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ORGANI-CULTURAL DEVIANCE[1]

Abstract

Debate continues in social responsibility whether to hold the individual or corporation responsible for violations of law. Velasquez (2003) believed organization's actions are products of its members' and leader's intent. This ongoing debate results in this paper's exploratory discussion between corporate social responsibility and employee relational dynamics in preventing wrong-doing.

Il existe un débat dans le domaine de la responsabilité sociale, si l'on doit juger l'individu ou la société responsable des violations de loi. Velasquez (2003) a cru que les actions de l'organisation sont des produits de ses membres et des intentions du chef. Cet article offre une discussion exploratoire entre la responsabilité et la dynamique apparentée des employés en empêchant des méfaits.

Key words: Organi-Cultural Deviance, Corporate wrong-doing, Business Cultural Environment

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Introduction

Corporate social responsibility is often taken to mean the inputs and outputs of an organisation. That is, how a company extracts and processes the raw materials required for the production of its products and services. Outputs refer to the nature of the product: environmental impact and treatment of employees. Moreover, in terms of output from a corporation, corporate social responsibility is also taken to mean a corporation's active participation in the community, usually through charitable donations and community partnerships.

The authors argue another key component of corporate social responsibility are the internal human dynamics within the company. Wrong doing can occur in all types of organisations, including not-for-profits, corporations, privately held enterprises, and government institutions. As the focus of this conference is on corporate social responsibility, the human interactions within a corporate environment will be discussed. Most of the human or relational dynamics that lead to wrong doing can and do occur outside of corporate settings. With that said, the authors will discuss in greater detail the types of internal human interactions within a corporate setting. The authors argue internal human interaction of a corporation must be taken into account in terms of corporate social responsibility.

All organisations are dependent on human interaction for their functioning. This pertains to both formal organisations, such as a publicly held company, as well as informal organisations, such as a family. This equally applies to lawful human organisations, such as charitable organisations, as well as unlawful organisations such as mafias. This paper focuses on certain deviant aspects or human dynamics within lawful organisations, specifically legally-constituted corporations. It will be argued that part of corporate social responsibility is to monitor, and detect internal negative dynamics within the organisation. Negative interactions within the corporation are defined as a series of behaviours by an individual, or a group of individuals, whose intent is to commit harm, wrong doing or crime.

Human Interaction Needs

Human beings are social animals. Humans want to socialize, participate and engage in activities with other individuals. McCabe, Keibe & Trevino (2001) argue that a group has internal controls regarding behavior. The group will try to regulate its behavior and develop its own norm. (McCabe et al, 2001, p. 30). Henggler et al argued that deviant peers have a mutually reinforcing effect. As one peer is deviant, the other peers become increasingly deviant. (Henggler, 1998, p.124-130).

Wetherall (1996) referred to Tajfel and Turner's finding on individual self-identification. Tajfel and Turner found an individual's motivation, judgements and perceptions are transformed when the individual becomes a member of a group. Taijel and Turner believed individual identity is transformed into social identity through the following processes: 1) individual self-esteem becomes the result of the fortune of the group 2) opinions of others outside the group become less relevant to the individual 3) the individual adjusts their personal identity to match the thoughts, behaviors and other attributes of the group through a process called referent information influence (Wetherell, 1996, pp. 34-35). The concept of individual group association satisfying individual needs, as described by Maslow (1953),

Wetherell (1996) , Norwood (1999) and Huitt (2004) is relevant to Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development.[i] In Kohlberg's pre-conventional stage, individuals see morality as being external to themselves. Kohlberg found these individuals have a sense of right and wrong, believe in reciprocal relationships, view relationships as a means of exchanging favours, lack identification with family and societal value. What is seen as being right to an individual is what satisfies the individual's self-interest. Thus, the individual's desire to satisfy their needs is egoistic. In this stage, the individual is looking to satisfy their need for belongingness, safety, security and esteem through their association with the group. The group reinforces their ego, supports, justifies and encourages the individual's behaviour and provides them anonymity.

Individual based and socio-biological arguments propose group membership and the need for individual acceptance from the group can be traced throughout human history as an adaptive trait. These arguments suggest responding to others stems from our infantile dependence upon our caregiver to provide our basic needs (Wetherell, 1996, p. 12). Culture is a series of values and behaviours particular to a group of people which are consciously transmitted or transferred to new members of the group. The difference in behaviours serves to solidify social bonding between individuals belonging to the same group. It is through culture that a situation is interpreted and a solution identified. (William, 1995, p. 83).

Corporate culture can fill in the social need of identity, the personal need of belonging to a group, as well as the financial need of earning a living. As the functioning of all organisations, including corporations, is dependent on the quality of relationships within the organisation, it is important to note the quality and significance of the types of relationships occurring in the workplace. Again, as this paper focuses on corporate social responsibility, the social dynamics which relate to corporate wrong doing will be discussed. Behaviours which lead to criminal activities or corporate wrong doing will be discussed. Other types of harmful workplace relationships such as bullying or destructive workplace conflict are outside this paper's scope.

Organi-Cultural Deviance

Human behaviour being the result of individual characteristics or socialized influence has long been debated. The debate intensifies in its application to understanding deviant behaviour. However, some, like Alison, Bennell & Mokros (2002), have proposed a resolution to this debate. Alison et al. identified the need to approach behavior using a holistic approach; focusing on the interaction of the Person x Situation (Alison et al, INCSCID,2002). They are strong advocates of developing a framework, which addresses the complex interplay of situational, trait and behavioural components in understanding behaviour. In Systematic Differentiation Between Dark and Light Leaders: Is a Corporate Criminal Profile Possible (Husted, 2008) the concept of situational influences resulting in deviant behaviour within organizations was explored. ABC coined this concept "Organi-Cultural Deviance" to explain the social, situational and environmental factors that give rise to corporate deviance. Organi-Cultural Deviance is a term coined by ABC to describe a corporate culture which has been socialized to engage in deviant acts. For the purposes of this paper deviant acts are defined as criminal acts under existing legislation. The purpose of this article is to explore Organi-Cultural Deviance further, defining the term through understanding the role Person x Situation plays in forming deviance within organizations.

Within organisations, specifically corporations, there are some relational dynamics which must be monitored for, detected and acted upon as soon as they are noticed. Some of these relational dynamics

include: validation, group think, and gang or cult mentality. Moreover, one or more of these deviant relationships can combine to create "Organi-Cultural Deviance". As the outcome of these relational aspects tends to be negative or harmful, it is therefore argued that they need to be included in the definition of "corporate social responsibility".

Validation Yes Men

One aspect of potentially harmful validation is the development of "Yes Men". Rey (2002) argues that the culture of critical and open thinking starts at the top. It is up to executive management to set the vision for the company. In addition to vision setting, the executive management must cultivate an organisational culture in which all employees openly share ideas, possible solutions and methods of implementing those solutions. Without that creative dynamic, of being able to openly constructively criticize, an environment of fear, antipathy and stagnation sets in. When this environment sets in, red-flag situations are not addressed. A red flag situation is when a decision or strategy is known to be false, illegal or technically not feasible. No objection or criticism is raised because of the environment of fear. Individuals who would normally speak out do not, out of fear of being reprimanded or they simply have psychologically distanced themselves from the situation. When this distancing occurs, the responsibility for the decision is placed squarely onto the shoulders of another, and it becomes a situation of "I was following orders", without any second or critical thought to the meaning and outcome of those orders.

The term "Yes-Men" refers to a situation in which members of the group continuously agree to the decisions of a leader. Little to no objections, ethical, technical or feasibility issues are raised. The Yes-Men may be extremely competent in the subject matter, and from the onset of a plan, they probably know that there are technical or ethical issues with it. That said, given the group dynamics, the plan is implemented. The leader and the leader's plan can not be criticized in any way, or the person will risk being a group outcast.

Group Think

A second aspect of potentially harmful or negative validation is "group think". Group think occurs in a situation in which a group is extremely cohesive, with a strong desire to reach consensus among members. In the process, critical thinking and decision making become distorted. The processes tend to ignore evidence and lean increasingly towards reaching a decision which pleases all members of the group. (Chen et al, 1996, p. 582) There are eight symptoms of group think:[ii] i) illusion of invulnerability, ii) collective rationalization, iii) illusion of morality, iv) excessive stereotyping, v) pressure for conformity, vi) self-censorship, vii) illusion of unanimity, viii) mindguards: some members appoint themselves to protect the group from outside information, information which may cause damage to the group.

Group think within an organisation can reduce opportunities for employees to raise concerns about a certain course of action, specific practices or their effects. In terms of corporate social responsibility,

the ability of the employees to effectively raise doubts or concerns about the ethics of a practice, the potential harm of a product or practice, is crucial to the organisation being held both internally (to its employees) and externally (shareholders, stakeholders, broader public) accountable. Once a decision has been made, there is strong commitment from the group to see it through, regardless of any new evidence. This can be considered a form of group level cognitive dissonance [iii]. There is an acute failure of the group to incorporate new information into the decision making process. Moreover, the group becomes highly guarded against outside criticism. The group members begin engaging in cognitive dissonance. Within the business environment, Alhakami and Slovic found that if the benefits of an activity were considered good, the risks were considered low. If the benefits of a particular activity were judged to be low, the risks were deemed to be high. (Marnet, 2005, p. 616)

A third aspect of potentially harmful validation is justification. That is, other employees and companies are engaging in the same behaviour, therefore it must be proper or ethical to engage in the same behaviour. A common justification used for unethical and often criminal behaviour, is that others (competitors) are also engaging in the same behaviour. Failure to engage in the same unethical / criminal behaviour would lead to a fall in stock prices, which in turn, would lead to a reduction in company worth. This in turn would lead to fewer returns for the investors. (Gray et al, 2002, p. 49-51)

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many American investors were wondering why the executives of a firm which went bankrupt, were receiving very generous severance packages. The company they had led had to close its doors, leaving many people unemployed and the investors without a return. In efforts to couple executive pay and company performance, investors shifted towards a system of executive remuneration which was linked to the company's stock price. The higher the stock price, the higher the executive pay. This distorted the incentives of many CEOs in many cases. The pay of the CEO was not based on units sold, value-added to the product, or innovation. The pay of the CEO was largely dependent on stock prices, which could be artificially inflated. These perceptions were largely based on accounting, which as several scandals revealed, could be manipulated to artificially inflate the stock price.[iv] These corporate scandals include, but are not limited to: Enron[v], Tyco[vi], Worldcom[vii], Arthur Andersen[viii]. This creates situations in which the accounting method is legal, however creates the illusion that the financial health of the company is better than what it actually is. This deceives investors, the public as well as the employees.

In a 2006 PBS episode of *Frontline,* Henrick Smith believed there was unprecedented stress placed on corporate financial reporting safeguards in the 1990's. "American capitalism was in overdrive. Companies offering their CEOs stock options lead to the CEOs attempt to boost the company's stock, beating analysts' predictions and Wall Street expectations" (Smith, Schaffer, & Schaffer, 2006). Smith et al. (2006) contended the corporate watchdogs with official responsibility to insure the honesty and integrity of corporate financial records-"the first line of defense" worked for industry executives and not for common shareholders. He claimed Congress and accountants weakened protections and tied the hands of regulators. James Hooten, Former Chief of Arthur Anderson's World Wide Auditing stated:

> "It was the first time accounting principles became influenced by commercial and political interests. If you move accounting standards into the political environment, then you have lost control over whether those standards are the best. That ruling moved control away from principals and professional standards and more to the commercial side or client side of business. The goal became to present the transaction in the best way to present it for the client, to show the company's side of the story, as opposed to the professional side." (Smith et al., 2006)

Arthur Levitt, Former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) from 1993-2001, stated there was a "Culture of Gamesmanship where it was considered ok to bend to the pressures of analysts. A culture which believed it was ok to tweak the numbers and bend the rules and to allow discrepancies to slide" (Smith et al., 2006).

According to Richard Breedan, Former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (1989-1993), "The size of stock option packages created temptation for economic gain. This temptation is very coercive and will lead some people to be willing to lie, cook up false income, and not tell the truth about negative factors" (Smith et al., 2006).

Gang or Cult Mentality

Another relational aspect which figures into Organi-Cultural Deviance is the development of a gang or cult mentality. Richardson refers to Robbins and Anthony's definition of cult as a group having manipulative, authoritative leadership and coercive power. Cults were described as being very likely to have authoritarian leaders, totalitarianist in their organization, with a specific form of indoctrination. (Richardson, 1993, p. 351) The quality of the relationships is often different. In gangs and cults, there are many relationships which are coercive in nature. These are groups with a strict hierarchical arrangement in which force is used to gain higher status. The current authors find parallels in gang/cult mentality to what they call a "business cult environment". The current authors define a business cult situation as a business which engages in gang/cult mentality. This business cult environment is one of the factors the current authors believe leads to Organi-Cultural Deviance.

In a business-cult environment, many of the relationships are also transactional. That is, both parties are interested in financial gain only. The trust and honesty between the parties is either extremely low or non-existent. Transactional relationships do not evolve or change beyond the meeting of financial interests whereas relational relationships do change and evolve. Relational relationships are based on trust and a form of friendship. The bond between individuals goes beyond immediate financial gain. The relationship is flexible and grows, as each party shares non-work experiences with the other. There is a mutual interest in the other party's well being as well as a shared sense of support for the other. (Grimmer et al, 2007, p. 157-158).

Pavlos argued that cults look inward and express deviant behaviour. Within the cult, there are expected norms of behaviour, even if they differ from mainstream society. Each cult has a specific culture. The living leader may inspire individuals to join the cult. Often coercion is used to keep members in the cult. Should an individual wish to leave, group members and the leader may use coercive means to keep the individual as a member. The member may be made to feel unwanted by the outside world, may be made to work harder as punishment for having thought of leaving, and in some cases may face physical repercussions for having expressed a desire to leave. Cults create a unique sub-culture in which transactional relationship and coercive power are often used. There are ten points which identify a cult: (Pavlos, 1982, p. 4). The authors of this article find parallels between cult, gang, and business behaviour believed to be associated with Organi-Cultural Deviance. These parallels include: I) high levels of dependency on a charismatic leader, ii) intentional omission of other sources of information, iii) isolation of group from others, iv) strong reprimands for questioning the leader or the actions of the group, and v) members of the group tend to strongly identify with the group.

Kaplan argued that individuals who join gangs, suffer from low self-perception, that is low, self-esteem. The willingness to join a gang in large part stems from the belief that the individual could enhance their self-esteem through the performance of deviant acts. Deviant acts in most cases involve some level of criminality, from petty vandalism to felony murder. (Wang, 1994, p. 280) The deviant behavior is reinforced by other gang members and the gang leader. As the deviant behavior progresses, from petty vandalism, to drug dealing then onto violent acts, the rewards from the group increase. The person's status within the group is elevated, the person may receive greater monetary reward and status.

How groups, particularly cults, gangs and certain corporate cultures, get their members to participate to extremes (break the law, give more and more, isolate themselves from other peer groups and the outside world) is quite similar. In situations in which there was corporate crime, such as Enron, there was a strong charismatic leader who could rally the people behind him. These characteristics are also found in cults and gangs, in which the word of the leader is law. In a corporate situation, the term is referred to as being surrounded by 'Yes-Men'". There are individuals who know that the actions of the group are not feasible or ethical, but still go along with the plan despite their own objections-"to go along to get along".

The current authors argue the inter-personal dynamics discussed above (validation, group think, and cult or gang mentality) tend to be present in situations of organisational wrong doing. As such, the authors argue that the organisations, including corporations, adopt internal policies and strategies for the detection, monitoring and addressing of these potentially negative relational dynamics.

Conclusion

This paper opens the door to new areas of study. It proposes corporations are subcultures influenced by similar social dynamics and environmental forces that have commonly been associated and confined to the area of social science. This paper suggests that other fields of social sciences can be applied to the fields of business management and business administration. The authors also argue corporate social responsibility must be expanded to include internal relational-dynamics within an company. All organisations are subject to negative human interactions that can lead to organisational wrong doing. As such, corporate social responsibility must be expanded beyond how a corporation sources the materials required for production and its environmental footprint, to include the people-processes and internal people-centered policies. Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, the authors suggest looking at the transferability of the knowledge, practices and tools used in the areas of social science to recognize Organi-cultural Deviance and prevent corporate wrongdoing.

Dr. Christie L. Husted is a leading researcher in corporate criminology. Dr. Husted graduated with a Master of Science and PhD from Capella University. Her specialization is in organizational behavior. Dr. Husted, in her work titled *Systematic Differentiation Between Dark and Light Leaders: Is a Corporate Criminal Profile Possible?,* found it possible to profile corporate criminals and developed a preliminary framework to explain the causation of corporate crime. Dr. Husted's findings suggested personality characteristics by themselves do not lead to the manifestation of corporate crime & misconduct. Environmental and situational factors, combined with personality characteristics give rise to a propensity towards these undesired behaviors. Dr. Husted delved into the qualitative aspects of social theory to determine situational cause and effect relationships between leaders and their environments. Dr. Husted's methodology utilized psycho-biographical observation and narrative analysis to form a framework to understand, explain and predict patterns of criminal behavior in corporations.

SBM Consulting Services was established by Dr. Christie L. Husted, in 2008, to safeguard businesses from corporate crime & misconduct. SBM Consulting Services provides a wide array of services to employers, employees and legal counsel. Dr. Husted provides specialized assistance in the prevention and detection of white collar crime, corporate misconduct, employee theft and other undesirable behaviors in business. Dr. Husted offers research, consulting services, investigative/forensic services, guest lecturing, and training to individual employers, employees, legal counsel in compliance with regulations.

 Dr. Husted believes businesses with an ability to assess their current infrastructure, policies, environment, economy, composition of Boards of Directors, check and balances systems, and other person x situational factors will be able to devise policies and procedures for oversight to avoid placing themselves in a situation that gives rise to corporate crime & misconduct.

In 2010, Dr. Husted began pursuing her Juris Doctorate through Northwestern California University School of Law. This degree compliments Dr. Husted's PhD in Organization & Management/Organizational Psychology and undergraduate work in Administration of Justice and Social Science. Dr. Husted wishes to use this additional degree to advocate for individuals who have been victimized by corporate/organizational misconduct. Dr. Husted's intent is to use this additional degree to advise corporations in preventing, and litigating cases relating to corporate wrong-doing.

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Renée Gendron holds a Masters in sociology with a specialisation in governance. She holds an Alternative Dispute Resolution certificate from the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation. Renée is also a Ph.d candidate. Her thesis developed an evaluation model for the tracking of grievances in violent conflicts. The evaluation model is applied to the conflicts in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya.

Renée is an Associate of the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the prevention of violent conflict. CIIAN offers wide range of training programmes and mediation services. Among the work Renée does with CIIAN, she facilitates leadership training, conducts specialised research, undertakes policy analysis, and coordinated the Dialogues Project.

Renée is an expedition guide for The Canada Expedition, the eco-economy pillar. The Canada Expedition seeks innovative and meaningful solutions to the economic, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

Renée conducts research on several topics, including information communication technology and mediation, the North Caucasus, state building and organisational development.

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[i]   Lawrence Kohlberg, in his 1958 dissertation, established the pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional stages of moral development.

[ii]   http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~fulmer/groupthink.htm

[iii]   A psychological phenomenon which refers to the discomfort felt at the discrepancy between what you already know or believe and new information or interpretation (Atheron, 2005, p. 1).

[iv]   http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=653

[v]   http://www.forbes.com/2002/07/25/accountingtracker.html

[vi]   http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3721909/

[vii]   http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,266287,00.html

[viii]   http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/regulation/etc/synopsis.html