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Love, Hate, Ambivalence, or Indifference? A Conceptual Examination of Workplace Crimes and Organizational Identification

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Although research has shown that there may be very different types of workplace crimes, scholarly work in this area (a) is currently fragmented with very little communication between very similar streams of research and (b) tends to be incomplete and can lead to conflicting findings. We address both of these shortcomings. First, we propose a typology of different types of workplace crimes (consisting of pro-organizational, nonaligned-organizational, and anti-organizational crimes) based on the intentions of the perpetrators. Second, we link these intentions to various identification “pathologies”—such as over-identification and over-disidentification, under-identification and ambivalent identification—and argue that these pathologies are linked to propensities to commit certain types of workplace crimes. Specifically, we contend that over-identification and over-disidentification have direct effects on workplace crimes, whereas under-identification and ambivalent identification indirectly influence the propensity to engage in workplace crimes. We suggest that this research aids us in clarifying the inconsistent conclusions in previous work in the domain of workplace crimes and that it emphasizes the importance of including organizational identification as a key factor in the extant models of workplace crimes. This research also highlights policy implications regarding workplace crimes in that it suggests that different agencies may be more effective in enforcing the law and disciplining those engaged in the different types of workplace crimes.

Key words: crimes; identification; ethics; ambivalence; unethical behaviors

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Introduction

In the wake of several corporate scandals, there has been a renewed interest in better understanding workplace crimes. In addition to reputation-based costs, U.S. corporations estimate that they lose 5% of their revenues because of workplace crimes (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners 2010). In dollar terms, this figure translates to approximately \$2.9 trillion in losses, with more than one quarter of companies losing at least \$1 million. Even after Enron and similarly salient instances of misconduct, episodes of workplace crime remain high (Ethics Resource Center 2009). In fact, a 2008–2009 study on ethics in the workplace revealed that “nearly three out of four employees (74%) report that they have personally observed or have firsthand knowledge of wrongdoing within their organizations during the previous 12 months” (KPMG 2009, p. iii).

Such significant losses provide renewed motivation to better understand the underpinnings of workplace crimes so that episodes of such activity can be minimized. However, attempts to explore the antecedents of workplace crimes have been hindered in at least two ways. First, workplace crimes include many different types of crimes (see Pinto et al. 2008, Treviño et al. 2006,

Vardi and Wiener 1996). Further, research in this area is fragmented and is conducted in silos with very little communication between similar streams of scholarly work. Thus, broad-brush approaches to understanding all workplace crimes are often limited in scope (Treviño et al. 2006). Second, although the investigation of the precursors of workplace crimes has informed our knowledge of the conditions that facilitate such crimes (see Kish-Gephart et al. 2010 and Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008 for recent reviews and meta-analyses), this research tends to be incomplete and can lead to conflicting findings. To illustrate, in work on top management fraud, some research suggests that a higher proportion of outsiders on boards decreases illegal activities by firms (Beasley 1996); other research finds no such relationship (e.g., Kesner et al. 1986).

We argue that (a) development of a typology based on intended outcomes and (b) consideration of the individual–organizational bond as a motivational explanation for workplace crimes help address both concerns. Specifically, focusing on intended outcomes provides a common comparison point for all types of workplace crimes, whereas focusing on individual–organizational relationships as individuals’ motivations for workplace

crimes points to the importance of how these relationships shape crime propensities in very different ways. With regard to these individual–organizational relationships, we argue that to the degree that an employee loves, hates, is indifferent, or is even ambivalent toward his or her organization will not only predispose him or her to engage in workplace crimes but will also influence the type of workplace crime committed. These states of relating to an organization match well with extant work on the expanded model of organizational identification and various identification “pathologies” (Dukerich et al. 1998, Elsbach 1999, Pratt 2000).

We begin by reviewing extant research on workplace crimes to create a typology of such crimes. As we do this, we argue that one key difference among the motives for these crimes involves how the individual relates to his or her organization. Drawing on theories of organizational identification, we then develop hypotheses about how different forms of identification are related to different types of workplace crimes.

Typology of Workplace Crimes

We use the term “workplace crimes” broadly to denote *the illegal, illegitimate, or immoral actions deliberately committed by employees in the workplace*. Workplace crimes have often been studied on the basis of crimes committed (e.g., Ambrose et al. 2002, Clinard and Quinney 1973, Greenberg 2002), individual or group involvement (e.g., Daboub et al. 1995, Pinto et al. 2008, Szwajkowski 1985), victims (e.g., Aquino and Bradfield 2000, Bennett and Robinson 2000, Warren 2003), organizational position (blue-collar versus white-collar) of the perpetrator (e.g., Aguilera and Vadera 2008, Clinard 1983, Sutherland 1940), as well as on the basis of crimes specific to a particular industry (Calavita et al. 1997, Flannery and May 2000).

These varied conceptualizations have significantly added to our knowledge of workplace crimes; nonetheless, they are limited for two reasons. First, some (but not all) conceptualizations tend to overlook why individuals engage in crime in the first place. For instance, although research on prosocial unethical behaviors and organizational corruption explicitly focuses on the intended outcomes of the perpetrators—“to potentially benefit the organization” (Umphress et al. 2010, p. 769) and “chiefly for personal benefit” (Aguilera and Vadera 2008, p. 434) respectively—scholarly work on other workplace crimes tends to look at the actual outcomes instead of the intentions of the transgressor. Consider the study by Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly (1998), who, while conceptualizing antisocial behaviors, argue that these behaviors are “negative” and “have the potential to cause harm to individuals and/or the property of an organization” (p. 658). These scholars, along with others who study antisocial behaviors and related

notions, do not claim that the intentions of the perpetrators are to harm the organization but simply state that the engagement in these behaviors may have unintended negative effects on the organization and its members. This discrepancy in the treatments of intentionality in workplace crimes makes various types of crime hard to compare. For example, it is difficult to ascertain how crimes in the accounting industry (e.g., fraudulent financial statements) are related to employees’ antisocial behaviors, such as organizational retaliatory behaviors (Skarlicki and Folger 1997) and workplace incivility (Pearson et al. 2001).

Following Treviño et al. (2006) and others (see Zahra et al. 2005), we view crime as deliberate and thus intentional—i.e., with the motivated objective to con, cheat, or swindle internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, we feel that intentionality provides a common comparison point for all types of workplace crime. Other researchers (Greve et al. 2010, Zahra et al. 2005), while reviewing extant literatures on crime at the top management level and/or organizational level, have also recently made similar claims and proposed that to fully understand the precursors of organizational crime, it is important to consider the varied intentions of the perpetrators. Therefore, in this paper, we draw from the extant research on workplace crimes and develop a typology based on the intention, or more specifically, the intended outcomes, of the crimes. That is, we pay particular attention to whether the motivation to engage in workplace crimes is based on the organization being benefited, harmed, or not affected by the crimes. A focus on intended outcomes will help researchers navigate the dizzying number of crime-related concepts, many of which use similar terms. For example, intended outcomes cleanly differentiate a corrupt organization from an organization of corrupt individuals (Pinto et al. 2008), as well as corporate crime (Box 1983) from occupational crimes (Clinard and Quinney 1973).

Second, and similarly, because these different approaches to workplace crimes are fragmented and each approach generally tends to focus on a limited range of workplace crimes, there is often very little communication among similar streams of research, further complicating efforts to examine organizational crime in a more coherent fashion. For example, on one hand, research on corporate illegality (Mishina et al. 2010, Szwajkowski 1985) and unethical prosocial behaviors (Umphress et al. 2010) investigates the structural and individual antecedents of crimes that benefit the organization; on the other hand, studies on deviance, anti-social behaviors, and counterproductive work behaviors (Bennett and Robinson 2000, Brass et al. 1998, Clinard and Quinney 1973, Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly 1998) examine the precursors of crimes that are conducted against the organization and its members. Each focuses on crimes in the workplace, but because there is very

little overlap between these streams of research, it is difficult to ascertain which factors are likely to motivate employees to commit which types of workplace crimes. We contend that an explicit focus on intended outcomes allows us to compare insights across a broad spectrum of workplace crimes and build on the cumulative insights from each subfield. Given the high costs organizations and members endure because of these crimes, this lack of integrative focus is unfortunate.

In this paper, we adopt a bottom-up approach to build a typology of workplace crimes based on intended outcomes to ameliorate the fragmented literature, and we develop a theoretical framework that provides a parsimonious explanation for what motivates different types of workplace crimes. Although we integrate much of the literature on workplace crimes, we acknowledge that our more micro-oriented approach is different from research focusing on more structural approaches—such as studies focusing on perceptions of organizations' ethical climate (Victor and Cullen 1988), ethical culture (Treviño et al. 1998), ethical infrastructure (Tenbrunsel et al. 2003), and ethical leadership (Brown and Treviño 2006). However, as we will argue in more detail later, we believe that how one identifies with an organization will play a critical role as to whether, how, and to what degree, individuals will attend to ethical climates, ethical infrastructures, and organizational leadership.

Consistent with much prior research, we assume that the individual perpetrator always intends to gain some benefit from engaging in the crime (see Treviño and Youngblood 1990). Beyond this self-serving motive, however, extant research suggests that workplace crimes can be delineated based on the intended impact on the organizations that employ the perpetrators. For example, some types of workplace crimes may be intended to benefit both the perpetrator and the organization (e.g., organizational illegality), some types may be intended to benefit the perpetrator at the expense of the organization (e.g., antisocial behaviors), and some types may be intended to benefit only the perpetrator, without consideration of the impact such crimes may have on the organization (e.g., organizational corruption). We refer to these different types of workplace crimes as *pro-organizational*, *anti-organizational*, and *nonaligned-organizational*, respectively. These various crime types are listed in Table 1 and are elaborated below.

Pro-Organizational Workplace Crime

As noted in Table 1, our review of the research on workplace crimes revealed that work on “organizational illegality,” “corporate crimes,” “unethical prosocial behaviors,” and “corrupt organizations” (Baucus and Near 1991, Calavita et al. 1997, Pinto et al. 2008, Szwajkowski 1985, Umphress et al. 2010) covers workplace crimes that are carried out with the intention to

benefit the organization. For instance, organizational illegality is conceptualized as legally prohibited action that is taken by organizational members primarily on behalf of the organization (Szwajkowski 1985). In a similar vein, corporate crime has been defined as “illegal acts committed by individuals (agents) in pursuit of either corporate interests or the joint interests of the firm and the agents” (Cloninger 1995, p. 51). Tombs (1993, p. 334) quotes Box (1983) to similarly define corporate crime as “illegal acts of omission or commission of an individual or group of individuals in a legitimate formal organization, in accordance with the goals of that organization” (also see Calavita and Pontell 1990, Glasberg and Skidmore 1998, Schrage and Short 1978). In addition, Umphress et al. (2010) conceptualize unethical prosocial behaviors as actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members but that violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct. Finally, a corrupt organization is said to exist when “a group collectively acts in a corrupt manner for the benefit of the organization” (Pinto et al. 2008, p. 668).

We refer to these activities as pro-organizational workplace crimes. Pro-organizational workplace crimes can thus be conceptualized as *workplace crimes that are enacted for the purpose of advancing one's own interests as well as the organizational interests in some way*. A common illustration of pro-organizational workplace crime would be financial reporting fraud by the senior managers of an organization. Financial reporting frauds are misrepresentations by agents of a publicly listed firm about the firm's financial condition (Kang 2008). Fraudulent misrepresentations violate the generally accepted accounting principles, often to the end of achieving a desired level of reported earnings (Rosner 2003). As evident from the recent corporate scandals, financial reporting frauds have an implicit intention of benefiting not only the perpetrators (top management in most cases) but also the organization and its shareholders by falsely inflating the stock prices.

Anti-Organizational Workplace Crime

Our review revealed a second type of workplace crime in which individual members may engage (see Table 1). We term this type of crime as anti-organizational workplace crime. Anti-organizational workplace crimes can be defined as *workplace crimes that are enacted with the intent to benefit oneself and harm the organization*. Concepts such as “unethical behaviors,” “occupational crimes,” some forms of “deviance,” “antisocial behaviors,” and “counterproductive work behaviors” (Bennett and Robinson 2000, Brass et al. 1998, Clinard and Quinney 1973, Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly 1998) can be considered as anti-organizational workplace crimes. Unethical behavior is generally defined as behavior that has a harmful effect on others and is either illegally

Table 1 Integration of Workplace Crimes with Other Similar Concepts

Type of workplace crime:	Pro-organizational		Nonaligned-organizational	Anti-Organizational	
Related concepts:	Organizational illegality	Unethical prosocial behavior	Organizational corruption	Deviance	Unethical behavior
Definitions	Legally prohibited action of organization members that is taken primarily on behalf of the organization (Szwajkowski 1985)	Actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members but that violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct (Umphress et al. 2010)	The crime that is committed by the use of authority within organizations for personal gain (Aguilera and Vadera 2008)	Voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in doing so threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both (Robinson and Bennett 1995)	Behavior that has a harmful effect on others and is either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community (Brass et al. 1998)
Primary beneficiaries	Individual + Organization and/or its members	Individual + Organization and/or its members	Individual	Individual	Individual
Intended victims				Organization and/or its members	Organization and/or its members
Closely related concepts	Corporate illegality; illegal corporate behavior	Corporate crime	Government corruption; political corruption; corporate corruption; collective corruption	Antisocial behaviors; dysfunctional behaviors; counterproductive work behaviors	
Examples	Toxic waste poisoning; misrepresentation in financial statements	Concealing information; exaggerating the truth; misrepresenting the truth	Accepting bribes; insider trading; corporate violence	Using abusive language; putting little effort into work	Stealing; lying

or morally unacceptable to the larger community (Brass et al. 1998). Occupational crime refers to violations of the law by employees in the course of their occupations and *against their employers* (Clinard and Quinney 1973). Similarly, workplace deviance has been conceptualized as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, *threatens the well-being of the organization* or its members, or both” (Bennett and Robinson 2000, p. 349, emphasis added). Finally, even though Bloch and Geis (1970) do not explicitly discuss anti-organizational workplace crimes, they state that workplace crimes should be delineated, and one of the categories should include offenses committed by employees against the business or employers. Typical examples of anti-organizational workplace crimes include theft and sabotage in the organization, violations in the sale of securities, and embezzlement.

Nonaligned-Organizational Workplace Crime

A third type of workplace crime that individuals could engage in is nonaligned-organizational workplace crime. This type of crime entails *workplace crimes that benefit the perpetrator without any intentional effect (harm or benefit) on the organization*. Nonaligned-organizational

workplace crime is related to “organizational corruption” and “an organization of corrupt individuals” (Aguilera and Vadera 2008, Ashforth et al. 2008, Pinto et al. 2008). Corruption is generally defined as the abuse/misuse of public power for private benefit (Robertson and Watson 2004, Rodriguez et al. 2005). This definition of corruption encompasses a wide range of phenomena, from a police officer accepting money from drug traffickers to an employee stealing supplies from work for personal use. There are several different forms of corruption; however, in all (or nearly all) the definitions and explanations of corruption, including the one on organizational corruption that looks at the use of authority for personal benefit (Aguilera and Vadera 2008), researchers talk of corruption as a gain for oneself—without noting how such actions are intended to either harm or benefit the organization (Zimring and Johnson 2005). In a related vein, Pinto et al. (2008, p. 688) put forth the notion of an organization of corrupt individuals “in which a significant proportion of an organization’s members act in a corrupt manner primarily for their personal benefit.” The focus of this work is on organizations, but individuals in these cases are acting in a criminal manner that we would categorize as nonaligned-organizational.

Although it may be possible for the perpetrator of nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes to predict the hurt and benefit for the organization in committing a crime, the crime itself is not *motivated* with the intention to either help or harm the organization—only to benefit the perpetrator. Consider a situation in which an individual bribes an executive at a firm for (inside) information about the firm so that he can manipulate (buy, sell, or hold) stocks of the firm to ensure maximum profitability for himself. In this case, it could be argued that both individuals engaged in insider trading to benefit themselves, with little or no regard for the implications of their actions on the firm(s). Thus, this illegal activity could be considered as an illustration of nonaligned-organizational workplace crime.

To summarize, pro-organizational workplace crimes involve offenses that are intended to benefit both the individual and the organization. Anti-organizational workplace crimes refer to deliberate acts that may not just benefit the perpetrator but may also cause harm to the organization. And nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes include offenses by individuals that personally benefit them but do not intentionally help or harm the organization. Thus, each type of workplace crime has a different motivation: to benefit, harm, or have no effect on the organization.

Workplace Crimes and Organizational Identification

Our emphasis on intended outcomes begs the question of why individuals would intend to hurt, benefit, or ignore the organization when committing a crime. We argue that a key motivator in determining whether and which type of crime is committed is the type of relationship an individual has with his or her employing organization. As we note below, the concept of *organizational identification* effectively explains these various motivations, especially when compared with similar constructs.

Organizational identification is a special kind of social identification, often referring to the emotional–cognitive link between an individual and organization. It is a “feeling of oneness” (Ashforth and Mael 1989) that occurs as one’s organization becomes self-referential (Pratt 1998). We draw heavily on work on organizational identification for three main reasons. First, identification has been found to be highly motivational (van Knippenberg 2000), thus providing the impetus for actions such as crimes. Second, because it involves a self-referential attachment to a particular organization, this attachment type is organization specific, just as workplace crimes are often perpetrated with specific organizations in mind. Concepts such as commitment, by contrast, focus on a match with organizationally held values and goals. However, these values and goals may be espoused by many other organizations; consequently,

unlike identification, commitment is not viewed as being organization specific (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Third, unlike other attachment constructs such as commitment and person–organization fit that tend to focus primarily on the degree (high to low levels) of cognitive attachment with the organization (see also Pratt 1998 for a distinction between these concepts), organizational identification differentiates among affectively positive, neutral, negative, and ambivalent types of attachments—and it delineates the strength of these attachments (Dukerich et al. 1998). Thus identification provides a force (motivation), target (organization), and valence (positive, negative, ambivalent, or neutral) that match well with our notions of pro-, anti-, and nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes.

Focusing on identification also complements and enriches other earlier work on the individual-level antecedents of workplace crimes (see Kish-Gephart et al. 2010 and Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008 for recent reviews and meta-analyses). Most of the prior research focusing on the individual-level factors influencing workplace crimes has examined the role of demographic variables such as age, experience, education, and gender (Ambrose and Schminke 1999, Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), as well as other individual difference factors such as cognitive moral development (Ashkanasy et al. 2006, Treviño and Youngblood 1990), moral identity (Aquino and Reed 2002), individual propensity for risk (Junger et al. 2001), locus of control (Forte 2005), and the value placed on money (Leap 2007). For instance, youth, a lack of experience and education, high tolerance for risk, and greed are sometimes positively associated with involvement in workplace crimes (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, Junger et al. 2001, Leap 2007, Levine 2000, Zahra et al. 2005). However, such treatments do not differentiate how and when such individual differences may lead someone to commit *different types* of workplace crimes.

Let us consider greed (Levine 2000), which has played a central role in work on individual-level motivations. Greed has mostly been conceptualized as the fear of loss and the effort to defend against it (Levine 2000). The greedy person thus is constantly aware of the threat of loss and, because of this, is driven to attempt to take from others lest they take from him or her (see Levine 2000). Therefore, when an opportunity to commit a crime presents itself, greed makes the employee aware of his potential losses (and others’ benefits) if he does not engage in the crime. Thus, greed is considered to play an important role in the propensity to commit workplace crimes. However, research also shows that not all greedy people commit workplace crimes or commit the same types of crimes (see Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008)—that is, those that might intentionally harm or benefit the organization. In this paper, we suggest that how employees form connections to their

organizations may have implications for the relationship between greed and workplace crimes. As we will explain in detail, we believe that greed may provide a motivation to act, but how this motivation is channeled toward (e.g., for, against, or without regard to) the organization will be determined by the form or nature of one's organizational identification.

Focusing on organizational identification also helps in understanding heretofore mixed results in research on workplace crimes. To illustrate, consider the research noted in the introduction on the effects of the composition of the board of directors of a firm on the likelihood of commission of illegal activities of the firm. The primary responsibility of the board of directors is to monitor the organization (Fama and Jensen 1983). It would, therefore, be expected that an increase in the number of outside members on the board of directors of a firm would decrease the likelihood of fraud in the firm. Although this increase may sometimes lead to less fraud (Beasley 1996), Kesner et al. (1986) studied the organizational characteristics that affect financial statement-related fraud and demonstrated that the percentage of outsiders on the board of directors is not significantly related to the number of illegal acts. We propose that these contradictory findings may be resolved by studying the identification of these outside members with the organization. Fraud, for example, may be perpetrated to either protect (e.g., falsify records to please shareholders) or harm (e.g., embezzlement) an organization. Boards that "love" their organizations may be more likely to squelch anti-organizational crimes but may turn a blind eye toward pro-organizational crimes such as certain types of fraud.

This focus on different forms of identification is relatively new. Traditionally, much of the research on organizational identification has focused on the positive in two respects. First, scholars have focused on positive evaluations or feelings toward an organization (e.g., I feel proud to be associated with this organization); thus, to identify with an organization means that one feels some positive affection toward that organization (Pratt 1998). Second, the emphasis has been on potential positive effects for both individuals and their organizations. For example, organizational identification may meet an individual's needs for self-esteem, uncertainty reduction, and belongingness (Ashforth and Mael 1989, Deaux et al. 1999, Dutton et al. 1994, Hogg and Mullin 1999, Pratt 1998) and may lead to greater job satisfaction and motivation among employees (Alpander 1990). Organizational identification may also benefit the organization by increasing employee loyalty toward the organization (Adler and Adler 1988) and motivating employees to act in the organization's best interests (Cheney 1983, Pratt 2000). For example, highly identified employees may contribute financially to an organization (Mael and

Ashforth 1992) and engage in more extra-role, prosocial behaviors (Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006).

Recent research, however, has shown that identification with an organization need not be experienced in terms of positive affect (i.e., there are different forms of identification), nor does such identification always result in benefits for the individual and his or her organization. With regard to the different forms of identification, research has provided evidence of an "expanded model" of identification (Elsbach 1999, Kreiner and Ashforth 2004, Pratt 2000) that demonstrates that one's relationship with an organization need not be positive, as it is with identification, but that it can also be negative (i.e., disidentification), mixed or confusing (i.e., ambivalent, conflicting, or "schizo" identification), or indifferent (i.e., neutral identification). Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) demonstrate the validity and utility of the expanded model and show that the four types of identification are related yet discrete. Scholars who take this expanded perspective view organizational identification (a positive-valence force) and organizational disidentification (a negative-valence force) as independent forces that determine how one ultimately relates to an organization. Thus, one can be either high or low on identification and high or low on disidentification (e.g., Ashforth 2001, Elsbach 1999, Kreiner and Ashforth 2004, Pratt 2000).

Individuals can range in their degree of identification and disidentification, sometimes to a dysfunctional or pathological degree. Thus, Dukerich et al. (1998) posit that four types of identification pathologies are possible when crossing high and low identification with high and low disidentification: *over-identification* (high identification, low disidentification), *under-identification* (low on both identification and disidentification), *ambivalent identification*¹ (high on both identification and disidentification), and *over-disidentification* (low on identification, high on disidentification). They even begin to suggest a link with crime via over-disidentification, noting how it may "result in sabotage, resistance, or aggressive behaviors aimed at the organization and its representatives" (Dukerich et al. 1998, p. 251). As we have discussed, however, workplace crimes entail intentional acts committed by individuals not only to harm the organization but also to benefit or even have no effect on the organization. We therefore adopt the full expanded model of identification as it relates to identification pathologies (Dukerich et al. 1998, Pratt 1998) to help explain why one's identification with the organization influences one's propensity to commit different types of workplace crimes. We propose that over-identification and over-disidentification have direct effects on workplace crimes. That is, those who "love" or "hate" the organization are more likely to engage in crimes that benefit or harm the organization, respectively. By contrast, under-identification and ambivalent identification

may have indirect effects on workplace crimes such that these identification types may interact with other conditions to result in pro-organizational, anti-organizational, and nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes. Our major propositions are captured in Figures 1–4.

Over-Identification

Over-identification is a condition whereby a portion of one's identity is too wrapped up in the organization; as a result, the uniqueness of the individual is largely lost (Dukerich et al. 1998). Thus, an individual is said to have over-identified with the organization when he or she cannot think of him- or herself as anybody but a member of the organization. In essence, the organization as a collective becomes an "extension" of the individual's self-construal.

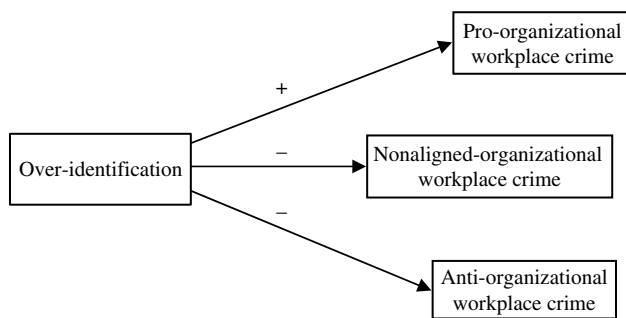
Such extension of one's self-construal is common in the literature, as individuals can incorporate both possessions via an "extended self" (e.g., James 1890, Maccoby 1980) and relationships via "self-expansion" (Aron and Aron 1986) into their self-views. With regard to the former, Maccoby (1980, p. 252) argues that "the self can be extended beyond a notion of 'me' to include 'my' ... [it] is a psychological construct in which the concept of *me* and the concept of *my* are blended." Similarly, research on self-expansion theory suggests that self-expansion is facilitated by inclusion of the other in the self (Aron et al. 1991). Though it is often implicit, social identity theory also argues that such an expansion or extension of one's self-construal does occur; however, it moves the referent from individuals to a broader social collective (e.g., organizations). This argument suggests that individuals who over-identify with the organization have expanded their sense of self so that the distinction between the self and the organization is completely blurred.

Over-identification and identification have similar hedonic tones (both are positive because of high identification, and both lack negative hedonic tones because of low disidentification), but they differ in terms of strength. The high level of attachment exhibited by over-identifiers can amplify or even distort the benefits of identification to an unhealthy degree. For example, an over-identified individual is highly motivated and will conform to organizational dictates, but this state may also involve loss of an independent and autonomous sense of self, decreased creativity and risk taking, overconfidence and overdependence on the collective, loss of ability to question the ethicality or legality of organizational actions, increased distrust and vulnerability in case of layoffs or loss of reputation of the firm, and heightened use of tyrannical behaviors by both leaders and followers (Ashforth and Mael 1996, Dukerich et al. 1998, Dutton and Dukerich 1991, Mael and Ashforth 1992, Pratt 2001).

Based on both self-expansion and self-verification, we propose that when individuals over-identify with the organization, they are more likely to engage in pro-organizational workplace crimes. Self-expansion argues that an individual's self-construal includes one's organizational membership. And according to self-verification theory (Burke 1991, Burke and Harold 2005, Swann 1983, Swann and Read 1981, Swann et al. 1992), once individuals form self-views, they work to stabilize them by seeking and embracing experiences that match their self-views and by avoiding or rejecting experiences that challenge them. And when faced with a challenging situation that potentially threatens individuals' view of the self, they are motivated to respond to this situation both affectively and behaviorally. The behavioral response is generally to modify the situation (Burke and Harold 2005).

Based on this research, we argue that when individuals over-identify with an organization, they may be willing to "step over the line" to protect and otherwise help the organization in order to maintain their self-view. Over-identified individuals may thus be more likely to commit crimes on behalf of the organization and to attempt to cover up its wrongdoings. This relationship is illustrated in the recent scandal at Enron. In his court trial, Jeff Skilling—the number two executive at Enron—noted that he "bled Enron blue" (Emshwiller and McWilliams 2006b, p. C3). Some reports suggested that this bond was unhealthy and may have contributed to his engagement in the pro-organizational workplace crimes. One article on the Enron scandal noted that [Skilling] suffered from an "obsession" with Enron and that he came to realize that his professional life had overshadowed his personal life, and he "wanted to die" when he heard about the layoffs at Enron (Emshwiller and McWilliams 2006a, p. C1). In addition, Skilling notes that his intention was to help, not harm, Enron. For instance, on being accused of turning to LJM partnerships (LJM stands for Lea, Jeffrey, and Michael—the names of the children of Enron CFO Andrew Fastow) to buy Enron's poor assets and investments so that the energy company could hide debt and boost earnings, Skilling claimed that he used the partnerships as quasi-investments for the company so that these partnerships could act as a hedge, because "we [Enron] needed to protect shareholders" (Emshwiller and McWilliams 2006b, p. C3). This over-identification therefore may have made the decision to use questionable investing and bookkeeping easier to justify. Evidence that Skilling was engaged in self-verification/self-protection dynamics during his court hearing was further illustrated by his need to prevent, in his own words, the following scenario: that Enron employees' recollections are going to be wrong, and no one will understand. This interpretation of events supports Levine's (2005, pp. 726–727) view that Enron leaders did not see themselves as

Figure 1 Schematic Representation of Over-Identification



“crooks, or even amoral manipulators of the system” but rather as “doing good.”

In short, we propose that because over-identification results in the loss of a personal self in favor of the organization, as suggested by self-expansion, actions to protect and further the goals of the organization may be viewed as protecting oneself, and harming the organization would equate to engaging in self-harm. Furthermore, self-verification theory suggests that individuals will go to great lengths to validate and protect their self-construal. Thus, we argue that over-identification should be negatively related to anti-organizational workplace crimes—crimes that intend to harm the organization. Similarly, given the salience of the organization and its centrality in a person’s self-definition, it is unlikely that the over-identified employee would engage in actions that do not take into account its impact on the organization. This suggests that over-identifiers would also be less likely to engage in nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes (see Figure 1). Hence we argue the following.

PROPOSITION 1. *Employees engaging in workplace crime who over-identify with their organization are more likely to engage in pro-organizational workplace crimes than in nonaligned-organizational or anti-organizational workplace crimes.*

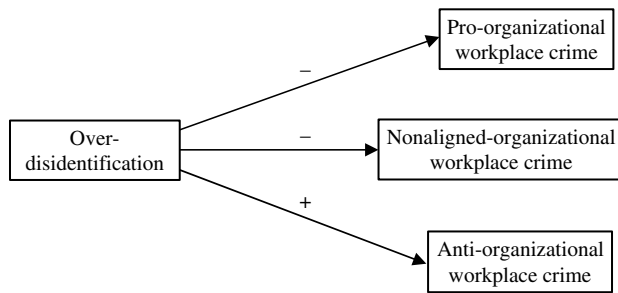
Over-Disidentification

Organizational disidentification is defined as “a self-perception based on (1) a sense of active separation between one’s identity and the identity of the organization, and (2) a negative relational categorization of oneself and the organization” (Elsbach 1999, p. 179). Unlike identification, where self-enhancement is achieved through one’s similarity with the organization, disidentification leads to self-enhancement through dissociation with the organization and the creation of negative distinctiveness (e.g., I am proud that I do not value what my organization values, or the organization defines who I am *not*). Mild forms of disidentification may not be problematic for an organization (e.g., it may provide a needed critical voice for overly cohesive groups), but

over-disidentification—whereby the forces of identification and disidentification are highly skewed in favor of the latter—may pose significant problems for the organization. This is especially true because this form of attachment is associated with powerfully negative emotions such as hate or anger, which have been found to predict actions that lead to organizational harm (see Pratt 2000).

Because over-disidentification involves strong, negative feelings toward an organization, employees with this type of attachment may not share their organizational affiliation with nonorganizational others, may be vocal about the aspects of the organization they dislike, and/or may try to differentiate themselves from the organization by identifying with some other characteristics that make them distinct (Kreiner and Ashforth 2004). In their study of the National Rifle Association (NRA), Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) found that individuals who claimed to disidentify with the NRA carried out counterorganizational actions such as boycotting products and making organizationally disparaging public claims. Over-disidentified individuals within an organization therefore may be willing to engage in offenses that more strongly dissociate them from the organization by inflicting harm to the organization.

Although not labeled disidentification and anti-organizational workplace crimes, these two concepts have been linked anecdotally in stories about individuals who “hate” their organizations and retaliate against them. For example, in a series of autobiographical essays on sabotage in the workplace, Sprouse (1992) offers numerous examples that would support our main arguments. In one of the essays, Jason, a bank teller, commented on developing a strong dislike for his workplace after it underwent a major reorganization. As a result, he began to engage in crimes that intentionally hurt the organization. He started cashing bad checks even if they were forged or scammed. On days that were important for the bank (such as paydays for welfare, Social Security, municipal, among others), both Jason and his soon-to-be wife (the only two bank tellers who spoke English as their first language) did not go to work. All this amounted to huge losses for the bank. Missing from such anecdotes, however, is the implication of identity. However, Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1987) have argued that employee aggression in the workplace may be motivated by a desire to project an identity that is opposite of what the employee feels is being ascribed to him or her by a manager (also see Ashforth and Mael 1998). They note that “sabotage is an individual’s way of establishing what he/she is *not*” (Giacalone and Rosenfeld 1987, p. 369, emphasis in original). Extrapolating from these findings, we argue that employees who are over-disidentifiers are more likely to commit anti-organizational workplace crimes.

Figure 2 Schematic Representation of Over-Disidentification

The main mechanism linking over-disidentification with anti-organizational crimes is self-verification (Burke 1991, Burke and Harold 2005, Swann 1983, Swann and Read 1981, Swann et al. 1992). As with over-identification, over-disidentifiers still see their organizations as highly central to their self-definitions—though there is less blurring of person and organization, as is the case with over-identifiers. Moreover, disidentifiers will act on those self-definitions in ways that condemn the organization; thus, for example, disidentified Amway distributors are those who create and maintain websites denouncing Amway (Pratt 2000). Such actions against the organization are self-verifying—reinforcing the notion that the organization stands for “who I am not.” Extending this logic, over-disidentifiers tend to oppose suggestions or initiatives by the organization (Dukerich et al. 1998) and are less likely than those who do not disidentify to act on behalf of the organization’s best interest. They are, therefore, not likely to commit pro-organizational workplace crimes. Moreover, because over-disidentifiers are bound to the organization by their negative distinctiveness, we believe that they are also less likely to commit acts of nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes because they will tend to focus on ways to harm the organization as a signal of resistance and defiance. Our propositions regarding over-disidentification and workplace crimes are illustrated in Figure 2 and summarized in the following way.

PROPOSITION 2. *Employees engaging in workplace crime who over-disidentify with their organization are more likely to engage in anti-organizational workplace crimes than in nonaligned- or pro-organizational workplace crimes.*

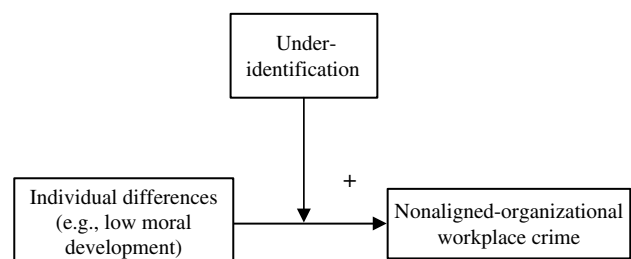
Under-Identification

Whereas over-identification and over-disidentification both refer to attachments characterized by strong emotional bonds—where one can hate or love an organization too much—the lack of an emotional connection to an organization may also be problematic. Individuals who “under-identify” or who are severely apathetic toward an organization experience chronically low levels of identification and disidentification. Under-identification is therefore akin to anomie such that the

individual is not anchored in the social context. Under-identification may be found in people who either are incapable of identifying with the organization or just do not care to be identified with the organization (Dukerich et al. 1998).

In contrast to over-identified individuals whose personal self is lost in their organizational “social” identity, under-identifiers are more likely to be motivated by their idiosyncratic or “personal” identities (Turner 1999). Moreover, although under-identification in and of itself may not lead to workplace crimes (i.e., because it provides no direct motivation for crime), it may explain why some *individual differences* sometimes lead to such crimes. To illustrate, reviews by Daboub et al. (1995) and Zahra et al. (2005) point to the importance of certain demographic traits, such as age, tenure, and education, as moderating the influence of organizational structures on committing workplace crimes. Specifically, they argue that individual differences (e.g., low education and youth) that are associated with characteristics that are highly self-centered—such as recklessness, immediate gratification, or low moral development (see also the role of narcissism in Levine 2005)—are likely to increase the propensity toward criminal activity. However, the relationship between these traits and actual criminal behavior is mixed (see Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008). Thus, not every highly self-centered person commits an organizational crime.

We argue that under-identification may moderate the effects of the aforementioned individual differences. Specifically, weakening ties with the organization may make it more likely that individuals will (a) disregard organizational rules meant to prohibit criminal behavior and (b) free up the individual to act on his or her personal wants and desires. Thus, as we depict in Figure 3, individuals prone to immediate gratification and extreme self-interest may be more likely to act on these interests when they are apathetically identified with the organization. In short, we argue that under-identification makes individuals less sensitive to organizational norms and structural features such as ethical climate (Victor and Cullen 1988), ethical culture (Treviño et al. 1998), ethical infrastructure (Tenbrunsel et al. 2003), and ethical leadership (Brown and Treviño 2006). This indifference

Figure 3 Schematic Representation of Under-Identification

to the organization and its rules and policies thus intensifies the effects of self-centered individual differences on workplace crimes. This logic supports the claims made by Daboub et al. (1995) that the effects of these self-centered individual differences are most likely to occur when situational constraints are weak.

Although the research of Daboub et al. (1995) does not specify the type of workplace crime that are associated with these self-centered characteristics, Zahra et al. (2005) suggest that certain demographic variables may be tied to a wide range of workplace crimes. Building on our logic above, we believe that these characteristics, when possessed by an individual who does not have any strong feelings toward the organization, are most likely to lead to nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes. As we have argued, both pro-organizational and anti-organizational workplace crimes suggest a strong pre-existing bond with the organization: pro-organizational workplace crime is associated with over-identification, and anti-organizational workplace crime is associated with those who strongly disidentify with the organization. Lacking such organizational bonds, the behavior of those who are apathetic is not likely to be channeled directly into either helping or harming the organization. Thus, for those who are both self-centered and under-identified with their organization, nonaligned-organizational workplace crime, where the focus is on how the crime benefits the individual—regardless of the impact on the organization—is likely to follow.

PROPOSITION 3. *Under-identification moderates the effects of self-centered individual differences (e.g., low cognitive moral development) on criminal behavior such that those holding these characteristics are more likely to engage in nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes.*

If under-identification is likely to make personal motives more salient—and thus increase the probability that an individual will act selfishly in committing nonaligned-organizational crimes—it begs the question of how those with strong identification (e.g., over-identification) may respond if they are also greedy. Building on our previous arguments, the expression of greed is likely to be influenced both by the strength on one's identification and by its valence. For example, when one strongly identifies with a social entity such as an organization, we know that the standards of behavior move from personal to social (Turner 1999). Thus, it may be that greedy individuals who are also over-identifiers may express this greed in ways that benefit both themselves and the organizations they serve, thereby making them more susceptible to committing pro-organizational crimes. Alternatively, a strong bond with an organization may also serve to inhibit one's selfish impulses on behalf of the greater collective. We return to these arguments in our discussion section.

Ambivalent Identification

Ambivalent identification occurs when an individual simultaneously highly identifies and disidentifies with the same organization (Dukerich et al. 1998). According to Wang and Pratt (2008), ambivalent identification can occur when an individual identifies with some beliefs or values of the organization and disidentifies with others, or when the individual simultaneously identifies and disidentifies with the same aspects of the organization (Kreiner and Ashforth 2004). Research suggests that ambivalently identified employees will be highly motivated to resolve their ambivalence (Pratt 2000, Pratt and Doucet 2000)—but how might they resolve it, and what relation might it have to workplace crimes?

Ambivalence-amplification theory (Katz and Glass 1979) posits that ambivalence may be resolved via the formation of overly positive or overly negative attitudes. Such resolution may be aided by actions taken on the part of the object of one's ambivalence. Building from the premise that attitudes about certain "stigmatized" groups (e.g., racial minorities) tend to be more ambivalent than unambiguously hostile or friendly, Katz and Glass (1979) reviewed a series of laboratory experiments that explored whether the resolution of ambivalence leads to stronger negative or positive responses toward such groups. Their review confirmed an ambivalence-amplification effect. For example, in a study where subjects in the majority group (white) were asked to give black confederates a strong shock in a learning exercise, the majority's attitudes toward the minority subjects changed significantly for the worse; however, this effect was not found when white subjects were to be given a shock (either mild or strong). By contrast, results showed a positive amplification effect by white evaluators when they were asked to evaluate both black and white stimulus persons, and both stimulus persons were described as having desirable social traits. Similar patterns of results were found when the target person in the study was a physically disabled person. These effects have been replicated in more recent work. Colella and Varma (2001), for example, found that disabled workers (the "stigmatized" group) who did not ingratiate were seen less favorably by managers than nondisabled workers who did not ingratiate. However, disabled workers were more highly favored than their nondisabled counterparts when both groups engaged in ingratiation (see also Gibbons et al. 1980 for similar results). This study thus shows that negative actions (no ingratiation) by the stigmatized group changed feelings toward the group from ambivalent to unfavorable ones, and positive behaviors (ingratiation) changed the ambivalent feelings to favorable ones. Colella and Varma (2001) attribute this interaction to an ambivalence-amplification effect.

Building on this research, we argue that ambivalent identification with an organization may be resolved via

an amplification of one's feelings toward the organization. Specifically, ambivalent identification may have an indirect effect on committing workplace crimes by making employees more susceptible to forming over-identification or over-disidentification. Salient events, such as a corporate scandal or corporate heroics, may trigger ambivalence resolution and the amplification of more uniformly negative or positive attitudes, respectively. Thus, if the organization engages in salient, socially desirable behaviors or in actions that are positively evaluated by the employee experiencing this ambivalent state of identification, then this conduct by the organization would be consistent with the employee's positive attitude toward the organization and in contrast to his or her negative attitude toward the organization. The employee in such cases may engage in ambivalence-reducing behaviors by making compensatory overly positive evaluations of the organization, thereby leading to over-identification. Ironically, this would suggest that we would see an increase in pro-organizational workplace crimes by some employees after positive actions are made by organizations (see Figure 4). By contrast, if the organization engages in socially undesirable behaviors or in actions that are negatively evaluated by the employee in this state of ambivalent identification, then the organization's conduct would be consistent with the employee's negative attitude toward the organization and in contrast to her positive attitude toward it. This may lead the employee to strongly disidentify with the organization. The employee may, therefore, express such disidentification by engaging in very negative behaviors against the organization, such as extreme denigration (Dienstbier 1970). Thus, we would expect ambivalent employees to engage in more anti-organizational workplace crimes following a negative evaluation of the organization (see Figure 4).

PROPOSITION 4(A). *Employees engaging in workplace crime who ambivalently identify with their organization*

are more likely to commit pro-organizational workplace crimes in the wake of salient, positive action by the organization.

PROPOSITION 4(B). *Employees engaging in workplace crime who ambivalently identify with their organization are more likely to commit anti-organizational workplace crimes in the wake of salient, negative action by the organization.*

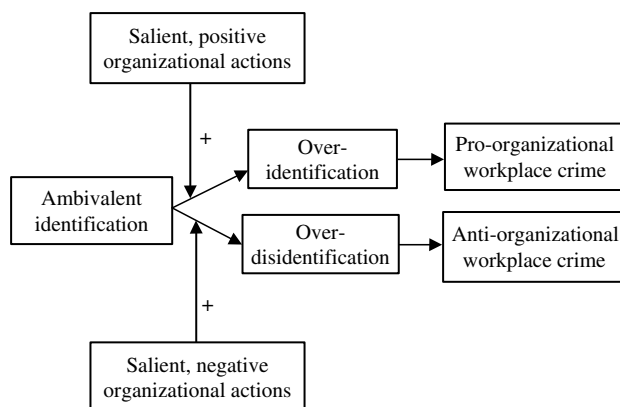
Discussion

In this paper, we propose a typology of workplace crimes (pro-organizational, anti-organizational, and nonaligned-organizational) based on intended outcomes, and we argue that one of the key factors that may lead organizational members to commit these different types of crime is organizational identification. We specifically suggest how identification pathologies such as over-identification, over-disidentification, under-identification, and ambivalent identification may be linked to propensities to commit pro-organizational, anti-organizational, and nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes. By doing so, we bring together the previously disparate literatures of workplace crimes and organizational identification and make contributions to each.

Theoretical Contributions and Avenues for Future Research

Typology of Workplace Crimes. To begin, we contribute to the literatures in the workplace crimes domain by providing a parsimonious typology of workplace crimes, based on their intended outcomes. As noted in the introduction, there is a dizzying number of ways to conceptualize and categorize the various crimes under the rubric of "workplace crimes." Part of this proliferation of schemes may stem, in part, from viewing workplace crimes in terms of crimes committed (e.g., Ambrose et al. 2002, Clinard and Quinney 1973, Greenberg 2002), involvement in crimes (e.g., Daboub et al. 1995, Pinto et al. 2008, Szwajkowski 1985), victims of the crimes (e.g., Bennett and Robinson 2000, Warren 2003), characteristics of the perpetrator (e.g., Aguilera and Vadera 2008, Clinard 1983, Sutherland 1940), as well as on the basis of crimes specific to a particular industry (Calavita et al. 1997, Flannery and May 2000). Implicit in some of these conceptualizations, however, is the basic *intention* of whether the organization will be harmed, benefited, or ignored. Thus, we move intentionality to the forefront and use it as a way to clearly distinguish among three major types of workplace crimes: pro-organizational, anti-organizational, and nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes. By proposing this typology, we hope to address some of the inconsistent findings regarding workplace crimes by differentiating unique motivators (e.g., identification type) that may lead to these

Figure 4 Schematic Representation of Ambivalent Identification



crimes. This also helps explain why the same conditions (e.g., publicly negative actions by an organization) may lead to no crime (no pathological identification) or to widely disparate crime types (e.g., anti- or pro-organizational).

Motivational Antecedent of Workplace Crimes. Our focus on intended outcomes opens our inquiries about workplace crimes to a new potential individual-level motivator (van Knippenberg 2000) for such crimes: organizational identification. In particular, by drawing on the expanded model of identification and identification pathologies, we provide a parsimonious way of explaining why some individuals will be predisposed to pro-organizational, anti-organizational, or nonaligned-organizational workplace crime. We also suggest how identification types may work in conjunction with other individual differences that have historically been associated, though not necessarily consistently tied, to workplace crimes (see Proposition 3). Thus, a greedy person who under-identifies with his or her organization is more likely to commit nonaligned-organizational crimes than a person who over-disidentifies with an organization.

Building on these arguments, future research may also want to examine how attachment motivations in organizations may play off each other. It may be that some combination of organizational identification pathologies may be particularly devastating for organizations. To illustrate, organizations filled with a high percentage of ambivalent identifiers may be particularly attuned to the identification-related actions of others. Imagine that in this workplace, an over-identifier engaged in activities that resulted in a corporate scandal. This scandal, in turn, may “flip” ambivalent identifiers into over-disidentifiers, thus increasing the probability that anti-organizational crimes may then occur when the organization is already suffering.

Resolution of Conflicting Findings. Another way by which the propositions in this paper may enrich our understanding of workplace crimes is by helping us understand mixed and conflicting results in research on workplace crimes (see Treviño et al. 2006). One running example we have used in this paper is the discrepant findings regarding the impact of having a large percentage of outsiders on the board of directors on the occurrence of financial statement-related fraud (Beasley 1996, Kesner et al. 1986). We can further demystify these contradictory findings by closely examining the types of identification these outside members hold toward their organizations.

If the outside members on the board of directors over-identify with the organization, then they are more likely to work for the benefit of the organization, thereby ensuring that the top management team of the organization does not engage in anti-organizational workplace crimes. Moreover, if such crimes do occur, it is likely

that these board members would attempt to address such crimes “in house” and not involve the press. With regard to pro-organizational workplace crimes, over-identifiers might even collude with executives and managers in perpetuating such crimes. Thus, from a researcher’s perspective, we would notice that crimes, if reported, would be more likely to be those that benefit the organization.

If the outside board members come to over-disidentify with the organization (e.g., as the result of resolving an ambivalent attachment in the face of a corporate scandal or of joining the board of an organization an individual dislikes to change it or “destroy it from within”), we would expect a different pattern to emerge. If the top management team was engaged in any type of crime, disidentifying board members might be quick to alert the press in order to “shame” the organization (although the response time *may* be slower when reporting anti-organizational workplace crimes, as board members may wait for more damage to be done). Taken together, from a researcher’s perspective, we would notice that both more crime and more types of crime would likely be reported (see Hillman et al. 2008).

Implications for Organizational Identification Research. Our model and propositions also suggest new avenues for research in identification, especially as it relates to criminal activity. At a general level, our research adds to the literature on organizational identification by focusing on the less positive aspects of identification. Beyond the role of over-identification (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1996, Kramer and Wei 1999), the “dark side of identification” in organizations has only begun to be explored (Dukerich et al. 1998). We contribute to this embryonic literature by proposing an association between organizational identification and workplace crimes; we note that both identification type and strength are critical. Perhaps most obviously, identification type or its hedonic tone (i.e., positive, negative, or ambivalent) is critical for establishing the motivational focus for workplace crimes (i.e., to help or hurt the organization). However, we also imply that identification strength plays a role in two ways.

First, if hedonic tone is kept constant, might there be an “optimal” level of “positive” identification that is needed to decrease the potential that workplace crime will be committed? We have argued that over-identification and under-identification each can make members more vulnerable to committing different types of workplace crimes. This would suggest that some optimal level of organizational identification might deter someone from engaging in workplace crime. What we do not know, however, is the range of this optimal level. For example, at what places along the identification (and disidentification) continuum ($-a$) are people most likely to have healthy (noncriminal) attitudes and engage in healthy behaviors toward the organization? What organizational and individual factors might serve to widen or

narrow this range? In addition, future research may also wish to examine whether this proposed “inverted U” is symmetrical. For example, the point at which one moves from “healthy” identification to under-identification may be different from the one that governs the move from healthy identification to over-identification.

Second, strong forms of identification—whether they are positive or negative—are most likely to have direct effects on the propensity to commit workplace crimes. Weak or conflicted attachments (under- and ambivalent identification), by contrast, are more complex and have more indirect effects. Our extrapolation from ambivalence-amplification theory suggests that those with ambivalent identification may be particularly susceptible to external cues such as salient organizational actions. Resolution of ambivalence may trigger a sense-making process whereby individuals scan the environment for ways to resolve such ambivalence. By contrast, we can infer from early work on individual differences and crime propensity (Aquino and Bradfield 2000, Leap 2007, Levine 2005, Treviño and Youngblood 1990) that under-identified individuals may look more at internal cues stemming from their personalities. Future research may wish to further explore the conditions under which such externally versus internally focused sensemaking holds, as well as examine a wider range of conditions that may affect the relationship between attachment and crime when attachments are not unambiguously strong.

In addition, we have focused on identification pathologies in terms of active engagement in workplace crimes, but future research may also examine how organizational identification influences people’s passive acquiescence to criminal behavior or other indirect effects (Daboub et al. 1995). Along these lines, it may be interesting to investigate whether organizational identification plays a role in how employees *react* to the illegal acts of others in the organization. For instance, those who under-identify with the organization may be less likely to care about the illicit and unethical behaviors of the other members in their organization because they do not view their organization positively or negatively. However, those who over-identify with the organization are more likely to pay attention to actions that have a bearing on their organization. In fact, these individuals may be more likely to encourage crimes that benefit the organization (i.e., pro-organizational workplace crimes) and blow the whistle for those crimes that harm the organization (i.e., anti-organizational workplace crimes). Thus, it may be fruitful to examine how organizational identification affects not only the actions of organizational members but also their inactions toward those engaging in workplace crimes in their organization (also see Vadera et al. 2009).

Practical Implications

Workplace crime, whether it is done for or against the organization, is harmful to the shareholders, employees, stakeholders, and society as a whole. It is therefore very important for organizations to be aware of the different motivational reasons behind these acts so that they are better able to reduce the likelihood of occurrences of such crimes. As discussed previously, managers need to be aware of both the strength and the quality of their members’ identification. Regarding strength, this paper suggests that over-identification and under-identification are pathologies that need to be avoided so that employees can achieve an optimal level of identification with the organization. Although there has been relatively little work on “de-escalating” over-identification, there has been considerable work done on how organizations can increase identification (Ashforth and Mael 1989, Dutton et al. 1994, Pratt 2000), which may help move employees out of states of under-identification and ambivalent identification. However, if identification is too weak, it is unlikely that such individuals would respond to organizational identification management attempts. Regarding the quality of identification, managers need also be aware of the hedonic tone of employees’ attachments. Conventional wisdom may suggest being most attentive to disgruntled (i.e., disidentified) employees, but we suggest that such employees are only prone to commit certain types of workplace crime and that other types of emotional ties may also be destructive. In addition to the potential hazards of over-identification, managers should also be aware of the sometimes counterintuitive effects of ambivalent identification. Again, although it may not be surprising that incidents of workplace crimes may increase in the wake of a corporate scandal, heroic actions by the organization may push ambivalently identified members into over-identification, which, we propose, could lead to the commission of pro-organizational workplace crimes.

The distinction among pro-organizational, anti-organizational, and nonaligned-organizational workplace crimes may also help policy makers design and enforce more competent policies and regulations that are more in tune with the crimes that the organizational members are involved in (see Vadera and Aguilera 2009). A recent example of such a policy may be the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which focuses mostly on financial and accounting misrepresentation; this can be considered as only one type of workplace crime (i.e., pro-organizational workplace crime). Thus, understanding the different types of workplace crime and the identification of individuals engaging in these crimes may be the foundation to develop a more comprehensive theory of the psychology of workplace crimes for the purpose of designing more nuanced legislation.

We also assert that understanding these various types of workplace crimes may help us better identify who

might be most effective as “watchdogs” for these crimes. Individuals engaging in pro-organizational workplace crimes, for example, may receive the support of their organizations, as these crimes also benefit the organizations. Additionally, the organizations may be less likely to sanction such behaviors because of the increase in profitability for the organizations from these illegal acts. Therefore, in such cases, outside agencies, which are independent of the organizations being watched, may be best positioned to provide the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the rights and privileges of the stakeholders are maintained. For individuals committing anti-organizational workplace crimes, organizations may penalize such behaviors because these crimes entail stealing from the organization itself. Because these crimes are against the organization, the organization itself may be best suited to develop mechanisms to control and persecute members engaging in such crimes. Given that nonaligned-organizational identification does not have direct effects on workplace crimes, it may be best that policies and procedures focus on the factors that this type of identification may moderate (e.g., self-centered, individual-level differences).

Conclusion

Corporate scandals and other workplace crimes continue to dramatically impact individuals, organizations, and societies. We propose that research on understanding and preventing criminal behavior in organizations can be facilitated by (a) organizing the various types of workplace crimes into a parsimonious typology based on intended outcomes and (b) better understanding a key individual-level motivator for those intentions—the nature and strength of an employees’ identification.

Acknowledgments

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Endnote

¹Dukerich et al. (1998) refer to this pathology as “schizo” identification. However, “schizo” often refers to schizophrenia, which is associated with hallucination and delusions but does not, in fact, refer to a split personality (also known as dissociative identity disorder). Thus, we use the term “ambivalent” to capture the opposing attractive and repulsive forces inherent in this form of identification (Pratt and Doucet 2000).

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