

CAREER JOBS, SURVIVAL JOBS, AND EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE: A Social Investment Model of Workplace Misconduct

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We examine the relationship between career stakes, or the fit between workers' current jobs and their long-term career plans, and employee deviance. Most prior research has focused on the link between job satisfaction and deviance, but career stakes may be a more salient and theoretically relevant measure of workers' investments in their present positions, particularly in young adulthood. We hypothesize that people whose current jobs match their long-term career goals have made a social investment with their employers that inhibits deviant behavior. We analyze data from the Youth Development Study (YDS), a longitudinal community sample of individuals now in their mid-twenties. Our results show that career stakes and job satisfaction exert independent effects on worker misconduct even when prior levels of general deviance and workplace deviance are statistically controlled.

Finding a career and establishing oneself in the workforce is a defining part of the transition to adulthood. Entry into a "career job" may be a turning point (Elder 1985; Sampson and Laub 1993) that alters long-term trajectories of deviant behavior. In contrast, work in more marginal "survival" jobs may have weaker effects on crime and deviance (Allan and Steffensmeier 1989; Crutchfield 1989; Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997; Uggen 1999). This article examines the relationship between career stakes in the current job and employee deviance among a representative community sample of young adults. We conceptualize career stakes as an indicator of social investment that reduces deviance by increasing informal social control and strengthening workers' holdings in their jobs.

Organizations also maintain a stake or investment in their workers, providing varying degrees of training, benefits, and job security. As employers rely more heavily on non-

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The Sociological Quarterly, Volume 41, Number 2, pages 245–263.

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ISSN: 0038-0253

unionized (Western 1995), part-time (Pitts 1998), and temporary (Parker 1994) workers and adopt new management approaches likely to affect worker commitment (Hodson 1996), changes in rates of employee misconduct may result. The study of career stakes and their relation to workplace deviance is thus timely, in light of recent economic transformations. Increasingly, researchers concerned with business ethics (Greenberg 1997; Murphy 1993; Trevino and Youngblood 1990) and organizational theory (Edelman and Suchman 1997; Powell 1996) have turned their attention to deviance and law in the workplace.

Studying workplace misconduct may also contribute knowledge about adult offending in the general population. Relative to the wealth of nationally representative data on self-reported juvenile delinquency, comparatively little is known about the "secret deviance" (Becker 1963, p. 20) of adults who have evaded formal criminal justice sanctioning. Most studies of adult crime and deviance have relied on official statistics (e.g., Ekland-Olson and Kelly 1993) or officially defined offender groups (e.g., Shover 1996; Tracy and Kempf-Leonard 1996). Yet criminologists have long understood that many forms of law violation are nearly ubiquitous in the general population (Wallerstein and Wyle 1947).

The workplace is an especially important setting for the study of adult crime and deviance. Employee misconduct is probably responsible for business failures and higher consumer costs, affecting all industries from fast-food chains (Hollinger, Slora, and Terris 1992) to general hospitals (Hollinger 1986). Some studies estimate that over two-thirds of workers are involved in some form of employee theft (Comer 1985; Green 1997; Henry 1981; Horning 1970; Murphy 1993; Slora 1989; Zeitlin 1971) or "production deviance," such as unnecessary use of sick leave or working under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Hollinger and Clark 1983b; Mangione and Quinn 1975). Yet employee deviance remains an "invisible social problem" (Harris and Benson 1998), in part because it is rarely detected and often not sanctioned when it is discovered (Lipman and McGraw 1988; Parilla, Hollinger, and Clark 1988; Robin 1970). For criminologists, the high incidence of employee misconduct among the general population is both striking and worthy of greater research attention (Slora 1989). For organizational researchers, employee misconduct represents a problem of worker productivity and organizational control. This investigation links theories of crime with the sociology of work and organizations by positing a social investment model of workplace deviance based on career stakes or commitment.

WORKPLACE DEVIANCE

Prior research has identified several personal characteristics and job conditions that are correlated with employee deviance (see Robinson and Greenberg 1998 for a recent review of this research). For example, males generally report committing significantly more acts of employee theft and other deviance than females (Mangione and Quinn 1975; Ruggiero, Greenberger, and Steinberg 1982). In fact, some studies have found that men commit almost twice as much deviance at work as women (Harris and Benson 1998; Hollinger and Clark 1983a).

Age is also correlated with employee misconduct, with younger workers more likely than older workers to engage in workplace deviance (Mangione and Quinn 1975; Robin 1969). Richard C. Hollinger (1986) found age to be the most significant predictor of involvement in general employee deviance. Studies of particular industries and occupations have also revealed strong age effects. For example, younger employees reported greater involvement in theft from nursing homes than older employees (Harris and Benson

1998). Workers under the age of twenty-one with little job tenure were also more likely to steal than older, more experienced employees in a study of fast-food workers (Hollinger et al. 1992).

Greater employee deviance among young people may be due to their disproportionate representation in marginal work (Greenberg and Barling 1996) or "survival" jobs. At the aggregate level, Emilie Anderson Allan and Darrell J. Steffensmeier (1989) showed that the quality and availability of employment affect rates of arrest among young adults. Interpreting similar results in an individual-level study of employee theft, James Tucker (1989) argued that people working in short-term positions are more likely to steal because they have little time to develop a relationship with the employer. This view is consistent with research showing that age and job tenure affect job satisfaction and other subjective appraisals of the quality of employment (Quinn and Staines 1979).

Job satisfaction is the most frequently identified link connecting job conditions and workplace misconduct (Hawkins 1984; Hollinger 1986; Hollinger and Clark 1982a; 1983a; Mangione and Quinn 1975; Murphy 1993; Sieh 1987). Richard C. Hollinger and John Clark (1982a) reported that a general measure of job satisfaction, as well as a multidimensional construct, is a strong predictor of employee deviance. Likewise, another study found that nonthieves were twice as likely as thieves to report that they were "very satisfied" with their jobs (Harris and Benson 1998). In surveys asking why some employees never steal, both managers and their subordinates attributed differences in employee theft to differences in job satisfaction (Terris and Jones 1982).

Just as job satisfaction may reduce workplace deviance, dissatisfaction may exacerbate it. A classic theoretical statement by Theodore D. Kemper (1966) argues that employees dissatisfied with workload increases and organizational failure to recognize merit may retaliate through "reciprocal deviance" at work. Consistent with Kemper, a number of studies have shown that perceived inequity (and the neutralization of guilt that follows) leads to greater deviance among workers (Greenberg 1990; Hollinger 1991) and students (Greenberg 1993; see also Trevino and Youngblood 1990). Worker dissatisfaction and perceptions of distributive injustice (Greenberg and Scott 1996) may directly motivate employee deviance or disrupt the group norms and informal social controls that regulate it (Hollinger and Clark 1982b; Horning 1970; Mars 1974; 1982; Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly 1998). Both satisfaction and dissatisfaction are therefore likely to affect employee misconduct.

Apart from job satisfaction, however, the career commitment of employees is likely to have an independent effect on workplace deviance. Although workers' career stakes in their current jobs have yet to be operationalized in extant research, numerous studies suggest that they may be a critical determinant of workplace misconduct. Most existing research has focused on organizational commitment, that is, loyalty to and identification with the employing organization (Hollinger and Clark 1983b; Murphy 1993). For example, an investigation of retail stores, hospitals, and manufacturing firms characterized involvement in property deviance as a "function of the strength of the employee's future commitment to continuing employment in one's present work organization" (Hollinger 1986, p. 70). Another study reported, "a decline in company loyalty and long-term commitment can be expected to lead to an increase in employee theft" (Lipman and McGraw 1988, p. 52).

Although past research suggests that career stakes are linked to employee deviance, no investigation thus far has directly measured the fit between respondents' current jobs and

their ultimate career goals. Richard C. Hollinger, Karen B. Slora, and William Terris (1992, p. 178), for example, attributed high levels of employee deviance in the fast-food industry to employees not viewing their jobs as careers, but their study used proxy measures of career stakes, such as age and tenure. The questionnaire items used by Robert P. Crutchfield and Susan R. Pitchford (1997), Hollinger (1986), and Hollinger and Clark (1982a) all asked some variant of employees' intention to quit their present job. Since people may be seeking new employment for reasons independent of career stakes (e.g. for better pay or because they have disagreements with coworkers), a more refined indicator is needed to distinguish career stakes from job satisfaction and the expected duration of employment.

CAREER JOBS AND SURVIVAL JOBS IN A SOCIAL INVESTMENT MODEL OF EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE

We define career stakes as the degree of commitment to one's current job as a long-term employment trajectory. When employees envision careers in their present jobs, the employment relation is likely characterized by "personal commitment" in addition to the "structural commitment" binding workers to jobs (Johnson 1991; Ulmer 1994). Career commitment evolves in a "dialectical process by which social organizational factors produce stakes in continuing lines of action in the future, and in which actors experience these stakes in decision-making processes" (Ulmer 1994, p. 138; see also Becker 1960; Murphy 1993). Social investment in the form of career stakes may be especially important for young adults as they make the transition to adulthood and join the full-time workforce. Specifically, we hypothesize that the fit between current jobs and long-term career goals affects the likelihood of deviant and conforming actions on the job.

A conception of career stakes as a social investment is consistent with both informal social control and rational choice theories of crime. According to informal control theories (Sampson and Laub 1990; 1993), individuals' investments or "stakes in conformity" (Toby 1957) induce compliance with societal norms. In particular, Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub (1993) note that job stability (a combined measure of employment status, tenure, and work habits) and commitment to occupational goals (based on occupational, educational, and economic aspirations) decrease criminal offending in young adulthood. Therefore, a direct measure of career stakes in the current job is suggested by the literature on crime and deviance more generally, as well as by research on workplace deviance. Criminologists report that work-based stakes in conformity directly influence deterrence from spouse abuse (Sherman and Smith 1992), desistance from crime (Sampson and Laub 1993; Shover 1996), and exits from homelessness (Hagan and McCarthy 1997). To the extent that individuals' current jobs are congruent with their long-term career goals, they are motivated to avoid deviance generally and to conform to workplace rules in particular.

Career stakes in the current job can thus be conceptualized within a more general economic or choice perspective. The more valuable the job to the worker, the less likely the worker is to jeopardize it by engaging in workplace misconduct. In the language of game theory, those with career stakes in their current job are "repeat players" (Montgomery 1998), accumulating firm-specific human capital they would not wish to risk. Conversely, Crutchfield (1989) and Crutchfield and Pitchford (1997) argue that low-quality jobs in the secondary sector of the economy provide little incentive to avoid crime. In fact, they report that secondary sector workers are more likely to engage in crime, but sector effects are mediated by the expected duration of employment.

According to Crutchfield's labor stratification argument, when jobs have an established career line, an "implicit contract" (Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997, p. 94; England and Farakas 1986) motivates both employers and employees to continue their relationship so as to realize profits from their common investment in firm-specific training. This view suggests that a comprehensive social investment model would consider the actions and intentions of employing organizations as well as individual workers. To the extent that firms invest in workers by providing continuing training and high wage and benefit levels, they create the type of "career jobs" likely to increase the individual career stakes held by their workers. In contrast to our measures of individual career stakes, our organization data are too limited to provide a critical test of employer effects, although the analysis to follow will present some evidence bearing on these arguments.

Career stakes are associated with social-structural processes (such as labor market segmentation), social-psychological characteristics (such as the worker's affective state), objective job characteristics (such as wage and benefit levels), and other subjective job appraisals (such as employee satisfaction). Our analytic strategy is designed to disentangle these effects and to adjust estimates of career stakes in the current job for prior deviant behavior. Because workers invested in their current jobs may possess higher levels of unmeasured traits, such as self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) or cognitive moral development (Trevino and Youngblood 1990) that drive both career stakes and employee deviance, we adjust the effects of job appraisals for prior levels of employee deviance and general deviance.

DATA, MEASURES, AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data

We analyze data from the Youth Development Study (YDS), an ongoing prospective longitudinal survey that began in 1988. One thousand adolescents in St. Paul, Minnesota, public schools completed annual self-administered questionnaires in grades nine through twelve. In subsequent years, YDS staff mailed questionnaires to the respondents. The sample is representative of the general population of students in St. Paul public schools in terms of race, family composition, median household income, education, and occupational level (Finch, Shanahan, Mortimer, and Ryu 1991). Respondents provided information on career stakes and employee deviance, as well as retrospective deviance data, during the tenth wave of the study in 1998. About 70 percent of the original survey participants answered employee deviance items at wave ten (when most respondents were 24–25 years old), a response rate that compares favorably with the most comprehensive self-report surveys of occupational deviance (Green 1997; Hollinger and Clark 1983b).

Measures

Employee Deviance

We constructed and validated a nine-item employee deviance index using factor and item analyses. The behaviors comprising our index are listed in Table 1. Participants reported the frequency of engaging in each behavior during the past year using response categories of 0, 1, 2, 3–4, and 5 or more times. We summed the frequencies to create an index ranging from 0–25, with a standardized Cronbach's alpha of .63. The most prevalent activities

TABLE 1. PREVALENCE, INCIDENCE, AND FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE IN PAST YEAR (N = 764)

	Percentage Reporting Act	Mean Incidence	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
Got to work late without a good reason	51.0	1.38	1.57	.467
Called in sick when not sick	47.9	.98	1.23	.464
Gave away goods or services	32.7	.95	1.50	.389
Claimed to have worked more hours than really did	9.7	.22	.75	.358
Took things from employer or coworker	9.1	.20	.70	.640
Been drunk or high at work	7.2	.20	.79	.620
Lied to get or keep job	5.8	.10	.45	.483
Misused or took money	2.5	.05	.38	.478
Purposely damaged property	2.1	.04	.34	.559

were "production deviance" (Hollinger and Clark 1983b) such as tardiness (51 percent), calling in sick when not sick (48 percent), and giving away goods and services (33 percent).

Our measure of workplace deviance is thus more inclusive than indicators used in studies of white-collar crime (see Robin 1974) but consistent with research on occupational deviance more generally (Green 1997; Hollinger and Clark 1983a; Ruggiero et al. 1982). One factor accounted for about 25 percent of the explained variance, suggesting substantial measurement error in the summative index. Nevertheless, these levels are comparable to those found in studies of delinquency and other deviant behavior. In their factor analysis of various problem behaviors, John F. Donovan and Richard Jessor (1985), for example, reported explained variances ranging from 23–48 percent, depending on the gender and age of the sample. To the extent that our estimates are affected by measurement error, however, they would likely be *understated*, resulting in more conservative tests of hypotheses.

Because previous research and our factor analysis indicated that employee deviance may be multidimensional (a second factor explained 14 percent of the variance for a total of almost 40 percent explained variance between the two factors), we also tested alternate specifications of our dependent variable. We created an occupational crime index that excluded less serious behaviors and an index that included only three theft items to examine the robustness of the findings across different domains of employee deviance. Although serious theft, substance use, fraud, and embezzlement were less prevalent behaviors, they were closely correlated with other forms of employee deviance in our factor analysis. We present results for the overall aggregate index because our social investment model predicts that career stakes should affect workplace deviance generally, rather than affecting only workplace theft, production deviance, or some other construct.

Career Stakes in the Current Job

We expect low levels of employee deviance when respondents' current jobs match their long-term career goals or are linked to their career goals. The YDS survey asked each respondent, "How is your present job related to your long-term career goals?" Table 2

indicates the response categories: it will probably continue as a long-term career (coded 2); it provides skills or knowledge that will prepare me for my future work (coded 1); and it is not linked to my long-term career objectives (coded 0).¹ Although there were only three valid response categories, we treat career stakes as a continuous variable (with mean equal to 1.04 and skewness equal to .06). We thus assume that the intermediate category, "providing skills and knowledge," reflects a partial career stake, although we also report results from models that relax this assumption and treat the three categories as discrete.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Variable	Description	Coding	Mean	Standard Deviation
Subjective work attitudes				
Career stakes	How is your present job related to your long-term career goals?	0–2	1.04	.78
Job satisfaction	All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job as a whole?	1–6	4.45	1.03
Objective work conditions				
Income	All money earned through paid employment during past two weeks	Hundreds of dollars	\$8.85	\$6.22
Authority	Do you supervise other workers on your job?	0 = No, 1 = Yes	29%	
Primary sector	Primary versus secondary or service industrial sector	0 = No, 1 = Yes	72%	
Continuing training	Is there any continuing training or instruction on your current job?	0 = No, 1 = Yes	73%	
Turnover	Did respondent report multiple jobs?	0 = No, 1 = Yes	56%	
Insurance benefits	Do you have health insurance through your employer?	0 = No, 1 = Yes	58%	
Prior deviance ^a				
General index	During high school did you . . . ?	0–10	2.65	2.31
Employee deviance	During high school did you . . . ?	0–9	2.14	1.79
Human capital				
Education	Highest level of education completed	1 = Elementary 8 = Professional degree or Ph.D.	4.07	1.64
Ascribed characteristics				
Male	Self-reported sex of respondent	0 = Female 1 = Male	48%	
Nonwhite	Self-reported race of respondent	0 = White 1 = Nonwhite	33%	

^a Prior deviance refers to retrospective reports of general and employee deviance during the high school years (1988–1991).

Job Satisfaction

We also assess the effects of job satisfaction because of its importance in prior studies of employee deviance (Harris and Benson 1998; Hawkins 1984; Hollinger 1986; Hollinger and Clark 1982a; 1983a; Sieh 1987). The six response categories ranged from 1, extremely dissatisfied, to 6, extremely satisfied, in answer to the question, "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job as a whole?" Table 2 shows that the mean satisfaction score is about 4.5, which represents a response midway between somewhat and very satisfied. We expect job satisfaction to be negatively associated with employee deviance and positively associated with career stakes in the current job. Nevertheless, the two subjective job appraisals capture different dimensions of the employment relation, and we therefore expect them to exert independent effects on employee deviance.

Objective Work Conditions

Our income measure is based on respondents' self-reported earnings (before taxes and including tips) during the two weeks before survey completion (in hundreds of dollars). Prior research has shown that low wages are associated with workplace theft (e.g., Mars 1973; Ruggiero et al. 1982). We therefore anticipated that higher income would exert a negative effect on employee deviance, since higher values suggest more desirable jobs. Authority on the job indicates workplace power as well as the opportunity to commit deviance. As Susan P. Shapiro (1990, p. 358) notes, organizational position is "related to the distribution of positions of trust, which in turn, provide opportunities for abuse." The authority measure indicates whether the respondent supervises other workers, coded 1 for yes and 0 for no. Approximately 29 percent of respondents were employed in an authority position.

Labor Market Sector

We follow Crutchfield (1989) and Crutchfield and Pitchford (1997) in distinguishing between primary and secondary labor market segments.² We use Crutchfield's (1989) occupational classification scheme but distinguish among manufacturing industry workers following E. M. Beck, Patrick M. Horan, and Charles M. Tolbert (1978) and Arthur Sakamoto and Meichu D. Chen (1991). In the primary sector we include workers in professional, technical, managerial, sales, administrative support, precision production, skilled crafts, transportation, and primary manufacturing (such as metal, machinery, and professional equipment), as well as self-employed business owners with employees. The secondary sector is composed of those working in retail trade and services, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, helpers and laborers, equipment cleaners, secondary manufacturing (such as lumber, food, and clothing), and self-employed persons with no employees.

Employer-provided Training and Benefits

The social investment that workers make in the employment relation is reflected in subjective job dimensions, such as career stakes. Employers also provide more tangible perquisites that may instill career commitment in workers. We measure both the presence of

employer-provided continuing training and employer-provided health insurance benefits. Because job stability is likely to influence career commitment and workplace deviance, we also include an indicator of job turnover in the prior year in our full multivariate model. High training and benefit levels and low turnover are thought to increase organizational commitment (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990). Although our primary concern is with employees' career commitment rather than employer characteristics, we include these indicators in our multivariate analysis to isolate the individual effects of worker career stakes from contextual organization and industry effects.

High School General Deviance

Our index of general deviance during high school ranges from 0–10 with a mean of 2.7 and a standardized Cronbach's alpha of .76. This index represents eleven dichotomous (yes/no) responses indicating whether the respondent had engaged in the following behaviors during high school: (1) driven twenty miles or more over the speed limit, (2) driven a car or motor vehicle after having too much to drink, (3) made prank phone calls, (4) vandalized property that did not belong to them, (5) stolen something worth less than fifty dollars, (6) stolen something worth more than fifty dollars, (7) sold or gave alcohol to youth under the age of twenty-one, (8) used or tried to use someone else's checks or credit cards without permission, (9) been in a physical fight or fist fight, (10) broken into a home, store, building, or vehicle to steal something, and (11) taken money or valuables from someone by force. We did not attempt to gauge incidence or frequency of offending for the high school period, in light of the greater reliability and validity of "ever" variety questions for this earlier period (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981).

High School Employee Deviance

The YDS data also contain information about workplace deviance during high school. The questions were identical to those comprising the dependent variable but with dichotomous (yes/no) response choices to facilitate recall (Hindelang et al. 1981). We thus constructed an index for high school employee deviance using a count of the same nine behaviors. Scores on this index ranged from 0–9 with a mean of 2.1 and a standardized Cronbach's alpha of .72. When the past year's employee deviance was placed on a common metric with the high school index, high school scores were significantly higher (2.1 versus 1.7 acts on average) than an identical summative index for the past year.

Human Capital and Ascribed Characteristics

The effect of career stakes may be spurious due to the greater human capital of workers who hold career stakes in their current jobs. We measure human capital by the highest level of education completed, an ordered variable ranging from elementary or junior high school (coded 1) to professional degree or Ph.D. (coded 8). The mean of 4.1 is approximately equal to having completed an associate degree. We also include sex and race in our multivariate models, as these ascribed characteristics may be associated with both work conditions and employee deviance. As indicated in Table 2, approximately half of the respondents are male and a third are nonwhite.³

Analytic Strategy

We first estimate separate bivariate regressions for the effects of career stakes and job satisfaction on employee deviance and then compare these effects with estimates from a multiple regression equation containing both career stakes and job satisfaction. Next, we add human capital, ascribed characteristics, and objective work conditions to the model with both career stakes and job satisfaction. We then estimate the effects of all the above factors and the two measures of prior deviance. By statistically controlling for lagged levels of employee deviance, this model is a variant of static score regression (Finkel 1995).⁴ This analytic strategy provides a strong test of the social investment hypothesis because it removes the effects of stable differences across individuals in propensity to commit employee deviance. We also include a measure of prior general deviance, since the meaning of work is likely to change between high school and the mid-twenties and prior occupational deviance may not adequately control for preexisting deviant propensities.

RESULTS

The bivariate correlation between career stakes in the current job and job satisfaction is .46 (not shown), and both are strong predictors of employee deviance. To assess the independent effects of these variables, we first regress employee deviance on career stakes and job satisfaction separately in models 1 and 2 of Table 3, respectively. In model 1 of Table 3, the coefficient of $-.925$ implies that respondents reporting the strongest career stake (2) had about $2 \times (-.925)$ or 1.85 fewer acts of employee deviance in the past year than those lacking a career stake in their current job (0). The job satisfaction effect in model 2 suggests that those reporting the highest level of satisfaction (6) have about $5 \times (-.779)$ the unstandardized regression coefficient for job satisfaction, or approximately 3.9 fewer acts of employee deviance than those reporting the lowest level of satisfaction (1).

Model 3 in Table 3 shows that job satisfaction and career stakes have independent effects, but these effects are somewhat reduced when both are included in the same equation. Moreover, each standard error rose by about 11 percent over the bivariate models due to the intercorrelation of satisfaction and career stakes. Nevertheless, both explanatory variables remain statistically significant at the .01 level.

In model 4, objective work conditions, human capital and ascribed characteristics are added to determine whether the effect of career stakes is spurious due to preexisting differences in jobs or workers. The level of career stakes in the current job remains a significant predictor but is slightly reduced in magnitude when controlling for these variables. Predictably, males report significantly more acts of employee deviance than females. Race, education, and income are not significant predictors of employee deviance net of the other independent variables. Somewhat surprisingly, supervisors with authority at work report more workplace deviance net of the other independent variables, a relationship that also holds in the bivariate case. Although unexpected, this finding is consistent with power-control theory (Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson 1985; Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis 1987, p. 798), which suggests that those with workplace authority have more freedom to deviate and are less subject to social control. Alternatively, this finding may simply reflect supervisors' greater opportunity to commit certain acts (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, p. 192; Shapiro 1990).

**TABLE 3. PREDICTORS OF EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE AT AGES 24–25
(UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS)**

	1	2	3	4	5
Subjective work attitudes					
Career stakes (0–2)	–.925** (.196)		–.661** (.219)	–.603** (.234)	–.532* (.214)
Job satisfaction (1–6)		–.779** (.149)	–.552** (.166)	–.592** (.168)	–.518** (.154)
Objective work conditions					
Income (hundreds of dollars)				.0007 (.030)	–.013 (.027)
Authority (supervisor = 1)				1.07** (.342)	.994** (.314)
Primary sector (primary = 1)				–.417 (.370)	–.292 (.340)
Continuing training (training = 1)				.335 (.363)	.028 (.335)
Turnover (turnover = 1)				.272 (.318)	.144 (.292)
Insurance benefits (benefits = 1)				–.097 (.350)	.107 (.321)
Prior deviance					
General Index (0–10)					.301** (.078)
Employee deviance index (0–9)					.629** (.099)
Human capital					
Education (1–8)				–.058 (.097)	.019 (.089)
Ascribed characteristics					
Male (vs. female)				1.18** (.316)	.505 (.300)
Nonwhite (vs. white)				.217 (.387)	.516 (.356)
Intercept	5.16 (.254)	7.64 (.679)	7.31 (.684)	6.84 (.895)	4.38 (.850)
Number of cases	678	663	663	642	639
R ²	.032	.040	.053	.098	.245

Standard errors are in parentheses. * $p > .05$, ** $p > .01$ (two tailed tests).

Why does a subjective measure of career stakes behave so differently from what might arguably be considered an objective measure of the same concept? One explanation is that authority in the absence of career stakes creates opportunities for deviance without the commitment that would inhibit it. We therefore tested for an interaction between career stakes and authority position. Although the product term was only marginally significant

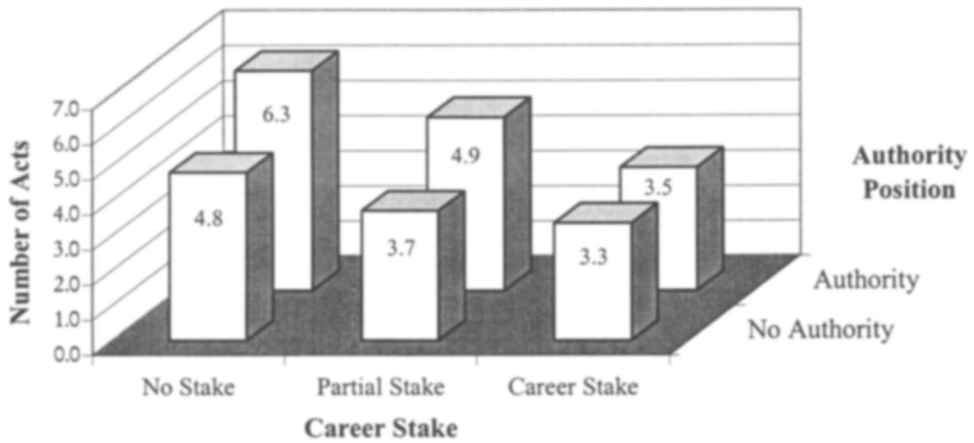


FIGURE 1. ACTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVIANCE, CAREER STAKES, AND AUTHORITY POSITION

($p = .125$), the results showed the *highest* levels of occupational deviance among those lacking career stakes but holding authority positions.

Figure 1 elaborates the relations among workplace deviance, authority, and career stakes. Those in authority positions who do not hold a career stake in their current job report an average of 6.3 deviant acts, relative to only 3.5 acts for those with a career stake. For those lacking workplace authority, we also observe the highest levels of deviance among those without a stake in their current job. Career stakes thus reduce deviance among workers with and without workplace authority. Aside from authority, however, none of the other objective work conditions significantly affect employee deviance. Even when career stakes and satisfaction are excluded from the model, none of these predictors—continuing training, turnover, benefits and income—are significant predictors of workplace deviance (analysis not shown). Only the indicator for primary sector approaches statistical significance in the bivariate case ($p = .085$) and, as expected, career stakes and satisfaction mediate its effects (see also Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997).⁵

Finally, high school general deviance and high school work deviance are added in model 5. The standardized betas (not shown) suggest that these are the strongest effects overall and dramatically increase the explained variation in employee deviance from .098 to .245. Nevertheless, the effects of both career stakes in the current job and job satisfaction remain strong and significant in the final model. Moreover, the effects of these subjective work attitudes are comparable in magnitude in model 5: a one standard deviation increase in career stakes reduces employee deviance by about 0.4 acts and a one standard deviation increase in job satisfaction reduces employee deviance by approximately 0.5 acts, net of prior deviance and the other independent variables.⁶

Authority again emerges as a positive predictor in Model 5, with those in supervisory positions committing about one more deviant act in the past year than those not in supervisory positions. Note that after controlling for prior deviance, the sex effect is dramatically reduced: males in their mid-twenties do not commit significantly more acts of employee

deviance than females, once levels of high school deviance are controlled.⁷ Race, level of education, and income remain unrelated to workplace misconduct in our final model.

Although the effects of primary labor market sector are not significant in the multivariate models in Table 3, it may be the case that job characteristics, such as career commitment, interact with labor market sector so that their effects are *only* observed in the primary (or core) sector. We therefore disaggregated the sample and estimated our final model separately for each sector. In comparing the two equations, however, we could not reject the null hypothesis that every regression coefficient in the primary sector was equal to its corresponding estimate in the secondary sector.⁸ In both sectors, the unstandardized career stakes coefficient was approximately $-.5$, as in model 5 of Table 3 for the combined sample. Thus, the same social investment model of employee deviance appears to apply to both sectors.

To examine the robustness of these findings, we also estimated models of more serious employee misconduct (in which the deviance outcome excluded tardiness and calling in sick when not sick) and a three-item index of employee theft. In both cases, the effects of all work variables were somewhat attenuated, although career stakes and job satisfaction continued to be strong negative predictors of employee deviance (tables available from authors).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our primary finding is that social investment in the form of career stakes reduces employee deviance in a model that includes stringent controls for prior deviance. Even after controlling for prior workplace misconduct and other job attributes, a change from no career stakes to high career stakes is associated with a reduction of one full act of employee deviance per year. Moreover, job satisfaction had a similarly strong and robust effect on employee misconduct, suggesting that career stakes and job satisfaction are independent predictors of workplace misconduct.

Our social investment model of employee deviance combines elements of informal social control and rational choice theories. We link these theories with a social-psychological mechanism—career stakes in the current job. The results show that employees who view their work as “career jobs” rather than “survival jobs” have a strong stake in conformity (Toby 1957; Hollinger 1986) that reduces employee deviance. By avoiding deviance at work, they maintain their investment in their chosen career. In addition, we find that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to conform to work rules. Satisfaction may also signal a stake in conformity, although it is more likely to represent an affective dimension of the employment relation rather than the strategic social investment indicated by career stakes. Nevertheless, more satisfied workers commit fewer acts of workplace deviance than less satisfied workers, a finding consistent with prior research on worker misconduct and recidivism among criminal offenders (Uggen 1999).

The data only partially support the conception of career stakes as an implicit contract between worker and employer. We find that employees are motivated to follow the rules of the workplace in order to realize their investment and continue along their chosen career trajectories. In turn, employers should be motivated to provide satisfying work with an established career line to induce productivity and inhibit deviance. Both workers and employers would thereby benefit from this social investment or contract. Nevertheless, we found little support for the effectiveness of employer-provided training or health insurance benefits in reducing worker misconduct. Although we observed a marginally significant

association between employee deviance and labor market sector, these effects were mediated by career commitment and job satisfaction.

Our findings bear more directly on employees' attitudes and behaviors than on employers' intentions and actions. Nevertheless, workplace deviance is clearly analogous to the problems of absenteeism, turnover, and other outcomes studied by organizational and occupational researchers. Thus, this research raises questions with important implications for organizational research and the sociology of work and occupations. Do post-Fordist management approaches that promise to empower workers, such as total quality management, reduce rates of workplace deviance? Organization-level research is necessary to determine whether such tactics inhibit deviance, perhaps by increasing the career stakes and organizational commitment of workers.

At the aggregate level, our social investment model predicts that rates of workplace deviance should be affected by the relative availability of career jobs relative to survival jobs. Repeated cross-sectional research is necessary to test such hypotheses and to determine whether other structural changes in labor markets affect rates of worker misconduct. A series of repeated cross-sectional surveys tracking changes in satisfaction, commitment, and workplace deviance—such as a replication of the *Quality of Employment* series (Quinn and Staines 1979) with the addition of a deviance module—would provide excellent data for such tests. Finally, cross-national or comparative research is needed to determine whether observed national differences in job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990) affect levels of employee deviance.

An unanticipated result, that workplace authority increases deviance, provides a counterpoint to our main findings about career stakes and job satisfaction: those in authority are likely to hold greater career stakes in their current jobs but also have more opportunity for deviance and less accountability. In elaborating this relationship, we discovered that career stakes reduce deviance among those with and without authority, but that those who had authority without career stakes in their current jobs reported the highest levels of deviance. We suggested that this pattern of results is consistent with John Hagan's power-control theory (Hagan et al. 1985; 1987) as well as with the opportunity mechanism specified by Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (1990) and Shapiro (1990). How might we arbitrate between these differing interpretations of authority effects?

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that selection processes inherent in the upper end of the occupational structure are likely to place people with relatively low criminal propensities in authority positions. They therefore predict, "rates of crime among employed white-collar workers should be low as compared to those of people in less structured occupations with similar opportunities" (1990, p. 191). It is unlikely that discrepancies in opportunities for common forms of workplace deviance, such as tardiness, substance use, or theft, are sufficiently great to account for the positive authority effect we observed. Therefore, although we cannot standardize our workplace deviance index by opportunities with these data, the Gottfredson-Hirschi hypothesis does not appear to fit the evidence presented in Table 3.

The power-control interpretation of the authority effect (Hagan et al. 1985; 1987) is more consistent with our results. The core assumption of power-control theory is that "the presence of power and the absence of control create conditions of freedom that permit common forms of delinquency" (Hagan et al. 1985, p. 1174). Unlike our social investment model and analysis, however, Hagan and his colleagues considered the effects of *parental* workplace authority on the delinquent behavior of their children. Contrary to most theories of crime, power-control theory predicts greater "common delinquency" (Hagan et al.

1985, p. 1161) among the sons of owners and supervisors than among the sons of working-class fathers. We found greater “common workplace deviance” among the authority holders themselves, consistent with a power-control interpretation of employee misconduct. Although our social investment model emphasizes informal controls in the form of career stakes—and hence the control portion of power-control theory—neither our conceptual model nor our empirical data are inconsistent with the major assumptions of power-control theory. Elaboration of a power-control theory of workplace deviance is thus a potentially fruitful direction for future research.

Our findings also have implications for other general theories of adult deviance and crime outside the workplace. We found that social investment in the form of career stakes reduced deviance among a general sample of young adults. These results parallel other studies of stability and change in deviant careers (Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997; Hagan and McCarthy 1997; Sampson and Laub 1990). Our conception of career stakes is consonant with “occupational commitment” (Sampson and Laub 1993, p. 156), the “stability that goes with good work” (Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997, p. 112), and social embeddedness in employment (Hagan and McCarthy 1997, p. 232). In each case, some variant of career stakes or commitment affects deviant behavior. Future research could explore the effects of career stakes and job satisfaction among older cohorts to see whether these subjective work attitudes continue to affect employee deviance in later life stages.

There are several limitations to the current study. First, our results are based on a single community sample of a cohort of young adults. The effects of career stakes may differ in other labor markets or life-course stages. Second, we have no independent verification of the validity and reliability of our retrospective self-reported deviance indicators. Despite this caveat, there is little reason to suspect that the past year’s deviance would be underreported relative to reports of the same items for the high school period. Third, high rates of job turnover among the young adult population complicate efforts to tie specific jobs to specific offenses. Nevertheless, we included a turnover indicator in our models and any unmeasured variation in turnover would likely bias estimates of job attributes downward rather than upward, resulting in more conservative tests of our hypotheses. Finally, our dichotomous measures of labor market sector, turnover, and employee benefits and training may not capture important variations in these factors that could affect employee deviance.

Despite these limitations, this research supports a social investment model of employee deviance among a general sample. When individuals’ current jobs match their long-term career goals, they hold a stake in workplace conformity that inhibits deviant behavior. Although we found little evidence that benefit levels and worker training affect employee deviance, we would not argue that organizations can afford to ignore such considerations in their hiring and human resources practices. If firms offer high-turnover, low-wage work that lacks benefits and job security, few of their employees are likely to develop career stakes in their jobs. To minimize workplace deviance, then, employers should offer satisfying work with established career lines and identify potential employees on the basis of their long-term career interests as well as their education and work experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health (“Work Experience and Mental Health: A Panel Study of Youth,” MH 42843) and the University of Minnesota (UROP Program). We thank Jeylan Mortimer for providing the data

as well as encouragement in every stage of this research. We also thank Sabrina Oesterle, Melissa Thompson, Janna Cheney, and the anonymous *TSQ* reviewers for assistance and helpful comments.

NOTES

1. About five percent of the respondents replied "don't know" to the career stakes question. We code these "don't knows" as lacking a career stake in their current jobs (aggregating them with respondents who state that their current jobs are not linked to their long-term objectives), since they clearly do not recognize their jobs as providing a stake in conformity.

2. Because workers in retail trade and service sectors may have greater opportunities to commit theft, we initially distinguished between service jobs and other secondary sector employment. Due to a low number of respondents working in the (non-service/retail) secondary sector (31 of 739 respondents), we combine the secondary with the service/retail sectors for our analysis. In our initial trichotomy, we classified 72 percent of the workers as primary sector, 23 percent as service or retail, and 4 percent as other secondary. Thus, for the dichotomous indicator, a total of 27 percent of the working respondents are classified as secondary sector employees.

3. Approximately 13 percent of the participants are Asian, 9 percent are African American, 4 percent are Latino, 1 percent are American Indian, and 6 percent other races.

4. Because the past-year employee deviance index reflects incidence and high school employee deviance is a count, the two variables do not share a common metric. When we estimated models in which both employee deviance measures were placed on a common nine-point scale, our results were substantively similar to those reported below.

5. We considered estimating a structural equation model that would partition the direct effects of employer benefits and sector on deviance from their indirect effects through career stakes and job satisfaction. Because we found little correlation between the employer variables and deviance, however, we present the multiple regression analysis rather than the structural model.

6. We also estimated models in which career stakes were dichotomized in a single variable and models with separate indicator variables for "high stake" and "partial stake." In each case, our results were very consistent with those reported in Table 3. Relative to those whose current jobs were not linked to their long-term career objectives, those with high career stakes reported 1.1 fewer acts and those with partial stakes reported .6 fewer acts in an equation that was otherwise equivalent to the one shown in model 5 of Table 3.

7. To explore potential gender differences in the effects of our independent variables, we also estimated models for males and females separately. Although there were few statistically significant sex differences, the effect of career stakes was slightly stronger for females and the effect of authority position was slightly stronger for males.

8. We used Chow's (1960) test for global equivalence:

$$F_{k+1, N_1+N_2-2k-2} = \frac{[SS_{\text{ERRORTOTAL}} - (SS_{\text{ERROR1}} + SS_{\text{ERROR2}})]/(K+1)}{(SS_{\text{ERROR1}} + SS_{\text{ERROR2}})/(N_1+N_2-2K-2)}$$

where the subscripts 1 and 2 index the two separate samples, TOTAL indicates the combined sample, and K is the number of independent variables in one equation.

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