# 'Soft' Deviance or Erosion:
# The Forming of Organisational Culture*

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**Abstract:** An omnibus survey in 1996 (economically active population CR, N = 1,322) showed a number of surviving nuisances or more serious deviant elements at the level of the workplace. Even though privatisation has brought some positive trends for the development of organisational culture, the quality of the leadership of the management and the whole agenda of human resources of the organisation belong among the weak points. Sexual harassment is not a major problem, however, the readiness of higher level staff to tackle this problem is not very high. The main nuisances are misuses of telephones and the material equipment of the company. While employees react sensitively to partial manifestations of inequality, protection and mobying within the organisation, their attitudes toward customers remain sometimes a problem. This experience is seen in the context of theories of anomie and concepts of discipline, and life in a risk-society.
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The concept of erosion is used here to describe the process of erosion or sophistication of the norms of people's everyday behaviour in the sphere of their *economic activities in organisations*. There is no intention to examine the process of decay or even disintegration of these firms. The aim is to point out seemingly slight problems occurring within the monumental processes of social transformation of post-communist society. These darker sides of the formation of a new organisational culture can, of course, be ascribed to the previous system and considered as remnants of the past. From this point of view, the question may arise whether something new has yet been formed that could already corrode. On the other hand, the shortages and nuisances described further can be considered as the product of an anomic situation that has been provoked by radical change. They can be considered also as newly appearing forms of reaction to frustration, to relative social deprivation, and to organisational conflicts. The initial thesis is based on the supposition that the painstaking formation of a corporate culture following the transformation not only shows certain slight cosmetic faults but that it is accompanied by certain erosive processes.

The erosion of organisational culture is supported by individual, gradually cumulative deviant elements, which are taken as *partial deviations from the norms of behaviour* on the level of individual employees. Of course, larger organisational bodies can also act in a non-effective, regressive, irrational way, or in a way that runs contrary to currently accepted cultural norms, however, these deviations or outright pathogenic processes require a much more complex analysis. Here, the focus is to find out to what extent, for example, individual employees at lower levels of management (shop floor) behave in a

undesirable way, be it by their passivity, intentional absenteeism, breaking of regulations and norms (including the unwritten ones), even though only rarely does this result in substantial damage or catastrophic scenarios. Typical deviant elements will all be considered as manifestations of *erosion of norms, slight or more serious erosion of human relations,* ethical principles, and further acts that may even reach the level of criminal offence.

Within the introductory delimitation of the subject it is necessary to point out that the focus is not on the phenomenon of corruption, although – even from the viewpoint the Czech Republic's image abroad – this is a fashionable and topical subject. Similarly excluded are the deviant actions of top-management or new owners, and the Czech phenomenon of 'tunnelling'. On the one hand, these topics go beyond the scope of this research, on the other, they are not typical for the internal functioning of organisations. In such cases it would hardly be adequate to speak about 'soft' erosion: these are serious systemic problems, if not a disease.

It might be objected that all that remains is to study certain slight nuisances, which only sometimes become more serious matters. However, the monitoring of these in an individual company and in society as a whole is of great significance because:

– advancing slight nuisances or offences negatively influence the social climate and have a negative effect on the satisfaction and motivation of employees who proceed in a correct way,

– under certain conditions they can involve whole groups of employees and complicate the process of management, and lead to reduced effectiveness in achieving the aims of the respective organisation,

– where such information leaks out, it tarnishes the image of the company, and makes the conditions for dynamic public relations more difficult etc.,

– some deviant elements irradiate the whole society and devastate the normative consensus, deviation becomes 'normalised'.

The substance of social transformation originates from the potential of human resources and presupposes the development of initiative and creativeness of employees, that is to say a certain level of positive deviations (R. K. Merton). Absolute conformism or even a certain bureaucratic stiffness are not ideals [Keller 1996]. It is not in the interest of the organisation to suppress the initiative of the employees in the field of innovation, the presenting of patents or suggestions for rationalisation. However, it is without any doubt interested in keeping an adequate level of *discipline among employees* in the elimination of all negative deviations.

It is symptomatic that the literature published in recent years in the Czech Republic on the topic of corporate culture [Bedrnová and Nový 1994] with certain exceptions [Buriánek 1997] monitors a larger scale of positive movements in the formation of enterprise identity or organisational culture. It seems as if it were enough to define correctly new values, to create an impressive image and to introduce functioning rules of action in the organisation. After all, the theory of organisation [Peters and Waterman 1992], and the theory of human resource management followed for a long time the same direction. Older critical views of organisational behaviour monitoring in connection with the phenomena of bureaucratisation, power and special strategies of actors, (for example, the study by M. Crozier from sixties) seem to have been forgotten.

In my latest research I have focused on the phenomena where the negative label is, in its own way, indisputable (there exists strong consensus characterising certain behaviour as incorrect, for example, the favouring of some employees based on personal relations) and matters where the limits of the 'norms' are not quite clear (e.g. the problem of sexual harassment). I attempt to choose such situations which occur in everyday life relatively often but which can be tolerated to a certain extent. In spite of this, there exists considerable agreement that they represent what is not correct and what represents a latent risk.

### Risk, Tolerance and 'Discipline' in the Management...

In sociological research it is necessary to monitor rather global tendencies: it is not possible to measure in detail the level of tolerance in individual cases, in the given situations. We are interested in the general climate, in prevailing norms. If we want to inquire what people think about the use of a service telephone for a private call, we have to consider the whole spectrum of possible situations. Certainly there are working places where nobody dares to do so (be the motivation immediate threat of a penalty or inner conviction), in other places a person refers to the mentioned reasonable level of 'human' tolerance, elsewhere nobody bothers – it is simply something 'normal'. In any case, it is important for the management of the organisation to find out the opinion of the majority of the employees, regardless of whether it holds a strict disciplinary (authoritative) or reasonably tolerant (democratic) attitude. In addition, the question should be considered of whether all employees are treated equally, and if abuses are tolerated selectively.

The manager always needs to look for an adequate *level of tolerance*, an effective and motivating way to reach the aims of the group. It is desirable to set up morals which stimulate effectiveness, competitiveness, and innovations, but at the same time the responsibility of employees, and their obedience to the instructions of the management. Internal conflict may be hidden here – under certain circumstances the management may require the employees to chat to customers and perhaps break the regulations. The following considerations are valid only under the given conditions: not every employee who revolts against the climate in the enterprise is necessarily a deviant in a broader, all-society sense. Continual reconstruction of what the actors consider normal is naturally based on the discourse, on the dialogue.

The conception stressing a certain level of tolerance towards nuisances and slight inconveniences might be supported by reference to the specifics of life in a *'risk society'*. Some authors such as U. Beck [1986], and A. Giddens [1990] designate thus the state when the endeavour to keep the balance and relatively smooth movement of society leads to the effort to identify and to master the risks of exposure to danger by means of expert systems that have been formed specifically for this purpose. This can lead to the fact that people transfer responsibility for the solution of problems to these 'responsible bodies'. In contemporary theories of social deviation, this concept is extended into the so-called new principle of insurance ('actuarial') justice [Feeley and Simon 1994]. The society endeavours to foresee and to calculate the risks; this leads to the monitoring of the risky areas, and suspicious persons, it increases the volume of social control, sometimes seen as leading to the manipulation of the people, produces excessive legal regulation and so forth.

On the other hand, risk is taken as something that is in its way inevitable, since any action has a certain probability of occurrence ('intervention' towards the given subject)

and there remains nothing other than to take out insurance and invest an adequate amount into the solution of the eventual problem (of course, this concerns rather the consequences, the indemnity). Some critical authors have pointed out that even the police have started to pay attention only to what insurance companies are interested in.

On basis of these propositions it is possible to draw certain conclusions even on the level of enterprises:

– there is a low probability that all risks of the occurrence of undesirable behaviour can be prevented

– however, it is useful to monitor the occurrence of these risks and take effective measures (such as the education of employees, training of managing staff etc.)

– it is necessary to balance the cost of prevention, control and the eventual damage.

The last of the mentioned principles evokes, of course, a rather different theoretical basis, that is, the theory of rational choice. A reasonable attitude toward soft deviation, however, need not sound like resignation, or reconciliation with a certain volume of 'losses'.

Sometimes it is a question of offences that do not cause direct material damages (e.g. the slandering of co-workers) or which have 'no victim' (especially apparent in cases of corruption, offering favours). The absolute decriminalisation of this type of social pathology are not adequate. An industrial enterprise or organisation can be considered as a functioning *social system*, as a certain community of people which can exist only in conditions of basic and universally accepted consensus. Consequently, disintegrative tendencies and influences always represent a certain threat.

There remains a general problem of how far unpunished or 'accepted' deviation can lead to a broader demoralisation of the whole social system. This aspect should be included into our calculations. After all, even compensation (indemnity) is never a hundred per cent and so the general account of losses must be on the permanent increase.

### ...plus Anomic Character of Change

A specific situation opening space for 'soft deviations' arises in the process of social change. Not only revolutions but even reorganisations provoke conflicts of the old system with new elements. Many norms and proven ways of action cease to be valid, a certain vacuum of values, or in the worse case, confusion arises. Durkheim characterised this state of society as *anomie*, which means a certain weakening of the normative regulation of the system. It should be taken into account that states of anomie occur even in the case of organisational changes. One example of this is the entry of a foreign partner when it is necessary to achieve a symbiosis of different organisational cultures, and when the rules imposed can be interpreted differently by both sides. In Czech conditions, a preprivatisational syndrome has been described [Vláčil 1996a, 1996b] which is characterised, on the one hand, by the effort (of management but sometimes also of employees) to utilise quickly the space and adapt to a market setting, and, on the other, not to undertake anything that might threaten the survival of the enterprise and wait for what the new owner comes up with.

A major task for sociological research is monitoring within the existing reorganisation the processes of setting up norms and rules of behaviour [Srubar 1994]. This should concern not only new technologies and organisational charts, but the whole complex of social climate. Many norms do not come into existence by the simple publication

of a regulation but are set up by the activities of people, by interaction and communication. Behind the problems a certain fatal *misunderstanding* can often be found, which can concern the positions of a novice at the working place.

Deviant tendencies may have more causes. As previously mentioned, a cause of tension can be a discrepancy between declared aims and values and the possibilities of achieving them. If employees are promised something they cannot then reach, this can also provoke negative reactions. It may be that the intentions of management are not understood, but also actions of protest or actions seeking compensatory satisfaction (small thefts, sabotage) can be involved. There may be a more general problem of *relative social deprivation*: the people may feel that they are curtailed in their rights when either compared with the previous situation or compared with other groups of employees.

In some organisations certain *subcultures of deviation* can come into existence, that is to say groups which choose different values and ways of behaviour. Sometimes it is a question of relatively closed groups which subjugate even their manager. These groups develop a considerable pressure of 'socialisation' on the new employee, who quickly becomes acquainted with various nuisances.

It is useful to close this brief theoretical excursus by noting that any concept of deviation is accompanied by the act of evaluation. In other words, the group defines its own limits of tolerance and in this sense it constructs deviation socially in mutual conflict with those who, for various reasons, reject the norms accepted by the majority. Therefore, the stated discrepancy can become a challenge for change, for a new delimitation of values and norms. Consequently, there is no reason to be afraid of this or ignore it: in a certain sense deviation it is a part of the culture of an enterprise. However, it is an advantage to have at hand the instruments which are able to regulate it institutionally. It follows that deviation can be settled by means of rules, in the awareness that everything is 'normal'. However, it might be supposed that in the Czech cultural milieu the 'fear of conflict' or at least the fear of negative labelling prevails, which considerably complicates the possibility to define or grasp the deviation.

**Data and Methods of Research**

The following data originate from the investigation of a representative sample of the *economically active population of the Czech Republic between the ages of 18 and 60 years* (the inclusion of the block of questions on deviations into the omnibus investigation was made possible by grant GAČR 403/95/0189 and Charles University GA 186/95). Collection of data took place in November and December 1996 and registered the opinions of 1,322 respondents. The technique was a standardised interview, the method of quota sampling was used.

Table 1.        Description of the sample (in %)

| Position: | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Ordinary employee | 52 |
| | Foreman, boss | 9 |
| | Middle level manager, clerk | 24 |
| | Top level manager | 8 |
| | Self-employee, owner | 7 |
| Branches: | Agriculture | 5 |
| | Industry | 28 |
| | Construction | 10 |
| | Transport and communication | 5 |
| | Sales and services | 14 |
| | Education and health care | 16 |
| | State administration | 5 |
| | Security corps (Army, Police) | 1.5 |
| | Others | 14.5 |
| Ownership – sector: | State (enterprise, organisation) | 28 |
| | Privatised (former state) | 28 |
| | Owned by respondent | 7 |
| | Private – others | 26 |
| | Co-operative | 4 |
| | Communal, communality services | 2 |
| | Foreign owners | 3 |
| | Other type | 4 |
| Size of the organisation: | self-employee | 2 |
| | up to 5 employees | 6 |
| | 6-25 employees | 20 |
| | 26-100 employees | 26 |
| | 101-500 employees | 22 |
| | 501-1,000 employees | 9 |
| | more than 1,000 employees | 16 |

I am aware that favourable conditions for analyses of these phenomena are offered by one enterprise, where the context is relatively clearly defined and where differences between working places and in the hierarchy of management can be monitored. However, this extensive all-field research makes possible rather a global report on the present situation in the Czech Republic: it makes possible the differentiation of individual branches, enterprises of different size etc. but is oriented rather to a generalisation of conclusions, and to a suggestion of trends.

I would like to stress not only the relevance of the theme in the specific Czech conditions but at the same time provoke a more intensive research of these phenomena. As far as I know, thus far nobody has engaged systematically in this research. In short, it is a question of 'slight nuisances and big methodological problems'.

### Anomic Situation as Individual Feeling

Although anomie characterises rather a certain social unit, it also functions as a feeling or opinion in the consciousness of an individual (a summary of possible theoretical attitudes to the problem and application of Srole's A-scale for measuring anomie are offered by Rabušic and Mareš [1996]. An individual can be frustrated by the obscurity or absence of

firm rules of action and deformation of human relations. A certain degree of such uncertainty or outright alienation may influence the occurrence of individual deviation.

In the following battery of statements the first two have most significance. By chance it is just these aspects (they include a cognitive and normative dimensions) that are relatively most claimed by employees. The indices (weighted arithmetic means on a 4 point scale) indicate that the share of optimistic and pessimistic opinions is roughly balanced, item F received the best evaluation.

Table 2. *Considering the present situation in your enterprise would you agree that in comparison with other enterprises the following statements are valid?*
Scale: (1) More than elsewhere, (2) The same as elsewhere, (3) A bit less than elsewhere, (4) Valid little, only exceptionally

|  |  | % of 1 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| a) | The whole system of working and organisational regulations is complicated and difficult to understand | 11 | 2.39 |
| b) | The rules are not valid equally for all employees | 11 | 2.38 |
| c) | It is difficult to arrange or solve anything without protection and acquaintances | 9 | 2.40 |
| d) | In the relations between the people at the working place 'sharp elbows' decide | 9 | 2.59 |
| e) | Co-workers cannot be trusted too much | 6 | 2.59 |
| f) | Enrichment at the expense of the enterprise occurs everywhere | 7 | 2.73 |

Considering these indications it should be noted that they point to a certain complex of attitudes: behind the answers a certain global tendency is hidden and the opinions are strongly correlated (e.g. items A and B indicate the correlation gamma 0.55). Of course, it was not the aim to verify whether they form a reliable scale, although this is very probable.

The answers to the first item manifest certain connections with further structures of opinion or factors of social position. Although no statistically significant differences depending on age or sex have been stated, apart from the influence of the size of the enterprise (the bigger is the enterprise, the more complications in regulations), other relatively strong correlation appeared. Unintelligibility of regulations is claimed more often by:

– ordinary workers (especially in comparison with the opinions of owners)

– those who do not trust the management ($G = -0.35$) or indicate disagreement with the management ($G = 0.39$)

– employees generally less satisfied ($G = -0.38$)

– people tending to the left or to the radicals (in opposition to liberals).

In the future it can be expected that general dissatisfaction and frustration will lead employees to more radical opinions. The existing share of roughly one-tenth of 'dissatisfied' does not look bad, however, the answer 'the same as elsewhere' can indicate a certain degree of scepticism.

From the viewpoint of practical utilisation of the results, it might be seen that where a high rate of offences in working discipline occurs there exists something like latent dissatisfaction of a conflicting social climate (expressed by the index value on the

4-point scale, the difference between the very satisfied and dissatisfied is 2.8-2.1). Further investigations in the culture of enterprises confirmed that the employees perceive very sensitively all inequality or injustice in attitude towards them, be it in terms of salary, evaluations of effectiveness or in respect of opinion or initiative.

### Employees' Opinions on Negative Phenomena

It is more than difficult to enumerate all possible nuisances or abuses and obtain a representative taxonomic enumeration of the 'soft deviation'. Into our basic battery of questions were included quite current problems as well as those by nature criminal offences. In this respect, those cases are of interest that occur 'often' (at the same time aware of the relativity of this term). In question 35 the mean index is calculated which indicates to what extent the given phenomenon is accepted by public opinion at the workplace. The scale is from one ('normal') to four ('unusual, not acceptable'). However, it should be added that the means are computed after deducting from the data those who indicated that a similar situation cannot come into consideration at all – in some items as much as one-fifth of participants reacted this way.

The extent of these phenomena increases if we include the category 'Occasionally'. It follows from the survey that the *most frequently occurring offences* are:

– the abuse of service telephone (often plus occasionally indicates 60%)

– the abuse of material or equipment (at least occasionally 44%)

– protection (at least occasionally 22%)

– breaking regulations (altogether 18%)

– slandering (gossip)

– mobying, corruption

The first two features show a high degree of acceptance on the part of public opinion – the use of the telephone is something rather frowned upon but tolerated, and for a substantial part of working places really an 'normal' practice. The abuse of equipment is considered as a modern and dangerous phenomenon because there exists the danger of private undertakings of the employees to the detriment of the enterprise, for example, the nuisance of illegal copying of computer programs. Tolerance of these phenomena shows a lower cultural level existing in the enterprises and organisations in the Czech Republic.

More detailed analysis indicates that the occurrence of these phenomena is interconnected with the general *satisfaction of employees*. An evident difference expressed by the index of occurrence can be observed in 'mobying' (very satisfied 3.2-unsatisfied 2.6) or favours (3.0-2.4), it appears also, for example, in the abuse of materials and equipment (2.0-1.8).

Employees consider unacceptable thefts and various financial scheming, and deformations of accounting. A rather 'current phenomenon' was considered by some respondents to be protection and the breaking of regulations (see Graph 4).

The data do not prove that catastrophic processes of moral decay exist in most companies at the micro-level, considering the technique of sampling of the respondents it would be rather a question of individual working places and individual experience. On the other hand, it has been confirmed that the mentioned partial deficiencies prevail, and that they can be encountered in practice, some of them even quite often.

Table 3.     Question 34: *How would you characterise your enter-*
*prise/organisation as regards the occurrence of various problems or*
*outright negative phenomena:*
It occurs: (1) Often, (2) Occasionally, (3) Seldom, (4) Quite excep-
tionally, (5) Do not know, (6) Does not come into consideration
Question 35: *If such a situation comes into consideration, how do the*
*people in the organisation react?*
(1) They take it as a more or less current and as a matter of fact, 'nor-
mal' phenomenon, (2) It is perceived as something undue, unsuitable,
(3) It is already a more or less denounced deviation in behaviour,
negative phenomenon, (4) They consider it as absolutely unusual and
for the enterprise and for the staff an unacceptable phenomenon

| q 34 'Often' (%) | q 35 Index 1-4 | ELEMENTS/SYMPTOMS |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 2.82 | A. The mobying of a subordinate (e.g. in form of exaggerated control, entrusting with extraordinary tasks, verbal attacks, threatening etc.). |
| 29 | 1.48 | B. The abuse of service telephones for private calls. |
| 16 | 1.89 | C. The abuse of materials or equipment of the company for private purpose (office accessories, materials, service cars etc.). |
| 1 | 2.93 | D. Troubling co-workers with hidden sexual connotations ('harassment' i.e. unpleasant verbal suggestions, gestures, physical contact). |
| 2 | 2.59 | E. Intimate (non-marital) relations between some employees of the enterprise with hidden sexual connotations. |
| 6 | 2.50 | F. Confidential relations between some employees such as intentionally making friends, protection, lobbying groups. |
| 1 | 3.48 | G. Thefts of personal belongings among co-workers. |
| 4 | 2.75 | H. Bribery or favours. |
| 1 | 3.23 | I. 'Black' employment, scheming in payments of insurance etc. |
| 1 | 3.19 | J. Scheming in invoicing, falsifying registrations on sales, services, output, profits etc. |
| 5 | 2.54 | K. Breaking regulations (safety at work, technology, organisational rules). |
| 2 | 3.08 | L. Cheating customers. |
| 5 | 2.72 | M. The slandering of some employees to cause them harm, prevent their promotion etc. |

*Individual groups of employees* differ in connection with nuisances. A rather different situation exists with private owners and entrepreneurs, where usually in small enterprises a normative consensus prevails and – with a certain hope – an even higher absence of the category of cheating customers can be noted. Generally, especially in small enterprises (6-25 employees) the frequency of the occurrence of the problem is the lowest and the reaction most resolute (e.g. mobying does not come into consideration in 70% of cases, harassment 74%, protection 60%). One-third of respondents from big enterprises indicate

the abuse of the telephone. It remains valid that in small organisational units the current system of social control works much more effectively.

*Working position* is also of importance. Ordinary workers at the lowest level come more often into contact with thefts, mobying, the breaking of regulations, cheating customers, and slandering and protection (as do both ordinary 'clerks' at the middle level). Higher management employees come into contact with some offences more rarely, but at this level verbal rejections are more resolute, explicitly in mobying, on the other hand they are more tolerant as regards telephoning. However, we have to consider that these are declarations of attitude in a conversation and many managers might be considered guilty of some offences. It is interesting that, for example, lower managing workers (foremen) manifested lower trust in the management of the company.

Both sets did not show such distinct differences between the opinions of men and women, men mentioned more often the abuse of the materials of the organisation and the breaking of regulations. Differences in age appeared selectively, young people hinting more often at the abuse of the telephone (often 37%), the oldest respondents cited the complexity of regulations and reacted more strictly to abuse of material and equipment. The influence of socio-demographic variables does not generally reach the significance of the size of the company and the working position, and hypothetically also the character of activities of the organisation represented, that is to say the branch.

### A Modern Problem – Sexual Harassment

A good example of a certain social constructivism concerning the delimitation of a norm and deviation is offered by the modern problem of sexual harassment. According to the preceding table it seems that it is not a current phenomenon, however, the discussion surrounding this subject has started and the topic itself can be considered a criterion of the culture development of the enterprise. With slight exaggeration it can be understood as a criterion of civilisation, and with some cynicism as something that modern society has itself 'produced against itself'.

Table 4.    *Have you met one of the mentioned forms in such a situation where you were explicitly troubled and wanted to say so or assert your right to redress?* (in %)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. yes, several times, most often it was ........................... | 8 |
| 2. yes, once, (indicate) ........................... | 5 |
| 3. no | 87 |

The Czech public considers it clear harassment when the boss conditions certain evaluation (remuneration, qualification etc.) by contact, by a certain favour in this field. A large part of respondents also reject physical contacts (in the form of touches etc.), although in our cultural conditions they are not explicitly alarming (nearly 60% of respondents secretly tolerate it). Another group includes usual jokes, commentaries on appearance and provocation by appearance, telling intimate experiences – however, they are only perceived as harassment by roughly every sixth respondent. Almost completely tolerated is a 'colleague' kiss at a party, which leads to the conclusion that there exists a high degree of tolerance and liberalism in the Czech milieu.

Of course, we cannot overlook the differences in the position and opinions of men and women, even though the differences are not absolute. Several cases of harassment

were indicated by 10% of women and 6% of men, one case by 9% of women and 2% of men. In a 'definition' of harassment, women indicate more often the following characteristics:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| physical contacts | 40% | (men 35%) |
| invitation for a date | 40% | |
| unjustified and insistent demands of social contact | 66% | |
| lewd offers and suggestions | 38% | |
| looks, gestures | 39% | (men 33 %) |

Table 5.    *Can you say that harassment occurs rather in relation of superiors and subordinates or does this circumstance not play substantial role?* (in %)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.  Power position plays a decisive role | 32 |
| 2.  Mostly other circumstances play a role | 67 |

Table 6.    *Where can you come into contact with the problem of sexual harassment or abuse* (in %):

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.  at the workplace | 31 |
| 2.  in the family, in partnership relations | 10 |
| 3.  in the street, on means of transport, in public | 49 |
| 4.  elsewhere | 9 |

Harassment is a phenomenon with a *high degree of latency*, where a large part of cases remain hidden. About one-third of respondents see the workplace as critical. The factor of power asymmetry is also cited (although higher managers accept this in only 24% of cases). In opposition to this statement, there exists an extended idea that the most risky spaces are those public ones (this opinion is supported by 53% of women, the men emphasise more the working place – 34%). The spread of opinions on the *role of the victim* is interesting: traditionally some respondents lay a considerable part of the blame upon the victim [van Dijk 1985]. However, in the process of work the victim is more often than not at a disadvantage. It seems that some of the public at present do not want to hear about this problem. However, it is the 'victims' who more often point to the fact of power asymmetry, more often indicate the occurrence of this problem at the workplace and more often support the opinion that these phenomena are underestimated (60%).

Table 7.    *Imagine the situation that one of your co-employees invites you repeatedly for a date and suggests interest in sexual intercourse. would you be ready:* (in %, the rest DNK)

| | yes | no |
|---|---|---|
| A.  to go to complain to the superior? | 9 | 77 |
| B.  to announce the case to the management of the enterprise? | 5 | 83 |
| C.  to lodge a formal complaint with the police? | 5 | 82 |
| D.  to look for help from co-workers, from your trade union? | 20 | 67 |
| E.  to intimate family members, friends? | 53 | 33 |
| F.  to take it as something not worth making fuss? | 50 | 29 |

The research confirms that managers at a lower level of management tend to underestimate the matter – 65% 'would not make fuss'. A stronger tendency to intimate family and friends can be found with young people and employees of small enterprises, generally rather women (65%) than men (40%). For women, the reaction of their superior is obviously of greater importance, 13% would complain.

Generally, the reaction to the mentioned situation can be assessed as sober, there prevails a tendency to a non-institutionalised solution without unnecessary fuss. On the other hand, the effort to avoid 'overworking of superiors' does not indicate a high degree of trust. However, it is valid here that in many cases the victim is in an uneasy situation and an excessive interest can further complicate the situation, there might be fear of revenge from the part of the offender or of so-called secondary victimisation (the reaction of one's environment). Because the possibilities of solving such problems by self-help have their limits, the manager must be able to master such situations in a sensitive and tactful way, without underestimating their importance. Even in a relatively liberal milieu a certain degree of prevention is justified.

## Respect for Authorities and the Law

In the following block of questions we are not so much interested in the opinions of people as regards the importance and ways of solving individual events as the *relation towards the management of the enterprise as a potential authority* or arbitrator. The management of enterprises would be looked to mainly in the case of thefts, the threatening of the environment is perceived in a milder way. The fact that the slight cheating of the customer would cause 'worries' to just less than one-half is rather typical. Relation to the client is in the current conditions still a weak point, although this is from the viewpoint of forming the culture of an enterprise without any doubt of key significance.

Table 8. *Even in other situations a person can look for the help of various people or institutions. At which level would you probably solve:* (in %)

|  | Contact the superior or the management of an enterprise | No fuss |
|---|---|---|
| 1. the loss of 500 Czech Crown from the purse at the work-place | 67 | 4 |
| 2. the cheating of another person (e.g. customer) out of about 100 CZK | 47 | 22 |
| 3. the case of threatening the environment by the action of an enterprise | 61 | 5 |
| 4. the loss of material or instruments to the value of about 5,000 CZK, for which – of course – you are not personally responsible | 70 | 5 |

Investigation of the culture of an enterprise cannot overlook the influence of the more general *moral climate in the society*. The willingness to respect the law is a basic condition to subdue nuisances and various criminal acts [Tyler 1990].

Table 9. *People have rather different opinions on how much it is important to respect the law, provisions of police etc. Indicate, your personal opinion (agreement or disagreement) with the following statements:*

|  | Agree (%) | | Index |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Definitely | Somewhat | 1-4 |
| A. people must respect the law even in the case that is does not correspond with what they themselves consider correct | 33 | 48 | 1,88 |
| B. the breaking of the law is seldom justifiable | 21 | 56 | 2,04 |
| C. it is difficult to break the law without losing self-esteem | 15 | 38 | 2,38 |
| D. for people like myself there exist only few reasons to respect the law | 3 | 8 | 3,37 |

Respondents declare a high degree of respect for the authority of the law, three-quarters would do so even in the case of a different subjective conviction. *Legitimacy* is mainly recognised, as regards moral justification or conscience things are a bit worse. Even in this field there are not such homogeneous opinions. It is interesting that a lower willingness to respect the law is manifested by supporters of the 'firm hand'. The political orientation of respondents also enters into it here: supporters of socialist orientation trust less the authorities and the law, but in the degree of 'non-respect' or the breaking of rules they are in agreement with liberals. The greatest respect for the law is characteristic for the conservatives. The importance of respect for the law is characteristic also for higher managers.

Women are characterised by a generally higher respect for the law. However, more clear-cut is the correlation with age, where conformity increases with age.

In some previous studies [Buriánek 1996] I formulated the hypothesis of a specific *'entrepreneurial pattern of behaviour'*, for example, in family relations. This analysis proved that this group is less compliant, that is to say it shows a stronger tendency to the breaking of laws or certain existing norms. In my opinion this confirms the significance of investigating deviations in the milieu of organisations and entrepreneurship generally.

**The Specifics of Industrial Enterprises**

Although the situation in the key branches of production can be considered worth paying special attention, the analyses did not prove specific differences in respondents representing industrial enterprises (they represented a sub-category of 376 respondents). Their characteristics varied rather in the zone of the average, while the source of significant deviations was more in other branches. For example, the combined category 'education, health care, state administration, security services' (the rough arbitrary grouping of branches followed the efforts to establish statistically comparable sub-categories) differed in many cases more expressively, of course, due to the different character of work and working conditions and also a different qualification structure (in average higher education), as well as representation of women. While in industry the share of men was 63%, in this category it was only 19%.

Consequently, it is not surprising that, for example, the share of experience with sexual harassment in industry is lower – several times 6%, once 5%. Deviation is here expressively bound to *opportunities*, considering the monitored phenomena there seem to be here more possibilities, nevertheless the shares of the marked deviations increase only in certain items. Compared with other categories, we can observe movements from the

category 'does not come into consideration' to the column 'exceptional'. Before passing to the main questions of frequency of contacts with nuisances and reactions to them, it must be remembered that certain specifics can also be represented by closer relations with immediate superiors. This can be documented by the statement that in case of the loss of money 53% would choose to contact a superior. Here we can consider a crystallisation of some specific patterns of behaviour connected with the character and organisation of work. However, it should be mentioned that lower trust in the management of organisations (index 2.9:2.75) can be the result of a greater 'distance' of management from ordinary workers.

In the sphere of the occurrence of individual negative phenomena the data differ in the degree of individual percentage (when we follow key categories 'often' or 'occasionally').

More distinct differences can be found in the items thefts and rule-breaking where industries are involved substantially. In no case can we arrive at the conclusion that the milieu of industrial organisations is more aggravated by risks of the occurrence of undesirable phenomena.

As far as the declared *reaction of 'public opinion'* has been monitored it can be said that the attitude mostly expressed is, slightly more tolerant around the fictitious point 2 ('more or less tolerated'). However, this non-expressive deviation finds its manifestation in taking first place among workers in industry on the scale of tolerance in the following items:

– mobying

– protection

– bribes and favours

– sexual harassment

This milieu is less tolerant to slandering compared with the others. On the other hand, the validity of data from the research is proved also by the fact that in the categories 'commerce, construction industry, transport' a larger share of conciliatory evaluation is included in items 'scheming with salaries' and 'cheating customers'.
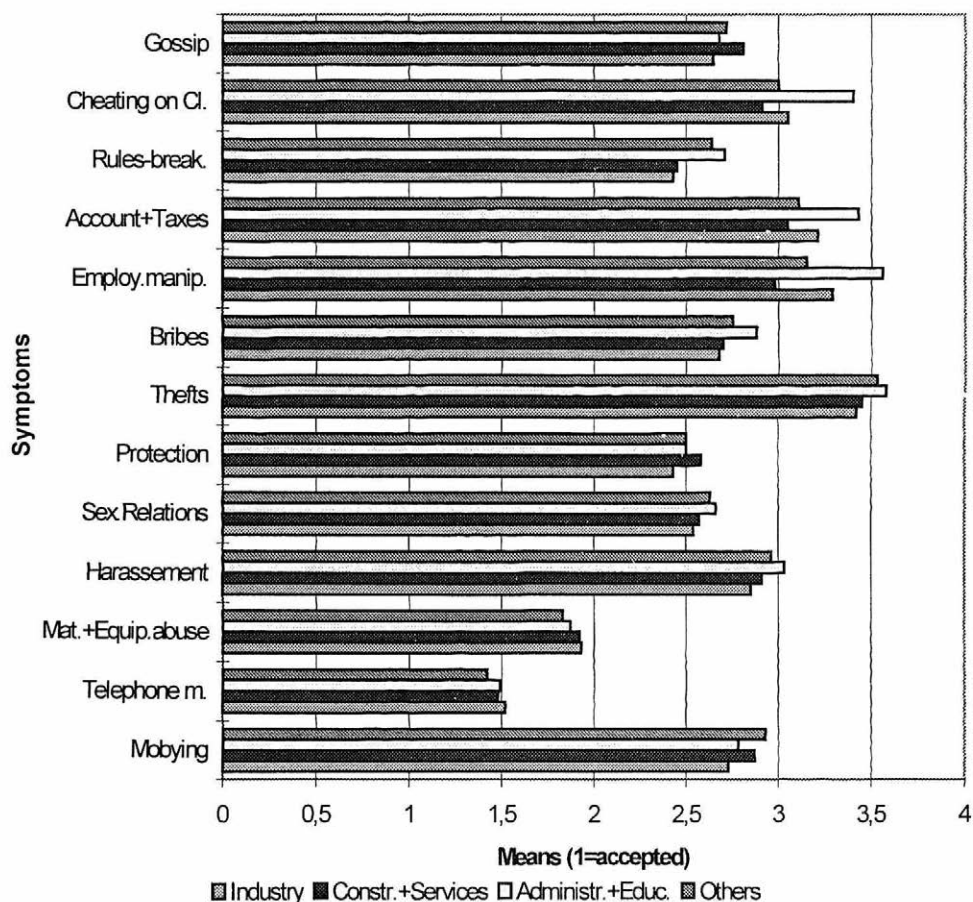
The mentioned graph shows the considerable homogeneity of the sample (in the mean values the chosen types of branches showed no distinct differences). In a certain way, it is the general impression which is more important: the curve in its saddle at telephoning designates the most accepted nuisance as well as the prevailing tendency to the rejection of the majority of other deviations (index values higher than 2.5). The effort to specify the position of industry unintentionally changes in a certain summarising balance of cultural-normative climate in the economically active population.

**Influence of Privatisation**

A sub-file of 829 respondents representing branches with a higher degree of variability of the monitored factor has been chosen for the analysis of the influence of the ownership sector; dramatic changes belong to the key parameters of social transformation. It concerns production branches and the sphere of transport and services. Privatisation, with some minor exceptions (part of the system of health care), did not really touch other sectors (state administration, education, security). The variable 'ownership sector' was transformed by collapsing the categories 'co-operatives' and municipal or communal

enterprises: the category 'others' is also left out, and the category 'foreign enterprise' is treated with extreme caution in view of its size.

Graph 1.     Elements of Deviance – Reactions/Attitudes by Branches



**Symptoms** (vertical axis)

Gossip, Cheating on Cl., Rules-break., Account+Taxes, Employ.manip., Bribes, Thefts, Protection, Sex Relations, Harassement, Mat.+Equip.abuse, Telephone m., Mobying

**Means (1=accepted)** (horizontal axis, scale 0 to 4)

▩ Industry  ■ Constr.+Services  ☐ Administr.+Educ.  ▨ Others

The results of cross-tabulations into four items which indicate elements of deviation are seen in Table 10. There are statistically significant differences especially due to the more expressive occurrence of the monitored 'soft deviation' in state enterprises.

Table 10.  Elements of Deviance by Sector/Ownership
(In columns percentage of 'often' + 'sometimes')

|  | Telephone abuse | Mobying | Material + Equip. abuse | Harassment | N of cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| State | 65 | 23 | 61 | 10 | 94 |
| Privatised | 60 | 17 | 46 | 7 | 314 |
| Private ownership | 45 | 8 | 45 | 2 | 66 |
| Private others | 56 | 10 | 38 | 4 | 250 |
| Community + co-operatives | 57 | 20 | 50 | 2 | 54 |
| Foreign | 59 | 21 | 45 | 3 | 29 |
| Total | 58 | 15 | 45 | 5 | 807 |

Contrary to this, positive reports on the state of 'their' organisations are presented by private owners: this is understandable since these are relatively small enterprises. A certain paradox appears in the item of harassment: while in the global description of the situation the respondents from state enterprises ascribe more importance to this phenomenon, their personal experience is lower (see Table 11). A certain puzzle remains the large share of reported harassment in foreign companies. But even here the small firms of former emigrants might be concerned: the power positions of foreign managers are usually rather strong.

Table 11.  Harassment Experience and Trust in Management by Ownership

|  | Harassed (%) | Trust in Management (% definitely+rather) | N of Cases | % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State | 8,5 | 39 | 95 | 11.5 |
| Privatised | 12.5 | 34 | 314 | 37.9 |
| Private ownership | 18.6 | 53 | 70 | 8.4 |
| Private others | 10.8 | 53 | 250 | 30.3 |
| Community + co-operatives | 18.5 | 32 | 54 | 6.5 |
| Foreign | 26.6 | 48 | 30 | 3.6 |
| Total | 13 | 43 | 813 | |

For the evaluation of reactions of the public to deviant elements only the first four items in the list of symptoms will be chosen. In both sets of items a scale of four points was used for the answers which were used for calculating average values of an attitude (1 means agreement, eventual acceptance of the phenomenon).

State enterprises appear usually more anomic, only in the item 'mistrust in co-workers' did foreign companies overtake them, in the item "stealing" communal enterprises or co-operatives are in the first place. If we overlook the support of the self image of entrepreneurs, the most positive climate remains in private firms. Opposing this, the other sectors are in rather rare agreement. This can be interpreted as consensus on values by a larger part of society.

Table 12.    Anomie and Reactions on Deviance by Ownership
Means on the scale of „acceptance" (1 = common, accepted, …, 4 = exceptional)

| | State | Privatised Private owner | | Private others Community + co-operatives | | Foreign | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rules compl. | 2.0 | 2.2 | 3.2 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Inequality | 2.1 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.4 |
| Protection | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| Sharp elbows | 2.4 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Mistrust | 2.4 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Stealing | 2.4 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| R-Mobying | 2.8 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.8 |
| R-Telephone | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| R-Mat.misuse | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| R-Harass | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.9 |

In the reactions to deviations, foreign firms do not come out well and the employees allegedly in most cases become reconciled with the occurrence of these phenomena (mobying, abuse of telephone, equipment). In the item of reactions to harassment the most reconciliatory attitude was indicated by respondents from privatised enterprises. The question, however, is whether it is a certain situational reaction to the executive transformation and changes of social climate, whether a distinct differentiation of power positions occurred and so on.

While some anachronisms of the disturbed social climate (or the phenomena of postponed change) seem to survive in state-owned enterprises, in the private enterprises we can observe some of the executed changes. Among others, changes in the style of management can be seen, as mentioned in the introduction. In both cases, it can be considered that the feeling of complexity of rules and regulations shows signs of a lower level of effectiveness in the management's activities. The emerging private sector is a bearer of positive trends and shows less symptoms of deviation. In the forming of organisational culture it is surprising that a positive example of foreign firms was not found, although it is not a representative sample. An externally tolerant atmosphere towards soft deviation, however, can be quite well illustrated by the above-described trend to tolerance and to a more open-minded attitude to 'nuisances'. What might be excluded is that it is only a foreshadowing of adaptation to life in a risk society.

**Conclusion**

Generally, the research confirmed that sexual harassment is not a distinct problem in Czech enterprises or organisations. On the other hand, the faith in managing staff in their ability to solve this is also not too high. *The abuse of equipment of the company for private purposes* (especially telephoning) is one of the main nuisances. While employees are relatively sensitive to *correctness of conduct within the organisation*, that is to say cases of corruption or favouring (or on the contrary mobying) the fate of customers is not so close to their hearts. The fact that part of the respondents do not work in organisations with actual customers increases the relative gravity of this deviant element of culture which also operates in a broader all-society context. In this respect, in the Czech Republic, characteristics of a rather 'eastern concept' of enterprise and trade occasionally survive.

While small enterprises show certain capabilities of normative self-regulation, the question remains as to how the forms of behaviour of entrepreneurs and owners will develop. Many of the monitored nuisances are in direct connection with the *quality of work of the managing staff.* However, many analyses suggest that the main weak points are at present on the agenda of personnel departments, especially when considering the development of human resources and the active forming of the culture of organisations. Of course, some erosive effects at the macro-level cannot be ignored in the normative structure of society as a whole. In brief, the development of corporate culture represents one of the weak points of transition where the nice paintwork has been marred some small but corroding spots.

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