

Can constructive deviance be empowered?

A multi-level field study in Australian supermarkets

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Statement of originality

None of the work presented in this manuscript has been published or submitted simultaneously for publication elsewhere.

Ethics statement

The research and data collection procedures were approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee at Queensland University of Technology (approval no 1300000627). While working on this study, the first author was a postdoctoral research fellow at Queensland University of Technology, partially supported by funding from Woolworths Group as part of a collaborative research agreement between Woolworths Group and Queensland University of Technology. Woolworths Group was not involved in research design, data analysis or reporting of findings.

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Abstract

We test four hypotheses about how leaders facilitate constructive deviance in the teams they manage. Constructive deviance describes ways of creating value by departing from common ways of working. We test a multi-level model that suggests links between various leadership behaviors, psychological empowerment, and constructive deviance at the individual and team levels. Our findings add nuance to the prevalent assumption that empowered employees engage in more constructive deviance than unempowered employees do by suggesting that, rather than stimulating constructive deviance, empowerment makes deviance unnecessary. We detail implications for management.

Keywords: constructive deviance; psychological empowerment; empowering leadership behavior; survey; multi-level modeling.

Introduction

Retailers must to maintain high standards of service and good relationships between customers and retail employees (Lee & Yang, 2013; Pantano & Migliarese, 2014). To achieve these aims, retail organizations create reliable routines that guide and restrict employees in their work (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Kasiri, Cheng, Sambasivan, & Sidin, 2017; Pentland, Hærem, & Hillison, 2011). However, employees sometimes deviate from their organizations' prescribed routines and norms (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Warren, 2003). Traditionally, such deviance has been regarded as a threat to the organization's functioning (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Bennett, 1995), but more recent research suggests that deviance can also be beneficial to retailers (Mertens, Recker, Kohlborn, & Kummer, 2016a; Mertens, Recker, Kummer, Kohlborn, & Viaene, 2016b). This line of research studies *constructive deviance*, which is behavior that deviates from the norms of a reference group, is conducted with honorable intentions to benefit the reference group, and conforms to hypernorms, that is, is not harmful to other groups or society as a whole (Dahling, Gabriel, & MacGowan, 2017; Galperin, 2012; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004; Warren, 2003). For example, Mertens et al. (2016b) describe how constructively deviant bakery teams in retail stores deviate from prescribed batch sizes, baking schedules, and production planning to ensure they always have the most appropriate product range on the shelves at just the right time of the day while minimizing leftover bakery waste at the end of the day. Mertens and Recker (2020) find that constructively deviant supermarket teams do not to follow "normal" procedures for promotional items (e.g., put the items on display as required, discount them, record them as shrinkage if they do not sell) but call in help from the national support office for allocated promotional items that do not fit the local layout, customer profile, or season, resulting in reduced negative impacts (e.g., waste or shrinkage,

opportunity cost of shelf space) and giving the head office more reliable information about performance than would otherwise have been the case.

As these examples suggest, constructive deviance can provide a powerful basis for organizational learning and improvement (Pascale & Sternin, 2005; Seidman & McCauley, 2008), for finding innovative ways to solve work challenges (Galperin, 2003), and for increasing performance in retail (Mertens & Recker, 2020; Mertens et al., 2016b). However, knowledge about the antecedents to constructive deviance remains scattered and inconclusive (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Vadera, Pratt, & Mishra, 2013). Our work focuses on one fundamental ambiguity: the question concerning whether and how leaders can influence the emergence of constructive deviance. Some researchers argue that, for constructive deviance to emerge, traditional top-down leadership styles must be converted into facilitative ones (Pascale & Sternin, 2005), and contexts must be created in which employees are empowered by their leaders to execute their work with a degree of autonomy and latitude (Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003; Vadera et al., 2013). However, these arguments are not yet tested empirically.

Mertens and Recker (2020) make strides in developing theory about the link between leadership behaviors and constructive deviance, suggesting that leaders can empower their team members, which encourages them to engage in constructive deviance and, as a result, boost retail performance. The authors' theorizing is grounded in a qualitative study of seventeen supermarket stores, but they do not examine their propositions quantitatively.

We take this step by reporting on a quantitative study designed to examine Mertens and Recker (2020) theoretical propositions. Using a field study of 144 supermarket store teams consisting of store managers and their department team leaders, we evaluate the influence of various leadership behaviors on the emergence of constructive deviance in teams.

We proceed as follows. The following section reviews the literature on constructive deviance. Then we develop four testable hypotheses from the propositions Mertens and Recker (2020) put forward. Next, we describe the design, execution, and analysis of our study. Finally, we conclude by discussing the main implications of our findings.

Background

Constructive deviance entails voluntary behavior that deviates from established norms in the workplace (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) but that occurs with honorable intent. Its definition holds three central assumptions:

1. The assumption of *behavioral deviation* refers to voluntary departure from formal or informal norms. For employees in their work contexts, relevant (i.e., salient) norms are organizational norms, as opposed to norms that are part of, for example, a religious belief system or social groups. Organizational norms are informal or formal rules that regulate and regularize behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Feldman, 1984). These norms can be formally described in role descriptions or procedural regulations that are documented or openly discussed (Feldman, 1984) but may also just be “the way we do things around here.”
2. The assumption of *honorable intention* refers to the enactment of behavior with positive intent to achieve benefits for the reference group. In this regard, constructive deviance appears similar to behaviors like organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), creative performance (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996), and proactive and extra-role behaviors (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), all of which are behaviors with which employees go beyond typical expectations to gain benefits for reference groups like peers, the team, or the organization.

3. The assumption of *conformance to hypernorms* refers to behaviors that are honorable, respectable, or otherwise virtuous (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003; Warren, 2003). In this regard, constructive deviance appears similar to forms of prosocial and anticipatory actions like helping and voice (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), whistleblowing (Near & Miceli, 1987), and issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993).

Because the standards for judging behaviors as constructively deviant can be subjective, the literature is inconsistent in how it treats the composition of these three assumptions in the definition of constructive deviance. Essentially, two views have been proposed: Vadera et al. (2013: 1222) suggest viewing constructive deviance as a broad umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of behaviors that share a focus on the assumption of honorable intent, so theirs is a formative definition. In contrast, Galperin (2012) suggests a more narrow view that defines constructive deviance as the simultaneous manifestation of all three elements, so Galperin's is a summative definition.

We reside with Galperin (2012) in holding that constructive deviance describes behavior that reflects the simultaneous manifestation of all three criteria—behavior that is at the same time deviant, conducted with honorable intent, and conformant with hypernorms—for two reasons: theoretical precision and empirical validation. First, while Galperin (2012) view embodies the summative definition, it is also consistent with the formative view. Some of the authors who adopt the broad view of constructive deviance (e.g., Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Morrison, 2006; Vadera et al., 2013), also mention that, for instance, creative performance “*can fulfil the three criteria of constructive deviance*” (Vadera et al. 2013, p. 1224) when it entails deviations from norms and is conformant to benevolent higher-order values. Likewise, proactive or prosocial behaviors *may or may not* entail deviatory actions or conformance to hypernorms (Dahling, Chau, Mayer, & Gregory, 2012; Morrison, 2006). As

for empirical validation, Galperin (2012) view is currently the only definition of constructive deviance that has been operationalized and empirically validated as a psychometric scale, which captures two dimensions of constructive deviance: acts of constructive deviance that are directed toward the organization and acts of constructive deviance that are directed toward individuals. Galperin's initial validation supports the two-factor structure of constructive deviance and shows that constructive deviance relates largely as expected to constructs like organizational citizenship behaviors and negative deviance, while displaying sufficient discriminant validity (Galperin, 2012). However, the scale is most strongly positively related to destructive deviance, that is, deviant behavior that does not benefit the organization (Galperin, 2012, p. 3004). This strong relationship reflects a strong focus on *deviance* in the scale's items. For example, some of the items refer to "violating company procedures" or "disobeying instructions or orders of the supervisor."

Hypothesis Development

Several studies identify factors that lead to the emergence of constructive deviance (e.g., Dahling et al., 2012; Galperin, 2012; Morrison, 2006). Vadera et al. (2013), the first comprehensive review of this literature, proposes three key mechanisms shaped by the work context that give rise to constructive deviance: intrinsic motivation, (the drive to engage in a particular task because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, Ryan & Deci, 2000), felt obligation (feeling compelled to help the organization in reaction to perceived beneficial treatment from the organization, Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001), and psychological empowerment (perceiving work as meaningful, believing in one's own competence with regards to the work, and having a sense of self-determination and control over work outcomes, Spreitzer, 1995).

Building on Vadera et al. (2013), Mertens and Recker (2020) again reviewed the literature on the determinants of constructive deviance, noting that psychological empowerment is one of the most frequently hypothesized antecedents (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004; Vadera et al., 2013) and suggesting through their qualitative, inductive research that psychological empowerment provides a promising pathway through which to examine how constructive deviance might be encouraged and channeled through leadership.

The connections among leadership, empowerment, and constructive deviance are dominant in the constructive deviance literature. Constructive deviance purportedly emerges in contexts in which people feel competent, motivated, and provided by their leaders with a degree of autonomy and empowerment. For example, Seidman and McCauley (2008) and Pascale and Sternin (2005) argue that constructive deviants are competent people who are more highly motivated than their conforming peers are and that leaders should increase employees' latitude and become facilitators of constructive deviance. Others refer to the need for management to instill in employees a sense of self-determination and meaning regarding their work (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003), along with a sense of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005; Vadera et al., 2013).

On the basis of this literature, Mertens and Recker (2020) use data from an inductive multi-case analysis of seventeen retail supermarkets stores in Australia to develop the first theoretical model to explain how leadership behaviors relate to psychological empowerment and constructive deviance. They offer four propositions:

1. Team members' psychological empowerment fosters team members' constructive deviance.
2. An empowering leadership behavior increases team members' psychological empowerment and, thereby, constructive deviance.

3. A transactional leadership behavior reduces psychological empowerment and constructive deviance.
4. Leaders' constructive deviance fosters team members' constructive deviance.

In what follows, we first develop from their propositions concrete, measurable hypotheses that we can test quantitatively. Fig. 1 visualizes our hypotheses in a research model. Then we develop from these hypotheses how psychological empowerment affects the emergence of constructive deviance. Finally, we theorize about how different empowering and transactional leadership behaviors may affect both empowerment and constructive deviance.

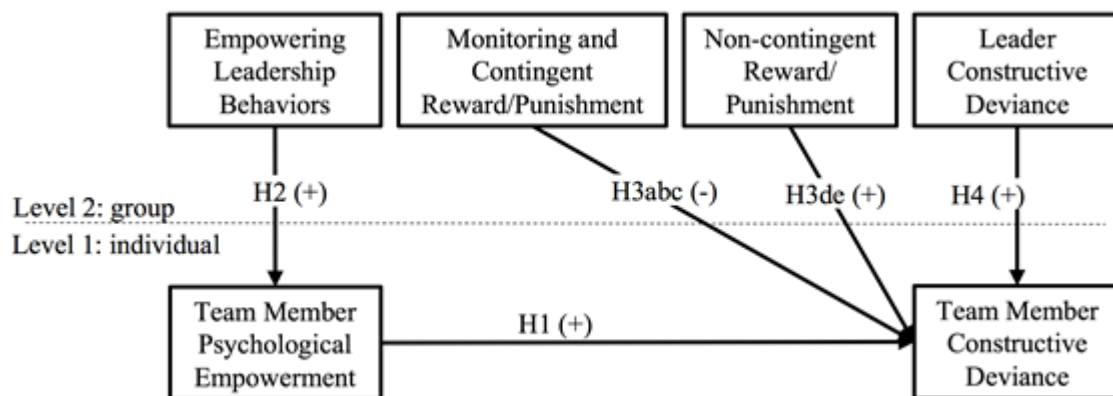


Fig. 1. Research model

Psychological empowerment and constructive deviance. Constructive deviance requires an employee to make decisions and take action (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). It requires employees to be “fortified” (Vadera et al., 2013) in that they are motivated to *do their best*, they feel confident in their abilities, and they have the opportunity to be in charge of their own work—that is, they are free to *do their own thing*. Psychological empowerment (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011; Spreitzer, 2008), which grasps this sense of self-determination, competence, and control, refers to four psychological

states that are necessary for individuals to feel in control of their work (Spreitzer, 1995, 2008): *meaning*, which refers to the fit between the purpose of the work and one's personal values and beliefs, that is, whether the employee perceives the work as meaningful; *competence*, which is an individual's belief in her or his own ability to fulfill the role; *self-determination*, which refers to the individual's perceived degree of choice and autonomy in the actions that he or she carries out as part of the work role—that is, the extent to which the employee is intrinsically driven; and *impact*, which refers to an employee's perceived degree of control over her or his work outcomes.

Mertens and Recker (2020) offer as a rationale for the link between psychological empowerment and constructive deviance that empowered employees want to do their jobs as well as possible and, in so doing, are more likely to deviate from rules or norms if doing so allows them to execute their work in the best possible way. Clearly, if an individual perceives his or her job as meaningful and is self-driven (two elements of psychological empowerment), that person will strive to do the job well and be willing to “risk greatness” (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). In other words, they are more likely to engage in *constructive* behavior. Further, individuals who feel competent and in control, the other two elements of psychological empowerment, will also be likely to use that control to carry out their jobs as they see fit, even when norms dictate a way of working that does not align with their views. In short, they are likely to engage in *deviant* behavior. They will believe that the potential for success outweighs the risk of failure, and the potential to have a real impact gives people reason to take risks in the first place (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). In summary, an employee who feels competent, motivated by her or his work, and self-determined (i.e., psychologically empowered) will choose the *best* path to achieve a result, rather than the *normative* path (i.e., the path accepted as the normal or common way of completing the work). Therefore, we specify as our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Team members' psychological empowerment has a positive impact on their willingness to engage in constructive deviance.

Leadership Behavior and Team Members' Constructive Deviance. The second, third, and fourth of Mertens and Recker (2020) propositions suggest three ways in which leaders can influence the emergence of constructive deviance in their teams: by engaging in empowering leadership behavior (positive influence), by engaging in transactional leadership behavior (negative influence), and by being deviant themselves (positive influence). We specify three hypotheses to test these three modes of influence and discuss each in turn.

Providing empowerment: Following the Mertens and Recker (2020) logic, we expect empowering leadership behaviors to have a positive effect on psychological empowerment, as hypothesized in Hypothesis 1, which then leads to constructive deviance. Empowering leadership behavior (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Dewettinck & van Amejide, 2011; Fong & Snape, 2014; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004; Seibert et al., 2011; Zhang & Bartol, 2010) builds fortification; that is, it provides employees with a sense of psychological empowerment through participative decision-making, showing concern, interacting with the team, leading by example, informing, and coaching (Arnold et al., 2000) that increases team members' perceptions of their own potential for affecting on work outcomes and their sense of self-determination and motivation (Chen & Kanfer, 2006; Seibert et al., 2011). Thus, they understand why their jobs are important (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) and meaningful, and they feel empowered to perform them well:

Hypothesis 2: An empowering leadership behavior is positively related to team members' psychological empowerment.

Instilling compliance with norms: The second way in which leaders can influence constructive deviance is of a direct, not mediated, nature: transactional leadership behavior. Transactional leadership is an umbrella term for behaviors that are characterized by an exchange of leader rewards for productive employee behavior and sanctions for undesirable behavior. This exchange results in a clear contract between leader and follower: followers do as leaders say and are rewarded (or avoid punishment) in return (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). This type of leadership behavior *reduces* the emergence of constructive deviance and focus employees' attention on "doing the (nominally) right thing."

To test this proposition, we must be clear about which transactional leadership behaviors we expect to be relevant. We look at four in particular. First, transactional leaders can impose restrictions and maintain a grip on critical rules and norms (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl, 2012). Monitoring compliance with norms and rules is important for leaders because employees must be empowered to at least a degree, but that empowerment cannot be absolute. Leaders must monitor team members' behavior to determine whether they are carrying out their assigned tasks adequately and according to plan (Yukl, 2012), and take corrective action in case of non-compliance to certain rules and norms (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Second, transactional leaders can exercise their power to sanction inappropriate behavior and reward appropriate behavior (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). For example, Mertens and Recker (2020, p. 12) report on how supermarket store leaders grant non-institutionalized rewards for good behavior (e.g., chocolates, pats on the shoulder).

Third, transactional leaders can exercise their power to provide non-contingent punishments, which are not conditional on whether the employee's behavior complies with a norm (Podsakoff, Bommer, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). For example, Mertens and

Recker (2020, p. 9) report on how a leader penalizes a member of the store team for drinking water from a bottle outside of scheduled work breaks. We expect non-contingent punishments to confuse employees' understanding of norms because sanctions are independent of standards or schemas that are meant to stipulate the "right" behavior. At the same time, these leadership behaviors are shown to relate negatively to employees' effort, in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Podsakoff et al., 2006). In-role performance describes behavior that matches formally prescribed job responsibilities (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003), whereas extra-role performance describes employees' behaviors that are not part of their formal job requirements but that help the organization to function smoothly (Bateman & Organ, 1983). Examples of such extra-role behavior are organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), role innovation (West, 1987), and proactive behaviors (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Both in-role and extra-role performance are behaviors that are similar to constructive deviance in their effort to create positive effects for the reference group. Therefore, even if we do not expect non-contingent punishment to increase the salience of norms, we do expect it to affect constructive deviance negatively:

Hypothesis 3: Leader monitoring (H3a), contingent reward (H3b), contingent punishment (H3c), and non-contingent punishment (H3d) behaviors are negatively related to team members' constructive deviance.

The fourth transactional leader behavior refers to leaders' exercising their power to provide non-contingent rewards. Like non-contingent punishment, non-contingent rewards are not conditional on whether the employee's behavior complies with a norm, which may confuse employees' understanding of norms. However, we believe non-contingent rewards

are *positively* related to employee effort, in-role performance, and extra-role performance (Podsakoff et al., 2006) and so does *not* reduce constructive deviance. Therefore, we specify:

Hypothesis 3e: Leaders' non-contingent reward behavior is positively related to team members' constructive deviance.

Role-modeling behavior: According to Mertens and Recker (2020), the third way in which leaders can influence constructive deviance among team members is through role modeling, that is, modeling behavior that team members follow even when the behaviors break away from salient and expected norms (Appelbaum, Deguire, & Lay, 2005). Mertens and Recker (2020) suggest that, when team leaders engage in constructively deviant behavior themselves, they positively affect the extent to which their team members also engage in constructively deviant behavior. Accordingly, we hypothesize that leaders' modeling of deviant behavior constitutes a form of social learning through imitation (Bandura & Walters, 1977) that reinforces both constructive and deviant practices at work. Our final hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4: Leaders' constructive deviance is positively related to team members' constructive deviance.

Method

Design and Sample

In designing our research, we follow Mertens et al. (2016a) in defining constructive deviance (as both behavior and outcomes, see Mertens et al., 2016a, p. 1295), exploring constructive deviance together with its determinants, and accessing sufficiently large samples using generalizable measures of constructive deviance.

With these design choices in mind, we test our four hypotheses using a cross-sectional multi-level survey of team members and their managers in the supermarket retail stores of a

large international retail organization headquartered in Australia. The organization, one of the twenty-five largest retailers globally, employs more than 180,000 staff and has a network of 952 grocery stores (a number that rises frequently). Our units of analysis are these stores. The stores vary in size but typically have a range of trading departments, such as seafood, deli, health, and bakery. Each of these departments is led by one member of the store's management team, which is headed by the store manager. Our study focuses on this management team and the routines they employ to operate their stores.

Each of the departmental team leaders is responsible for one of the departments in the store (e.g., bakery, fresh food, seafood, meat) and are collectively seen as a social entity, the "store leadership group" that works interdependently, is embedded in a larger social system (the store in the particular region of the national network), and performs tasks that affect others (e.g., coworkers and shoppers) (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). These department leaders have frequent meetings with their individual teams as well as frequent interactions (ranging from weekly to daily) (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), thereby working toward shared commitment and striving for synergy (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). The store manager is the team leader of these department heads.

We surveyed all department heads and store managers from all supermarket stores using an online instrument. Responses were received from 3,090 respondents. We perform several steps to cleanse the data and arrive at our final sample, which consists of 585 department heads (team leaders) and 152 store managers from 144 supermarket stores (management is shared in four stores).

First, we exclude incomplete surveys and surveys that contain clear response patterns indicative of a lack of engagement with the study. We apply a strict and consistent rule, excluding respondents who completed the survey in less than ten minutes ($n = 109$), the cutoff for outliers below the 5th percentile ($M = 28.44$ minutes, $SD = 64.56$ minutes) (Field,

2013). We do not exclude outliers at the higher end of the distribution, as respondents were allowed to abandon the survey and complete it at a later time, which many did, as reflected in the large standard deviation. Visual inspection of the excluded cases confirms the validity of our cut-off, as most of these cases have large numbers of missing values, suspicious repetition, tendencies toward extreme responses, inconsistent responses, and multiple rapid responses that are consistent, recorded in the same store, and completed in immediate succession.¹

Second, we exclude respondents who do not fit our selection criteria, as they do not belong to the teams of interest ($n = 535$), are from stores where the manager did not complete the survey ($n = 685$), and are from stores where the manager had been in her or his role for less than six months ($n = 548$). This last point deserves note: We consider only those store managers who had been in their roles in their current stores for six months or more, as it takes time for store managers to become accustomed to their roles and stores, for teams to form a consistent view of their supervisors' leadership styles (Carter, Carter, & DeChurch, 2015), and to change their practices in response, and for these changes to have an impact on their stores' performance. Moreover, our performance measures are based on six-month growth data.

Third, to increase our multi-level model's validity and reliability, we select from the sample only teams in which at least three team members rate the store manager (as in, e.g., El Akremi, Mignonac, & Perrigot, 2011; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005). This step brings the final sample for the analyses to 585 team members and 152 team leaders, representing 144 stores. For the four stores in which two store managers share the leadership role, we aggregate the reported constructive deviance scores and assign to each of them the same scores for

¹ Store managers were encouraged by the study's organizational sponsors to have all team members complete the survey, yet responses were kept confidential. This encouragement appears to have led to some artificially conflated survey-completion numbers in some stores.

follower-rated items. Thus, the behavior of every team leader in the sample is rated by an average of just over four team members ($M = 4.06$).

Because the final sample consists of a subsample of the 1,465 valid responses that fit our selection criteria, we assess the risk of selection bias by comparing the cases we include ($n = 737$) with those we exclude ($n = 728$). We use a one-way analysis of variance using inclusion vs. exclusion as a factor to assess differences in the control variables for both team members and team leaders. The results indicate no significant differences between included and excluded respondents from the valid sample.

Measures

Constructive deviance. As Mertens et al. (2016a) suggest, we measure constructive deviance as an individual-level construct at both the *team member* level and the *team leader* level using Galperin's (2012) 9-item scale. The scale captures two dimensions of constructive deviance: one that measures acts of constructive deviance that are directed at the organization (e.g., "[please rate how often you] violated company procedures in order to solve a problem"), and one that measures acts of constructive deviance directed at individuals (e.g., "[please rate how often you] disobeyed your supervisor's instructions to perform more efficiently"). Both team members and team leaders rated their own constructive deviance on a Likert-type response scale anchored between *never* (1) and *daily* (7).

Psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is also an individual-level construct, so it was measured based on self-reports of team members using the 12-item scale developed and validated by Spreitzer (1995). This scale captures four sub-dimensions: meaning (e.g., "The work I do is very important to me"), impact (e.g., "I have significant influence over what happens in my department"), self-determination (e.g., "I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job") and

competence (e.g., “I am confident about my ability to do my job”). In line with previous validations and applications of the scale, participants rated all items using a Likert-type response format (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). We model psychological empowerment as a second-order construct in the evaluation of the measurement model and, after validating the scale, aggregate the responses to all items to form an overall score of psychological empowerment.

Empowering leadership. Leadership behaviors are shared properties of every team, as they represent the team members’ shared perceptions of team leaders’ behavior (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Consequently, we measure them at the individual level and evaluate them for the appropriate analysis level. We assess five behavioral dimensions associated with *empowering leadership behavior* using the 37-item scale developed by Arnold, Arad, Rhoades and Drasgow (2000). Team members rated the items using a 5-point Likert response format (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to capture leading by example (e.g.: “[our team leader] sets a good example by the way he/she behaves”), participative decision-making (e.g., “...listens to my work group’s ideas and suggestions”), coaching (e.g., “...teaches work group members how to solve problems on their own”), informing (e.g., “...explains company decisions”), and showing concern and interacting with the team (e.g., “...shows concern for work group members’ success”).

Monitoring. We measure leaders’ monitoring in terms of team members’ ratings using the 4-item scale developed by Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn (1995) and adapted by Spreitzer, De Janasz and Quinn (1999) (e.g., “[Our team leader] monitors compliance with the rules”). Participants rated these items using the original Likert-type response scale, which ranges from *almost never* (1) to *almost always* (7).

Contingent and non-contingent reward and punishment. Team members also rated their leaders’ exercise of (non-) contingent reward and punishment behavior, as we model

and analyze all four leadership behaviors as distinct constructs. Contingent and non-contingent reward and punishment behaviors were rated using a validated 18-item scale developed by Podsakoff, Todor, Grover and Huber (1984) (e.g., “[my team leader] always gives me positive feedback when I perform well,” “...lets me know about it when I perform poorly,” “...is just as likely to praise me when I do poorly as when I do well,” “...is often displeased with my work for no apparent reason”). Participants rated these items using a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

Validation

Evaluation of the Factor Structure of Constructive Deviance

Although it has been validated previously, the constructive deviance scale remains relatively young, so we re-evaluate the factor structure of the scale by executing a principal component analysis with varimax rotation in SPSS version 21 and investigating the eigenvalues, scree plots and factor loadings. However, unlike Galperin (2012), we initially extract two factors where items show high levels of cross-loadings between the factors and only two items load highly on the second factor (*interpersonal constructive deviance*): “Reported a wrongdoing to co-workers to bring about a positive organizational change” and “Disagreed with others in your team to improve the current work procedures.” Furthermore, the eigenvalue of the second factor was only 1.03, and the variance explained before rotation was only 11 percent. Reiterations of the factor analysis suggest a one-factor solution would be more valid (factor $R^2 = 55\%$; all factor loadings $> .7$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$) if the two items above were excluded. We deem this exclusion appropriate because these two items have factor loadings lower than .7 and *Cronbach’s α if item deleted* is higher than *Cronbach’s α with the item*. In addition, closer inspection of the items shows that these were the only two items that explicitly refer to co-workers or other team members—all other items refer to

supervisory directions or organizational rules or norms—so we exclude these items, retaining a 7-item, one-factor measure with high face and measurement validity for the following analyses.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model and Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs)

Next, we evaluate the structure of the entire multi-level measurement model following Dyer, Hanges, and Hall (2005) method using MPlus version 7.4 (Kelloway, 2015). We first perform a conventional one-level CFA and then estimate the between-group variance. We evaluate the aggregation and measurement reliability using the r^*_{wg} coefficient to assess within-group interrater agreement (Lindell, Brandt, & Whitney, 1999) and ICC1 and ICC2 to assess raters' consistency and group means' reliability, respectively (Bliese, 2000). Next, we perform a CFA at the individual level (level 1) and at the group level (level 2) separately, and finally perform a multi-level confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 1 summarizes relevant fit statistics for each of these five steps. The results show that the multi-level model fits the data well and better than any of the non-multi-level models we test: The chi-square value is smallest when compared to the degrees of freedom, and the ratio between both, which controls for sample size model complexity, is within the recommended range (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). Further, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is smallest for the multi-level model, and all other relevant fit indices are also within recommended ranges (Dyer et al., 2005; Hooper et al., 2008). All of the final multi-level model's standardized factor loadings are statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Table 1. Model fit indices according to the multi-level CFA testing steps proposed by Dyer et al. (2005)

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Step 1: Total	15229.87	3275	4.65	0.07	0.83	0.82	0.05
Step 3: Within	1821.47	575	3.17	0.06	0.93	0.92	0.06
Step 4: Between	11447.21	1026	11.16	0.12	0.81	0.79	0.06
Step 5: Multi-level	3797.73	1601	2.37	0.04	0.91	0.90	within: .06 between: .06

Note. All chi-square values are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, which is usual for large samples. RMSEA refers to root mean square error of approximation, CFI is the comparative fit index, TLI is the Tucker-Lewis Index, and SRMR is the standardized root mean square residual.

The measurement model that emerges as the best fit to our data models the constructive deviance and psychological empowerment of team members at the individual level.

Measurement of leaders' constructive deviance resides at the group level, but no aggregation is necessary as it is measured at that level. Empowering leadership behavior and monitoring behavior are modeled at the team level. In addition, because of levels of agreement that are just below recommended thresholds for aggregation (average $r^*_{wg} = 0.37$; average ICC1 = .08 and ICC2 = 0.21), we analyze contingent and non-contingent reward and punishment behaviors at the level where they are measured: level 1 (Bliese, 2000; Dyer et al., 2005; Peterson & Castro, 2006).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<i>Individual level</i>																			
Controls																			
1. Gender (male = 45%; female = 55%)	—	—	1.00																
2. Age (25-34 = 35%; 35-44 = 31%)	—	—	.16***	1.00															
3. Experience in retail (years) (5-10 = 21%; 10-20 = 47%)	—	—	.07	.57***	1.00														
4. Tenure in the company (years) (5-10 = 28%; 10-20 = 43%)	—	—	.05	.37***	.61***	1.00													
5. Tenure in the current store (years) (1-2 = 20%; 2-5 = 30%)	—	—	.21**	.31***	.24***	.28***	1.00												
6. Tenure in the current role (years) (2-5 = 14%; 5-10 = 34%)	—	—	-.08*	.38***	.38***	.43**	.32***	1.00											
7. Tenure in the current store and role (years) (1-2 = 24%; 2-5 = 31%)	—	—	.08*	.42***	.33***	.32***	.73***	.66***	1.00										
8. Education level (year 11 or below = 32%; year 12 = 35%)	—	—	-.23***	-.16***	-.17***	-.12**	-.11*	-.07	-.10*	1.00									
Constructs																			
9. Team member's constructive deviance	1.97	1.21	-.23**	-.20***	-.13**	-.11*	-.13**	-.08	-.17***	.10*	1.00								
10. Psychological empowerment	6.09	0.73	.08	.16***	.11**	.07	-.03	.16***	.07	-.06	-.19***	1.00							
11. Perception of the leader's contingent reward behavior	4.86	1.67	.03	.12**	.09*	.07	.03	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.22***	.22***	1.00						
12. Perception of the leader's contingent punishment behavior	5.23	1.19	-.17***	.02	.03	-.07	-.08	-.05	-.10*	.01	.10*	.06	.12**	1.00					
13. Perception of the leader's non- contingent reward behavior	3.34	1.42	.06	-.03	-.05	.03	.06	.00	.03	.02	-.02	.07	.15**	-.07	1.00				
14. Perception of the leader's non- contingent punishment behavior	3.11	1.57	-.13**	-.12**	-.14**	-.11*	-.02	.06	.02	.05	.25***	-.13**	-.38***	.20***	.28***	1.00			
<i>Team level</i>																			
15. Team leader's constructive deviance	2.27	1.08	.03	.00	-.03	-.02	.01	-.11**	-.03	.01	-.02	-.01	.00	-.13**	.05	-.03	1.00		
16. Team leader's monitoring behavior	5.38	0.69	.04	.07	.02	-.06	-.04	.00	-.06	-.05	-.16***	.03	.24***	.21**	.01	-.07	-.08*	1.00	
17. Empowering leadership behavior	3.73	0.60	.02	.02	.05	.02	-.02	-.06	-.07	-.11**	-.16***	.00	.53***	.14**	.04	-.21***	.01	.60***	1.00

Note. Age, experience, and tenure are measured in years and are based on the group of team members; percentages for the categories closest to the median are presented between brackets. Team-level variables are assigned to individuals on the teams, so cross-level correlations are confounded. All construct measurements except for the measurement of the team leader's constructive deviance are based on the group of team members.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of constructive deviance, the antecedents we studied, and all included control variables based on the sample of team members; team leader scores are allocated to team members. We identify three noteworthy results. First, gender is correlated to constructive deviance and to perceptions of leaders' punishment behavior, as women report less constructive deviance ($M = 1.72$) than men do ($M = 2.27$) and perceive that their leaders engage less in punishment behavior. Second, constructive deviance is negatively correlated to age, experience, and tenure but positively related to education level. It is also negatively correlated to team members' psychological empowerment ($r = -0.19$) and empowering leadership behaviors ($r = -0.16$). Third, empowering, monitoring, and reward behaviors are positively correlated, but only contingent reward behavior and non-contingent punishment behavior are correlated to team members' psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis Tests

We specified four hypotheses with which to examine the propositions Mertens and Recker (2020) formulate about how leadership influences constructive deviance. Because the hypotheses are all part of a cross-level model with the dependent variable—constructive deviance—at the individual level, these hypotheses are tested using Multi-level Structural Equation Modeling in MPlus version 7.4 (Kelloway, 2015; Preacher, Zhang, & Zyphur, 2011). This multi-level method accounts for error variance at both the individual and group levels (Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000) and allows for rigorous simultaneous tests of the multi-level model and mediation (Preacher et al., 2011), which is appropriate because our

model suggests that empowering leadership behaviors influences constructive deviance in a mediated way through psychological empowerment.

We test all four hypotheses simultaneously in the validated multi-level measurement model, using the aggregate scores for all constructs. Because empowering leadership may have meaningful variance at the individual level as well (Fong & Snape, 2014; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), we allow empowering leadership to vary at both the individual and group levels: We model the effect of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment and the indirect effect on team member constructive deviance at the within-group level while maintaining the cross-level direct effect of empowering leadership on constructive deviance. This model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 89.03$, $df = 45$, $\chi^2/df = 1.98$, RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.94, SRMR within = 0.04, SRMR between = .02).

Table 3 shows the results of the multi-level analyses. Hypothesis 1 proposes that team members' psychological empowerment is positively related to their constructive deviance, but our results show that psychological empowerment is negatively related to constructive deviance ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = .014$), providing no support for Hypothesis 1. In line with Hypothesis 2, the effect of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment is meaningful and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.23$, $p = .000$); and the indirect effect on team members' constructive deviance (i.e., the mediation effect) is statistically significant and negative, like the effect of psychological empowerment ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = .030$). The direct cross-level effect of empowering leadership on constructive deviance is statistically non-significant ($\gamma = -0.16$, $p = .889$), suggesting full mediation.

In line with hypothesis H3a, leaders' monitoring behavior is negatively related to team members' constructive deviance, but this effect is not statistically significant ($\gamma = -0.20$, $p = .559$). Leaders' contingent reward behavior (H3b) is also negatively related to constructive deviance, and although small, this effect is statistically significant ($\beta = -0.08$, $p =$

.035). Unexpectedly, leaders' contingent punishment behavior (H3c) is positively related to constructive deviance, although this effect is also small and not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.08, p = .058$); leaders' non-contingent punishment (H3d) is positively and statistically significantly related to constructive deviance ($\beta = 0.11, p = .012$); and non-contingent reward behavior (H3e) has a negligible and statistically non-significant negative effect on constructive deviance ($\beta = -0.01, p = .686$). Finally, leaders' constructive deviance is not significantly related to team members' constructive deviance ($\gamma = -0.01, p = .900$), contrary to the expectation in H4.

Table 3. Multi-level Structural Equation Model (MSEM) hypotheses test results

Variables		Coefficient	SE	p
DV	Team members' constructive deviance			
IV	Team members' psychological empowerment	-0.19	0.08	0.014
	Leader's contingent reward behavior	-0.08	0.04	0.035
	Leader's contingent punishment behavior	0.08	0.04	0.058
	Leader's non-contingent reward behavior	-0.01	0.04	0.686
	Leader's non-contingent punishment behavior	0.11	0.04	0.012
	Leader's monitoring (level 2)	-0.20	0.34	0.559
	Leader's constructive deviance (level 2)	-0.01	0.06	0.900
	Empowering leadership behavior	-0.16	1.16	0.889
Control	Gender	-0.38	0.10	0.000
	Tenure in current store and role	-0.21	0.07	0.003
Mediation	Effect of empowering leadership on psychological empowerment	0.23	0.04	0.000
	Indirect effect of empowering leadership on team members' psychological empowerment	-0.05	0.02	0.030

Note. DV refers to dependent variables; IV refers to independent variables; Control refers to control variables. Only controls that have a significant effect on the DV are shown. Significant effects are bolded.

We also find that constructive deviance is affected by three control variables: both female team members and team members that have longer tenure in their roles and stores report lower levels of constructive deviance than those that do not. Psychological empowerment is also related to gender and tenure, but differently, as female team members

report higher levels of empowerment than males do as do team members with less experience in their current stores and those with more experience in their current roles.

Discussion

We quantitatively test proposed leadership behaviors' links with constructive deviance and psychological empowerment. Our results can be interpreted such that employees who receive significant direct guidance on the tasks and activities to be executed, are empowered to participate in decision-making, and are provided with autonomy and the means to develop and grow are less likely than others are to revert to behaviors that deviate from formal rules and directions in doing their jobs. Some of these findings contradict expectations. We discuss their implications in what follows.

The Effect of Empowerment on Constructive Deviance

We expected that psychological empowerment would be positively related to constructive deviance; that, when confronted with dysfunctional norms or norms that otherwise prevent them from doing their work well, empowered team members would constructively deviate from those norms; and that empowering leadership behaviors (Arnold et al., 2000) would have similar effects through the stimulation of psychological empowerment of followers (as in Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Dewettinck & van Amejide, 2011; Fong & Snape, 2014; Seibert et al., 2004; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). While our findings replicate the effects of empowering leadership behaviors on followers' psychological empowerment, we find less self-reported constructive deviance in teams in our sample whose leaders engage more frequently in empowering leadership behaviors and in teams whose members report high levels of psychological empowerment.

In interpreting these results, we investigate them in light of the key defining feature of constructive deviance as *positive* organizational behavior that *deviates* from the norms of the reference group without violating *hypernorms*. Compared to existing research on comparable *positive organizational behaviors* outside the core job descriptions, such as extra-role behaviors (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), work effort (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015) and creative performance (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), our finding that psychological empowerment tends to be positively related to these positive organizational behaviors is directly opposed to what the extant research usually finds (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007; Spreitzer, 2008). However, none of these existing studies refer directly to constructive *deviance*.

When we compare our findings to those of the existing research on (negative) workplace *deviance* (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Kim & Beehr, 2017; Robinson & Bennett, 1995), we see more similarities. The extant research shows that workplace deviance is related to the opposite of employee empowerment (Bennett, 1998; Bennett & Robinson, 2000) and is described as a way to regain control (Spreitzer, 2007) when employees feel powerless (Bennett, 1998) and experience misuse of power (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007) and micromanagement, that is, the opposite of empowerment (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Our findings suggest that the same may be true for constructive deviance: Team members in our sample who do *not* feel empowered to do their jobs as well as they can appear to be more likely to revert to deviant behavior, whereas team members who do feel empowered to execute their work with a reasonable degree of autonomy do not feel the need to deviate from the rules or from supervisory directions to perform their jobs.

Vadera et al. (2013) do not necessarily oppose this view either, as the behaviors they refer to in support of the relationship between psychological empowerment and constructive deviance are creative performance and extra-role behavior. These behaviors are constructive

by definition, but as Vadera et al. (2013) argue, they are not necessarily deviant. Like Galperin (2012), we consider *deviation* to be a vital and unconditional part of the definition of constructive deviance. Empowered or “fortified” individuals (Vadera et al., 2013) may seek non-deviant, positive ways to perform their jobs optimally and/or may *change* directions and, eventually, norms rather than deviate from them.

Alternatively, perhaps people who feel more empowered *perceive* their own behavior as not deviating from organizational norms, even when it technically does, because norms that are captured in rules and regulations are perceived as less strict by psychologically empowered leaders and, consequently, are imposed less strictly in empowered teams. This result may also derive from a team-level process of “normalization” of deviance: Behavior that is initially deviant but positive may be tolerated in empowered teams and explicitly or implicitly adopted as the norm (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; McNamara, 2011). Because of these team-level dynamics, an empowered person who engages in behavior that deviates from organizational norms may not necessarily perceive it as deviant. In other words, our results suggest that empowered teams cease to perceive constructive deviance as deviant.

The Effect of Monitoring, Reward Behaviors, and Punishment Behaviors on Constructive Deviance

In line with our expectations, monitoring and contingent reward behaviors are negatively related to constructive deviance in our sample: Team members whose leaders closely monitor their behavior and contingently reward behavior that is in line with the established rules and norms engage less frequently in constructive deviance. However, non-contingent punishment behavior is positively related to constructive deviance in our sample. While unexpected, this result makes sense considering that this type of behavior does not aid in establishing and fortifying rules and norms but can be considered a form of injustice or

supervisory mistreatment, which research also link to negative forms of workplace deviance (Dalal, 2005; Liu & Ding, 2011; Mayer, Thau, Workman, Dijke, & Cremer, 2012).

The effects of contingent punishment and non-contingent rewards in our sample are not statistically significant and are not in line with our expectations, but they are indicative of the complex influence of leadership: Contingent punishment is positively related to constructive deviance, while non-contingent rewards have a negative effect, suggesting that rewards, rather than contingent corrections, reduce constructive deviance, whereas punishments—contingent or not—stimulate constructively deviant behavior. Again, these results are more in line with research on *deviance* than they are with research on *constructive* behaviors, and they support the contention that employees use deviance as a tool to regain power or, in this case, even retaliate. This contention is also mirrored in the operationalization of Galperin's (2012) scale, which uses terminology that emphasizes *deviance* like “bending or breaking rules,” “violating company procedures,” and “disobeying instructions.”

The Effect of Team Leaders' Constructive Deviance on Team Members' Constructive Deviance

Mertens and Recker (2020) speculated about the effects of leaders' role modeling deviant behaviors on their followers. Our results do not support this proposition or Hypothesis 3, as we find no significant relationship between leaders' constructive deviance and team members' constructive deviance. The absence of this effect might be explained by assuming that members do not perceive deviant behavior as such: When a team leader reports in the survey her or his own constructively deviant behavior, the team leader is likely to judge that behavior in light of his or her perception of organizational norms, which is in accordance with the definition of constructive deviance. However, when a team member judges the

deviance of his or her own behavior, he or she may judge it against the norms of the team as the leader exercises, reinforces, and shares them, rather than as the broader organization does. Team-level behavioral norms are strongly influenced by the leader (Feldman, 1984; Feldman & Pentland, 2003), and team members may not consider deviant the behaviors that the leader considers deviant, particularly when the team member sees the leader engaging in this behavior. In other words, it is plausible that, when a team leader engages in organizationally deviant behavior, this role modeling establishes deviance as the salient within-group norm, rather than as a departure from some (higher-level or more formalized) organizational norm.

In summary, the results for the question concerning how leaders can enable the emergence of constructive deviance indicate that both empowerment and transactional leadership behaviors reduce less constructive deviance, and that leaders who engage in constructive deviance does not necessarily inspire constructive deviance in their followers. Instead, it is plausible that teams led by deviating and empowering leaders cease to perceive constructive deviance as deviant.

Implications for Practice

Our quantitative findings corroborate earlier studies' findings (Mertens & Recker, 2020; Mertens et al., 2016b) that deviance in supermarket teams can be beneficial to retailers, so management should not seek to avoid all workplace deviance. Our findings demonstrate that leaders play an important role in shaping, enabling, but also limiting, constructive deviance. This finding has value because constructive deviance can be beneficial in terms of community engagement, local optimization, and sales improvements, but it should not be overly dominant. For example, several aspects of work, such as health and safety regulations that relate to product-handling or service delivery, must remain stable, and deviant behavior in these areas should be contained. Our findings draw attention to how leaders might achieve

this feat, as the choice of leadership behaviors can guide team members where to follow norms and be compliant, where to exercise autonomy in decision-making, and where innovative work behaviors will even be rewarded. The key is to exercise the right leadership behaviors in the right aspects of work, a recommendation that draws attention to leadership coaching and training. Our findings indicate that neither empowering leadership nor transactional leadership in themselves are the most beneficial forms of leadership; rather, leaders must base their exercise of empowering and transactional leadership behaviors based on the situation to achieve the best outcome. Management should ensure that training and coaching programs educate leaders about the effect of various leadership behaviors and on when to use which form of leadership.

Our study also draws attention to role modelling as an important aspect of leadership. We find that the employees in our sample do not perceive their own behavior to be deviant when their leaders also engage in deviant behavior, as deviance had become their norm. This finding again suggests that leaders be aware of when to role model which behavior—when to demonstrate compliant behavior and when to demonstrate self-empowerment and fortification—so their teams members can engage in similar behaviors for the right reasons and in the appropriate areas of their work.

Our findings also have implications for how organizations can learn from constructive deviance. Organizations should not simply “add” constructively deviant behavior to the formal norm because making constructively deviant behavior a norm restricts teams’ autonomy, diminishes their empowerment, and decrease staff’s sensitivity to customers’ needs. Therefore, constructive deviant behaviors should not always become the new norm, while the factors that lead to the emergence of constructive deviance in the first place should always be enabled. Then, over time, new norms are likely to emerge and then be challenged

again by the constructive deviant behaviors that emerge in the future. Organizations that stimulate such revisions of norms promote innovation from within.

Limitations

We carried out our research using a field study with a partnering organization. Field surveys like ours carry a number of limitations that stem from collaboration with the partnering organizations:

1. It was possible only for us to collect cross-sectional, self-reported data on our main variables. We used Galperin's (2012) constructive deviance scale, but constructive deviance could also be defined in terms of other metrics, such as employee satisfaction or process innovation, which was not possible in our case.
2. Response bias and common method bias may be present in our data because of our single-method design. For example, we note a high positive correlation ($r = .60, p < .001$) between empowering leadership and monitoring behavior, which may indicate the presence of common method variance.
3. Since we could not separate the measurement of constructive deviance temporally from the other variables (e.g., through a longitudinal panel survey), endogeneity is a concern.
4. Our field study was limited to one retailer in one country. Although the retailer is one of the leading retailers globally, our findings' generalizability could be limited. Also, in our data we had considerable between-store variation (e.g., high performance, average performance, low performance). Moreover, all of the measurements we used are substantively grounded but also generally applicable, so it is possible to replicate our study with similar samples from other supermarket retailers in regions other than Australia. In particular, we used a general, self-reported scale of constructive deviance (Galperin, 2012), which has been used to identify such behaviors in various retail organizations or, indeed, in any organizational context (e.g., Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Yıldız, Alpkan, Ateş, & Sezen, 2015). Moreover, our research design followed the guidelines put forward by Mertens et al. (2016a) so it is replicable by others.

Future Research Opportunities

Many elements of our study design and findings suggest opportunities for meaningful continuations and extensions of our work. First, although several of our findings are similar to what is generally found in research on negative forms of workplace deviance, previous studies generally find more differences between the antecedents of negative and positive forms of deviance and generally report both to be negatively related to each other (e.g. Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Dalal, 2005; Lee & Allen, 2002). However, these studies usually operationalize the positive end of the spectrum as extra-role behaviors that do not *necessarily* deviate from the organizational norms. Our findings, like the strong positive correlations between negative and positive forms of deviance Galperin (2012) reports, suggest that the relationship between negative deviance and constructive deviance differs from the relationship between negative deviance and positive organizational behaviors. However, considering the negative relationship between the scale measure and the substantive measure, we believe this result is largely due to the Galperin (2012) scale's strong focus on the *deviant* aspect of constructive deviance and on rules and supervisory directions, rather than on implicit norms. Therefore, future work could take norms more closely into account in studying constructive deviance and look more deeply into how negative forms of deviance and constructive deviance relate and how both can be measured with high discriminant and external validity at the same time.

Further, our results with regard to empowering leadership and psychological empowerment suggest that empowering leadership behaviors do not necessarily affect all team members in the same ways. More work is needed to flesh out whether this result stems from leaders' acting differently when they deal with different team members, or whether other aspects of the individual leader or team member influence the convergence of leadership behaviors into a psychological state of empowerment.

Finally, more research is required on how norms shape constructive deviance (Feldman, 1984). Like most studies on constructive deviance, our study does not focus on conceptualizing and measuring the salience of norms, different levels of norms, or how the perceptions of norms relate to whether deviant behaviors manifest as constructive. For example, our study's results suggest the need to validate whether empowered employees perceive their own deviant behavior to be non-deviant, particularly when their leaders also engage in deviant behavior. We speculate that, when deviant behavior happens on the team level, a reference shift occurs whereby local team norms, rather than organizational norms, become the more salient of the two, as they are exercised by a leader, thus becoming the guide for behavior and for judging deviance. The question then becomes whether empowered teams *change* norms, rather than deviate from them.

Conclusions

Our study provides the first reliable analysis of assumptions in the constructive deviance literature about the relationships of leadership and empowerment with constructive deviance. Our findings provide some answers regarding these complex relationships and provide a first quantitative test of the propositions Mertens and Recker (2020) put forward, but they also raise questions about the measurement of constructive deviance and the nomological net that describes its relationship to other forms of deviant or positive organizational behaviors.

So, can constructive deviance be empowered? It appears not. In fact, it appears that empowerment renders deviance unnecessary in the eyes of those doing the work.

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