits of these actions for their organization, the short-term profit implications, or the immediate benefits to internal stakeholders without considering the broader, more complex implications of these behaviors are likely to construe UPB as ethically appropriate, and in turn engage in these behaviors. Therefore, our findings indicate that moral knowledge plays a central role in understanding the motivation to engage in UPB. Our findings lend further support to Reynolds et al.'s (2014) assertion that moral knowledge has motivational power, and extend their findings outside of the domain of self-interested unethical acts to prosocial forms of unethical behavior.

Second, through a lens of moral maturation capacities, our findings provide insights into the role of organizational contexts in motivating UPB. Egoistic organizational norms signal to employees that behaviors that enhance one's own interests (Martin et al., 2014; Victor and Cullen, 1988) are encouraged, supported, and the sole criteria for determining success. Egoistic norms also provide little to no cues about the importance of considering the broader impact of one's actions, and constrain the complexity of moral knowledge in these contexts. In turn, employees are less likely to consider competing information signaling the unethical aspects of UPB and more likely to falsely judge these behaviors as ethically appropriate. By failing to provide ethical standards, amoral egoistic norms undermine employees' moral maturation capacities by restricting the complexity of moral knowledge and impairing ethical judgments, particularly for employees whose interests are entangled with the organization's interests.

Third, our research provides new insights into the linkages between organizational identification and UPB. Namely, signals from the organizational context take on increased importance to ethical cognition processes among employees who strongly identify with their organization. Employees for whom organizational membership is a salient and important aspect of one's identity are likely to see an overlap between their personal goals and the organization's (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Without complex moral knowledge provided by the organization, they will emphasize the internal versus external impact of their actions in determining the appropriateness of these actions. In turn, the internal, immediate benefits of UPB are likely to be salient, whereas the impact on

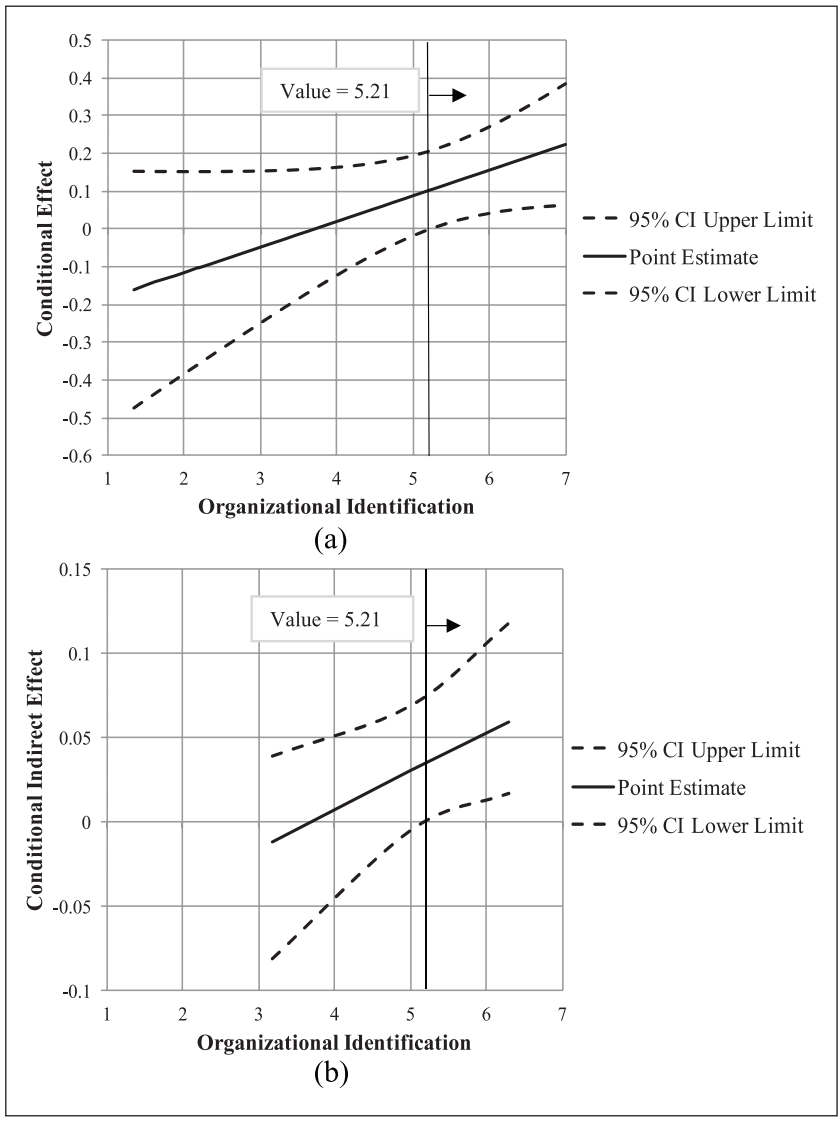

Figure 2. Plots of the conditional effect of egoistic norms on ethical judgments of UPB (Figure 2a) and the conditional indirect effect of egoistic norms on UPB (Figure 2b) at levels of the moderator, organizational identification
UPB = Unethical pro-organizational behavior. CI = Confidence interval.

external stakeholders is less likely to be attended to. Therefore, our findings support Hannah et al.'s (2011) contention that social identities play a pivotal part in shaping moral knowledge owing to their reduction of domain-specific moral sensitivity. Organizational identification may take on the form of an activated moral sub-identity

(Hannah et al., 2011), increasing the importance of contextual cues such as egoistic norms. Taken together, our research demonstrates the utility of Hannah et al.'s (2011) moral maturation and conation framework to understanding prosocial forms of unethical conduct in the workplace.

From a practical perspective, incidents associated with UPB may appear to be good for the organization and transgressing employee by helping to make a sale or keeping costs low. Yet, these benefits are myopic and ignore the broader impact on external stakeholders who are critical to the firm's reputation and success. For managers and organizations, our research demonstrates that negative ethical judgments of UPB inhibit employees from engaging in such behaviors, explaining approximately 15–17% of the incremental variance after controlling for age and gender across studies. To enhance employees' moral knowledge and capacity to judge UPB as ethically inappropriate, organizations are likely to benefit from investing in integrity programs aimed at improving employee understanding of the implications of UPB to firm stakeholders. Managers can discuss UPB moral dilemmas that employees may face, including weighing short-term benefits to the organization at the cost of outside stakeholders and long-term organizational harm (Giacalone and Thompson, 2006). Training could provide experiential exercises where participants are placed in situations where the opportunity to engage in UPB is apparent, and they examine the potential consequences of each act on internal and external stakeholders.

Additionally, using performance metrics that focus exclusively on short-term results may inadvertently encourage UPB through the emergence of egoistic norms. Integrating assessments of norms into employee surveys will help to identify those trigger points throughout the organization, and identify norms that encourage self-interested behavior and a simplistic understanding of ethical responsibilities. Establishing clear expectations for ethical conduct and holding employees accountable are also likely to be important actions that reshape norms and expectations for ethically responsible conduct (Grojean et al., 2004).

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations with the current research that should be noted. First, in Study 1, participants were asked to recall a past UPB incident, judge the ethicality of that incident, and then indicate their willingness to engage in such acts. This procedure may have introduced a retrospective recall bias. Some participants may have failed to recall aspects of an incident they witnessed, understating the severity of the events that occurred (Evans and Leighton, 1995). In addition, the participants had limited knowledge of the observed coworker's intention. Some of the observed incidents may have involved employees who were acting solely in their own self-interest (with the organization a secondary and unintended beneficiary). Such behaviors would be outside of the domain of the UPB construct.

Second, in Study 2, we assessed supervisors' ratings of the employees' likelihood of engaging in UPB as opposed to observed acts of UPB. As acts of UPB violate generally accepted norms of appropriate conduct, using likelihood ratings enabled us to minimize social desirability biases in supervisors' ratings and remove any guesswork involved

with supervisors judging employee intentions behind observed behavior. However, supervisors cannot know with certainty how an employee might behave, or the reasons why. They also may have been hesitant to respond accurately out of concern that the findings may reflect poorly on them as supervisors. Alternatively, the supervisor ratings may reflect an underlying favorable (halo effect) or unfavorable (horn effect) perception of the employee (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). Furthermore, having focal employees recruit supervisors for surveys can introduce possible selection bias and inflate the effects (Marcus et al., 2017). Though we followed recommended procedures to remove careless and questionable responses (Marcus et al., 2017; Meade and Craig, 2012), the nature of the supervisor–employee relationships may introduce endogeneity bias.

Third, in Study 1, ethical judgments and willingness to engage in UPB were self-reported; in Study 2, norms and judgments were self-reported; in Study 3, norms, judgments, and UPB acts were self-reported. This raises the possibility for common method bias (CMB) to inflate the magnitude of the observed effects. Though we took several steps across all the studies to limit CMB in accordance with Podsakoff et al. (2003), including reminding respondents their responses were confidential, using different sources (Study 2), and using a time-lagged design (Study 3), we cannot rule out the possibility that the relationships are inflated because of CMB. Future research could consider additional controls, such as social desirability, negative affect, or positive affect to further address CMB concerns (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, ethical judgments had a nearly identical relationship with UPB across the three samples (including one multisource sample), which provides some indication of the robustness of the effects. In addition, interaction effects are unlikely to be found as a result of CMB (Evans, 1985). Given the sensitive nature of UPB and the risk–reward tradeoffs to both the transgressor and organization, assessments of UPB from multiple sources are likely to provide a more complete picture.

Fourth, though we relied on theory to present directional hypotheses, field studies such as these are not ideal for establishing causal direction. For example, employees may view the firm's norms as egoistic because they view UPB as ethically appropriate. Though Study 3 used a time-lagged design to separate the measures of norms, judgments, and behavior, we cannot establish causality given our methodology. Future research should use a combination of experimental research and repeated-measures longitudinal designs to establish the robustness of the effects.

Fifth, though our findings shed some light on the role of egoistic norms, the broader role of organizational culture (e.g. shared values) and climates (e.g. shared perceptions) remains unclear. Contextual factors such as ethical climates, high-performance cultures, or bottom-line mentality climate may also shape ethical judgments and motivate UPB. Multilevel studies are needed to determine the unit and cross-levels effects of context on employees' UPB judgments and behaviors, particularly in conjunction with employee organizational identification. In addition, moral disengagement processes are also thought to be an important ethical cognition related to UPB (Chen et al., 2016; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). In our research, we did not consider the joint effects of moral disengagement and ethical judgments on UPB, and future research should consider how these forms of ethical cognition jointly contribute to the motivation to engage in or refrain from UPB.

Our study also examined identity exclusively in the form of organizational identity. More research is needed to better understand how social identities are related to moral identity and how various domain-specific identities may interact with one another (Hannah et al., 2011; Leavitt et al., 2012) to create or inhibit moral maturation capacities. Controlling for other moral traits, such as moral identity and unethical tolerance, may also be fruitful. Additionally, future research could consider the situations where organizational identity functions as a deterrent to UPB. For example, in settings with a strong climate for ethics, employees with high organizational identification may be *more* likely to perceive UPB as ethically inappropriate and *less* likely to engage in such behavior. Finally, we did not examine the extent to which UPB may be motivated by personal self-interest. Particularly in contexts with egoistic norms, employees who engage in UPB may be primarily driven by self-interest. Future research could disentangle the effects of individual self-interest from prosocial interests targeted at the organization. As Vadera and Pratt (2013) and Thau et al. (2015) note, the vast majority of UPBs likely benefit both the individual and the organization. However, there has been little empirical examination into the interdependencies among beneficiaries of UPB.

In this vein, our data from Study 1 provided us with an opportunity to explore UPB beneficiaries. Three types of interdependencies are thought to exist among pro-organizational (or pro-group) transgressions (Thau et al., 2015; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). First, negative interdependency occurs when actions that benefit the organization hurt the focal actor. Second, unrelated interdependence occurs in cases where UPB helps the organization, but neither harms nor benefits the perpetrator. Third, positive interdependency occurs when the perpetrator and organization benefit from the actions. Thau et al. (2015) suggested that these positive interdependency scenarios are likely the most common scenarios. Many of the incidents described by participants in Study 1 included some comments on the coworker's reason. Our methodology provided us with an opportunity to examine positive interdependencies by coding the overlap between organizational interest and employee self-interest in the descriptions. Using a deductive approach, we defined three categories of intended beneficiaries:

Explicit organization beneficiary: Actions benefit the organization and may also have some personal benefit to the employee; the response explicitly states that the employee engaged in these actions to benefit the organization.

Organization and personal beneficiary: Actions benefit the organization and also have a personal benefit to the employee; however, the response does not explicitly state that the individual engaged in these actions to benefit the organization or himself/herself.

Explicit personal beneficiary: Actions benefit the organization but serve to primarily benefit the employee; the response explicitly states that the individual engaged in these actions to benefit himself/herself (e.g. meet a quota, gain a commission, etc.).

Using these definitions, the same two coders independently assigned each of the 151 incidents into one of the three categories. We calculated interrater agreement using Cohen's Kappa, and found a moderate level of initial agreement ($\kappa = .60$, SE = .05, $p = .00$) according to benchmarks provided by Landis and Koch (1977). The coders then discussed their

Table 7. Supplemental analysis of beneficiary interdependence.

Category and example	Frequency
Explicit organization beneficiary	61
'We were infested by bugs! A client came in and asked if we were infested; we all said "no" to make our organization look good.'	(40.4%)
Organization and personal beneficiary	64
'My boss was talking to a potential client about all of the services we offer, but many were not even close to completion. He was saying all these things to secure the deal, but I knew he was lying through his teeth.'	(42.4%)
Explicit personal beneficiary	26
'A manager wouldn't admit to a customer that our delivery people made a mistake during a delivery, saying it was the customer's fault and that the customer would have to pay another delivery charge. The mistake was definitely our fault and the manager was just trying to save a non-productive delivery to keep his quota intact.'	(17.2%)

Frequency = number of responses coded to that category; percentage of responses are included in parentheses.
N = 151.

initial coding and agreed on a category for each incident. Table 7 summarizes the findings and provides a sample response in each category. A total of 61 responses (40.4%) explicitly emphasized the organization as the beneficiary, while 26 responses (17.2%) explicitly emphasized the personal benefit to the focal actor. For the remaining 64 responses (42.4%), both the organization and individual may have benefited. These findings indicate that positive interdependencies are common, though the third-party coworkers could not fully know the focal actors' intent. Future research could therefore explore employee intent surrounding UPB, and further examine the conditions under which acts of UPB are primarily motived by self-interest or prosocial motives.

Conclusion

Acts of UPB may have benefits to both the organization and the member committing those acts. However, these benefits are often short-sighted and place the organization at risk for customer loss, reputational damage, and even litigation. Our findings indicate that egoistic organizational norms provide narrow as opposed to complex moral knowledge to members, which constrains moral maturation capacities and provides a gateway to UPB through more positive ethical judgments of these behaviors. Moreover, organizational identification is an important social identity that heightens the importance of organizational norms for determining the ethicality of one's actions. Therefore, our study sheds new light on the roles of context and identity as moral maturation capacities that shape ethical judgments and motivate UPB.

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