

When Employees Turn Violent

The Potential Role of Workplace Culture in Triggering Deviant Behavior

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About fifteen years ago, James Davis walked through the doors of the Union Butterfield tool company in Asheville, North Carolina. He had been fired by Union Butterfield just two days before, and now he wanted revenge. To extract that revenge, Davis carried a semiautomatic rifle and a pistol. Once inside the doors he opened fire, getting off about fifty shots and killing three of his former co-workers. After he finished shooting, Davis lit a cigarette and calmly waited for the police to arrive; then he quietly surrendered and was led away in handcuffs. He is currently serving a life sentence in prison, and expresses no regrets for his actions.

A few months later James Daniel Simpson entered his former workplace, Walter Rossler Company in Corpus Christi, Texas and began systematically shooting employees at point-blank range before going out the back door and fatally shooting himself in the head. When Simpson worked for Rossler, the company had reimbursed him for college tuition in return for his agreement to work for the firm for two more years. When he quit prematurely, Rossler Company sued Simpson; Simpson, in turn, was forced to sell many of his possessions in order to repay Rossler. Rossler also provided a poor recommendation, making it difficult for Simpson to find another job. Finally, he pawned his television and bought the gun that ended several lives.

Unfortunately, tragedies such as these are not uncommon in the least. According to recent statistics, an employee is killed at a U.S. workplace by a current or former co-worker an average of once each week. In addition, another twenty-five are seriously injured by violent assaults. Overall, some two million U.S. workers are victims of some form of workplace violence each year. Experts also suggest that U.S. businesses lose billions of dollars each year in lost work time and productivity, litigation expenses, and security measures in the aftermath of workplace violence. Among the more common reasons often given for increasing workplace violence are economic fears regarding job security, heightened concerns for personal safety after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and generalized stress and anxiety among workers.

Most non-fatal incidents attract little or no media attention. However, workplace homicides are still likely to attract coverage, especially in local media outlets. Most media coverage follows a fairly consistent storyline: (1) what happened, (2) who was killed and/or severely injured, (3) what is the profile of the perpetrator, (4) what in the perpetrator's background and personal life most likely stimulated the violence, and (5) what the company and its employees are doing to recover. Even when there appears to be a specific triggering event, such as a layoff or termination, observers tend to accept such management actions as a regrettable but common business practice and focus their attention almost exclusively on the perpetrator as the sole target for blame. Indeed, it seems only logical to direct blame at the individual who brought the gun to work and shot his (or her) former associates. And in most cases such attributions are absolutely correct. After all, mature and well-adjusted adults should be able to control their impulses and channel their anger and frustration through healthier avenues.

At the same time, however, there seems to be some indirect evidence and anecdotal indicators to suggest that on at least some occasions the organization itself has played a role in the incidence of violence. This organizational role is most likely to be manifested through its culture. By placing the concept of workplace violence into a deviance framework and identifying potential contributing factors for these behaviors associated with individuals and with organization culture separate and apart from one another, it then becomes possible to examine them together in a more meaningful and integrated manner. This is our goal in this chapter.

Definition of Workplace Deviance

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines workplace violence as any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse that occurs in a work setting. Workplace deviance, a broader concept than violence per se, has been defined as "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 556). This definition of workplace deviance has been widely used in subsequent research dealing with deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Bordia, Restubog & Tang, 2008; Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt & Barrick, 2004; Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007; Ferris, Brown & Heller, 2009; Henle, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2005; Judge, Scott & Ilies, 2006; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Stewart, Bing, Davison, Woehr & McIntyre, 2009; Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone & Duffy, 2008).

While this definition focuses on the negative aspects of deviance, others have extended the concept to include more neutral terms resulting in deviant behavior that can be either positive or negative (Warren, 2003). By defining deviance more broadly as simply a departure from norms, it becomes difficult to attribute the value or merit of the underlying behavior (Warren, 2003). As such, deviance can be seen as a departure from norms resulting in negative behavior, as previously described by others (termed *destructive deviance*), or positive behavior that can lead to improvement and potential benefits for the organization, its members, or both (termed *constructive deviance*). Our focus, however, will center on the intentional acts that violate norms of the organization and in this respect potentially result in harm to the organization, its members, or both (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). And as previously implied, we will generally address deviance but use workplace violence as a specific framework for discussion.

Grounded in this form of destructive deviance, Robinson and Bennett (1995, 2003) developed a widely accepted typology of workplace deviance which identifies deviant behavior based on its target (recipient of the harmful behavior—individual/organization) and its severity (the magnitude of the harmful behavior—minor/serious) (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002). The combination of these two dimensional configurations results in four distinct categories, or quadrants, of workplace deviance: Property Deviance, Production Deviance, Political Deviance, and Personal Aggression. Two of these quadrants focus specifically on organizational deviance, where the targeted recipient of the deviant behavior is the organization. Robinson and Bennett (1995, 2003) identify these forms of organizational deviance as property deviance and production deviance. Property deviance is presented as the most harmful and serious form of organizational deviance, resulting in such behaviors as sabotaging equipment and stealing from the organization. A more minor form of organizational deviance, production deviance, may result in such destructive behaviors as withdrawal and absenteeism.

The remaining two quadrants focus specifically on what Robinson and Bennett (1995) define as interpersonal deviance, where the targeted recipient of the deviant behavior is another individual such as a coworker or supervisor. Robinson and Bennett (1995, 2003) identify these forms of interpersonal deviance as political deviance, resulting in political backstabbing, the spreading of rumors, favoritism, verbal abuse, and incivility, as well as the more harmful and serious form of interpersonal deviance described as personal aggression, resulting in aggressive behavior, harassment, and violence.

The distinction between organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance has been and continues to be widely used in the literature describing

deviant behavior in the workplace (see Ambrose, Seabright, Schminke, 2002; Berry, Ones & Sackett, 2007; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, Carr, Breaux, Geider, Hu & Hua, 2009). In fact, Ambrose, Seabright, and Schminke (2002) make an interesting association between Robinson and Bennett's (1995) forms of deviant behavior (organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance) and the extant literature on organizational justice. The authors propose similarities between organizational deviance and structural aspects of justice described by distributive justice and procedural justice as well as interpersonal deviance and social aspects of justice (Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Greenberg, 1993a), or interactional justice. Given that the experience of an injustice can be created by the organizational system or through interpersonal interactions with specific individuals (Ambrose et al., 2002), such sources could be construed as driving forces capable of impacting individual deviant behavior. As such, "research suggests that individuals' responses to injustice are likely to correspond to its source" (Ambrose et al., 2002, 953). Therefore, in describing the causes of workplace deviant behavior it is presumed that specific types of variables may explain the different types of workplace deviance described as organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. In essence, "organizational variables might be more likely to influence deviance directed at harming organizations, and individual variables may be more likely to explain interpersonal forms of deviance" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 567).

With this definition and review as context, we now turn our attention to a discussion of the role of the individual as an instigator of violence, the extreme form of deviance. We will then discuss the role of organizations as a context for instigating or stimulating violence behavior. This will lead to an analysis of how individual and organizational factors may interact to increase or decrease the probability of violent behaviors.

Individual Predispositions for Violent Behavior

Given that the perspective traditionally taken in reporting and discussing workplace violence generally starts with characteristics of the individual, we will likewise begin our discussion with the individual as well. Specifically, we propose that individuals enter an organization with some potential predisposition to exhibit deviant behaviors. We further propose that this predisposition exists in all people even though it may be very low in most individuals. But simply because the predisposition is low does not mean that it does not exist. Indeed, just as it is theoretically impossible to accept a null hypothesis, we cannot confirm that a behavioral trait or predisposition does not exist

simply because it does not manifest itself. In those cases where individuals do exhibit deviant behavior, of course, the argument for predisposition becomes more compelling. Hence, we suggest that every person has a predisposition to behave in deviant ways under certain circumstances; for most individuals this predisposition may be very low while for others it may range from modest to very likely.

Examining the fundamental underpinnings of predispositions toward deviant behavior requires a complex analysis of a variety of literatures. For the purposes of this chapter we will only note some of the most logical and significant factors that contribute to a predisposition toward deviance. Evidence suggests that these factors include personality, experiences, and motives. Further, after a person has been in an organization for some period of time, whatever predisposition toward deviance she or he had upon entering may increase or decrease as a result of both direct and vicarious organizational experiences.

Personality Traits

While Henle and Gross address the relationships between personality and deviant workplace behavior in this volume, we provide an overview of personality traits in order to offer some context. Individual predisposition, or the person-based perspective of workplace deviance, postulates that an individual's personality, not the environment he/she operates in, is what dictates individual behavior (Henle, 2005). As such, personality will dictate individual behavior regardless of the existing context or situation. In effect, it is personality that will influence how an individual interprets or responds to different contexts or situations (Henle, 2005). Therefore, individuals with a predisposition for deviant behavior can be presumed to be characterized by a specific profile of traits that lend themselves to this type of behavior (Henle, 2005).

While the belief that personality influences deviant behavior has been widely held, existing research has been slow to support this perspective (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). In fact, the personality traits that have been linked to deviant behavior (Trevino, 1986) have been shown to explain relatively little variance (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Exceptions, however, have started to arise related to some of the Big Five Personality traits, dispositional aggressiveness, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and locus of control.

Big Five Personality Traits. Several of the Big Five personality factors have been shown to predict workplace deviant behavior. Research by Lee, Ashton, and Shin (2005) revealed that extraversion played a prominent role in

predicting both organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Their logic for this relationship stems from the need for individuals to exemplify a certain level of boldness, assertiveness, and activity in order to engage in deviant behavior such as harassment and sabotage, while passive or timid individuals would be lacking this capability.

Support has also been found for the trait of agreeableness in relation to interpersonal deviance (Colbert et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2005). Given that the trait of agreeableness is described by likability, friendliness, warmth, kindness, empathy, trust, and being cooperative (Barrick & Mount, 1991), Lee et al. (2005) proposed that the trait of agreeableness would be more likely to affect interpersonal deviance as opposed to organizational deviance given its relation to social interactions. As such, results indicated a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and interpersonal deviance. Therefore, individuals who tend to be low on agreeableness are more likely to engage in interpersonal deviant behavior than those who are high on agreeableness. This relationship was further supported by Colbert et al. in their 2004 study.

Conscientiousness has also been linked to deviant behavior. More specifically, given that the trait of conscientiousness is often described by such traits as endurance, achievement-oriented, responsible, hardworking, and persevering, it has been proposed that conscientiousness would most likely affect organizational deviance as opposed to interpersonal deviance given its relation to work situations and its impersonal, non-social, description. As such, results indicated a significant negative relationship between conscientiousness and organizational deviance (Colbert et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2005). Therefore, individuals who tend to be low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in organizational deviant behavior than those who are high on conscientiousness.

Neuroticism, otherwise described as emotional stability or negative affectivity, has also been linked to deviant behavior. Negative affectivity has been described as the frequency or intensity with which one feels distressing emotions such as anger, anxiousness, depression, embarrassment, emotional, fear, hostility, insecurity, and worry (Aquino, Lewis & Bradfield, 1999; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Watson & Clark, 1984). Previous research indicates that individuals who experience high levels of negative affectivity are likely to experience negative moods across all contexts or situations (Aquino et al., 1999; Watson & Clark, 1984). As such, "negative affect has been viewed as the most proximal predictor of aggressive behaviors in various models of aggression" (Lee, Ashton & Shin, 2005, 86). Results indicate negative affectivity is significantly correlated with both organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance (Aquino et al., 1999).

Dispositional Aggressiveness. The personality trait of aggressiveness has been shown to have a significant direct relationship to interpersonal deviance (Aquino, Galperin & Bennett, 2004). Research by Berkowitz (1993) and Geen (1995) indicates that individuals with aggressive dispositions tend to experience "more intense emotional responses to aversive stimuli, hold more aggressive cognitive scripts, and experience weaker internalized constraints against engaging in antisocial behavior than do those who are less aggressive" (Aquino, Galperin, Bennett, 2004, 1004). As a result, aggressiveness has consistently been found to moderate the relationship between aversive stimuli and aggressive response (Geen, 1995).

Machiavellianism. The personality trait of Machiavellianism is another dispositional characteristic shown to be linked to deviant behavior. Machiavellianism has been conceptualized as an individual's propensity to be distrustful, engage in the act of manipulation, cheat, and steal, particularly when there is low risk of getting caught and high opportunity for rewards. Research indicates those who demonstrate high levels of Machiavellianism are more likely to engage in acts of theft (Harrell & Hartnagel, 1976) and more likely to engage in both interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

Narcissism. Several studies have demonstrated positive correlations between narcissism and deviant behavior, such as counterproductive workplace behavior, hostility, and aggression (Penney & Spector, 2002; Raskin, Novacek & Hogan, 1991; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Wink, 1991). Research suggests that "narcissists may be predisposed to engage in aggressive and other deviant behavior because they are predisposed to see their work environment in negative, threatening ways" (Judge, LePine & Rich, 2006, 764). Therefore, provocation and threats, particularly to one's self-concept (Stucke & Sporer, 2002) and self-esteem (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998) are likely to trigger an aggressive response from those who score high on narcissism. Additionally, while narcissists seem to exhibit increased aggressive behavior, they also have been shown to lack the ability to restrain aggressive behavior. This lack of restraint has been explained by the correlation between narcissism and disinhibiting tendencies (Emmons, 1984).

Locus of Control. Locus of control is a personality trait defined by one's general expectation over whether rewards, reinforcements, or outcomes in life are self controlled or controlled by others (Spector, 1988). In a work setting, individuals with an internal locus of control believe that work outcomes (promotions, salary increases, and career advancement) are a direct reflection of their own actions, behaviors, efforts, and abilities. Individuals with an external locus of control believe that work outcomes are a direct

result of external factors or forces, such as luck, chance, fate, or powerful others.

An individual's type of locus of control is likely to influence his or her behavior. As such, those with an external locus of control often experience perceived powerlessness. Perceived powerlessness is frequently associated with a lack of participation, a lack of autonomy, and a lack of freedom (Allen & Greenberger, 1980; Ashforth, 1989; Bennett, 1998). Therefore, in an effort to regain some semblance of control, research indicates that those who experience perceived powerlessness are likely to engage in behavior that will serve as a corrective means for restoring one's sense of control within his/her respective environment (Ashforth, 1989). Deviant behavior is perceived to be a means for restoring such control (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). In fact, perceived powerlessness has been construed as a provocation to deviant behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2003) and as such has been linked to sabotage (Ambrose et al., 2002; Bennett, 1998; DiBattista, 1991), aggressive behavior (Perlow & Latham, 1993), and destructive behavior (Allen & Greenberger, 1980).

Experiences

Individual experiences have also been frequently studied as a potential precursor or trigger for deviant behavior. Of particular interest have been experiences dealing with frustration and perceived injustice in the workplace. As such, previous research has focused on examining deviance as a potential reaction to an experience of frustration or injustice.

The link between frustration and deviant behavior stems from the proposed interplay of affective antecedents and behavioral responses. Spector and Colleagues (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox & Spector, 1999; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001; Spector, 1997; Storms & Spector, 1987) have demonstrated strong empirical support for the link between experienced frustration and deviant behavior. More specifically, experienced frustration is deemed to create an emotional state that results in an affective reaction. This affective reaction has shown significant empirical support for its ability to trigger aggressive responses such as deviant behavior. Often the emotional response of frustration is triggered by the experience of a frustrating job stressor such as interference with goal attainment or goal maintenance (Spector, 1978), or even the felt emotional response to inadequate resources (Taylor & Walton, 1971), which can then serve as the source of frustration and therefore the motivation behind any resulting deviant behavior (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002).

Consistent with the writings of several authors in this volume, perceived injustice in the workplace is another individual experience factor linked to triggering deviant behavior. Injustice refers to the belief of having been treated in an unfair manner either through the distribution of outcomes (distributive justice), the procedures used to determine the outcomes (procedural justice), or being disrespected or treated in a demeaning or discourteous manner (interactional justice). Adam's Equity Theory (1965) indicates that when an individual perceives to have been treated unfairly, he or she is likely to respond in a way to try and restore the balance of equity. Research indicates that one means of restoring equity and responding to experienced injustice is to resort to deviant behavior (DeMore, Fisher & Baron, 1988; Greenberg, 1990; Greenberg, 1993b; Greenberg & Alge, 1998).

Generally, injustice has consistently been cited to trigger such deviant behavior as sabotage (Crino, 1994; Crino & Leap, 1989; Neuman & Baron, 1998; Robinson & Bennett, 1997; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). More specifically, distributive and procedural injustice have frequently been cited for their influence on such deviant behaviors as theft (Greenberg, 1990, 1993b; Greenberg & Alge, 1998), sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002), and aggression (Folger & Baron, 1996; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Glew, 1996; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). As for interactional injustice, the perception of having been treated in an interpersonally unfair manner has been shown to have a consistent link to deviant behavior, such as retaliation through stealing, even when the stolen item was of no value to the individual (Greenberg, 1996), and revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1998). Whereas individuals are likely to try and restore equity when they have encountered distributive injustice, research indicates retaliation is a far more likely form of response when they experience interactional injustice (Greenberg, 1996). Hence, "interactional injustice (especially lack of interpersonal sensitivity) takes on paramount importance in predicting retaliation and aggression in the workplace" (Folger & Skarlicki, 1998, 43).

A different form of experience that also seems to contribute to an individual's propensity for violence in particular is knowledge of and experience with weapons, especially firearms.

James Davis, for example, grew up in a family environment characterized by violence and aggression—his father routinely beat Davis, his brother, and his mother. After Davis left home he joined the military and saw combat in Vietnam. Later, back in civilian life he bought a .44 Magnum and practiced target shooting in his basement. His experiences in Vietnam were a frequent topic of conversation at work, and he was fired for fighting with a co-worker. James Daniel Simpson was an avid hunter earlier in his life and also knew his way around guns.

Motives

“Behind each form of deviance is a particular motivation produced by a specific provocation” (Robinson & Bennett, 1997, 23). In examining the motivational underpinnings of workplace deviance, prior research indicates that deviant behavior is often a provoked response. This response is motivated most often by perceived inequity or experienced injustice.

Robinson and Bennett (1997) describe two distinct motivations that relate to workplace deviance. One form, termed expressive motivation, “reflects the need to vent, release, or express one’s feelings of outrage, anger, or frustration” (Robinson & Bennett, 1997, 16). Expressive motivation thereby focuses more on the ends and can be described as an affective response (Lee & Allen, 2002) to feelings of injustice. In fact, affective responses have been suggested to influence aggressive behavior (Baron, 1993) furthering support for the triggering of deviant behavior. The second form of motivation described by Robinson and Bennett (1997) is termed instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation “reflects attempts to reconcile the disparity by repairing the situation, restoring equity, or improving the current situation” (Robinson & Bennett, 1997, 16). As such, instrumental motivation can be described as a cognitive-judgment-driven response to a perceived inequity whereby “deviant behavior need not be spontaneous in every occasion; individuals may also engage in workplace deviance after cognitive deliberation” (Judge et al., 2006, 127). Thus, instrumental motivation focuses more on the means to an end, in an effort towards obtaining balance and restoring equity. This form of motivation and resulting engagement in deviant behavior “requires employees to think about their work and hence, suggests an emphasis on cognition” (Lee & Allen, 2002, 133).

Organizational Propensity to Elicit Violent Behavior

In ways very similar to that of the individual component of our model and in describing the individual’s predisposition for deviant behavior, we also propose that an organization has a propensity to elicit deviance. This propensity construct describes the range of potential influence that an organization can have in contributing to, and eliciting, deviant behavior from individuals (employees). This perspective, of course, has been noted previously. For instance, the situation-based perspective of workplace deviance postulates that the environment an individual operates in is what dictates individual deviant behavior (Henle, 2005). As such, “employees will commit deviant acts at work depending on the work environment they are in regardless of

their individual characteristics" (Henle, 2005, 248). This perspective advocates workplace deviance as a sole product of the individual's organizational environment. Therefore, organizations predisposed to employee deviance are likely to exhibit certain characteristics that make organizations vulnerable to employee deviant behavior (Henle, 2005).

For example, if an organization is perceived by individuals (employees) as fair and as intolerant of deviant behavior, of having a warm and nurturing culture, of having an equitable reward system, and treating its employees with dignity and respect, it may reasonably be described as having a low propensity for eliciting deviant behavior from individuals. On the other hand, if an organization tolerates or reinforces deviant behaviors, has a harsh and overly competitive culture, maintains a reward system characterized by arbitrariness and capriciousness, and treats its employees impersonally and as consumable assets, it may be much more likely to have a higher propensity to elicit deviance. As with an individual's predispositions for deviance, we propose the organization's propensity to elicit deviance to be reflected by a continuum ranging from low to high.

Perhaps not surprisingly, numerous workplace killers have placed some or all of the blame for their actions on their former employers. James Davis, for instance, cited a culture that caused worry, stress, and anxiety at Union Butterfield as the cause of his rampage. While such views are, of course, likely to be biased and created to serve as defense mechanisms, independent assessments have also noted organizational conditions that have contributed to violence. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, for instance, investigated a shooting at a large defense contractor and concluded that the firm permitted a racially charged atmosphere to exist at one of its factories. Specifically, the EEOC charged that the firm knew that a hostile work environment existed at the facility but did nothing to change things. The propensity of organizations to elicit violence is critical in that we argue that it serves as a likely stimulating or repressing context for the potential emergence of deviant behaviors by its employees. Among the critical elements of an organization that determine its propensity to elicit deviance are its culture, norms and procedures, reward system, and orientation toward employees.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the set of values, norms, assumptions, and beliefs that exists among organizational members which influence employee attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. An organization's culture can control the way employees interpret or perceive situations and how they respond

to situations. Several studies have examined the value system of organizations which helps create an organization's culture to determine influences on employee deviant behavior. For example, the NCS Workforce Development Group and the Food Marketing Institute conducted the 8th Annual Survey of Supermarket Employees, which served to examine counterproductive behavior by employees ranging from theft, a form of property deviance, to absenteeism, a form of production deviance. Results of the study indicated that organizations with "positive" cultures are less likely to trigger employee deviant behavior than organizations with "negative" cultures. Organizations with "positive" cultures maintain at least seven of the following eight values: (a) fairness with employees, (b) caring and empathy, (c) employee empowerment, (d) career-enriching opportunities, (e) equitable pay and benefits, (f) accurate job-person matching, (g) honesty and ethics, and (h) safe working conditions.

In effect, "employees who described their company as having a 'positive culture' admitted far less theft—\$12.23 annually—than employees of organizations with a 'negative culture,' who said they stole more than \$90 a year" (Wellman, 1998). Therefore, an organization with a high propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior is likely to have developed a "negative" culture. This type of environment is likely to mold or reinforce deviant behavior. It is also likely to have created an overly competitive culture. On the other hand, an organization with a low propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior is likely to have a value system that creates a "positive culture" described as fair, respectful, warm, trusting, and nurturing. It is also likely to communicate its intolerances of deviant behavior by consistently punishing deviant behavior.

Norms and Procedures

Just like values, norms can have a very powerful effect on behavior (Schein, 1996). Norms are often construed as informal rules of conduct that communicate to members which behaviors are expected of them. Norms serve as a means for controlling behavior and often are enforced through rewards and punishment by the group members within an organization. Norms have often been studied as an antecedent of workplace deviance through various theoretical underpinnings such as social information processing and social learning theory (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998).

According to social information processing theory, "individuals, as adaptive organisms, adapt attitudes, behavior, and beliefs to their social context" (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, 226). As such, Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998) use social information processing theory to help explain its application to

individual antisocial behavior by indicating that "individuals use information from their immediate social environments to interpret events, develop appropriate attitudes, and understand expectations concerning their behavior and its consequences" (659). Therefore, the social context for an individual is likely to be a strong predictor of individual behavior.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory has also been used to examine such deviant behavior as antisocial behavior. O'Leary-Kelly and colleagues (1996) indicate that through social learning theory, individuals are likely to learn appropriate adaptive responses through social cues in the environment. These environmental social cues may be learned through modeling behavior (Bandura, 1977) or through incentive inducements as explained by positive reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). While some individuals are more prone than others towards deviant behavior, such as violence (Bandura, 1977; Berkowitz, 1993), it is suggested that deviant behavior can be considered a learned response based on the context of one's environment, given the right triggering social cues. Therefore, individuals who operate in the context of coworkers who engage in deviant behaviors are likely to engage in deviant acts (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Additionally, individuals who receive positive rewards for their deviant behavior are more likely to continue to demonstrate this form of deviant behavior.

As such, research indicates that social norms have been influential in triggering workplace deviance (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), as well as specific deviant behaviors such as sabotage (Giacalone, Riordan & Rosenfeld, 1997), workplace aggression (Greenberg & Alge, 1998), theft (Greenberg, 1998), antisocial behavior (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), and counterproductive behavior (Boye & Jones, 1997). Therefore, given the influence of group norms on individual behavior, it is presumed that social cues that communicate tolerance for deviant behavior are more likely to create an organizational culture with a high propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior. On the other hand, employee deviance can also be constrained by these same social norms that can then serve as informal social controls through primary work-group relationships (Hollinger & Clark, 1982). Therefore, social norms can also be very powerful in inhibiting deviant behavior thereby creating an organizational culture with a low propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior.

Reward System

The organizational environment can contribute to deviant displays of behavior in one of two ways: by creating social conditions that promote this type of

behavior and/or by lowering restraints against it (Berkowitz, 1993). According to Berkowitz (1982, 1983), while an individual may have a strong impulsive reaction to deviant behavior such as violence, the actual display of the behavior is "most likely to occur when cognitively based inhibitory restraints are minimal" (Carlson, Marcus-Newhall & Miller, 1990, 622). The organization can therefore become a contributory factor in whether or not deviant displays of behavior are engaged in by the individual, especially when, for example, the threat of punishment from the organization is absent (Berkowitz, 1993).

Reinforcement theory posits that individual behavior is determined by its consequences. Therefore, an organization can influence the behavior of its employees through the use of rewards and punishments. For an organization to maintain a low propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior, it is proposed that the organization must maintain a reward system that is equitable. A fair and adequate reward system is likely to keep employees satisfied and less likely to trigger feelings of frustration towards the organization, potentially resulting in deviant behavior (Boye & Jones, 1997). It is also proposed that the organization maintain a reward system that perhaps even promotes reducing deviant behavior. Boye and Jones (1997) propose the use of a profit sharing system whereby "this method of compensation should help make clear to employees the reward they can obtain by reducing counterproductive behavior and thus helping the company to increase its profitability" (181). This method would communicate the intolerance for deviant behavior and at the same time reward or provide incentive for employees to maintain desired, as opposed to undesired, behaviors.

On the other hand, it would serve organizations well to punish unacceptable counterproductive or deviant behaviors. Boye and Jones (1997) further propose the use of a policy to communicate concerns regarding employee deviant behavior and the organization's intolerance of such behavior. However, punishment is ineffective if organizations engage in weak sanctions for rule or policy violations (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). As such, empirical evidence indicates that the severity of sanctions is critical in influencing or deterring deviant behavior. Hollinger and Clark (1982) indicate that while formal sanctions do serve to deter both property deviance and production deviance, the strength of informal sanctions by coworkers is two and a half times greater. Therefore, "employee behavior seems to be constrained more by the anticipated reaction to deviance by one's fellow coworkers than the threatened formal reaction on the part of management" (Hollinger & Clark, 1982, 340). Yet, both formal and informal sanctions are critical in effectively reducing employee deviant behavior, particularly when

sanctions against those who engage in deviant behaviors are consistent, severe, and known to all employees (Boye & Jones, 1997).

Organizations that tend to have a high propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior are likely to maintain a reward system characterized by arbitrariness and capriciousness, and that runs counter to generally accepted behavior. That is, organizations often develop *counternorms* (Sims, 1992), which describe generally accepted "organizational practices that are contrary to prevailing ethical standards" (507), such as rewarding secretive and deceitful behavior, encouraging individuals to "pass the buck" and avoid taking responsibility, and communicating to employees to do whatever it takes to get a job done. Organizations, therefore, tend to encourage individuals to maintain a "bottom line mentality" that often occurs at the expense of upholding other values (Appelbaum, Deguire & Lay, 2005).

In the context of workplace deviant behavior, counternorms are thought to result in what has been termed the "effect/danger" ratio (Appelbaum et al., 2005). The "effect/danger" ratio describes deviant behavior that occurs covertly in the workplace and involves an aggressor who engages in behaviors that effectively harm the target (individual/organization) yet allows him or her to incur minimal danger to oneself (Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Hjelt-Back, 1994). Prior research indicates that covert aggression tends to be a preferred method of deviant behavior over overt actions such as physical violence, particularly in the workplace, where one's identity can be more effectively hidden (Baron & Neuman, 1998).

Orientation Towards Employees

An organization's orientation towards its employees can have significant effects on its employees' behaviors. Several theoretical perspectives support this relationship. Social exchange theory (Gould, 1979; Levinson, 1965) and norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) indicate that individuals will tend to demonstrate reciprocative behaviors directly towards those who benefit or harm them. As such, empirical evidence suggests that individuals who perceive they are receiving supportive and favorable treatment from the organization are likely to engage in positive behaviors such as increased motivation and commitment. On the other hand, individuals who perceive unfavorable treatment by the organization are likely to violate organizational norms and exhibit deviant behavior (Colbert et al., 2004).

The justice and perceived organizational support literatures help to further explain the relationship between an organization's orientation towards its employees and employee behavior. Research indicates that regardless of

the form of injustice, when employees are treated in an unjust manner, they are more likely to engage in deviant behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Distributive and procedural forms of injustice are likely to trigger theft (Greenberg, 1990, 1993b; Greenberg & Alge, 1998), sabotage (Ambrose et al., 2002), and aggression (Folger & Baron, 1996; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1996; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Interactional injustice, on the other hand, is likely to trigger retaliation (Greenberg, 1996) and revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1998). In fact, Bies and Tripp (1998) indicate that interactional justice through interpersonal insensitivity, such as the demeaning treatment of employees, may play a critical role in triggering retaliatory sabotage, or revengeful behavior.

As for perceived organizational support, the employee-organization relationship is determined by their work history and series of exchanges (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1996; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). When employees feel a general sense of being valued by the organization and cared for (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), they are likely to feel support from the organization and are less likely to engage in workplace deviance (Colbert et al., 2004). However, when employees perceive low levels of organizational support, when they are "shown disrespect, passed over for promotion, given additional responsibilities with no pay increase, denied adequate resources to do the job, or didn't receive what he or she considered adequate credit for work performed from co-workers or management" (Crino, 1994, 315), then the resulting frustration is likely to result in deviant behavior such as sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002), and potentially, hostility or aggression (Spector, 1997).

Therefore, organizations with a low propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior are likely to treat employees with dignity and respect, to maintain fair and equitable procedures, to treat employees with trust, respect, dignity, and sensitivity as proposed by Boye and Jones (1997). Organizations with a high propensity to elicit employee deviant behavior are likely to treat employees impersonally and as consumable assets, and to maintain unjust environments filled with perceived social and structural injustices (Greenberg & Alge, 1998).

Person-Situation Determinants of Deviant Behavior

In the preceding sections we have developed arguments that two central constructs in understanding workplace deviance are individual predispositions for deviant behavior and organizational propensity to elicit deviant behavior. As noted by Appelbaum, Iaconi, and Matousek (2007), situation-based and person-based predictors of employee deviance have traditionally

been considered to be mutually exclusive. More recently, though, cognitive social theorists have come to believe that there is a strong interaction between person-based and situation-based types of deviance. This is because personality is contextual and it modifies how individuals interpret, and thus respond to, particular situations (Henle, 2005). Further, Appelbaum et al. also argue that deviant behavior actually cannot be attributed to personality traits alone. As previously noted, it is more likely that deviant behavior may be best predicted based on a combination of personality variables and the nature of the workplace situation (Peterson, 2002; Caruana, Ramaseshan & Ewing, 2001).

The individual predispositions for violent behavior and organizational propensity to elicit violent behavior constructs provide a useful integrative framework for potentially understanding how situation-based and person-based predictors may interact to influence deviant behavior. Specifically, figure 9.1 presents the organizing elements of a model of person-situation determinants of deviant behavior in organizations. By viewing individual predispositions for deviant behavior and organizational propensities for eliciting deviant behaviors as continuums, and by considering these two constructs as theoretically independent of one another, we can create the 2x2 matrix shown in the figure. This matrix defines four general conditions:

- Condition 1: High individual predisposition for deviance/low organizational propensity to elicit deviance
- Condition 2: High individual predisposition for deviance/high organizational propensity to elicit deviance
- Condition 3: Low individual predisposition for deviance/high organizational propensity to elicit deviance
- Condition 4: Low individual predisposition for deviance/low organizational propensity to elicit deviance

As also illustrated in table 9.1, condition 2 is likely to have the highest incidence of deviant behaviors, given that the individual has a high propensity for deviance and the organization has a high propensity to elicit deviance. Alternatively, condition 4 is likely to have the lowest incidence of deviant behaviors, since the individual has a low propensity for deviance and the organization has a low propensity to elicit deviance. Conditions 1 and 3 are likely to have moderate incidences of deviant behavior.

To illustrate further, consider the case of two hypothetical persons, Sam and Peter, and two hypothetical employers, company A and company B. Assume that Sam has a relatively high propensity for deviance and that Peter

Table 9.1
*A Model of Person-Situation Determinants of
Deviant Behavior in Organizations*

Individual Predispositions for Deviant Behaviors	High	1	2
		Moderate incidence of deviant behavior	Highest incidence of deviant behavior
	Low	Lowest incidence of deviant behavior	Moderate incidence of deviant behavior
		4	3
		Low	High
Organization Propensity to Elicit Deviant Behavior			

has a relative low propensity for deviance. Similarly, assume that company A has a relatively high propensity to elicit deviance and that company B has a relatively low propensity to elicit deviance. The highest overall probability for deviant behavior to arise among these four ‘actors’ would be if Sam were to take a job at company A. Similarly, the lowest overall probability for deviant behavior would be if Peter took a job at company B. Of course, this does not mean that deviance by Sam and no deviance by Peter are certain, but instead simply suggests relative probabilities for the two potential deviant acts.

It is also likely that predispositions and propensities can change over time, resulting in potentially fluid probabilities. For instance, someone with a high predisposition for deviant behavior might achieve some increased measure of personal peace or tranquility, thereby lowering his or her predisposition for deviance. Likewise, a series of major personal setbacks and tragedies could conceivably increase a person’s predisposition for deviance. The patterns could also exist in organizations as they alter their cultures, norms and procedures, reward systems, and orientation towards employees in ways that increase or decrease their propensity to elicit deviant behaviors.

Implications and Future Directions

Considerable work, of course, is needed in order for the value of our proposed model to be fully realized. For one thing, a more thorough and comprehensive theoretical development of the key constructs is required. For example, while we focus on such individual factors as personality,

experiences, and motives, other factors such as values and genetic and biological elements may also need to be included. Similarly, other contextual factors such as the role of supervision, coworkers, and national culture may also be relevant.

More precise linkages between the two constructs must also be developed. For instance, there is clearly a wide range of deviant behaviors. Subcategories of deviant behaviors may also be differentially affected by different person-specific constructs. Personality differences, for example, may be more influential on certain deviant behaviors whereas experiences and motives may be more influential on others. Similarly, certain organization factors like culture may be more likely to elicit certain kinds of deviance while reward systems and norms and procedures may elicit other forms of deviance. Clearly, then, there is room for greater theoretical and conceptual development and exposition.

Empirical research is also necessary in order to further assess the validity of the model after it is fully elaborated. A combination of laboratory research, detailed clinical case studies, and organizational field studies may all be needed in order to provide greater insights into the constructs of individual predispositions for deviance, organizational propensity to elicit deviance, and the interactions between the two. The authors' hope is that the model can serve as an organizing framework for a more complete perspective on the study of deviant behavior in organizations.

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