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Pro-Social Rule Breaking:

Determinants, Manager Responses and Rationalizations

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Kassel, September 2022, Annika Jost

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List of Abbreviations

CD.....*Constructive Deviance*
DD .....*Destructive Deviance*
DWB.....*Deviant Workplace Behavior*
GPSRBS .....*General Pro Social Rule Breaking Scale*
HC..... *High Condition*
ICD .....*Interpersonal Constructive Deviance*
IDD .....*Individual-targeted Destructive Deviance*
LC ..... *Low Condition*
OCD..... *Organizational Constructive Deviance*
ODD .....*Organizational-targeted Destructive Deviance*
RBSE .....*Role Breadth Self-Efficacy*

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1. Introduction

"There is an exception to every rule" is a well-known proverb in many languages. Yet, looking at organizational research, it mostly focuses on the negative side of rule breaking, neglecting the necessity of rule breaking in certain situations.

Organizational rules in general are not only essential to coordinate the behavior of organizational members, but also to make their behavior more efficient (e.g. as building blocks of routines), and last but not least, to ensure the legitimacy of their behavior (Cyert, March, & Clarkson, 1963; Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Since rules more or less describe solutions of ex-ante defined problems they are unable to guarantee efficiency in every situation (Baldwin, 1990, p. 334). In a world of complexity and change it is impossible to foresee every emerging problem in advance. Against this background, it is widely acknowledged that rule-breaking can be vital for an organization at least in some situations (Desai, 2010, p. 184), as the well-known proverb already indicates. One of the first to address the potential positive side of rule breaking was Morrison (2006) who defined this kind of rule breaking as Pro-Social Rule Breaking (PSRB). Notably, PSRB only refers to formal rules and excludes the violation of informal norms. Yet, up to this date most research is directed at the negative side of rule breaking and general destructive workplace behavior[1], which includes informal norm deviance. This research generally focuses on the different types of destructive deviance (e.g, Lawrence & Robinson, 2016; S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995), influencing factors on destructive deviance and how to avoid such behavior (e.g.Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Johnston, Warkentin, & Siponen, 2015; Peterson, 2002).

However, in recent years the positive[2] side of deviance (constructive deviance) has gained increasingly intention (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Mertens, Recker, Kummer, Kohlborn, & Viaene, 2016; e.g. Vadera, Pratt, & Mishra, 2013). Similar to the concept of destructive deviance, constructive deviance refers to any kind of norm deviance, including behaviors such as taking charge, extra-role behaviors, prosocial behaviors, creative performance, expressing voice or issue selling (Vadera et al., 2013, p. 1248). These behaviors do not necessarily violate specific and formal organizational rules. Existing studies on PSRB mainly analyzed why employees engage in such behavior. Determinants to PSRB are from

[1] The different constructs will be defined and distinguished in chapter 1.1.
[2] Positive, because of the underlying good intention and the potential benefits for an organization, as explained subsequently.

particular interest because punishment is an option when breaking formal organizational rules and yet, some employees decide to take this risk to help the organization.

However, the question arises whether managers punish this kind of rule breaking, or if they differ between the kinds of rule breaking. To be precise, whether they respond to PSRB differently than to destructive rule-breaking or if they handle both rule-breakings the same. Allowing organizational members to break rules, however, raises serious consequential management problems. Without a sanction for breaking the rule, the rule would be undermined, making it finally obsolete. For instance, it is widely accepted that employees are more likely to destructively deviate when chances of punishment are low. Previous studies have repeatedly found a significant negative relation between potential sanctioning and destructive deviance behavior (e.g. Hollinger & Clark, 1982, p. 333; Kaplan & Johnson, 1991, p. 98; Vardi & Wiener, 1996, p. 158; Grasmick & Kobayashi, 2002; Johnston et al., 2015, p. 126). In general, leadership and past management responses to deviant behavior influences future deviant behavior and is one determinant among others that influences such behavior.

A differentiation or more open formulations of rules are no alternative to solve the situation since a flood of regulations or vagueness does not give the organizational members sufficient orientation for action. Since the problem of rule-breaking can also not be solved through meta-rules of rule-breaking, the handling of such behavior is designated to management. This results in a leadership dilemma. On one hand managers are responsible for employee's rule compliance and on the other hand, must decide ex-post whether they accept an exception of this compliance. Yet, managers have a role as authority figures and must decide to punish or reward rule breaking (Bell & Hughes-Jones, 2008, p. 503). This dilemma situation especially occurs when employees engage in pro-social rule breaking, hence, want to help the organization by breaking the rule. Up to this date, it is uncertain how managers respond to such kind of rule breaking and further, how they reason their response behavior. The few existing studies analyzing managers response to PSRB found a negative response tendency by management. This is rather surprising, as PSRB can be vital for organizations. Also, in such situation's employees break rules with the primary intention of helping the organization. Therefore, it is from great interest to understand why managers respond to PSRB in a particular way, which leads to the following research question:

W*hat cues do managers use to rationalize their response behavior to PSRB?*

To fulfill this aim, it is important to understand why employees engage in such behavior and how underlying motives can be separated from destructive deviance behavior. Understanding why employees engage in PSRB can help to create an environment that supports and encourages such behavior, which again is intwined with managers responses towards rule breaking. It can help managers assess rule breaking situations better and respond dependently. To be precise, awareness about what drives employees to engage in destructive deviance and PSRB can help to increase PSRB behavior and decrease destructive deviance behavior.

A better understanding of managers responses and rationales is of great interest because it not only offers important aspects for managers to reflect on such dilemma situations but also may influence managements responses, and in consequence, future PSRB behavior. As mentioned above, potential punishment decreases destructive deviance. The same can be assumed for PSRB. Sanctioning systems are typically implemented with the intention of preventing wrongdoings and considered to be effective when they do so (Chui & Grieder, 2020, p. 1090; Mulder, Verboon, & Cremer, 2009, p. 255). This leads to the assumption that when employees believe the potential gain for the organization, hence the benefit, outweighs the potential risk of punishment, they are also more likely to engage in PSRB. This means, if managers do not differ between different types of rule-breaking, chances are high that they deterrent from all kinds of rule-breaking. However, since PSRB can be vital to organizations and can increase efficiency, customer satisfaction or help colleagues respectively subordinates (Morrison, 2006, p. 11; Dahling, Chau, Mayer, & Gregory, 2012, p. 21) it might not be reasonable for managers to suppress such behavior.

Therefore, this thesis is structured as followed (see Figure 1): As part of this introduction, I will define important terms for this thesis. Further, I will define different deviant workplace constructs, which are frequently referred to in this thesis. After this I will define PSRB in more detail and classify it to the other constructs mentioned. Subsequently, I will have a closer look at the current state of research regarding PSRB. This involves analyzing determinants[3] of PSRB. Because of the similarities to other constructs, research on these will be included. This further includes how leaders respond to PSRB. As shown in chapter 2.2, this results in a dilemma for managers. Hence, I will address leadership dilemmas subsequently.

[3] The terms determinants and influencing factors are used synonymously in this thesis

This section results in deriving the above presented research question. To answer this research question, I conducted a qualitative experimental vignette design, which is addressed in the third part of this thesis. As a result, I will present a cognitive process model on what cues managers use to rationalize their response to PSRB. Last, I will discuss my findings and how they contribute to PSRB research as well as research on deviant behavior in general before discussing practical implications as well as quality criteria and limitations.

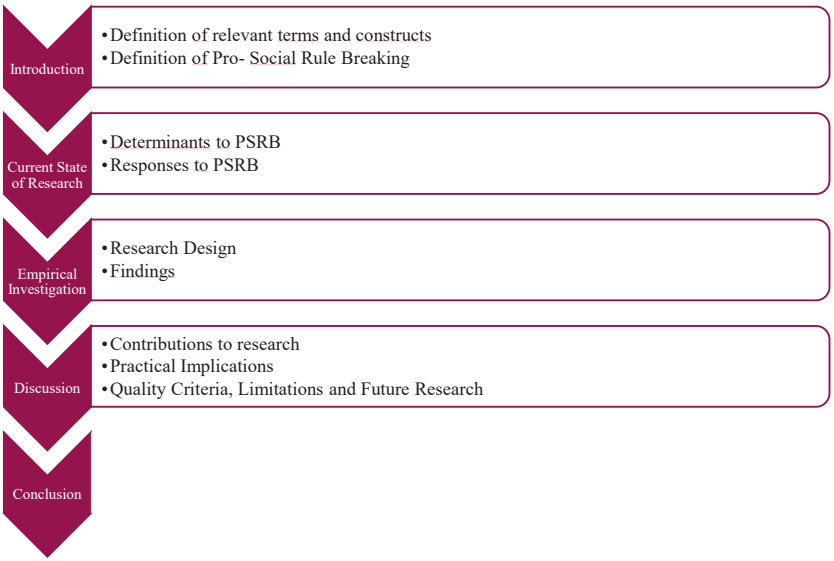

Figure 1: The structure of this thesis

1.1 Definitions and Construct Distinctions

To define and understand PSRB, it is necessary to understand the term *rules* better. Rules have a certain purpose. They serve for orientation and guidance and rule-compliance is expected not just from superiors, but also from colleagues (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). They are part of the formal system[4], which can be defined as all kinds of written measures with the intention to direct employee behavior in a way that it supports organizational goals (Falkenberg & Herremans, 1995, pp. 133–134). This means that a formal system provides guidance and uses organizational rules as an implementation tool.

[4] In contrast stands the informal system, which does not explicitly try to control behavior (Falkenberg & Herremans, 1995, p. 134).

To Schulz (2003), organizational rules are rooted "in written (or unwritten) text of the organization, embedded in organizational practice, quietly supporting the organizational structure…". Ortmann (2003, p. 11) additionally states that rules and norms are necessary to create social order and defines them as "generalizable procedures" (Ortmann, 2003, p. 34). Thus, rule following means to exercise a procedure and rule breaking, to derive from it. To Luhmann (1972, pp. 304–305) and Ortmann (2003, p. 253) rule-breaking is not just a necessary act but also an unavoidable one. The more rules and norms are established within a system (here the organization), the more likely that some are contradictory and therefore, the likelihood of breaking rules increases.

Deviant[5] workplace behavior (DWB) or employee deviance describes "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms […]" whereas organizational norms can be "formal and informal organizational policies, rules, and procedures […]" (S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Literature distinguishes between two kinds of DWB: positive, respectively constructive deviance and negative, respectively destructive deviance in organizations (Galperin & Burke, 2006; Warren, 2003).

Generally, the first addresses all kinds of deviant behavior with an underlying positive intention, thus with the intention to increase the well-being of an organization or one of its stakeholders. Whereas the second kind addresses behaviors which harm the organization or one of its stakeholders (Warren, 2003).

Constructive Deviance

The construct of constructive deviance (CD) gained wider attention over the past years. By definition, it belongs to DWB with a positive effect to the organization. Warren (2003) states that for constructive deviant behavior to be truly constructive, it is not enough to have a positive effect on the organization, but it is also necessary for the shown behavior to confirm with normative standards (see Table 1). With other words, constructive behavior can only be truly constructive, if the deviant behavior is a) helpful to the organization or one of its stakeholder and b) additionally confirms to so called hypernorms. Such norms can be seen as societal meta norms. They are fundamental to human existence and "serve as guide in evaluating lower level moral norms (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994, p. 265). Take an employee from a cruise ship, who dumps the ships waste into the ocean, instead of disposing it

[5] "deviant" generally "refer[s] to individuals who fail to obey or to conform to social norms" (Galperin, 2012, p. 2989).

rightfully as an example. This act may bring financial benefits to the cruise company, but since such behavior is globally considered as wrong and does not confirm to normative standards, it cannot be labeled as constructive deviance (Warren, 2003, p. 629). As the following table illustrates, this act by definition belongs to DD because it deviates from organizational norms as well as from hypernorms.

Table 1: Typology of Employee Deviance (own illustration based on Warren 2003, p. 629)

		Normative Standards (including hypernorms)	
		Conform	**Deviate**
Norms of reference group	**Conform**	Constructive Conformity	Destructive Conformity
	Deviate	Constructive Deviance	Destructive Deviance

Besides this consent on CD (deviance from a norm of a reference group and confirming to hypernorms), there are also many differences in existing definitions.

Vadera et al. (2013, p. 1222) use CD as an umbrella term for any behavior where an employee acts outside his or her role expectations, with a benefit to the organization. Including behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), taking charge, extra-role behavior, expressing voice, whistleblowing, creative performance and more (p.1248). This is a subject for debate, because some of these behaviors do not necessarily have to be norm deviant. For example OCB, which describes voluntary behaviors that helps the organization to function effectively, however, are not necessarily recognized by the formal reward system (Organ, 1990 cited by Galperin, 2012, p. 2990). Helping a colleague who has been absent for a while (Galperin, 2012, p. 2991; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004, p. 836) is a typical example for OCB. Yam, Klotz, He, and Reynolds (2017, p. 373) even argue that forced OCB can be a reason to deviate in negative ways, because it can give the employee a feeling of entitlement, since he has done more than he actually must. Also, some of the named behaviors are a response to DWB. For example, without deviant behavior, whistleblowing, expressing voice or taking charge, would not be necessary in the first place. Further, if the intention behind these acts is considered, whistleblowing or raising voice do

not have to be CD. External whistle blowing puts the organizations reputation in danger and can base on the intention to harm the organization, even though such behavior might conform with hypernorms. Internal whistle blowing, however, can bring attention to some wrongdoing and gives the chance for correction, saving an organizations reputation, and therefore is more likely an act with an underlying intention to help the organization. Raising voice is solely an act of criticizing. The intention behind it is to make constructive suggestions, which again can challenge the system, but doesn't have to involve violating norms (Galperin, 2012, p. 2991; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004, p. 837).

This goes along with the definition made by Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003, p. 209) and Galperin (2012, p. 2990), to whom the intention behind deviant behavior is *the* crucial point, leaving out the outcome of such. Additionally, this agrees with the general definition of DWB (as mentioned in chapter 1), which includes the intention into the definition of deviant behavior (S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Meaning, that any act with a primary intention to benefit the organization is seen as CD.

Lavine and Cameron (2012) measure CD on a performance continuum, saying everything above normal performance is CD. Therefore, to them, any unexpected success because something has been done differently, is CD. This is also debatable, because a coincidental increase in efficiency, for example, does not have to be the result of deviant behavior. Further, looking for more efficient ways to improve performance either can be the norm or can be norm exceedance, but does not have to be norm violating.

As one can see, there are many definitions for CD, which differ in small ways. Mertens, Recker, Kohlborn, and Kummer (2016, p. 1290) pointed out, that all of these definitions vary in three important ways: They either refer to an outcome or a behavior, the perception on why the outcome or the behavior is perceived as "positive" or "constructive" and on why the outcome or behavior is perceived as "deviant".

For the further course of this thesis, I will define CD as any behavior that clearly violates organizational norms but confirms to hypernorms, with a primary *intention* to increase the well-being of the organization or its employees. Therefore, aligning with Galperins (2012) definition and neglecting the actual outcome of such behavior as well as unexpected success. As explained above, a positive outcome does not necessarily have to base on deviant behavior. Further, a deviant act should be a conscious one. If there is no conscious intention behind a behavior, it is rather coincidentally positive or negative to the organization.

Destructive Deviance

Destructive Deviance (DD), can be defined as "…voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both." (S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). DD behaviors are separated into organizational and interpersonal as well as serious and minor. This means that the shown behavior either has the intention of going against the organization or individuals within the organization and is perceived as minor or serious. This distinguishment leads to four different kinds of DD (S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 565): Production Deviance (organizational and minor; e.g. leaving early or intentionally working slow), Property Deviance (organizational and serious; e.g. lying about working hours or theft), Political Deviance (interpersonal and minor; e.g. showing favoritism or blaming co-workers) and Personal Aggression (interpersonal and serios; e.g. sexual harassment or stealing from customers) .

Most of the literature researching DWB focuses on this negative side and usually investigates ways to increase rule compliance. Applebaum and Shapiro (2006) point out that about 95% of companies report some kind of deviant behavior, and about 75% report heavy destructive deviant behavior, such as theft, fraud or vandalism. 60% of all employees engage in theft at one point in their career (Litzky, Eddleston, & Kidder, 2006, p. 91). Engaging in destructive deviance can have an impact on many things. To name few, it can lead to a lack of product consistency, to higher production costs, to loss of profits or to poor service reputation (Litzky et al., 2006, p. 92). In the U.S., the estimated impact of theft and fraud is around 50$ billion every year (Applebaum & Shapiro, 2006, p. 14; Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006, p. 622) and causes 30 percent of business failures (Litzky et al., 2006, p. 92). Dunlop and Lee (2004) found empirical proof that DWB can lead to poor business unit functioning which again leads to a worse overall business performance. This explains why research has focused so heavily on employee compliance.

Yet, in the past years there was a shift and attention on positive workplace deviance has grown. However, even though the interest in constructive DWB has increased, there are only few empirical studies addressing the positive side of DWB, compared to destructive workplace behavior. Also, existing studies mainly address determinants of positive DWB, leaving out possible consequences (Mertens, Recker, Kummer, et al., 2016, p. 193).

1.2 Pro- Social Rule Breaking

In 2006 Morrison introduced a new construct, which gained interest over the past years, namely Pro-Social Rule Breaking. It is defined as "any instance where an employee intentionally violates a formal organizational policy, regulation, or prohibition, with the primary intention of promoting the welfare of the organization or one of its stakeholder" (Morrison, 2006, p. 6). Morrison explicitly says, that by rules she means formal and recorded rules, accessible to everyone within the company. Therefore, she explicitly excludes informal norms.

Katz (1964, pp. 131–132) named three types of behaviors, which are crucial for the functioning and surviving of an organizations, among them is pro-social behavior. This means, that pro-social acts are vital for organizations to function and should not be neglected or underestimated. Nevertheless, they are a difficult subject. Even though they are vital to the organization, they cannot be demanded or formally regulated, since they go beyond role-expectations[6] (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 710).

Pro-Social behaviors *in general* are non-selfish, regard the preferences of others and consider other people's utility instead of only caring about their own (Frey & Meier, 2004, p. 66). For example, helping, sharing or donating (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 710). The aim of such behavior is to "produce and maintain the well-being and integrity of others" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 710). Pro-Social *organizational* behavior derives from that, but instead of ensuring or increasing the well-being of others, the well-being of the organization and/or its members are in focus. Brief and Motowidlo (1986, p. 711) articulated three requirements for pro-social organizational behavior. First, it must be an act by a member of the organization. Second, the act must be directed at an individual, group or the organization itself. Third, the intention behind this act is to increase the welfare of an individual, group or the organization. Hence, the term "pro-social rule breaking" already highlights the good intention behind this behavior, also leaving out the actual outcome of such. The motivation behind it is mainly non-selfish and a personnel benefit is not a key driver for such acts (Fleming, 2020, p. 1195).

However, the construct seems contradictory. Rules are established for order and guidance and to act rule-compliant is part of role-expectations towards employees. Yet, "pro-social" means to act beyond role-expectations (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, pp. 712–717). Thus, if

[6] Referring to the expectation's employers have towards their employees and not inner-role-expectation's.

rule-compliance is part of the role expectations, rule breaking must be against these expectations. So how can PSRB be an act beyond role-expectations? This again shows the difficulty of PSRB, especially when researching this construct. Because even if employees break rules for benevolent reasons and even though it is essential for organizations to function, breaking rules in general is forbidden and employees can be punished for it[7].

In 1963 Bensman and Gerver already talked about the necessity of breaking rules, for organizations to function effectively. They found that in an aircraft factory rule breaking, with a benefit to the organization, is daily business. In this factory, it is typical for normal workers, to use a certain tool (the tap) even though they are not allowed to use it. They can be fired just for owning it and still regularly use it in the manufacturing process. This is mainly due efficiency reasons, to keep the production flow running steadily. The primary reason behind this rule breaking was to build the airplanes as fast as possible, with least possible interruptions. However, status within the organization evolved as a byproduct of this PSRB behavior, because still, not everyone was allowed to use the tap. The (informal) permission to use it, symbolized a higher status compared to other workers. This example illustrates that even if the main reason behind breaking rules can be to benefit the organization, a personnel benefit can occur as a byproduct (status). This example demonstrates what Morrison later defined as PSRB. In her study, she wanted to find out whether this kind of rule breaking exists and what motivates employees to engage in this behavior, even though they might not have any personnel benefits from it. She found that about 64% of the interviewed employees could name a situation in which they engaged in PSRB and further, was able to identify three different categories of PSRB (Morrison, 2006, p. 11):

1) Job efficiency,
2) Helping subordinates/ colleagues and
3) Customer service

[7] Sanctions and punishments are used synonymously in this work. Arvey and Ivancevich (1980, pp. 123–124) define punishment as: „… the presentation of an aversive event or the removal of a positive event following a response which decrease the frequency of that response." This involves either a response cost (paying a fine, repairing damage…) or the removal of something positive (withdrawal of privileges, no consideration for the next promotion). An example for an aversive event is write-ups. This explains why sanctions and punishments are used simultaneously here.
[7] This will be discussed subsequently.

Each category refers to a reason, why employees engage in such kind of rule-breaking behavior. The first category *efficiency* describes situations in which pace played an important role and where the employee felt that rule-obedience would take too much time and could therefore threaten the organizational goals. The second category *helping subordinates/colleagues* refers to situations in which organizational rules were broken to promote subordinates or colleagues. Compassion and concern play an important part here. The last category *Customer service* addresses rule breaking, in order to ensure customer satisfaction or to minimize customer disappointment (Morrison, 2006, p. 13).

Hence, commonly PSRB behavior appeared when an employee wanted to increase one of these categories. An example for PSRB that belongs to the third category is the one of an upset restaurant visitor, who (rightfully) complains to the waiter. The waiter has two options now: he can either let the customer leave upset, with the danger of him never coming back or even worse, starting a bad word-of-mouth recommendation. Alternatively, he can try to calm the customer with a free meal or voucher for example. Giving out free meals or vouchers is in fact against the restaurant policies, however, in such a situation an exception to the rule is beneficial for the restaurant in the long run (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 21).

The question arising now is where the difference between PSRB and CD lies, since both behaviors are deviant workplace behaviors and are intentional acts with the main purpose to benefit the organization. The main difference lies in the object from which one is deriving from. While PSRB is about a derivation from an explicit and formal policy, regulation or prohibition (Morrison, 2006, p. 6), CD is about a violation of informal or formal norms. This is especially important when it comes to the reactions towards these deviant acts, as it offers different possibilities to sanction them. While rule deviance can be sanctioned by the organization and can even lead to losing the job, norm deviance is usually sanctioned by the social group, which was deviated from, and at the most ends in-group exclusion. This difference could have a great impact on engaging in such behavior in the first place, because rule breaking presents a higher personnel risk as informal norm deviance. Since CD includes formal as well as informal norm deviance, PSRB can be seen as a subcategory of CD.

Yet, it is unclear whether PSRB must confirm to hypernorms. The previous given example of the employee who throws waste into the ocean cannot be seen as CD as explained above. Thus, it might be PSRB because a formal rule is broken with the intention to increase the

well-being of the organization and not for self-beneficial reasons[8]. Nevertheless, such acts that go against hypernorms typically do not fit the understanding of pro social behaviors in general. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that PSRB should also go in line with general normative standards. Concluding, PSRB can be interpreted as a subcategory of CD.

Even though the impact on PSRB in daily business is easy conceivable, still only a few researchers have acknowledged such kind of rule breaking (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 21). This could be because of its contradictory nature, which increases the difficulty to research it. However, this makes it even more interesting and necessary to bring closer understanding to it.

Functional Deviance

One last construct which I want to introduce as part of positive workplace deviance is functional deviance[9] (Luhmann, 1972; Osrecki, 2015, 2015, p. 345). This concept is rather unknown in international DWB research but due to similarities and overlaps to PSRB, it is necessary to include to get the full picture. It was first introduced by Luhmann (1972) and can be defined as any act which violates organizational rules but is somehow useful to the organization. According to Luhmann, functional deviance is necessary for any system to maintain, following the principle that exceptions prove the rule. There are two main reasons for this (Luhmann, 1972, pp. 304–305; Ortmann, 2003, p. 253):

1) Deviant behavior gives the opportunity to create something new and is needed to adapt to changes in the environment. Deviance of this kind can be the trigger to overthink the accuracy of an existing rule.
2) Social systems have controversial norm orientations and if they establish a set of formal norms, a certain amount of deviation becomes unavoidable (due to different expectations toward the system or subsystem). Different to 1) this kind of deviance is not a reason to overthink a rule. Here the deviation is based on controversial expectations; however, the rule itself is still accurate.

One popular example for functional deviance is the VW- Emission- Scandal (Kühl, 2015). Employees from VW faked the emission numbers for some cars, even though it is strictly forbidden within the company *and* by law to do so. As long as this behavior remained

[8] Assuming the intention behind it is to save money
[9] The actual term „brauchbare Illegalität“ literally translates into “useful illegality”, however, Osrecki (2015, p. 345) translated it into the more suitable term “functional deviance”.

unnoticed by the public, it was beneficial to the company because it had a positive impact on sale figures. Apparently, everyone within the department knew about it, still no one said anything. It is assumed, that this behavior was a result of unreachable target agreements connected with high bonus payments. Nevertheless, it was functional to the company until it became public (Kühl, 2015, p. 4). This goes along with every corruption case. They are clearly forbidden by organizational policies and by law, however, many employees engage in such behavior because it can be very beneficial for companies. Still, once corruptions become public, they can be very harmful to an organization (Osrecki, 2015).

The difference between PSRB and functional deviance mainly lies in the focus of the two constructs. While PSRB is an ex-ante view on rule breaking, focusing on the underlying good intention, functional deviance rather is an ex-post view, focusing on the actual outcome of deviant behavior. The good intention can be judged before engaging in rule breaking. However, whether the rule breaking is functional to an organization can only be said after engaging in the rule breaking. This further means that once a particular rule breaking behavior can be classified as PSRB, it can always be classified as such, even though the actual outcome damages the organization, as the underlying intention was to benefit it. In contrast, functional deviance can change to non-functional deviance, depending on the time of observation. The given examples regarding functional deviance show that such behavior can be functional to the organization for as long as it remains private but can damage the organization once it becomes public. Also, because functional deviance does not only refer to rule breaking but also law violations, it does not necessarily have to confirm to hypernorms as breaking the law does not fit to normative moral standards.

Concluding, even though PSRB and functional deviance have overlaps, they also have differences. Because CD as well as PSRB focus on the underlying good intention, as well as fitting to normative standards, functional deviance cannot be categorized as a subconstruct to CD.

To summarize, there are different constructs regarding deviant workplace behavior in general. Constructive Deviance as well as Destructive Deviance focus on the underlying intention when deviating from informal or formal norms. Hence, they have an ex-ante view on the deviant behavior. In contrast to functional deviance, which has an ex-post view on the deviant behavior. While CD includes formal as well as informal norm breaking, PSRB explicitly refers to breaking formal organizational rules. This difference is important when

it comes to the sanctioning potential. While CD might be sanctionable by the organization, it does not have to be. However, PSRB is always sanctionable in some way by the organization.

Figure 2 illustrates the different types of DWB:

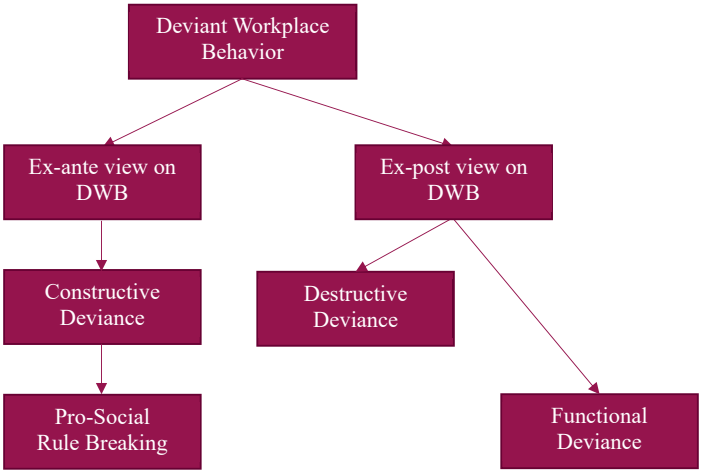

Figure 2: Different types of DWB (own illustration)

This figure focuses on constructs which either include or are mainly about breaking formal organizational rules. Consequently, constructs that focus on informal norm deviance are neglected in this figure. The four different kinds of DD are also neglected in this figure, as this thesis focuses on the potential positive side of rule breaking.

After having defined and distinguished the different relevant constructs, I will discuss the current state of research of PSRB.

2. Current State of Research

Scholars around the world increasingly researched influencing factors on PSRB over the past decade. However, this has been the key focus. Additional research is still limited compared to CD and especially to DD research. Therefore, at the beginning of this chapter I will analyze the current state of research regarding determinants to PSRB.

To test different influencing factors to PSRB Dahling et al. (2012) developed the General Pro-Social Rule Breaking Scale (GPSRBS), a questionnaire based on the three different categories of PSRB (job efficiency, help subordinates and/ or colleagues and increasing customer service). This questionnaire measures employees likelihood to engage in PSRB through self-assessment (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 23). Even if such a scale is beneficial to calculate significant correlations between different influencing factors and PSRB behavior, such a self-reported assessment should be interpreted carefully. It is possible, that employees do not give completely honest answers to such a tricky subject such as rule breaking. Their answers might be biased towards social desirability. This assumption is undermined by Morrisons research which showed that 16 out of the 40 given PSRB examples were not pro-social and rather motivated by self-interest (Morrison, 2006, p. 10). Nevertheless, it is probably the easiest and quickest way to survey employees' tendency to engage in PSRB

Because of the large overlaps between the constructs, it is possible to draw interferences from CD research to PSRB. However, to apply insights on CD research onto PSRB, it is necessary that studies base on the same definition of CD as offered in this thesis. Collected data is only transferrable if the regarding studies analyze behavior with positive intentions, matching the definition of PSRB. I will neglect studies with different definitions. When analyzing determinants to CD, researchers typically distinguish between two types of CD: interpersonal CD (ICD) and organizational CD (OCD). The first refers to acts which are directed at individuals (e.g. disobeying manager orders, to advance organizational processes), whereas the latter refers to acts which are directed towards the organization (e.g. finding creative and new ways to solve problems or challenging existing *formal or informal* norms) (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009, p. 550; Galperin, 2005, T3). Thus, formal norms are included into the second facet of CD, again highlighting the similarities between the two constructs. The most common survey used here is by Galperin and therefore bases on the same definition of CD as offered in this thesis.

This differentiation is typically also used when researching DD. Meaning, studies differ between individual-targeted destructive deviance (IDD) and organizational-targeted destructive deviance (ODD) . Because ODD as well as OCD include formal rule breaking, studies revealing significant correlations here were included.

Even though I focus on the positive side of rule breaking, I included research on DD here. First, CD and DD are often analyzed together and are often both included in one study. Second, understanding why employees engage in DD (especially ODD) can help to understand, why they engage in constructive deviance and PSRB. Last, this assumption is undermined by the fact that previous studies show that employees seem to have a general rule breaking tendency, independent of the kind. Meaning, that employees who engage in DD are also more likely to engage in CD, as shown in the next section. Therefore, it seams reasonable to include particular studies researching determinants on DD.

After giving an overview on the different determinants, I will analyze possible responses to PSRB and will argue, why responding to PSRB can lead in a leadership dilemma.

2.1 Determinants to PSRB

When it comes to rule breaking, employees generally have two options: they can either follow or break the rule (Fleming, 2020, p. 1192). Therefore, the question arises, why employees decide to break the rule, especially with the primary intention of helping the organization. As mentioned before, rule breaking can have personal consequences for the rule breaker. Yet, employees often decide to face this danger without having a direct personnel benefit from it.

For a better overview I categorized determinants based on their features. These features can be separated into personal features, (social) environmental features, leadership[10] features as well as organizational features and will be discussed subsequently. I want to mention here that some features are not completely separable and could belong to two categories. However, this assignment is not main purpose of this thesis and should rather help in increasing clarity regarding the many determinants.

[10] Leading and leadership is one key management function (Schreyögg & Koch, 2020, p. 8; Răducan & Răducan, 2014, p. 809). Hence, all managers are typically leaders. Therefore, in this thesis I will include literature on leadership. Further, the distinguishment between managers and leaders is secondary, which is why I will use these terms synonymously

2.1.1 Personal Features as determinants

Several analyzed influencing factor of PSRB can be categorized as personal features and refer to personality traits as well as personal characteristics. Hence, there are different personal features that increase or decrease the possibility of employees engaging in PSRB. Interestingly, as indicated before, there is a correlation between DD and CD behavior (Galperin, 2005, 4). This means, that individuals who tend to deviate in harmful ways, also have a bigger tendency to deviate in beneficial ways and vice versa (Galperin, 2005, 6). This relationship is also imaginable for PSRB, meaning that people who are more likely to break rules in negative ways, are also more likely to break them in positive ways, indicating that the personality might be one crucial determinant.

Flemings (2020) study showed a significant positive relationship between age and PSRB (p.1204). Hence, older employees reported more PSRB behaviors than younger employees. This could be because older employees are more experienced and have a higher ability to judge whether rule breaking is more beneficial than rule abiding. However, studies researching DD show different results. For example, Berry et al. (2007) could find low significant correlations between age and ODD (negative). Therefore, younger employees seem to engage slightly more often in destructive deviant behaviors. Even though these correlations were significant, they were very low (Berry et al., 2007, p. 415). Hollinger and Clark's (1983) findings suggest something similar, younger employees are less deterrent by certainty and severity of punishment and thus, are more often involved in theft. This indicates that younger employees engage less often in PSRB, yet more often in DD. Whereas in contrast older employees are more likely to engage in PSRB and less likely to deviate in negative ways. An explanation here could be the amount of experience that is necessary to assess a situation. Experience can help to judge whether rule breaking or rule following helps to achieve organizational goals. Additionally, older employees might have greater trust that they won't be dismissed because of breaking a rule with best intentions. On the other hand, younger employees might be more careless, naïve, and rush into decisions. However, if younger employees are less deterrent by certainty and severity of punishment, it would mean they generally break more rules, independent of the kind. Which again would approve to the fact that individuals either generally have a rule-breaking respectively norm deviance tendency, or not. Therefore, further research is necessary to understand how age influences PSRB behavior.

Next, gender influences general PSRB behavior. Shum, Ghosh, and Garlington (2020) found evidence that male hospitality employees engage in PSRB more often (p. 6). Gender identification[11] moderated and employee's level of honesty mediated this relation (p.7). Honest individuals have a higher tendency to be truthful and act rule-conform (Shum, Ghosh, & Garlington, 2020, p. 3). To be precise, males with high gender identification were less honest than women with high gender identification and engaged in PSRB more often. Shum et al. argue that society still[12] expects women more to follow rules and that they are more likely to be sanctioned for deviant behavior. These results are in line with Hollinger and Clark (1983), who revealed that next to the age, male employees are less deterrent by certainty and severity of punishment and therefore are more likely to engage in ODD. Consequently, male employees generally deviate more than females. Again, this indicates that individuals seem to have general deviance tendency, independent of the kind.

Another influencing factor on PSRB is the employees risk-taking propensity (Morrison, 2006, p. 17). This can be defined „as the perceived probability of receiving the rewards associated with success of a proposed situation, which is required by an individual before he will subject himself to the consequences associated with failure, the alternative situation providing less reward as well as less severe consequences than the proposed situation" (Brockhaus, 1980, p. 513). This means, people with a high risk-taking propensity overestimate the possibility to have success and underestimate the possibility of failure and therefore, are more likely to engage in PSRB. This goes in line with study result by Howell and Higgins (1990, p. 42), who found that risk-taking propensity is positively related to deviation from organizational norms in general. Breaking formal organizational rules makes employees vulnerable because they can be sanctioned for it. Hence, it is about taking a risk when engaging in rule breaking. Further, risk seekers could be less deterrent by potential punishment in general.

Additionally, correlations between Role Breadth Self-Efficacy (RBSE) and OCD as well as ICD could be revealed (Galperin, 2012, p. 3007). Role Breadth Self-Efficacy „concerns the extent to which people feel confident that they are able to carry out a broader and more

[11] Gender characteristics can only have an influence on behavior, when gender identification is high. A high gender identification increases the likelihood of individuals to internalize typical gender characteristics and act conform to sex-role behaviors (Shum, Ghosh, & Garlington, 2020, p. 3).
[12] Even though there has been a gender movement in the past years. The authors note this because of this movement, the influence of gender identification could become weaker in the following years (Shum, Ghosh, & Garlington, 2020, p. 8).

proactive role, beyond traditional prescribed technical requirements." (Parker, 1998, p. 835). A confidence in being successful at carrying out roles that go beyond expectations could increase the likelihood of actually engaging in such behavior, thus OCD, and most likely also PSRB.

Another determinant of OCD (but not ICD) is Machiavellianism (Galperin, 2012, p. 3006). A person with high scores in Machiavellianism is someone who acts aggressively, exploiting and deviously to achieve personal and organizational goals (Hunt & Chonko, 1984, p. 30). However, Machiavelli's shouldn't be seen as people who are generally unethical and untruthful but rather as people who are "willing to sacrifice ethics" to achieve their goals (Gable & Dangello, 1994, p. 599). Thus, they are willing to break organizational rules and policies, if these rules might hinder the accomplishment of certain goals (Galperin, 2012, p. 3006). Therefore, this personality feature can be especially relevant for PSRB, as these individuals are willing to break rules to achieve organizational goals.

Besides these personal characteristics, some personality traits impact the likelihood of engaging in PSRB. Different studies analyzed the influence of the Big 5 personality traits (Bowden, Saklofske, van de Vijver, Sudarshan, & Eysenck, 2016; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and DWB. Dahling et al. (2012) found a significant, negative correlation between self-reported PSRB and conscientiousness. Conscientiousness describes the extents to which a person is reliable, self-disciplined and ambitious. Individuals with a high level of conscientiousness are more likely to work organized and thoughtful and to set goals (Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009, p. 557) than individuals with low level of conscientiousness. Further, people with a high level of conscientiousness score higher on integrity tests and are less likely to engage in negative forms of rule-breaking (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 27). Berry et al. (2007) came to the result and found that individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are less likely to engage in ODD. It seems reasonable that conscient employees are generally less likely to break rules, independent of the type. This again fits to the assumption that individuals have a general formal and informal norm deviation tendency.

Further, neuroticism as a personality trait showed a negative influence on both types of CD, (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009, pp. 557–558). Individuals with high neuroticism scores experience more negative emotions (such as fear, anxiety and jealousy) and have a higher tendency to show low emotional adaption, compared to individuals with low neuroticism scores. This personality trait is often referred to as emotional instability or liability (Berry et

al., 2007). In contrast, emotional stable individuals are less likely to engage in both kinds of DD. Hence, emotional stability is the opposite of neuroticism and refers to the extent to which an individual is secure, relaxed, and has low anxiety and low emotionality (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007, p. 414). Yet, the study by Berry et al. (2007) showed that individuals who are emotional stable are also less likely to engage in DD: Conversely, this would mean that emotional instable employees engage more often in DD as emotional stable employees. Meaning that emotional instable employees engage less in CD, but more in DD. These results are somehow contractionary and rather surprising, as fear and anxiety should deterrent from any kind of norm or rule deviation, because of an increased fear of being sanctioned. One explanation could be that individuals who experience more negative emotions engage in DD to restore perceived justice[13]. However, future research should investigate the role of neuroticism and emotional stability more closely.

Agreeableness is another Big 5 personality trait that has a negative influence on both types of CD, (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009, pp. 557–558). A high level of agreeableness „is characterized by friendliness, warmth, adaptability and cooperation" (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009, p. 551). Hence, such individuals are less likely to deviate from norms in constructive ways. Adaptability is one element in the definition of agreeableness, which again is characterized by norm- and rule-conforming behavior. Thus, adapting to other people's behavior. Deviant behavior might cause tensions and therefore can be interpreted as unfriendly behavior, even with an underlying good intention. Therefore, this personality trait should also decrease the likelihood of employees engaging in PSRB, as rule breaking can also cause tensions.

Last, there is a positive correlation between openness to experience and OCD (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009) and a negative correlation to ODD (Berry et al., 2007). Meaning, employees with high levels on this scale rather tend to deviate in constructive than destructive ways. These individuals are more likely to be creative, independent, inquisitive, and non-conforming (Bodankin & Tziner, 2009, p. 551). As this personality trait is partly characterized by non-conformity, it is rather surprising that employees with high levels of openness to experience tend to deviate in constructive, but not in destructive ways. One possible explanation is that these individuals enjoy trying new and different ways, however, know their limits and do not want to harm the organization.

[13] The concept of perceived justice will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.1.4

To summarize, personal features that can have an impact on PSRB behavior are the general tendency to deviate from norms and rules, gender, age, risk-taking propensity, RBSE, Machiavellianism, consciousness, emotional stability (neuroticism), agreeableness and openness to experience. Yet, some of these determinants refer to CD and DD (see Table 2). Therefore, to ensure interferences to PSRB and to understand the kind of influence on PSRB, more research is necessary. This is especially true for emotional stability/ neuroticism, age and openness to experience, as the kind of influence remains unclear, especially with the assumption that individuals have a general deviance tendency, independent of the kind.

Table 2: Personal Features as Determinants

Determinant	Moderator	Mediator	Kind of influence	Construct researched	Authors
Conscientiousness	/	/	negative	PSRB	Dahling et al., 2012
				DD	Berry et al., 2007
Risk-taking Propensity	/	/	positive	PSRB	Morrison, 2006
Gender (being male)	Gender Identification	Honesty	positive	PSRB	Shum et al., 2020
	/	/		DD	Berry et al., 2007
Age	/	/	positive	PSRB	Fleming, 2020
			negative	DD	Berry et al., 2007
Neuroticism	/	/	negative	CD	Bodankin & Tziner, 2009
Emotional Stability	/	/	negative	DD	Berry et al., 2007
Agreeableness	/	/	negative	CD	Bodankin & Tziner, 2009
Openness to experience	/	/	positive	CD	Bodankin & Tziner, 2009
			negative	DD	Berry et al., 2007
DD Behavior	/	/	positive	CD	Galperin, 2005
RBSE	/	/	positive	CD	Galperin, 2012
Machiavellianism	/	/	positive	CD	Galperin, 2012

2.1.2 (Social) Environmental Features as determinants

Next to personal features there are environmental features which influence PSRB behavior. These features are often socially related, thus, referring to the social environment.

For example, when employees observe PSRB behaviors from colleagues, they are more likely to show the same behavior (Dahling et al., 2012; Fleming, 2020; Morrison, 2006). Past research has found, that before an employee engages in risk-connected behavior, he/she tries to gain as much information about how such behavior is apprehended and reacted to by others (Morrison, 2006, p. 18). This indicates that past reactions to deviant behavior influences future behaviors. If employees observe PSRB by colleagues and see that others (colleagues as well as managers) tolerate this behavior, they will assume the same tolerance for their rule-deriving behavior and thus, are more likely to engage in PSRB. Flemings (2020) study indicate that the perception of others rule breaking behavior is enough to influence own PSRB behavior, as he found that the *perceived* intensity of coworkers breaking rules already influences PSRB behavior (positive relation). Hence, when individuals think their colleagues break rules frequently, they are more likely to engage in PSRB.

Closely related to this is the informal sanctioning certainty and celerity as an influencing factor. Johnston et al. (2015) analyzed employees compliance intention by using deterrence theory as an key element. This theory goes back to the 18th century to Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham (Paternoster, 2010, p. 767), and is commonly used to explain criminal behavior. It claims that an individual chooses to break a rule or law if the benefits outweigh the risks (Johnston et al., 2015, p. 118). Concluding, when employees believe that punishment for CD or PSRB is unlikely or "soft", they will rather engage in such behavior. Their results show that *formal* sanction certainty, severity and celerity has no impact on compliance intention. However, *informal* sanction certainty and severity, as well as perceived threat severity, have an influence (p.126). Hollinger and Clark's (1982) investigation showed similar results. Threats of informal sanctions were a better predictor for DD as threats of formal sanctions. These results indicate that the decision whether to engage in rule breaking or not is rather influenced by possible informal sanctions (through colleagues, friends or family) than by formal sanctions (through the organization). Grasmick and Kobayashi (2002) investigated this influence closer and discovered, that informal sanctions in form of impending self-imposed shame and socially-imposed embarrassment, deterrents most from deviant behavior. All of these findings lead to the suggestion that PSRB

might be a circular process and is influenced by experience about past rule-breaking responses, especially by colleagues. Kaplan and Johnson (1991) research supports this suggestion. They found evidence that past destructive deviance experiences (including external and informal sanctions) influence future deviant behavior. This already highlights the importance of analyzing the responses towards PSRB, next to the influencing factors.

Further, there is a significant negative correlation between access to information and OCD, but not to ICD. Interestingly, there was no significant relation between access to resources and any kind of CD (Galperin, 2012). However, this means that employees working in an environment where they can easily access important information, are less likely to deviate from norms or rules. An explanation could be that employees with access to information have enough of such, to increase the well-being of the organization through legitimate ways (Galperin, 2012, p. 3009). However, the influence of access to information on PSRB remains unsure. On one hand, a high level of information could mean that employees know how to increase the organizational well-being through official ways, similar to CD. On the other hand, it could also mean that they have enough of such to estimate when rule breaking becomes necessary, because official ways have their limits or do not apply to every situation. Therefore, the impact of access to information on PSRB needs further research to understand the kind of influence.

In conclusion, environmental features that influence PSRB behavior are (perceived) rule breaking and norm deviance frequency of colleagues, informal sanctioning certainty and celerity (to be precise impending self-imposed shame and socially-imposed embarrassment) as well as access to information (see Table 3). Yet, the kind of influence regarding the latter remains uncertain and needs further research.

Table 3: (Social) Environmental Features as Determinants

Determinant	Kind of influence	Construct researched	Authors
Observation of colleague‘s (pro social) rule breaking behavior	positive	PSRB	Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006
Access to information	negative	CD	Galperin, 2012
informal sanction certainty and severity	negative	DD	Johnston et al., 2015
Perceived threat severity	negative	DD	Johnston et al., 2015
Impending self-imposed shame	negative	DD	Grasmick & Kobayashi, 2002
Socially imposed embarrassment	negative	DD	Grasmick & Kobayashi, 2002

2.1.3 Leadership Features as determinants

Rule breaking as well as norm deviance behavior is further influenced by leadership and their relationship to the deviant person.

In 2014 Huang, Lu, and Wang analyzed the effects of transformational leadership on PSRB, mediated by job autonomy. Job-autonomy is „the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying out” (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 258). The authors argue (2014, pp. 129–130), that transformational leaders give constructive feedback and can convince employees to act beyond their role-expectations, as pro-social behaviors request. Further, they argue, that transformational leaders give their employees more freedom, which is in line with job autonomy. These assumptions could be confirmed with their study. Transformational leadership was positively related to PSRB, and this connection was fully mediated by job autonomy (Huang et al., 2014, p. 132).

Further, the relationship quality between manager and employees influences PSRB behavior. Mayer, Caldwell, Ford, Uhl-Bien, and Gresock (2007) analyzed employee-customer and employee-supervisor relationship, and the impact it has on PSRB in a customer service context. In their study, they found a positive correlation between supervisor-employee relationship quality and PSRB. Perceived supervisor support mediates, and perceived fairness of the policy moderates this connection. This means, that if the rule in question was perceived as rather unfair and unreasonable, employees in high-quality relationship with their supervisor, were more likely to engage in PSRB as when the policy was perceived as unfair (p. 22). A perceived high-quality relationship generally increased the PSRB likelihood through perceived support. Hence, employees with a good relationship to their supervisors assumed support in their decision to engage in PSRB and thus, rather decided to engage in such behavior. Surprisingly, no such significant correlation could be found between PSRB and customer-employee relationship (Mayer et al., 2007, pp. 16–30). As transformational leaders want to transform employees' values and involve these in daily processes, it seems reasonable that they have a higher quality relationship with their employees. Therefore, leader-employee relationship could also work as a mediator or moderator between transformational leadership and PSRB.

Similar to findings discussed in chapter 2.1.2, Flemings (2020) study indicates that severity of punishment decreases the probability of engaging in PSRB behavior. As explained above, Deterrence Theory serves as an explanation here. Nevertheless, Fleming did not differ between informal or formal perceived severity of punishment, which could make a difference as discussed previously. However, it is to assume that he is referring to formal punishment, since he builds his argument on deterrence theory, which again refers to formal punishment (by the state/ police). Because managers are responsible for deciding whether to punish or not, I assigned perceived severity of punishment to leadership features. Yet, this differs from previously discussed study results, which indicate that informal perceived severity of punishment has a greater impact on DD. It could be that informal perceived threats have a greater influence when it comes to harmful deviations, as impending self-imposed shame and socially imposed embarrassment is more likely then.

Last, supervisor guidance influences DWB. There is a positive relation between supervisor guidance and DD when behavioral integrity was low (Dineen et al., 2006). Behavioral Integrity can be defined as "a pattern of word–deed alignment, rather than a specific instance" (Dineen, Lewicki, & Tomlinson, 2006, p. 624). Hence, integrity refers to a

maintained congruence of individuals personal value system and personal ideals with one's own words and actions. Supervisors' guidance is the extent to which a supervisor gives clear instructions and helps employees fulfill their tasks (p.624). Interestingly, when supervisor's guidance was generally low, behavioral integrity did not matter. Dineen et al. explain this relationship with social learning theory, which addresses the requirement for authority figures to establish espoused standards of behavior, without giving the impression of being to controlling or influence behaviors of others merely through words, without corresponding deeds (Dineen et al., 2006, p. 631). This should also apply to PSRB but the other way around. When supervisor's guidance as well as behavioral integrity is high, employees could be more likely to engage in PSRB. On one hand they have clear instructions and are supported in reaching goals (this should also apply if rule breaking is necessary to reach goals) and on the other hand, high behavioral integrity suggests that actual deeds are appreciated more than just words. Additionally, when supervisors support is high but behavioral integrity is low, employees might engage less in PSRB.

Therefore, transformational leadership and the relationship quality between leader and employee impacts PSRB behavior. Further, supervisor guidance could be an additional influencing factor mediated by behavioral integrity (see Table 4).

Table 4: Leadership Features as Determinants

Determinant	Moderator	Mediator	Kind of influence	Construct researched	Authors
Leader-Employee Relationship	Perception of policy-fairness		positive	PSRB	Mayer et al., 2007
		Perceived support		PSRB	Mayer et al., 2007
Transformational Leadership	/	Job autonomy (full mediation)	positive	PSRB	Huang et al., 2014
Perceived severity of punishment	/	/	negative	PSRB	Fleming, 2020
Supervisor Guidance	/	Low Behavioral Integrity	positive	DD	Dineen et al., 2006
Supervisor Guidance	/	High Behavioral Integrity	negative	DD	Dineen et al., 2006

2.1.4 Organizational Features as determinants

The last determinants of PSRB are somehow connected to the organization and therefore, are summarized as determinants with organizational features.

The first to mention is job autonomy (Morrison, 2006). Employees need a certain scope and means of control to break rules and to judge, whether this rule-breaking is beneficial or harmful to the organization (Morrison, 2006, p. 16). Employees with a high job autonomy are therefore more likely to engage in PSRB than employees, with low job autonomy. This goes in line with Galperin (2005, 4-6), who also found that job autonomy is a predictor for OCD moderated by RBSE.

Next to job autonomy, organizational identity influences PSRB, moderated by psychological discomfort (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017). Previous research has found ambiguous results between the relationship of organizational identity and positive DWB, leaving unclear when and why highly identified employees rather engage in rule breaking than rule abiding behavior, since they so strongly care about the organization (2017, p. 1167). Dahling & Gutsworth included psychological discomfort as a moderator to gain a better understanding on this relationship. Psychological discomfort refers to the psychological state where an employee has "…conflicting or inconsistent thoughts, such as abiding by actual norms that are less desirable than alternative norms…" (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017, p. 1170). According to the authors, a possibility to reduce this tension is to behave differently, thus, to deviate from norms or rules. This could explain why employees who highly identify with the organization tend to break rules and deviate from norms. Another explanation could be that because they care so much about the organization, they are willed to take the risk of formal and informal punishment, to fulfill organizational goals. This would mean that such employees engage in CD but not in DD.

Further, rule consistency is negatively related to PSRB behavior (Fleming, 2020, p. 1204). A strong rule consistency exists when rules are universal, thus are valid for (mostly) all entities and free from formal exceptions or selective enforcement (Fleming, 2020, p. 1200). Fleming argues that organizations with a high rule consistency signal that rule violations or selective application is unaccepted behavior. This has a deterrent effect on employees and therefore they do not engage in PSRB as often. Again, this indicates that responses to previous rule-breaking influences future PSRB behavior. Also, if rules are universal and mostly free from exceptions, they are very likely open formulated, leaving room for rule interpretation. This again could mean that employees have a higher scope of action and rule breaking happens less often, as if rules are formulated specifically and without any room for interpretation.

Next, Galperin and Burke tested the relationship between three facets of workaholism and constructive deviance. A workaholic can be defined as a person who "feels driven or compelled to work, not because of external demands or pleasure in work, but because of inner pressures that make the person distressed or guilty about not working" (Spence & Robbins, 1992, p. 161). A person who shows the following three features, can be called a workaholic: (1) they are more involved into work, (2) they feel driven or compelled to work, because of internal pressures and (3) have less enjoyment of work, compared to others in a

similar position (1992, pp. 161–162). These features resemble the three tested facets of workaholism. The authors found that enjoyment at work was significantly related to OCD (Galperin & Burke, 2006, p. 342). This connection should also be true for PSRB because individuals, who enjoy their work and deviate from norms in a positive way, should also be more likely to bend or break organizational rules, for the same reasons. This is consistent with OCB research, which proposes that employees who are positively in tune with their organization, are more likely to engage in acts of discretionary that can benefit the organization (Galperin & Burke, 2006, p. 342; Organ & Konovsky, 1989, p. 157). This again fits findings which indicate that employees who highly identify with their organization engage in CD and PSRB more often, as these employees are also in tune with their organization. Because the level of enjoyment at work is not just influenced by the individual but also by organizational features, it is listed as an organizational feature.

Besides enjoyment at work, the ethical climate and intrinsic motivation influence DD intention (Peterson, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2005). Regarding the ethical climate, the level of organizations care and concern about employees is a key variable here (Peterson, 2002, p. 56). Organizations, which are concerned about their employees, rather transmit a feeling of belonging which decreases the likelihood for DD. Employees might care more about their organization's well-being, when organizations also care about their employees. Similar to Allen and Meyer's (1990) commitment model, where normative commitment refers to organization's investments into employees and the resulting obligation to stay within the organization (tit for tat strategy). Hence, when organizations care about their employees, employees also care for their organization and do not want to harm it. Tyler and Blader's (2005) findings suggest similar. They found that employees rather follow rules because they are intrinsically motivated than told to do so (p.1143). Important variables here are individuals view about legitimacy and value congruence regarding the organization and the established rules within (p. 2005). According to Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 68) organizational characteristics can influence affective commitment[14], hence the intention to remain within the organization. Among the different kinds of commitment, affective commitment has the highest influence on intrinsic motivation (Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010, p. 233). This means that organizational features as support and care can have an influence on work experience (and whether it is perceived as enjoyable) and motivate

[14] The authors note that there are many definitions and approaches to commitment, however, most of them include the following three factors: "affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, pp. 63–64).

intrinsically. This again increases the likelihood of rule following. To conclude, rule following is more likely the result of internal process than external commands. This means employees rather follow the rule because they want to, not because they must. These findings could apply to CD and PSRB as well. This would means that intrinsic motivated employees (based on organizational characteristics) are more likely to engage in PSRB, to fulfill organizational goals. As mentioned above, when organizations care about their employees, these also care about their organization and are interested in its well-being. On one hand this leads to a decrease in destructive behavior, and could further increase constructive deviance, to fulfill organizational goals and ensure its well-being. However, this might especially occur to lower risk rule breaking because employees care highly about their organization and do not want to risk the general well-being of it.

Another interesting approach is by Ferris, Brown, and Heller (2009), who used belongingness theory to explain deviant behavior. This theory proposes that individuals have a strong need to belong to a social group or to form strong and positive relationships and constantly crave to satisfy this need. The fact that possible informal sanctions influence deviant behavior more than possible formal sanctions underlines this assumption. One important element of the theory is self-esteem. Meaning, individuals who feel accepted and belonging to a group are more confident than individuals who feel rejected by it. Organizational based self-esteem revers to the level an employee feels capable, significant and worthy at work (Ferris et al., 2009, p. 280). Their study provided evidence that organizational based self-esteem mediates the connection between organizational support and ODD. Hence, low levels of organizational support decrease organizational based self-esteem, which again increases the likelihood to engage in ODD. Conversely, this means to reduce deviant behavior it is important for organizations to support their employees to build organizational based self-esteem. These results might seem inconsistent because if an employee feels excluded from a group, a rational response is to behave in accordance with norms and regulations, to increase consensuses with the group. However, as the authors argue (p.284), individuals do not always act rational, especially when their identity is threatened.

These variables are expected to influence PSRB behavior, too. If organizational support is high, employees more likely have high organizational self-esteem. When employees feel capable, significant, and worthy at work, they might be more confident to break rules for the right reasons. Additionally, the organizational-role and position can be at risk when engaging

in rule breaking. Therefore, it is more likely for employees to take that risk when their organizational based self-esteem and organizational support is high because they can trust that their decision will find support and understanding. As stated, potential informal and formal sanctions are an important element when it comes to rule breaking and therefore a certain level of organizational based self-esteem is needed when engaging in PSRB. Nevertheless, it is also possible that organizational support and a high level of organizational self-esteem decreases the likelihood of PSRB, because employees fear social exclusion and losing benefits. Hence, it is very probable that organizational support as well as organizational self-esteem do play a role, but the direction of influence remains unclear when it comes to PSRB.

Derfler-Rozin, Moore, and Staats (2016) also argue that rule-breaking can not only be attributed to individual differences, but is also influenced by the task itself. To be precise, they found a correlation between task variety and rule breaking. Deliberative thinking mediated this relation (p.1367). The authors assume that when task variety is low, employees rely on autonomous processes, which can lead to self-serving behaviors (e.g. longer lunch breaks). However, deliberative thinking can help to overcome decision biases and reduce the impact of errors in judgment (p.1364). It is conceivable that especially deliberative thinking is a key variable when it comes to PSRB. Deliberative thinking refers to the ability to weigh different actions and their impacts. Hence, it weighs whether to break the rule or not. Deliberative thinking helps to judge whether breaking the rule increases the chances of reaching organization goals. Employees who do not engage in deliberative thinking will probably just do as they told. Thus, follow the rule.

Last to mention is the influence of perceived justice on ODD and IDD (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999, p. 1085; Berry et al., 2007, p. 416). Perceived Organizational Justice is typically distinguished in three different types. First, distributive justice, which refers to how tasks and resources are distributed within an organization. Second, procedural justice, which refers to a perception of fairness regarding how decisions are made within an organization. And last, interactional justice, which refers to perceived interpersonal treatments. For example, a received task is disliked by an employee (distributive justice), however, the approach for deciding on assignments is perceived as fair (procedural justice). Also, the way the task was transmitted by supervisors is also perceived as fair (interactional justice) (Aquino et al., 1999, pp. 1075–1076; Berry et al., 2007, p. 414). It is one of the most used concepts when explaining why employees engage in DD (tit for tat strategy), which is why

it is mentioned here. Aquino et al. (1999) investigated different kinds of perceived injustice and their influence on DD. Their findings suggest that most types increase DD intentions. Interactional justice in particular negatively affected ODD (Aquino et al., 1999, p. 1085). The study by Berry et al. (2007, p. 415) revealed negative correlations between all three types of organizational justice and ODD. Yet, its influence on PSRB is questionable since this is not an act of frustration or perceived injustice. Nevertheless, especially interactional justice could be relevant here. While it decreases chances of DD, it could increase PSRB behavior. Employees who feel treated fairly and respected, might feel like their relationship to their supervisors has a high quality. Whereas employees who feel treated unfairly and disrespected might rather perceive a low-quality relationship (see chapter 2.1.2 or Mayer et al., 2007). Yet, perceived justice is most likely secondary when it comes to PSRB and is a better predictor for DD as for PSRB.

To sum up, there are many organizational features that influence DWB. These are job autonomy, organizational identity (moderated by psychological disfomfort), rule consistency, perceived severity of punishment, enjoyment at work, organizational support (mediated by organizational based self-esteem), ethical climate, task variety and last, procedural justice. Yet, organizational features are mostly analyzed to explain DD. Therefore, influences on PSRB remain hypothetical. However, especially elements like organizational support, ethical climate, and task variety are very likely to influence PSRB behavior.

This literature review helps to understand the motivational basis for PSRB. It becomes clear that besides personality traits, leadership, the surrounding social group, and last, organizational features influence PSRB behavior. Different combinations of these variables either increase or decrease PSRB behavior. Additionally, it highlights the similarity as well as differences to other deviance constructs.

Table 5: Organizational Features as Determinants

Determinant	Moderator	Mediator	Kind of influence	Construct researched	Authors
Job autonomy	/	/	positive	PSRB	Morrison, 2006
	RBSE			CD	Galperin, 2005
Organizational Identity	Psychological Discomfort	/	positive	PSRB	Dahling & Gutworth, 2017
Rule Consistency	/	/	negative	PSRB	Fleming, 2020
Enjoyment at work	/	/	positive	CD	Galperin & Burke, 2006
Procedural Justice	/	/	negative	DD	Berry et al., 2007
Organizational Support	/	organizational based self-esteem	negative	DD	Ferris et al., 2009
Ethical climate*	/	/	positive	DD	Peterson, 2002
Task variety	/	Deliberative Thinking	positive	DD	Derfler-Rozin et al., 2016

* esp. level of organizational care and concern (Tyler & Blader, 2005)

2.2 Responses to Pro-Social Rule Breaking

Chapter 2.1 shows that leadership in particular plays an important role when it comes to PSRB. One influencing factor on PSRB that could be identified is the perceived severity of punishment, as the study by Fleming (2020) and studies regarding destructive deviance show. Also, past experiences with rule and norm deviance can influence future deviant behavior, which again is impacted by management. And further, how employees feel treated and the level of their perceived relationship quality to their supervisors influences deviant behavior. Therefore, to understand the construct of PSRB better it is not enough to discuss determinants but also to find out, what happens after employees engage in such behavior. Especially, whether supervisors punish it as any other kind of rule breaking. The current state of research indicates towards a circular process of PSRB. To be precise, past management response influence future PSRB behaviors of employees.

Organizational scholars propose three general responses to deviant behavior and rule breaking: *sanctioning*, *supporting* and *ignoring* (Geddes & Stickney, 2011, p. 203) Supporting is a positive response, typically connected to a desired behavior, whereas sanctioning is a negative response, typically aligned to undesired behavior (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008; Lin, Mainemelis, & Kark, 2016). Ignoring refers to the absence of both, hence, to not respond at all.

Rule breaking typically should be punished, since it generally represents an undesired behavior otherwise the rule would be undermined. Sanctioning demonstrates that this kind of behavior is not tolerated within the organization and deterrents other employees from breaking rules. This, however, especially counts for harmful rule breaking. When the rule breaking is beneficial to the organization, it is suggested that rule breaking should not be sanctioned but instead should be ignored (Luhmann, 1972, p. 313). It cannot be acknowledged because then it must be sanctioned, to constraint others from engaging in rule breaking, or alternatively the rule must be changed. Hence, according to Luhmann, the response to rule breaking should base on the impact on the welfare, neglecting the good intention behind the act. When rule breaking is functional to an organization, ignoring as a response can be advantage because this way the rule breaker must not be punished and the rule itself does not need to be changed. And indeed, Karelaia and Keck (2013, p. 783) found that sanctioning is more likely – especially for employees in a leading position – when organizational harm is high. However, Arvey and Ivancevich (1980, p. 125) stated that managers always have to consider the potential harm if nothing is done versus potential side

effects of punishment such as emotional response or the urge for revenge. Sanctioning an employee for something he/she did with good intentions, even if they are only verbally warned, makes the occurrence of such side effects even more likely. Also, based on the analysis in chapter 2.1 it is very likely that it would decrease future PSRB behavior and could even increase future DD behavior because of a feeling of injustice. Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara (2011) findings reinforce this assumption. He found that a high level of punishment can lead to a low level of perceived procedural justice, which can in the end increase destructive deviant acts (see chapter 2.1). Morrison and Milliken (2000) argue that managers can perceive rule-breaking as threatening or as a critique of their competences and therefore might ignore the rule-breaking, to avoid any kind of reaction. Therefore, it is from great importance that managers assess rule breaking situations carefully and respond with caution.

Fraedrich and Ferrell (1992) transmitted insights from ethical theory to managerial decision making. There are different moral philosophies in ethical research, among them Deontology and Teleology (Utilitarianism)[15]. The authors transferred this distinction onto management and their underlying morality. The teleological management type focuses on the moral worth of behavior, which is determined by the consequences of this behavior (p.246). The deontological management type in contrast focuses on the underlying intention, and not on the results of a behavior. This is especially from interest, because it suggests that the underlying intention of an act is – at least to some managers – more important than the actual outcome. When it comes to PSRB, a good intention is given, whereas a good outcome is not ensured. Aim of their research was to find out, whether management stick to their underlying morality when it comes to ethical decision- making or whether it varies. In their study, only 15% of the respondents remained constant in their moral philosophy. The authors argue that depending on the situation, managers may change the importance of values (p.248). This indicates that depending on the situation, managers focus either on the intention or on the result of a behavior. Only few managers seem to make this decision independent to the situation.

[15] Fraedrich and Ferrell (1992) defined teleology as a subcategory of utilitarianism. Today ethical research mainly distinguishes between Deontology and Utilitarianism (Macdonald & Beck-Dudley, 1994; Alder, 1998). Utilitarianism and Teleology are very similar approaches and literature does not agree upon a definition. However, this discussion is not from interest here and therefore will be neglected.

Therefore, the question remains whether managers rather focus on the outcome (reaching organizational goals) or the intention and what such situational variables are that lead to a change in managers values.

Up to this date there are only two studies which directly address managers responses to PSRB (Dahling et al., 2012; Ghosh & Shum, 2019). Next to their determinant research mentioned in the previous chapter, Dahling et al. (2012, p. 28) formulated an exploratory question, about the relationship between PSRB and performance ratings. They found a negative tendency between supervisor's performance ratings and PSRB. They argued, that this might be due to the fact, that supervisors are "rule enforcers" (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 32) and thus, have to evaluate rule-breaking as negative. Therefore, they implemented an additional study in which they analyzed the connection between coworkers, who do not have a responsibility for rule enforcement, and PSRB (informal threat of punishment). Again they found a negative relationship (Dahling et al., 2012, p. 36). There are two possible explanations for these findings. First, their findings base on self-evaluated PSRB behavior. Morrison (2006) mentioned in her work, that many acts are labeled as "intentionally beneficial to the organization", however, often are rather beneficial to the individual. Hence, individuals might believe they engage in PSRB[16] often, when, they are not. Thus, get a lower performance rating. This again highlights the problem of self-evaluation. The second explanation is offered by the authors and already mentioned above. Supervisors[17] could see themselves as "rule-enforcers" whose job it is to ensure rule compliance.

Ghosh and Shum (2019) followed Morrison's (2006) first procedure and asked for specific rule breaking behaviors and further, how supervisors handled the situation. Based on their findings, when employees broke a rule to help coworkers, they faced modest consequences (p.23). Yet, it is not mentioned what these modest consequences looked like in detail. When breaking a rule to increase efficiency, employees received minor verbal warnings (p.25). Last, when they broke rules to promote guest services most employees did not face any consequences and at the most again received minor verbal warnings. Thus, this study indicates an ignoring response to PSRB with a slightly negative tendency. The kind of PSRB

[16] Because the researchers used a self-observatory survey to find out, how often employees engage in PSRB. This self-evaluation can be biased.

[17] The terms *manager*, *leader* and *supervisor* are used synonymously. Even though they differ in their definitions, they also have similarities. Important for this thesis are the similarities: both have subordinates and the right to impose disciplinary consequences.

(to increase efficiency, to promote customer service and to help coworkers), or the intention behind it, did not influence the way supervisors reacted. However, the reasons why managers respond this way remain unclear.

However, the negative tendencies the two studies show are in a way surprising. On one hand, as argued before, rule breaking generally should be punished, which would explain the negative tendency. However, on the other hand this would mean that the underlying intention and/ or reaching organizational goals is rated as less important than rule compliance.

As pointed out, it is widely acknowledged that rule-breaking can be vital for an organization at least in some situations (Desai, 2010, p. 184). Allowing organizational members to break rules, however, raises serious consequential leadership problems. This could explain the rather negative reactions to PSRB by supervisors. Without a sanction for breaking the rule, the rule would be undermined, making it finally obsolete. Additionally, as discussed in chapter 2.1, it is widely accepted that employees are more likely to destructively deviate when chances of punishment are low as previous studies have repeatedly found a significant negative relation between potential sanctioning and destructive deviance behavior (e.g. Hollinger & Clark, 1982, p. 333; Kaplan & Johnson, 1991, p. 98; Vardi & Wiener, 1996, p. 158; Grasmick & Kobayashi, 2002; Johnston et al., 2015, p. 126). Therefore, sanctioning systems are typically implemented with the plain intention of preventing wrongdoings and considered to be effective when they do so (Chui & Grieder, 2020, p. 1090; Mulder et al., 2009, p. 255).

As deterrence theory suggests, when employees believe the potential gain for the organization, hence the benefit, outweighs the potential risk of punishment, they are more likely to engage in PSRB. This means, if managers do not differ between different types of rule-breaking and generally act as “rule-enforcers”, as suggested by Dahling et al. (2012), chances are high that they deterrent from all kinds of rule-breaking. Yet, as previously discussed, PSRB can improve efficiency, customer satisfaction and help colleagues or subordinates (Morrison, 2006, p. 11; Dahling et al., 2012, p. 21). Therefore, it might not be reasonable for managers to suppress such behavior as indicated by the two studies above.

One solution could be to formulate rules more openly. However, it is questionable whether this is a reasonable alternative because too many regulations or imprecise rules do not give employees enough orientation for action. Because this problem can also not be solved through meta-rules of rule-breaking, the handling of such behavior is assigned to

supervisors. It is expected that managers should deal with rule-breaking behavior of their followers on a case-by-case basis. This consequently means that leaders in such situations face competing demands (reaching goals and ensuring rule compliance). As discussed subsequently, this results in a dilemma for managers.

2.3A Leadership Dilemma

Organizations regularly face competing demands (e.g. Gaim, Wåhlin, e Cunha, & Clegg, 2018; Rothman & Melwani, 2017; Smith, 2014). One effect of such competing demands are dilemmas (Gaim et al., 2018, p. 2). Dilemmas are either-or situations (Chong, 2021; Gaim et al., 2018; Janssens & Steyaert, 1999; Smith, 2014), where no choice can be particularly preferred or is specifically desirable or advantageous (Chong, 2021, p. 9). Hence, even though this seems to be an impossible choice do make (Janssens & Steyaert, 1999, p. 122), dilemmas can be resolved by making this choice and choosing one alternative over the other (Gaim et al., 2018; Smith, 2014). Employee's decision to engage in PSRB already represents such a dilemma situation. They can choose to either break the rule and potentially increase the organizations well-being, yet, risking sanctioning's; or to obey to the rule, even though it might not be in the organizations best interest, yet, not becoming vulnerable for potential consequences. As indicated before, when managers are confronted with PSRB, they face competing demands which brings them into this dilemma situation.

They are responsible that organizational members comply to rules but at the same, must decide ex-post whether they accept an exception of this compliance. Managers "in their role as authority figures" have to decide whether to punish or reward such kind of behavior (Bell & Hughes-Jones, 2008, p. 503). This dilemma situation for managers is especially evident when a follower's behavior is not harmful but demonstrates to be beneficial. Especially because it is also their responsibility to ensure reaching organizational goals. As mentioned in chapter 1.1, rules are implemented with the main intention of reaching organizational goals. Consequently, leadership in such situations face competing demands, which results in a dilemma because managers must decide whether rule compliance or reaching organizational goals is more important. This situation becomes even more tricky, when employees break rules with best intentions and in the end harm the organization. The intention is still good, however, neither rule compliance nor reaching organizational goals is ensured. This is especially problematic because intention is a hypothetical construct and is a question of perception. This means, even though the actual intention might be good, it can be questioned by managers or not be recognized as such. Thus, if the intention is perceived

as bad and/ or PSRB leads to a decrease of the organizational welfare it is more likely that managers will punish such behavior. Consequently, in future situations employees are less likely to engage in PSRB. This again leads to the problem that rule breaking can be vital for organizations and reaching goals and should not generally suppressed.

Ignoring such situations seems to be an easy solution here, as managers avoid handling this dilemma situation and making this impossible choice. However, ignoring as a strategy leaves employees uncertain. They cannot know whether managers actually did not recognize the rule breaking, or if it is their way of showing their support, accepting such behavior. Also, it can send the wrong message. Employees could interpret it as a sign of weakness and that their supervisor generally avoids conflict situations.

Again, this shows that it is vitally important that managers assess rule breaking situations with great sensibility and respond on a case-by-case basis.

As there are many different kinds of dilemma situations and no general solution how to make this "impossible decision" (Janssens & Steyaert, 1999, p. 122), it remains unclear how managers solve this difficult situation.

Based on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), when individuals hold two or more inconsistent cognitions (for example ideas, attitudes, beliefs or opinions) they experience a state of tension (Festinger, 1957; Hinojosa, Gardner, Walker, Cogliser, & Gullifor, 2017; Lowell, 2012; Smaili & Arroyo, 2019). This cognitive dissonance can appear when leaders must make a difficult decision. In order to reduce the tension they feel a need to justify their decision either before or after making it (Hinojosa et al., 2017, p. 176; Smaili & Arroyo, 2019). Through justifying as a rationalization strategy, one reduces the tension between inconsistent or dissonance cognitions. Prior literature suggests that the decision maker engages in "selective information processing", focusing on positive elements of the preferred alternative and negative elements of the rejected alternative (Hinojosa et al., 2017, p. 176; Russo, Medvec, & Meloy, 1996, p. 103). In the context of PSRB, managers must decide whether they focus on rule compliance, reaching organizational goals or the underlying intention, as these factors can be contractionary and/ or not obvious. This could lead to such a cognitive dissonance. Rationalizing the choice made can be one possible response by individuals in dilemma situations (Chong, 2021, p. 3). Hence, in situations where managers are confronted with PSRB, they will rationalize their decision to either focus on rule compliance (punish rule breaking) or organizational goals (support or ignore rule breaking),

through focusing on positive elements of the decision and negative elements of the rejected alternative. Additionally, when PSRB leads to a decrease of organizational welfare managers might still not punish this behavior, because of a perceived good intention (referring to ethical theory as explained previously). This again indicates that the way managers respond depends widely on how they *perceive* the situation (including the underlying intention). Respectively, that managers will interpret the situation in a way that *justifies* their response strategy. This goes hand in hand, as individuals process information selectively, which leads to a certain perception of a situation, focusing on positive elements that support the chosen response behavior and negative elements for the rejected alternatives. However, elements, or relevant cues (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), that influence the perception of the given situation and are used to justify the response behavior, are either implicit and/or not well reflected.

Rationalization must be separated from sensegiving. As sensegiving involves creating plausible images about what people do, one could argue that it is very similar. According to sensegiving research, it is a fundamental leadership activity to influence their followers meaning constructions (Maitlis, 2005). However, sensegiving involves creating plausible images about what people are doing in a *retrospective* (Weick et al., 2005). This is different to rationalizing. Here, it is less about making sense of an employees' behavior from a retrospective, but rather about justifying the self-related decision on how to respond. Different cues are perceived and considered unconsciously, before a decision is made on how to respond. Hence, it is less about constructing a certain image to give sense to a situation and more about legitimizing the decision on how to respond to an ambiguous situation.

Legitimacy is a crucial topic in organizations in general (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Vaara & Tienar, 2008). Boyce (1996, p. 5) defines legitimation as "the process by which people construct explanations and justification for the fundamental elements of their collective, institutionalized tradition". It is a process that handles a certain problem or action in question (Vaara & Tienar, 2008, p. 986). Rationalization and legitimation are closely linked, as rationalization is legitimation by referring to the value of certain actions (Vaara & Tienar, 2008, p. 988). To be precise, rationalization, among others, is a specific legitimation strategy and justification, is again a particular rationalization strategy. By focusing on positive aspects and neglecting negative ones of a chosen action (processing information selectively to justify the action), it gives the action value and legitimizes it.

In 2003 Geppert analyzed legitimation in Multinational Corporations, including legitimizing decision-premises within these. This already indicates the necessity of legitimation processes when it comes to decision-making. In his results he offers a political sensemaking approach which involves stories to legitimate decision-making premises. Similar to Weick (1995), he sees stories as narratives where "experience is filtered and given a particular order. They are cues within frames that are also capable to create frames." (Geppert, 2003, p. 324). According to Weick (1995, p. 111) frames are "past moments of socialization and cues tend to be present moments of experience." This again points out the similarities between the concepts and fits my idea of analyzing cues that are used to justify responses to PSRB. Responses to deviant behavior in general depends on how a situation is experienced and on how different cues are perceived. These cues are used to rationalize the decision.

Therefore, the question is what elements influence the perception of a given situation and justify a particular response. Because there exists no research on PSRB regarding this subject, I will subsequently discuss (situational) elements that influence the response towards proactive behavior as well as deviant behavior in general, as both constructs are related to PSRB. These elements could serve as cues to justify the decision on how to solve the dilemma, hence, to rationalize the kind of response behavior to PSRB.

Proactive behavior describes anticipatory actions (behaviors) by employees that influence themselves and/or their environment, thus, employees actively take initiative to have an impact on themselves or their surroundings (Crant, 2000, p. 436). This behavior often describes extra-role behavior (meaning the acts are always outside the boundaries of employee's roles (Grant & Ashford, 2008, p. 9)). This description fits my understanding of PSRB. When engaging in PRSB, an employee actively anticipates in having an influence on the organization ('s welfare) and this engagement lies outside the employees' boundaries. Therefore, supervisors' responses towards proactive behavior and PSRB might have similarities.

Grant and Ashford (2008) argue that the response towards proactive behavior will depend on how others evaluate it. Thus, on the perception of coworkers. If colleagues perceive actions as interpersonally or organizationally beneficial, they are more likely to respond positively. Contrary, when colleagues perceive these actions as interpersonally or organizationally harmful, they rather respond negatively. They additionally argue that reactions by management can be both, positive and negative at the same time. This goes in

line with Luhmann (1972) arguments and points out, that next to the actual outcome of PSRB (increase vs. decrease of welfare), the perception by others also plays a role. Hence, the perception by others can influence managements perception. Yet, managers might not know how others perceive proactive behavior. Still, this could explain the rather negative reactions to PSRB in the studies conducted by Dahling et al. and Shum et al., as they did not include the actual outcome of PSRB in their studies. However, Ghosh and Shum (2019) mention that especially when engaging in PSRB to help colleagues, coworkers are very likely to perceive this kind of rule-breaking as positive. Yet, it still led to modest consequences.

The question arises when colleagues perceive deviant behavior as positive respectively negative. Hochstein, Bonney, and Clark (2015) wanted to identify elements that will lead to an either positive or negative coworkers perception of rule-breaking behavior. In their qualitative study, they found the following elements to be relevant for the perception of deviant behavior: motivation, temporal, and financial.

1. *Motivation* refers to the underlying motive when engaging in deviant behavior. Is the aim to increase efficiency or to advocate customers, the perception of the deviant act is more likely to be positive, as if it is an emotional act, or a result of casual thinking. In addition, perception is more likely to be negative when customer advocacy is too excessively.
2. *Temporal* refers to time-based features of the deviant behaving person. When the deviant acting person has been a member of the organization for a long time, his frequency of deviant acts is low and the rules and norms he derives from vary, colleagues will more likely perceive these acts as positive. Contrary, colleagues are more likely to label them as negative, when the deviant acting person has a short tenure and often deviates from the same rules or norms (high frequency and low variation).
3. *Financial*[18] factors refer to the value of the person who engages in deviant behavior and the actual return of that behavior. If the person has a high value to the organization and if the outcome of the act is positive, colleagues will more likely perceive this deviant behavior positively. If the person on the other hand has a low organizational value and if the actual outcome of the act is negative, colleagues will rather perceive it as a negative behavior. These findings suggest

[18] This terminology is taken from Hochstein et al. (2015).

that the underlying intention behind rule-breaking, as well as the actual outcome do play an important role in the perception by others, thus, as previously explained, also in the kind of response by the supervisor.

According to the research by Grant, Parker, and Collins (2009), supervisors' reaction towards proactive behavior partly depends on what employees' value. If an employee engages in proactive behavior, who generally has high prosocial values, he/she is more likely to get a higher performance rating. In contrast to this are employees with low prosocial values. If such employees engage in proactive behaviors it does not impact their performance ratings (Grant et al., 2009, p. 44). An explanation could be that employees with high prosocial values express these more often and thus, management is more likely to recognize and attribute these values to the employee. This again can influence how managers evaluate the underlying intention, as this is a matter of perception as pointed out before. It is very likely that when employees often express prosocial values that managers will rather recognize a good intention behind their acts and vice versa. Consequently, managers response to PSRB might also be influenced by the rule breaker him- or herself. Who breaks the rule could influence managers perception of a situation, based on a given personal history.

Another study to mention is by Röder, Wiesche, Schermann, and Krcmar (2014), who wanted to find out under which circumstances leaders tolerate respectively punish workarounds. Broadly spoken, workarounds are deviations from routines that challenge process standardization (p.1). The fact that management has the possibility to punish workarounds indicates a similarity to rule breaking. Commonly literature associates' workarounds with performance loss (thus, consider it to be DD); however, the authors note that workarounds can also base on the intention to improve performance (thus, to be CD). Looking at the different workarounds identified in their study, the similarity to rule breaking becomes even more obvious. Identified workarounds for example are downloading patient records from a secure information system onto an USB stick, keep standard passwords (even though they were the same for every employee) or making orders based on unofficial forecasts (p.5). To every identified workaround, they name possible organizational benefits as well as harms. This again highlights the similarity between workarounds and rule breaking because both can be beneficial or harmful to the organization. Yet, the underlying intention remains unclear and is not part of this construct. The authors conducted interviews to gain an understanding about management toleration of workarounds. Based on these interviews

they proposed that when efficiency gains can be expected, leaders are more likely to tolerate workarounds. However, they further proposed that when employees do not act conform to sets of systemic rules, they are more likely to be punished.

This again raises the question, whether the expected efficiency gain (potential benefit to the organization) outweighs the negativity of rule breaking (not conforming to a set of systemic rules) in general and which of the proposed cues has the stronger influence on managers willingness to tolerate or punish workarounds. Nevertheless, the underlying intention was not included in this study, and the sole focus was the differentiation between organizational benefit and harm. However, it is an additional indication that the organizational output does play an important role when it comes to supervisors' response towards deviant behavior. Yet, it remains unclear if and how the underlying intention influences response behavior.

Thus, the actual outcome of the rule-breaking could explain why the responses were rather negative, in the two studies that analyzed responses to PSRB by management. Especially the study by Ghosh and Shum (2019) included good intentions when engaging in rule-breaking, as well as different types of PSRB, yet, the reactions had a rather negative tendency. However, when employees engaged in destructive rule-breaking with no good underlying intention, they said that they would probably face severe consequences, if supervisors found out about the rule-breaking. Yet, because they have not, this remains unsure. It could be that managers generally tend to ignore rule breaking to avoid conflict situation, independent to whether rule breaking is beneficial or harmful. Nevertheless, employees assume heavier consequences when rule-breaking is destructive with no underlying good intention. Which again should decrease destructive deviance intentions. This again indicates that employees assume that the underlying intention influences leader's perception and is less likely to be punished. Yet, the question remains how supervisors respond to PSRB and what cues influence their perception and are used to rationalize their decision, as there is no obvious answer on how managers should solve this dilemma situation.

3. Interim Conclusion

The theoretical investigation shows that there are many different determinants that influence deviant behavior, in particular PSRB behavior. Features of these determinants can be allocated into different categories: personal features, (social) environmental features, leadership features and organizational features (see Table 2 to Table 5). Especially leadership plays an important role here, as managements response influences future PSRB behavior (Table 4). Thus, PSRB is a circular process: Past experiences as well as observations of others rule breaking behavior influence the perceived severity of punishment, which again influences future PSRB behavior. Even though management response plays an important role here, it has not been sufficiently studied by prior research.

Hence, it remains unclear how and especially why managers respond to PSRB in a certain way. When managers are confronted with PSRB they are in a dilemma situation, as they face competing demands. Previous studies do not give enough insights here and the question remains, whether managers focus on reaching organizational goals or employees rule compliance and what role the underlying intention plays. Managers on one hand must ensure rule compliance and on the other hand reaching organizational goals. Thus, they must decide whether to sanction well-intended rule breaking or not on an individual case basis. However, the underlying intention is a question of perception, as managers can only assume what the intention behind such behavior is. Further, it is not enough to distinguish between sanctioning, ignoring, and supporting here. For example, as pointed out by Grant and Ashford (2008), leaders reaction to proactive acts can be positive and negative at the same time[19]. This response could also occur towards PSRB because of the given dilemma situation. The studies by Dahling et al. (2012) and Ghosh and Shum (2019) indicate that managers respond rather negatively in such situations. The authors offer assumptions regarding this reaction. Therefore, the question how managers rationalize their response to PSRB, is from great interest. This helps to understand how and why they respond in a certain way. However, to understand how they rationalize their response behavior, it is necessary to evaluate the kind of response first. To be precise, to understand the rationalization of their response strategy, it is necessary to analyze how they would respond at first.

The literature review based on proactive and general deviant behavior indicates that the way managers respond to PSRB could vary and depend on the situation. Summarized, the

[19] From the employees' point of view: Negative is sanctioning and positive is supporting.

following elements could influence the kind of response towards proactive and general deviant behavior and serve as cues to rationalize the decision on how to solve the dilemma: (1) the actual outcome of the behavior, (2) the underlying intention, and (3) the perception of colleagues towards the deviant act. The latter is influenced by the underlying motive behind such behavior (motivation), the organizational tenure of the deviant person as well as his/ her deviation frequency (temporal factor), and the value of the deviant acting person to the organization (financial). The fact that leader's response to deviant behavior is partly influenced by the perception of others of the given situation, indicates towards an existing social pressure. Others seem to have certain expectations and there is a pressure to meet these expectations as their supervisor. On one hand, the underlying motive (intention) is important to colleagues, and on the other hand is the actual outcome of deviant behavior. These expectations seem to differ depending on who acts deviant. This goes in line with findings by Grant et al. (2009), who found that managers value employees more if they have high prosocial values.

All this highlights the complexity of the situation, and the dilemma managers are in. Especially because elements such as the perception by others or the underlying intention might not be obvious and sometimes can only be assumed.

Based on cognitive dissonance theory, individuals use justifying as a rationalization strategy, to reduce cognitive tension, when they must make difficult decisions. How to respond to PSRB is such a difficult decision as it puts managers in a dilemma situation. As the literature review shows there is no clear strategy or answer that addresses this matter. Rule-breaking should generally be punished. However, this is too short-sighted, especially when considering the potential side effects of punishing. Side effects can be preventing such kind of rule-breaking in the future, even though it can be very important and beneficial for organizations, loss of employee motivation, feeling of injustice among employees and more. This demonstrates the importance of managers responding carefully to rule breaking. Acting as general "rule enforcers" could harm the organization in the long run. Also, this would mean that rule compliance is more important than reaching organizational goals even though rules are mainly implemented with the intention to ensure reaching goals. Yet, the two existing studies point to a punishment-tendency (bad performance ratings and verbal warnings). However, these studies did not include the actual outcome. Further, as these results base on a self-assessment of ones PSRB behavior, it leaves out how others (colleagues as well as managers) perceived the situation, particularly the underlying intention. Also, it

cannot be sure that behaviors actually belonged to PSRB. As Morrison pointed out, some behaviors are labeled as "pro social", when they are not. Yet, cues to rationalize the response behavior are especially from interest here, as they can help to understand why managers react to PSRB in a certain way.

Thus, the question remains W*hat cues do managers use to rationalize their response behavior to PSRB?*

To be precise, how do managers justify the way they respond? To analyze this, it is necessary to first understand how managers respond to PSRB in the first place. Do they sanction, support, or ignore such behavior, or do they respond in a way, which has been neglected up to this point?

Addressing this research gap is from great interest, as it helps to understand how and why managers respond to PSRB in a certain way, based on a case-by-case basis. Previous research indicates that there are many different elements that can influence the perception of a situation (referring to the perception of colleagues as well as supervisors). Yet, these elements can be contractionary (good intention and bad outcome), especially when it comes to PSRB. Also, previous research addressed general deviant behavior as well as general proactive behavior. Hence, there is a research gap regarding PSRB. Up to my knowledge, there is no existing study that aims at understanding how managers rationalize their response behavior to PSRB. Yet especially PSRB results in a leadership dilemma, different to other deviant or proactive acts. This makes a better understanding even more interesting and important. The two discussed studies by Dahling et al. & Shum et al. indicate towards a punishment response behavior to PSRB by management. To understand this tendency, it is essential to find out what cues managers use to rationalize their decision on how to respond and what influences their perception of the situation. Gaining understanding here is especially important to sensibilize managers about the importance of their behavior regarding rule breaking situations.

Four potential cues could be derived from similar research streams (outcome, intention, perception by others, employees' value). However, an underlying good intention is part of the definition of PSRB. Therefore, when it comes to true PSRB a good intention is always present. Yet, the good intention is a question of perception. Further, as discussed above, when engaging in PSRB the perception by coworkers is on one hand likely to be positive (because of the underlying motive, hence, the underlying good intention) and on the other

hand, is influenced by the actual outcome of the behavior. In situations where employees break a rule with the main intention to help the organization, others are more likely to perceive the deviant act as positive when the outcome is beneficial to the organization, and as negative, when the act harms the organization. This leaves the actual outcome of PSRB (increasing or decreasing an organizational welfare) as a key variable to research here as it seems to influence the perception of coworkers and management. Also, the dilemma is especially present when the rule breaking outcome is positive, as managers must weigh between the importance of rule compliance and reaching organizational goals. Yet, even when the outcome is bad managers are still in a difficult decision, as they must decide whether to sanction well-intended rule breaking or not. Further, it remains unclear if and how the outcome influences the perception of the situation and whether a bad outcome rather leads to a negative perception, as the underlying intention is still good. Yet, it could be that a bad outcome also influences the perception of the intention. Meaning, that when PSRB is harmful to the organization, the underlying intention is not perceived as good.

Thus, focusing on the outcome as a key variable here could give greater insights on the rationalization process and cues used to justify the decision. Including the outcome into the research brings managers in the described leadership dilemma. It increases the difficulty of the situation to managers. Hence, the outcome should not be neglected as it has been by previous research.

Consequently, the research question should be addressed with a special focus on the PSRB outcome. To address this research gap, an empirical investigation is needed. Figure 3 summarizes the current state of this thesis as well as the presented research question.

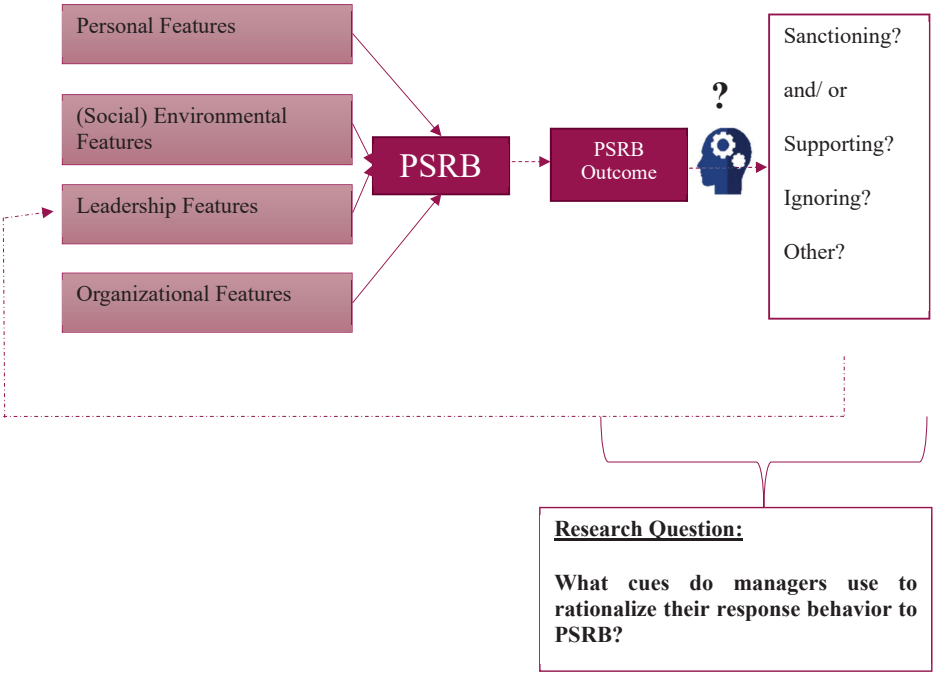

Figure 3: Interim Conclusion

4. Empirical Investigation

To answer the proposed research question and understand how, and especially why managers respond to PSRB in a particular way empirical research is necessary.

When collecting empirical data, one must disclose the methodological approach. This means to document the insights carefully and to make each step in the process transparent. This is important to ensure a high quality of the study as discussed later in chapter 5.4. To make the following study comprehendible, I will conceptualize the empirical investigation and explain its structure in this section. To be precise, I will discuss which study design and data collection method serves the purpose of this thesis and can generate insights which allow to answer the presented research question. Afterwards, I will present my findings and offer a process model of rationalization.

4.1 Research Design

The first step of the research process is to identify a suitable research design. The research design "concerns issues of how to plan a study" (Flick, 2014, p. 112), or as Yin (2014, p. 28) puts it "research design is *a logical plan for getting from here to there*"[20]. Thus, in this chapter I will discuss the overall plan and design-decisions, with the aim to satisfy the research question.

Generally, there are three designs to choose from: (1) a quantitative research design (2) a qualitative research design and (3) a mixed-method design (e.g.: Kelle, 2008, Mey & Mruck, 2010, Creswell, 2010 or Bryman & Bell, 2015). The choice of research design is "based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers' personal experience, and the audiences for the study" (Creswell, 2010, p. 3). As the author points out, qualitative and quantitative should not be seen as opponents, but rather as two ends on a continuum. In the middle of this continuum are mixed-methods, since they include elements of qualitative and quantitative research.

Following Creswells' (2010) logic, I will explain why a qualitative research design serves best in order to fulfill the aim of this paper.

Qualitative research is commonly used to explore unanticipated issues (Ritchie & Lewis, 2014, p. 48) and therefore has the aim of theory generation or elaboration (Bryman & Bell,

[20] italic highlighting in original

2015, p. 38; Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 38). To fulfill this aim, it follows an inductive tactic regarding the relationship between research and theory.

“The starting point for the development of theory is usually provided by everyday contexts, which researchers find interesting. On this basis, aim is to get to generalizations respectively theoretical concepts. The figure of thought that is applied here is that of transcendence of the particular/empirical to the general/theoretical. Such conclusions are often characterized by the term induction” (Breuer, 2010, p. 39).

This definition points out another key element of qualitative research, namely the everyday context. The given context determents human behavior and thoughts, which makes it reasonable to analyze them within this very (Gillham, 2000, p. 11). While quantitative research typically neglects the research context, qualitative research includes it. Here it is from special interest to understand social phenomena, through analyzing peoples opinion (Creswell, 2010, p. 4). Qualitative methods address social relationships in particular and aim to describe and explain these, to understand them better (Kühl, Strodtholz, & Taffertshofer, 2009, pp. 14–17). Thus, the research question has be formulated in a particular way so that it “requires the use of this approach and not a different one” (Flick, 2014, p. 12). This is the case, when “our knowledge about this life world […] is too limited for starting from a hypothesis to test in our research. Instead we need sensitizing concepts for exploring and understanding this life world and the individual (and social) biographical processes […]” (Flick, 2014, p. 12). Typical qualitative research questions are how and why questions. In other words, qualitative research is required when there is not enough knowledge to formulate reasonable hypothesis, which can be tested empirically with the help of statistical (quantitative) methods. Hypotheses, if at all, can be formulated at the end of the process and thus, can be the result of a qualitative study. Yet, these are usually not called hypotheses but propositions.

The research procedure might be somehow linear, but rather is circular or iterative (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 395; Yin, 2014, p. 1). This means, that the collected or analyzed data can lead to an adaption of the original design or implementing results (analyzed data) into the research process as it continuous.

A qualitative research approach seems reasonable. In the following, I will explain the reasons for this.

- The aim of this thesis is to understand *how* and particularly *why* managers respond to PSRB and therefore has an explorative nature. As explained before, three general leadership acts can be derived from literature (sanctioning, supporting, and ignoring). Yet, it is not enough to distinguish between these three. What is from special interest here are situational factors that lead to a specific response behavior. Hence, to understand *why* supervisors acts in a certain way. *Why*- and *how*- research questions are best answered through direct communication and therefore are typical qualitative research questions (Yin, 2014, p. 2). Also, managers may not be aware of the reasons and thus, asking for them directly through a questionnaire does not only limit given answers but might also bias them.

- Even though potential response behaviors could be derived from literature, it is not enough to answer the research question. First, as pointed out before there might be different ways to respond to PSRB which have been neglected so far. Second, the derived responses are rather general and may differ in their execution. Third, as explained in chapter 2 and 3, a combination of the three possible responses is possible. And last, particularly from interest is how managers rationalize their response behavior. Even though some cues could be derived from literature, it remains unclear how they function, whether they also apply to PSRB and if there are more. Therefore, an open approach seems reasonable. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, when there is not enough data to build on, or when researching rather unanticipated issues, a qualitative approach is reasonable (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 26; Ritchie & Lewis, 2014, p. 48). The literature review showed that there has been no study up to this point, which analyses the rationalization when responding to PSRB. The two existing studies which included reactions to PSRB leave open why supervisors respond in a certain way. Additionally, the question how they respond was not answered sufficiently. Even though it was possible to derive some potentially relevant factors from the general rule-breaking and deviance literature, it is not enough to formulate hypothesis. However, since these factors most certainly will have an impact on the kind of response, it is reasonable to control them somehow. Controlling variables is commonly part of quantitative research, nevertheless it is also possible within qualitative, as explained in the next section.

- The empirical investigation aims to understand managers response towards PSRB. This is a specific form of rule breaking with a certain context. Especially the context is important here. On one hand, it is central to include the context and on the other hand, it is important to have the same contextual starting point for all participants. On this common basis, I want to identify further contextual features that rationalize the decision on how to respond. Operationalizing these features and making a statistical investigation is hardly possible. Further, aim of this thesis is not to prove a certain relationship or measure effect sizes, for what a survey would be. Hence, aim is not to prove an existing theory, as there is none. Yet, aim is to discover possible relevant variables that may influence the kind of response behavior. Or to be more precise, cues which managers use to justify the way they respond to PSRB. This is typical for qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 26). Quantitative research could be applied in a next step, to test found variables.

Nevertheless, one aim is to find out, whether the response depends on the actual PSRB outcome, which means to understand this relation better. Dependencies are typically researched through quantitative methods. However, this requires an operationalization of these variables, which is not possible here.

4.1.1 Basic Design

Research Design is as an umbrella term here, regarding all elements of the empirical research. Distinct from that is the basic design, which is a component of the research design. There are typical basic designs for each research design. In this section, I will discuss which qualitative basic design suits best to answer the research questions.

Typical qualitative research designs, which are dominant in organizational research are (1) Grounded Theory, (2) Ethnographies and (3) Case Studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 49; Elsbach & Kramer, 2016; Flick, 2014, 40-42, 121)[21].

(1) Grounded Theory is a design, which serves best to establish or extent a general and abstract theory. The established/ extended theory is then grounded in the collected and analyzed data (hence the participants views) (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 25; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 50; Flick, 2014, p. 40), which is why it is called this

[21] More qualitative research designs exist but are not commonly used in organizational research and therefore are neglected here. To get a full picture I recommend Creswell (2010); Flick (2014).

way. Typical for a grounded theory approach is the high degree of openness throughout the whole research process. This approach is highly inductive and theoretical concepts are chosen after data collection and not before (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 29). Typical data collection methods in Grounded Theory are observations and interviews.

(2) Ethnography designs are commonly used to research shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 50). Here aim is not ultimately to create or extent a theory, but rather to understand specific patterns. Underlying questions when conducting this design are "*What is the culture of this group of people? How does culture explain their perspectives and behaviors"*[22] (Patton, 2015, p. 170). Like Grounded Theory, observing and interviewing participants within their everyday life, are typical data collection methods here.

(3) Case Study designs are the right choice when researchers want to develop in-depth analysis of a specific case or multiple cases. These cases are usually bounded by time and activity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 51). Case studies best apply to *how* and *why* research questions, when there is no requirement to control behavioral events and, as already mentioned, when the focus lies upon contemporary events (Yin, 2014, p. 9). Not controlling behavioral events also means not to be able to manipulate relevant behaviors (Yin, 2014, p. 12).

Looking at these basic research designs, two can be directly excluded. First, grounded theory. Even though the chosen approach should be highly open, it should not be completely inductive, as some knowledge already exists regarding the research question and concepts have been chosen before data collection. Grounded Theory is especially applied, when there is no data do build on or when exploring a new research field. However, even though research on PSRB is limited, there are similar constructs to build on and the literature review highlighted possible factors that could be relevant when it comes to responding to PSRB. Thus, grounded theory is not the best approach[23].

[22] Italic highlighting in original
[23] Suddaby (2006) and Walsh et al. (2015) point out that most qualitative research claims to follow a Grounded Theory Design, when in reality they are not.

Second, case study research. Objective is not to research a specific case. It is not conductive and has no additional value to define a specific or multiple case, which is then analyzed in detail. Additionally, it is reasonable to control some variables. As discussed in Chapter 2.2 there are factors, which have an influence on the kind of response towards deviant behaviors by management. Therefore, it is beneficial to choose an approach, which allows to keep these influences stable, since these factors are very likely to have an influence on the kind of response.

Hence, an ethnographical design remains as a choice. However, essential data collection method in ethnographical studies are observations[24] (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 143; Gobo, 2010, p. 4; Thomas, 2010, p. 465). While interviews[25] are mainly characterized through speaking and listening, observations include all the senses: seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling (Flick, 2014, p. 308). Observations are best to find underlying structures or "how something factually works" (Flick, 2014, p. 308). As Flick (2014, p. 308) points out, interviews merely are a verbal account of a practice rather than the practices themselves. To be able to research the response of PSRB via observation, the researcher would have to know what rules exist within the organization, notice when a rule is broken and further, had to be sure that the rule was broken with best intentions. This is nearly impossible. One would have to be in an organization for a longer time to get to know processes and rules so well, to recognize such kind of deviant behavior. In addition, one had to enjoy great trust by other organizational members, for them to be open about rule breaking and know them very well to make judgments about the underlying intentions.

Also, the PSRB outcome is from special interest here as pointed out in the previous chapters, since it could impact how managers perceive the rule breaking situation. Especially a good outcome of PSRB brings managers into a dilemma situation, where they must justify their decision (at least to themselves). However, in an ethnographic setting it cannot be ensured that the outcome of PSRB is good. Further, managers might justify their decision to themselves, however, not necessarily to the observer. Consequently, an ethnographic study is not the best fit here.

Another approach is necessary to answer the research question, as none of the presented research designs serves the purpose of this thesis. Therefore, I want to present an additional

[24] Interest in observations in organizational research increased significantly over the past years (O'Doherty & Neyland, 2019, p. 1).
[25] A more detailed explanation will follow in the section "Research Method".

research design which can meet the requirements of the proposed question: a qualitative experimental design. Aguinis and Bradley (2014, pp. 351–352) criticize the fact that most management research designs are standard designs which aim to analyzes covariation between independent and dependent variables. They argue that this is not enough to establish causality. Additionally, they criticize that these designs leave no room for other explanations, regarding the relationship of variables. To gain better understanding about a relation, they call for more qualitative experimental designs. The authors note that experiments in organizational research might be rare, because they take more time and effort to conduct as a classical online survey for example.

This meets the demands of the research question, as I don't just want to analyze the correlation between PSRB outcome and supporting, sanctioning, and ignoring, but understand why and when PSRB leads to a particular response behavior, how managers justify their decision and what elements influence the perception of the situation. Therefore, qualitative experiments combine the open character of qualitative research with an experimental facete. This allows to focus on the influence of the PSRB outcome to the response behavior while remaining open for further cues and explanations, as well as responses.

Yet, qualitative experiments are even rarer than quantitative experiments in organizational research as well as in social science. This was not always the case. Qualitative experiments played a crucial role in Piaget's development psychology or in the findings of Gestalt Psychology (Burkart, 2010, p. 252).

Classical experiments aim at creating conditions in which causes, and effect can be analyzed in detail. For example, to evaluate effects of certain treatments or measures (Kromrey, 2002, pp. 92–93). Typical for classical experiments are the existence of a control group as well as an experimental group, to ensure that measured effect can be aligned to the analyzed intervention. To be precise, certain changes are implemented in the experimental group only. Whereas the control group should be exposed to constant conditions as far as possible. To draw conclusions about the effect of experimental changes, it is necessary that both groups are comparable. To accommodate this, subjects are randomly assigned to a group. Hence, experiments are especially implemented to uncover and measure effects and casual relationships (Häder, 2010, pp. 339–441), which is why they are typically associated with quantitative research.

Qualitative experiments in contrast are "an intervention in a social object to explore its structure according to scientific rules" with the aim to find new complex structures and understanding them better (Lamnek, 2008, p. 644). To be precise, relationships, dependencies, and relations and possible reasons for them. Qualitative relations typically cannot be measured "because they are not just trajectories, but also negations, contradictions, unstable dependencies […] and include fractions" (Kleining, 1986, p. 725 translated by A.J.). One crucial element in this definition is the intervention in a social object. This differentiates qualitative experiments from all other qualitative research designs, where usually no intervention takes place. Without this active intervention, it would not be an experiment but rather a common observation (Lamnek, 2008, p. 644; Yin, 2014, p. 13). Concluding, just like quantitative experiments, there must be at least one manipulated variable. This technique therefore implements qualitative tactics such as interviews or focus groups "to capture the differences in the processing of meaning construction between groups in a single phase of experimental execution" (S. Robinson & Mendelson, 2012, pp. 332–333). Even though this technique is not very common in organizational research, it is a respond to the many suggestions by researchers to combine quantitative and qualitative strategies, especially when researching the reactions to social realities.

In the following I will point out the main difference between qualitative and quantitative experiments:

a. Variables do not have to be operationalized and can have a qualitative nature. Thus, instead of measuring the effects of one (manipulated) variable to another, these are rather examined (Brewerton & Millward, 2011, p. 58).
b. In qualitative experiments, repeatability of an experiment is not a necessary condition (Brewerton & Millward, 2011, p. 58; Burkart, 2010, p. 252).
c. Qualitative experiments do not test previously formulated hypothesis, these are rather the result of the investigation (Burkart, 2010, p. 252; Lamnek, 2008, p. 645).
d. Instead of controlling all conditions of investigation, their flexibilization is possible.

To Yin (2014) experiments are very similar to case studies. The main difference to him is the requirement to control and manipulate variables in experiments. Examples for controlled

external variables in qualitative experiments are for example the environmental conditions or differences between participants.

A qualitative experimental research design seams most suitable for my research for the following reasons. As pointed out, a crucial element to experiments is an intervention in a social object. This is also the main difference to other qualitative research designs (Burkart, 2010, p. 252). This design allows to include a qualitative variable, which then is manipulated. Hence, the PSRB output can be included into the research as an independent variable. This allows to analyze whether a good respectively bad outcome of PSRB leads to different perceptions of the situation and responses to PSRB. Also, especially when the outcome is good managers are in a dilemma situation and are likely to rationalize their decision. Yet, when it comes to PSRB the underlying intention is good, even if the rule breaking is harmful to the organization. Based on ethical theory, managers either focus on the intention behind or the outcome of an act depending on the situation. Therefore, by manipulating the output I can analyze what managers value more in the context of PSRB. Additionally, it helps to find out how managers solve the dilemma they are in and how they rationalize their response strategy, when the output is good. And last, it could be possible to make interferences between the output and the perception of the intention.

Also, in an experimental setting it is possible to control and create a common context respectively starting point. Previously derived variables, that most likely have an influence in the decision-making (e.g. perception by others), can be included and controlled this way. As argued by Aguinis and Bradley (2014, p. 352), this design further allows alternative explanations. Meaning, besides understanding the influence of the PSRB output onto managers response behavior better, it is possible to analyze and include additional cues.

To sum up, a qualitative experimental research design offers the possibility to create a common context in which carefully chosen variables are manipulated. Additional potential influencing factors can be flexibly integrated to see if this influences managers response to PSRB. Hence, additional explanations for the kind of response can be integrated.

4.1.2 Research Method

After deciding upon the general and basic design, further decisions must be made regarding the specific research method. Typical data collection methods in qualitative research with an organizational contexts are, among others, interviews, focus groups as a particular form of interviews, and observations (Brewerton & Millward, 2011; Flick, 2014, 2018; Flick,

Kardorff, & Steinke, 2010; Lamnek, 2008; Yin, 2014). When choosing a research method most important criteria is that it serves to answer the research question (Stake, 2010, p. 72). As argued before, to answer the research question through observations does not seem suitable, as they do not seem to serve the purpose of this research. Analyzing responses to PSRB with observations would require a wide knowledge about existing rules within an organization, hence the research would be limited to only one or two companies. Further, rule-breaking is commonly something that happens in the background, not visible to everyone. This especially accounts to managers response. They will most likely deal with it face to face and not in the public.

The interest in interviews, particularly semi-structured interviews, has increased in organizational research over the past two decades (Flick, 2014, p. 206). However, even though they are a good method to generate rich qualitative data, they are still rare compared to quantitative questionnaires (Crawford, Chiles, & Elias, 2020, 1). Interviews rather resemble guided conversations than structured queries (Yin, 2014, p. 110) and therefore are an highly flexible tool (Brewerton & Millward, 2011, p. 69). Generally, there are three types of interviews: unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and full-structured interviews. According to Corbin and Strauss (2015, pp. 58–59), interviews become less effective the more structured they are. Also, full-structured interviews are not much different to *surveys* and therefore rather belong to quantitative research[26]. Unstructured interviews may generate the richest data; however, they are not easy to conduct and do not suit to every research project. They especially make sense when there is rarely any theory or concepts to build on. According to Flick (2014), the interest in (semi-structured) interviews especially increased, because interviewees are more likely to share their viewpoint in an openly designed interview than in a standardized survey. A semi-structured interview technique however has more advantages. First, the interviewer has a guide, which he can use for all interviews. Therefore, on one hand can ensure that the interview is going in the right direction and on the other hand, creates the possibility to compare answers (at least up to a certain point). Another advantage is that in a semi- structured interview, the interviewer has the possibility to go deeper into given answers, to understand them better (Brewerton & Millward, 2011, pp. 73–74; Flick, 2014, pp. 217–223). S. Robinson and Mendelson (2012, p. 339) point out that a sophisticated set of interview questions can bring up

[26] The main or only difference is that the interviewee can ask questions back, if something is unclear to him (Brewerton & Millward, 2011, p. 70).

information about underlying assumptions, attitudes and perceptions. However, there are also some disadvantages. Interviews can easily be biased (through speech or appearance of the interviewer for example) and therefore have a low reliability. The interviewer should be aware of these biases to minimize them.

Rule breaking is a rather sensitive and critical subject. Asking for this matter directly in a classical interview, could bias results because interviewees could fear to speak the truth. This could especially be the case, when asking about rule breaking within their own organization. However, one advantage is that the interviewer can ask more closely about given answers, to understand them better. Hence, the interviewer can ask *why* one would respond in a certain way.

Since observations and classical interviews do not have an experimental character and do not fit to the purpose of this research, I want to introduce another interview type: vignette[27]-based interviews[28]. Vignettes are often features in social science research and are rather rare in organizational research (Kandemir & Budd, 2018, p. 1). Further, vignettes are typically used in quantitative research, referred to as factorial surveys (Ganong & Coleman, 2006, pp. 455–456). Yet, vignettes have been used in organizational context in combination with qualitative research (e.g. Jennings et al., 2015; Kirrane, O'Shea, Buckley, Grazi, & Prout, 2017).

Atzmüller and Steiner (2010, p. 128) define the term vignette as a "short, carefully constructed description of a person, object, or situation, representing a systematic combination of characteristics." Bloor and Wood (2006, p. 183) define vignettes from a different point of view, referring to it as a research technique.

"A technique, used in structured and depth interviews as well as focus groups, providing sketches of fictional (or fictionalized) scenarios. The respondent is then invited to imagine, drawing on his or her own experience, how the central character in the scenario will behave. Vignettes thus collect situated data on group values, group beliefs, and group norms of behaviour. While in structured interviews respondents must choose from a multiple-choice

[27] Scenario, shortstory and vignette are typically used synonymously (Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, & Neale, 2010; Ganong & Coleman, 2006) and are used synonymously in this thesis.
[28] Also referred to as multiple segment factorial vignette design (Ganong & Coleman, 2006) or narrative case vignettes (Jennings, Edwards, Devereaux Jennings, & Delbridge, 2015).

menu of possible answers to a vignette, as used in depth interviews and focus groups, vignettes act as stimulus to extended discussion of the scenario in question."

This technique combines fundamentals of experimental designs with the inductive tactic of qualitative research (Ganong & Coleman, 2006, p. 455). Vignettes are a good method to gather information about attitudes, beliefs or judgments in sensitive topics, and are a valuable non-threatening way to start a discussion (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 184; Ganong & Coleman, 2006, p. 456). This is because scenarios create a "distance between the context of the vignette and the participant, by not asking people directly about their own experiences, rather by asking how third parties might feel, act, or be advised to proceed in a given situation (Kandemir & Budd, 2018, p. 2). They often present *dilemmas* to explore thoughts and beliefs about this subject. Therefore, vignettes offer a possibility to present an issue indirectly and less obvious (Stake, 2010, p. 172). Further, vignettes are a good choice when possible consequences are more serious (Taylor, 2005, p. 1188) and make investigation rather difficult. Researchers using this method claim a higher validity through contextualizing and framing research topics (Kandemir & Budd, 2018, p. 1). Nevertheless, vignettes should not be seen as real-life-experiences, but rather as a report of such (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 184). Vignettes belong to experimental research design, because variables of interest can be embedded (Ganong & Coleman, 2006, p. 458). Hence, there is more than one scenario presented to the participants. This allows to research how change in variables impacts given answers within the same context. However, this also means that the number of vignettes increases exponentially with the number of variables.[29] Thus, the researcher should choose carefully which variables to include, keeping the numbers of scenarios down.

Yet, even though vignettes have an experimental character and therefore belong to qualitative experimental research design, they differ from typical qualitative and quantitative experiments. These normally have a control and experimental group. This is not the case for qualitative experimental vignette designs. However, because there are different scenarios which typically are structured equally and only differ regarding the analyzed variable, they belong to experimental designs.

[29] One variable (at least) has two expressions and thus comes with (at least) two scenarios. Each additional variable must be paired with the expressions of the prior included variables. For example, two variables are included in a study. The first one is expressed in 1 and 2 and the second one in a and b. This leads to four possible scenarios: 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b.

To sum up, this method has many advantages regarding the research questions. First, the integration of a variable. Hence, it is possible to include changes in organizational welfare (PSRB output) into the research. To be precise, in one scenario the organizational welfare increases and in the other it decreases. Second, as mentioned above, it creates a distance between the fictional supervisor in the story and the supervisor interviewed. This can provide answers that are more honest. Reason for this is that the interviewee has less fear of being exposed because I do not ask about rule breaking within *their* company but rather about a fictional company. Third, vignettes offer the opportunity to include contextual variables sequentially to see if this changes the described response. As Burkart (2010, p. 255) points out, qualitative experimental designs offer the possibility to vary and extent everyday objects, to explore relationships, check structures and test boundaries. This means, it is possible to adjust the presented story throughout the experiment, to test boundaries for sanctioning (e.g. "imagine now the employee decided completely on his own to break the rule, without talking to his colleagues first. Would that change the way you respond?"). Fourth, as explained prior, vignettes are a good choice when researching dilemmas. The presented issue demonstrates such a dilemma as discussed in chapter 2.3. Last, it still brings the advantages of a classical interview. Hence, I can ask more closely about why a certain response was described, to understand the underlying assumptions and perceptions.

Nevertheless, it also has the same disadvantages. Hence, results can be biased. For example, the interviewer has a greater effect on the interviewee in one-on- one interviews than in focus groups. Also, self-reported biases are very likely to occur. Further, in this experimental setting variables cannot be isolated, different to quantitative experiments. This means, that nothing specific can be quantitatively measured (S. Robinson & Mendelson, 2012, pp. 342–343). However, a qualitative experimental vignette design with collecting data through interviews is a good choice to answer the research questions.

4.1.3 The Vignette

Vignettes have to be carefully constructed, as Atzmüller and Steiner (2010) already pointed out in their definition. Literature differs between implementing steps and a guideline, on which researchers have agreed upon, does not exist. In the following I will construct vignettes according to Aguinis and Bradley (2014). Their guideline is most suitable to adapt for qualitative research.

The authors name different decision points when planning and implementing vignette research. The first decision point (p.357) is deciding whether vignette research is a suitable approach. According to the authors, it is a good approach when researchers need to control independent variables to collect evidence regarding causality (p. 357). As argued before, this is the main reason for choosing this research design. This way the PSRB output can be included as an independent variable to analyze whether it influences the kind of response. Further, the literature review showed that there are other variables that could influence the perception of the situation. These variables can be intentionally included and controlled, to have a common context for all participants. Hence, these variables are stable in their expression and thus, are the same for all participants. In other words, when interviewees describe different ways of responding, it cannot be attributed to these variables. Additional arguments for this approach are discussed in the previous chapter.

The second decision point addresses the kind of vignette. Aguinis and Bradley (2014) differ between two types, whereas the first one is *paper people studies* and the second one *policy capturing and conjoint analysis* (p.351). In their literature review they point out that paper people studies are more common in organizational research. In *paper people studies* the researcher commonly confronts participants with written scenarios who subsequently must make explicit decisions or give answers regarding judgment and choices (p.354). This type of vignette has been particularly popular when researching ethical decision-making contexts. *Policy capturing and conjoint analysis* studies differ in that way that participants must make decisions between scenarios. Aim here is to understand implicit (judgment) processes by ranking the vignettes or asking to choose between them. This kind of vignette is advantageous when the researcher wants to get an understanding about the effects of manipulated variables onto the implicit judgment (p.354).

Both types seem reasonable for this study. On one hand, aim is to analyze the influence of the PSRB outcome onto the response behavior to PSRB and on the other hand, how managers rationalize this response. Also, rule-breaking can have a contradictive nature and lead to competing demands as pointed out before. It is generally considered to be wrong and still, can be right in some situations. This can lead to a dilemma, and thus, it is about decisions in ethical contexts (paper people study). On the other hand, aim is also to understand how the outcome of PSRB effects judgment (policy capturing and conjoint analysis). Nevertheless, the authors refer to classical, hence, quantitative vignette design. Yet, I am doing a qualitative vignette design, in which I subsequently conduct an interview,

instead of handing out questionnaires. Therefore, a paper people study is more suitable, as policy capturing and conjoint analysis fit better when implementing a quantitative experimental vignette design. Further, ranking both scenarios is pointless for the aim of this research. Additionally, presenting participants with both PSRB output scenarios could influence given answers and could make the research object clear to the participants. If participants were confronted with two scenarios, in which both a protagonist breaks a rule with best intentions, and in one scenario the organization benefits from it and in the other is harmed, the research object could become obvious, and participants would reflect on the presented situations. As pointed out before, this could lead to socially desirable answers. I especially want to see how individuals respond intuitively, without thinking too much about it. However, this just concerns the very first described reactions. Afterwards it could be especially interesting if participants reflect their given answers and share thoughts with the interviewer, as aim is to understand how managers rationalize their intuitive decision. Nevertheless, I decided to ask participants if they acted differently, when the PSRB outcome would have been different. This way interviewees do not have to read more than one scenario. Further, including it as an interview question among others might not highlight the research object as obvious as handing out two scenarios with the different outcomes. However, as already mentioned, previously given answers could influence this answer.

The third decision point addresses the vignette design and whether to conduct a between-person, within-person, or mixed research (p. 360). In between-person designs participants read only one vignette. It is especially important here to give enough information, to provide as much context as possible. Whereas in within-person designs, participants are confronted with a set of vignettes, to compare different vignettes within the same person.

One aim of this research is to analyze the role of PSRB outcome when it comes to managers response. Further, additional cues should be identified that could have an influence on the kind of response and rationalizing strategy. Therefore, it is from interest to find out whether the same PSRB outcome leads to the same kind of response (between-person comparison). This would indicate that the outcome is the main influencing factor. However, if that is the case the described response had to change, when the PSRB outcome changes. If results indicate that the outcome is the main variable here, it can be tested by including a change of welfare as an interview question. This supports my decision regarding point two, to include the change of the PSRB output as an interview question which allows a within-person comparison if necessary.

The next decision point refers to the level of immersion. Aguinis and Bradley (2014, p. 361) argue that the main critique regarding experimental vignette design is that they show what *can* happen but not what necessarily happens outside the experimental situation. Therefore, the authors suggest increasing the level of realism through adding videos or sounds. However, for my research it is from greater importance that employees' thoughts and intentions become clear. Hence, the described story must be detailed and lively. The authors (p.363-364) further argue that realism can be increased by conducting the research within the participants natural work environment instead of inviting them to the university. Therefore, to increase realism I will conduct interviews within a natural setting (in the interviewees office for example). This way a natural surrounding as well as a work context is ensured, which can increase realism.

The fifth decision point addresses the number of manipulated variables. As mentioned in chapter 4.1.3, the number of manipulated variables must be chosen carefully, because it increases the number of vignettes exponentially. Therefore, the sixths decision point requests to choose the number of vignettes[30]. Because I will conduct interviews after the scenarios instead of handing out questionnaires, I must limit vignettes even more. Also, there is one key variable from interest here, the PSRB outcome. Thus, I will include this as the only variable which consequently leads to two vignettes (decision point 5 and 6). However, as already indicated, throughout the interview I will add variables to the story to see if this leads to a change in the described behavior.

To ensure that the described rule breaking behavior seems realistic as decision point 4 requests, it is adventurous to describe a real situation instead of a fictional one. Morrison (2006) conducted two studies in her research. In the first one she asked participants to describe PSRB situations and behaviors. In the second study she used one of the previously described rule-breaking situations and made it into a scenario[31] (Morrison, 2006, pp. 24–25). However, because she analyzed influencing factors of PSRB, her story ended right before the rule-breaking and participants were asked what they would do now (to see if they would engage in rule-breaking or not). I will adapt this scenario for my research. I will use the same

[30] One strategy here can be to pick extreme vignettes, where the manipulated variables have the heaviest or lowest expressions, hence, leaving out vignettes were variables have a medium expression.
[31] In this scenario a hot order came in, which must be handled within 24 hours and has to be processed by management. However, the employee could not get a hold of his boss and now had the choice, two just leave the order until the boss was reachable (this could mean that the order is not processed within 24hours), or he could process the order himself, without having the permission.

situation, however, in my story the employee decides to break the rule and in one vignette the rule-breaking behavior increases the well-being of the organization (happy and satisfied customer) and in the other it decreases (mad customer who leaves to competitors). Therefore, the described rule-breaking situation is derived from a real-life example which increases realism.

A first test round showed that it is necessary to include possible consequences for the manager into the scenario. It became clear that without possible consequences for the manager there is no need to solve the confronted dilemma. Thus, managers must be in a tight spot. Without threatening consequences, managers rather avoid confrontation. Therefore, I adapted the scenario and added possible severe consequences for the manager, because of the employee's rule breaking behavior.

To sum up, in my research I will conduct a paper people study. Focus will be a between-person analysis. Videos or sounds will not be included, because it is thought to believe that this does not add any value. However, interviews will be held in a work context, if possible, to ensure natural surroundings. Because from special interest is to research whether PSRB outcome impacts how managers respond, this is the only included manipulated variable. This way different responses can be aligned to this variable only (speaking of external influences here, as the kind of response most likely also depends on personal differences). This consequently leads to two different scenarios. Each participant will be presented with one scenario, however, throughout the interview, I will add variables to the story to see whether this has an impact on the described response. Also, I will ask if the interviewee would act any different if the output was the opposite. This way the second scenario is somehow included, without having interviewees to read more. The written scenario is based on Morrisons (2006) scenario. A pre-test showed that possible consequence for supervisors should be added to the story to bring them in a tight spot. Otherwise, participants might not see any necessity to act at all.

The final vignette is as follows:

You have been a department manager of the customer service department for four years in a company that sells, rents, and maintains computer systems to companies (e.g., PCs, servers, network devices, printers). During this time, you have made a name for yourself in the company through your discipline and good work, which is why you are given a lot of freedom. You are aware that this special position is not necessarily permanent. For example,

you were promoted to your current position when your former supervisor had to vacate his position due to a mistake that resulted in the loss of a major customer. After this incident you were promoted. In addition to the typical personnel tasks of a department manager, your main duties include looking after the largest and most important customers. Since more and more major customers have left for competitor companies in the past (mainly due to standardized treatment and the associated poor offers), it has been explicitly stipulated that all major customers may only be serviced by you. Orders from such customers are referred to as "hot orders". In addition, these customers immediately slide to the top of the processing list to be fully processed within 24 hours because of their special status.

As you come into the office today, you hope the day won't be quite as stressful as the day before. Due to numerous meetings, you did not even manage to take a well-deserved lunch break yesterday.

Increase of Welfare

Just arrived at the office, one of your customers calls you to thank you for the usual quick processing of the order. You learn that the customer placed an order yesterday, which has already been completely processed. When you speak to the employee who processed the order, he tells you that he processed the order on his own because he assumed that you would not be able to meet the 24-hour deadline due to the many meetings. He also talked about it with his colleagues and together they came to the decision that this was the best way. You are now torn about how to handle the situation. Your employee has clearly violated the company's rules, even if he had good intentions in doing so. There are reasons why these orders should only be processed by you! Just imagine what would have happened if the order had not been processed without error. Either way, the employee's actions can also have consequences for you if someone wrong gets hears about it. Your employee should not have decided this on his own and should not have processed it, even if it meant an extra night shift for you. On the other hand, you know very well that the employee did not act out of self-interest but wanted to ensure the satisfaction of the customer - which he succeeded in!

Decrease of Welfare

Just arrived at the office, one of your customers calls you and is upset and alarmed. He reports about an order from the day before, which has been processed in the meantime, but incorrectly. The rented PCs do not have the ordered performance and further, a stable connection to the server cannot be established. Due to the urgency, the customer has now

rented the ordered material from a competitor and demands compensation for the lost working day, as the work has to start one day later now. When you ask the responsible employee about this, he says that he had no choice but to process the order himself, since you were stuck in meetings all day and could not be reached, and otherwise it would not have been possible to process it within 24 hours. He had also discussed this with his colleagues, and they all felt it was best to process the order without consulting you. You are now torn as to how to handle this situation. On the one hand, the employee obviously had no personal gain from processing the order independently and only wanted to ensure customer satisfaction. On the other hand, his unauthorized actions have now led to the loss of one of your most important customers and, as the past has already shown, this can backfire on you.

4.1.1 Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

The next step in the research process is to find potential participants, which is decision point seven by Aguinis and Bradley (2014, p. 363). Different sampling strategies in social research exist. The most frequently used strategy is probability sampling. Aim of this strategy is to create a statistically representative study. However, this strategy is typically aligned to quantitative research. Qualitative research has a different logic, which does not require statistical representation (Flick, 2014, p. 171). Here, the selection of participants is commonly based on purposive, which is why it is called purposive strategy. Researchers should choose individuals, organizations and so on based on their expected level of new insights regarding the research question. Hence, the idea behind this sampling strategy is to select participants who have a high level of information regarding the research question (Schreier, 2018, p. 88). There are many different purposive sampling strategies (e.g. extreme sampling, typical sampling, theoretical sampling) (Flick, 2014, p. 181; Schreier, 2018, p. 88).

Since the focus of this research is how and why managers respond to PSRB, participants should be in a managing position with a role as a leader. Further, the selected managers should have a disciplinary responsibility for their employees. Disciplinary responsibility is important here because it allows managers to sanction employees. This way they already have experience with sanctioning and can relate to it. That is why research participants should also have at least three years of experience in a leading position and should not be new to the position. The last requirement is that participants have at least three subordinates. Often managers are closer to some employees than to others. If they only have one or two

subordinates, they might think too much about them when giving answers. Hence, this requirement also ensures a certain level of experience. Therefore, managers who fulfill these criteria serve the purpose of this research.

Other factors, such as the industry, organization size, and demographic features are not relevant to this research. However, these factors could be relevant for further research. Nevertheless, I want to gain better understanding on how and why managers generally respond to PSRB. Hence, it is beneficial to get insights from managers from all kinds of working industries and organizational sizes to get a maximum range of answers and identify as many cues as possible.

After deciding upon criteria for potential participants, I created a flyer. In this flyer, I called for managers who fulfill the listed features to participate in a scenario-based experiment. However, I did not mention the research object of these experiments precisely. Saying that it is about rule breaking in a positive context (or similar) could have had an influence on participants. For answers as true as possible, it is necessary for participants to decide for themselves, whether the rule breaking was good or bad. It is quite reasonable to assume that to some managers rule breaking is always bad, independent of the effect on the organization. Therefore, the flyer just said that it is about rule breaking in general.

I handed out this flyer to about 35 managers and additionally asked friends and family to hand out the flyer in their company. As I already had assumed, even though it was mentioned in the flyer that the research object is independent to any organization, individuals expressed skepticism. In one case, the leader asked the human resource department for allowance to participate, which was denied. However, I could reduce most skepticism through a short face-to-face conversation or a call, and with reinsuring that I will not publish any company related information. Nevertheless, some refused to take part. However, many potential participants expressed great interest in the research subject and offered to provide time. In the end, 31 managers who fit the criteria responded to the flyer and participated in the experiment. These 31 interviewees belonged to 14 different companies, and one person had already retired. Three companies are public and eleven are in the private sector. As Table 6 might already indicate, companies varied much regarding their size. Participating companies ranged from middle-sized family business to large groups. For example, two of the participating companies belonged to the so called “Big Four” auditing companies and one to

a well-known car manufacturer. Therefore, many different sectors are represented in the study.

The two vignettes were randomly assigned to the participants. I have drawn lots with the starting vignette, which was the one where the welfare was decreased (High Condition). After that I alternated the vignettes. Table 6 shows characteristics of the interviews and interviewees.

Table 6: Characteristics of Interviews and Interviewees

Inter-view	Company	Number of Sub-ordinates	Leadership experience	Scenario	Interview length	Interview kind
1	Company A	12	25 years	HighCon*	00:46:06	Telephone
2	Company C	55	20 years	LowCon**	01:24:53	Face2Face
3	Retired	1000	40 years	HighCon	00:30:24	Telephone
4	Company D	180	25 years	LowCon	00:44:29	Face2Face
5	Company B	18	3 years	HighCon	00:57:04	Face2Face
6	Company E	13	5 years	LowCon	00:56:59	Face2Face
7	Company E	13	6 years	HighCon	01:04:21	Face2Face
8	Company G	500	7 years	LowCon	00:49:26	Face2Face
9	Company F	5	20 years	HighCon	01:03:14	Face2Face
10	Company B	50	35 years	LowCon	01:21:29	Face2Face
11	Company B	10	15 years	HighCon	01:00:11	Face2Face
12	Company G	6	40 years	LowCon	01:06:53	Telephone
13	Company F	30	18 years	HighCon	00:52:38	Face2Face
14	Company F	50	30 years	LowCon	01:21:29	Face2Face
15	Company H	80	4 years	HighCon	00:50:39	Face2Face
16	Company F	85	25 years	LowCon	00:58:17	Face2Face
17	Company I	250	6 years	HighCon	01:00:01	Telephone
18	Company J	35	20 years	LowCon	01:03:50	Face2Face
19	Company J	11	5 years	HighCon	00:59:20	Face2Face
20	Company J	300	20 years	LowCon	01:05:12	Face2Face
21	Company J	17	12 years	HighCon	00:53:12	Face2Face
22	Company J	26	10 years	LowCon	00:52:43	Face2Face
23	Company K	5	15 years	HighCon	00:55:10	Face2Face
24	Company J	12	5 years	LowCon	01:12:11	Face2Face
25	Company J	10	12 years	HighCon	01:12:00	Face2Face
26	Company J	5	5 years	LowCon	01:16:27	Face2Face
27	Company L	185	6 years	HighCon	00:33:50	Telephone
28	Company M	12	6 years	LowCon	01:12:48	Face2Face
29	Company N	30	6 years	HighCon	01:07:42	Telephone
30	Company I	180	13 years	LowCon	00:44:18	Telephone
31	Company J	80	20 years	HighCon	00:54:02	Face2Face

*Scenario with a decrease in the organizational welfare

**Scenario with an increase of the organizational welfare

The implemented interview is a semi structured interview, separated into four sections, and consists of eleven main questions. Whereas the first and last questions are an entry

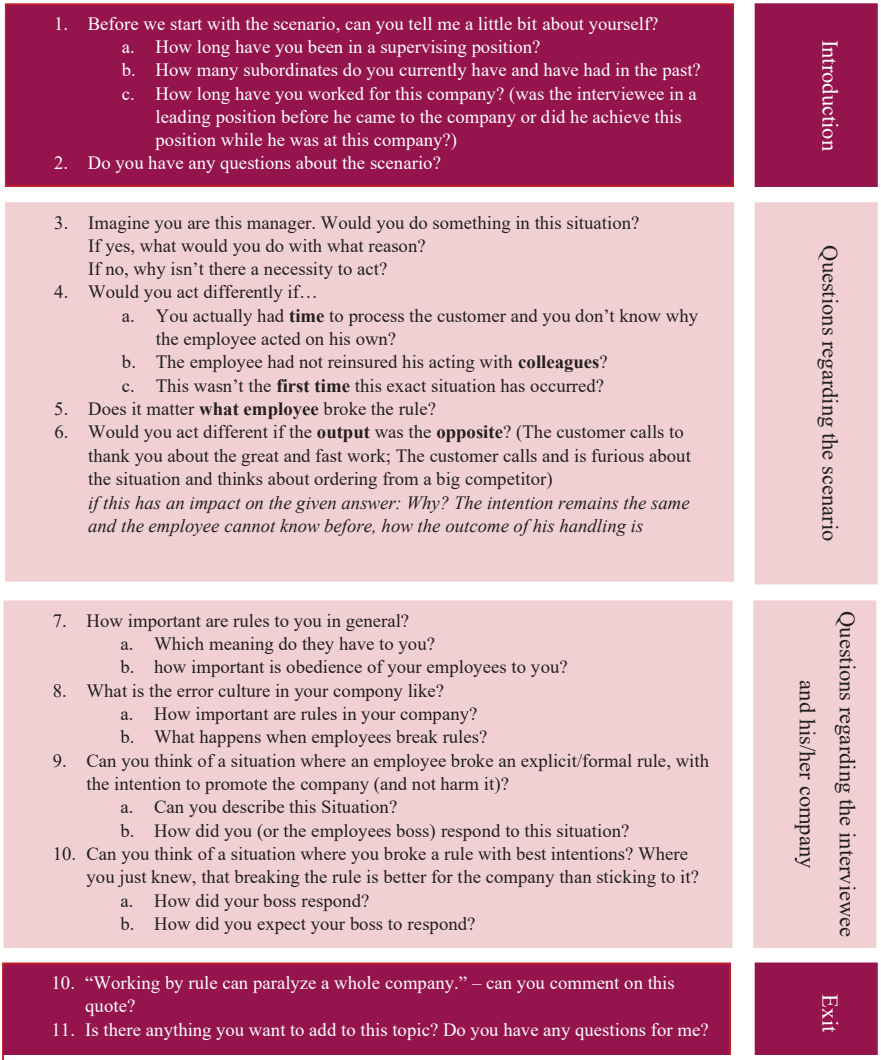

Figure 4: Semi-structured Interview Guide

respectively exit question. Figure 4 shows the different sections as well as the questions asked throughout the interview.

In the first section I mainly asked managers about themselves and their experience. I did this to compare leading experience, number of subordinates and the leader's response to the scenario. I further asked them whether they have any questions about the vignette.

The second section included reading the vignette and questions regarding it. Then interviewees were asked to imagine that they are the manager in the story and whether he/ she sees a need to act. If yes, I asked what he/ she would do now. After describing if and how they would respond, I asked for reasons behind this response behavior and whether they would act differently when the situation was different (question 4-6). Different points (or variables) were added to question 4 the more interviews I conducted. Previously given answers on why managers would respond a certain way presented new potentially relevant cues for the kind of response. This highlights the iterative nature of qualitative research.

In the third section I asked questions about the interviewee's opinion on rules and the organizational rule culture. I further asked if they remember a situation where a subordinate or the interviewee him-/ or herself broke an organizational rule to improve its wellbeing.

I finished the interview (section four) by asking participants to comment on a well know proverb (question 10). Last, I asked participants if they want to add anything or have any questions.

As mentioned before, I pre-tested the vignette and semi-structured interview guideline and changed some formulations. However, the biggest change was to include potential consequences for managers into the vignette. The semi-structured guideline worked well and showed that the very open starting question invited to give detailed answers, which focused on what is important to the interviewee, without giving a first direction. The pre-test also showed that a reasonable approximate time calculation is about one hour per interview.

All interviews were conducted in 2019 throughout whole Germany, therefore all interviews were held in German language. Hence, all the presented quotes were translated by me to the best of my knowledge. However, instead of translating word by word I rather tried to capture the meaning of the quote. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by a transcription agency, using a non-verbatim method. This means pauses, filling words, false starts etc. were not transcribed as they are irrelevant for this research. All 31 transcripts together were just under 700 pages in total.

Transcripts were coded using the Gioia-Method (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). I started out with open-coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 222), guided by the question *how* managers respond in general, neglecting the outcome at first. Focus here was especially on the initial reaction (the starting question) and how it was expressed. Generally, open coding is characterized by a very open procedure. However, this highly inductive method is often criticized. When evaluating the transcripts, I did not follow a solely inductive way but rather a mix between induction and deduction. This coding strategy is sometimes referred to as *abduction* (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). The literature analysis already pointed at possible response behaviors. Therefore, these responses served as deductively derived codes (sanctioning, supporting, and ignoring). Yet, these response behaviors are rather general and do not describe detailed responses. An open-coding procedure, as it is typical for the Gioia-Method allowed me to be open for other/ new responses and further, to code the responses more detailed. In the ended, I coded 984 text passages that were connected to managers response to the presented scenario.

In the next step I aggregated open coding's to second order codes. In the second analyzing step I had a closer look at how the described responses were reasoned, identifying elements that lead to a particular (re)action. Last, I looked for patterns, especially regarding the outcome. This means, I analyzed the contextual variables, including the outcome of PSRB, and *how* respectively *if* it influenced or changed the described response. Additionally, whether this applied to more participants. This analysis built the ground for the later presented process model. To be precise, interviewees often dependent their responses on different key cues (e.g., "If this happens the first time, I would …. But if this has happened before, I would …"). After coding the first ten interviews I could identify certain key cues that were frequently mentioned. This way I could identify factors that were regularly mentioned and relevant in the decision on how to response to PSRB. Therefore, after coding the first ten interviews, I re-started coding the interviews.

In the following section I will list key findings of my analysis.

4.2 Findings

Before going into detail regarding the findings, I want to mention some initial reactions after reading the vignette. For example: "*this is a typical scenario*" or "*this seems quite familiar*", because it on one hand highlights that PSRB is everyday business and on the other hand shows that the described vignette was generally perceived as realistic which is important for

qualitative answers. Yet, some managers said that it can never be the right choice to break rules: "*I also abide by rules I don't like*" or "*No matter that it led to an advantage. This is a rule-violation and rules should be followed!*" are statements from these managers. One interviewee got upset during the interview and finished it early. In his opinion there exists no situation where rule breaking can be necessary and got mad the more I asked about it. Yet, this was an absolute exception. All the others did not mind talking about it and gave positive feedback.

Most managers agreed that rule breaking can be necessary sometimes[32]. One interviewee stated that "*rules do not stand above the actual intention of our business*" and that rules are only implemented to ensure reaching organizational goals. Another one said that "*I expect that my employees break the rules whenever it is appropriate*" or that "*these are things that are required by the situation, and I mean, if you break rules without need, it's stupid. That's what rules are for.*" Interestingly, even managers who said that rule breaking is rarely ever necessary, rejected service according to regulation. Yet, service according to regulation means nothing less than applying completely to organizational rules and not engaging in extra-role behavior. Nevertheless, such behavior is seen as a form of strike and interviewees agreed that this could paralyze a whole organization.

However, the question remains under which situations rule-breaking is perceived as "required" and under which it is perceived as wrong.

Before looking into leader's response in detail, I want to give an overview about the different opinions on rule breaking in general and interviewees reasons for this opinion. Table 7 summarizes the different thoughts on rule breaking. As the table shows interviewees named more reasons for rule breaking than against it and had a positive opinion on it. In numbers, 25 of the 31 interviewees named at least one reason for rule breaking (positive opinion), whereas only 6 interviewees named reasons against it (negative opinion).

[32] Interviewees always referred to organizational rule-breaking and repeatedly mentioned, that it would be a different situation if employees broke the law or similar.

Table 7: Opinions on rule breaking (based on empirical study)

Rather positive opinion on rule breaking			**Rather negative opinion on rule breaking**		
Reason	**Nb. of codes**	**Nb. of interviews***	**Reason**	**Nb. of codes**	**Nb. of interviews**
Rule breaking tolerable and unavoidable within certain limits	20	12	Never necessary, rule compliance always possible	9	4
Reaching goals is more important than rule compliance	19	11	Success and reaching goals do not justify rule breaking	2	2
No progress without rule breaking	14	10	Rule breaking is only ok when agreed upon	2	2
Mistakes are important to learn from them	11	9	Rule breaking is no sustainable solution	1	1
Today's workplace requires improvising and fast decisions more often	8	6			
Unconventional thinkers are important for companies	3	3			

* Number of interviews in which the presented reason was named

When I asked what purpose rules generally have, the following reasons were given:

1. Rules give a direction and set a framework (23 | 17)*
2. Rules give security to employees and the organization (18 | 13)
3. Rules serve as legal insurance (10 | 7)
4. Rules ensure an efficient process (10 | 8)
5. Nothing works without any rules (5 | 5)
6. Serve as orientation guide (4 | 4)
7. To ensure a certain fairness and equality (3 | 2)

*first number in brackets refer to the number of codes and the second number to the number of interviews in which it was mentioned

This is from interest because depending on what interviewees think about the function of rules it can influence their opinion about the necessity of rule breaking. For example, reason 3 somehow states that rules are not implemented because they offer the best solution, but to have legal insurance. This again can influence the way managers respond to the presented PSRB situation.

In the following I will analyze how managers responded to PSRB and how they rationalized their response.

4.2.1 Managers Response

Prior To having a closer look at the contextual factors, it is necessary to see how managers generally responded, hence, what kind of actions were described. Overall, three different actions were described frequently. To be precise, every interviewee described (at least) one of the following actions taken:

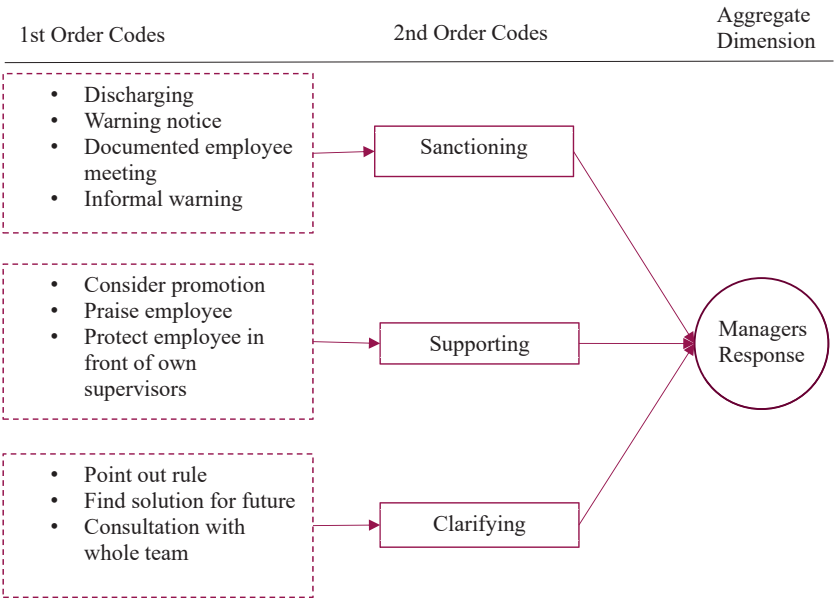

Figure 5: Data Structure of Management Responses (based on empirical study)

It is to note that this structure depicts the whole range of actions, not just the initial ones. Further, sometimes second-order codes were directly described, without going into detail, whereas others were very precise. This especially counts for sanctioning. However, ***sanctioning*** was considered by some interviewees:

> *"… we have a mandatory delegation of authority, a list, which describes what each position is allowed to do. When this area of responsibility is exceeded, it will have disciplinary consequences. He would get them today*." (14 – LC)[33]

Discharging an employee was never among initial responses and was rather considered as a last solution when employees have broken rules in the past and have been warned not to do so.

> "*And I am someone, I would talk to him probably around five times before doing something like this. But everything has to have an end at some point.*" (21 – HC)

However, this is also because of the German employment law, which protects employees from being laid-off after making a single mistake. An official warning letter on the other hand was among initial responses, as were documented employment meetings and informal warnings. The two latter were mentioned most often.

> "*First of all, you must clearly report the violation, document it, discuss it and make sure that it does not happen again*." (30 – LC)

> *"In this respect I would give him a warning because it was not right*" (31 – HC)

Other managers did not see the need for sanctioning but rather quite the opposite. To some, the fact that an employee acted when an action was needed and took on responsibility was a reason to promote him, or at least widen their area of responsibility. This was categorized as ***supporting*** as a response.

> "*So, I have to ask myself, whether this isn't an employee who can make this decision in the future and maybe even someone who is promotable*?" (10 – LC)

> "*I would try to establish him as my deputy*" (12 – LC)

[33] The number behind every quote refers to the interview number. LC stands for Low Condition (increase in welfare) and HC stands for High Condition (decrease in welfare), depending which scenario the interviewee was presented with.

18 participants either directly said that the employee's behavior was right or indirectly by saying, doing something is better than doing nothing. 12 of them said they would therefore praise the employee for his[34] behavior. Independent to whether the leader perceived the behavior as right or wrong, many would protect him in front of their own supervisors, saying that it is their job to do so.

> "*When I lead a team, I'm ultimately the one who takes the fall…*" (23 – HC)

Interesting is that some managers expressed responses that warned and praised the employee at the same time, sending ambivalent messages:

> "*Personally, I have to thank you for doing this and helping out. But please, never to it again…"* (14 – LC)

> "*I would have an open conversation […] telling him that I like the intention behind this and that I'm happy, and that I'm happy that the customer is happy. The result is good; however, it is well thought not well done. And for that I would definitely reprimand him […] and warn him that this cannot happen again*!" (22 – LC)

Two of the interviewees would consult their own supervisors and let them decide about potential consequences. One of them had the vignette with an increase in welfare (LC) and the other one with a decrease (HC).

Independent to whether the leader would sanction or support such behavior, everyone – without an exception – mentioned a response that can be categorized as ***clarifying***. This means, managers used this rule-breaking to point out the rule again to the employee who broke the rule and/or the whole team.

> "*And then […] define this rule again: You have to do it like this, there is no alternative."* (23 -HC)

> "*We have team meetings regularly […] where we talk about things and within this, I would point out the rule again quite clearly*" (28 – LC)

It was often expressed that this would be used as an example to demonstrate the importance of the rule. However, most managers additionally stated that it must be clarified how to act in this situation in the future ("*What can we do, so this won't happen again*?" 17 – HC). Suggestions among others were permitting this specific rule-breaking (exception to the rule),

[34] The protagonist in the story was male

announcing someone who is allowed to make this decision in the future or change the process in general. Most managers stated that they generally must learn from this "mistake" or find a solution, to prevent this from happening again in the future. Interestingly, many referred to the rule-breaking itself as a mistake, not the actual outcome of it. Therefore, to some a solution was to remind everyone's area of responsibility to ensure that this rule will not be broken again. The decision to punish respectively support the employee was not directly influenced by the **PSRB outcome**. This is pointed out by the fact, that 13 out of the 31 managers would implement some of the above listed punishments, whereas seven of them were confronted with the low condition vignette (increase in welfare) and six with the high condition vignette (decrease in welfare).

To complement these findings which base on the fictional scenario, interviewees were asked to think about a situation where an employee, or the interviewee him or herself broke a rule with best intentions, how this rule-breaking turned out and how the reaction was (either by themselves or their own supervisors). In total, interviewees described 35- rule breaking situations that fit the definition of Pro-Social Rule Breaking. Some interviewees immediately thought of a few examples, whereas others could not think of one at all. However, the described situations fit the results. Harsh sanctioning methods were never described, even though some supervisors pointed out that this would be different, if it happened too often or led to a big organizational damage.

One manager thought about an official warning letter but spontaneously decided against it, because the employee showed remorse. The more typical responses were having a serious talk with the employee, trying to correct mistakes afterwards (e.g. when a mandatory form was not filled out to get something done faster, the form was filled out afterwards) or finding a solution for future situations.

Especially when managers talked about their own rule-breaking behaviors, they often knew before they would get in trouble for it. However, they still decided to break the rule, because complying to the rule would lead to an even worse outcome and would get them in even bigger trouble.

Different to the literature review, ignoring was not an option to managers. However, ignoring as a response behavior was mentioned in the self-given examples. Interviewees mentioned situations where they broke the rule and it had no consequences, because the risk was limited or because it was the right thing to do.

"... no one says anything [...] the rules are there but just don't fit. They are implemented for a different purpose....And therefore the risk is just very low." (23 – HC)

"*Generally, it was the right decision and turned out right. Of course, it led to extra work in other departments. [...] I decided this and there were no consequences*" (27 – HC)

"*Well, I don't say anything. I only raise my warning-finger but say nothing*." (12 – LC)

Interviewees also explained when rule breaking becomes necessary in their opinion. First, whenever a rule exists for a different purpose which does not fit a given situation. In their opinion this is often the case when rules are made at a top-level, with a too big distance to the working force. Second, when fast decisions and acts are needed which do not give an opportunity to seek allowance or go an official way. And third, when rules are made to give organizations a legal security, but are counterproductive in everyday situations (e.g., certain safety rules).

Further responses were described, unrelated to the employee. For example, when the output was bad, managers said the first action they would take is to try to regain customer satisfaction. Hence, to undo the mistake. However, since it does not impact the employee or the team, it is not from interest for this research and was not included into the coding structure.

To summarize, responses to PSRB were either supporting or sanctioning and independent to the kind of response, clarifying. Yet, the question remains why managers decided to sanction respectively support and how they rationalized this decision. This is the subject of the following section.

4.2.2 Cues for Managers Rationalizations

As figures 6 and 7 show, cues that were used to rationalize managements responses can be divided into two types: cues which are directly related to the PSRB situation and the ones which are independent of the specific PSRB. Interviewees mentioned these cues when explaining why they would act in a particular way. They were either mentioned directly as a reason, or indirectly when rationalizing their response. In the following I will describe

these cues in more detail, starting with the cues that are directly related to the rule breaking situation.

Cues related to the rule breaking

The first cue to mention here is the ***outcome***, as special focus laid on it within the research. The outcome did play a role here but not the only one. It was not directly mentioned as a reason for how managers responded, but often was mentioned indirectly. When the PSRB outcome was good, it was pointed out, or mentioned in a clause:

> "*important is that he reached the goal!"* (4 – LC) or
>
> "*No damage is caused quite the opposite, in fact!"* (12 – LC)

and vice versa:

> "*Obviously, there was a mistake. And this mistake led to a big damage." (9 – HC)*
>
> *"Let's just say, it is annoying when employees do not contribute to customer satisfaction"* (11 – HC)

However, to some it was completely irrelevant:

> "*If I am reading it right, nothing went wrong, that doesn't make it any better."* (30 – LC)
>
> *"Whether that is advantageous or disadvantageous, is completely irrelevant. This is a rule violation, and a rule should be respected"* (26 – LC)

Further, 24 out of the 31 interviewees mentioned or recognized the good ***intention*** behind the rule-breaking and 14 highlighted that the employee acted proactive. However, even though it was explicitly mentioned in the vignette, some managers doubted this good intention. One factor that led to believing or doubting the good intention, was the frequency the employee has broken rules, or extended his area of responsibility, in the past:

> "*If this has happened before, I must ask myself, why is he doing this*? (14 – LC)

Another relevant factor was if the employee had tried to reach the supervisor to avoid this situation and the rule breaking.

> *"Then it can be seen as negative and I would assume, that he wanted to distinguish himself. Assuming I was there, and I was reachable…"* (18 – LC)

However, the fact that the employee deliberated the whole team about the situation and how to act, reinforced the good intention and was positively perceived by most managers:

> *"But it says here, he talked about it with his colleagues. Therefore, I don't believe he wanted to distinguish himself."* (18 – LC)

> "*He didn't act completely on his own, you have to recognize that, too. It would have been bad if he had decided on his own >>I will just do this now<<"* (14 – LC)

> *"It is in his favor that he collected more opinions and didn't just act…"* (29 – HC)

Another relevant factor connected to the rule-breaking situation is the ***rule-breaking severity***. The potential profit (customer satisfaction) was weighted against worst-case scenario outcomes (losing one of the biggest customers). Opinions differed on how serios the worst-case scenario outcome is, but most perceived it as manageable and therefore, abstained from heavy punishment. Further, some managers thought about the risks or consequences if the employee had done nothing.

> *"Actually, the employee stepped in to do something. What if he had done nothing at all? Would the problem be bigger or not?"* (21 – HC)

> *"If he had done nothing, we would have lost that customer anyway. And this way he tried his best"* (23 – HC)

As mentioned before, many interviewees noted that the employee violated an internal organizational rule and not a law. They stated that law violations are not acceptable at all, independent of the outcome or intention behind it.

> *"There are just a few things like legal regulations and such, and we simply have to comply with them."* (26 – LC)

> "*So, which regulation is he violating? Is that an internal regulation or is it one that is externally mandated? So, if it's a law, I'm just not allowed to do it… and then it's just negligent to do it differently, no matter what the intention behind it is"* (26 – LC)

The last rule-breaking related factor is ***communication***. On one hand it is about how and if the employee communicated that he broke a rule and how honest he is about it.

> "*But an information, that something has happened, is very important. There is nothing worse than your employees doing something, and you as their supervisor know nothing*." (14 – LC)

On the other hand, it is about how this rule was communicated prior to the rule-breaking and whether there might have been misunderstandings regarding the rule.

> "*Then I would question, whether the employees knew this rule, if they were conscious about it?"* (18 – LC)

> *"That this has not had the desired result is one thing, but the question is […] why did this mistake happen? Is it simply because he didn't know any better? Or couldn't know any better?* (09 – HC)

This is interesting because in the vignette it was described that the employee clearly knew that he is breaking a rule. And still, some managers assumed misunderstandings regarding the rule.

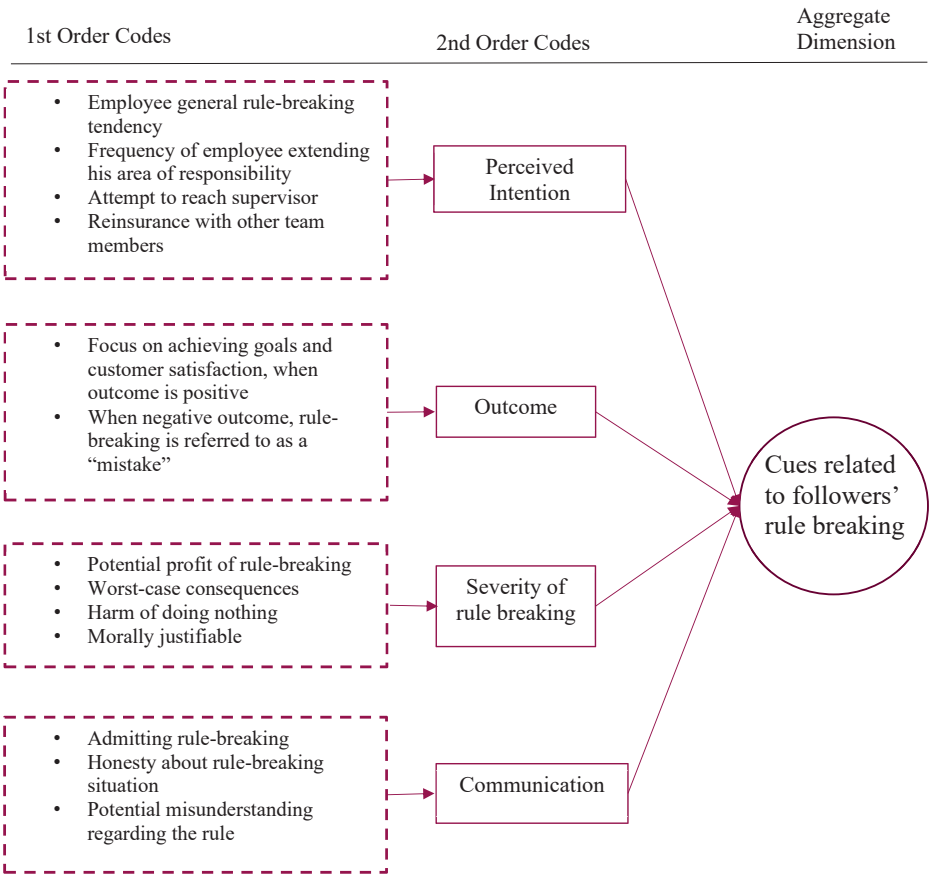

Figure 6:Data Structure of Cues related to followers' rule breaking (based on empirical study)

Next to cues that can be directly linked to the PSRB, interviewees further mentioned general cues which are not directly related to the situation. Hence, in interviews managers used situational aspects to rationalize their action as well as situational unrelated aspects. Therefore, next I will show and depict cues that are independent to followers' rule breaking.

Cues independent to rule breaking

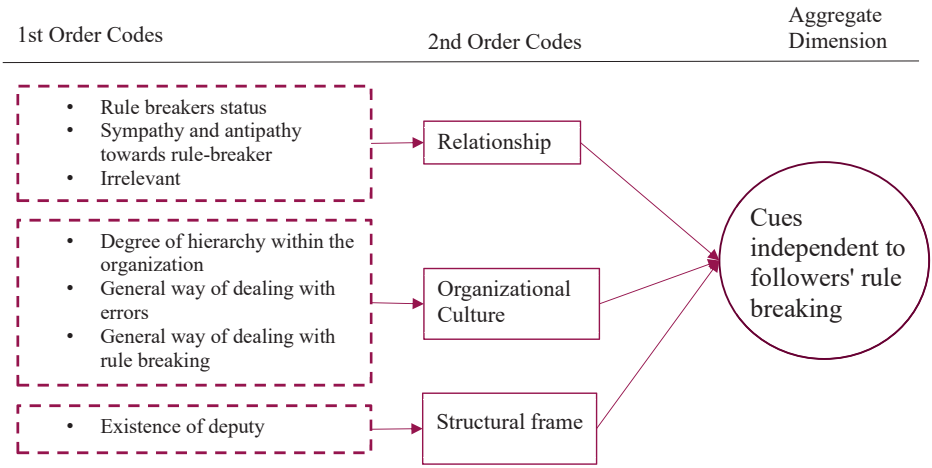

Figure 7:Data Structure of Cues independent to followers' rule breaking (based on empirical study)

The first one here is perceived ***relationship*** quality between the leader and the rule-breaker. Most managers agreed that even if you should be objective towards your employees, you never are completely. Only 5 of the interviewees said that sympathies towards the rule breaker have no impact on the decision how to handle the situation. The others agreed that sympathy and antipathy always have an influence, even if it is unconsciously.

> "*Yes, you shouldn't really make this difference, I have to treat employees equally, but in everyday life it does make a difference. Everyone is human and that influences the perception.*" (27 – HC)

> *"What do I tolerate? This depends on many different factors. Ultimately, this also depends on how well or not I get along with the employee."* (12 – LC)

> "*As a manager, I am not free of sympathy* […] *In other words, if I have someone to whom I have a fundamentally positive attitude, where I have the feeling that he supports me, where I feel a sense of loyalty, my tolerance for mistakes is naturally higher than if I say: >>Müller, he's always done everything wrong, he can't do anything<<".* (20 – LC)

One interviewee said that some colleagues wait for employees to make mistakes, to have a legal base for an official warning.

> "*with employees that they actually want to get rid of. They look very precisely into one's rule-breaking behavior then…"* (10 – LC)

However, even more important than antipathies and sympathies is the perceived qualification of the employee who broke the rule.

> *"If this is an employee who, let's say, you are very convinced that he contributes one hundred percent to the company's success. And who then settles this matter in such a way that it ends negatively. Then, of course, you see it differently than with someone who's budget is always tight. And then does it on top of that."* (05 – HC)

Additional cues mentioned in this context were the perception of the employees' general interest in the company's success, substitutability, trustworthiness and whether the employee has taken responsibility before.

Another key factor is the ***organizational culture***. To be precise, how the company general responses to mistakes and rule-breaking, influences decisions.

> "*As described, this is a violation of the rules. The question is how rule violations are generally dealt with in the company*? (30 – LC)

> "*That's very difficult to answer now, because of course, the kind of corporate culture goes hand in hand with that. How are problems generally dealt with?*" (29 – HC)

The degree of hierarchy does also play a part here.

> "*Depending on how the company works. Does the company strongly believe in hierarchy? […] then hierarchy compliance is necessary and then employees must conform. Sadly, you cannot choose your boss*." (20 - LC)

The last relevant element regards the ***structural frame*** of the company. In the story, the employee broke the rule because he could not get a hold of his boss and a decision had to be made. Hence, many managers asked whether there is a deputy that he could have asked instead. After most of the first interviewees asked whether they had a deputy in the story, I included this element into the interview guideline. The existence of a deputy generally led to a harsher response. Managers argued that it makes the rule-breaking less necessary and further, that it challenges the described good intention.

"*If there is a representative who is available, then you at least have to talk with him. So, there I would be…. That is a violation of the rules where you simply say that he has now acted on his own authority*!" (06 – LC)

Some thoughts were only made in the vignette, where the welfare decreased. Most managers stated that they would try to locate the source of error and why the employee could not live up to the standards. They said that before they respond in anyway, they would want to find out what went wrong. To them it would make a difference, whether the employee did not want to get better results or could not. This again also depended on the leader's perception towards the employee.

"*is it because of the person, the ability or the will*?" (21 – HC)

Few stated that the source of error could also lay without the employees' area of influence. Hence, that he had a good intention, did everything right and it still led to the wrong outcome.

"*… and still the mistake happened, and it wasn't his fault."* (01 – HC)

"Because maybe it would have gone just as wrong even if I had been there. So, then it's not at all due to the employee's actions. The employee did his best. The best that was possible. So, I wouldn't immediately scold him, but first try to analyze what actually caused the whole thing." (23 – HC)

After giving an overview of the most relevant cues, I subsequently want to discuss their connections, how they influenced the decision to sanction or support and depict these connections in a cognitive process model.

4.2.3 A Process Model of Rationalizing

Subsequently, I want to examine the connection of the cues and their influence on managers response behavior. The previous chapter already indicated the listed cues are often mentioned in connection to certain response behaviors. This brings up a cognitive process model for the rationalization of managers response to PSRB (see Figure 8). Shortcuts refer to managers to whom the presented elements were irrelevant and independently decided to sanction the rule breaking. The model is separated into three different process steps. I will start with the latter one, managers responses.

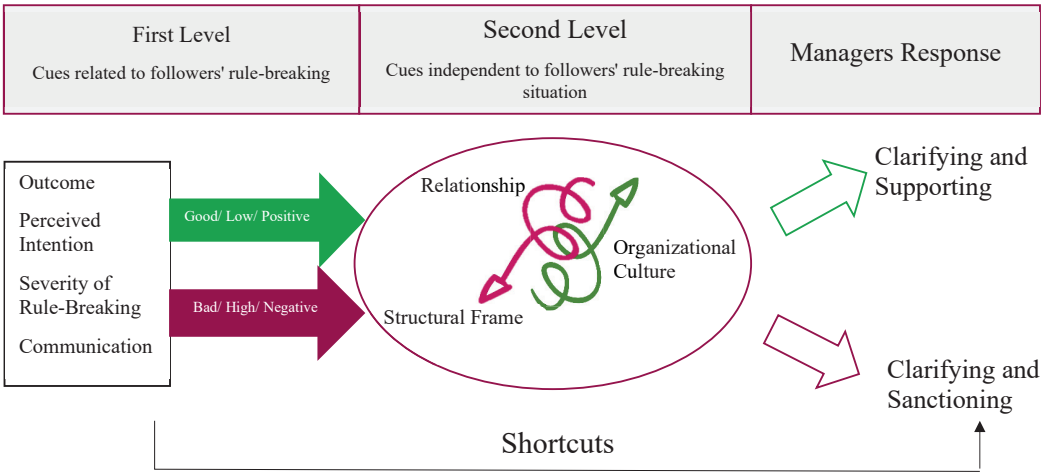

Figure 8: Process of Rationalization (own illustration)

Harsh sanctioning methods such as a documented employee meeting, discharging was hardly amongst the initial reactions. Yet, few managers responded with direct punishment, without considering the outcome of the PSRB behavior, the intention or any of the other cue discussed above. Typically, managements response was either supporting, or an informal warning, like a "serious talk". In some cases, it was supporting and an informal warning at the same time. In the study, all managers agreed that a rule was broken, and that rule-breaking is generally wrong and must be punished in some way. However, even though very few argued that rule-breaking can never be right, most agreed that situations occur regularly where breaking the rule is the right choice.

The study results emphasize that a clarification of the rule is of foremost interest in the case of PSRB. "Clarifying" was always an intention of the managers and was accompanied either with sanctioning or supporting. Every leader in the study described at least one clarification measure. Yet, the kind of clarification typically differed in combination with supporting or sanctioning. Managers describing a supporting response behavior, often focused on finding a solution for the future, such as widen the employees' area of responsibility, finding an official deputy or informally allowing this rule-breaking in the future. Whereas managers describing a sanctioning response behavior, rather focused on pointing out the rule to the

employee him- or herself as well as the team. Their understanding of finding a solution for the future focuses on making sure that this rule will not be broken again.

Notably, ignoring the PSRB was not an option considered by the participants. None of the managers in this study said they would ignore the rule-breaking and not response at all.

> *"It is quite clear that something must happen"* (09 – HC)

> *"I see quite a few necessities to take action"* (26 – LC)

Yet, when asked how colleagues might act in this situation and if they have colleagues that might not see a necessity to act, 23 of the 31 interviewees agreed. Most of them said that this is especially true in situations where the organization benefited from.

> *"Our management acts like this: As long as everything goes smoothly, nobody cares. But if something goes wrong, they will start asking why and how?"* (01 – HC)

> *"I think that people generally have the tendency to turn a blind eye, when things are rather positive compared to when results are negative"* (12 – LC)

At this point, I want to mention that managers do not reflect on each of these elements individually, but they are considered all together with different weights and above that influence each other. Thus, a rather complex cognitive process is involved for rationalizing managements responses to PSRB. The results indicate that there are three different process steps, whereas the last one depicts the decision for managers response.

First level elements are connected directly to the rule breaking situation and therefore are the starting point. However, they do not influence the decision directly, but indirectly or subconsciously. This means, they are considered to justify the final decision, hence, why rule-breaking is supported or not heavily punished, as one might assume. Also, the combination of level one factors may influence the decision. For example, even though the rule-breaking had a bad outcome, the good intention paired with a perceived low severity of the rule-breaking, decreases (green arrow) the probability of punishing. On the other hand, for example, a good outcome, paired with a bad intention and an omitted or false communication on the part of the employee, increases (red arrow) the likelihood of punishment. The only difference between the scenarios was the outcome and still the situation was interpreted differently among interviewees. This shows that factors such as the underlying intention or severity of rule breaking are a matter of perception.

As already indicated, the **outcome** of the rule breaking had no direct influence on the final decision on how to act but indirectly. Hence, when PSRB led to an increase of welfare, reaching organizational goals was explicitly mentioned and focused on. It was almost used as an excuse for not punishing, hence, to relativize the situation.

> *"Of course there was… well… some kind of misconduct, but which did not have any consequences."* (08 – LC)

When I asked interviewees, who read the vignette where the rule-breaking had gone wrong, if they reacted any different when the outcome would be vice versa, some stated that a sanctioning method becomes less necessary.

> *"I would not hand out an official warning notice in this case. I would still remind him that he broke a rule and ask him not to do this again."* (05 – HC)

> *"The customer is satisfied […] In such cases I always use the sports rule: Who scores, is right. If the success is there, it's okay."* (21 – HC)

Further, 19 out of the 31 Interviewees described any kind of supporting (hence, praising the employee, protecting him/her in front of own supervisors and/or considering a promotion). Interestingly, out of the 19 interviewees, 12 had the scenario where the welfare was increased and 7 where the welfare was decreased. In other words, 12 out of 15 described a supporting action, compared to only 7 out of 16.

However, if the welfare of the organization was decreased, meaning the PSRB had a different output then intended, it was also important where the source of error laid. Hence, managers said they first need to find out what went wrong before they can respond. If the source of error laid outside the employees' sphere of influence, managers were less likely to punish him or her. If it was the employees' fault, managers rather decided to punish. Additionally, some managers differed between whether the employee could not do it better or did not want to do it better. If the latter was true, the good intention was doubted, which again increased the likelihood of punishment.

Additionally, in the given PSRB real-life examples, a connection to the actual outcome was sometimes made. Saying that if everything goes right, nothing happens. This accounted to given examples, where the interviewee themselves described a situation in which they engaged in PSRB. Hence, where their own supervisors should have responded.

> "*It was ignored and accepted because it was the best decision*" (27 – HC)

"*If it turns out fine, then the top management pats themselves on the back and says how great they are. And if it goes wrong the culprit is sought*." (19 – HC)

This indicates that even though interviewees did not say directly that the outcome influences their final decision, it seems to have an indirect influence.

The element **intention** functions in a similar way. As mentioned above, 24 of the interviewees acknowledged the good intention behind the behavior. Just as the outcome, it was used to relativize the decision to not punish at all or in harsh ways. Yet, some doubted the described good intention, hence, not everyone perceived the intention as positive. When I asked managers, who did not decide to punish the employee whether the intention influenced this decision, most of them agreed. This means that breaking the rule with a good intention is less likely to be formally punished as breaking the rule with a bad intention. Only for few the intention behind the rule-breaking was secondary and the rule breaking itself in the foreground (shortcut). The following quotes indicate that the decision not to punish was influenced by the good intention behind the act:

"If we assume that the employee just waited for the boss to leave because he wants to be a boss himself for once, you have to handle the situation differently…" (04 – LC)

"You can officially warn him if he sent out a bad offer intentionally […] but not in this case here" (12 – LC)

This is also indicated by the fact that some of the interviewees who had the scenario where the welfare was increased and who described supporting actions, remained with their decision to support, even though the outcome was bad. They argued that the intention behind his act remains the same.

"Even if it goes wrong. It was in the sense of the company." (12 – LC)

The perceived intention was strongly influenced by the frequency the employee breaks rules. Almost every interviewee said that if this has happened more often already, it is time to set an example and to act more consequently.

"*I would not hand out an official warning letter, unless he has done this before"* (12 – LC)

"If the scenario said that this has already happened before, my procedure would be totally different. But I assume it is the first time this has happened." (16 – LC)

"If he knew this, I would document his behavior the first time it happens. And the second time I would hand out an official warning letter." (17 – HC)

Yet, if this *specific* rule had been broken before, few managers said that they obviously failed in finding a good solution and therefore it is partly their fault.

"Then this employee is in the wrong position. Or I failed in describing the processes clearly. Because if I'm lacking time to do this myself, I as a supervisor have to find another way." (14 – LC)

"Well then something in the whole system is wrong […] if I always have to hope for someone to safe me and the situation from escalating." (18 – LC)

Additionally, the perceived intention is generally related to the employee who broke the rule. A good intention is rather believed when loyal and trusted employees express such. One leader said that every employee presents rule-breaking with an underlying good intention and that no one would admit that they wanted to harm the organization. Therefore, as a leader you must always reflect given explanations. The perceived intention was positively influenced by the fact, that the employee talked to the whole team about his decision, as pointed out in chapter 4.2.2.

The perception of the **severity of rule breaking** may be another important element for the rationalization of managers response behavior. Potential risks were always weighed up. Some perceived the (potential) bad outcome of the PSRB as acceptable and a risk worth taking and thus, were less likely to punish and rather praised the employee.

"and this is a rule where I would say, the risk is quite neglectable." (20 – LC)

However, as pointed out above, they also said that if the potential risks were higher, a good intention or a good outcome would not be enough. Then they more likely would sanction the employee, to ensure that this worst-case scenario will never occur. This especially counts for breaking the law. One could argue that breaking the law can also happen with a good intention and be beneficial for the organization, thus, fulfills all criteria of PSRB (e.g., bribing). However, this is only true for as long as the rule breaking remains hidden. It can be beneficial for the company at first, but also brings the company in great danger, and thus, is not advantageous to the organization in the long run. In this case it would not be PSRB

but functional deviance, as explained in chapter 1.2. Some of the participants perceived the (potential) bad outcome as severe and hence, were more likely to respond with punishment.

Most frequently named deviant behaviors that the interviewees would not tolerate and sanction immediately, without any tolerance are corruption, theft, fraud, money laundering, bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, lying about working hours, and violations of the working hours act. Some of these actions can in no way be beneficial to an organization. Others, like corruption, money laundering or violations of working hours act (hence, working more hours than legally allowed), are comparable to bribery. They can be beneficial in a short term, if these behaviors remain undetected, but can cause big damage when they become public. This points out that it is reasonable to distinguish between PSRB and functional deviance.

The given PSRB real-life examples fit here as well. Besides the actual outcome, the reasoning (intention) behind the rule breaking, the perceived risk was also mentioned when explaining a response behavior.

> "*It was (...) accepted because it was the best decision. […] It was a conscious decision, and the consequences were predictable for the most part*." (27 – HC)

> "*And I know I have this free space. […] What would the worst-case scenario be? The risk is not so high."* (15 – HC)

Further, the **communication** about the rule breaking also influences the kind of response. Accordingly, reliability and trustworthiness of the rule breaking follower is very important. This is questioned if the subordinate keeps her/his behavior a secret. The given quotes in 4.2.2 highlight this fact. Most participants in the study implied that the employee openly talked about his behavior, as it is not mentioned in the vignette. They argued that they could not know about the good intention if the employee did not actively talk about it. This was also used as an argument to not punish. The real life PSRB examples again fit these findings:

> "*So, both his boss and his bosses' boss are aware that we are planning to do this. Of course, we have told them for what reasons and have explained that there is no other way. So, he virtually has no possibility but to say >>Do your business […] <<. So, we maneuvered him into this situation, where he must go along with it. Otherwise, he would be acting in a way that would damage the business. Which he can't do either."* (10 – LC)

"*It has always been bad in situations where they have not informed us. Then we had a very "nice talk" afterwards, where I expressed my anger. But if the person called me and explained himself, then it was a rule-breaking that I could accept*." (06 – LC)

How communication was perceived seemed to be influenced by the amount interviewees regularly talk to their employees and how reachable they are in general. Because some interviewees said that there is always room and time to talk about such important news and that they are reachable 24/7. To them communication was valued more.

To sum up, managers consider different cues, which are connected to the rule-breaking situation, to relativize the situation. Hence, depending on their perception (positive outcome/negative outcome; good intention/ bad intention; high severity/ low severity; communication/ no communication), and cognitive processing in combination, managers develop a first tendency to response.

The second level of reflection refers to additional elements independent of the specific rule breaking that enhance or mitigate these first level response tendencies. The **organizational culture**, particularly the error-culture, impacts the way rule-breaking is generally handled. Hence, managers feel they have to punish, even though they do not think it is right. The results indicate, the organizational culture may have an influence on the perception of rule-breaking in general. Also, the culture may determine how supervisors must respond to rule-breaking up to a certain degree, even though they would personally act differently.

The **relationship** quality between supervisor and follower has a similar influence. First, sympathies and antipathies play a role here. For instance, even though a leader would not punish PSRB, because of the good intention or the good outcome, they might as well do because of a bad relationship to the employee. For example, one interviewee who initially said he would praise the employee for his actions, later said:

"It may also depend on who this is all about. Because I think if this is an employee you just don't like, you might see this as an opportunity to relief some anger. Arguing that this is the straw the broke the camel's back. And now you will get an official warning letter! If it is about someone you really like, you might rather keep it low." (28 – LC)

Or vice versa, even though they think punishment is an appropriate response behavior, they might decide not to because of the good relationship and the fear, to harm this. Last, the relationship may not turn the initial decision, but rather enhance it.

> *"And I would hope that this is an employee who has a good impression on me. That would make it much easier* [to stay calm and not sanction him]*"* (10 – LC)

Second, the employees perceived status influences the kind of response. Employees with a perceived high status are less likely to be punished then employees with a low status.

> *"Everyone knows that discharging an employee who has been with the company for 30 years and more, can be very expensive. This unconsciously influences the decision* [to sanction or not]. *"* (16 – LC)

If a follower is perceived as skilled and not easy to replace, punishment is less likely.

> "*if this is a competent employee, I might rather accept the fact that I lost some money here*." (06 – LC)

Another element independent of the specific rule-breaking is the **structural setting.** To be precise, the hierarchy levels and whether the leader has an official deputy. Depending on the structural setting the rule breaker might have had a possibility to avoid unauthorized behavior. In my study to some managers these possibilities make the rule-breaking unnecessary. Expressed more precisely, even though a leader generally would support an employee (e.g., because of the good outcome of PSRB), he/she sees the rule-violation in the foreground as it is perceived as unnecessary to break the rules and therefore, decides to punish the employee.

> "*I think it was good of him to act this way! The whole situation would be different* [including the response behavior] *if there was a deputy or if I was somehow reachable. […] this would be a clear rule violation*" (12 – LC)

> "*I would pass it on to the whole team* [note: the praise]. *On the premise that neither the deputy nor I were reachable*" (18 – LC)

To sum up, the organizational culture, the leader-follower relationship between leader and employee as well as the structural setting can mitigate, enforce or even change first tendencies on how managers respond to PSRB. Typically, not only one of these cues form the decision on how to respond but rather their combination. Hence, it is thought to easy to

say that an increase in welfare leads to supporting whereas a decrease leads to sanctioning. There are different situational and non-situational cues that in their unique combination and expression rationalize the final decision.

5. Discussion

Looking at the results it becomes clear that it is thought to easy to say that PSRB with a decrease in organizational welfare increases the likelihood of punishment and vice versa. As previously assumed, managers mention different cues to rationalize, or justify, their decision on how to act. My findings therefore contribute to research of deviant workplace behavior and especially to Pro-Social Rule Breaking, by going beyond looking into the influencing factors that thrive such behavior. This study helps to gain a better understanding about relevant cues that are considered when responding to well-meant deviant behavior. The results indicate that most interviewees were not just "rule-enforcers", as suggested by Dahling et al. (2012) and they indeed recognized the ambiguous and difficult situation they are in, weighing the different cues when coming to a decision on how to respond.

5.1 Contribution to PSRB research

In this section, I want to highlight typical paths of rationalization to make the presented process more tangible. The presented research model contributes to PSRB research, as it depicts how managers respond, and from even greater interest, why managers respond to PSRB in a certain way. Past research mainly focused on determinants of PSRB. Among these are leadership features, including the relationship of employee and manager. Yet, there are hardly any studies that analyzed how managers respond to PSRB. The existing studies focused on how managers respond to PSRB and not on why they do so. Therefore, the negative tendencies of managers responses to PSRB could not be explained. The results of my studies help to understand why managers respond to PSRB in a particular way and how they justify this response behavior. In the following I will demonstrate three different paths of rationalization.

The first two paths I want to highlight are the most typical ones. They might vary in detail but lead to the same result. As shown in the findings, after interviewees described how they would respond in the given situation, they rationalized their decision. This either meant to focus on given facts in the story, to question these, or to label them as irrelevant. In doing this, cognitive dissonance is reduced, and the decision made becomes justifiable. In other words, the perceived situation fits the personal understanding on how one should respond to such a situation. Justification of decisions and rationalizing strategies will be discussed later.

Path A: The outcome is perceived as bad, the intention is perceived as good, severity of rule-breaking is perceived as high, and communication is perceived as negative. Hence, three

out of four cues have an expression that lead to a first sanctioning tendency. This tendency is now enhanced by the relationship between rule breaker and leader, the organizational

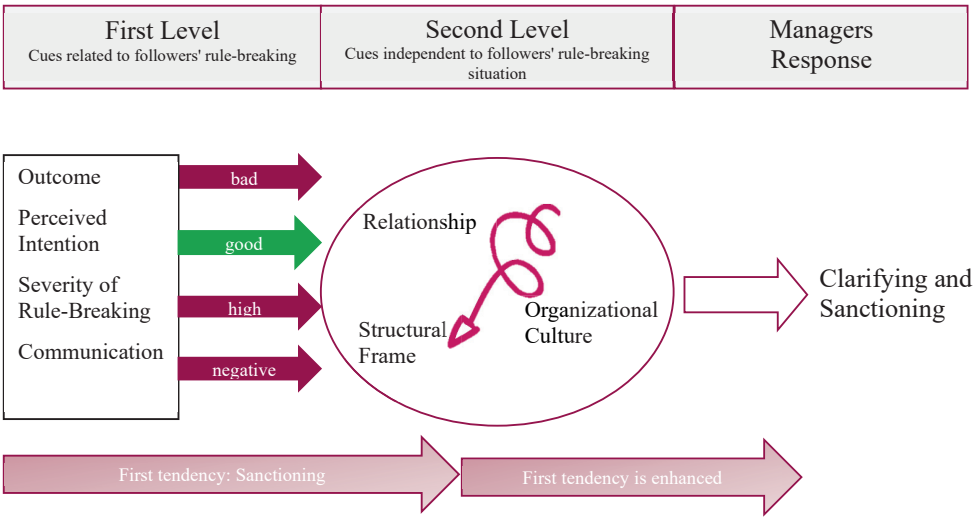

Figure 9: Path A – Clarifying and Sanctioning tendency

culture and structural frame. To be precise, if managers have no sympathy for the employee, or consider him to be less skilled, there exists a deputy that could have been asked and the organizational culture typical sanctions rule-breaking, the original tendency is enhanced, and the leader decides to sanction the rule-breaker. Of course, this first tendency can also be mitigated if the organizational culture is different, or the rule-breaker and leader have a good relationship. This could result in softer sanctioning methods or even supporting.

Path B leads to a supporting response behavior. Here all four cues related to the followers' rule-breaking have a positive expression, leading to a supporting tendency. This tendency is enhanced by the good relationship between the rule-breaker and his supervisor, by a supporting organizational culture and by a structural frame that lead to the necessity to break this rule in this situation. Therefore, the first tendency to support the employee in his rule-breaking behavior, is enhanced by situational independent cues.

Again, this first tendency can also be mitigated. This means, even though the outcome is good, the intention is perceived as good and so on, a bad relationship, or a sanctioning culture can change this first tendency and result in (probably soft) sanctioning. Yet, the paths and tendencies might not always be as obvious. Especially when two situation-related cues have

a positive, and the other two a negative expression, cues independent to the rule breaking situation become even more important.

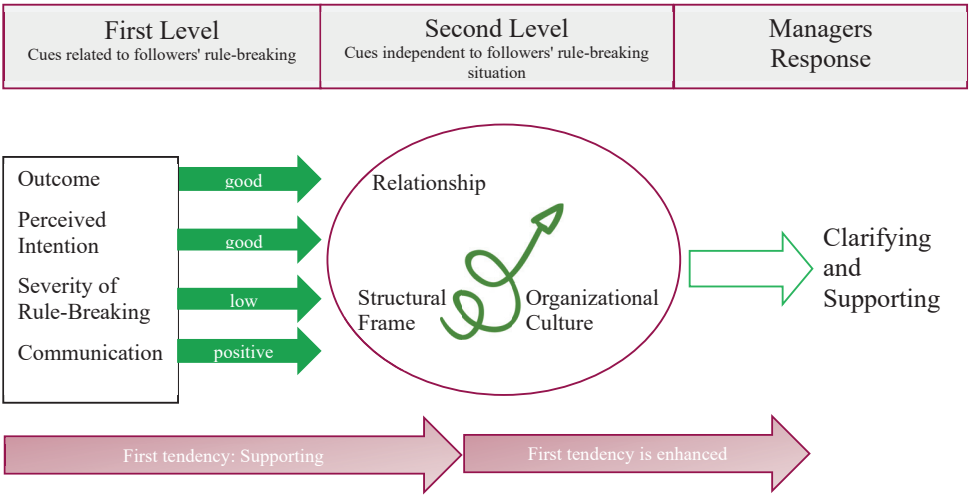

Figure 10: Path B – Clarifying and Supporting tendency

Path C: The outcome and communication about the rule-breaking are positive, but the perceived intention is bad, and the perceived severity of rule-breaking is high. Based on the expression of the situational independent cues, managers will either decide to support or sanction. In the depicted situation a bad relationship, a structural frame that decreases the necessity of rule breaking as well as a sanctioning culture lead to the decision to respond with "softer" sanctioning methods. However, in these situations managers will probably not justify their decision to sanction by pointing out their bad relationship with the rule-breaker. In this case the leader will most likely pay more attention to the negatively expressed first level cues and neglect the positive expressed cues. These were the interviewees who questioned the clearly described good intention in the scenario and focused more on the rule-breaking itself than the positive outcome. By doing this they justify their response behavior and reduce the cognitive dissonance.

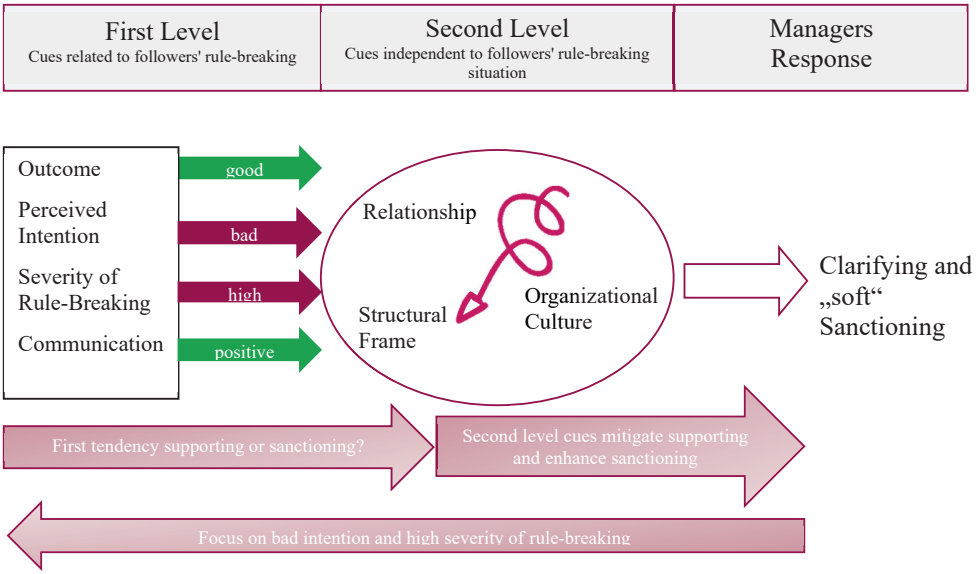

Figure 11: Path C – Clarifying and "soft" Sanctioning tendency

Also, interviewees sometimes responded with supporting (praising) and punishing (informal warning) at the same time. This is also a strategy to solve the presented dilemma. By this, managers fulfill their role as "rule enforcers" and point out that rule breaking is generally not tolerated. However, by praising the rule breaking they demonstrate that they agree that in this case, breaking the rule was the right choice. This way managers try to meet both competing demands, reaching organizational goals as well as rule general rule compliance.

At this point I want to add that second level cues can also have a positive and negative expression at the same time, mitigating and enhancing a first tendency. It is conceivable that in this case the first level cues become even more important again. Further, depending on managers values and beliefs, some second level cues can be more important than others. Especially the relationship and the organizational error culture seem to be important here, whereas the structural frame seems to be secondary. However, further research is necessary to gain better understanding about which cues are more relevant than others and in which situation.

5.2 Contribution to Deviant Workplace Behavior research

Research on responses to DWB is on one hand rare and on the other does not give a clear understanding on why managers sometimes decide to punish, to support or to ignore. As the literature analysis shows, some influencing factors onto the kind of response could be found, however, do not fully explain them. In this section I want to compare and discuss gained insights with existing literature. My research particularly contributes to the research stream of deviant behavior, including rule-breaking and especially PSRB. The first chapter of my thesis point out the wide span of behaviors which are categorized as deviant workplace behaviors. PSRB makes up only a small fraction here. However, as many DWB constructs are similar in some way, my findings on PSRB can also explain why supervisors respond to deviant behavior differently. The identified relevant cues for justification are very likely to apply to all kinds of DWB. For example, part of the PSRB definition is the underlying good intention. However, as this is a matter of perception, good intention was questioned and thus, was only one cue among many that influenced response behavior. Also, when it comes to DWB employees can also have an underlying good or bad intention. Additionally, the outcome of the act can be good for an organization and its members, or bad. Especially when looking at the definition of CD, which also bases on a good intention and leaves out the actual outcome (Galperin, 2012). This shows that the presented model might not only be true to responses to PSRB but to general DWB, especially CD. For example, situations like stealing from a company (DD) or internal whistleblowing (CD) can be represented within the model, explaining supervisors' responses towards such behavior. Even in such obvious situations like stealing, where managers most likely have strong first tendency to punish (bad intention, bad outcome, high severity of rule breaking and most likely no communication), this tendency might be mitigated by a good relationship between leader and follower for example.

Also, general purposes of rules could be confirmed and supplemented (see chapter 1.1) Confirmed purposes are for example that rules serve for orientation and guidance (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), that they support the organizational structure (to be efficient) and that they create a social order (because without rules, nothing works) (Ortmann, 2003). Further purposes named are that rules give security (to employees and the organization) and serve as legal insurance. This is from special interest because these purposes somehow imply that rules are not always the best way or solution, but rather are implemented for security reasons. Interviewees who named such purposes of rules rather had a positive attitude towards rule

breaking. Further, the interviewees general opinion on rule-breaking influenced their response behavior, especially their first initial reaction to the scenario. It is less surprising that managers who had a negative opinion on rule-breaking, rather responded negatively to the behavior (PSRB) in the scenario. This indicates that next to the presented situational dependent and independent cues, the decision on how to respond to PSRB is also person related. Managers opinion on rules depend on how they are socialized. On one hand, how they are socialized by the organizations rule culture, past experiences in other organizations and, how they were socialized growing up. Often individuals obey to rules without thinking or questioning them because they were told to so and their behavioral routines need it (Cohn & White, 1990, p. 1). Besides fear of punishment, another reason why individuals conform to rules is because they simply believe it is the right thing to do (Cohn & White, 1990, pp. 10–11). This varies between individuals. How a person grew up influences their opinion on rules and consequently, their opinion on rule breaking. Therefore, to some managers rule compliance is valued more than by others. The influence of personal differences to responses to PSRB will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The typical response behaviors to the presented scenario, as well as the self-described PSRB examples, where either supporting, like encouraging such behavior or speaking out an informal warning, as a "serious talk". The described punishments fit to Beyer and Trices' (1984) findings. In their study they investigated what sanctioning methods are typically used with problem employees and found, that leaders discharged problem employees in only 3% of the cases. In contrast, 95% had at least one informal conversation (p.751). The identified sanctioning methods in my study are widely concurring. Only suspensions were never considered among the interviewees. This is also in line with the results by Ghosh and Shum (2019) who found that the typical response to PSRB are informal warnings. However, my findings indicate that supporting is also a possible response to PSRB. In addition to supporting or sanctioning, managers will clarify the rule breaking. Clarifying has a special role in the context of PSRB, which I will go into more detailed later on in this chapter.

Findings by Fielding, Hogg, and Annandale (2006) suggest that positive deviance in form of performance exceedance is perceived more favorable, when the whole group benefits from it and not just the individual. When it comes to PSRB it is always about an advantage or disadvantage to the whole organization and not just one individual. As the whole organization benefits from PSRB in the second scenario, it can be perceived as more favorable and could explain, why harsh punishment was almost never an option. On the other

hand, harsh punishment was also hardly considered when the welfare was decreased (first scenario). An explanation can be that the intention to improve the welfare already leads to a more favorable perception. This would mean that the intention to help the organization and to do the right thing, is already perceived well, largely independent to the actual outcome. Further, Beyer and Trice (1984) results indicate that harsh punishment is also rarely considered when it comes to destructive deviance. Hence, it seems that before managers take the risk of potential side effects of punishments, as suggested by Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) (e.g. influencing the mood within the organization negatively), they tend to give out second chances. And in the case of PSRB, they find good reason to do so, like a good outcome, a good intention, or a low severity of rule breaking.

Besides avoiding negative consequences of punishment, softer or *lenient* reactions can further lead to a personal advantage. As the study by Zipay, Mitchell, Baer, Sessions, and Bies (2021) shows, responding lenient to misconduct instead of punishing can give the grantor a feeling of pride. This could further explain why harsh punishment is hardly ever considered, even when it comes to destructive deviance. Yet, as the authors found out lenient behavior can also lead to a feeling of guilt, as grantors fail to serve as "good organizational stewards" (p.352), who should punish any kind of wrongdoing. This again points towards a dilemma situation when it comes to responding to deviant behavior. Managers must decide whether to punish lenient destructive deviance, with risking negative side effects. Or grant second changes, even though they know rule breaking should be sanctioned. They again face competing demands: Harmony within the team vs rule compliance. Whether lenient responses to misconducts lead to a feeling of pride or guilt is influenced by self-conscious emotions, which indicate whether one has lived up or failed at living up to the ideal self. However, this especially counts to lenient responses to misbehavior. PSRB should not be categorized as misbehavior, especially when it leads to a beneficial to the organization. Therefore, supervisors could feel less of an urge to act as "good organizational stewards" and rather have positive emotions when being lenient than negative ones.

However, in some cases, the described responses themselves were ambiguous, expressing supporting measures and an informal warning at the same time. Thus, sometimes the response behaviors were simultaneously positive and negative as suggested by Grant and Ashford (2008). This could be the case when the different cues were neither clearly positive (green errors) nor clearly negative (red arrows) but rather compensated each other. It again points out the dilemma situation the decision-makers are in when it comes to PSRB.

Further, this can be the reason, why clarifying was the most important response here, as it was mentioned in some way by every single interviewee. Leaders acknowledge the dilemma they are in and try to solve it by pointing to a potential misunderstanding on the side of the follower. Against the background of communication theory, misunderstandings can be addressed in order to keep the communication going and avoid a potential breakdown (e.g. Luhmann, 1995). In other words, clarifying as a response action allows to go back to the former relationship quality between leader and follower. This is somehow similar to what Lin et al. (2016, p. 539) refer to as *forgiving,* a possible response to creative deviance. They argue that leaders can caution certain behaviors, without formally punishing them. This way they compromise in making clear that the deviant act is generally not tolerated and still acknowledge the good intention. The study by Zipay et al. (2021) showed that forgiveness is related to the level of pride experienced, as forgiveness is seen as a benevolent act. This is again in line with Zipay et al. (2021) finding that lenient responses can lead to a feeling of pride, especially since forgiving can be considered a lenient response. Some interviewers in my study mentioned that there are managers who avoid conflict situations with their employees if possible. Therefore, it seems to be a good solution to the presented dilemma, as clarifying or forgiving are good ways to caution employees, without facing the unpleasant situation of punishment and further, even can increase positive emotions. In general, *clarifying* is in my view the most purposeful and distinct action in the case of PSRB.

As pointed out in the theoretical background section *ignoring* is considered in some of the literature as the most appropriate behavior to deal with the leadership dilemma related to PSRB. However, none of the interviewees considered to ignore the presented rule breaking. Therefore, one would assume that based on my findings ignoring is not a dominant practical option. Especially for middle managers since they are keen to show responsible leadership towards their subordinates *and* their supervisors. Doing nothing would mean to not fulfill the expected role as a leader. The importance of acting as a leader is supported by literature on impression management (e.g. Gardner & Martinko, 1988) and leadership identity theory (e.g. DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Managers and their acts are typically highly visible to employees, which makes it important to manage their impression. Therefore, they often engage in behaviors that establish or maintain a favorable impression (Gardner & Martinko, 1988, p. 42). Ignoring as a response behavior to PSRB, especially when colleagues know about the rule breaking, could send the impression of weak leadership. Clarifying on the other hand signals that the supervisor knows what is going on, but acknowledges the special

situation and acts generously, instead of sanctioning the rule breaking. This creates a more desirable impression.

According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory, one way for decision-makers to reduce cognitive tensions is to justify their decision. Justifying in general is a widely observed behavior and an important element of communication (Xiao, 2017). Wildermuth and Wildermuth (2006) point out that managers rarely ever face black and white decisions, which can be solved through company policies. They also point out that finding an ethical solution to dilemmas requires rational thinking. However, i*gnoring* rule-breaking is hard to rationalize when it is perceived as a poor leadership choice. *Clarifying* on the other hand is easy to justify, because it somehow meets both needs: the organizations wish to respond to rule-breaking, and the employees hope to not be punished for something he or she did with a good intention. Maybe this sought be clever solution is the reason why managers sometimes feel a sense of pride when responding leniently. This could further explain why dismissals were never considered. When dismissing an employee, managers do not only need to justify this decision to themselves, but also to the employee and the organization (Xiao, 2017, p. 15). The pressure to justify can therefore influence employee related decisions. Dismissals were only considered when an employee had broken rules before or when rule-breaking led to a high organizational risk. It is to assume, that otherwise – as in the presented scenario – there is no base to justify such a harsh decision. Softer sanctioning methods, as an informal warning, can easily be justified to the employee as well as to others within the organization. As explained in chapter 2.3, justifying is a rationalization strategy to reduce cognitive dissonance. A general justifiability of decisions further helps to avoid future cognitive dissonances. Based on Decision Justification Theory (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002), decision makers experience less regret, when they can justify their decision (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002; Reb & Connolly, 2010).

However, the empirical design could have enforced response actions. By ignoring, one would present oneself as a weak leader. Thus, managers in my study might have answered in a way they think is right which does not have to confirm with actions taken in real life situations. This assumption is supported by the fact that most interviewees agreed that other managers often do ignore rule-breaking, especially when the organization benefits from it. Additionally, the given real-life PSRB examples support this assumption. When interviewees talked about their own rule breaking behaviors, they said that their own supervisors often look the other way if everything turns out fine. This again can be explained

with the need to justify. If everything goes well there is no need to justify, only when things turn out bad. Yet, even if I suppose a certain bias of the answers, ignoring is not an option that is offensively advocated, and which is seen as appropriate behavior in the case of PSRB.

Based on the results, the perceived severity of rule-breaking is one cue that rationalizes the type of response. Especially the perceived risk was a key element here. This seems reasonable, as the higher the risk, the bigger the necessity to prevent such rule-breaking in the future. However, what was rather surprisingly is the fact that in the presented scenario the potential risk was mostly perceived as low. Even though there were no legal consequences to fear based on the kind of rule breaking, the scenario revealed an organizational history where managers have already been dismissed after losing important customers (scenario, where the welfare was decreased). Hence, in the story the personal risk was rather high. Yet, a perceived high potential risk might favor a sanctioning response, to prevent such rule-breaking in the future and to minimize this potential risk. Cognitive Dissonance Theory again offers a possible explanation. One strategy that supports the rationalization process and justifying, is selective information processing (Hinojosa et al., 2017, p. 174). As pointed out in chapter 2.3, to reduce cognitive dissonance, decision makers tend to focus on elements that favor their decision, and neglect information that contradicts them. Hence, they process information selectively to be better able to justify their decision. In the given context this means that managers processed information about potential risks selectively, to support their decision to avoid harsh sanctioning.

Results further indicate that the organizational culture mitigates or enhances the kind of response to PSRB. This goes in line with Mainemelis (2010, p. 569). He argues that some organizations value conformity more than others and thus, will punish any kind of deviant behavior, despite the underlying intention or the actual outcome. Chui and Grieder (2020, p. 1090) findings revealed that strong sanctioning systems in organization can increase the perception of how unethical wrongdoings are. This means, in such organizations rule-breaking is perceived as more immoral as in others. If it is perceived as immoral, the likelihood of punishment increases. Hence, the culture can influence how rule breaking and other cues are generally perceived.

Next to the organizational culture, the kind of relationship between follower and leader functions in the same way. E.g., even though a leader would not punish PSRB, because of the good intention or the good outcome for example, they might as well do because of a bad

relationship to the employee. Or vice versa, even though they think punishment is an appropriate response, they might decide not to because of the good relationship and the fear, to harm this. Wildermuth and Wildermuth (2006) point out that when it comes to dilemma situations, individuals tend to favor those who are closest which impacts ethical decisions. As shown in the results section, managers rather believe in a good intention when a trusted employee expresses such, which again decreases the likelihood of punishment. Further, the employees perceived status influences the response behavior. Employees with a perceived high status are less likely to be punished then employees with a low status. If a follower is perceived as skilled and not easy to replace, punishment is less likely. This is somehow consistent with findings by Bowles and Gelfand (2010). Their study showed that higher status actors who deviate in destructive ways are punished less severely than low status actors. Additionally, rule-breaking from employees with a low job tenure who still might be unexperienced, is rather tolerated than from employees, who have been in the company for a while and should know better. Interestingly, some argued the other way around, saying that employees with years of experience can judge the situation and the necessity of rule-breaking better, and know better what is right and necessary and what is wrong. It was also mentioned that it is nearly impossible to legally fire employees with a high job tenure and therefore, misbehavior must be tolerated.

This shows that the perceived relationship between followers and managers (partly influenced by status and job tenure) can also enforce or mitigate the favored way of action. Looking into managership literature, this fits to Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This theory assumes interdependence relationships between leader and follower, where different roles are developed. These roles are connected to certain expectations. In the interviews it became clear that managers have different expectations towards employees with a high job tenure, compared to employees with a low job tenure. Further, in the theory the leader-member relationships can have a high- or low-quality (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001, p. 697). This is often referred to as in-group (high-quality relationship) or out-group members (low-quality relationship) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986, 621f.). Depending on the relationship, managers treat their employees differently (George & Jones, 2012, p. 353). In-group employees often receive a higher level of trust, support and formal or informal rewards than out-group employees (Dienesch & Liden, 1986, p. 621).

One influencing factor to PSRB is the perceived relationship between supervisor and employee. This means that employees who feel they have a good relationship to their supervisor are more likely to engage in PSRB. These employees can be assumed to be in-group members. Therefore, in-group members rather engage in PSRB, which is then again perceived as more positively than by out-group members. As chapter 2.1 shows, positive experience with past deviant behavior increases the likelihood of future deviant behavior. Therefore, the fact that in-group members rather have a security to engage in PSRB, is later reinforced by leader's positive response. Further, as argued above, managers are more likely to believe in the good intention when employees are trusted: Hence, they rather believe in-group members than out-group members, when it comes to expressing a good intention. This also fits into the results, where a high-quality relationship can mitigate punishment and enforce support and vice versa. Kluemper, Taylor, Bowler, Bing, and Halbesleben (2019) used LMX theory to test the relationship between negative deviance and managements perception of deviant behavior. They found that managers perceive less deviant behavior when the employee who deviated negatively had a high-quality relationship to the leader. This means that in high-quality relationships, managers might perceive PSRB as less deviant than in poor-quality relationships.

The influence of different leadership types

As already indicated at the beginning of this chapter, another factor that seems to influence the decision on how to respond which is not included into the model, is the leadership type and personal differences. I asked interviewees what their opinion about rules is and revealed two general perceptions. One type, to whom obedience and thus, rule-conformity is most important (type 1) and the other, to whom reaching organizational goals stands above rule-obedience (type 2). The first leadership type generally neglected and had a negative opinion on rule breaking, whereas the second leadership type approved that rule breaking can be necessary in certain situations and therefore had a rather positive opinion on rule breaking (see Table 7).

Yet, with very few exceptions, even the first leadership type acknowledged either the good intention, or the good outcome and did not punish this kind of rule-breaking as much as they would sanction destructive rule-breaking. The literature review showed that study results by Fraedrich and Ferrell (1992) indicate that there are indeed different leadership types (deontological and teleological), yet, that they can vary depending on the situation. Hence,

are not universal. Therefore, it remains unclear whether interviewees generally have this perception of rules, or if it was connected to the presented situation (vignette). With other words, it is possible that managers who are generally more the teleological type (focus on outcome), in the interviews presented themselves more as the deontological type (focus on intention), because of the rule-breaking situation, or simply because of the interview setting and vice versa. When I asked type 1 interviewees about potential exceptions of rules, some said that these exceptions also must be regulated. However, as argued in chapter 2.2, the implementation of meta rules is no sustainable solution to PSRB. Exceptions to meta rules must again be regulated, which leads in an infinitive process. In contrast, type 2 managers argued that rules are a simplification of a complex system and must be universal to fit to everything and sometimes just do not. They further stated that rules serve as guidance and that some employees need more guidance than others.

However, I could not find a pattern regarding the interviewees age, years of experience as a leader, or the leader-to staff ratio and the two described leader types. For example, older type 1 managers had a quite hierarchical mind setting, in contrast, whereas older type 2 managers had a great serenity and wished for more employees to act in the described way. This indicates again that the response behavior is also related to the idealized leadership perception.

One leadership approach that has been widely researched in the past years is transformational leadership (Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993; Caillier, 2016; Steinmann, Klug, & Maier, 2018). This concept was introduced in 1978 by Burns and refers to leaders who transform followers beliefs and values and encourage them to act beyond the expected (Burns, 1978; Bass & Bassi, 2008, p. 2974; Steinmann et al., 2018, p. 32-4). They do so in (1) raising followers awarness of the importance of goals and reaching them, (2) getting followers to put their own self interest behind the teams or organizations, and (3) activating and highering their needs with inspiring visions. This overview shows that transformational leaders focus more on reaching organizational goals than on rule obedience. Caillier (2016, p. 896) found a significant positive relation between transformational leadership and goal clarity, and further, between goal clarity and extra-role behaviors. Therefore, as these managers encourage on reaching goals, it is presumable that they are less likely to punish PSRB and instead celebrate employees intent to reach organizational goals. Huang et al. (2014) discovered a direct positive relation between transformational leadership and employees PSRB tendency. Hence, employees are more likely to engage in PSRB when having a

transformational leader. This is consistent with deterrence theory, because under transformational leaders employees rather come to the decision that the potential benefits (reaching goals) overweigs potential (hence, unlikely) punishment. The relation was further mediated by job autonomy. Morrison (2006) already argued and proved that a certain level of job autonomy is necessary to be able to engage in PSRB in the first place. This also fits to some of the interviewees statements who said that many rules are intentionally worded vaguely, to give the employee a certain range of action. However, they further stated that this is also done to interpret the rule in the organizations favor when needed, thus, when the outcome is bad (so that the organization has a legal safety when it is needed). To sum up, transformational leaders somehow encourage their followers to engage in behaviors such as PSRB and therefore, might be more likely to reward such behaviors. Future research should analyse the relation between leadership styles and types and response behaviors to PSRB to gain a better understanding.

5.3 Practical Implications

Until today employees' rule-breaking behavior is widely seen as something negative, that needs to be suppressed. Even though most managers do know it happens and can be necessary at times, it is a subject they rather avoid. Further, though they know it can be necessary they often point out a warning finger or send mixed signals by supporting and warning at the same time, leaving the employee who broke the rule behind with doubts.

As shown in chapter 2, the way managers respond to deviant behavior impacts future DWB. Therefore, it is from great importance to sensibilize managers even more that this happens in every organization and can be vital for its survival. It is a dilemma situation every leader will be in at one point, which makes it even more important to raise awareness, to avoid unnecessary harsh punishment. Also, it needs to become clear that rule-breaking does not equal rule-breaking but that it comes with many different facets and is influenced by many different factors. This realization can help to handle this dilemma situation, as managers might feel less of an urge to punish employees for this kind of rule breaking. Further, it can help to create an environment that minimizes destructive behavior, without decreasing PSRB behaviors.

Especially in this dynamic world, employees who act responsible with the organizations interest at heart are most important. Strict rules with employees who follow these without reflecting upon them, is not contemporary anymore, as is strict hierarchical thinking. Single

errors can be more serious than ever, not leaving much tolerance for mistakes. Also, as change becomes a current state rather than a phase, rules can soon be outdated, as the world changes faster than rules can be adjusted. This makes it even more important to have employees who reflect rules and their behavior, rather than just obeying. Therefore, it is from great importance for supervisors to know what influences such behavior, to promote it in future. Further, it is to assume that employees who take responsibility rather want to work in an environment where such behavior is rewarded instead of punished. Of course, this does not mean that managers should tolerate all kinds of rule breaking. Hence, it becomes even more important for supervisors to evaluate the situation carefully and appropriately. Knowing of influencing factors as well as the presented process model can help right there - to sensibilizing what factors influence the decision. It may even help to approach such situations more rational than emotional, as emotions will most likely impact the reaction in negative ways. Further, my findings indicate that managers response differs depending on who broke the rule. This again can lead to a feeling of unfairness or injustice. As mentioned in chapter 2.1.4, perceived injustice can increase DD. Further, studies show that perceived fairness is directly related to job satisfaction (Witt & Nye, 1992). Therefore, awareness of the different cues which are considered when responding to DWB can help to increase perceived fairness, which again can increase job satisfaction.

Hence, such dilemma situations could be included in training programs. As mentioned before Wildermuth and Wildermuth (2006) point out that to find solutions to dilemmas rational thinking is required. The authors further argue that rational thinking requires training, as decisions often must be made under time pressure. Therefore, it can help to think through similar situations before, so managers can assess a situation better in real life context. It can spread knowledge about what influences PSRB, raise awareness on the different kinds of rule- breaking and the cues that influence the way that supervisors respond. With this knowledge managers can be able to reflect on their own behavior better, learning how to judge the situations more open-minded. Also talking with colleagues about such situations can show that these are typical, everyday situations.

5.4 Quality Criteria

When conducting empirical research, it is important to discuss quality criteria. The quality of empirical studies is typically discussed with the classical quality criteria objectivity, reliability, and validity. However, this is especially true when implementing a quantitative, standardized, research method. Therefore, it is debatable if these criteria fit to the purpose

of qualitative research. For example, the objectivity criteria is somehow against the idea of qualitative research, where subjectivity is less seen as a bias but rather as a potential advantage, as the researcher is involved and interacts with the data (Maxwell, 2018, p. 24). We are part of the social world and therefore it is important to understand how this world influences us and how we influence this world. This interaction, or rather the awareness of this interaction, is referred to as "reflexibility" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009; Haynes, 2012; Maxwell, 2018). The following quote highlights the relation between subjectivity and qualitative research: "*in quantitative research, the researcher has instruments, but in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument.*" (Maxwell, 2018, p. 24). Hence, aim of qualitative research is not to present oneself as a detached scientific investigator, but rather to accept that the researcher is part of the research (Given, 2008, p. 572). Therefore, researchers frequently discuss whether it is reasonable to adapt these classical criteria to qualitative research or if new criteria should be formulated (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2009; Steinke, 2010).

"In reviewing the literature, I find that everyone agrees evaluation is necessary, but there is little consensus about what constitutes an appropriate set of evaluation criteria for qualitative research. Are researchers judging for validity, or would it be better when referring to qualitative evaluation to use terms like rigor (Mays & Pope, 1995), truthfulness, or goodness (Emden & Sandelowski, 1999), or something called integrity (Watson & Girad, 2004)? Then there is this question: Can one set of criteria apply to all forms of qualitative research? Also, if qualitative findings are referred to as constructions, and truth is considered a mirage, aren't evaluative criteria also constructions and therefore subject to debate?" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 332).

Yet, some qualitative researchers apply the classical quality criteria to qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014). However, Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 336) further point out that even though classical criteria have been adapted to qualitative research, they still carry "too many quantitative implications (a personal bias)". Flick (2010, p. 396) wonders whether these standardized criteria are combinable with the special features of qualitative research. For example, reliability in the traditional sense refers to a certain stability of data and results, when replicating the study. This does not seem applicable to qualitative research, as it is most unlikely that interviewees would say the exact same thing

when repeating a narrative interview. And if so, it would rather indicate a memorized version than a reliability of what is said.

Validity is typically separated into internal and external validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2010; Yin, 2014). Internal validity seeks "to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships" (Yin, 2018, p. 66). This means that internal validity is high or ensured when other variables can be excluded from this casual relation. Therefore it is implemented through a high control of contextual factors, by standardizing the research situation (Flick, 2010, p. 397). This already indicates discrepancies with qualitative research, as high standardization is not compatible with it. Further, strength of qualitative research is to analyze phenomena within their special context, therefore a standardization would weaken its advantages. External Validity refers to a generalizability of results beyond the research situation. Indeed, under particular circumstances a certain generalizability in qualitative research can be made (for example by choosing a good case when doing case study research) (Flick, 2009, p. 31; Gioia et al., 2013, p. 24). However, different to quantitative research generalization is not the purpose of qualitative research. The idea of qualitative studies is to gain a better understanding about a phenomenon and understand a certain problem or situation better, within its contexts, and less to find representative results (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 364). Hence, when trying to generalize qualitative findings the connection to the specific context must be given up (Flick, 2009, p. 407). Therefore, aim is not ensuring statistical or empirical generalization, but rather trying to create concepts that are theoretically generalizable (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 93; Seale, 2000, p. 109).

Even though researchers discuss this matter controversial, all agree that there should be certain standards (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 332). However, I agree with Corbin and Strauss (2015), Flick (2009) and Steinke (2010) that an adaption of the classical criteria misfits the purpose of qualitative research. Especially because the classical criteria were developed for different methods, such as surveys or tests. These methods base on different scientific and epistemological theories than qualitative methods (Steinke, 2010, p. 186). Therefore, I will focus on newly formulated quality criteria for discussing the quality of my study. However, I want to mention at this point that researchers have not yet agreed upon new criteria, which are generally accepted.

Thus, the question arises how rigor in qualitative research can be ensured if the classical criteria do not seem to fit. Rheinhardt, Kreiner, Gioia, and Corley (2018) argue that fitting a procedure "into a previously used or preconceived methodology does not connote rigor, as each study is unique and therefore likely to require at least some degree customization". This means that every qualitative study is exceptional and requires a different approach to increase rigor. Thus, Rheinhardt et al. argue that rigor in qualitative research is not ensured by following a structured, rigid protocol (a "blueprint") but rather in engaging in a chaotic and iterative procedure and by conveying credibility. Tracy (2010, p. 837) in contrast argues that this is why a clear set of qualitative criteria are necessary. A clear structure, rules and guidelines help us to learn and practice. Therefore, a proposal for qualitative criteria is indeed necessary but need to offer some flexibility so they can be adapted to the specific research method. Hence, they should rather be a guideline than a strict set of rules. Rheinhardt et al. (2018) therefore analyzed previous literature on this matter and further asked scholars who have published qualitative studies, what it means to them to conduct a rigorous qualitative study (p.518). Based on the responses they were able to develop categories, which considered similarities as well as differences. These are credibility, transparency, depth and volume of data, reflexivity, and transferability (p.522) and are discussed subsequently.

Credibility

Credibility was first indirectly mentioned by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 as a criteria to create trustworthiness (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 333–334; Flick, 2009, p. 392; Rheinhardt et al., 2018, p. 522). It is often listed as an alternative criterion, especially for internal validity (Symon & Cassell, 2012, 207). A certain level of credibility is given when findings convince that they reflect participants', researchers, and reader's experience with the research subject (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 336). Eisenhardt (1989, p. 532) already pointed out that key criteria for evaluating qualitative research is to convince that research results are grounded in the evidence. The following factors can help to persuade the reader: A thick description (showing rather than telling), variety of sources, methods and/or researchers, multivocality (a selection of participants) as well as participants feedback (Symon & Cassell, 2012, 211; Tracy, 2010, p. 840). These suggestions widely fit to the ones made by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who also outlined criteria to increase credibility.

In the findings section I undermined my arguments with corresponding quotes, with the purpose to rather show than tell. Even though answers among the interviewees differed in a

way, I wanted to show the variety in answers and not give an illusion of false consensus. Further, I frequently discussed my findings with other researchers, who have great experience in qualitative research but are not involved in the research project. This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as "peer debriefing" (Flick, 2009, p. 392; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 392). By doing this, I wanted to ensure that my findings and what I derived from them, is understandable and comprehensible and further, to reveal blind spots. Last, I presented the final model in some of the participating companies (which I picked randomly) and asked interviewees if they can identify with it. All of them agreed and showed great interest in the results. Yet, I did not combine my findings with different data sources or used more than one method. Still, I believe a certain level of credibility is ensured.

Transparency

Since a general guideline on how to implement qualitative research does not exist and there is no statistical test to rely on, a high transparency of the research process is from great importance (Rheinhardt et al., 2018, p. 523). The degree of transparency is characterized by the level of honesty regarding the research process (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). The whole research process should be transparent, meaning to discuss and justify important decisions along the way (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). Gioia et al. (2013, p. 23) also mention that results should base on transparent evidence. This high degree of transparency is thought to create a certain level of "objectivity" or "neutrality" (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012, p. 241)

My aim was to depict the whole research process, including the different decisions made along the way. This includes the chosen method (including writing the scenario), the choice regarding the different participants in question, the interview settings, the whole data collection process and last, the building of the process model, by discussing each element before and including quotes to make my evidence transparent. I also attached the coded sections of the interviews as well as the list of codes used in the appendix, to increase transparency.

Volume and Depth of Data

Rheinhardt et al. (2018) argue that to ensure a certain level of credibility, it is not enough to have multiple data sources, but further to discuss these sources and how they contribute to the findings. As they point out, researchers often say that in addition to their interviews they further include archival data and do some observations, however, the final results mainly build on interview quotes.

As already mentioned, I only used data from one source in my findings, to be precise the interview transcripts. Therefore, my results obviously build solely on these. However, I want to point out again at this point that researching rule breaking is a very sensitive topic. There are not many additional options on how to approach this matter, as argued before. This is mainly because rule-breaking generally happens in secret, which makes it hard to observe. And as my interviews showed, not every kind of rule-breaking is documented or punished, therefore there is no archive data to include. This can be a possibility when researching destructive behavior and when it leads to dismissal. However, this was not subject of my research.

However, Rheinhardt et al. (2018) further argue that for a high volume and depth of data the quantity of data matters as well. "Theoretical saturation" is often the key word here and refers to a point in the data collection process, where incremental learning is minimal because there are no new insights or findings anymore (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 545). Throughout the interview process I somehow reached this point. This is especially demonstrated by the fact that when I coded the last interviews, I did not need to create new codes regarding the scenario, as everything said already fitted in the already established codes. Only given examples and real-life situations were new at this point, however, not the responses to the scenario and the story. This is true for the last 5-6 interviews. Hence, I can assume that a certain level of theoretical saturation is reached. Yet, the number of data gathering methods could have been higher.

Reflexivity

As previously mentioned, reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of the interplay between data and research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 206), the awareness of his or hers role in the research and how this influences the process as well as outcomes (Haynes, 2012, p. 72). Reflexivity is one of the most frequently mentioned criterion when discussing rigor of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Flick, 2009; Haynes, 2012; Hibbert, Coupland, & MacIntosh, 2010; Rheinhardt et al., 2018; Tracy, 2010) The difference between reflection and reflexivity is that the latter one is much more complex (Hibbert et al., 2010, pp. 47–48). Whereas reflection revers to observing and examining the own ways of doing things (to create a mirror image), reflexivity rather revers to a process where we question our own ways of doing things. Therefore, reflection is part of reflexivity and further includes interpreting the reflected (Haynes, 2012, p. 73).

Reflexivity is a quality criterion which cannot be judged directly but is something that should happen through the whole research process. From the beginning on the researcher should assess own biases and motivations and ask him- or herself certain questions such as “How did I come to write this text?”, “is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view?” (Tracy, 2010, p. 842).

A strategy for reflexive awareness can be to keep theoretical assumptions in mind (or write down) and check if they change during the research process and further, to think about how they have influenced the research question or findings (Haynes, 2012, p. 79). Throughout the whole process the researcher should have an open mind for new assumptions and ideas. Before conducting the interviews, I indeed had some assumptions, especially regarding the importance of the outcome of PSRB, thinking that this would be the main influencing factor on how supervisors will respond. The literature review further undermined this assumption, which is why I chose this to be the only variable in the research process. I assumed that most managers would not see a necessity to respond at all if the outcome was good and would dislike the rule-breaking if the outcome was bad. Yet, the interviews indicated differently. First, ignoring the rule-breaking was no option to any of the interviewees and second, the actual outcome was one factor among others that shaped the decision on how to respond. What then turned out to be particularly interesting was how the decision on how to respond was justified, which brought up new cues. Therefore, my previous assumption especially influenced the initial scenario, however, the chosen method allowed me to easily include other variables and change the story bit by bit throughout the interview. Yet, there are biases which most likely influenced the given answers which I will discuss in chapter 5.5. As mentioned before, the chosen method most likely impacted the fact that no manager chose ignoring as a response behavior.

Another strategy to increase awareness is to discuss and evaluate given answers and the process itself with fellow researchers. As already mentioned, I regularly took part in peer debriefings, where I discussed every step of the research process. This includes the chosen research question, the chosen method, my findings and most important the final process model, which therefore changed several times until it was finalized.

Transferability

Transferability is often seen as the most important criterion in achieving rigor in qualitative research and to some is the analogue to the quantitative-centered criteria of generalizability

(Rheinhardt et al., 2018, p. 525). It means that findings can be transferred from one context to another, or in other words the degree, to which findings fit and are applicable to different contexts (Flick, 2009, p. 407; Rheinhardt et al., 2018, p. 525). A high level of transferability increases the utility of the study for a wider field and allows findings to reach a larger audience (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 24; Rheinhardt et al., 2018, p. 525).

Even though the main story of the scenario was the same to everyone and therefore the described rule-breaking always occurred in the same context, interviewees came from different backgrounds. They ranged in age, experience, the field they are working in, and number of subordinates. Therefore, the responses to the scenario came from many different backgrounds. It is very likely that the given background was not blanked out when giving answers and that it influenced the way managers responded. Hence, the offered process model is very likely to apply to all middle managers. Also, the presented process-model is not only applicable to PSRB situations, but to all kinds of DWB as discussed in chapter 5.2. It is therefore transferable to other DWB constructs, such as CD.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

My study has the usual limitations of a qualitative research. In this respect, the results are not statistically representative or generalizable, as discussed in chapter 5.4. However, I could at least to some extend open the black box of rationalization of managements response to PSRB. As assumed, vignettes offered great advantages in addressing such a sensitive subject. Many managers were skeptical when I first asked for interviews about rule breaking. However, after explaining the research design and ensuring that I will ask general question and not specific to their own organization's rules, most could be persuaded to take part in the research. After starting the topic through the vignette, the participants opened and gave interesting insights about their alleged response to rule breaking. Nevertheless, vignettes also bring some disadvantages, as they are not real-life experiments, but rather a report of such (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 184). Accordingly, the described responses can differ from behaviors in real life. This is especially true because the explained responses are self-reported. As such this study may include biases (e.g., social or moral desirability as already mentioned) due to the methodological approach.

Further, the proposed cognitive process model can also be biased when making managers reflect on their response behavior. Just asking about their perception of rule-breaking and consequent behaviors may lead to a higher reflection of elements than it would be the case

in a real-life situation. In such situation managers may rather rely on their intuitions or gut feelings and not on in-depth explicit rationalizations. However, my study aimed to bring the unconscious to conscious level.

Also, while most managers referred to the vignette as highly relatable, to some it seemed very abstract and they had difficulties to put themselves into the situation. Jenkins et al. (2010, p. 186) argue that vignettes can generate rich data when participants perceive the scenario as realistic and plausible, whereas the opposite is the case when it is not believed. My experience confirms this. Interviewees who could relate less to the scenario gave shorter answers and I had to ask them more questions to get desired information. This again can bias the data in giving a direction. The comprehensive answers were given by managers who could relate to the situation and explained in detail what they would do now and why, without me asking many questions. For example, interviewees who are reachable 24/7 and never leave their phone out of sight – even in meetings – had difficulties relating to the scenario or doubted the good intention behind the rule breaking more than managers, who are not always reachable, as the rule breaking in the scenario became necessary because the supervisor was not reachable.

Further, through the presented scenario managers got much relevant information regarding the situation and the employee's thoughts, which they might not have in practice. This high level of information and insight to the employee's feelings does not represent reality and therefore, could have had an influence on the given answers.

Additionally, the perception of rule-breaking behavior may evoke emotions on the side of the leader. Because of the created distance these emotions are missing, which probably also biased the given answers. Only few managers said that they would first have to calm down (especially when the outcome was bad) before deciding what to do and talking to the employee. Thus, it is presumable that in everyday context the outcome has a bigger influence on the response behavior, as a negative outcome most likely leads to stress and negative emotions.

Since the research on managements response to DWB, especially PSRB is rare, much more research is needed. Future research could analyze the importance of the different cues presented and try to find out, whether some weigh more into the decision-making process as others. Further, future research could analyze the role of personal differences and

characteristics more closely, to find out whether some individuals generally respond less lenient to rule breaking than others.

Also, my study does not give any information about responses and patterns regarding demographic features, the employee span, years of leadership experience, the preferred leadership style, and the field the company worked in. As these could influence the decision on how to respond to PSRB and rule breaking in general, future research could address these features.

However, even though research on influencing factors on PSRB is higher, more research is needed here as well. Especially on factors derived from other DWB constructs as well as on factors with contradictory results (e.g. the age and rule breaking behavior).

This also applies to analyzing the gender of the rule breaker. Bowles and Gelfand (2010) findings indicated that male leaders rather punish destructive deviant acts implemented by females than by males (p. 53). However, the vignette was written with a male protagonist and thus, I cannot make conclusion about this. They further found that black employees are more likely to be punished, because of their perceived lower status. This might be true for other nationalities as well and could be addressed by future research.

My study focuses on managers response to PSRB and leaves out employees' reaction. As colleagues' perception and reaction on PSRB influences how managers respond, it could be interesting to analyze. Similar to my research, future research could try to identify elements that influence colleagues' perception on PSRB, as existing research here focused on general pro social behavior which does not have to be deviant.

6. Conclusion

So far, most research analyzing PSRB and DWB in general has focused on different determinants and motivations behind these acts. One main influencing factor onto such behavior is past managers response to DWB. How they responded in the past, influences future DWB, including PSRB. As PSRB is generally a desired behavior and can be vital for organizations to function effectively and efficiently, such behavior should not be suppressed. Yet, rule breaking should generally be punished, as it is typically wrong, can be very harmful to the organization, and to avoid others from breaking rules in the future. This again, can suppress future PSRB behavior. On the other side, rules are implemented with the aim to reach organizational goals and reaching these, is one key management function. Therefore, when employees break organizational rules with the best intention, it results in a leadership dilemma. This is especially true when rule breaking leads to a benefit for the organization. In such situations managers face competing demands: Ensuring rule compliance or reaching organizational goals. However, even if PSRB is in the end harmful to the organization, it results in such a dilemma, as managers must decide whether to value the intention behind acts or their outcome. When managers focus on outcomes and therefore punish such behavior, it can lead to negative side effects regarding the employee, such as perceived unfairness, frustration, loss of motivation, as well as suppressing future PSRB behavior.

Therefore, it is from great interest to analyze why managers respond to PSRB in a certain way and how they rationalize this behavior, which was aim of this thesis. To understand why they act in a particular way, it was necessary to analyze how they respond to PSRB in the first place. Different to existing research on managers response to PSRB, I included the PSRB outcome into the research, instead of only focusing on the underlying intention. By this, I could make the leadership dilemma more severe. Further, it helps to understand whether managers rather value the intention behind acts or their consequences and what role the rule breaking outcome plays when rationalizing and justifying the response behavior.

Through my empirical research, I could reveal that managers to not act as “rule-enforcers” but take the context of PSRB into consideration. They rely on many aspects and not only on the positive or negative outcome for their response action. These findings are from great interest, because up to this date it is widely unknown why managers respond differently to rule-breaking situations and deviant behavior. My findings further gave a better understanding on how sanctioning and supporting is expressed in detail when it comes to PSRB. Different to what previous literature suggests, they further indicate the ignoring is no

common response to PSRB. Instead, it highlighted that clarification of the rule and situation is the most frequent response, as every interviewee mentioned a clarification strategy. Clarifying as a response behavior is a way to solve the presented dilemma. Through this, managers on one hand can demonstrate that the rule and rule compliance is generally important, and on the other hand can acknowledge the good intention behind such acts.

My research contributes to PSRB research by helping to understand what cues managers use to rationalize their response behavior and further, by showing different possible responses to this behavior. As mentioned, clarifying is the main strategy to solve the presented leadership dilemma.

The results further contribute to general DWB, as the presented process model can be applied to different DWB constructs. The identified cues do not only apply to PSRB, but to other constructs as well. One key element to PSRB is the underlying intention. Yet, depending on how managers respond to PSRB and how they perceive the situation, this good intention can be questioned. Also, in real life situations the underlying intention is not obvious and is a matter of perception. Therefore, the intention was one cue among others, which is why the presented model also applies to other DWB constructs. Identified cues were either directly connected to the deviant act or independent to it. Cues connected to the presented situation (e.g., the underlying intention or the outcome of the deviant act) give a first tendency on how managers respond. However, this first tendency is mitigated or enhanced by situational independent cues (e.g., the relationship between leader and employee or the organizational culture). The decision on how a manager responds to a deviant act is justified by the different presented cues. When doing this, managers process information selectively and focus on cues that support their decision and neglect cues, which do not. Through this, managers can reduce cognitive dissonance which arise because of the given dilemma situation.

PSRB is a difficult subject for employees as well as supervisors. Employees actively go against organizational rules to increase efficiency, help colleagues or to promote customer service, even though they know about the potential personal consequences. However, todays working context makes such behavior and hence, employees who engage in PSRB more important than ever. However, because rule breaking is widely perceived as something negative, it makes researching this construct rather difficult. The chosen qualitative experimental vignette design was generally a good choice to research this sensible topic. Through vignettes and the presented fictional rule breaking situation, a distance between

interviewees and real-life rule breaking situations was created. This distance helped to gain comprehensive information on this topic. However, the use of vignettes also has disadvantages. Interviewees report on how they *would* respond in the given situation. This does not mean that they actually respond this way in real life situations. Yet, all in all the chosen method proved to fulfill the aim of this thesis.

I hope that this thesis stimulates further research on determinants of PSRB as well as leader's response to it and sensitize leaders to think about their rationales and actions in the context of rule violations in general.

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This book explores the topic of pro-social rule-breaking — more specifically, when employees break formal organizational rules intending to help the company. Generally, managers react to rule-breaking with sanctions; this may lead one to question why some employees break the rules without any apparent personal advantages despite the risk of being sanctioned.

The first part of this book discusses the various reasons for rule-breaking based on literature. Leadership-related factors are notably important: how leaders have reacted to pro-social rule-breaking in the past often influences future employee behavior.

For this reason, the second part of this book empirically deals with the leadership perspective, which has been largely neglected in research so far. In response to pro-social rule-breaking, leaders face a dilemma because they are subject to competing demands: ensuring rule compliance versus goal achievement.

Therefore, the goal of this book is to research and identify cues that leaders use to rationalize their response to pro-social rule-breaking. In this way, I aim to create a better understanding of responses to well-intentioned rule-breaking.

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