The Economics of "Crossing Over": Examining the Link between Correctional Officer Pay and Guard–Inmate Boundary Violations

Article *in* Deviant Behavior · October 2015

DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2014.982781

CITATIONS
8

READS
367

2 authors:

Robert M. Worley
Lamar University
78 PUBLICATIONS **213** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

Vidisha Barua Worley
Lamar University
37 PUBLICATIONS **71** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

Deviant Behavior

ISSN: 0163-9625 (Print) 1521-0456 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/udbh20

The Economics of "Crossing Over": Examining the Link between Correctional Officer Pay and Guard–Inmate Boundary Violations

Robert M. Worley & Vidisha Barua Worley

To cite this article: Robert M. Worley & Vidisha Barua Worley (2015): The Economics of "Crossing Over": Examining the Link between Correctional Officer Pay and Guard–Inmate Boundary Violations, Deviant Behavior, DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2014.982781

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2014.982781

DEVIANT BEHAVIOR, 2015
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2014.982781

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The Economics of "Crossing Over": Examining the Link between Correctional Officer Pay and Guard–Inmate Boundary Violations

Robert M. Worley and Vidisha Barua Worley

Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, USA

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to ascertain why some correctional officers engage in boundary violations with inmates in spite of the presence of strong organizational cultural norms which discourage familiarity between staff and offenders. Using an alternate version of Blau and Blau's relative deprivation theory to guide in the interpretation of our analyses, we conclude that poor pay, perceptions of boundary violations by other officers, and lack of family support, the *economics*, lead some officers to have a lack of pride in their work and profession, thus, triggering their closeness to inmates across the sacrosanct border, resulting in the crossing over.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 August 2014
Accepted 10 September 2014

Introduction

Although virtually every correctional organization has explicit rules that forbid any type of familiarization between staff members and inmates, some officers still cross the line and engage in boundary violations with the offenders they are paid to protect and supervise. Boundary violations refer to behaviors that "blur, minimize, or disrupt the professional distance" between the keeper and the kept (Marquart, Barnhill, and Balshaw-Biddle 2001:878). While these behaviors can range from being relatively minor (e.g., receiving or giving a soda or bag of popcorn to an offender) to outright illegal (such as love affairs), they often result in chaotic and unstable work environments and undermine the stability of correctional facilities (Worley 2011; Worley and Cheeseman 2006; Worley, Tewksbury, and Frantzen 2010). Prison administrators are keenly aware of this and create policies designed to discourage inmates and staff from fraternizing with one another (Worley et al. 2010). Most correctional facilities also provide employees with specialized training to prevent inmate–officer relationships from developing (Dial and Worley 2008). The guard subculture also reinforces the notion that officers should avoid establishing friendships with inmates. This is, in fact, a well-established folkway that has persisted throughout the history of prisons, and to many prison employees, violating the "no-friendship with inmates" norm is akin to the incest taboo (Marquart et al. 2001).

Correctional employees may engage in a variety of different types of boundary violations, however, actions which constitute *inappropriate relationships* tend to be regarded by prison administrators as being the most serious. Inappropriate relationships have been defined as:

> personal relationships between employees and inmates/clients or with family members of inmates/clients. This behavior is usually sexual or economic in nature and has the potential to jeopardize the security of a prison institution or compromise the integrity of a correctional employee. (Worley, Marquart, and Mullings 2003:179)

In the wake of the Prison Elimination Act of 2003, researchers have focused primarily on boundary violations between inmates and staff which are of a sexual nature (Blackburn et al. 2011; Dial and

CONTACT Robert M. Worley, Ph.D. rworley@lamar.edu Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX 77710, USA.

Worley 2008; Ross 2013; Worley and Cheeseman 2006). Every year, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) also collects data from offenders in order to make inferences regarding the nationwide prevalence of inmate–staff sexual boundary violations (Worley, Worley, and Mullings 2010).

While the layperson may perceive that sex between inmates and guards is fairly rare, those working within the field of corrections know better (Dial and Worley 2008; Worley et al. 2010). In 2013, this issue received national attention in the wake of a public scandal at the Baltimore City Detention Center where a notorious inmate gang leader of the Black Guerrilla Family fathered five children with four female correctional officers (Marimow and Wagner 2013). Two of these employees even tattooed the inmate's first name on their bodies. A total of thirteen correctional officers were indicted for various offenses, such as smuggling contraband into the jail, money laundering, and having sexual relationships with prisoners. They were paid off by inmate gang members and given expensive gifts and access to luxury vehicles outside of work. All these officers were earning between only $28,000 and $47,000 in 2012, according to salary figures from the comptroller's office, low paychecks considering the dangerous and stressful working conditions as well as the high cost of living within the greater Baltimore area (Tully 2013).

On any given day, more than 2.4 million people (mostly males) find themselves incarcerated in state and federal prisons, country and city jails, as well as other types of correctional facilities (e.g. juvenile institutions) (Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol 2011). America's criminal justice juggernaut consumes more than $200 billion dollars a year with the carceral function constituting over one-third of the price tag (Perkinson 2010). Correctional facilities where guards run amok and engage in boundary violations with inmates are unlikely to be conducive to offender rehabilitation and are, therefore, a waste of taxpayer resources. Given the fact that substantial manpower and money are involved in the mass incarceration movement, it is worth investigating why some correctional employees cross the line and behave inappropriately with the inmates they are paid to protect and supervise.

Literature review

While prison researchers have only recently begun to study boundary violations between inmates and correctional officers, Sykes (1958) alludes to these in his classic study of a maximum security prison facility in New Jersey. He argues that even correctional officers want to be perceived as nice or a "good Joe" by inmates and often make deals with prisoners in an attempt to win their obedience (Sykes 1958:55). The operational realities of prison life encourage a norm of reciprocity in which officers overlook minor violations and reward inmates with privileges in exchange for compliance in major areas. Over time, if this trend continues, reciprocity between inmates and correctional officers erodes the professional distance between the keeper and the kept. Sykes (1958:58) contends that in some circumstances inmates may even develop leverage on an employee and threaten to send an anonymous letter [a "snitch kite"] to an officer's supervisor describing all of the employee's past derelictions in detail. Often, this threat may be sufficient to encourage officers to continue ignoring violations, and if left unchecked, can lead to the outright corruption of an authority figure.

Sykes's (1958) discussion of the corruption of authority provides us with one of the first scholarly presentations of boundary violations. However, it is important to note that modern correctional facilities are vastly different places than they were several decades ago. For example, Sykes (1958) confines his discussion of boundary violations to only those interactions involving male officers and male inmates. Today, females comprise a significant portion of the correctional officer workforce. This is due, in large part, to the efforts of female plaintiffs who filed lawsuits against correctional agencies under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Martin and Jurik 1996; Pogrebin and Poole 1997). As a result of this civil litigation, prisons and jails are no longer sex-segregated, and females are free to work closely with male inmates. According to recent Bureau of Justice Statistics data, 26% of correctional officers working within state facilities are women (National Institute of Corrections 2008). Even though some research indicates that female officers may have a calming effect on male

inmates (Alpert and Crouch 1991; Cheeseman, Mullings and Marquart 2001; Worley and Cheeseman 2006), other scholars have commented that the sexual integration of the correctional officer workforce has "facilitated female prison staff members' opportunity to engage in occupational deviance, especially boundary violations (forming personal relationships with male prisoners)" (Marquart et al. 2001:890). It is, indeed, noteworthy that as employment opportunities within prison facilities have expanded for women, so have the opportunities for inappropriate behaviors between correctional officers and inmates.

In the wake of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, the Bureau of Justice Statistics has collected official data designed to provide insights into the frequency of sexual victimization including those acts that occur between prisoners and staff members. In 2011, 49% of the 8,763 allegations of sexual victimizations that occurred in correctional facilities involved staff members (Beck et al. 2014). Of those incidents of staff sexual misconduct which were substantiated, more than half (54%) were perpetuated by female employees. Additionally, of all the substantiated incidents of staff–inmate sexual misconduct which occurred between 2009 and 2011, the vast majority (84%) of those committed by female employees involved a sexual relationship that "appeared to be willing" (Beck et al. 2014). When male employees involved themselves sexually with an inmate, it "appeared to be willing" in only 36% of the cases. In a related Bureau of Justice study, which is commonly referred to by prison sex researchers as the National Inmate Survey, researchers collected responses from a sample of 92,449 adult inmates across various correctional facilities and jails throughout the country between February 2011 and May 2012 (Beck et al. 2013). Of these inmate respondents, 2.3% (or an estimated 25,900 prisoners) reported to be a willing participant in a sexual relationship with a correctional employee within the past twelve months. Typically, staff-on-inmate sexual victimization occurred in semi-private areas throughout the correctional facility, such as, commissaries, kitchens, cafeterias, laundry rooms, and workshops.

While an inmate cannot legally consent to any kind of sexual relationship with a staff member by virtue of the fact that he or she is incarcerated (Smith 2008; Beck et al. 2014), some research indicates that male offenders may nevertheless encourage and even initiate sexual relationships with female correctional employees (Blackburn et al. 2011; Marquart et al. 2001; Worley and Cheeseman 2006; Worley and Worley 2013b; Worley et al. 2003). Dial and Worley (2008) collected a total of 367 completed self-report questionnaires from inmates across four facilities within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. From this sample, 134 inmates admitted to engaging in acts with correctional employees that were considered to be boundary violations by agency regulations, and 50 inmate boundary violators admitted to engaging in some type of sexual act with a correctional employee. In this same study, inmates who were identified as boundary violators were significantly more likely than other inmates to have chauvinistic attitudes toward female officers (Dial and Worley 2008). For example, inmate boundary violators often perceived that female correctional officers lacked the physical strength necessary to perform their jobs and also used charm to control prisoners. In a related study, Blackburn et al. (2011) analyzed survey responses from a sample of 443 male inmates and 363 female inmates to ascertain whether or not gender differences exist in how boundary violations are perceived by prisoners. Findings revealed that male inmates were significantly more likely than female inmates to be supportive of sexual behaviors between staff and inmates and agree with statements, such as: "It is okay for a staff member to have sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) with an inmate" (Blackburn et al. 2011:364).

While it is not known for sure why boundary violations between inmates and staff flourish within some correctional facilities, it is likely that poor supervision practices, low hiring standards, and a lack of training contribute at least partially to this problem (Marquart et al. 2001; Worley and Worley 2013a; Worley and Worley 2011). Also, the stressful nature of correctional employment may play a major role in the development of boundary violations between inmates and staff (Garland, Hogan, and Lambert 2012; Lambert, Hogan, and Tucker 2009; Mahfood, Pollock, and Longmire 2013). A poor public image and a lack of civic support might also be a major source of external stress

among correctional officers (Vickovic, Griffin, and Fradella 2013). This is consistent with Conover (2001), who in his book, *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*, refers to the plight of correctional officers owing to their low pay, dangerous work conditions, and a lack of public support. Conover (2001) puts the prisoners and the prison guards in the same bracket as constituting a major part of American society, thus, voicing the urgent need to study the sociology of prison work. The prison setting, isolated from the rest of society, with potentially dangerous work conditions and abysmal pay, all raise concerns about the formation of a subculture that tolerates deviance among officers (Stohr et al. 2012). Presently, the average starting salary for correctional officers is $36,414, which is quite low given the stressful and dangerous nature of the job (Tully 2013). Accordingly, Gibbons and Katzenbach (2006) urged state and local governments to improve the pay of officers and focus on an all-round development of the workforce in order to enhance the profession.

Although sexual and boundary violations between inmates and corrections staff are especially egregious and warrant our attention, we contend that it is also informative to investigate boundary violations of a non-sexual nature. This is largely due to the fact that previous research confirms that when correctional employees engage in boundary violations of a non-sexual nature this often becomes a slippery slope that has the potential to lead to more serious infractions (Marquart et al. 2001; Worley and Cheeseman, 2006; Worley et al. 2003; Worley and Worley 2013a). This study seeks to ascertain why some correctional officers engage in boundary violations with inmates in spite of the presence of strong organizational cultural norms which discourage familiarity between staff and offenders. We seek to examine the reasons why some correctional officers undermine the stability of the prison agencies they work for by fraternizing with the very inmates they are paid to protect.

The economics of crossing over

What is it that makes professionals violate boundaries, boundaries that are sacrosanct, boundaries that they are under oath to protect? Most professionals, like teachers, professors, correctional officers, social workers, or counselors, understand how important it is not to cross over to the other side, even though they might empathize with their clients. In the field of clinical psychology, a kind of crossing over or *coutertransference* takes place when the counselor or caregiver projects their own feelings and emotions on the patient (Jung 1907; Freud 1910; Ulberg et al. 2013). Such *countertransference* sometimes leads to *compassion fatigue*, where a caregiver, because of being highly involved, experiences secondhand the trauma suffered by the patient, resulting in stress and burnout (Gentry 2002; Thompson, Amatea, and Thompson 2014). According to Gentry (2002), one of the earliest references to the cost of caring for others can be traced to Jung's (1907) struggle with *countertransference*. This is usually a reaction to *transference*, where clients project on the counselor traits or characteristics of others in their lives. While these feelings of empathy for the patients in clinical psychology can lead to compassion fatigue manifested in stress and burnout, in other relationships, it could lead to boundary violations.

There is a power differential in all these relationships, which render these bonds non-consensual. Yet, the protected often manipulate some of the protectors, leading to the *crossing over*, just as in biology, homogeneous chromosomes break up to combine with the heterogeneous ones. As we conducted our research, we tried to delve into the variables and understand, what are some of the factors that allow some of these professionals to be manipulated? In our analysis of boundary violations by correctional officers, who operate in an oppressive environment with strict organizational and subcultural norms, where such transgressions are taboo, almost incestuous, we questioned, what is it that motivates these officers, placed in a superior position, to violate boundaries with inmates, who, in this situation are powerless, and occupy a lowly status? Do these officers feel a closer bond with the inmates as compared to the rest of society? If so, why do these officers feel that way?

Sociologists Judith Blau and Peter Blau (1982), drawing from the anomie theory (Merton 1968) and the social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942), propounded the *relative deprivation theory*. According to this theory, members of society, who feel economically deprived compared to

others they know or the rest of society, are likely to develop negative feelings about themselves, experience stress, form hostile feelings toward those doing better than them, and thus, feel justified in engaging in deviant or criminal behavior, which is usually violence against those who are better off. In the *economics of crossing over*, we examine an alternate reaction to feeling relatively deprived. We surmise that instead of a violent reaction, professionals who feel relatively deprived, are likely to turn to those who are further relatively deprived, thus, feeling closer to those they have power and control over.

Correctional officers, who are sometimes ashamed of admitting that they work in prisons and feel comfortable telling that they work for the state (Gibbons and Katzenbach 2006), might be experiencing relative deprivation. These feelings are aggravated when they lack the support of their supervisors or their families and are often not clear about what their role entails, thus, feeling constantly undermined and undervalued. Such negative feelings about themselves, coupled with stress from role conflict, and a feeling of hostility toward their supervisors and others in society in general who do not have similar experiences, make them feel relatively deprived and be more drawn toward the inmates they are guarding than the rest of society. The badge of honor holds no meaning anymore. In this state of deprivation and low self-image, professionals are likely to go down the slippery slope of boundary violations in order to boost themselves and feel wanted. Thus, the *economics of crossing over* emerges from a cost–benefit analysis that allows deprived professionals to seek comfort from those over whom they exercise power and control.

Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature, but has the *verstehen* advantage of qualitative studies, as the lead author is a former correctional officer with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. While working as a guard for seven years, the lead author learned about more than 100 instances where officers were disciplined, terminated, or forced to resign for engaging in boundary violations with inmates. With his firsthand knowledge of the deviance that occurred within correctional facilities, he designed a questionnaire to measure the phenomenon of boundary violations. He developed a series of questions, which was approved by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and Sam Houston State University. Questionnaires were administered during the summer of 2005 to correctional officers at seven inservice training classes. Before surveys were handed out, the lead author identified himself as a correctional officer, which might account for the high response rate of 79.5%.

Designing the questionnaire

In order to examine boundary violations from the perspective of correctional officers, we devised a self-report survey instrument. A total of fifteen questions that appeared at face value to measure perceptions and actual acts of boundary violations engaged in by correctional officers were included in two scales, respectively. Participants were given hypothetical scenarios and asked to rate their responses on a 1–5 Likert-like scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). Some of the questions were reverse coded to avoid response set patterns. While some respondents did not answer all of the questions, this did not pose a significant problem, given that only a few items were missing at random. We decided to impute the mean score for non-demographic values that were missing in these rare cases. Mean imputation is a common tactic that is often employed to compensate for missing values (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012).

Scale reliability and validity

In order to ascertain whether or not the items in the two boundary violations scales (Self-reported and Perceptions) were valid, we employed reliability tests to determine the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is commonly used to measure a scale's internal consistency. According to

Pallant (2013), ideally, the Cronbach's alpha of a scale should be above 0.70. Upon conducting a reliability analysis of the boundary violations scales, we found that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.653 and 0.672, for the self-reported and perceptions scales, respectively. While this is slightly less than the 0.70 standard advocated by Pallant (2013), being above 0.65, which can be rounded off to 0.7, we opted to utilize both scales. Moreover, these items were pretested with a sample of correctional officers and appeared on their face to measure the constructs appropriately. Table 1 and Table 2 present the results from the reliability analyses of the items that comprised the two scales.

Besides designing both boundary violations scales, we also utilized scales from other studies. These scales were designed to measure respondents' perceptions of job pay, role conflict, supervisory support, peer support, and family support. All these scales were incorporated within this study in order to ascertain whether or not there were significant relationships between self-reported boundary violations by correctional officers and various organizational factors. These scales, found to be reliable and valid in earlier studies, were used after taking appropriate permission (Cullen et al. 1985; Toch and Klofas 1982; Triplett, Mullings and Scarborough 1996). While some scholars might perceive these scales to be outdated and therefore irrelevant to the understanding of contemporary correctional facilities, they continue to be frequently cited and utilized by prison researchers (Atkin-Plunk and Armstrong 2013; Dial, Downey, and Goodlin 2010; Cheeseman and Downey, 2012; Lambert et al., 2013).

Findings

Sample demographics

A total of 501 officers within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice participated in this study. There were 335 (68%) Caucasians, 104 (21%) African Americans, 30 (6%) Hispanics, and 25 (5%) participants who belonged to a racial category that was categorized as "other" in this study. Respondents, who identified themselves as belonging to the "other" group, were possibly Asian or

Table 1. Items of boundary violations scale (self-report).

#	Survey items	Mean	SD
1.	If I am hungry enough, I would let an inmate give me food (e.g., candy bar, chips).	1.26	.75
2.	I would never let an inmate break a rule (Reverse Coded).	2.20	.97
3.	I would never shake hands with an inmate (Reverse Coded).	1.40	.79
4.	If I saw an employee giving an inmate a soft drink, I would tell someone immediately (Reverse Coded).	2.22	1.18
5.	I have never had an inmate try to give me something. (e.g. note, soda, food) (Reverse Coded).	3.59	1.34
6.	If I was counting, and an inmate was masturbating, I would write him/her a disciplinary case no matter what. (Reverse Coded).	1.87	1.07
7.	I would never tell an inmate anything personal about me. (Reverse Coded).	1.66	.93
8.	If I caught two inmates fighting, I would report this to my supervisor no matter what. (Reverse Coded).	1.56	.81
		Cronbach's Alpha: .653	

Table 2. Items of boundary violations scale (perceptions).

#	Survey items	Mean	SD
1.	Some employees let inmates do their jobs for them.	3.25	1.19
2.	Some employees let inmates break the rules.	4.07	.95
3.	Some employees have inappropriate relationships with inmates.	4.49	.81
4.	Most employees have had an inmate ask them to "bring in" contraband.	3.32	1.18
5.	A supervisor would never give tobacco to an inmate. (Reverse Coded).	3.18	1.35
6.	Some employees let inmates "kill"/masturbate on them.	3.12	1.23
7.	A correctional employee would never live with or marry an inmate. (Reverse Coded).	3.79	1.21
		Cronbach's Alpha: .672	

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Variable	N (%)	Mean	Min	Max	Total N
Age					
18–25	103 (20.6)	40.12	18	80	485
26–35	136 (27.1)				
36–45	102 (20.4)				
46–55	82 (16.4)				
56–65	55 (11.0)				
66–80	7 (1.4)				
Race/Ethnicity					
Caucasian	335 (68)				494
African American	104 (21)				
Hispanic	30 (6.0)				
Other	25 (5.0)				
Gender					
Male	330 (65.9)				498
Female	168 (33.5)				
Marital status					
Married	250 (49.9)				495
Divorced	77 (15.4)				
Separated	14 (2.8)				
Single	150 (29.9)				
Widowed	4 (.8)				
Educational level					
GED	162 (32.3)				498
High School	51 (10.2)				
Some College	227 (45.3)				
College Degree	50 (10.0)				
Graduate School	8 (1.6)				
Current health					
Poor	16 (3.2)				495
Fair	102 (20.4)				
Good	294 (58.7)				
Excellent	83 (16.6)				
Smoking status					492
No	342 (68.3)				
Yes	150 (29.9)				

American Indian. The average age of the sample was about 40 years. There were 330 males and 168 females in the sample. The majority of the officers was married, did not smoke, had some college, and was in good health. Table 3 provides a univariate analysis for the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Bivariate analysis: correlations

There were statistically significant correlations between the dependent variable, self-reported boundary violations, and the following independent variables: job pay ($r = -.140$, $p < .01$), role conflict ($r = .173$, $p < .01$), supervisor support ($r = -.136$, $p < .01$), peer support ($r = -.134$, $p < .01$), family support ($r = -.188$, $p < .01$), and perceptions of boundary violations ($r = .156$, $p < .01$). The negative correlation between job pay and the dependent variable, self-reported boundary violations, indicates that officers who perceived that their pay was low, were more likely than other officers to engage in behaviors which could lead to boundary violations within their workplace. Also, negative correlations were found between the dependent variable and supervisor support, peer support, and family support, which imply that the less supervisory, peer, and family support respondents felt, the more they were likely to admit to engaging in behaviors that might lead to boundary violations. A positive relationship was

found between role conflict and self-reported boundary violations, as well as between respondents' perceptions of boundary violations and the dependent variable. This indicates that the more officers were confused about their roles or felt undermined and perceived that others were deviant, the more likely they were to violate boundaries with inmates. Table 4 also indicates significant correlations among the independent variables as well.

Multivariate analysis

In this study, we utilized standard multiple regression to examine self-reported boundary violations by 501 correctional officers, a sample which was large enough for us to make broad generalizations about the larger population. In cases where the participants did not answer all of the items in the survey, we utilized mean imputation, as advocated by Tabachnick and Fidell (2012). Less than 1% of the total cases were left unanswered, therefore, this did not pose any significant threats to external validity. Before conducting any regression analyses, all the variables were screened for outliers. Scatterplots, Normal Probability Plots, Cook's Distance scores, Tolerance, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were also examined in order to ensure that the data met the required assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity (Mertler and Vannatta 2005; Tabachnick and Fidell 2012).

In the present analysis, "self-reported boundary violations" was employed as the dependent variable. This scale measured the respondents' admission to attitudes and behaviors which could lead to boundary violations. Participants were asked to respond to a variety of items. Many of these were hypothetical questions designed to gauge whether or not the respondents held beliefs that were supportive of boundary violations. Respondents who scored higher on self-reported boundary violations were more likely to admit to or hold beliefs in favor of behaving inappropriately with an inmate. The independent variables included job pay, work stress, role conflict, supervisor support, peer support, family support, and perceptions of boundary violations. Additionally, demographic variables, such as age, gender, race, marital status, and smoking status were also incorporated into the multiple regression model. The categorical variables, marital status and race, were converted into binary variables for all of the analyses conducted in this study.

This model was statistically significant and had an R Square of .132. This indicates that the regression model explained 13.2% of the variance in the respondents' scores for self-reported boundary violations. According to the Coefficients Table, five of the twelve predictor variables were statistically significant. The results indicated that job pay, work stress, role conflict, family support, and perceptions of boundary violations were the best variables in predicting the respondents' scores on the boundary violations scale, $R^2 = .132$, $R^2_{adj} = .110$, $F(12, 477) = 6.023$, $p < .001$. Table 5 indicates the results of the analysis.

As Table 5 indicates, respondents who did not feel supported by their families, were most likely to report boundary violations with inmates, showing a negative relationship between the two variables (B = –.162, $p < .001$). The second significant variable was work stress (B = –.166, $p < .01$). Because the unstandardized regression coefficient was negative, this ironically indicates that the more subjects were stressed, the less likely they were to engage in boundary violations. On the other hand, if respondents reported less stress at work, it might be because they engaged in boundary violations with inmates as they felt closer to them in an environment where they were underpaid and unsupported by others. This supports our theory of *crossing over* and shall be elaborated on later. The third significant variable is the perceptions of boundary violations (B = .150, $p < .01$), which is positively related to the dependent variable. Thus, the more they perceived deviance among other officers, the more likely they were to admit to or hold beliefs in favor of boundary violations. The fourth significant variable is role conflict (B = .174, $p < .01$), which is positively related to the dependent variable. Thus, officers who were not clear about their roles in the institution reported higher levels of boundary violations. The last significant variable is the job pay scale which is negatively related to the dependent variable, self-reported boundary violations (B = –.160, $p < .01$). This means that the poorer the pay, the more likely

Table 4. Correlations among study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Age	1.000												
Gender	.171**	1.000											
Race (Binary)	−.127**	.062	1.000										
Marital Status (Binary)	−.281**	−.022	.069	1.000									
Smoking status	.068	.181**	.060	−.060	1.000								
Job pay	−.036	.017	.054	−.020	.028	1.000							
Work stress	−.149**	.047	−.035	.038	−.053	.146**	1.000						
Role conflict	−.111*	.045	−.113*	.004	−.051	.064	.346**	1.000					
Supervisor support	.130**	−.055	.009	−.043	.015	−.089	−.435**	−.470**	1.000				
Peer support	.086	.000	.028	−.052	.012	.057	−.272**	−.288**	.452**	1.000			
Family support	.000	−.047	.030	−.123**	−.025	.032	−.027	−.130**	.141**	.181**	1.000		
Perceptions of Boundary violations	−.142**	−.027	.029	.086	−.002	−.019	.300**	.207**	−.288**	−.242**	−.089*	1.000	
Self-reported Boundary Violations	.011	−.011	−.063	.084	.050	−.140**	−.050	.173**	−.136**	−.134**	−.188**	.156**	1.000

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

Table 5. Multiple Regression results for study-variables predicting self-reported boundary violations.

	Overall model (N = 501)				
Variables	b	S.E.	Beta	t	p
Age	.012	.012	.047	1.013	.312
Gender	–.017	.025	–.029	–.663	.508
Race (Binary)	–.408	.401	–.044	–1.015	.310
Marital Status (Binary)	.594	.389	.069	1.527	.127
Smoking status	.019	.014	.059	1.347	.179
Job pay	–.160	.060	–.117	–2.674	.008
Work stress	–.166	.049	–.169	–3.384	.001
Role conflict	.174	.060	.145	2.906	.004
Supervisor support	–.079	.059	–.074	–1.351	.177
Peer support	–.039	.066	–.030	–.598	.550
Family support	–.162	.045	–.159	–3.556	.000
Perceptions of Boundary violations	.150	.044	.162	3.451	.001
Constant	20.694	2.752		7.519	.000
R^2	.132				
Adjusted R^2	.110				
$F(12, 477) = 6.023$***					

b = unstandardized regression coefficients; Beta = standardized regression coefficients; S.E.= standard error of b; ***$p < .001$

that officers would either engage in or have attitudes favorable to having boundary violations with inmates.

Further multiple regression analyses of males and females were conducted separately with the same variables (See Table 6). The regression model for males significantly predicted the dependent variable, self-reported boundary violations, R^2= .153, R^2_{adj}= .123, $F(11, 313) = 5.141$, $p < .001$. This model accounts for 15.3% of variance in male correctional officers admitting to and holding beliefs in favor of boundary violations with inmates. Also, for male respondents, job pay (B = –.230, $p <$ .01), perceptions of boundary violations (B = .152, $p < .01$), family support (B = –.131, $p < .05$), and marital status (B = 1.073, $p < .05$) contributed significantly to the model. Apparently, respondents who reported being divorced, separated, or never married (Coded 2) were more likely than married employees (Coded 1) to admit to engaging in behaviors that might lead to boundary violations with inmates. Although they were not found to be statistically significant, smoking status (B = .033, $p =$ .061), supervisor support (B = –.141, $p = .070$), peer support (B = –.149, $p = .080$), and work stress (B = –.108, $p = .082$) were very close to being significant in the male model.

Table 6. Multiple regression results predicting self-reported boundary violations by gender.

	Males (n = 330)					Females (n = 168)				
Variables	b	S.E.	Beta	t	p	b	S.E.	Beta	t	p
Age	.022	.015	.079	1.411	.159	.014	.019	.058	.731	.466
Race (Binary)	–.681	.513	–.071	–1.326	.186	.459	.616	.055	.745	.457
Marital Status (Binary)	1.073	.484	.121	2.215	.027	.760	.657	.089	1.157	.249
Smoking status	.033	.017	.099	1.877	.061	–.011	.028	–.028	–.381	.704
Job pay	–.230	.076	–.163	–3.020	.003	–.209	.095	–.166	–2.195	.030
Work stress	–.108	.062	–.105	–1.742	.082	–.215	.079	–.241	–2.721	.007
Role conflict	.011	.074	.009	.153	.878	.380	.105	.332	3.607	.000
Supervisor support	–.141	.078	–.124	–1.820	.070	–.006	.085	–.006	–.065	.948
Peer support	–.149	.085	–.107	–1.754	.080	.069	.101	.057	.690	.492
Family support	–.131	.064	–.116	–2.050	.041	–.175	.062	–.209	–2.828	.005
Perceptions of Boundary violations	.152	.055	.159	2.766	.006	.143	.070	.165	2.033	.044
Constant	24.630	3.454		7.132	.000	15.559	4.355		3.573	.000
R^2	.153					.206				
Adjusted R^2	.123					.149				
	$F(11, 313) = 5.141$***					$F(11, 152) = 3.591$***				

b = unstandardized regression coefficients; Beta = standardized regression coefficients; S.E. = standard error of b; ***$p < .001$

The regression model for females significantly predicted the dependent variable, R^2= .206, R^2_{adj}= .149, $F(11, 152) = 3.591$, $p < .001$. This model accounts for 20.6% of variance in female correctional officers admitting to behaviors and holding beliefs conducive to boundary violations. For females, the variables that most significantly contributed to the model were role conflict (B = .380, $p < .001$), family support (B = –.175, $p < .01$), work stress (B = –.215, $p < .01$), job pay (B = –.209, $p < .05$), and perceptions of boundary violations (B = .143, $p < .05$). These results for female correctional officers demonstrate that the more they receive mixed messages about their role at work, the more they are likely to admit to violations. However, the scores will be lower on self-reported boundary violations if the job pay is improved and there is more support from their families. This is supported by existing literature where a lack of family support is shown to cause stress in female police officers (Pattanaik and Worley 2014). It is noteworthy that less work stress was associated with higher levels of boundary violations in both the female (statistically significant) and the male (close to being significant) models. This once again advances the *economics of crossing over* which posits that correctional officers who establish inappropriate relationships with inmates may come to view their jobs as pleasurable venues for social interaction rather than facilities that warehouse dangerous criminals. They may also derive a sense of power from conversing with inmates who they view as being relatively further deprived than themselves, thus, feeling a sense of satisfaction in engaging in the *economics of crossing over*.

Discussion and conclusion

While we did not set out to test the relative deprivation theory for the purposes of this article, it would be fair to say that this theory did guide the interpretation of our results. After examining the outcomes from the perspective of the relative deprivation theory, it is not surprising that poor pay is significantly related to self-reported boundary violations among the correctional officers who participated in this study. This is also in sync with the existing literature that associates meager paychecks and dreary work conditions of correctional officers to poor public image and low self-esteem (Conover 2001; Garland et al. 2012; Gibbons and Katzenbach, 2006; Lambert et al. 2009; Mahfood et al. 2013). According to the relative deprivation theory, such negative feelings might also possibly give rise to violence in cases where officers displace their frustrations on inmates and engage in acts of brutality. However, this aspect of correctional officer deviance is beyond the scope of the present study. In our alternate use of the relative deprivation theory, isolated from the rest of society, some correctional officers tend to feel alienated and drawn more toward the prisoners they are meant to supervise leading to inappropriate actions. This also explains our unanticipated finding where work stress was found to be negatively related to self-reported boundary violations in all three models and found to be statistically significant in the overall and female models and close to being significant in the male model. If correctional officers view their workplaces as lax environments or places to conduct inappropriate activities, they are less likely to experience work stress than officers who view their jobs as dangerous.

By way of conclusion, the *economics of crossing over* posits that correctional officers, who perceive themselves to be undervalued and unappreciated feel closer to those relatively further deprived than themselves, in this case, the inmates, because it alleviates their lowly status and boosts their self-image. Given the results of our statistical analyses, we contend that this situation is likely to even become exacerbated when correctional officers also feel unsupported by their families or perceive their coworkers to be engaging in inappropriate relations with inmates.

It should be noted that, in spite of our results, we do not fully embrace the explanation that "a poor paycheck made me do it," as it removes any agency on the part of the employee and also ignores broader environmental variables that might be present. Nevertheless, in light of the above findings, we urge policymakers first and foremost to improve the pay of all correctional officers. We contend that this will boost their public image, garner more support from their families, and instill a sense of pride in their profession. Second, in an already dreary work environment, it is

very important that officers are clear about their duties and responsibilities. This will give them a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Third, we suggest that supervisors be adequately trained to provide appropriate support to their staff and boost their morale so that they can build a positive self-image. These measures will go a long way in enhancing the quality of the profession of correctional officers where they can feel a sense of pride and consider it below their dignity to violate boundaries with inmates that they pledged to protect.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance, support, and wonderful hospitality of countless Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) employees in Human Resources and Internal Affairs for making this research possible. The authors also acknowledge the valuable input of staff on local prison units. Finally, we deeply appreciate all the staff in Executive Services for facilitating this research project in countless ways from beginning to end. While the TDCJ approved this study, this does not imply the Department's endorsement or concurrence with statements or conclusions contained therein.

References

Alpert, Geoffrey P. and Ben M. Crouch. 1991. "Cross-Gender Supervision, Personal Privacy, and Institutional Security: Perceptions of Jail Inmates and Staff." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 18:304–317.

Atkin-Plunk, Cassandra and Gaylene S. Armstrong. 2013. "Transformational Leadership Skills and Correlates of Prison Warden Stress." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 40:551–568.

Beck, Allen J., Marcus Berzofsky, Rachel Caspar, and Christopher Krebs. 2013. *Sexual Victimization in State and Federal Prisons Reported by Inmates, 2011–2012* (NCJ 241399). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Beck, Allen. J., Ramona R. Rantala, and Jessica Rexroat. 2014. *Sexual Victimization Reported by Adult Correctional Authorities, 2009–11 (NCJ 243904)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Blackburn, Ashley G., Shannon K. Fowler, Janet L. Mullings, and James W. Marquart. 2011. "When Boundaries are Broken: Inmate Perceptions of Correctional Staff Boundary Violations." *Deviant Behavior* 32:351–378.

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review* 47:114–128.

Cheeseman, Kelly A. and Ragan A. Downey. 2012. "Talking 'Bout My Generation: The Effect of Generation on Correctional Employee Perceptions of Work Stress and Job Satisfaction." *The Prison Journal* 92:24–44.

Cheeseman, Kelly A., Janet L., Mullings, and James W. Marquart. 2001. Inmate Perceptions of Staff Across Various Custody Levels of Security. *Corrections Management Quarterly* 5:42–48.

Conover, Ted. 2001. *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Cullen, Francis T., Bruce G. Link, Nancy T. Wolfe, and James Frank. 1985. "The Social Dimensions of Correctional Officer Stress." *Justice Quarterly* 2:505–533.

Dial, Kelly Cheeseman, Ragan A. Downey, and Wendi E. Goodlin. 2010. "The Job in Joint: The Impact of Generation and Gender on Work Stress in Prison." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38:609–615.

Dial, Kelly Cheeseman and Robert M. Worley. 2008. "Crossing the Line: A Quantitative Analysis of Inmate Boundary Violators in a Southern Prison System." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 33:69–84.

Freud, Sigmund. (1910). "The Future Prospect of Psychoanalytic Therapy." *Standard Edition* 11:141–151. London: Hogarth Press.

Garland, Brett, Nancy, L. Hogan, and Eric G. Lambert. 2012. "Antecedents of Role Stress: A Replication and Expansion." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 2:527–550.

Gentry, J. Eric. 2002. "Compassion Fatigue: A Crucible of Transformation." *Journal of Trauma Practice* 1:37–61.

Gibbons, John J. and Nicholas de B. Katzenbach. 2006. "Confronting Confinement." *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 22:385–561.

Guerino, Paul, Paige M. Harrison, and William J. Sabol. 2011. *Prisoners in 2010*. (NCJ 236096). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Jung, Carl G. 1907. *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Lambert, Eric G., Nancy L. Hogan, Kelly A. Cheeseman, and Shannon M. Barton-Bellessa. 2013. "The relationship between Job Stressors and Job Involvement among Correctional Staff: A Test of the Job Strain Model." *The Howard Journal* 52:19–38.

Lambert, Eric G., Nancy L. Hogan, and Kasey A. Tucker. 2009. "Problems at Work: Exploring Correlates of Role Stress among Correctional Staff." *The Prison Journal* 89:460–481.

Mahfood, V. Wolfe, Wendi Pollock, and Dennis Longmire. 2013. "Leave it at the Gate: JobStress and Satisfaction in Correctional Staff." *Criminal Justice Studies* 26: 308–325.

Marimow, Ann E. and John Wagner. 2013. "Md. Guards Accused of Aiding Prison Gang." *The Washington Post*, April, 254: AO1.
Marquart, James W., Maldine B. Barnhill, and Kathy Balshaw-Biddle. 2001. "Fatal Attraction: An Analysis of Employee Boundary Violations in a Southern Prison System, 1995–1998." *Justice Quarterly* 18:878–910.
Martin, S. E. and N. C. Jurik. 1996. *Doing Justice, Doing Gender*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
Mertler, C. and R. Vannatta. 2005. *Advanced and Multivariate Statistical Methods: Practical Application and Interpretation*, 4th ed. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.
Merton, Robert K. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.
National Institute of Corrections. 2008. Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 2005. Longmont, CO: Information Center, US Department of Justice.
Pallant, Julie. 2013. *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step by Step Guide to Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS*, 5th edition. Oxford, UK: Open University Press.
Pattanaik, J. K. and V. B. Worley. 2014. "Job Expectation, Adjustment, and Coping Mechanism among Women in Two Police Forces in India." Pp. 205–218 in *The Evolution of Policing: Worldwide Innovations and Insights*, edited by Melchor C. de Guzman, Aiedeo Mintie Das and Dilip K. Das. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
Perkinson, Robert. 2010. *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire*. New York, NY: Picador.
Poegrebin, Mark R. and Eric D. Poole. 1997. "The Sexualized Work Environment: A Look at Women Jail Officers." *Prison Journal* 77:41–57.
Ross, Jeffrey Ian. 2013. "Deconstructing Correctional Officer Deviance: Toward Typologies of Actions and Controls." *Criminal Justice Review* 38:110–126.
Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Smith, Brenda V. 2008. "The Prison Rape Elimination Act: Implementation and Unresolved Issues." American University Criminal Law Brief 3:10–18.
Stohr, Mary K., Craig Hemmens, Peter A. Collins, Brian Iannacchione, Marianne Hudson, and Hailey Johnson. 2012. "Assessing the Organizational Culture in a Jail Setting." *The Prison Journal* 92:358–387.
Sykes, Gresham. 1958. *The Society of Captives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Tabachnick, Barabara G. and Linda S. Fidell. 2012. *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
Thompson, Isabel A., Ellen S. Amatea, and Eric S. Thompson, 2014. "Personal and Contextual Predictors of Mental Health Counselors' Compassion Fatigue and Burnout." *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 36:58–77.
Toch, Hans and John Klofas. 1982. "Alienation and Desire for Job Enrichment Among Correctional Officers." *Federal Probation* 46:35–44.
Triplett, Ruth, Janet Mullings, and Kathryn E. Scarborough. 1996. "Work-Related Stress and Coping among Correctional Officers: Implications from Organizational Literature." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 24:291–308.
Tully, Meg. May 2013. "Indicted Correctional Officers were Low Paid." MarylandReporter.com. Retrieved March 14, 2014 (http://marylandreporter.com/2013/05/14/indicted-correctional-officers-were-low-paid/).
Ulberg, Randi, Anette Aardal Falkenberg, Taran Buran Nærdal, Heidi Johannessen, Janne Elisabeth Olsen, Trine Klokseth Eide, Anne Grete Hersoug, and Hanne-Sofie Johnsen Dahl. 2013. "Countertransference Feelings when Treating Teenagers. A Psychometric Evaluation of the Feeling Word Checklist-24." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 67:347–358.
Vickovic, Samuel G., Marie L. Griffin, and Henry F. Fradella. 2013. "Depictions of Correctional Officers in Newspaper Media: An Ethnographic Content Analysis." *Criminal Justice Studies* 26:455–477.
Worley, Robert M. 2011. "To Snitch or not to Snitch, That is the Question: Exploring the Role of Inmate Informants in Detecting Inappropriate Relationships Between the Keeper and the Kept." *International Review of Law, Computers, and Technology* 25:79–82.
Worley, Robert Michael and Kelly Ann Cheeseman. 2006. "Guards as Embezzlers: The Consequences of Non-Shareable Problems in Prison Settings." *Deviant Behavior* 27:203–222.
Worley, Robert Michael, James W. Marquart, and Janet L. Mullings. 2003. "Prison Guard Predators: An Analysis of Inmates who Established Inappropriate Relationships with Prison Staff, 1995–1998." *Deviant Behavior* 24:175–198.
Worley, Robert Michael, Richard Tewksbury, and Durant Frantzen. 2010. "Preventing Fatal Attractions: Lessons Learned from Inmate Boundary Violators in a Southern Penitentiary System." *Criminal Justice Studies* 23:347–360.
Worley, Robert. M. and Vidisha B. Worley. 2011. Guards Gone Wild: A Self-Report Study of Correctional Officer Misconduct and the Effect of Institutional Deviance on Care within the Texas Prison System. *Deviant Behavior* 32:293–319.
Worley, Robert M. and Vidisha B. Worley. 2013a. "Games Guards Play: A Self-Report Study of Institutional Deviance in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice." *Criminal Justice Studies* 26:115–132.
Worley, Robert M. and Vidisha Worley. 2013b. "Inmate Public Autoerotism Uncovered: Exploring the Dynamics of Masturbatory Behavior within Correctional Facilities." *Deviant Behavior* 34:11–24.
Worley, Vidisha B., Robert Worley, and Janet L. Mullings. 2010. "Rape Lore in Correctional Settings: Assessing Inmates' Awareness of Sexual Coercion in Prisons." *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* 7:65–86.

Notes on contributors

ROBERT M. WORLEY, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas; the Editor of *ACJS Today;* Associate Editor of *Deviant Behavior*; and member of the Institute for Legal Studies in Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University. He has published academic articles in journals, such as *Deviant Behavior, Criminal Justice Review, Journal of Criminal Justice Education, Criminal Justice Studies*, and *Criminal Law Bulletin*, among others. Dr. Worley was a correctional officer with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for seven years. His research interests include inmate–guard inappropriate relationships, police and prison officers' liabilities for the use of tasers and stun guns, computer crime and cyberbullying, and issues related to publication productivity and rankings in criminology and criminal justice.

VIDISHA BARUA WORLEY, Ph.D., Esquire, is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas; former contributing editor and columnist with the *Criminal Law Bulletin* (January 2010 to December 2013); founding member of the Institute for Legal Studies in Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University; and a licensed attorney in India and New York. She was a journalist in India for six years and worked at three national dailies, *The Asian Age, Business Standard*, and *The Financial Express*, respectively. She presented a paper on intellectual disability and the death penalty at the Oxford Round Table, Oxford University, England in March 2010. Professor Worley's research areas include police and prison officers' liabilities for the use of tasers and stun guns, the death penalty, prison rape, correctional officer deviance, inappropriate relationships between inmates and correctional officers, cyberbullying and sexting, ethical issues in criminal justice, and terrorism. Her published books include *Press and Media Law Manual* (2002) and *Terrorism in India* (2006).