Journal of Management

Ain't Misbehavin: Workplace Deviance as Organizational Resistance

Thomas B. Lawrence and Sandra L. Robinson

The online version of this article can be found at:

Published by:

$SAGE

On behalf of:

S·M·A
SOUTHERN
MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION

Southern Management Association

Additional services and information for *Journal of Management* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://jom.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://jom.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

Citations (this article cites 35 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
http://jom.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/33/3/378

Ain't Misbehavin: Workplace Deviance as Organizational Resistance[†]

Thomas B. Lawrence[*]

Faculty of Business Administration, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6B 5K3

Sandra L. Robinson

Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1Z2

Although organizational control and power are often designed to diminish workplace deviance, they also have the capacity to incite it. This is because enactments of power that confront organizational members in their daily work lives can create frustration that is expressed in acts of deviance. In this article, the authors examine why power provokes workplace deviance in organizations and, specifically, how types of power affect the form that workplace deviance takes.

Keywords: deviance; power; resistance; organization

The prevalence and costs of misconduct or deviance in the workplace make its study imperative. In an earlier survey, it was found that 33% to 75% of workers have engaged in behaviors such as vandalism, sabotage, unwarranted absenteeism, and theft (Harper, 1990). Recent research suggests that the increasing tension in corporations that has resulted from economic changes, increasing global competitiveness, and trends toward downsizing and restructuring has led to significant levels of misconduct. Americans experience 1.7 million violent victimizations at work annually (U. S. Department of Justice, 2000). Nearly 11% of

---

378

British workers report having been bullied at work in the prior 6 months (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002). The organizational costs of such behavior are staggering. U.S. retailers lose $15.1 billion per year in internal theft, and the rate of such theft is increasing each year (Hollinger & Davis, 2003). In Australia alone, fraud committed by organizational members costs an average of $2.1 million for each fraud incident an organization experiences (KPMG Forensic, 2004) Along with these hard costs, the negative impact of workplace deviance on productivity and performance has been found to be substantial (Dunlop & Lee, 2004).

With organizational deviance at such a high level and costing organizations so much, it is imperative that we understand its underlying causes. In this article, we examine workplace deviance as a form of resistance to organizational power. Deviance has often been recognized as a reaction to frustrating organizational stressors, such as financial, social, and working conditions (Robinson & Bennett, 1997). The episodes and systems of power used by organizational members to control, motivate, organize, and direct others, however, have not yet been systematically examined as a potential and important cause of workplace deviance.

We argue that the enactment of power in organizations, regardless of purpose or intent, can be perceived negatively by those it affects. In brief, we argue that instances of power can lead to a loss of autonomy and identity, and to perceptions of injustice, which together can provoke feelings of frustration, which in turn may motivate deviant behavior (J. W. Brehm, 1966; S. S. Brehm & Brehm, 1981). We will further argue that *how* power is enacted will influence how likely it will be to provoke deviant behavior and the form that deviant behavior might take. We are not suggesting that all enactments of power will necessarily provoke resistance or that all resistance occurs in the form of misconduct. Rather, we believe that organizational power has the potential to incite workplace deviance and that this relationship has been underexplored. This article therefore seeks to create a theory of the relationship between organizational power and workplace deviance.

This article may offer several potential contributions. First, it integrates the well-established literatures on power and resistance in organizations with the newer research domain of workplace deviance and negative organizational behaviors. These literatures have developed in relative isolation from one another, despite their shared foci. Such behaviors as absenteeism, shirking, sabotage, gossip, and physical violence have been addressed in the literatures on both deviance and resistance, and yet the cross-fertilization between these research areas has been relatively modest. Bringing these two areas together, however, may expand our understanding of each.

A second potential contribution of this article is that it may help to contextualize the study of workplace deviance. Although harmful organizational behavior is inherently perceived as dysfunctional and counterproductive by definition (Robinson & Greenberg, 1999), more recent theorizing has noted that such behavior may also have functional aspects (e.g., Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004; Warren, 2003). Although deviant actions may be perceived as dysfunctional by the organization itself, they may be functional to those engaging in them because, as we will argue, they serve to maintain and protect their needs for autonomy and sense of self-respect and fairness.

Finally, our theory may provide a useful counterbalance to the accepted but untested causal relationship between managerial actions and employee deviance (Robinson & Greenberg, 1999). A long history of agency theory (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989) suggests that organizations can

and should increase managerial control to ensure employees act in the interest of the firm. In contrast, our theory would suggest that managerial attempts to control and limit dysfunctional workplace behavior may increase such behavior, rather than reduce it.

We present our argument in three main sections. First, we discuss how power in general leads to frustration, which in turn affects workplace deviance as resistance to that power. Next, we drill down in our analysis to explore how specific dimensions and types of power can produce specific forms of workplace deviance. In the final section, we discuss the implications of our model for theory and practice.

## The Primary Relationship Between Power and Workplace Deviance

Organizational power reflects actions of any individual or organizational system that controls the behavior or beliefs of an organizational member. We contend that such enactments of power provoke workplace deviance, defined here as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and thus is perceived as threatening the well-being of the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1997). When power provokes workplace deviance, it is a form of organizational resistance: Resistance involves an action, inaction, or process whereby individuals within a power structure engage in behaviors stemming from their opposition to, or frustration with, enactments of power (Collinson, 1999; Knights & McCabe, 1999). Deviant behavior is only one of many forms of resistance identified in the literature.

Workplace deviance as organizational resistance is important and widespread because all organizations are sites of power and resistance (Clegg, 1989; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). The structures, systems, and cultures of organizations act as circuits of power that control the actions of organizational members (Townley, 1993). Organizational structures provide the basis of legitimate authority (Pfeffer, 1981), whereas cultures and systems control members through rewards and sanctions and the articulation of what is understood as normal and desirable (Clegg, 1989; Townley, 1993). Within these cultures and structures, organizational actors regularly enact power in attempts to influence, persuade, or otherwise motivate organizational members to act in particular ways (Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Workplace deviance is driven by provocations (Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Robinson & Bennett, 1997). Such provocations come from perceived disparities between a current state and some ideal state, need, or desire, which creates frustration (Robinson & Bennett, 1997). The frustration stemming from these provocations may motivate deviant behavior that is either instrumental or expressive in nature (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992). We argue that organizational power has the potential to create at least three forms of perceived disparity that produce frustration: (a) disparity between the need for autonomy and an experienced loss of freedom, (b) disparity between one's social identity and threats to that identity, and (c) disparity between a need for justice and experiences of unfairness. (See Figure 1.)

Need for autonomy. Reactance theory argues that the enactment of power can create a feeling of reduced autonomy on the part of employees, and this threat in turn motivates those employees to restore it by engaging in the restricted behaviors, or behaviors similar to them

Figure 1
The Primary Relationship Between power and Deviance
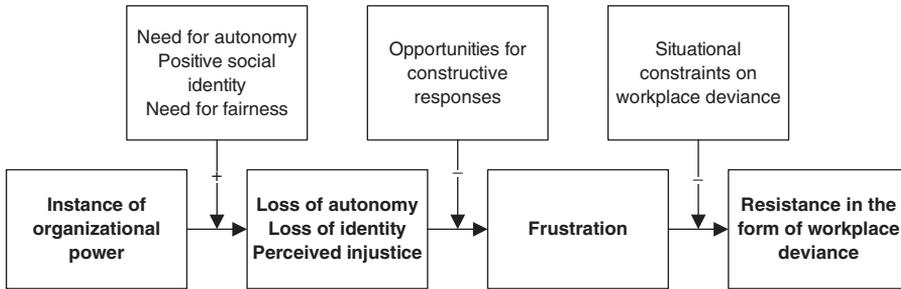
(J. W. Brehm, 1966; S. S. Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974). Enactments of power have the potential to thwart basic needs of employees, such as their sense of autonomy and self-control (Adler, 1930). Although individuals vary in their need for autonomy, such needs are critical to individuals because they believe that they can control their own destinies; it is only through the freedom to make decisions and choose actions that they can maximize their own satisfaction (J. W. Brehm, 1966; Wicklund, 1974). In terms of our model, we posit that enactments of power reduce autonomy, and the ensuing frustration can lead to deviant behaviors that are intended to resist that loss of autonomy.

> *Proposition 1:* Instances of organizational power are more likely to lead to the frustration that underpins workplace deviance as resistance either when it significantly reduces the autonomy of individuals and/or when the targets of that power have a high need for autonomy.

Social identity. A second psychological mechanism through which power can lead to frustration and thus to deviant behavior involves the potential threat to an employee's social face, or desired identity. Social face refers to an interplay of attributes and social identities that the employee would like to project in a given social environment (Erez & Earley, 1993). Enactments of power in organizations can undermine or threaten one's identity in the organization as a strong, independent, equal individual. Such a threatened or damaged identity potentially provides the frustration that can lead to deviant behavior (Averill, 1982; Berkowitz, 1993; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994): When individuals' identities or social face are threatened, they tend to engage in defensive self-presentation (Schlenker, 1980) and are more likely to act with aggression (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994; Morrill, 1992) or seek revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1995; Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997). As Andersson and Pearson (1999) argued, revenge is a way for individuals to demonstrate that they have socially valued attributes and are deserving of respectful behavior: Revengeful behavior may help to reestablish one's lowered sense of self or build up one's identity (Kim & Smith, 1993). Following our general model, acts of power undermine one's social identity, which in turn causes frustration and

leads to a variety of deviant behavior intended to either seek revenge or restore that threatened loss of social face.

> *Proposition 2:* Instances of organizational power are more likely to lead to the frustration that underpins workplace deviance as resistance either when it significantly threatens the identities of targeted individuals and/or when the targets of that power have a high need to protect their identities.

Justice. Organizational power may also create disparity between desires for justice and perceptions of unfair treatment. Employees who are equity sensitive or who possess a high need for justice will be more likely to sense such disparies. The enactment of power may produce a sense of unfairness by those who are the recipients of it (Collinson, 1992). Although organizational members are often affected by decisions, systems, and processes that are counter to their self-interest (Mintzberg, 1983), research on procedural justice shows that individuals are more likely to consider acts of power as legitimate when they perceive the underlying processes as fair (Tyler, 2000). Thus, when organizational members perceive processes as unfair, such perceptions can engender frustration and motivate them to seek retribution, potentially by reciprocating the perceived unfair act (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Consequently, feelings of injustice generated by organizational power can lead to the frustration that underpins workplace deviance intended to release those feelings or achieve some sort of retribution.

> *Proposition 3:* Instances of organizational power are more likely to lead to the frustration that underpins workplace deviance as resistance either when it significantly undermines perceptions of justice on the part of targeted individuals and/or when the targets of that power have a high need for organizational justice.

Factors That Moderate the Link to Frustration

We have argued that enactments of organizational power have the potential to create disparities between individuals' needs for autonomy and their experienced loss of freedom, their social identity and threats to that identity, and between a need for justice and experiences of unfairness. Even when this is the case, however, we contend that opportunities in the environment for more constructive forms of resistance will moderate the link between these perceived disparities and individuals' frustration.

When opportunities for alternative responses are available, the likelihood of frustration in response to instances of power is decreased. One opportunity is afforded by the availability of channels through which individuals can gain voice, such as through complaint channels, unions, or other mechanisms to constructively resolve disputes. Other opportunities for alternative responses may include the attractiveness and availability of alternative jobs and organizations, enabling some to exit the organization rather than engage in workplace deviance (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Together, these and other opportunities for alternative responses to enactments of power may decrease the frustration experienced by individuals in response to instances of power.

Proposition 4: Opportunities for alternative responses will moderate the relationship between enactments of power and the frustration that underpins workplace deviance, such that the presence of those opportunities weakens the relationship.

Thus far, we have shown the general relationship between organizational power and workplace deviance, as mediated by frustration of fundamental needs. In so doing, we have treated enactments of power and workplace deviance as unitary constructs. However, as we will explore in the next section, particular types of power may produce particular types of workplace deviance.

Dimensions of Power and Workplace Deviance

In this section, we drill down in our preceding analysis to examine relationships between dimensions of power and dimensions of workplace deviance. Research shows that organizational resistance can take many forms and that its strength, influence, and intensity are likely to be variable and to change over time (Brown, 1992). The type of resistance in which one engages depends on the particular context and content of what is being resisted (Jermier, Knights & Nord, 1994). Whatever form resistance takes is intertwined with the systems of power exhibited within the organization (Collinson, 1994). Therefore, the nature of deviance as a form of resistance depends on the nature of the power that provokes it.

To explore this issue, we first articulate the nature of power with a two-dimensional typology, and the nature of workplace deviance, with a similar typology. Next we examine how the nature of power affects the particular nature of deviance that emerges.
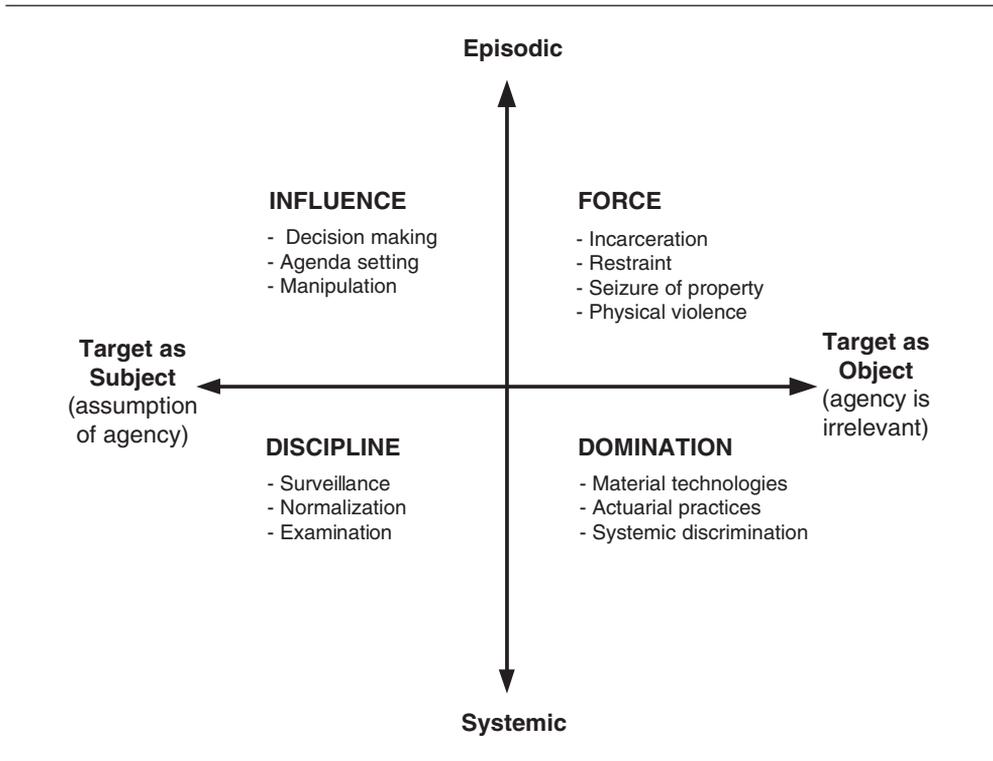
The Dimensions of Power

We begin our analysis with an examination of the nature of power and its dimensions. To do so, we rely on Lawrence, Winn, and Jennings's (2001) conceptualization and typology of power. This typology is well suited for our model because it encompasses a wide array of potential provocations that are rooted in organizational power. The breadth of the typology stems from the two dimensions on which it is based: (a) degree of objectification and (b) the mode of power (Figure 2).

Objectification of power. Some forms of power treat the target as a "subject," by which we mean an individual who is seen as having agency or choice. Influence, for example, involves attempts to negotiate, exclude, or manipulate a target (Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981), which assumes agency on the part of the target. Without an assumption of agency, efforts to influence would be nonsensical.

In contrast, other forms of power treat the target as an "object," one whose agency is irrelevant to the exercise of power. A wide variety of objectifying forms of power have been examined in organizational contexts, including physical violence (Hearn, 1994), material

Figure 2
Forms of Organizational Power

Episodic

INFLUENCE
- Decision making
- Agenda setting
- Manipulation

FORCE
- Incarceration
- Restraint
- Seizure of property
- Physical violence

Target as Subject
(assumption of agency)

Target as Object
(agency is irrelevant)

DISCIPLINE
- Surveillance
- Normalization
- Examination

DOMINATION
- Material technologies
- Actuarial practices
- Systemic discrimination

Systemic

technologies (Shaiken, 1984), and even actuarial practices (Simon, 1988). Each of these practices involve enacting power over individuals directly, without having to compel or convince the targets to "do" anything.

Mode of power. The second dimension of power is the "mode" of power, which describes the basic manner in which power operates. There are two distinct modes of power: "episodic" and "systemic" (Lawrence et al., 2001). Episodic power refers to that which is enacted in relatively discrete, strategic events that are initiated by self-interested actors (Clegg, 1989; Hardy & Clegg, 1996). This mode of power has dominated the study of power in organizations and has been approached from a wide variety of perspectives (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981).

In contrast to episodic power, systemic forms of power work through the routine, ongoing practices of organizations to advantage particular groups without those groups being obviously or clearly connected to the establishment or maintenance of those practices (Foucault, 1979; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Some examples of systemic power include organizational socialization processes (Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian, & Samuel, 1998), technological systems

such as manufacturing and information systems (Shaiken, 1984), and human resource training and testing systems (Townley, 1993). All of these systems can dramatically affect the lives of organizational members without being tied to specific agents or episodes of power.

Combining these dimensions of power, four specific types emerge. Episodic and nonobjectifying forms of power are labeled *influence* and reflect actions such as moral suasion, negotiation, rational persuasion, ingratiation, and exchange (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence et al., 2001; Maslyn, Farmer, & Fedor, 1996). Episodic power that treats employees as objects is termed *force*, and it includes moving, restraining, or directing employees in ways they have no choice. An example might include relocating an employee or dismissal. Systemic forms of power that do not objectify the individual are referred to as *discipline* and involve such practices as socialization, compensation, training, teamwork, and surveillance (Sewell, 1998; Townley, 1993). Finally, systemic and objectifying forms of power, called *domination*, include power that is reflected in things ranging from the technology used in a manufacturing plant (Shaiken, 1984) to pay systems that discriminate (Falkenberg, 1997).

The Dimensions of Workplace Deviance

Workplace deviance is enacted in a wide variety of forms that can vary from context to context (Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Redeker, 1989). Robinson and Bennett (1995), using multidimensional scaling analysis, identified two dimensions that capture the full domain of workplace deviance: severity and target (Figure 3).

Severity. The dimension of severity refers to the extent to which the deviant act violates important organizational norms and thus is perceived as more potentially harmful to the organization or its members. Relatively minor forms of deviance include such behaviors as social loafing and unjustified absenteeism, whereas more severe forms might involve physical aggression or theft.

Target. The target dimension reflects whether the deviance is directed at the organization or organizational members. Organization-directed deviance might include, for example, vandalism, theft, or sabotage. In contrast, individual-directed deviance might include gossip, scapegoating, or physical assault. Although a given act of deviance may harm both targets, organizational members will tend to direct their deviant actions at primarily an individual or an organizational target.

These two dimensions of workplace deviance create four specific types of deviance. Less severe behavior that is targeted at individuals reflects "political behavior," the engagement in social interaction that puts other individuals at a personal or political disadvantage (Robinson & Bennett, 1995: 566) and includes things such as gossip, rumor spreading, scapegoating, or favoritism. More severe forms of behavior targeted at individuals, labeled *personal aggression*, include behavior such as harassment, verbal attacks, and threats to cause physical harm. Deviance that is less severe and directed at the organization reflects "production deviance" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 1997) and includes taking excessive breaks, calling in sick, intentionally working slow, and generally violating norms regarding the minimal quality and quantity of work to be accomplished. And finally, severe deviance targeting the organization

Figure 3
A Typology of Workplace Deviance
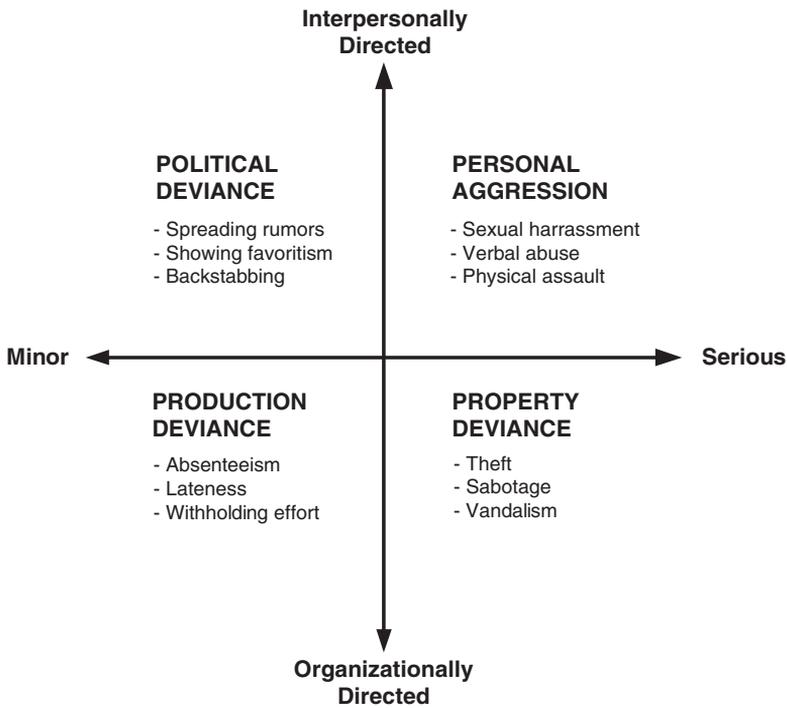
reflects "property deviance" and includes behaviors such as theft from the organization, insubordination, intentional mistakes, and sabotaging machinery or equipment.

The Relationship Between Dimensions of Power and Dimensions of Deviance

In this section, using the dimensions discussed above, we posit that the nature of power along each of its dimensions will affect the nature of the deviance that emerges.

Impact of objectification on severity of deviance. We argue that the targets' perceptions of whether power treats them as subjects or as objects will lead to greater frustration, which in turn will create motivation to resist with deviance. Objectifying forms of power will tend to lead to greater levels of frustration than do those that treat targets as subjects, because objectifying forms of power entail a greater loss of autonomy, pose more serious threats to organizational members' identities, and may be perceived as less procedurally just. The greater threats that emanate from objectifying forms of power, in contrast to other forms of power, will tend to

elicit stronger behavioral resistance. Greater frustration leads to more severe acts of workplace deviance (Andersson & Pearon, 1999), which can be understood from the "effect/danger ratio" (Baron & Neuman, 1996). More severe forms of deviance are likely to be more effective, but they also carry the risk of consequences for those who engage in them (Hollinger & Clark, 1982). Thus, one needs greater motivation to offset concern for the increased risks. We argue that motivation is greatest when individuals are subject to objectifying forms of power, and the degree of frustration is greatest. Together, these arguments suggest the following:

> *Proposition 5:* The greater the degree of objectification involved in the enactment of power, the greater the frustration and hence, the more likely deviance will be severe.

Impact of mode on target of deviance. We argue that the perceived mode in which power operates—episodic or systemic—will affect where deviant actions are targeted. When individuals experience negative outcomes, such as those producing frustration, they will seek to attribute blame or responsibility for them (Harvey, Ickes, & Kidd, 1981). Episodic forms of power involve the enactment of power in specific, discrete actions (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence et al., 2001): Regardless of whether the episode is driven by individual or organizational interests, there will usually be a specific, identifiable actor that can be readily observed as responsible (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). Thus, the appearance of identifiable individual agents in episodic power will lead the targets of that power to hold a particular actor accountable. In contrast, systemic power is enacted within routines that are more obviously attached to the organization as a whole than to a specific organizational member. Consequently, under systemic power, the employee is much more likely to hold the organization responsible, rather than specific individual agents or managers.

Targets of power will tend to direct their acts of resistance at the perceived source of the frustration (Robinson & Bennett, 1997). Given that deviance as resistance serves in part to cause harm to, or wreak revenge on, the entity perceived responsible for enacting the power, the actions perceived as maximizing effectiveness will be those directed at the source of the power. Thus, if the costs of directing deviant behavior toward different targets are the same, individuals will tend to target the perceived source when possible. A variety of prior literature is consistent with this argument. Research on aggression finds that when such behavior is triggered by aversion treatment, the source blamed for the treatment becomes the target (Allen & Lucero, 1996; Berkowitz, 1993; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996).

> *Proposition 6a:* Enactments of episodic power will be positively related to individual-directed deviance.
> *Proposition 6b:* Enactments of systemic power in organizations will be positively related to organization-directed deviance.

The Relationship Between Specific Types of Power and Deviance

The relationships between dimensions of power and dimensions of workplace deviance discussed above form the foundation for understanding the links between *specific* forms of power and *specific* types of deviance. As illustrated in Figure 4, we contend that specific

Figure 4
The Impact of the Form of Power on Types of Workplace Deviance

Form of Organizational Power		Type of Deviance Most Likely to Result
Influence	⇨	Political Deviance
Force	⇨	Personal Aggression
Discipline	⇨	Production Deviance
Domination	⇨	Property Deviance

forms of power are likely to provoke one of four types of workplace deviance. We now discuss each of these links in turn.

Influence and political behavior. Influence, an episodic and nonobjectifying form of power, occurs as specific acts of power in which one actor attempts to persuade another actor to do something he or she would not otherwise do (Clegg, 1989; Porter et al., 1981). Thus, influence may provoke deviant behavior when the target of power feels frustration or outrage, perhaps because moral suasion feels like undue pressure, a negotiation appears one-sided, or ingratiation feels insincere and manipulative. In reaction to these negative feelings, an individual might seek to express his or her frustration or outrage, or to attempt to correct the situation in some way.

Influence is episodic in nature (Porter et al., 1981) and therefore will encourage workplace deviance that is directed at the perceived source. Because episodes of influence treat the employee as a subject rather than an object, the severity of the deviance provoked by it will likely be relatively mild: The target's relatively small loss of autonomy and greater sense of procedural fairness will lead the employee to resist through less severe acts of deviance. Thus, episodes of influence are likely to engender workplace deviance that is targeted at the individual and low in severity; what Robinson and Bennett (1995) referred to as "political behavior."

Proposition 7: Acts of workplace deviance that are provoked by an episode of influence will tend to occur in the form of political deviance.

Force and personal aggression. The use of force involves episodes of power where organizational members are treated as objects (Hearn, 1994). An extreme but common form of force involves firing organizational members, but there are a range of other actions that effectively remove an employee's sense of agency: moving an employee to a different shift or to a different location; taking away a resource, such as access to information; compelling behavior through extreme coercion. What is critical with respect to understanding the link between force and workplace deviance is the lack of agency as perceived by the target. Episodes of force can produce feelings of intense frustration and outrage, because one's autonomy has been stripped, one's identity threatened, and the act itself is perceived as procedurally unfair.

The episodic nature of force will lead to forms of deviance that are targeted at the individual perceived responsible. Because a specific individual is seen as accountable for the episode, the target individual will direct his or her frustration and outrage at that person. In contrast to influence, however, force is likely to lead to more destructive or severe forms of deviance. This is because force creates a greater perceived loss of autonomy and sense of procedural unfairness. Thus, it evokes stronger frustration and thus more severe deviant behavior. These arguments taken together suggest that force will be more strongly associated with deviance directed at individuals and that is more severe in nature, what Robinson and Bennett (1995, 1997) referred to as "personal aggression."

Proposition 8: Acts of workplace deviance that are provoked by an episode of force will tend to occur in the form of personal aggression.

Discipline and production deviance. Discipline involves organizational systems or routines, rather than episodes of power, that treat individuals as subjects who have volition or choice with regard to their behavior (Clegg, 1989; Foucault, 1979; Lawrence et al., 2001). Whereas the use of influence assumes that targets of power have stable identities that will lead them to react in predictable ways to certain inducements, the power of discipline is in its capacity to shape the identities of targets and consequently lead them to act in particular ways without specific inducements (Covaleski et al., 1998; Knights, 1992).

When discipline provokes deviance as a form of resistance, it is likely to evoke less serious forms because organizational members are treated as subjects within systems of discipline, and thus their sense of autonomy will be less restricted, their identities will be less threatened, and their sense of justice will be less disturbed. In addition, the systemic nature of disciplinary power suggests that any workplace deviance that it provokes will likely be targeted at the organization rather than an individual. Disciplinary systems are typically routinized and embedded in the organization as a whole, and so no specific individual is likely to be identifiable as responsible. Together, these dynamics suggest that discipline will tend to provoke deviance that is less severe and directed at the organization, what is referred to as "production deviance" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 1997).

Proposition 9: Acts of workplace deviance that are provoked by systems of discipline will tend to occur in the form of production deviance.

Domination and property deviance. Domination is a form of power that is systemic and treats its target as an object. It involves systems of organized, routine practices that do not require agency or choice on part of those targeted (Lawrence et al., 2001). These systems of power all have the ability to support patterns of social action in an ongoing way without the complicity of those on whom they act (Lawrence et al., 2001). Assembly-line technologies, for example, can routinely determine the actions of individuals without any episodic intervention or action on the part of management.

Like force, domination strips its targets of their sense of autonomy and agency, which is likely to lead to high levels of frustration. At the same time, the sense of procedural unfairness can be high. As such, the deviance it provokes will be more severe in nature. The direction of this relatively severe workplace deviance is likely to be toward the organization as a whole, rather than an individual member; because power is embedded in organizational systems and routines, targets of power will find it difficult to attribute it to any individual. Together, these two elements suggest that domination as a form of organizational power will encourage organizational members to engage in organizationally directed deviance that is severe in nature— what Robinson and Bennett (1995, 1997) referred to as "property deviance."

Proposition 10: Acts of workplace deviance that are provoked by systems of domination will tend to occur in the form of property deviance.

Constraints on Workplace Deviance

Although we argue that each form of power is most likely to lead to a specific type of workplace deviance, these relationships are likely to be moderated by the existence of constraints on individual behavior. Constraints are ubiquitous in organizations and essential to their existence (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Not surprisingly, behavior in organizations is often dictated by constraints (Johns, 1991), which are defined here as barriers to action or environmentally induced limitations on behavior (Rosse & Miller, 1984). Typical constraints on workplace deviance include surveillance and sanctions. To the extent that employees are monitored and audited, the opportunity to engage in destructive behavior is limited (Baum & Youngblood, 1975; Dalton & Perry, 1981; Mobley, 1982). The likelihood of sanctions and the severity of those sanctions may thwart workplace deviance (Hollinger & Clark, 1982). Moreover, informal sanctions by coworkers can also regulate deviance such as theft (Siehl, 1987). These constraints increase costs of deviant behaviors, and we know that employees weigh the costs of engaging in alternative responses before choosing one (Adams, 1965; Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988). This suggests that situational constraints on workplace deviance will decrease our ability to predict the exact type of deviance that any given form of power will engender.

Proposition 11: Situational constraints will moderate the relationship between the forms of power and the specific types of workplace deviance, such that to the extent that there is monitoring of and sanctions against deviant behavior, the relationships will be weaker.

Conclusion

In this article, we have developed a theory of workplace deviance as a form of resistance to organizational power. We have argued that workplace deviance is often sparked by the systems and episodes of organizational power that lead organizational members to feel frustration, which in turn motivates them to resist, potentially with deviant behaviors. We further argued that different forms of power will prompt specific types of workplace deviance. Forms of power that are systemic (discipline or domination) will tend to incite deviance directed at the organization, whereas episodic power (influence or force) will tend to provoke deviance targeted at individual organizational members. Power that objectifies the employee (force or domination) will tend to encourage relatively severe deviant responses, whereas power that relies on the target's agency (influence or discipline) will tend to incite less severe deviance.

An important implication of this theoretical model for the study of workplace deviance is that it highlights the degree to which deviant behavior can involve any organizational members and stem from routine organizational contexts. Feelings of frustration or outrage by the exertion of power are not uncommon in organizational life, and the reactions to power we address here are not atypical employee behaviors (Collinson, 1992, 1999; Jackall, 1988). By conceptualizing deviance as a form of organizational resistance, we can move the study of deviance away from the notion that there are unique "deviant" organizational members. Furthermore, the forms of power we have discussed here are not necessarily aberrant or abusive: Influence, discipline, domination, and force are all ordinary, legitimate mechanisms of control in contemporary organizational life (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence et al., 2001; Simon, 1988; Townley, 1993). By suggesting that workplace deviance may stem from a reaction to organizational forms of power, we do not want to romanticize deviance and demonize power. We believe that organizational members who enact forms of power typically do so without any intention of abusing or mistreating other organizational members. This, however, makes the link between organizational power and workplace deviance even more important. If power incited deviance only when it was intentionally or obviously unreasonable, then this would be a relatively minor issue and one that could justifiably be ignored in most deviance research. However, because the link between power and deviance is based on the perceptions of individuals who will have widely varying interpretations of the reasonableness of organizational power, we believe it is critical for research on deviance to include these employee perceptions in their studies. Indeed, what might be considered reasonable by organizational members enacting the power may well be considered unreasonable by the members who are its targets.

For those interested in understanding and managing workplace deviance, an important implication is that organizational power and workplace deviance may constitute an interlocking system of actions, interpretations, and reactions in which all organizational members are implicated. For those seeking to curb workplace deviance, our model may be helpful for illuminating the potential roots of deviance, including the episodes and systems of power that

are intended to control deviant behavior. Only by understanding the actual causes of deviance can effective solutions be identified.

We hope that this article will encourage empirical investigation of the relationships we have proposed in our model. An important next step for research on power and deviance in organizations would be to empirically establish the general relationship between power and deviance we have suggested, as well as to test the specific relationships between forms of power and types of workplace deviance. More generally, we believe that these relationships may provide a broad foundation for future empirical research exploring the relationship between these two domains of study. The injection of power as a concept could open up scholarly examinations of workplace deviance such that they become more critical in terms of the role of management in provoking deviant behavior and more practical by providing explanations of deviance that address issues of structure, authority, and control. In return, incorporating issues of workplace deviance into studies of power could lend considerable insight into the relationship between episodes and systems of power and the forms of resistance they can engender.

References

Adams, J. S. 1965. Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology:* 267-299. New York: Academic Press.

Adler, A. 1930. Individual psychology. In C. Murchinson (Ed*.), Psychologies of 1930:* 395-405. Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.

Allen, R. E., & Lucero, M. A. 1996. Beyond resentment: Exploring organizationally targeted insider murder. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 5: 86-103.

Ambrose, M. L., Seabright, Mark, A., & Schminke, M. 2002. Sabotage in the workplace: The role of organizational injustice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 89: 947-965.

Andersson, L., & Pearson, C. 1999. Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24: 452-471.

Averill, J. R. 1982. Anger and agression: An essay on emotion. New York: Springer Verlag.

Baron, R. A., & Neuman, J. H. 1996. Workplace violence and workplace aggression: Evidence on their relative frequency and potential causes. *Aggressive Behavior*, 22: 161-173.

Baum, J. F., & Youngblood, S. A. 1975. Impact of an organizational control policy on absenteeism, performance, and satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60, 688-694.

Berkowitz, L. 1993. *Aggression: Its causes, consequences, and control*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Bies, R. J., Tripp, T. M., & Kramer, R. M. 1997. At the breaking point: A Social cognitive perspective on vengeance and violence in organizations. In J. Greenberg and R. Giacalone (Eds.), Antisocial Behavior in Organizations, pp. 18-36. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bies, R. J., & Tripp, T. M. 1995. Beyond distrust: "Getting even" and the need for revenge. In R. M. Kramer & T. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations:* 246-260. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brehm, J. W. 1966. *A theory of psychological reactance*. New York: Academic Press.

Brehm, S. S., & Brehm, J. W. 1981. *Psychological reactance: A theory of freedom and control*. New York: Academic Press.

Brown, R. K. 1992. *Understanding industrial organizations*. London: Routledge.

Clegg, S. R. 1989. *Frameworks of power*. London: Sage.

Collinson, D. L. 1992. *Managing the shop floor: Subjectivity, masculinity and workplace culture*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Collinson, D. L. 1994. Strategies of resistance: Power, knowledge and subjectivity in the workplace. In J. M. Jermier, D. Knights, & W. Nord (Eds.), *Resistance and power in organizations:* 25-68. London: Routledge.

Collinson, D. L. 1999. "Surviving the rigs": Safety and surveillance on North Sea oil installations. *Organization Studies*, 20: 579-600.

Covaleski, M. A., Dirsmith, M. W., Heian, J. B., & Samuel, S. 1998. The calculated and the avowed: Techniques of discipline and struggles over identity in Big Six public accounting firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43: 293-327.

Dalton, D., & Perry, J. L. 1981. Absenteeism and the collective bargaining agreement: An empirical test. *Academy of Management Journal,* 24, 425-431.

Dunlop, P. D., & Lee, K. 2004. Workplace deviance, organizational citizenship behavior, and business unit performance: The bad apples do spoil the whole barrel. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(1): 67-80.

Eisenhardt, K. 1989. Agency theory: An assessment and review. *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 57-74.

Erez, M., & Earley, P. C. 1993. Culture, self-identity, and work. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Falkenberg, L. E. 1997. Eliminating the barriers to employment equity in the Canadian workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 16: 963-975.

Foucault, M. 1979. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Hardy, C., & Clegg, S. R. 1996. Some dare call it power. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies:* 622-641. London: Sage.

Harper, D. 1990. Spotlight abuse–Save profits. *Industrial Distribution*, 7: 47-51.

Harvey, J. H., Ickes, W., & Kidd, R. F. 1981. *New directions in attribution research* (Vols. 1-3). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hearn, J. 1994. The organization(s) of violence: Men, gender relations, organizations, and violence(s). *Human Relations*, 47: 731-754.

Hirschman, A. 1970. *Exit, voice and loyalty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hollinger, R. C., & Clark, J. P. 1982. Formal and informal social controls of employee deviance. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 23: 333-343.

Hollinger, R. C., & Davis, J. L. 2003. 2002 National retail security survey: Final report. Gainesville, FL: Security Research Project, University of Florida.

Jackall, R. 1988. *Moral mazes: The world of corporate managers.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Jermier, J. M., Knights, D., & Nord, W. 1994. *Resistance and power in organizations*. New York: Routledge.

Johns, G. 1991. Substantive and methodological constraints on behavior and attitudes in organizational research. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 49: 80-104.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. 1978. *The social psychology of organizations.* New York: John Wiley.

Kim, S. H., & Smith, R. H. 1993. Revenge and conflict escalation. *Negotiation Journal,* 9, 37-43.

Knights, D. 1992. Changing spaces: The disruptive impact of a new epistemological location for the study of management. *Academy of Management Review,* 17: 514-536.

Knights, D., & McCabe, D. 1999. "Are there no limits to authority?" TQM and organizational power. *Organization Studies*, 20: 197-224.

KPMG Forensic, 2004. Fraud Survey 2004. KPMG International.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. 1985. *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

Lawrence, T. B., Winn, M., & Jennings, P. D. 2001. The temporal dynamics of institutionalization. *Academy of Management Review*, 26: 624-644.

Maslyn, J. M., Farmer, S. M., & Fedor, D. B. 1996. Failed upward influence attempts: Predicting the nature of subordinate persistence in the pursuit of organizational goals. *Group & Organization Management*, 21: 461-480.

Mintzberg, H. 1983. *Power in and around organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Mobley, W. 1982. Some unanswered questions in turnover and withdrawal research. *Academy of Management Review*, 7: 111-116.

Morrill, C. 1992. Vengeance among executives. *Virginia Review of Sociology*, 1: 51-76.

O'Leary-Kelly, A. M., Griffin, R. W., & Glew, D. J. 1996. Organization-motivated aggression: A research framework. *Academy of Management Review*, 21: 225-253.

Pfeffer, J. 1981**.** *Power in organizations*. Marshfield, MA: Pitman.

Porter, L. W., Allen, R. W., & Angle, H. L. 1981. The politics of upward influence in organizations. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior*, Vol. 3: 109-149. Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Rayner, C., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. 2002. Workplace bullying: What we know, who is to blame and what can we do? London: Taylor & Francis.

Redeker, J. R. 1989. *Employee discipline*. Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs.

Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. 1995. A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multi-dimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38: 555-572.

Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. 1997. Workplace deviance: Its definition, its nature and its causes. In R. J. Lewicki, B. H. Sheppard, & R. J. Bies (Eds.), *Research on negotiation in organization*, Vol. 6: 3-27. Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Robinson, S. L., & Greenberg, J. 1999. Employees behaving badly: Dimensions, determinants and dilemmas in the study of workplace deviance. In D. M. Rousseau & C. Cooper (Eds.), *Trends in organizational behavior*, Vol. 5: 1-23. New York: John Wiley.

Rosse, J. G., & Miller, H. E. 1984. Relationships between absenteeism and other employee behaviors. In P. Godman & R. Atkin (Eds.), *Absenteeism:* 194-228. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rusbult, C., Farrell, D., Rogers, G., & Mainous, A. 1988. Impact of exchange variables on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect: An integrative model of responses to declining job satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal,* 31: 599-627.

Schlenker, B. R. 1980. Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Sewell, G. 1998. The discipline of teams: The control of team-based industrial work through electronic and peer surveillance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43: 397-428.

Shaiken, H. 1984. *Automation and labor in the computer age.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Sheppard, B. H., Lewicki, R. J., & Minton, J. W. 1992. *Organizational justice: The search for fairness in the workplace*. New York: Lexington Books.

Siehl, E. W. 1987. Garment workers: Perceptions of inequity and employee theft. *British Journal of Criminology*, 27: 174-190.

Simon, J. 1988. The ideological effects of actuarial practices. *Law & Society Review*, 22: 771-800.

Skarlicki, D. P., & Folger, R. 1997. Retaliation in the workplace: The roles of distributive, procedural and interactional justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82: 416-425.

Spreitzer, G., & Sonenshein, S. 2004. Toward the construct definition of positive deviance. *Behavioral Scientist*, 47: 822-847.

Tedeschi, J. T., & Felson, R. B. 1994. *Violence, aggression, and coercive actions.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Townley, B. 1993. Foucault, power/knowledge, and its relevance for human resource management. *Academy of Management Review*, 18: 518-545.

Tyler, T. R. 2000. Social justice: Outcome and procedure. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35: 117-125.

U.S. Department of Justic, Bureau of Justic Statistics. 2000. National crime victimization survey. Conducted by U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Wicklund, R. A. 1974. Freedom and reactance. Potomac, MD: Erlbaum.

Warren, D. E. 2003. Constructive and destructive deviance in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 28: 622-632.

Withey, M., & Cooper, W. 1989. Predicting exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34: 521-539.

Yukl, G., & Falbe, C. M. 1990. Influence tactics and objectives in upward, downward, and lateral influence attempts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75: 132-140.

Biographical Notes

Thomas B. Lawrence is the Weyerhaeuser Professor of Change Management and director of the CMA Centre for Strategic Change and Performance Measurement at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. He received his PhD in organizational analysis from the University of Alberta. His research focuses on the dynamics of power, change, and institutions in organizations and organizational fields.

Sandra L. Robinson is a professor and distinguished university scholar in the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia. She received her PhD in organizational behavior from Northwestern University. Her research focuses on the dysfunctional side of individual behavior in organizations, examining topics such as psychological contract breach; trust betrayal; workplace deviance; aggression; and, most recently, territoriality.