

CHAPTER 7

MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL DEVIANCE

Focusing on Causes, Not Symptoms

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Organizations experience staggering expenses when employees break rules, behaviors that are variously referred to as acts of organizational deviance, counterproductive work behavior, or organizational misbehavior.¹ For example, conservative estimates place the annual cost of internal theft at \$6 billion in the U.S. (Wimbush & Dalton, 1997); computer-based loafing behavior, or cyberloafing, costs \$600 million annually in the United Kingdom (Taylor, 2007) and upwards of \$5.3 billion in the United States (Bennett & Robinson, 2003); and recovery from acts of anger and violence in the workplace cost over \$4 billion per year (Bensimon, 1997). It is not surprising that managers are highly motivated to identify ways to control employee deviance given these statistics, and a large body of practical, "self-help" books for managers has sprung up to meet this demand in the last decade (e.g., Bruce, Hampel, & Lamont, 2011; Falcone, 2009; Grote, 2006; Scott, 2006; Shepard, 2005).

Despite the good intentions of these authors, there are two key problems that are typically evident in the books directed at practicing managers. First,

employee deviance is usually interpreted as a function of person-level causes; deviance is oftentimes attributed to "bad employees" who must be controlled to prevent them from acting in undesirable ways. For example, Scott (2006) immediately describes problematic employees in terms of trait qualities that manifest in problematic behaviors (e.g., "the busybody and gossip, the backstabber, the incompetent" p. viii). While many of these books eventually arrive at the conclusion that deviant behavior is a result of interplay between individual differences and the work context, the emphasis is generally to seize upon the notion that deviant behavior is a function of bad apples rather than bad barrels (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010). This orientation conflicts with the remarkable progress made in the scholarly literature in the past 20 years, which points to a wide set of workplace conditions that promote employee deviance (e.g., Aquino & O'Reilly, 2011; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Griffin & O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Lawrence & Robinson, 2007; Litzky, Edlestone, & Kidder, 2006; Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

The second problem with the practical literature is that most of the advice offered to managers is reactive and disciplinary rather than proactive and preventative. When managers focus on how to appropriately discipline employees (Grote, 2006), or how to have tough administrative conversations (Falcone, 2009), they miss the broader opportunity to consider their own behaviors and the workplace influences that may be prompting the deviant behavior to occur in the first place (Litzky et al., 2006). Managers may be able to suppress the symptoms of underlying problems by disciplining deviant employees, but deviance will continue to emerge if its causes remain unchecked. Proactively managing the work context, rather than reacting to employee deviance, offers the only true opportunity to free managers from the burden of regular disciplinary conversations.

Given these disconnects between the scholarly and practical literature on employee deviance, the central question we explore in this chapter is, "Why do managers focus on *what* rule-breakers do without considering *why* these employees deviate in the first place?" We contend that shifting the conversation to understand employees' motivations for engaging in deviance will enable managers to respond decisively and effectively to deviant behavior. Moreover, taking the focus away from deviant employees enables managers to recognize that they may be inadvertently contributing to the problem by allowing conditions that encourage deviance to persist (Litzky et al., 2006) or by making faulty assumptions about their subordinates' traits and qualities (McGregor, 1960).

To this end, we begin first by exploring the "kernel of truth" underlying the practical literature on the traits of deviant employees: there is a sizable literature linking individual differences to employee deviance, and a balanced assessment of the causes of deviance should certainly take this

research into account (e.g., Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). However, the broader body of research on deviance suggests that people have many different motivations for engaging in deviance, and that these motivations are typically driven to a greater extent by elements of the work context than by individual differences (Vardi & Weitz, 2004). Thus, we next offer a framework drawn from Vardi and Weitz (2004) to describe the different motivations for deviant behavior and review the recent literature on the contextual drivers of these motivations. We structure this review around four main levels of analysis, namely (a) the organizational system, (b) the immediate team/workgroup, (c) the supervisor/subordinate dyad, and (d) the job characteristics experienced by individual employees. Third, given our motivational perspective on deviance, we consider a motivation for rule-breaking behavior that rarely appears in the practical literature—that people sometimes break rules with the intention of *bettering* the company. We explore the nascent literature on this topic given that these behaviors have the potential to actually improve workplace relationships and efficiency if managed appropriately. Last, we synthesize the literature that we review to distill a set of "must-do" recommendations for managers who are faced with a need to curtail and control employee deviance in the workplace.

THE KERNEL OF TRUTH: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND EMPLOYEE DEVIANC

The kernel of truth underlying the practical literature on employee deviance is that many individual differences are associated with organizational deviance (e.g., Berry et al., 2007). For example, research on the Big Five personality traits shows that conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness are all negatively related to counterproductive behaviors (Berry et al., 2007; Salgado, 2002). Other personality traits related to self- and emotion-regulation are also relevant to predicting employee deviance. For example, high negative affectivity, a general predisposition to feel negative emotions (Watson & Clark, 1984), predicts workplace aggression and other forms of counterproductive work behavior (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Penney & Spector, 2005; Spector, 2011). With respect to self-regulation, people who possess high impulsivity (Hemle, 2005), high reward sensitivity (Diekmann & Mehta, 2007), and low self-control (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Spector, 2011), are more likely to engage in workplace aggression and other deviant behaviors. Finally, the scholarly literature has suggested that a "dark triad" of personality traits consisting of Machiavellianism (Dahling, Kuyumcu, & Librizzi, 2012; Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009), trait anger (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Spector,

2011), and narcissism (Spector, 2011) predict a wide spectrum of deviant work behaviors, including theft, lying, deceit, sabotage, and cheating.

Aside from personality traits, some research has shown that cognitive ability is also an important predictor of deviance. Although it is well-known that higher cognitive ability is associated with better job performance and greater success in job training (Gottfredson, 1997; Kuncel & Hezlett, 2010), cognitive ability is also negatively related to organizational deviance (Dilchert, Ones, Davis, & Rostow, 2007). People with low cognitive ability are theorized to be less likely to think about the harmful consequences of their actions before engaging in behaviors, which makes it more likely that they will commit acts of deviance with negative repercussions.

To summarize, many individual differences, such as personality and cognitive ability, correlate with organizational deviance. However, traits alone do not explain why employees engage in deviant behaviors (Tomlinson & Greenberg, 2005). Elements of the organizational context can greatly exacerbate or negate the effects of personality traits on employee deviance (e.g., Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004); some employees never break rules despite having patterns of traits that are predictive of deviance, and other employees are driven to a wide range of deviant behaviors despite lacking any "red flag" dispositional markers. In the sections that follow, we focus on understanding the motivations that underlie employee deviance and the organizational experiences that shape them.

A MOTIVATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING DEVIANCE

To begin to understand the motivations underlying employee deviance, we introduce and elaborate upon Vardi and Weitz's (2004) framework for organizational misbehavior. Although past research offers a number of different frameworks to organize deviance research, Vardi and Weitz integrated many of these models while clarifying the motivational manifestations of intentional workplace misconduct. Their integrative approach suggests that neither the individual nor organizational/societal perspectives alone fully explain organizational misbehavior. What is also unique about their framework is that it does not assume that deviance is always harmful to the organization, a point that we explore in a section on constructive deviance later in the chapter.

Vardi and Weitz (2004) distinguished between three types of deviance based on the different motivations that drive them. These include misbehaviors intended to benefit the self (Type-S), misbehaviors intended to inflict damage and/or be destructive (Type-D), and misbehaviors intended

to benefit the organization (Type-O). Type-S misbehaviors are actions that usually victimize the employing firm or its members for self-gain and are mostly internal to the organization. Employee theft committed with the intention of personal financial profit would be categorized as Type-S misbehavior. Type-D misbehaviors are vindictive and intended to hurt others or the organization, and its victims can be either internal or external. Examples of Type-D misbehaviors include sabotaging company-owned equipment out of anger or deliberately providing compromised service to a rude customer. On the other hand, Type-O misbehaviors, which are primarily intended to benefit the member's employing organization, are generally directed towards external victims. For example, a restaurant employee could choose to ignore a reservation made by an unknown customer to provide an immediate table for an important, repeat customer.

Critically, the motivational intention behind the misbehavior is what drives the classification of deviance. Vardi and Weitz (2004) clarified that these three motivations are shaped by a mixture of two categories of predictor variables: *normative forces* or *instrumental forces*. Normative forces are internalized organizational expectations and experiences, while instrumental forces reflect employees' beliefs about personal interests. According to their framework, Type-S misbehavior is shaped primarily by instrumental forces; Type-S misbehavior is self-serving and is therefore influenced entirely by a person's beliefs about securing favorable outcomes. Conversely, deviance committed to benefit the organization (Type-O) is driven by normative pressures. These behaviors are typically determined by the organization's subjective norms at the cost of possibly sacrificing self-interest for greater causes; the welfare of the organization is the motivating factor behind this type of deviance. Destructively-motivated deviance (Type-D) assumes that both normative and instrumental forces are simultaneously at play, or can vary depending upon the action taken and target victim.

Taking a motivational perspective allows managers to evaluate the underlying intentions that promote these different types of deviance. It is important to understand that Type-O, Type-S and Type-D deviance are distinct and each is committed with different objectives in mind. In the next section, we explore the contextual predictors of employee deviance that can shape these various motivations. We primarily focus in this section on predictors of deviance that would be globally categorized as Type-D or Type-S, which are clearly detrimental to the organization. We review the nascent literature on the drivers of deviance intended to benefit the organization (Type-O misbehavior, or constructive deviance) separately.

CONTEXTUAL PREDICTORS OF DESTRUCTIVE AND SELF-INTERESTED DEVIANCE

Consistent with Vardi and Weitz's (2004) framework, an enormous variety of contextual variables in the work environment are predictive of organizational deviance. We review these variables in four categories, starting with macrolevel, systematic influences and ending with immediate, microlevel job experiences that encourage deviance. Specifically, the contextual variables that predict deviance can be organized into those that reside at (a) the organizational level of analysis, (b) the team or workgroup level of analysis, (c) the supervisor-subordinate dyadic level of analysis, and (d) the individual job level of analysis. While many important contextual variables have effects that cut across these four levels, this framework enables managers to think systematically about an organization to identify where the primary drivers of deviance may lie. We summarize the body of research presented in these sections in Table 7.1, with a special emphasis on the psychological theories used to explain why these contextual variables are associated with greater organizational deviance.

Organizational System

There are widespread, systemic influences on employee deviance that are formed on a broad, macrolevel within organizations, particularly with respect to shared organizational climates and reward systems. Social learning theory posits that individuals perceive the values of a social entity, such as an organization, as a guide to behavior that is learned through observation (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, an organization's climate can generate a strong influence over its members and dictate implicit or explicit organizational standards of conduct, acquired through modeling and direct conditioning (Biron, 2010). In particular, an organization's climates for ethics and justice have important implications for employee deviance.

Ethical climate. The ethical climate of a workplace refers to the shared perceptions among employees of what is considered ethically-appropriate behavior within the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Many studies have found that ethical climate perceptions shape employee behavior, in particular the commission of organizational deviance (e.g., Biron, 2010; Evans, Goodman, & Davis, 2011; Peterson, 2002). For example, Biron (2010) found a negative association between perceptions of the organization's ethical values and employees' organizational deviance. She additionally identified several moderators of this relationship; abusive supervision weakened the negative relationship between ethical values

Table 7.1. Summary of Contextual Predictors of Organizational Deviance

<i>Level of Analysis</i>	<i>Predictor Constructs</i>	<i>Relevant Psychological Theories or Models</i>	<i>Representative Studies</i>
Organizational System	Ethical climate, Perceived corporate citizenship, Justice climate	Social exchange theory, Social learning theory, Social identity theory	Biron, 2010; Evans, et al., 2011; Peterson, 2002
	Reward, control, and punishment systems	Social exchange theory, Fairness theory	El Akremi et al., 2010; Aquino et al., 1999
	Work group norms and pressures	Equity theory, Fairness theory, Goal setting theory	Hortvoka-Mead et al., 2002; Litz et al., 2006; Zoghbi-Maurique-de-Lara, 2011
Team/Workgroup			
	Organizational-based self esteem (OBSE)	Social learning theory, Bystander effect, Contagion effect	Ferguson & Barry, 2011; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Tepper et al., 2008
	Team autonomy	Belongingness theory	Ferris et al., 2009
Supervisor/ Subordinate Dyad			
	Managerial oversight	Job characteristics theory	Arthur, 2011
	Abusive supervision	Agency theory	Detert et al., 2007; Litsky et al., 2006
	Psychological contract breach	Reactance theory, Fairness theory	Ashforth, 1997; Shao et al., 2011; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007
	Violation of Trust	Social exchange theory, Equity theory	Bordia et al., 2008; Morrison & Robinson, 1997
Individual Job Characteristics			
	Perceived job autonomy	Social exchange theory, Equity theory	Litsky et al., 2006; Morrison & Robinson, 1997
	Role ambiguity, Role conflict (inc. work-family conflict)	Job characteristics theory, Job Demand Control Model	Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Baillien et al., 2011
		Stressor-Emotion Model; Identity theory	Spector & Fox, 2005
			Hange et al., 2009; Darrat et al., 2010;

and organizational deviance, while perceived organizational support (POS) strengthened it. POS refers to employees' beliefs about whether or not the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). The results of Biron's (2010) study showed that the lowest levels of organizational deviance were observed when there was low abusive supervision and high POS in a strong ethical climate. Conversely, the most deviance was committed under conditions of high abusive supervision and low POS in a weak ethical climate. These findings led Biron to suggest that the degree to which the employer's prescribed ethical values are consistent with its actions can have substantial implications for employee behavior. A negative reciprocity effect, the inclination to strike back in response to poor exchange relationships with organizational partners, may occur when the supervisor/employer acts in a way that is misaligned with the perceived organizational ethical values. These considerations are important when evaluating how an ethical climate as experienced by particular employees can influence organizational deviance.

In a related study, Evans et al. (2011) found that employee deviance can be influenced by the degree to which an employee considers his or her employer a good corporate citizen. This perceived corporate citizenship (PCC), an individual's evaluation of whether or not the employing organization fulfills the responsibilities of corporate citizenship, can greatly impact an employee's interpretation of his or her work environment. Results of their study indicate that employees who perceive their companies to be good corporate citizens are less likely to engage in costly and destructive behaviors. In addition to identifying this relationship, they discovered that organizational cynicism was positively related to deviance and mediated the relationship between PCC and deviance. This finding indicates that a cynical evaluation of corporate citizenship values can also play a role in whether or not employees will commit deviance.

Justice climate. A second type of organizational climate perception, the climate for justice, is also relevant to organizational deviance (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; El Akremi, Vandenberghe, & Camerman, 2010; Ménard, Brunet, & Savoie, 2011; Zoghbi-Mannique-de-Lara, 2011). The justice climate can be defined as the shared, group-level perceptions of justice that develop when people learn fairness information from others within their organization or team, leading to consistency in justice perceptions within the workplace (Roberson & Colquitt, 2005). Colquitt (2001) identified and described four types of justice evaluations that can be made at this collective level: distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal. Distributive justice relates to the belief that people receive fair amounts of valued work-related outcomes relative to their contributions. Procedural justice concerns perceptions of fairness about

the process used to determine outcomes in the workplace, while informational justice is the perception of the accuracy and quality of explanations given about these procedures. Last, interpersonal justice addresses whether or not employees perceive that they receive fair interpersonal treatment (e.g., that they are treated with dignity and respect within the organization).

Injustice has been found to weaken the quality of social exchange relationships between employees and their supervisor and/or organization. El Akremi et al.'s (2010) study found that perceived organizational injustice resulted in low POS and leader-member exchange (LMX) ratings, evaluations of the relationship quality between supervisors and employees. These negative reactions to injustice could instill a negative reciprocity effect leading employees to respond with deviance. POS mediated the negative relationship between procedural justice and organizational-directed deviance, indicating that employees directed their acts of retaliation toward the organization that they felt had mistreated them. On the other hand, LMX mediated the negative relationships between informational and interpersonal justice and both supervisor-directed deviance and organization-directed deviance (El Akremi et al., 2010). Thus, when leaders can be held accountable for injustice, employees direct their deviance toward both that supervisor and the employing organization. Along similar lines, earlier studies found that distributive justice has a significant negative relationship with interpersonal deviance, and that interpersonal justice is related to both organizational and interpersonal deviance (Aquino et al., 1999). Thus, perceptions of injustice within the organization are likely to lead to evaluations of blame for this treatment, and employees will subsequently react with deviance toward the responsible leaders or organization in retaliation (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Reward, control, and punishment systems. Organizational incentive and punishment systems can also contribute to employee deviance. For example, compensation that depends upon commissions or gratuities could create a financial motive for employees to commit deviance to achieve gains if deviance reflects the most straightforward way to profit (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Kerr, 1995). Litzky et al. (2006) explained that many reward systems drive competition for rewards and may trigger deviant acts by promoting unscrupulous behaviors among coworkers looking to get ahead, or by allowing employees to rationalize deviance under the guise of meeting sales quotas.

With respect to control and punishment policies, Zoghbi-Mannique-de-Lara (2011) found that procedural justice fully mediated the effects of monitoring and punishment threats on employee deviance. The study examined how punishment and monitoring affect deviance, and results confirmed that punishment threats alone are hardly effective, but instead

trigger deviance as a retaliatory behavior. Meanwhile, high levels of monitoring promote employee performance and ethical behavior. This is perhaps because employees perceive higher levels of monitoring as more fair. The author concluded that punishment, and to some extent monitoring, are more effective when used "in proper doses" to produce the greatest perceptions of procedural justice.

Control systems, especially those that are perceived as unfair, can also promote deviance among employees. For example, Sims (2010), using a case-study approach, examined the 2006 boardroom scandal at Hewlett-Packard to determine whether or not the observed workplace deviance from board members could be considered a retaliatory response to organizational power. Hewlett-Packard suffered from ongoing leaks of information by board members, despite the CEO's explicit expectation that she should be the one to communicate with the media about boardroom discussions. As Sims explained,

The norms against such behavior were well established and often communicated. The power, frustration, and deviance ... suggests that this deviant behavior can be tied back to board frustrations experienced by [her] use of power to control board communication with the media. (p. 556)

Sims concluded that by firing the CEO, the board was displaying an act of personal aggression, a form of retaliatory deviance, in response to threats to social identity and frustrations with injustice.

To summarize, there are a variety of system-level constructs that can promote employee deviance in organizations. These include perceptual constructs such as the ethical and justice climates, along with formal organizational compensation and control systems. However, additional group-level drivers of deviance emerge in more immediate work groups and teams, and we turn next to this level of analysis.

Work Groups and Teams

Work groups and teams introduce additional motivators of deviance among employees. Some key influences that we review in this section include group norms and practices that are supportive of deviance, group pressures in the form of cohesiveness and desire to belong, and team autonomy.

Group norms and group pressures. Employees engage in more deviant behavior when they have direct or indirect knowledge of team or group members who have also committed deviant acts (e.g., Ferguson & Barry, 2011; Glomb & Liao, 2003; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Additionally,

work group cohesion compounds this effect; when groups are cohesive, direct observation of deviance is especially likely to result in bystanders committing subsequent deviance. One likely explanation for deviance contagion within work groups is that hearing or witnessing deviance leads to the acceptance of it, or perhaps the promotion of a deviant culture. A second explanation implicates social pressure. Specifically, employees report dissatisfaction with each other when one group member expresses less employee deviance than others, which creates additional pressures to conform to the deviant norm (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998).

Group norms toward deviance also shape the way that employees react to abusive treatment from supervisors. For example, Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, and Duffy (2008) found that abusive supervision has an indirect effect on organizational deviance via reduced commitment. This indirect effect was strengthened by group norms for deviance; in their first study, the effect was stronger when the focal employees perceived that their coworkers performed more acts of deviance, and the effect was stronger in their second study when coworkers actually reported more deviance in the workplace. Thus, employees look to their coworkers for cues as to whether organizational deviance is an appropriate response to supervisor mistreatment.

In another study, organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) was found to mediate the relationship between organizational support and employee deviance (Ferris, Brown, & Heller, 2009). Organizational-based self-esteem is the degree to which an employee feels that he or she is a significant, capable, and worthy member of the organization (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989). Using a belongingness theory framework, Ferris et al. (2009) argued that when leaders and the organization do not provide support, lowered OBSE and increased deviance may result. Consequently, this need to belong motivates many employees' actions within work groups and teams in the office, and belongingness-related concerns should be taken into account when examining workplace deviance that unfolds at the team level of analysis.

Team autonomy. The organization and management of work groups can also promote deviant behavior. This may be particularly true with respect to team autonomy and self-management. For example, Arthur (2011) found that interpersonal deviance within teams was positively associated with the amount of autonomy given to the team. In highly-autonomous teams that supervise themselves, the absence of formal bureaucratic sanctions allows team members to act however they please without the fear of organizational consequences. Often, this freedom enables team members to apply informal sanctions that take on the flavor of interpersonal mistreatment, like bullying and incivility, to shape and punish the behaviors of non-conforming team members. Parallel findings were

reported by Barker (1993), who found that self-managed teams developed and enforced strict normative standards for behavior that were oftentimes more stringent than the rules and norms set by the organization itself. However, Arthur (2011) cautioned that despite the positive association between team autonomy and interpersonal deviance, managers do not necessarily need to avoid job designs with autonomous teams. Instead, he argued that by increasing awareness and anticipating potential deviance, leaders can introduce training and other preventative measures prior to teamwork. This would allow both the employees and firms to harness the gains associated with autonomous teamwork while avoiding the likelihood of deviant behavior manifesting in the team.

Multiple theories offer explanations for the effects of group-level phenomena on deviance. Ferguson and Barry (2011) argued that social information processing theory plays a significant role in this process. Because social information is acquired via the social environment and personal interactions, an individual may use the knowledge of someone else's deviant acts to perpetuate or justify their own subsequent deviant interactions. Managers should be cautioned that the "proliferation of deviance can take a cyclical form ... a kind of vicious cycle" (p. 89). Tepper et al.'s (2008) findings also offer the contagion effect as another possible explanation for coinciding deviance in workgroups. Drawing upon belongingness theory, Ferris et al. (2009) reiterated that the need to belong or form positive interpersonal relationships can significantly impact workplace deviance. When one's sense of belonging is thwarted (e.g. when those in the work group communicate, through actions or behaviors, that the focal individual is not valued), it can result in adverse reactions like deviant behavior. Although the explanations may vary, all of these studies demonstrate the extent to which work groups and teams can shape employee deviance.

Supervisor/Subordinate Dyad

Microlevel predictors that are experienced by specific employees, rather than large groups, have effects on deviance beyond those described at the system and team levels of analysis. One of these microlevel considerations is the nature of the relationship between the subordinate employee and his or her supervisor, which has been examined in terms of the *amount* of supervision that employees receive and the *quality* of the supervision that they receive.

Managerial oversight. One supervisor/subordinate dyad characteristic that correlates with deviance is managerial oversight. Managerial oversight is defined as the ratio of managers to employees who must be supervised

(Detert, Treviño, Burris, & Andiappan, 2007), which generally speaks to the opportunities that managers have to observe and interact with their subordinates. Detert et al. (2007) found a negative relationship between the scope of managerial oversight and employee deviance, indicating that infrequent supervision can lead to more workplace deviance. Presumably, supervisors who are stretched too thin have insufficient opportunities to monitor their subordinates. Without providing a proper amount of supervision, supervisors create unstructured environments in which deviance can occur without consequence (Shultz, 1993).

Abusive supervision. While infrequent supervision has been shown to have negative consequences, the quality of supervision is typically of greater concern in recent research. Abusive supervision, a phenomenon that we noted at several points in the preceding sections, occurs when a manager uses his/her power and authority to mistreat particular subordinates (Ashforth, 1997). When subordinates experience this mistreatment by their supervisors, higher levels of workplace deviance occur (Detert et al., 2007; Shao, Resick, & Hargis, 2011). Abusive supervision has been found to lead to multiple types of workplace deviance: deviance directed toward others, deviance directed toward the organization, and deviance directed toward the supervisor (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). In addition to engaging in these harmful behaviors, employees who experience abusive supervision are also less likely to engage in citizenship behaviors that can benefit the organization (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). These findings are generally interpreted in terms of fairness theory or reactance theory, which take the perspective that employees are motivated to react to unreasonable treatment with hostile behaviors directed back toward the supervisor or toward other employees.

One specific study about abusive supervision exemplifies the impact that supervisory behaviors can have on deviance motivations. In a study of almost 500 employees in a variety of different jobs, the researchers focused on the consequences of abusive supervision toward employees who were high in social dominance orientation (SDO; Shao et al., 2011). SDO is an individual difference that entails a desire to maintain and enforce existing social hierarchies (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). While SDO itself has been linked to dominating behaviors toward others (Guimond, Dambrium, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003), Shao et al. (2011) found that the managerial behavior of abusive supervision activated this dominant tendency in high-SDO employees. Employees who were high in SDO, but who did *not* experience abusive supervision, exhibited overall lower levels of workplace deviance. Experiencing abusive supervision provided the necessary "trigger" for employees with high SDO to act out against their peers.

Violation of psychological contracts and subordinate trust. Psychological contract breach is another supervisory behavior that can influence deviance motivations. A psychological contract consists of a set of beliefs involving terms and agreements between the employee and his/her employing organization or particular coworkers (Rousseau, 1995). Importantly, these beliefs are one-sided; while employees believe that their understanding of the terms of employment is held by both parties, in actuality an employee's perspective may be quite different from the perspective held by his or her supervisor. Psychological contracts are breached when one party believes that the other has failed to fulfill his/her promise or commitment; supervisors can very easily breach subordinates' psychological contracts because they may not fully perceive the way that subordinates have construed their work arrangements (Rousseau, 2004). When psychological contract breach occurs in organizations, employees feel betrayed and revenge cognitions are formed which provide the motivation for employees to commit workplace deviance (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008).

Along similar lines, supervisor behaviors that violate subordinate trust can motivate deviance (Litzky et al., 2006). When employees do not have trust in a supervisor or in the organization, they are more likely to anticipate broken promises and contracts (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and respond accordingly. Some deviant acts that have been reported in response to distrust of management are stealing, sabotage, and verbal aggression (Litzky et al., 2006).

To summarize, the scope of managerial oversight, abusive supervision, psychological contract breach, and violation of trust are all supervisory conditions and behaviors that encourage employees to engage in workplace deviance. Additionally, employees who have certain individual differences (e.g., high SDO) have been found to vary in deviance intentions based on the presence of certain supervisory behaviors; the behaviors discussed in this section can act as deviance triggers in employees who would not otherwise act out.

Individual Job Characteristics

Our fourth and final category of contextual variables that promote employee deviance concerns the characteristics of individual employees' jobs. Here, we focus predominately on job autonomy and role difficulties, especially role ambiguity and role conflicts.

Job autonomy. Perceived job autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction and performance in a wide variety of research (e.g., Den Hartog & Beelschak, 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Job autonomy exists when

employees have freedom in their job to control how various aspects of the work are done (Den Hartog & Beelschak, 2012). When employees perceive that they have control over their job, they are less likely to experience work strain and engage in deviant behaviors, such as workplace bullying (Baillien, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2011). Consistent with job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), employees believe that the organization trusts them with responsibility when they perceive high levels of job autonomy, and they are consequently likely to reciprocate with high performance and satisfaction. Conversely, low levels of autonomy suggest that employees are not trusted, which can promote acts of workplace deviance due to frustration or retaliation.

Role ambiguity and role conflict. Drawing on role theory (Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011), many studies have examined different role characteristics that promote employee deviance. For example, role ambiguity is experienced when an employee is uncertain about the expectations and responsibilities in his/her job (Katz & Kahn, 1978). One consequence of this uncertainty is that employees may remain ignorant of the expectations and the rules that govern their behavior in the workplace, making rule-breaking behavior more likely. Not surprisingly, researchers have found that ambiguity is positively related to a variety of negative work outcomes, including employee deviance, stress, and turnover (e.g., Litzky et al., 2006; Yang & Diefendorf, 2009).

Role conflict is another role characteristic that can influence employee behavior. Role conflict is experienced when employees are faced with conflicting or competing role expectations that are difficult or impossible to simultaneously achieve (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Like role ambiguity, this job characteristic has been shown to be related to deviant behaviors such as workplace bullying and aggressive behavior toward other organizational members (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2009; Spector & Fox, 2005). These effects are oftentimes explained in terms of stress models of deviance. For example, the stressor-emotion model of deviance states that work stressors, like role conflict, prompt negative emotions. These negative emotions, in turn, encourage strains that include deviant employee behaviors (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Spector, 2002). The stressor-emotion model also emphasizes that perceived control or autonomy should moderate these relationships, such that higher autonomy weakens the links between stressors, negative emotions, and deviance (Fox et al., 2001).

Conflict can also occur between work and nonwork roles. Some initial evidence suggests that this type of role conflict, called work-family conflict, can motivate organizational, interpersonal, and customer-directed deviance. Employees who may not normally engage in deviance report low job satisfaction when experiencing work-family conflict, and this negativity

has been found to manifest as workplace deviance in a preliminary study (Darrat, Amyx, & Bennett, 2010).

Summary

As evident by our review of the literature, contextual characteristics that reside at the organizational, team, supervisor-subordinate dyad, and individual job levels can all contribute to employees' motivations to engage in destructive and/or self-interested forms of deviance. By understanding how the organizational context can promote deviance, managers can take a more proactive approach to preventing this behavior. Although our discussion thus far has focused on the predictors of workplace deviance that Vardi and Weitz (2004) would categorize as Type-D or Type-S, we caution that some forms of deviance can be beneficial to an organization if managed carefully. We review these types of deviance, which are sometimes referred to as constructive deviance (e.g., Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004), in the next section.

SHOULD ALL DEVIANC BE SUPPRESSED? CONSIDERING CONSTRUCTIVE DEVIANC

Most deviance is automatically considered to be harmful in the work context and many organizations put forth great effort to punish and deter deviance in their employees. However, recent research has started to distinguish between two categories of deviance: constructive deviance and destructive deviance (e.g., Warren, 2003). Destructive deviance mostly results in damaging consequences and aligns with Vardi and Weitz's (2004) conceptualization of Type-D and Type-S forms of misbehavior. In contrast, constructive deviance can contribute positively to the work environment; this type of deviance in some respects aligns with Vardi and Weitz's Type-O misbehavior. It is important for managers to recognize the difference between these two broad types of deviance and to understand the motivations behind them.

Recent literature has focused on empirically distinguishing destructive deviance from constructive deviance by studying the different outcomes associated with these behaviors (e.g., Dahling, Chau, Mayer, & Gregory, 2012; Galperin & Burke, 2006). In general, constructive deviance is distinguished from destructive deviance because it is conducted with *honorable* intentions to better the organization or its stakeholders (e.g., Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004; Morrison, 2006; Vardi & Weitz, 2004; Warren, 2003). Constructive deviance may be confused with

destructive deviance by managers because, in both instances, the employee is overtly breaking a formal organizational rule or norm. Unlike destructive deviance, however, an employee engaging in constructive deviance is motivated by a desire to help the overall organization in some form.

Although research on constructive deviance is in its infancy, one of the more established examples of constructive deviance is prosocial rule breaking (PSRB; Morrison, 2006). PSRB has been defined as "the intentional violation of a formal organizational policy, regulation, or prohibition with the primary intention of promoting the welfare of the organization or one of its stakeholders" (Morrison, 2006, pp. 7-8). Employees engaging in constructive deviance believe that the act of breaking a formal rule or norm will ultimately lead to some benefit for the company. Some categories of constructive deviance/PSRB have been proposed that provide examples of behaviors that employees might engage in to help the overall organization. Constructive deviance, for example, may be committed in an attempt to improve efficiency, assist coworkers with work, and/or assist customers (Dahling et al., 2012).

Although two types of deviance have been established in the academic literature, the practical literature has focused largely on destructive deviance without acknowledging that deviance can also be constructive. This is an important oversight given that constructive deviance may be critical to prevent organizations from becoming inefficient and stagnant (Dehler & Welsh, 1998; Packer, 2011). Without employees who challenge the rules and norms of an organization in well-intentioned ways, organizations may miss opportunities to enhance employee flexibility, effectiveness, and adaptability (Dehler & Welsh, 1998).

Another way that constructive deviance has been said to be beneficial to an organization is by allowing employees to challenge organizational rules or norms that are harmful to the organization (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). Some rules may be outdated, ineffective, or immoral with respect to the objective that they were meant to accomplish. When employees act out against a rule in their daily working lives, it could mean that the rule is no longer benefiting the organization and needs to be reassessed. Without such constructive deviance, managers may be unable to identify and improve upon outdated or harmful norms that could ultimately lead to a business failure (Dehler & Welsh, 1998). Finally, an organization is unlikely to have creative problem solving without constructive deviance, which can also contribute to decreased organizational efficiency and growth (Galperin & Burke, 2006).

In summary, understanding the motivations behind deviance can help managers distinguish between the two types and address employee deviance accordingly. By understanding that some deviance is potentially

beneficial to the organization, managers can avoid the myth that all deviance needs to be punished and question more carefully why deviance might be occurring. To this end, we conclude this chapter by drawing on the body of literature described previously to provide some recommendations for managers who are faced with a need to manage employee deviance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGERS

The theories and studies of employee deviance that we describe in this chapter offer a wealth of advice for practicing managers. In this section, we build on previous work (e.g., Litzky et al., 2006) to attempt to distill this advice down to a manageable body of recommendations that are summarized in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2. Recommendations for Managers to Reduce and Control Organizational Deviance Based on Our Research of Deviance Predictors

1. **Set reward, control, and punishment systems with the potential for deviant behavior in mind.**
 - Explicitly reward ethical behavior; do not blindly reward results without consideration of how they were attained.
 - Set performance goals carefully (with measurable and attainable criteria) and seek employee input.
 - When control and punishment systems are necessary, compensate for their introduction with careful explanations and advanced warning to enhance fairness perceptions. Otherwise, these systems can actually promote rather than reduce deviance.
2. **Set and reiterate clear performance expectations for subordinates to bypass role difficulties.**
 - Do not allow role ambiguity to persist; clarify what behaviors are expected and what behaviors are unacceptable for people who hold a particular role.
 - Be mindful of role conflict for employees with extensive responsibilities. Help these employees resolve potentially conflicting expectations by either arranging work reassignments or increasing coordination among the parties to which the employees must answer.
3. **Consider the extent to which work-family conflict may contribute to deviance, and refer people to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) if necessary.**
3. **Make every effort to understand subordinates' expectations and anticipated outcomes to avoid violating trust and psychological contracts.**
 - Talk openly with subordinates about how they construe the employment arrangement and what they feel that they have been promised in exchange for their work.
 - Strive for mutually-held agreements about work exchanges that can reasonably be honored and that serve as the foundation for trusting relationships.

- Be careful not to overpromise outcomes for subordinates that cannot be delivered when the work is done.
4. **Model ethical behavior to serve as the foundation for a workplace ethical climate.**
 - Be aware that subordinates learn about desirable and rewarded behaviors by observing what their managers and coworkers do.
 - Do not condone deviant behavior from individual subordinates; this tacit approval communicates to other employees in the workgroup that deviance is not a matter of concern.
 - Managers should behave as they expect their subordinates to behave.
 5. **Balance the provision of autonomy to employees with managerial accessibility and continued awareness of their activities.**
 - Employees can and should be trusted with autonomy; this sense of responsibility is associated with many desirable workplace behaviors.
 - Autonomy is only an asset when managers and subordinates trust each other, when roles and responsibilities are clear, and when managers remain accessible for feedback and clarification.
 - Highly-autonomous, self-managed work teams should be carefully trained to avoid the development of coercive, unethical norms.
 6. **Remain open-minded about the potential for constructively-deviant behavior and what deviance might suggest about obsolete or inefficient practices.**
 - Recall that employees sometimes break rules with the well-being of the organization or its stakeholders in mind; the motivation behind an act of rule-breaking behavior should be identified before action is taken.
 - Constructive deviance can be a valuable way in which employees identify ways to improve organizational effectiveness in a bottom-up fashion.
 - If employees lack the perspective to understand that their well-intended deviance could potentially cause greater problems, provide careful explanations, set clear expectations for future behavior, and suggest other ways to advocate for changes.
 7. **Strive to treat subordinates kindly and fairly; avoid expressions of abusive supervision.**
 - Be mindful of employees' interpersonal justice perceptions, the extent to which they feel that they are treated with dignity and respect by decision makers.
 - Strive to be scrupulously fair when making decisions about desirable outcomes; award these outcomes equitably using consistent, clear procedures.
 - Do not express inappropriate hostile emotions or verbally abuse employees under any circumstances.

First, managers must set reward and control policies very carefully in light of research that shows (a) how reward systems can unintentionally encourage deviance and (b) that monitoring and control systems can be perceived as unfair in ways that elicit negative retaliatory behaviors. Ethical rule compliance can be motivated by reward systems that take into account employee behaviors rather than focusing exclusively on results

and disregarding the context of how those results were attained (Aguinis, 2008). Performance goals should be set with attainable and specific criteria in mind, and ideally employees should be involved in setting those goals (e.g., Litzky et al., 2006). Although monitoring and control systems are sometimes also necessary to direct employee behavior, providing advance notice and careful explanations about why they are being used can greatly reduce employees' negative reactions toward the introduction of these systems in the workplace (Horvoka-Mead, Ross, Whipple, & Renchin, 2002).

Second, deviance can be greatly reduced if managers simply take the time to set and reiterate clear expectations for subordinates to resolve role challenges. Role ambiguity creates opportunities for employees to define for themselves what behaviors are acceptable and desirable (Yang & Diefendorff, 2008). Consequently, early and frequent clarification by managers is important when employees commit acts of deviance in order to prevent confusion about what constitutes acceptable behavior in the future. Clear expectations are likely to be particularly important when employees are struggling to reconcile many conflicting role demands and responsibilities (Spector & Fox, 2005); under these circumstances, it is especially likely that employees will "cut corners" and make choices that compromise the quality of their work. Some initial evidence also suggests that work-family conflict in particular can promote employee deviance (Darrat et al., 2010). Managers can refer their subordinates to appropriate employee assistance programs that may be able to help if problems experienced at home are negatively impacting an employee's behavior at work (Shumway, Wampler, Dersch, & Arredondo, 2004).

While setting clear expectations for subordinates is critical, promoting trust and avoiding psychological contract breaches requires managers to also listen to the goals and expectations that employees have for the employment relationship. Many contract breaches occur when managers act in ways that unknowingly violate important psychological contracts held by employees (Rousseau, 1995). Employees *believe* that their psychological contracts are mutually-held, so when their expectations are violated, they may blame supervisors and other representatives of the organization and engage in acts of retaliation that seem incomprehensible to observers. Given that psychological contracts are constantly work-in-progress, managers should make every effort to speak openly with subordinates about the outcomes that they expect to clarify any misconceptions before a contract breach occurs (Rousseau, 2004). Moreover, they should be careful not to "overpromise" outcomes that may be impossible to provide. As employees' psychological contracts are honored and respected over time, more trust will develop between employees and managers, making deviant behavior increasingly unlikely.

Fourth, consistent with many authors, we strongly emphasize the importance of managers in setting the foundation for an ethical workplace climate by modeling ethical behavior for their subordinates (e.g., Litzky et al., 2006). Employees learn about acceptable and desired behaviors by observing what their supervisors and coworkers do (e.g., Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Consequently, managers who behave unethically should not be surprised when their subordinates emulate this observed behavior. Similarly, given how easily unethical workplace norms can develop, managers cannot ignore any deviant behavior in work groups and teams. Letting this behavior perpetuate sends a tacit acknowledgment to other employees that such behavior is permissible, compounding the initial problem.

Fifth, managers need to strike a reasonable balance between giving teams and individuals autonomy without being too absent. Employees respond positively to autonomy and being empowered with responsibility, and these reactions make it unlikely that they will break rules with self-interested or destructive intentions. However, research on managerial oversight shows that managers who are removed from their subordinates and are inaccessible create too many opportunities for deviance to occur without consequence (Detert et al., 2007). Moreover, autonomous work is only possible when both employees and managers trust each other, and when role expectations have been made very clear so that employees know how to direct their own behavior. At the team level of analysis, highly-autonomous, self-managed teams should be trained and periodically observed to ensure that coercive norms that encourage deviance do not develop within the group.

Sixth, managers should think carefully about the possible motivations for employee deviance and identify if some acts of deviance may be constructively motivated. Constructive deviance has the potential to improve innovation within the organization and to challenge inefficient practices (Galperin & Burke, 2006). Therefore, engaging with constructively-deviant employees rather than simply suppressing this behavior can be beneficial. Managers must also recognize, however, that employees sometimes lack the perspective to understand why rules exist in the first place, and that their acts of well-intentioned deviance may have broader consequences than they understand (Dahling et al., 2012). In these circumstances, effective managers will provide this perspective by giving detailed explanations, setting clear expectations for what behaviors are permissible in the future, and suggesting other avenues through which employees might innovate or advocate for changes.

Last, while it may seem self-evident, managers must strive to be fair and to treat subordinates kindly. Abusive supervision has received extensive recent research attention, and it is abundantly clear that mistreatment at

the hands of supervisors is a primary driver of retaliatory employee deviance (e.g., Detert et al., 2007; Shao et al., 2011). Abusive supervision most directly violates employees' sense of interpersonal justice, perceptions of the extent to which one is treated with dignity and respect by decision makers (Colquitt, 2001). However, abusive supervision can also entail violations of distributive justice through the unfair distribution of rewards, and violations of procedural justice through inconsistent or politically motivated decision making. Managers should make every attempt possible to be reasonable and respectful in their interactions with subordinates and to avoid expressions of abusive treatment at all times.

CONCLUSION

We hope this chapter provides some insight for managers about why deviance occurs and how best to manage these undesirable behaviors. Contrary to some of the practitioner literature that takes a simplistic, disciplinary view of deviance, the research we reviewed points to a wide variety of workplace characteristics that generate motivations for employees to act in self-interested or destructive ways. Understanding these motivations can help managers curtail these behaviors by proactively managing the organizational context and treating the causes of deviance rather than just its symptoms.

NOTE

1. An enormous number of terms have proliferated within the scholarly literature to refer to "bad behavior" in the workplace. To avoid unnecessarily confounding our discussion, we largely gloss over the fine distinctions between these behaviors and use the global term of "deviance" throughout this chapter. Griffin and Lopez (2005) provide a cogent review of the theoretical clarity of these competing terms for interested readers.

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CHAPTER 8

AGAINST ALL EVIDENCE

General and Specific Ability in Human Resources Management

Malcolm James Ree, Mark S. Teachout, and Thomas R. Carretta

For more than 100 years there has been an ongoing dispute about the measurement and utility of general cognitive ability (*g*) versus specific abilities (*s*) in human resources management (HRM), particularly for employee selection. The dispute centers around three basic issues: (1) the development and measurement of *g* versus *s*, (2) the absolute and relative contributions of general and specific factors to the measurement of abilities, and (3) the utility of these general and specific abilities in HRM in predicting occupational outcomes.

While the notion of specific abilities is quite old (Galton, 1869; Spearman, 1904, 1927; Thurstone, 1938), proponents have advocated their equal or greater importance relative to general ability. The authority and tenacity of this view has accelerated since World War II, in research, practice, and especially, the popular press. The *conventional wisdom* from many researchers and practitioners is that specific abilities exist; they can be measured reliably and can be differentially weighted to predict different occupational and educational outcomes. Let there be no mistake, the

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