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## Explaining workplace deviance behavior with more than just the “Big Five”

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### ABSTRACT

Investigations of personality as it relates to deviant behaviors in the workplace, such as theft, absenteeism, and mistreatment of co-workers, have largely overlooked theoretically-relevant personality traits not captured by the Big Five. Using univariate and multivariate analyses based on both attenuated and disattenuated correlations, we found that traits such as Integrity, Risk Taking, and Seductiveness, among others, explained substantial variance in workplace deviance. We conclude that research on personality and workplace deviance needs to move beyond the Big Five to include alternative personality variables that can enhance both prediction and the development of theory regarding personality-deviance relations.

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### 1. Introduction

Recently the criterion space for judging worker effectiveness has expanded beyond job performance to include behaviors that are counterproductive (e.g., theft, tardiness, mistreating co-workers; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). This collection of behaviors, often referred to as *workplace deviance*, can be bifurcated into dimensions known as *interpersonal* and *organizational* deviance (ID and OD, respectively; see Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). ID occurs when counterproductive behaviors are directed toward co-workers (e.g., acting rudely, teasing); OD occurs when counterproductive behaviors are directed toward the organization (e.g., theft, absenteeism). Some estimates suggest that 95% of organizations in the United States experience employee theft (Case, 2000), and that all forms of deviance together account for losses of up to 50 billion dollars annually (Coffin, 2003).

Given the huge amounts of resources and productivity lost each year as a result of deviant workplace behaviors, maximizing the prediction of workplace deviance is an important priority for research and practice (Hastings & Finegan, in press). One significant limitation of most research on deviance, however, is that it considers only the “Big Five” framework of personality (e.g., Berry et al., 2007). Although some have contended that the five-factor space encompasses the constellation of human personality attributes (e.g., Saucier & Goldberg, 1998), several personality traits relevant to workplace deviance have been identified as falling largely

outside the Big Five domain. For example, personality variables such as Integrity, Egotism, Risk Taking, and Manipulativeness have been found to be largely independent of the Big Five factors, yet the substance of these traits is well aligned to that of workplace deviance criteria. To the extent that these and other “non-Big Five” traits correlate with workplace deviance, the current meta-analytic evidence on personality and deviance relations will *underestimate* the criterion validity of personality. This could hinder both the advancement of theory that promotes an understanding of why personality relates to deviance and the overall predictive power of personality, thereby reducing the capacity for organizations to identify and manage those who are prone to counterproductivity. Accordingly, in this study we sought to demonstrate that relevant non-Big Five traits can account for important variance in workplace deviance, which, if shown, could lead to theoretical and practical advances. We begin by providing a rationale for the existence of personality traits not captured by the Big Five personality factors.

#### 1.1. Identification of non-Big Five traits

In a comprehensive study with the goal of identifying traits beyond the Big Five, Saucier and Goldberg (1998) reviewed the literature on personality and identified a total of 74 trait clusters that appeared to be reflective of the entire constellation of human personality attributes. Upon consideration of their statistical overlap with the Big Five, Saucier and Goldberg concluded that all but a trait cluster composed of items relating to religiosity terms could be accommodated by the Big Five. In an important reanalysis of

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that study, however Paunonen and Jackson (2000) argued, with empirical evidence, that there were actually nine trait clusters not well represented by the Big Five: religious, devout, reverent; sly, deceptive, manipulative; honest, ethical, moral; sexy, sensual, erotic; thrifty, frugal, miserly; conservative, traditional, down-to-earth; masculine-feminine; egotistical, conceited, snobbish; and humorous, witty, amusing. To those nine trait clusters they added the dimension of risk taking/thrill-seeking, as it has historically been difficult to place in the Big Five-factor space. Paunonen (2002) subsequently developed a measure of those 10 personality traits, which he referred to as the *Supernumerary Personality Inventory* (SPI; see Table 1). Considerable evidence supports the claim

that the SPI traits fall largely beyond the Big Five (e.g., Lee, Ogunfowora, & Ashton, 2005; Paunonen, Haddock, Forsterling, & Keinonen, 2003).

## 1.2. Background research and the current study

Berry et al. (2007) meta-analysis reported corrected correlations involving the relation between deviance and the Big Five as follows: Agreeableness (–.44), Conscientiousness (–.35), Emotional Stability (–.26), Openness to Experience (–.08) and Extraversion (–.03). As noted above, however, there is evidence for the existence of personality variables not encapsulated by the Big

**Table 1**

Descriptives and reliabilities for study variables, mean expert ratings of expected trait-criterion linkages, and univariate personality-variable validities.

Trait	M	SD	$\alpha$	Interpersonal deviance		Organizational deviance		Overall deviance	
				Expert rating	r	Expert rating	r	Expert rating	r
<i>Conventionality</i>									
Wants to preserve existing traditions and institutions; is opposed to radical change or innovation	3.40	.35	.59	.40	.04 (.06)	–.80	–.04 (–.06)	–.80	–.01 (–.01)
<i>Egotism</i>									
Has an exaggerated sense of self-importance; feels superior to others and may be contemptuous of them	3.47	.45	.83	2.00	.10 (.12)	1.60	–.05 (–.06)	1.20	.01 (.01)
<i>Femininity</i>									
Is considered feminine for his or her own sex; displays behaviors and emotions that might be considered effeminate	3.27	.50	.73	–.60	–.11 (–.14)	–.40	–.03 (–.04)	–.60	–.07 (–.09)
<i>Humorousness</i>									
Has the ability to arouse amusement and laughter in other people; is also quick to see the humor in situations	3.25	.57	.85	–.80	.17 (.20)	0	.20 (.23)	–.10	.21 (.24)
<i>Integrity</i>									
Shuns behaviors involving stealing, cheating, or deceiving; believes that such behaviors are never acceptable	3.47	.56	.82	–1.6	–.33 (–.40)	–2.00	–.50 (–.59)	–2.00	–.48 (–.56)
<i>Manipulativeness</i>									
Tries to use others to help achieve his or her goals; may use diplomacy, flattery, ingratiation, or even deceptions	3.07	.46	.77	1.8	.25 (.31)	1.40	.17 (.21)	1.40	.23 (.27)
<i>Religiosity</i>									
Is devoted to some ultimate reality or deity, a higher power that is believed to control one's destiny; is spiritual	2.77	.86	.94	–1.2	–.08 (–.09)	–1.20	–.23 (–.25)	–.50	–.19 (–.21)
<i>Risk Taking</i>									
Seeks out and is stimulated by situations involving risk of bodily harm; is positively aroused by danger	3.00	.57	.76	.80	.30 (.38)	1.40	.29 (.35)	1.80	.33 (.40)
<i>Seductiveness</i>									
Engages in behaviors intended to attract the romantic or sexual interests of others; can be charming and flirtatious	3.15	.55	.81	1.00	.36 (.44)	.20	.22 (.26)	.30	.31 (.36)
<i>Thriftness</i>									
Does not waste resources on self-gratification; is economical and not given to extravagances	3.06	.54	.78	0	–.09 (–.11)	–1.0	–.10 (–.12)	–.60	–.10 (–.12)
<i>Agreeableness</i>									
Tends to be sympathetic, kind, appreciative, trusting, soft-hearted, warm, and sensitive	3.73	.59	.84	–2.00	–.27 (–.32)	–1.80	–.24 (–.28)	–1.70	–.28 (–.32)
<i>Conscientiousness</i>									
Is organized, thoughtful, planful, efficient, responsible, and dependable	3.52	.61	.83	–1.20	–.14 (–.17)	–1.60	–.42 (–.49)	–1.40	–.42 (–.48)
<i>Extraversion</i>									
Tends to be talkative, assertive, energetic, outgoing, outspoken, and sociable	3.48	.74	.90	–1.00	–.14 (–.16)	0	–.05 (–.06)	–.11	–.05 (–.06)
<i>Neuroticism</i>									
Tends to be tense, anxious, nervous, moody, worrying, fearful, emotional, and unstable	2.53	.66	.83	1.20	.06 (.07)	.80	.14 (.16)	1.10	.12 (.14)
<i>Openness</i>									
Tends to have wide interests, and be imaginative, intelligent, original, insightful, and curious	3.45	.59	.74	0	–.06 (–.08)	0	–.07 (–.09)	0	–.07 (–.09)
Interpersonal deviance	2.31	1.21	.84						
Organizational deviance	2.37	1.06	.88						
Overall deviance	2.34	1.02	.91						

Note.  $n = 149$ . Correlations in parentheses are corrected for unreliability. The top five judge-selected SPI traits for each deviance criterion are boldfaced. Uncorrected correlations above .16 are significant at  $p < .05$ .

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