Ain’t Misbehavin: Workplace Deviance as Organizational Resistance†

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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

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378