



Emotion and power (as social influence): Their impact on organizational citizenship and counterproductive individual and organizational behavior[☆]

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Emotion
Power
Organizational citizenship behavior
Counterproductive work behavior
Counterproductive organizational behavior
Influence

ABSTRACT

Emotion and power as manifested in forms of social influence have been studied throughout millennia, and have recently enjoyed intense scientific scrutiny. However, their joint effects on important classes of discretionary behaviors in work organizations have not been well elaborated. This paper provides a theoretical framework derived from past research within which these joint effects are described, and offers hypotheses to guide future research. A primary theme is that emotion and social influence, when considered at individual, dyadic and organizational levels, have a reciprocal causal relationship and jointly affect organizational behavior, especially behavior that is largely discretionary, including organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behavior (OCB and CWB), as well as counterproductive organizational behavior (COB).

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The demise of the previously well-respected accounting firm Arthur Andersen as described in graphic detail by [Toffler and Reingold \(2003\)](#) illustrates the potentially cataclysmic impact of counterproductive behaviors. A pattern of ethically questionable or patently illegal behavior at both individual levels and across the entire firm over a significant period of time presumably led to the demise of the firm and to financial devastation amounting to billions of dollars and lost jobs for thousands of employees and investors. The causes of the firm's downfall are complex, but shared emotions and patterns of influence both within the firm and with key institutions in its environment appear to have played an important role. Institutionalized fear and forced adherence to unethical norms are among the factors underscored by the authors. In its early successful period, a climate of shared positive emotions and principled commitment to its clientele seemed to prevail.

This case illustrates several things: First, counterproductive behavior on the part of individuals is a critical element in an organization's success or failure, but perhaps even more significant is a pattern of such behavior that may be permitted or even encouraged by the organization. While research attention has been focused on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) of individuals, much less has been directed toward counterproductive organizational behavior (COB) (for an exception see [Campbell, 2007](#)). Second, emotions and patterns of social influence seem to be implicated in the occurrence of both organizational citizenship and counterproductive behavior. However, the manner in which the emotions and social influence independently and jointly operate to culminate in OCB, CWB and COB has not been definitively articulated. Third, solid theory and data on the independent and joint dynamics of emotions and patterns of social influence will add both to our understanding of OCB, CWB and COB, and to the repertoire of interventions that may be brought to bear in heading off such debacles as befell Arthur Andersen.

This paper elaborates upon the separate and joint impact of emotion and power, as social influence, through the development from past research of a theoretical framework that leads to empirically testable hypotheses. A basic assumption underlying this enterprise is that these two sets of variables are reciprocally and causally related, and so a thorough understanding of the dynamics of what drives behaviors like OCB, CWB or COB cannot be attained without considering both in tandem. Moreover, there has not

[☆] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, August 2004.

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been, to the author's knowledge, a rigorous theoretical statement that has incorporated at once all the critical sets of factors considered here. The paper begins with a brief overview of the key dependent variables of interest—organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and a class of behaviors distinct from CWB, counterproductive organizational behavior (COB). These classes of behavior are considered a fertile ground to explore the joint effects of emotion and social influence, since they are considered more discretionary than core role- and job-prescribed behaviors. As such they may be more susceptible to the impact of emotion and social influence. Nor has there been a great deal of careful theory development dealing with the manner in which emotion and power separately and jointly impact these kinds of behaviors. Following this section propositions and empirically testable hypotheses are offered at multiple levels, organizational, dyadic, and individual, that center on linkages among these dependent variables and the dual impact of their presumptive antecedents, emotion and social influence. The overriding purposes for this paper are twofold: 1. to illuminate the reciprocal, causal relationship between emotion and power; and 2. to develop a multi-level theory that traces their independent and combined effects on a variety of discretionary behaviors that may be classified as organizational citizenship and counterproductive work and organizational behavior. In addressing these purposes the value-added of this paper inheres in the following: 1) the enhancement of understanding of the presumed joint operation of two critical sets of variables that have not generally been considered in tandem as predictors and antecedents of important outcomes; 2) the development of testable hypotheses to clarify further the antecedents of variables that contribute to organizational and individual effectiveness or failure (OCB, CWB and COB), which will hopefully stimulate future research; 3) elaboration of concepts that have not been as comprehensively delineated in past treatments, including counterproductive organizational behavior and classification and listing of influence tactics into “hard” and “soft” categories, and 4) a brief description of measures that may be used to test the hypotheses proffered.

1. Organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behaviors

As stated the outcomes of concern here are OCB, CWB, and COB. That these are important to organizational performance is attested to by such indicators as the cost of white-collar crime, a type of CWB, which has been estimated at \$600 billion in 2001 (Ivancevich, Duening, Gilbert, & Konopaske, 2003). The case of Arthur Andersen described at the outset illustrates the enormity of the impact of COB (Toffler & Reingold, 2003). On the other hand those behaviors labeled OCB are critical both for maintenance of a social system, and for the achievement of the system's objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). The importance of this set of behaviors might be illustrated by the burgeoning amount of research focused on them, where during the period 2000–2005 the number of studies reported in journals rose to over 240 as contrasted with only 10 during the years from 1980–89 (Landy & Conte, 2007).

Organizational citizenship behavior includes a set of behaviors that have been called variously prosocial behaviors, organizational citizenship, helping or contextual performance (e.g., Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Sackett & DeVore (2001, p. 150) attempt to reconcile conflicting views about whether OCBs are in- or extra-role behaviors by defining them as, “...positive behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness, but that do not reflect core job tasks.” The notion of functions or behaviors at the workplace not formally classified as essential in the context of the Americans with Disabilities Act may help to clarify the concept further (cf. Brannick, Brannick, & Levine, 1992), in the sense that they represent actions not considered in the task-based core of a job.

Coleman and Borman (2000) conducted perhaps the most comprehensive study of the dimensionality of OCB. Using multidimensional scaling, factor analysis and cluster analysis, and rationally combining the results, they arrived at a hierarchical structure which categorizes OCB into three categories: Interpersonal (e.g., assisting co-workers with personal matters, keeping others informed), Organizational (e.g., promoting and defending the organization, demonstrating allegiance to the organization), and Job/Task (e.g., persisting with enthusiasm on own job, engaging in self-development to improve one's own effectiveness). Creativity and innovation are considered elements of OCB if prescribed roles do not expressly include these aspects.

CWB is, in the words of Sackett and DeVore (2001, p. 145), “...any intentional behavior on the part of an organizational member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests.” Their definition is inadequate for purposes of this paper in at least three ways. First, CWBs may be committed by individual employees or by groups of employees acting in concert. Second, the view of the social context within which an organization functions needs to be considered. Illegal behavior such as dumping of toxic waste, or in the case of Arthur Andersen the use of improper auditing processes (Toffler & Reingold, 2003), may be viewed as consistent with the legitimate organizational interest of enhancing profitability but is contrary to the interests of the community within which the organization functions. Third, the definition implies that CWB is necessarily judged as such by the entire organization or its duly appointed agents. Individuals who commit such acts may also render such judgments when the acts are not subject to discovery by others, or judgments may be a result of some formal action by an outside entity, for example the judiciary.

Sackett and DeVore (2001) came to a similar conclusion about the dimensionality of CWB, as Coleman and Borman (2000) did about OCB. That is they saw merit in a hierarchical view, where empirically supported categories of harm to the organization vs. harm to individuals is crossed with detractors from job performance (e.g., intentional underproduction, undermining performance of co-workers), vs. non-job performance related acts (e.g., destruction of company property, sexual harassment). White-collar crime and other forms of CWB do not appear among the types presented, but they are recognized here as major categories of criminal or immoral behavior, and cover such behaviors as falsification of financial data, trading inside information for personal gain, infringing on patents, stealing competitors' know-how, money laundering or otherwise hiding assets, and embezzlement.

A major element in Sackett and DeVore's treatment is that the object of harm is either the organization itself or a subset of its members. This eliminates from consideration acts taken by organizational members that are harmful to individuals or social

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