

# Measuring and Predicting Counterproductive Work Behavior

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## Defining Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

- Any intentional behavior on the part of an organizational member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests

## Examples of CWB

Theft

Destruction of property

Misuse of information

Misuse time and resources

Unsafe behavior

Poor attendance

Intentional poor quality work

Alcohol and drug use

Inappropriate verbal actions

Inappropriate physical actions

## CWB: Independent behaviors or clusters of related behaviors?

- Long history of treating as separate
- Recent research shows all are substantially correlated: a person who engages in one is more likely to engage in others
- CWB's form two clusters: behaviors aimed at the organization and behaviors aimed at other people

## Role of CWB's in Job Performance

- Overall job performance = Task performance + Citizenship – CWB
- Some argue Citizenship and CWB are opposite poles of the same dimension
- Recent research shows they are distinct
- Recent research shows CWB's are important determinants of overall performance ratings by supervisors

## Extent of the problem: Prevalence of CWB?

- Limited information:
  - Some readily observed (absence)
  - Many hard to detect (theft)
- Inability to readily observe makes research on CWB very difficult
- Question: “what % of employees steal?”
  - Need to specify amount and frequency
  - Answer may reflect your view of the world

## Time for a little quiz

- R100 from friend's wallet in locker room
- R100 from cash drawer
- R100 from Automatic Teller Machine
- R100 extra change from salesclerk
- R100 in wallet on street

- “Conscience is the inner voice that warns us that somebody may be watching”  
(H.L. Mencken)
- Illustrates the tension between a “person” perspective and a “situation” perspective

## The Big Question: Person or Situation?

- Dominance of the situation perspective in psychology since Hartshorne and May studies in 1928
- 16 independent opportunities for children to lie, cheat, or steal
  - 3% always dishonest; 7% always honest
  - On average: dishonest 50% of time
- Conclusion: no such thing as a trait called honesty: honesty is situationally determined

## The Big Question: Person or Situation?

- But: reanalysis shows average correlation of .19 among the 16 measures
- The key insight: there's lots of random error in any one behavior (analogous to a test item). We need to aggregate.
- Question: what's the correlation between # dishonest among first 8 and # dishonest among the last 8?
- Answer: .65

## Trait explanations and situation explanations are compatible

- Situational features can affect the % of individuals engaging in CWB
- But within any one situation, individual differences (traits) influence who does and who does not engage in CWB.

# Both Traits and Situational Factors are Important

- Situational factors
  - Honesty climate
  - Justice
  - Monitoring
  - Sanctions
- Personal factors
  - Integrity testing

## Overt Integrity Tests

- Beliefs about the frequency and extent of theft
  - Punitiveness Toward Theft
  - Ruminations About Theft
  - Perceived Ease of Theft
  - Rationalizations about Theft
  - Assessments of One's Own Honesty
  - Admissions
- London House PSI, Reid Report, Stanton Survey

# Personality-Oriented Integrity Tests

## Personnel Reaction Blank

- Construct Label: "Wayward Impulse"
- Dependability, Conscientiousness, Social Conformity

## PDI Employment Inventory

- Construct Label: "Employee Deviance"
- Trouble with Authority, Thrill-Seeking, Hostility, Unhappy Home Life, Lack of Work Motivation

## Hogan Personality Inventory: Reliability Scale

- Construct Label: "Organizational Delinquency"
- No Hostility, Impulse Control, Good Attachment

## Are Integrity Tests Valid Predictors?

- Large body of research now shows strong and consistent evidence of validity
- Both types of tests predict equally well on average
- While originally aimed at theft, they predict a wide array of CWB's
- A big surprise: they predict overall job performance
- Why: they reflect 3 of the Big 5: conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability

## Other Key Research Findings

- Minimal subgroup differences (race, gender)
- No correlation with cognitive ability
- Valid for high and low complexity jobs
- They are fakeable

## Should you use integrity tests?

- The opportunity to be selective is a scarce resource: choose carefully
- Example: Supermarket cashiers; two applicants for each opening
  - Focus on speed and accuracy?
  - Focus on customer service?
  - Focus on CWB?

## Prospects for Assessment Centres as Predictors of CWB

- Learn from Hartshorne and May: single behaviors are very unreliable
- So a single exercise with an opportunity for CWB is not a good idea
- Would need to aggregate across many behaviors.

## Concerns of critics

- Studies using detected theft as the outcome measure produce very low validities
- People will be misclassified
- People will be stigmatized by mislabelling
- Tests are invasive

## Concluding Quiz

- Rate yourself: above average, average, or below average:
  - Intelligence
  - Patience
  - Mechanical Ability
  - Loyalty
  - Artistic Ability
  - Honesty