

A Second-Order Observation of Organizational Deviance

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The purpose of this chapter is to review organizational deviance from two different, incommensurable scientific paradigms—the functionalist and interactionist. In the functionalist perspective, organizational deviance is viewed as being objectively manifest, whereas in interactionist studies deviance is understood as being subjectively problematic (Anderson 2014; Downes & Rock 2011; Rubington & Weinberg 1970, 2016). In assessing the underlying assumptions of these two perspectives—both shared and contested—we propose a novel theoretical formulation for organizational deviance. We refer to this proposed formulation as a second-order observation of organizational deviance.

Deviance has been theorized as ‘a breach of a socially acceptable standard’ (Anderson 2014: 3), arising from ‘an act, person, situation, or event as a departure from social norms’ (Rubington & Weinberg 1970: v). Deviance can arise either from informal relations or from formal established standards (Rubington & Weinberg 2016). As deviance is from accepted standards, its assessment lies in the eye of the beholder (Giddens et al. 2013). Usually, deviance from an established standard, or non-conformity, is punished and conformity and compliance are rewarded (Giddens et al. 2013).

In the discipline of sociology, while some aspects of the deviance discourse have seen an intellectual revival (e.g. anomie theory, symbolic interactionism), the ‘rate of intellectual innovation’ on deviance scholarship is declining (Downes & Rock 2011: xii). In contrast, in management and organization studies, especially in the second half of the last century, interest in research on deviance has been increasing (Power 1997).

While a substantial body of literature focuses on the causes and consequences of deviance (see, for instance, reviews by Griffin et al. 1998; Robinson & Greenberg 1998; Warren 2003), we take a different path in the present

chapter. We begin by introducing the reader to the functionalist perspective on deviance, delineating its key characteristics and theoretical strands. An assessment is made of how the functionalist perspective has been applied in management and organization studies. Next, we introduce the reader to the interactionist perspective, followed by a section that contrasts and compares the two perspectives and ends with a critical reflection. We conclude by distilling seven key lessons in proposing and charting a new agenda to investigate organizational deviance in a world of established standards.

2.1 First-Order Observations of Deviance—The Functionalist Perspective

The central assumption of the functionalist perspective is that a referent—a point of comparison—exists by which deviation can be measured (Durkheim 1982). Thus, deviance is viewed as an objective fact based on what is statistically *normal* and how an act, a person, a situation, or an event differs from its statistically normative appearance (Anderson 2014: 36). Managing deviance is accomplished as *first-order cybernetics* (von Foerster 1984). Thus, the observer, a researcher or manager, is viewed as an ‘external’ agent who objectively discovers, assesses, and manages deviance (Beyes 2005).

The functionalist perspective on deviance is characterized by three sets of assumptions (Rubington & Weinberg 1970). First, consensus exists on what constitutes a social norm in a specific social group. Second, deviance is unwanted and undesirable and calls for legal or social punishments. Third, these punishments reaffirm for the group what falls outside of social norms, reinforcing the need for compliance. Typical research questions include who or what is deviant, how does deviance occur, what are the conditions under which deviance arises (Rubington & Weinberg 1970), when does deviance hinder stability in a population (Erikson 1962), and how does a society normalize deviance (Moynihan 1992). Key proponents of the functionalist perspective of deviance in sociology include Durkheim (1964), Erikson (1962), and Merton (1938).

Traditional management research of the functionalist kind tends to focus on this negative, undesirable, and malfunctioning aspect of deviance. Deviance is conceptualized as an act of norm or rule violation, and investigations focus on individual motivations or conditions for norm-breaking behaviour. The prevailing assumption is that deviance not only violates established norms, but also leads to negative consequences for the organization, requiring social

control by management, often through education or sanctions (Bryant & Higgins 2010; Kidwell & Martin 2005; Linstead et al. 2014). Functionalist studies view deviance as ‘problematic behaviour’ or ‘misbehaviour’ (Bennett & Robinson 2000; Bordia et al. 2008; Lau et al. 2003; Lawrence & Robinson 2007; Marcus & Schuler 2004; Robinson & Bennett 1995; Warren 2003; quoted from Linstead et al. 2014). Consequently, the management of organizational deviance serves in this case as the practical response to misbehaviour (Kidwell & Martin 2005).

Other authors reinforce the value of management control of deviance. Vaughan (1999) developed a theoretical concept of organizational deviance building on Merton’s (1938) idea of unanticipated consequences when purposive social action is undertaken. She defined organizational deviance as ‘an event, activity, or circumstance, occurring in and/or produced by a formal organization, that deviates from both formal design goals and normative standards or expectations, either in the fact of its occurrence or in its consequences, and produces a suboptimal outcome’ (Vaughan 1999: 274). She systematically analysed what led to the production of suboptimal outcomes at NASA when the US space shuttle Challenger exploded soon after take-off in January 1986. She argued that organizational deviance is often a predictable and recurring product of socially organized systems, identifying how power, rules, and culture cause ‘routine nonconformity’—that is, the systematic production of deviance in the form of mistakes, misconducts, and disasters.

Another stream of research investigating the ‘dark side’ of organizational deviance is embedded in the neo-institutional discourse (Bromley & Powell 2012; Lounsbury 2008; Meyer & Rowan 1977; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). Here, researchers ask how organizations react to the so-called hypernorms, for instance, international accounting or quality standards (Aguilera et al. 2018). If these hypernorms are perceived as oppressive, organizations tend to deviate. Deviations are described here as decoupling (Bromley & Powell 2012; MacLean and Benham 2010; see also Fried et al. 2013) or as wrongdoing from the referent of hypernorms (Palmer 2017).

In their study on white-collar crime, Monahan and Quinn (2006) argued for a neo-institutional analysis of organizational deviance. In contrast to the idea that deviance within organizations is a product of individual choices or behaviours, they illustrated ‘how deviance is produced by organizations when the organization decouples structure from action’ (Monahan & Quinn 2006: 366). For instance, in an organizational environment with conflicting norms, workers more easily cross the line into deviance. In the neo-institutional view, ‘deviance is the dirty secret of decoupled organizations’ (Monahan &

Quinn 2006: 378) and a response to environmental pressures (e.g. pressure to be compliant with safety protocols or rules of financial bookkeeping).

MacLean and Benham (2010) confirm that decoupling compliance activities from actual core business activities can lead to a 'legitimacy façade' that facilitates institutional misconduct and potentially a loss of external legitimacy in organizations. Such was observed to be the case when certification audits were carried out of how organizations implemented safety standards in software development (Fried 2010). To prevent such institutional misconduct, the value orientation of organizational members is crucial for realising an effective legal–ethical compliance programme 'such as willingness to report bad news, organizational commitment, ethical awareness, and observed unethical behavior' (MacLean & Benham 2010: 1516). In turn, decoupling has a negative impact on the perception of internal legitimacy of compliance programmes, a negative effect on the organizational members' willingness to contribute, and an affirmative effect on organizational deviance. For this reason, the authors suggest that deviant behaviour can be reduced by incorporating 'compliance into their ongoing, day-to-day, core processes, such as training, monitoring, and discipline' (MacLean & Benham 2010: 1517).

Similarly, Palmer relates deviance to organizational wrongdoing that is intentional that include 'behavior(s) that violates ethical principles, social norms, organizational rules and protocols, industry or professional guidelines, and civil or criminal laws' (Palmer 2017: 739). From an institutional point of view, Palmer states how institutions curtail, countenance, stimulate, or sustain organizational wrongdoing, how they shape the extent and form of wrongdoing, and how they encourage wrongdoers (Palmer 2017). He concludes, from his review of institutionalist studies on organizational wrongdoing, that scholars 'should pay more attention to the ways in which institutions draw the line separating right from wrong in particular times and places' (Palmer 2017: 753).

In a different vein, we also see a positive turn in management and organization studies to recognize the value of distributed innovativeness and situated deviance, to honour the 'odd' agent of variation, and frame deviant behaviour as something vital to continued learning, innovation, and organizational survival (Lundmark & Westelius 2012; Singhal & Bjurström 2015). Lounsbury (2008) argues, for instance, how variation and deviation can create the conditions for organizations to innovate new beneficial practices. More recently, scholars have developed the positive deviance concept to describe how groups in business, healthcare, education, and social settings identify and adopt behaviours that lead to better outcomes compared to their peers (Pascale & Sternin 2005; Singhal et al. 2010). In the positive organizational scholarship

movement, positive deviance refers to ‘intentional behaviors that significantly depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways’ (Spreitzer & Sonenshein 2004). Thus, positive deviance pays attention to exceptional deviations within a certain population. It puts an emphasis on the individual rationality of actors and their space of action within a certain context in the search for agency and innovativeness (Singhal & Bjurström 2015).

There are also approaches to deviance in the recent management literature which simultaneously consider its dysfunctional *and* positive effects. Warren (2003) developed the concept of constructive and destructive deviance in organizations, proposing that deviance can be associated with both ‘desirable as well as undesirable behavior(s)’ of employees (Warren 2003: 622). She argued that a coherent framework should incorporate both positive and negative aspects of deviance by explicitly stating the normative standards of functionalist views as well as reference group norms in interactionist accounts.

Drawing on institutional theory, Aguilera et al. (2018) emphasized the entrepreneurial quality of organizational deviance—both as over-conformity and under-conformity. Some organizations have an entrepreneurial identity where it is ‘more likely to adopt over-conforming or under-conforming governance practices that deviate from established norms and practices’ (Aguilera et al. 2018: 87). There are two entrepreneurial directions representing either social or commercial motives. Both motives are applied to over-conformity and under-conformity with dominant governance logics. The resulting typology identifies commercial mavericks, commercial rate-busters, social rebels, and social angels as four different deviance types. These types understand organizational deviance as a result of the ‘national governance context [e.g. accounting standards, stock market regulations] that “sets the stage” for defining normative expectations.’ The entrepreneurial identity of the organization, however, defines its over-conformity or under-conformity with these governance logics (Aguilera et al. 2018: 101).

In summary, research on deviance utilizing a functionalist perspective provides important lessons for the readers of this book. Most importantly, organizations tend to deviate from established standards of the institutionalized environment when these are perceived as being inappropriate in their specific context. Further, deviance has potentially positive as well as negative outcomes depending on how the different reference groups socially construct their understanding. Importantly, research on deviance in a functionalist perspective requires a statistically valid identification of the deviant act, person, situation, or event, i.e. an empirical departure from the norm or average (Becker 1963)—for the better or the worse. But often there exists a lack of

statistical agreement on these norms. What objectively constitutes as positive or negative deviance is not so clear-cut (Anderson 2014; Rubington & Weinberg 2016) as social norms are often not static or overall valid. By defining deviance in an interactionist perspective and addressing the ‘observing observer’, these issues can, however, be addressed.

2.2 Second-Order Observations of Deviance—The Interactionist Perspective

While widely absent in management and organization studies, the interactionist perspective dominates the study of sociological phenomena. The interactionist perspective does not treat deviance as an objective entity, but one that results from a social interaction in which an act, a person, a situation, or an event is constructed as deviant. Researching and managing deviance is understood as *second-order cybernetics* (von Foerster 1984). Thus, the observation—accomplished by a researcher—is not independent from the observer whose attributes influence his/her descriptions. In essence, the observer’s self-reflection of his/her own role in discovering, assessing, and managing deviance is part of the mix (Beyes 2005).

In contrast to functionalism, interactionist studies scrutinize the perception of deviance and make it a subject of study. Typical research questions in the interactionist perspective include what positive and negative traits and values are associated with deviance, how deviance is reasoned, and how an actor might react when designated as deviant (Rubington & Weinberg 1970). Instead of understanding deviance by the quality or the character of a person, symbolic interactionism turns the individual *perception* (Rubington & Weinberg 1970) and *social construction* of deviance (Anderson 2014) into a matter of investigation. Thus, in the interactionist perspective, deviance does not come into being until it is created as a response in a social interaction. In this respect, the interactionist perspective shifts its focus from the identification of the various kinds of deviance (as would be the concern of the functionalist perspective), to an understanding of deviance as subjectively problematic (Downes & Rock 2011).

In sociological scholarship, two related interactionist streams—‘symbolic interactionism’ and ‘phenomenology’—are important to explicate in our discussion of deviance. *Symbolic interactionism* is interested in and concerned with the processes through which events and conditions, artefacts, people, and other factors achieve meaning—becoming objects of social orientation.

Symbolic interactionism views deviance ‘among other things, [as] a consequence of the responses of others’ (Becker 1963: 8) to an event, an artefact, people, or similar. In Becker’s labelling theory on ‘outsiders’, ‘social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders’ (Becker 1963: 9). The labelling theory reflects deviance not as the actual quality of an act or a person, but rather as a consequence of the application of rules and sanctions. That is, the definition of deviance is constructed in and through social processes.

In the symbolic interactionism tradition, Bryant and Higgins view deviance as ‘a product of situations being defined in particular ways and individuals become deviant as a consequence of being labelled so by others’ (Bryant & Higgins 2010: 253). Thus, researchers on deviance are not interested in what is labelled as deviant behaviour but rather in how norms are interactively constructed. According to Bryant and Higgins (2010: 269) the capacity to label behaviour as deviant (or not) highlights the significance of power relations within organizational studies of deviance. For instance, managers hold power to label certain employee behaviours as deviant (Bryant & Higgins 2010: 250). Here the ‘rule enforcer’ (Becker 1963) delineates a starting point for the analysis of deviant behaviour. Heckert and Heckert (2002) describe the labelling theory as ‘reactivist’ due to its focus on dynamics of reactions and evaluations of the other—an individual, group, or a social community. They developed an integrative typology of deviance emphasizing the contextual and situational nature of deviance. That is, definitions of the same behaviour and its evaluations vary across social groups and time.

The *phenomenological view* of deviance focuses on the common-sense reasoning of deviance in daily life (Berger 1973; Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1963; Schütz 1962). In modern working environments, ‘bureaucratically organized agencies are increasingly invested with social control functions, the activities of such agencies...generate as well as maintain definitions of deviance and produce populations of deviants’ (Kitsuse & Cicourel 1963: 139). In the end, ‘deviance is evidence of a moral diversity which others would repress in the name of an oppressive uniformity’ (Downes & Rock 2011: 210).

According to the phenomenological view, research on deviance should investigate the businesses of ‘identifying, classifying, managing, and reporting deviant events in everyday life’ (Downes & Rock 2011: 219). For instance, Greve et al. (2010) put social-control agents at the centre of interest who identify and classify deviance and assess, report, and manage resulting misconduct. Social-control agents represent ‘a collectivity and that can impose sanctions

on that collectivity's behalf' (Greve et al. 2010: 56). Examples of social-control agents include international standardization bodies, states, and professional associations. The authors' way of observing deviance from a second-order perspective becomes obvious when they suggest investigating deviance in relative terms—thus simply investigating the behaviour that 'qualifies as misconduct when social-control agents consider it to be such' (Greve et al. 2010: 92). This is a crucial step for the investigation of deviance. It departs from first-order observations that analyse deviance and misconduct in absolute terms (Greve et al. 2010). By raising interest in social-control agents instead of the deviants themselves, Greve and others avoid making the claim that deviance and misconduct depends on 'a researcher-defined standard, perhaps informed by the work of philosophers or theologians' (Greve et al. 2010: 92). Research questions they suggest relate, for instance, to the degree of consensus among social-control agents when evaluating deviance and misconduct.

In summary, unlike in the functionalist perspective, research on deviance employing second-order observations does not address statistically valid identification of a deviant act, person, situation, or event. Rather, researchers who become second-order observers raise interest in how knowledgeable agents (Giddens 1984; see also Fried & Walgenbach 2020) socially construct and judge deviations. Thus, in investigating organizational deviations from established standards, we, in this book, became second-order observers. The organizations we investigated were the ones who judged what constituted deviations from standards and how these deviations were assessed. Empirical investigations of applying a second-order observation are few and far between—whether investigating compliance with or deviance from established standards. Therefore, we recognize the need to examine deviance and misconduct on an organizational level. In this quest, the present book does not try to understand deviations of single organizational members but rather is interested in the interplay of organizational structures and interactions that give rise to deviations from established standards.

2.3 Lessons Learned for Studying Organizational Deviance from Standards

In previous sections, we introduced two ways of researching deviance—functionalism and interactionism—as incommensurables (Kuhn 1962) in terms of their scientific paradigm, and resulting theories, research methods, and assumptions (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 A comparison of functionalist and interactionist perspectives on deviance

Perspectives on deviance	Functionalist perspective	Interactionist perspective
Scientific paradigm	Critical realism	Social constructivism
Identifying deviance	Deviance is statistically provable (holism). Social norms are static and overall valid	Deviance is socially constructed (contingency). Social norms are socially constructed, variable, not predictable, and differ in time and population
Role of researchers and managers	Observers (first-order cybernetics)	Observing observers (second-order cybernetics)
Assessing the consequences of deviance	Older approaches provide absolute assessments (positive/negative) and do not specify for whom deviance is functional. Newer approaches see the assessment of deviance in the eyes of the beholder and provide, for example, extensive cost and benefit analyses	The assessment is either an identification of who labels (positive/negative) whom for what, or it observes the observer of deviance and leaves the assessment (positive/negative) of deviance to the field
Typical research questions	What/who is (statistically) normal? How does deviance occur? Which conditions contribute to deviance?	How is deviance defined by different actors? How is deviance reasoned? How does an actor react after being treated as deviant?
Research methods	Quantitative methods, mixed methods	Qualitative methods, in particular ethnography
Social actor	Individuum, passive	Individuum, passive
Limitations regarding ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the question of why individuals, groups, or organizations become deviant structural reasons for deviations and power dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the question of why individuals, groups, or organizations become deviant structural reasons for deviations and power dynamics

2.3.1 A Comparison of Functionalist and Interactionist Perspectives on Deviance

The functionalist perspective on deviance is rooted in the scientific paradigm of critical rationalism (Popper 1974), whereas the interactionist perspective is grounded in social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann 1966). The perspective chosen impacts how deviant acts, persons, situations, or events are identified

and assessed, which research methods are (not) used, and which research questions are (not) asked.

There are at least seven lessons learned that undergird both the functionalist and the interactionist perspective on organizational deviance. They hold important implications for researching *organizational* deviance in the field of standardization (see section 2.4).

(1) Assessing deviance means to judge an act, a person, a situation, or an event. In sociology, as in other fields like management and organization studies, a central concern is the assessment of negative and positive consequences of deviance. Some functionalists treat deviance mainly as something dysfunctional or as a temporary irregularity to cope with conflicting norms (e.g. Monahan & Quinn 2006; Vaughan 1999; Warren 2003). Deviance is understood as norm violation that needs to be corrected and aligned (Heckert & Heckert 2002). Other authors point out that the narrow and negative perspective on deviance fundamentally valorizes the social desirability of ‘the most likely case, scenario, or outcome for most of the people’ (Singhal & Bjurström 2015: 5). Lounsbury criticises, for instance, the dark-side approach (Vaughan 1996) for putting deviance as ‘a rational mimicry on the surface’ (Lounsbury 2008: 350), noting that deviant behaviour might be done by knowledgeable, performance-oriented managers. Singhal and Bjurström argue that a solely negative perspective would limit the problem-solving potential of empirical research in which positive deviants, ‘the unusual, the implausible, and exceptional are routinely ignored’ (Singhal & Bjurström 2015: 6). Thus, to identify positive deviants recognizes the reflexivity and innovativeness of agents, their agency and space to act ‘otherwise’, and the importance of finding variant institutional solutions (ibid.).

Overall, challenges remain in delineating absolute norms and assessing deviance from them as being universally valid in content and across time. If deviance is analysed as something statistically provable (characterized as a holistic view in Downes and Rock (2011)), researchers risk to ‘treat workplace norms as unproblematic and relatively stable objects of knowledge’ (Bryant & Higgins 2010: 250). In our view, deviance needs to be described ‘in all its complexity, so that there is no division between “good” poor people and “bad” poor people, legal and illegal or any such false dichotomy’ (Duneier et al. 2000: 1562).

(2) Deviance by itself is a problematic concept when defined in dualistic terms. As shown in Figure 2.1, the main distinctions are often drawn between positive and negative deviance and between deviance and compliance.

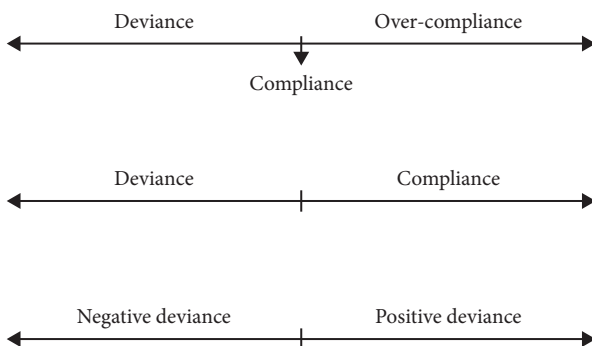


Figure 2.1 Examples of the common deviance dualisms

We see this as a linguistic impoverishment that can severely limit what we see when investigating organizational deviance. From a social constructivist perspective, rules, standards, norms, regulations, and the like are enacted, i.e. interpreted and realised in a context-specific way (Fried & Glaa 2020). Thus, organizations always deviate. In this context, the term *compliance* becomes a blurred concept. Compliance as an organization-independent concept does not exist in a social-constructivist reading. It can only serve as a proxy for the general commitment to social norms, standards, etc. (see also Fried & Langer 2020; Fried & Walgenbach 2020).

(3) Deviance encompasses three different aspects that must be distinguished analytically: (a) the description of a deviation, (b) the assessment of it, and (c) the sanction following a deviation. This is often mixed in the discourse on deviance and complicates the comprehensibility of typologies for deviance (e.g. Heckert & Heckert 2002; Robinson & Bennett 1995).

(4) It is crucial to disclose who judges what constitutes deviance, i.e. who identifies it as being positive or negative. Identifying deviance can serve a useful function, especially when extensive cost and benefit analyses are carried out for assessing ‘sociological balance sheets’ (Downes & Rock 2011). Interactionists, on the other hand, realise that deviance cannot be something positive or negative in absolute terms, and thus they focus primarily ‘on the mechanism underlying group members’ reactions to people who deviate from prescriptive norms’ (Levine & Marques 2016: 3). Phenomenologists emphasize the role of the observer in this labelling process (Kitsuse & Cicourel 1963), arguing that researchers should leave the assessment of deviance—whether positive or negative—to empiricists and take on the role of a second-order observer (Luhmann 2000). Thus far, in research on deviance the possibility of

second-order observations, and also the relativity of the assessments of deviance, is hardly recognized (Beyes 2005; Greve et al. 2010). A second-order observer's perspective tends to overcome problems in who judges deviance—whether the researcher himself/herself, or the observing person that the researcher is investigating.

(5) Barring some exceptions, functionalists as well as interactionists pay attention to the single deviant subject (Anderson 2014), which can become problematic in two ways. On the one hand, they risk individualizing deviant behaviour and blaming employees for disrupting an assumed consensus in organizations (Bryant & Higgins 2010). On the other hand, deviants are seen as 'passive nonentity' and are treated 'like sheep or robots' (Downes & Rock 2011: 193 and 90), devoid of subjective experiences. They embody the risk to view deviants as having no agency for redemption or alleviation. Thus, management and organization studies should highlight the role of social agency—the notion of the knowledgeable agent. Instead of investigating deviance as an experience or responsibility of an individual actor, we suggest investigating deviance as 'social practices ordered across time and space' (Giddens 1984: 2).

(6) The literature on deviance has not yet focused much on why organizations are likely to deviate from norms and adopt non-compliant practices (Aguilera et al. 2018). In order to better understand interventions in organizational processes, research should ask why deviance occurs, and why some organizations become deviant and others not.

(7) Deviance is an act of power (Anderson 2014) but rarely investigated in this regard (Bryant & Higgins 2010). Researchers on deviance do not tend to investigate the role that structural, institutional, or power concepts can play in human interaction. Identifying structural, institutional, and power-related aspects could help create a better understanding of why some organizations are more likely to deviate than others.

In the next section, we propose where research on deviance in management and organization studies should be headed.

2.4 In Conclusion: New Directions for Studying Organizational Deviance

To overcome the theoretical and conceptual problems discussed in the previous sections, we propose new directions for research on organizational deviance.

(1) We propose the concept of the ‘second-order observer’ (Luhmann 2000; Roberts 1993; von Foerster 1984)—that is, researchers should take on the position of an observer of the observers of deviance. In this view, a researcher should be the observer of the assessor/observer of deviance and not the assessor/observer of deviance himself/herself. Importantly, this proposed shift to understand researchers as ‘second-order observers’ has important consequences for the type of research questions that are raised in investigating organizational deviance.

(2) We categorize organizational deviance analytically (see Figure 2.2) into three aspects (applied in Gey et al. 2020a, 2020b; Langer et al. 2020b) to facilitate its operationalization and to address what is meant exactly when the empirical field describes deviations. The three aspects of organizational deviance are:

- the *descriptive aspect*, where an observer states deviation as a fact; every point in the circular continuum characterizes a deviation (e.g. deviation from development milestones);
- the *normative aspect*, where an observer assesses the deviation with respect to a compliance point of reference (e.g. standard requirements);
- the *sanctioning aspect*, where an observer relates the assessment to the negative and positive consequences of deviation (e.g. no certification of software).

(3) We call for thick descriptions of organizational life and a proactive ‘loss of [normative] authority on science’s side’ (Beyes 2005: 457) in the discourse of deviance in management and organization studies. The notion of the ‘second-order observer’ with its call for thick descriptions of organizational

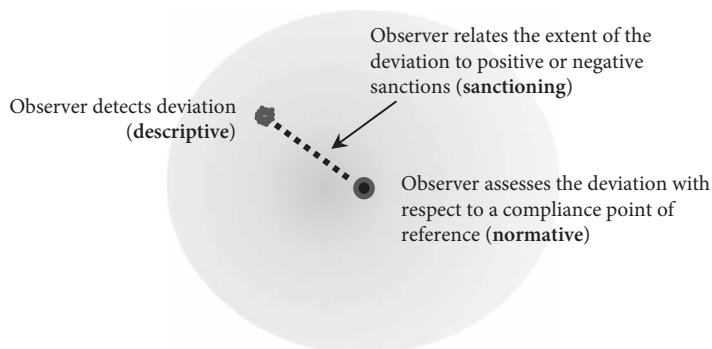


Figure 2.2 Analytical aspects of deviance

deviance leads consequently (4) to a phenomenological perspective on deviance that asks for a common-sense reasoning of deviance by organizations. We go beyond the investigation and explanation of individual deviance and take the deviants, and thus organizational members' perspective, to find out under which organizational circumstances they become deviant and 'what value, positive or negative, do they place on the facts of deviance' (Rubington & Weinberg 1970: 3).

To this end, (5) we utilize Giddens' structuration theory for the conceptualization and analysis of organizational deviance (Giddens 1984). Structuration theory views actors as knowledgeable, reflexive agents who not only develop rules but also deviate from them. At the interplay of standards as facilities (domination), standards as interpretative schemes (signification), and standards as social norms (legitimation), we propose a new formulation of the concept of *organizational deviance*.

While it is important to inventory the breaches of accepted social norms, it is also important to 'understand the types of things' norms and standards regulate (Anderson 2014: 4). By describing the interplay of legitimation, signification, and domination, (6) we reveal contradictions (Giddens 1979; Papa et al. 1995; Putnam et al. 2016) that deviance 'requires in order to exist as a social phenomenon' (Rubington & Weinberg 1970: 1). The explanation of inherent contradictions of an organization reveals the reasons for its deviance from normative functioning.

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