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# Two Perspectives On Organizational Wrongdoing

Organization wrongdoing can be viewed from two contrasting *perspectives*: one which views organizational wrongdoing as an abnormal phenomenon and one which views it as a normal phenomenon. Further, the causes of organizational wrongdoing can be understood from two approaches: a dominant outlook and an alternative one. Finally, there are eight different specific *explanations* of wrongdoing. Below I outline the two contrasting perspectives on wrongdoing, elaborate the two different approaches to understanding the causes of wrongdoing, and foreshadow the eight explanations of wrongdoing. I also indicate why I believe the explanations of wrongdoing that flow from the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective and that embrace the alternative approach to understanding wrongdoing are particularly worthy of greater attention and development.

Following my discussion of the perspectives, approaches, and explanations that form the core of this book, I present a detailed description of an instance of organizational wrongdoing that illustrates the two different approaches to understanding the causes of wrongdoing. This description will serve both to solidify my characterization of the difference between the two approaches and introduce the type of evidence upon which I will draw when elaborating the explanations of wrongdoing considered in the book. I end the chapter with a few remarks about what I consider to be the book's main message and my overarching objective in writing it. I suspect that some of the arguments that I develop in *Normal Organizational Wrongdoing* will run against the grain. So I will try to clarify my outlook and goals right from the start.

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### The two contrasting perspectives

#### *Organizational wrongdoing as an abnormal phenomenon*

Most popular and much scholarly thinking on organizational wrongdoing implicitly considers it to be an abnormal phenomenon. Wrongful behavior is viewed as aberrant—a clear departure from the norm and thus implicitly rare. Further, wrongdoers are seen as abhorrent—extraordinary in a malevolent way, sometimes characterized as “bad apples.” Some view wrongdoers as possessing despicable personality traits, such as excessive greed. Others view them as holding deplorable attitudes and beliefs, such as a reckless disregard for the welfare of others. Finally, the causes of wrongdoing are believed to be a narrow range of flawed or distorted organizational structures, sometimes characterized as “bad barrels.” Some focus on misaligned organizational incentive systems that motivate people to pursue illicit objectives. Others focus on perverse organizational cultures that condition people to think and act in deviant ways. Sometimes these analyses are explicit. Often, though, they are only implied in exhortations to improve governance controls and to upgrade ethics programs, which are intended to correct misaligned incentive structures and perverse cultures. Popular and scholarly authors sometimes draw a sharp distinction between focusing on “bad apples” as opposed to “bad barrels,” favoring one orientation over the other. But I consider this a family quarrel rather than a fundamental dispute.

Thomas Stewart, one-time editor of the *Harvard Business Review*, embraced the “wrongdoing as an abnormal phenomenon” perspective when offering his assessment of the general state of global business (2004). In an opinion piece in the *Financial Times*, he wrote:

Post-Enron, post-Shell, post-WorldCom, post-Parmalat, the collective knickers of the business world are in a twist about ethics, and rightly so. Deals are the building blocks of business. Enormous sums are at stake and the money belongs mostly to strangers, not neighbours. Without ethics to define deals and fair dealing, business will not get done. Rightly, therefore, regulatory bodies have yanked the chain. Rightly, business schools throughout the world have given more prominence to ethics in their curricula. Rightly, also, once-malfeasant companies such as Tyco have developed impressive safeguards to keep themselves straight. One day this horse will bolt again—greed is a clever animal—but it should not be for want of new locks on the stable doors.

Robert Shiller, a distinguished professor of economics at Yale University, also implicitly embraced this perspective when assessing a specific instance of wrongdoing at the New York Stock Exchange. In an op-ed piece for *The New York Times*, Shiller (2005) commented on the widely criticized pay package granted the NYSE’s chairman, Dick Grasso, which provoked a New York State

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Attorney General civil law suit against both the Exchange and Grasso. Shiller expressed outrage at the magnitude of Grasso's compensation package, approximately \$187 million, asking, "Why did nobody on the exchange's board look at that astronomical sum and feel some personal responsibility to find out what was happening?" After briefly referring to the "ineffectiveness of the safety controls" in place at the NYSE, he turned his attention to what he considered the primary cause of this instance of egregious behavior and of organizational wrongdoing more broadly. In his words, "I can't read minds, but I think it is fair to say that to some extent the players in this drama—as well as those in the ones now being played out in the courtrooms and starring former executives of Tyco, WorldCom and HealthSouth—have been shaped by the broader business culture." Shiller located the origin of the broader business culture in our graduate schools of business, whose courses "often encourage a view of human nature that does not inspire high-mindedness." He substantiated his assessment with a penetrating analysis of the standard business school curriculum, which exclusively extols the virtue of self-interested behavior. The overall message of Professor Shiller's column was clear: Grasso's compensation package obviously was excessive and those who approved it clearly were delinquent. Further, the excessive package was approved because the culture in which the NYSE board and business more generally is enmeshed is one-sided and thus distorted.

### *Organizational wrongdoing as a normal phenomenon*

Although most who write about organizational wrongdoing implicitly consider it to be an abnormal phenomenon, a growing number of scholars implicitly regard it as a normal occurrence. This contrasting perspective assumes that wrongdoing often is not much different from organizational right doing. This is partly because in most advanced societies, whether capitalist or socialist in character, competitive pressures often require people working in organizations (hereafter, "organizational participants") to operate close to the line separating right from wrong (Coleman 1987, 1988; Braithwaite 1988). Those who operate at a safe margin from the line are disadvantaged in their competition with other economic actors. The immediate vicinity of the line separating right from wrong, though, typically is a grey area. And organizational participants operating in this area are faced with significant cognitive and behavioral challenges in their efforts to approach, but not cross the line. These cognitive and behavioral challenges play an important role in many of the explanations of organizational wrongdoing examined in this book.

Further, the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective assumes that many wrongdoers are ordinary; that is, people who do not possess unusual human traits (e.g. sociopathic tendencies) or typical human traits that are

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allowed to develop in the extreme (e.g. unusual greed or ambition). Organizations are great levelers. The structures and processes that regulate behavior tend to reduce the significance of individual differences (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake 1989; but see House et al. 1996). This speaks to a major implication of the analysis that follows; namely, that even the most ethical, law-abiding, and socially responsible organizational participants are at risk of engaging in wrongdoing.

The normal organizational wrongdoing perspective also assumes that wrongdoing can be the product of the full range of structures and processes that shape behavior in organizations. Further, it assumes that these structures and processes can give rise to wrongdoing in a fashion that sometimes is incidental to the production of right doing. The full range of structures and processes that shape behavior in organizations and that can facilitate wrongdoing include administrative systems, situational social influence, power structures, and the routine technological processes that are susceptible to accidents.

Finally, the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective assumes that wrongdoing is ubiquitous. Many scholarly articles and popular books on organizational wrongdoing begin as this book did, with a recitation of the several most prominent recent cases of wrongdoing with which readers are likely to be familiar: Worldcom, Tyco, Waste Management, and Enron. But there is a plethora of less prominent prior and recent cases, many of which will be examined in this book, including the quiz show fraud of the 1950s, the B.F. Goodrich brake fraud case of the 1960s, the Colonial Pipeline bribery case of the 1970s, the insider trading schemes of the 1980s, the Fen-phen appetite suppressant tragedy in the 1990s, and the mortgage meltdown and subsequent financial crisis of 2008. Indeed, organizational wrongdoing has a history dating back to the emergence of large organizations, including religious orders, nation states, and business enterprises. The first reported case of financial fraud, which resulted in the South Sea Bubble, and that precipitated a global financial crisis, occurred at the dawn of the joint stock company in 1711 (Carswell 2001).

Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of modern sociology, was among the first to address the ubiquity of wrongdoing in society (Durkheim 1984, 1997). He argued, to put it simplistically, that societies must create wrongdoing in order to survive. Societies are groups of people who share the same definition of acceptable behavior. But they cannot define acceptable behavior without at the same time defining unacceptable behavior. Further, societies benefit from singling out and punishing those who engage in unacceptable behavior. Doing so reminds members of society of the views regarding acceptable behavior that they share. And this reinforces social solidarity. In advanced societies, specialized organizations assume the necessary responsibility of

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drawing and policing the line separating right from wrong. These specialized organizations, whom sociologists call social control agents, effectively create wrongdoing, albeit in a fundamentally different way than the perpetrators of wrongdoing do.

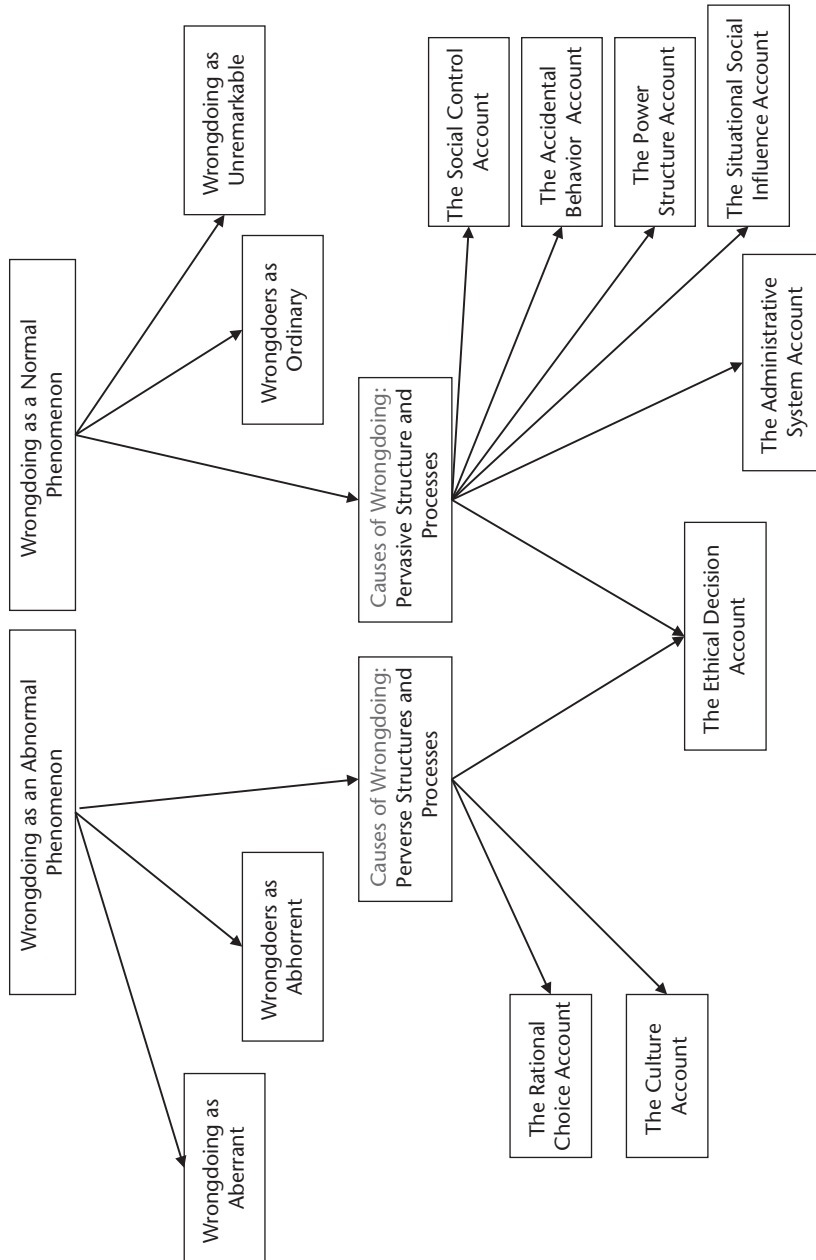
### *Taking stock*

I have argued that two broad perspectives apprehend organizational wrongdoing, a well-established framework that views wrongdoing as an abnormal phenomenon, and a still embryonic framework that views wrongdoing as a normal occurrence. I think the perspective that views wrongdoing as an abnormal phenomenon has merit. Thus, I devote time to elaborating the explanations of wrongdoing to which it gives rise: the rational choice and culture accounts. These explanations are covered in Chapters 4 and 5. But, I also think that the perspective that views organizational wrongdoing as a normal occurrence has merit. Further, I think that this perspective takes into account a broader range of less explored causes of wrongdoing. For this reason, I devote time to both elaborating and developing the explanations that flow from the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective: the administrative systems, situational social influence, power structure, accidental, and social control accounts. These explanations are covered in Chapters 7 through 11. There is one additional important explanation of organizational wrongdoing that I have not yet mentioned that represents a bridge between the two main perspectives on organizational wrongdoing. I elaborate and attempt to develop this account, the ethical decision explanation, in Chapter 6.

Figure 2 depicts the characteristics of the two perspectives on wrongdoing and the relationship between these perspectives and the eight explanations of wrongdoing. The first seven explanations of organizational wrongdoing focus on the perpetrators of wrongdoing. The eighth explanation, the social control account, focuses on those who draw the line separating right from wrong. Following the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective, I conceive of the first seven explanations as being rooted in different explanations of behavior in organizations more generally. Thus I begin my elaboration of each of these explanations by noting its roots.

## Two ideal-typical approaches to understanding the causes of organizational wrongdoing

There are also two contrasting approaches to analyzing the causes of organizational wrongdoing. The first approach assumes that wrongdoers deliberate mindfully and rationally on the merits of engaging in the wrongful course of



**Figure 2.** The Two Perspectives on Organizational Wrongdoing

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action in question. It also assumes that wrongdoers largely are uninfluenced in their deliberation by their immediate social context. It also assumes that wrongdoers make discrete decisions to engage in wrongful behavior. Finally, this approach assumes that once people make a discrete decision to engage in wrongdoing, they develop a positive inclination to engage in the behavior in question. Because this is the most frequently employed outlook, I refer to it as the dominant approach.

The second approach to analyzing the causes of organizational wrongdoing embraces diametrically opposed assumptions. It assumes that wrongdoers often embark on organizational wrongdoing without engaging in mindful and rational deliberation. It also assumes that wrongdoers often embark on organizational wrongdoing under the influence of their immediate social context. It also assumes that wrongdoers often embark on organizational wrongdoing in a crecive fashion, that is, over a protracted period of time, during which they become increasingly embroiled in the wrongful behavior. Finally, this contrasting approach assumes that wrongdoers often embark on organizational wrongdoing without first developing a positive inclination to engage in the wrongful behavior. Because this outlook is less frequently but increasingly employed, I refer to it as the alternative approach.

While the two approaches to understanding the causes of organizational wrongdoing do not follow directly from the two perspectives on organizational wrongdoing, they are associated with the same groups of specific explanations of wrongdoing. The rational choice and culture accounts tend to embrace the dominant approach to analyzing wrongdoing. The administrative systems, situational social influence, power structure, accident, and social control accounts tend to embrace the alternative approach. Finally, the ethical decision account once again occupies a bridging position, spanning the two approaches. The fundamental characteristics of the dominant and alternative approaches to explaining organizational wrongdoing are represented in Table 1. I presume that the distinction between discrete decisions and crecive processes is obvious. But I suspect that the other three distinctions between the dominant and alternative approaches to explaining wrongdoing are less transparent. Thus, I explain them in more detail.

### *Mindlessness and bounded rationality*

According to Langer and Moldoveanu (2000: 1–2), “mindfulness... can be best understood as the process of drawing novel distinctions” and “the process of drawing of novel distinctions can lead to a number of diverse consequences, including (1) a greater sensitivity to one’s environment, (2) more openness to new information, (3) the creation of new categories for structuring perception, and (4) enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving. The

**Table 1. The Two Ideal Typical Approaches to Explaining Organizational Wrongdoing**

	The Extent and Character of the Potential Wrongdoer's Deliberation	The Potential Wrongdoer's Immediate Environment	The Temporal Character of the Potential Wrongdoer's Transition into Wrongdoing	The Extent to which the Potential Wrongdoer's Transition into Wrongdoing is Intentional	The Explanations that Employ the Approach
Dominant Approach	Mindful and Rational	Situational Vacuum	Discrete Decision	Positive Inclination	Rational Choice, Culture, and Ethical Decision Theory
Alternative Approach	Mindless and Boundedly Rational	Situational Embeddedness	Crevice	Absence of Positive Inclination	Administrative Systems, Situational Social Influence, Power Structure, Accidental Behavior, Social Control, and Ethical Decision Theory



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subjective ‘feel’ of mindfulness is that of a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present.” Importantly, mindfulness includes an attention to intuition and emotion. As Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) put it, “mindfulness is not a cold cognitive process. When one is actively drawing novel distinctions, the whole individual is involved.” Weick and Roberts (1993:361), who draw on Ryle (1949), have offered a very similar concept, “heedfulness.” According to them, “people act heedfully when they act more or less carefully, critically, consistently, purposefully, attentively, studiously, vigilantly, conscientiously, pertinaciously.” Because mindfulness and heedfulness are virtually identical concepts, and because the term *mindfulness* is more familiar to the average reader, in this book I will use mindfulness exclusively.

The dominant explanations of organizational wrongdoing assume that organizational participants are mindful. But the alternative approach that I champion in this book assumes that organizational participants often embark on wrongdoing in a mindless manner. In Langer and Moldoveanu’s words (2000:2), when we behave mindlessly “we rely on distinctions and categories drawn in the past (and) rules and routines are more likely to govern our behavior, irrespective of the current circumstances.” In Weick and Robert’s words (1993: 362) heedless behavior is “careless, unmindful, thoughtless, unconcerned, indifferent” and represents “a failure to see, to taken note of, to be attentive to.”

Rationality has been defined in many ways. In this book I employ a commonsense definition of rationality that equates it with the thorough analysis of complete data pertaining to alternative courses of action. There are two types of rationality. Substantive rationality is the thorough normative assessment of complete data pertaining to the ends one seeks to attain. Formal rationality is the thorough cost-benefit analysis of complete data pertaining to the means used to attain chosen ends (Schroyer, 1975).

The dominant explanations of organizational wrongdoing assume that organizational participants, when mindful, deliberate in a rational way. But the alternative approach that I champion in this book assumes that organizational participants, when mindful, often embark on wrongdoing in a boundedly rational manner. Bounded rationality is mindfulness that is compromised by the limited capacity of human beings to accumulate and process information. Put crudely, the world is a complicated place and, as a result, the information required to conduct thorough cost-benefit or normative deliberations about behaviors and their consequences often is extensive. Further, people are boundedly rational, that is, cognitively limited in their ability to make thorough cost-benefit calculations, normative assessments, or ethical decisions even when the amount of information needed to conduct a

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thorough analysis, assessment, or decision is modest (March and Simon 1958).

Mindlessness is well illustrated by the tendency to react automatically to one's environment, following innate predispositions, learned social codes, or organizational rules and protocols. For example, Langer and associates (Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz 1978) conducted a study that showed that students waiting on line to use a photocopying machine were more likely to let another student "cut ahead" of them if the other student provided a reason for requesting to cut ahead, even when the reason the other student supplied simply restated his/her request to cut ahead (i.e. the student justified their need to cut ahead by saying, essentially, that they needed to cut ahead). Langer contends that human beings have an innate tendency or internalized social code that dictates we accept requests that have justifications.

The complex world/bounded rationality dilemma is illustrated well by Dennis Gioia's description of his job as Ford Motor Company's Field Recall Coordinator. Gioia writes, "It is difficult to convey the overwhelming complexity and pace of the job of keeping track of so many active or potential recall campaigns. It remains the busiest, most information-filled job I have ever held or would want to hold. Each case required a myriad of information-gathering and execution stages. I distinctly remember that the information-processing demands led me to confuse the facts of one problem case with another on several occasions, because the tell-tale signs of recall candidate cases were so similar" (Gioia, 1992: 382). I will return to Dennis Gioia and Ford in the next chapter because Goia was one of the safety coordinators who recommended against recalling the Ford Pinto, despite mounting evidence that the compact car was susceptible to bursting into flames when impacted from the rear at relatively slow speeds.

### *The immediate social context*

All human behavior is, fundamentally, social action. The human experience consists largely of exposure to socially constructed input. For example, the words we hear and speak are interpretable only in the context of a shared language. And the objects we see are acquired, manipulated and appreciated, and exchanged only within the context of markets, scientific systems, and cultures. The dominant explanations of organizational wrongdoing assume that wrongdoers are influenced by their social context in this way. But the alternative approach that I champion in this book assumes that organizational participants also are influenced by their social context in a more immediate way. Specifically, it focuses on the administrative structures (e.g. rules and standard operating procedures), situational social influence processes (e.g. small-group dynamics), power structures (e.g. formal authority and resource

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dependence), technological systems (e.g. task interdependencies), and social control relationships (e.g. interactions with law enforcement officials) in which organizational participants are typically embedded. And it considers how these structures and processes can influence how people think and behave in the moment.

### *The absence of positive inclinations*

A positive inclination to engage in a course of action represents a state of mind in which a person views the course of action as desirable, in particular, relative to available alternative courses of action. It is important to distinguish a positive inclination to act in a particular way from a disposition to act in a particular way, because psychologists use the term *disposition* in a very precise way. Inclinations to engage in a course of action are psychological states that are *produced in the situation* (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake 1989). Dispositions are psychological states that, by contrast, *people bring to situations* and that influence the way they think and act in situations. Dispositions include personality characteristics, need states, attitudes, preferences, and motives or goals (House, Shane, and Herold 1996). Dispositions are relatively stable; that is, they tend to persist over time and across situations. But they can vary in stability and even can be influenced by experience. For example, personality characteristics generally are understood to be relatively immutable, but need states are recognized to vary according to need satisfaction.

The dominant explanations of organizational wrongdoing assume that organizational participants develop a positive inclination to engage in a wrongful course of action before embarking on the course of action. The prototypical dominant explanation assumes that positive inclinations to engage in a course of action are produced by some type of deliberation. Regardless of their origin, though, positive inclinations to engage in a behavior are the precursors to intentions to act and actual action. The alternative approach to understanding organizational wrongdoing that I advocate assumes that people do not always develop positive inclinations to engage in wrongdoing before they embark on it. The prototypical alternative explanation of organizational wrongdoing assumes that people sometimes embark on wrongful behavior mindlessly, and as a result never develop a positive inclination or even an intention to act. Instead, action is, for lack of a better word, automatic. In fact, the alternative approach allows that organizational participants sometimes embark on wrongful courses of action even though they are negatively inclined to engage in the behavior. Such instances involve some form of compulsion or coercion.

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### *Taking stock*

I have argued that two approaches have been used to understand the causes of organizational wrongdoing, a well-established dominant outlook and a newer but increasingly popular alternative one. I think the dominant approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing taps an important dimension of wrongdoing in organizations. Certainly, people sometimes deliberate mindfully and rationally, in relative social isolation, make discrete decisions, and develop positive inclinations to engage in wrongdoing. But I also think that the alternative approach to explaining wrongdoing is valid. That is, I believe that people sometimes slip into wrongdoing over time, in a mindless and boundedly rational fashion, influenced by their social context, without ever developing a positive inclination to do so. Further, I believe the alternative approach captures complexities that sometimes characterize organizational wrongdoing that the dominant approach does not tap. And this belief reinforces my motivation to not only elaborate but develop the administrative systems, situational social influence, power structure, accident, social control accounts, and ethical decision explanations of organizational wrongdoing—accounts that to varying extents embrace the alternative approach to explaining wrongdoing. It also leads me to complete my presentation of each of the eight explanations of organizational wrongdoing with an assessment of the extent to which it embraces the alternative assumptions about how organizational participants come to engage in wrongdoing. Signs that explanations of wrongdoing fail to embrace the alternative assumptions provide impetus to move on to other theories that embrace the assumptions more consummately.

### **An illustration of the two ideal-typical approaches to understanding the causes of organizational wrongdoing**

In this section I draw on Paul Krimmage's account of his experience with banned performance-enhancing drugs as a professional bicycle racer to illustrate the two ideal typical approaches to explaining organizational wrongdoing elaborated above. I also draw on his account to introduce the reader to the sort of evidence that I will use to illustrate the ideas presented in the book. Krimmage is a controversial figure in professional bike-racing circles. When he left professional cycling, he embarked on a career in journalism. And since then, in print and public forums, he persistently has questioned not only the cycling community's commitment to eradicating doping but also the purity of the sport's leading cyclists, most notoriously, Lance Armstrong. Some question Krimmage's motivation for zealously pursuing the doping

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issue. But as far as I know, no one has questioned the veracity of his account of his own experiences.

Paul Krimmage began bike racing as an amateur in his home country of Ireland when he was 10 years old and jumped to the professional ranks when he was 24. He rode as a professional from the winter of 1986 through the summer of 1989, eventually competing three times in the Tour de France (being one of only a handful of Irish professionals to have ridden in the famous multi-day race at that point). He ended his career on the twelfth day of the 1989 Tour de France, when he, like many who start the race, fell behind and was forced to abandon the contest.

Professional cyclists used a variety of substances believed to enhance performance, including nitroglycerine, cocaine-based substances, and strychnine, as early as the last years of the nineteenth century. Officials and the general public only became seriously concerned about the use of performance-enhancing substances in 1967, when a rider died from ingestion of amphetamines during a race. Around this time, various governing bodies, most notably the International Olympic Committee and the International Cycling Union, began establishing rules that prohibited the use of specific substances. Nevertheless, use of performance enhancers in cycling continued and is believed to be prevalent even today. This is partly because it has proven technically difficult and politically problematic to develop and institute reliable methods of detecting banned substances. But, it is also partly because enterprising members of the cycling community have developed new performance-enhancing substances, when technical advances and political will has allowed for the design and implementation of rigorous methods of detecting existing banned substances.

When Krimmage entered the ranks of the professionals, many cyclists were using amphetamines (used as a stimulant on race days) as well as cortisone and testosterone (used to aid recovery during training and after races). And some riders were experimenting with a wider range of steroids, hormones, and more exotic chemicals such as erythropoietin (EPO) that became a part of the regular training and racing regiment of many riders in the 1990s. Krimmage wrote a memoir of his cycling career, *Rough Ride*, in which he frankly discussed his experience with banned performance enhancers. He raced clean for most of his career, but used amphetamines on three occasions in 1987.

Some of Krimmage's recollections appear consistent with the dominant approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing, recollections that suggest he engaged in focused and clearheaded deliberations, in the context of little consequential social interaction with others, over a relatively short period of time, and that this for the most part led to a positive inclination to eschew the use of banned performance-enhancing substances. For example, Krimmage recalls contemplating the use of banned performance enhancers during his

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first Tour de France in 1986. The Tour includes over 20 stages (separate component races), most of which cover more than 100 miles, and some of which include the summiting of multiple steep mountain peaks, all within a period of a month. For the first eight days of the race, Krimmage rode strong and performed well. But on the ninth day, severe fatigue set in. And this led him to contemplate doping. In Krimmage's words, "I was knackered. My batteries went completely flat. With fourteen stages still to race, I had a decision to make. A big decision. The biggest decision of my life. Did I want them re-charged (pp. xv)?" After contemplating the question, he decided against doping. As he put it, "On the Tour's ninth day, sport betrayed me. I was not prepared to take drugs to further my career in the sport (pp. xvi)." He would go on to recall that his decision was partly a matter of principle, but also partly a matter of fear, two factors upon which he elaborates later in his memoir.

Other of Krimmage's recollections, though, appear more consistent with the alternative approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing. Some of these recollections indicate that he revisited the issue of using banned substances many times, and that his behavior evolved over time, partly as the result of his many decisions. When Krimmage began his career as a professional cyclist, he considered the ingestion and especially the injection of any substance (legal or banned) to be doping. He declined offers of completely legal vitamin B-12 injections. He even declined offers of legal oral vitamin supplements and caffeine pills. But over time, he incorporated these and other legal chemical aids (such as those that aided digestion) in his training regimen and pre-race preparations. And eventually, on three occasions in a two-week period, he took banned amphetamine injections. In the two years following this relatively short period of doping, though, he remained "clean."

Further, some of his recollections suggest that the deliberations that led to changes in his behavior were on occasion compromised, short-circuited, and even post hoc. For example, during the 1987 Tour of Italy, a doctor entered his room after a very tough stage and offered him an intravenous feeding of glucose. Team doctors and trainers had offered him pills and injections on numerous previous occasions, but he had always declined the offerings, worrying that the pills or injections might include banned performance enhancers. But on this occasion, Krimmage recalls that he simply offered his arm, having too little energy to question what other, possibly banned, substances might be in the drip.

Later Krimmage recalls his state of mind just before he decided to use amphetamines for the first time. He fell behind and was forced to abandon the 1987 Tour de France and, in a state of depression, suspended training. Weeks later, he was scheduled to ride in the first of the series of day races known as the "French Classics" that follow the Tour. Professionals were paid

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on contract by race organizers to ride in these day races, also called criteriums, which were more performances than competitions. While most bike race courses are open and spectators can watch the action for free, the French Classic courses were closed and spectators were charged admission. Further, the leading veteran riders covertly predetermined the outcomes of these day races, awarding victory to the cyclists who had recently distinguished themselves in the Tour de France. Krimmage worried that he might not be able to “perform,” by which he meant keep pace with the other riders, most of whom he knew would be “charging,” that is, using amphetamines. And he worried that if he did not perform, he might not get paid. But his reasoning was anything but cool and collected. As Krimmage recalled:

Today is different: today they are paying to see a spectacle, and therefore we are obliged to perform. What if I can't? What if I'm unable to follow the others? . . . Will the manager still pay me my contract? Will I have the neck to approach him for it? I shouldn't have come here—but hell, I need the money. Ann (Krimmage's fiancée) is living with me now. There's more expense, more responsibility. . . . I sit on the bed watching the others get ready, waiting for the moment. I know it has to happen. I'm waiting for it to happen. Fuck it, I want it to happen. The pressure—I can't take this pressure. It happens: the smiles. . . . a bag is produced. In it small white ampoules of amphetamine and a handful of short syringes. A glance is thrown in my direction. My 'chastity' is well known within the team but it is only polite to offer. I scratch my head and breathe in deeply. If I walk out through the door with only the hotel lunch in my system I will crack mentally. As a result I will probably be dropped (off the back of the main pack of riders) and ridiculed after two laps. I can't face any more humiliation. The pressure. I need the money. I nod in acceptance.

After Krimmage returned home from the race, he revisited his “decision” to use amphetamine earlier in the day. But again, his deliberations were anything but organized. As Krimmage recalls, “The events of the day are turning in my head, the arguments for and against crossing my head like a tennis ball in a seemingly never-ending rally. The ‘againsts’ are hitting beautifully. . . . But the ‘fors’ return with some lovely volleys.” Some of his vacillation likely was due to the amphetamine molecules still coursing through his system hours after the race. But some likely was due to the complexity of the decision. Over the course of his memoir, Krimmage considers the many pros and cons of doping.

The pros were relatively straightforward. Banned substances could not make him a winner. But they could help him become an effective *domestique* (a rider who helps the team's best riders win) and thus could earn him the admiration of his fellow riders and the approval of his *directeur sportif* (team manager). The admiration of his fellow riders could bring him acceptance: he could become “one of the boys.” And the approval of the *directeur sportif* could mean

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survival as a professional cyclist, and survival meant a modicum of acclaim (and, perhaps more importantly, escape from derision), as well as subsistence for himself and his family. Finally, once he took the plunge, he learned that the use of performance enhancers provided him with a sense of self efficacy that fortified him for competition. And when he rejected doping, he experienced a disheartening sense of futility. Races that he had previously contested successfully, he now entered anticipating defeat, believing that it was impossible for him to surpass riders who had charged.

The cons were also numerous and possibly more difficult to weigh. He feared the guilt that he expected to experience in the wake of doping, as doping violated closely held values that were internalized as a child. He also feared detection and the repercussions of detection. He idolized his father, who had been a successful amateur cyclist. And he relished the admiration of his Irish compatriots, who followed his career closely. He knew he would suffer great embarrassment if he used banned substances and his doping was detected and made public. More practically, he feared the effects of doping. He had heard that the use of steroids, hormones, and other chemicals could result in physical harm and even death. Further, he feared that the use of these substances might be addictive. Finally, he found the very act of injecting substances into his body repulsive.

Krimmage used amphetamines twice more in the following two weeks. He recalled that it was “easy to slip into a routine,” which suggests that he did not deliberate much, if at all, before using amphetamines on these occasions. Further, he wrote, “my new habit started to worry me. I was losing control of my ability to say no.” This suggests that he found it difficult to deliberate on these occasions or perhaps to act on his deliberations. As a result, he decided never again to put himself in the position of entering a race without adequate training, and he remained clean for the remainder of his four-year career.

Krimmage also provides recollections that suggest that others in his immediate environment played an important role in his decision making or lack thereof. When recounting his decision not to dope during his first Tour de France, Krimmage made reference to the possible influence of others, which he did his best to resist. He wrote, “I had witnessed abuse of drugs on a number of occasions after joining the professionals, I tried to block out the fact that you could break the rules in this sport and get away with it (pp. xv).” But the widespread use of banned substances among professional racers was impossible to ignore. Kimmage described feeling that fellow riders and team officials expected him to use performance-enhancing drugs because doing so would increase his capacity to contribute to the team effort. As a *domestique*, it was his job to help the team’s better riders get and remain in a position to win races. And Krimmage’s ability to do this hinged on his physical condition. As a result, on the occasions when he refused to use performance enhancers, he



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felt “embarrassed” (pp. 125) and even “guilty” (pp. 113–114). Ultimately, Krimmage’s refusal to use performance enhancers limited the degree to which his teammates accepted him into their inner circle. And he very much wanted to be “one of the boys” (pp. 91, 98, 146, 150). So Krimmage began to avoid situations when he might be asked to participate in doping. Finally, when he accepted amphetamines for the first time, he remembers thinking, “I have joined the club and it feels almost satisfying to have done so (pp. 147).” But he still needed his teammates for one very practical reason. As already noted, Krimmage found injecting himself with any substance (legal or banned) repulsive. As a result, he relied on his teammates to perform the injections on the three occasions on which he used amphetamines.

Finally, on several occasions, Krimmage seemed not just to feel pressure to use performance enhancers but to feel compelled to do so. His decision to use performance enhancers seemed to be as much the result of coercion as it was the result of weighing of pros and cons: He doped despite being *disinclined* to do so. Krimmage recalls a teammate who put pressure on him to “toe the line” at a particular race. The teammate said that it was Krimmage’s “duty” to defend the team’s leading rider, which was an obligation that Krimmage willingly accepted. Further, he added that doping was just “part of the job,” which was where Krimmage drew the line. Remembering that day, Krimmage wrote, “I felt he was putting a gun to my head (114).” Ultimately, Krimmage placed the blame for doping on the sport’s power brokers: the team sponsors, the team officials, the race organizers, and even the sports media. He felt that they created a coercive system in which riders had no choice but to dope or leave the sport. Indeed, towards the end of his career, his anger at the power structure became an additional factor strengthening his resolve to remain clean.

How can we make sense of Paul Krimmage’s general abstinence from performance-enhancing substances between 1986 and 1989, and his isolated use of amphetamines during a three-week period in 1987? And more importantly, how can we make sense of what Krimmage tells us about his thoughts, feelings, and actions in regards to doping throughout his professional career? In *Normal Organizational Wrongdoing*, I will attempt to show that the dominant approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing and the specific accounts of wrongdoing that employ it, provide a useful, but incomplete, picture of the factors influencing Krimmage’s (and other wrongdoers’) behavior. I will also attempt to show that the alternative approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing and the accounts of wrongdoing that employ it provide a useful complement to the dominant approach, filling in important parts of the picture that otherwise would remain obscured from sight. Before embarking on this effort, though, a few words about the book’s message and my overarching objectives are in order.

## Two Perspectives on Wrongdoing

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### The book's message and my overarching objectives

I have outlined two overarching perspectives on organizational wrongdoing. I have also elaborated two approaches to understanding the causes of wrongdoing. Finally, I have said that while I believe both perspectives and approaches are valid, I favor the normal organizational wrongdoing perspective and the alternative approach to explaining organizational wrongdoing. This stance implies two messages, one of which might be considered optimistic and the other of which might be considered pessimistic. The optimistic message is that the number of bad apples in organizations, people who intentionally engage in wrongful acts, is small relative to the number of good apples, people who strive to pursue rightful behavior. The pessimistic message is that a large number of structures and processes without which organizations could not function can cause a significant number of the many good apples to embark on wrongful behavior or to join the few bad apples intentionally pursuing wrongful courses of action. On balance, the book's pessimistic message drowns out its optimistic one. To put it another way, this book dwells on the dark side of organizations more than it does the bright side.

I do my best to represent the determinants of organizational wrongdoing, especially the factors that lead good apples to become involved in wrongdoing, in a dispassionate manner. That is, I try to withhold moral judgments of organizational wrongdoers. This is partly because the book is a social scientific analysis, not a normative commentary. It is also partly because my analysis leads me to conclude that the labeling of acts as wrongful and of individuals as culpable is one of the dimensions through which wrongdoing is created. But, I must admit, I also withhold moral judgments partly because I sympathize with many organizational wrongdoers. They face a complex world that their limited cognitive resources leave them ill equipped to navigate. Moreover, intransigent organizational structures, strong social psychological processes, daunting power dynamics, and other formidable aspects of their immediate social context influence their thoughts and actions. Finally wrongdoers' behavior evolves in ways that are difficult to track and is subject to constraints that are difficult to overcome. As I dug deep into the actual instances of organizational wrongdoing recounted in this book, I came to the conclusion that even the most ethical, socially responsible, and law-abiding people are at significant risk of becoming entangled in wrongdoing when placed in an organizational context.

I do not, though, think that most people who engage in wrongdoing in organizations should be absolved of guilt and punishment. While I sympathize with many of the wrongdoers described in this book, for the most part

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I do not consider their behavior to be acceptable, nor do I consider the consequences of their behavior to be tolerable.<sup>1</sup> It is true that attributions of cause can be used as the basis of attributions of responsibility and blame (Margolis 2001). Those who see organizational participants as subject to powerful external forces might be more inclined to give them a free pass. This is not, though, my inclination. I hope that by contributing to understanding of how organizational participants come to engage in wrongful behavior, I provide insights that can help organizational participants who might otherwise engage in deplorable forms of wrongdoing avoid becoming ensnared in such behavior.

But, the first order of business is to address some technical matters. In the next chapter I present the definition of right and wrong that I will use, the theory building approach that I will follow, and the research methods that I will employ in this book. Once that is done, I can begin to elaborate the eight explanations of organizational wrongdoing that I believe organize thinking on this subject. Only after I have considered the eight explanations of wrongdoing can I return to thinking about how wrongdoing in and by organizations might be curbed.

<sup>1</sup> I intentionally hedge when stating my personal opposition to organizational wrongdoing (implicitly allowing that I find some forms of wrongdoing acceptable) because, as will become clear in Chapter 11, I also think that the labeling of behavior as wrongful is influenced by interests and power.