



HAL
open science

Becoming the next Charlie Parker : Rewriting the role of passions in bureaucracies with Whiplash

Dirk Lindebaum, Courpasson David

► **To cite this version:**

Dirk Lindebaum, Courpasson David. Becoming the next Charlie Parker : Rewriting the role of passions in bureaucracies with Whiplash. *Academy of Management Review (The)*, 2019, 44 (1), 227-239 p. hal-02276728

HAL Id: hal-02276728

<https://hal.science/hal-02276728>

Submitted on 3 Sep 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Review

**BECOMING THE NEXT CHARLIE PARKER+: REWRITING THE
ROLE OF PASSIONS IN BUREAUCRACIES WITH WHIPLASH**

Journal:	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>
Manuscript ID	AMR-2017-0414-RE
Manuscript Type:	Review Essay-By Invitation Only
Theoretical Perspectives:	Bureaucracy, Commitment, Control, Power
Topic Areas:	
Abstract:	

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

**BECOMING THE NEXT CHARLIE PARKER[†]: REWRITING THE ROLE OF
PASSIONS IN BUREAUCRACIES WITH *WHIPLASH***

Dirk Lindebaum^{1*}

Cardiff Business School, UK

mail@dirklindebaum.EU

www.dirklindebaum.EU

David Courpasson²

EM Lyon, France

and

Cardiff Business School, UK

courpasson@em-lyon.com

Keywords: bureaucracy, passions, performance, violence, voluntary servitude

Cite as:

Lindebaum, D. & Courpasson, D. (2017) Becoming the next Charlie Parker: Rewriting the role of passions in bureaucracies with Whiplash. *Academy of Management Review*.

Please do not cite without permission until the essay has undergone copy-editing by the journal.

Notes and Acknowledgements

¹ Drummer –retired; ² Drummer – active

[†] In the movie, *Charlie Parker* is a frequently invoked name of a prodigy jazz musician who entered stardom after initial setbacks, much like the protagonist in the movie *Whiplash*. We use the reference to *Charlie Parker* a metaphor of a certain idea of the *best* possible musician, rather than an instance of *how* to become the best musician - either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble. For background on this story, see <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/whiplash-getting-jazz-right-movies> , accessed on 5th of June 2017.

* Both authors contributed equally to this essay.

We gratefully acknowledge the insightful comments provided by Rick Delbridge, Martin Kornberger and Deanna Geddes on earlier versions of this essay. The editor Jean Bartunek provided superb conceptual guidance throughout the revision process, and we wish to place an explicit ‘thank you’ on record for that. With his prior experience as a jazz drummer, her brother Tom provided insightful comments on the framing of the metaphor around Charlie Parker.

1
2 Despite previous work developing an understanding of organizational violence through
3 grounded theoretical frameworks (Clegg, 2006; Hearn, 1994), we still do not understand the
4 extent to which the conscious practice of violence in bureaucracies can influence subsequent
5 individual performance. Part of the problem is that the ‘talk about’ violence at work is so
6 heavily fraught with negative connotations that theoretical and empirical efforts about its
7 potential utility (see also Lindebaum, 2017), such as driving excellent performance at work,
8 are oftentimes suppressed. In consequence, accounts on the potential utility of violence at
9 work remain essentially under-explored within management and organization studies.
10
11 However, the fact that we do not talk much about violence in management and organization
12 studies cannot be taken as an indicator that it is *not* present, as classical management accounts
13 have shown (Terkel, 1974).
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

27 The lack of engagement with violence as a construct of theoretical and practical
28 relevance poses significant challenges for management and organization studies³. As Albrow
29 (1992) reminds us, bureaucratic organizations revolve around *emotional* politics; their central
30 purpose is to remove and suppress any unpredictable behavior that is an outcome of
31 passionate drivers, so as to build a safe and rational world devoid of anger, violence and love.
32 However, studies of bureaucracies show that it is an endless and hopeless quest for purity and
33 neutrality (Gouldner, 1954). Bureaucracy ends up shaping the parameters of human existence
34 in ways far more closely than anything Weber might have imagined. What is puzzling,
35 though, is that organizational scholarship often discounts the significance of the passionate
36 side of bureaucracies by systematically insisting upon its dispassionate and rule-driven side.
37
38 As Graeber (2012) puts it, “it’s almost as if the more we allow aspects of our everyday
39 existence to fall under the purview of bureaucratic regulations, the more everyone concerned
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54

55 ³ We want to be absolutely clear that we do not personally advocate physically violent workplaces. Workplaces
56 have often legal obligations – for very good reasons - to prevent physical harm for employees. At the same time,
57 we do not pretend that only because it is legally sanctioned or negatively ‘talked about’, that it does not occur at
58 work.
59
60

1
2 colludes to downplay the fact (perfectly obvious to those actually running the system) that all
3
4 of it ultimately depends on the threat of physical force” (p. 112). Thus, we see passions not as
5
6 abstract and free-floating entities, but as concrete interactional processes in which *physical*
7
8 violence, and the threat of violence⁴, can play a constitutive role (Confortini, 2006). In that
9
10 respect, despite prior influential work on the informal sides of bureaucracies (Gouldner,
11
12 1954), it remains obscure how bureaucracies can be something other than impersonal mazes
13
14 alienating and destroying human capacities. In other words, how can bureaucracies be
15
16 approached as places where individuals can achieve great things and cultivate a passion for
17
18 their work, *even if it involves violence?*
19
20
21

22
23 In this essay, we aim to analyze the role of passions when they are inscribed in
24
25 practices of violence, as drivers for exceptional performance, such as becoming the next
26
27 Charlie Parker (or researcher, employee or soldier). While we elaborate further upon this
28
29 later, we note here that this focus is relevant to management and organization studies for one
30
31 specific reason: it enables a better understanding of the dynamics around the conscious
32
33 practice of violence – and its passionate manifestations – in bureaucracies that can drive
34
35 subsequent individual and organizational performance. As we argue later, the conscious
36
37 practice of violence does not imply here that it is inflicted upon the victim against his/her
38
39 will, but is rather consciously accepted by the victim as a necessary experience toward
40
41 excellence. Our argument stands at an angle with the literature on work passion and
42
43 bureaucracies. For one thing, it contrasts with the view that work passion represents “a
44
45 psychological state characterized by the experience of *intense positive emotions*, an internal
46
47 drive to do the work, and a sense of meaningful connection toward one’s work” (Perttula &
48
49 Cardon, 2011:193, italics added). For another, it stands in direct contrast to the lingering
50
51
52
53
54

55
56 ⁴ We focus here on the direct observation of physical violence, admitting the possibilities that there is also
57
58 psychological violence at play in the movie upon which this essay focuses. It is, however, outside the scope of
59
60 this essay to give detailed attention to both due to the multifaceted manifestations of psychological violence,
such as public humiliation, bullying or invoking maladaptive guilt.

1
2 domination within organizational scholarship of a Weberian image of the passionless
3
4 bureaucracy. To this end, we derive inspiration from the award-winning movie *Whiplash*. We
5
6 do so because the movie offers rich and fresh insights into how violence and passion can help
7
8 explain - under certain circumstances - the everyday quest for excellent performance within
9
10 bureaucracies.
11

12 13 **AN OVERVIEW OF *WHIPLASH*** 14

15
16
17 The movie's storyline is situated in an elite jazz music college in the US, where some of the
18
19 best musical students are enmeshed in a violent game to become world-class musicians.

20
21 Central to the movie is the initially antagonistic relationship between the drumming prodigy
22
23 Andrew Neiman (played by Miles Teller) and his psychopathic Jazz music instructor Terence
24
25 Fletcher (played by J. K. Simmons). Being a recognized jazz drummer virtually means the
26
27 world to Andrew, and so he commences his musical 'apprenticeship' with great zeal and
28
29 discipline, putting in the 'extra effort' (i.e., extracurricular practice) to succeed. With such
30
31 keen eye on his drumming practice, he progressively struggles in the movie to maintain
32
33 healthy social relationships around him, be it with his father (who grows increasing unease
34
35 about his son's ambition) or his girl-friend (who he at some point considers a liability to his
36
37 ambition and dumps her). With his peers too, he does not connect much on the social level.
38
39 For instance, his ambition evokes scorn when another drummer is promoted to core drummer
40
41 instead of him, and the fact that he misplaced the notes of yet another drummer just before a
42
43 gig does not earn him the respect from his peers (especially not as in the latter case Andrew
44
45 actually benefits from the misplaced notes because he can play the piece by heart).
46
47
48
49

50
51 At this juncture, it is key to highlight that Andrew's passion goes beyond 'harmonious
52
53 passions', which refers to situations in which individuals voluntarily and willingly accept
54
55 work as personally and unconditionally meaningful (Vallerand et al., 2003). While Andrew
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 also exhibits harmonious passions, his craving for the teacher's approval⁵ also implies that
3
4 lines are crossed into what is described as obsessive passions, where individuals feel
5
6 compelled to engage in work to sustain their sense of social acceptance, self-esteem, or
7
8 feelings of excitement (Vallerand et al., 2003).
9

10
11 During an extracurricular practice session at the very beginning of the movie, he gets
12
13 a surprise visit from Terence Fletcher in the rehearsal room. Andrew instantly exhibits highly
14
15 reverent behavior toward Terence ("Yes, Sir!" or "Sorry, Sir . . ."), though it cannot be
16
17 established retrospectively whether that is the result of pure admiration and respect for the
18
19 teacher, or the recognition of Terence's terrifying and brutal 'teaching style' to elicit the best
20
21 skills from his students. As the movie progresses, however, it becomes clear that woe betides
22
23 any student whose performance falls below Terence's mighty expectations; Terence does not
24
25 hesitate to berate, humiliate, or physically assault students in light of such failures, (e.g.,
26
27 shouting accusingly at students "*are you sabotaging my band*"? in response to one instrument
28
29 being out of tune, or throwing chairs at Andrew). His approach to motivating students is
30
31 tellingly captured in a key quote of the movie with Terence speaking to Andrew in the Jazz
32
33 bar: "*There are no two words more harmful in the English language than 'good job'*"⁶.
34
35 Terence readily, and with no remorse, plays on the hopes (and fears) of his student to get
36
37 what is for him the ultimate goal (i.e., "*to push people [the students at the college], not*
38
39 *conducting!*"). In the pursuit of this goal, he "*will never apologize for how [he tries] to get the*
40
41 *next Charlie Parker*".
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 Terence plays mind games with Andrew (Travers, 2014). This works because Andrew
49
50 is exceptionally aspirational, if not obsessive in nurturing his own drum-beating talent and
51

52
53 ⁵ Consider, for instance, the final scene when Terence signals that approval to Andrew through a nod. We
54 discuss that scene later in our essay.

55 ⁶ This is a key scene of the movie. Andrew had been kicked out of the jazz conservatory for having physically
56 attacked Terence after a performance during which he could not play well due to injuries incurred minutes
57 before the gig as a result of a car crash. In turn, Andrew testifies, on condition of anonymity, that he suffered at
58 the hand of Terence's violent teaching style. This leads to Terence's dismissal from the music school. The
59 meeting in the bar was a chance meeting months after the dismissals described above.
60

1
2 status. He has a ‘personal stake’ in the task and institution at hand (cf. Lindebaum &
3
4 Ashkanasy, 2017 and ; Voronov & Weber, 2016), and dedicates his life and body to an
5
6 everyday exhausting training, relentlessly repeating the same gestures up to the point of
7
8 bleeding hands. He continuously looks for the additional technical detail that will make a
9
10 difference. There is blood on the drum kit - (Terence: “*Alternates, wipe the blood of my*
11
12 *drums set*”). Yet, Andrew’s aspiration is also his weakness; it renders him emotionally
13
14 susceptible to manipulation and attack. Thus, he enters a relationship characterized by
15
16 sustained violence inflicted upon him by his teacher. Terence is very resourceful in
17
18 challenging Andrew, needling him and setting him up to eventually knock him down again.
19
20 What looks perhaps on the surface as inspirational discipline and cunning provocation on the
21
22 part of Terence regularly crosses the line into outright violence.
23
24
25
26

27
28 A shallow watching of the movie would suggest that Andrew is forced into a
29
30 relationship of compulsory dependence and subjugation by Terence. But that is not the case.
31
32 For one thing, Terence sees the potential in Andrew to become the next *Charlie Parker*.
33
34 Andrew, in a sense, personifies for Terence the combination between passionate dedication to
35
36 work and subjugation to the harshness often characteristic of bureaucracies. Director Damien
37
38 Chazelle suggested in an interview that Terence has this “unabating. . . just . . . pure love for
39
40 the music”⁷. For another thing, the subjugation can only unfold as long as it is permitted *by*
41
42 Andrew, himself entirely focused on becoming the best. Therefore, Andrew holds
43
44 considerable power in his hands, which he at first does not grasp at all, only at a later stage in
45
46 the movie (see final section of this essay). Nevertheless, both are locked in claustrophobic
47
48 corporeal interaction and dependence at the beginning and middle of the movie, like two
49
50 boxers fighting in the ring. How this physical violence will end up in a miraculously creative
51
52 musical achievement, however, is the core topic of the movie.
53
54
55
56

57
58 ⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jan/12/whiplash-jk-simmons-miles-teller> , accessed on
59
60 5th of June 2017.

1
2 One of the most intriguing and bewildering insights of this movie is that the ‘best’
3
4 drumming is elicited through sustained violence in which Andrew seems to voluntarily co-
5
6 opt. Our contention is that the music school (i.e., as one manifestation of a bureaucracy)
7
8 permits the construal of violence as a condition for the passage into excellence, by
9
10 galvanizing the student’s passion to be the best and giving meaning to his disciplinary
11
12 subjugation. By the same token then, violence can be theorized as a creative and dynamic
13
14 relationship as much as a mere practice of univocal domination.
15
16

17
18 Before we proceed, we need to clarify that *Whiplash* is more than a piece of fiction. In
19
20 terms of its genesis, it is meaningfully informed by the first-hand experience of the Director
21
22 Damien Chazelle getting drum lessons himself⁸. We can, therefore, infer that there is a degree
23
24 of pragmatic validity reflected in the movie, described as a “criterion for establishing truth as
25
26 fulfilment in practice” (Sandberg, 2005: 54). Likewise, J. K. Simmons was also outspoken in
27
28 an interview that Terence’s violent practices are often observable amongst music instructors
29
30 and conductors⁹. And finally, one commentator argued that the character of Terence Fletcher
31
32 resembled strongly the legendary jazz drummer and bandleader Buddy Rich, who, in a secret
33
34 recoding, berated his musicians aboard their tour bus after a show: “*Everybody can hear your*
35
36 *f*****’ clams out there! If I hear one f*****’ clam from anybody, you’ve had it! One clam*
37
38 *and this whole f*****’ band is through!*”¹⁰. Accordingly, *Whiplash* has representational
39
40 character in terms of its depiction of violence as a means to breed champions in the context at
41
42 hand. In other words, the movie invites greater attention to the variety of effects violence can
43
44 have in the workplace given different contextual circumstances (Johns, 2017).
45
46
47
48

49
50 ⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/whiplash-20141009> , accessed on the 5th of June
51 2017.

52
53 ⁹ Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eEuds1Qtqk> , accessed on the 5th of June 2017. This
54 story also lends a degree of credibility to the movie, see <http://www.thepurchasebeat.com/purchase-gets-whiplash-conservatory-students-react-to-a-hard-hitting-film/> , retrieved on 19th of July 2017.
55

56
57 ¹⁰ Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jan/12/whiplash-jk-simmons-miles-teller> , accessed
58 on the 6th of January 2017.
59
60

1
2 In the remainder of this review essay, we first unpack in more detail the relevance of
3
4 *Whiplash* and the insights it generates to help advance our substantive understanding of
5
6 violence, passions and their consequences in bureaucracies. Second, we lay the conceptual
7
8 foundations of violence by explaining *what* it is, but also, perhaps more importantly, *how* it
9
10 can produce excellent performance at work. We should not shy away from studying violence
11
12 at work, especially but not limited to physical violence, as we have clarified already. Despite
13
14 the topic perhaps appearing as ‘undesirable’, the reality may be that, given the right
15
16 constellation of individuals at a specific moment in time and space, violence may be
17
18 observable and prove to have utility in these circumstances. Third, equipped with these
19
20 insights, we then map out the need to re-write the role of passions in bureaucracies, away
21
22 from the traditional view of bureaucracies as sober and dispassionate arenas, toward the view
23
24 of passions constituting the very life-blood without which excellent performance is an
25
26 ambitious yet often unfulfilled goal in certain circumstances. Finally, we turn to the final
27
28 scene in order to close the narrative around Andrew’s path toward becoming the next Charlie
29
30 Parker. We relate the movie’s final scene, in synthesizing fashion, to prior discussions in this
31
32 essay on violence, passion, and excellent performance within bureaucracies.
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43

44 **RELEVANCE OF *WHIPLASH* FOR MANAGEMENT RESEARCH AND PRACTISE**

45
46 We contend that *Whiplash* offers a unique window into better understanding the processes
47
48 that explain how violence can be – under certain circumstances - a productive force in the
49
50 pursuit of individual excellence in bureaucracies. Readers might object that the conservatory
51
52 may at first glance have nothing to do with what Weber described as an ‘administration’.
53
54
55 Indeed, the movie does not give details on its internal functioning. However, we propose that
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 the conservatory qualifies as a bureaucracy for three reasons. First, the centrality of technical
3
4 expertise that is illustrated by the obsessive repetition of exercises, and the necessity of
5
6 absolute perfection, shines through on numerous occasions in the movie. This speaks to what
7
8 Gabrielsson (2001) calls the ‘musical structure’, made of tempo, loudness, pitch, intervals,
9
10 and rhythms. The obsessively perfect musical structure of the elite orchestra driven by
11
12 Terence is a reflection, we argue, of the aspiration of bureaucracies of achieving tasks in the
13
14 most perfect and impersonal manner. Thus, technical expertise is key in sustaining the
15
16 musical ensemble. Second, what is central in Weberian thinking is the power of discipline.
17
18 The harshness of discipline is the heart of the efficiency observable within bureaucracies,
19
20 efficiency being define here as the capacity of the conservatory to produce some of the best
21
22 jazz musicians. To be among them, students must be able to keep the right tempo, be on time,
23
24 obey the teachers’ orders, and relentlessly repeat the same gestures to guarantee the perfect
25
26 performance. And third, a central ingredient that permits us to treat bureaucracy as a core
27
28 phenomenon in our essay is the legitimacy of authority (Gouldner, 1954). The movie is
29
30 largely illustrative of the legitimacy of Terence (the bureaucrat in this case) as asserting the
31
32 organizational and institutional right to apply any method or rule that permits the
33
34 achievement of the collective enterprise (i.e., producing the best musicians for the sake of the
35
36 best ensemble). Combining these three aspects, we believe the conservatory context and its
37
38 effects on the students’ ensemble is a clear instance of the power and discipline that
39
40 characterize bureaucracies. The remainder of our essay should be read with this explanation
41
42 in mind.
43
44
45
46
47
48

49
50 Having clarified why we consider the jazz conservatory a bureaucracy, we propose
51
52 that *Whiplash* affords an analysis of a specific way of channeling energies toward excellent
53
54 performance that has been neglected so far by management and organization studies. In that
55
56 respect, *Whiplash* helps us shed fresh lights on the literature on bureaucracies in two
57
58
59
60

1
2 significant ways. First, it shows how the everyday practice of violence at work can drive
3
4 learning and excellent performance. To this end, the movie partly connects with existing
5
6 studies on brutal bosses (Hornstein, 1996)¹¹ and willing victims (Lipman-Blumen, 2005).
7
8 Terence's brutality seems gratuitous, as it manifests itself when he throws a chair at Andrew,
9
10 or indeed when he slaps him multiple times in the face because he fails to play the correct
11
12 tempo. On the other hand, Andrew does not resist the sustained physical violence inflicted by
13
14 Terence throughout much of the movie, because he knows that it is his ordeal that he has to
15
16 live through courageously if he wants to become the next *Charlie Parker*. Put differently,
17
18 *Whiplash* alerts us to the presence of an under-exposed - yet vitally important - phenomenon
19
20 that we can observe in many aspects of management research and practice, namely, that of
21
22 voluntary servitude. It expresses the fact that any form of influence or domination, no matter
23
24 how ruthless or despotic, rests on the willingness of the majority of the people (or specific
25
26 individuals, as in the case of Andrew). This consent is not a natural production, but is
27
28 engineered and carefully supported by astute propaganda and the mystique of power (de la
29
30 Boétie, 1975/2008). The potency of voluntary servitude in informing management research is
31
32 such that it can explain individual aspirations for excellent performance in ways often
33
34 neglected in this discipline. In other words, we argue that voluntary servitude is a concept
35
36 that can help better explain certain surprising reasons for accepting violent conduct of
37
38 individuals with power and status beyond the immediate objection that subjugation may be
39
40 unconsciously internalized over time.
41
42
43
44
45

46
47 *Whiplash* offers a fascinating story through which voluntary servitude comes to light
48
49 in a concrete organizational context, such as high-commitment educational settings (whether
50
51 a music, art, business school or the military). Voluntary servitude can thus be enlisted as a
52
53

54
55 ¹¹ We also note that José Mourinho, coach of Manchester United, tends to develop a "politics of injury, of
56
57 capacity and human will" for the sake of "winning at all costs" (Ronay, 2016). The article suggests a
58
59 conditioning of players to accept a kind of athletic masochism, consisting of playing despite (or because) of
60
injury.

1
2 means aiding bureaucracies to strive for more efficient means to breed champions (e.g.,
3
4 doctoral students or early career researchers), thereby enlarging the organization's reputation.
5
6 Thus, the role of voluntary servitude within bureaucratic organizations in shaping the
7
8 learning process (and subsequent excellence) manifests itself, underlining prior studies
9
10 arguing that "greater attention [should] be given to the forms of social interaction and the
11
12 context in which learning takes place" (Cajiao & Burke, 2016: 509). Shedding light on the
13
14 performative interaction between brutal bosses and willing victims, *Whiplash* shows how
15
16 violence can be fully inscribed in the socialization of how individuals (with varying roles,
17
18 such as teacher or student) fit into existing power structures that serve the interests of elite
19
20 teachers and/or organizations, as well as of those students who are capable of 'making it'. If
21
22 this is embraced by students, it helps illustrate how students (as willing victims) sacrifice
23
24 their dignity and wellness in the pursuit of lofty ambitions. It also suggests that this
25
26 apparently submissive behavior is inscribed in the very functioning of the whole
27
28 organization, thereby linking violence to the very efficiency of the school's curricula.
29
30
31
32
33

34 Second, *Whiplash* permits a new reading of how passions influence the efficient
35
36 reproduction of bureaucracies (here, the music college). These are usually analyzed as power
37
38 systems that tone down, and even largely undermine, passion¹². Indeed, the music college
39
40 confirms the Weberian thesis according to which bureaucracies are terrific machines to
41
42 produce efficiency (i) through administration based on technical expertise and (ii)
43
44 administration based on discipline (Gouldner, 1954). While both feature prominently in
45
46 *Whiplash*¹³, we note the intriguing nexus of technical competence, harsh discipline and
47
48 detailed guidance from the teacher with how Andrew's passion pushes him to voluntarily
49
50
51
52

53 ¹² For a powerful counter-perspective, see de Tocqueville (1889/2002) and Albrow (1992).

54 ¹³ For instance, Terence cements his authority through technical expertise by being able to detect a single out-of-
55
56 tune instrument in the whole jazz band, or being able to detect the finest nuances between 'dragging' or
57
58 'rushing' the tempo on the drum. Likewise, Terence's explicit expectation for rigorous discipline shines through
59
60 on numerous occasions in the movie (e.g., "If you want the f***** part, earn it!"), or when he summons Andy
to a 6am individual practice session (at which he himself does not show up).

1
2 submit to the authority of Terence. In consequence, *Whiplash* shows that Andrew's passage
3
4 to excellence is not accomplished in a dispassionate and cold-blooded world of discipline and
5
6 rules. On the contrary, the efficiency of the jazz conservatory rests upon carnal and emotion-
7
8 laden interactions that shape everyday life at work. Seen in this light, bureaucracies appear as
9
10 largely driven by passions, contrary to the still dominant Weberian vulgate. The movie
11
12 indeed reveals that an elite bureaucracy, where technical expertise and discipline are central,
13
14 also encompasses a variety of passionate and exceptional interpersonal encounters. For
15
16 instance, when Andrew is seemingly not performing according to Terence's high standards
17
18 during a band rehearsal (Terence's discontent is expressed through a tirade of insults),
19
20 Terence eventually asks Andrew "*Are you upset?*", to which Andrew replies "*Yes*", to which
21
22 Terence in turn responds "*LOUDER!*", to then have the shattered Andrew reply "*YES!*".
23
24 Thus, passions help us speak about bureaucracies (such as schools or the military) in a wider
25
26 context, including the possibility that extraordinary performance can be produced by
27
28 phenomena that habitually carry 'negative' connotations (see Lindebaum, Jordan, & Morris,
29
30 2016; Smith, 2007 for what this can imply in the military context). The absence of passion, or
31
32 the analysis of passion as a problem for management because it complicates control over
33
34 individual motives to engage or disengage, is why theorists often cast bureaucracies as
35
36 dehumanizing places, cultivating thoughtless rule-following that is contradicting individuals'
37
38 taking of responsibility for what they do (see e.g., Fromm, 1941/2011). *Whiplash* suggests
39
40 that it might be more complex than that.
41
42
43
44
45

46 47 **THE FABRIC OF PRODUCTIVE VIOLENCE**

48
49 According to Corbin (1976), violence is both a mental and physical phenomenon, albeit as
50
51 noted before we focus here upon the physical dimension only. While mentally it involves a
52
53 violation of identity, physically it involves the use of force to harm or destroy objects or
54
55 persons.
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 Violence is often part of the abusive practices of ‘brutal bosses’ (Hornstein, 1996 - or
3
4 leaders, mentors, coaches, or doctoral supervisors). Yet, the interaction they have with their
5
6 ‘willing victims’ (Lipman-Blumen, 2005) has received relatively scant attention in research
7
8 and practice in management. Indeed, notions of the “idealized image of leaders who
9
10 transform through inspiration, passion and love” (Krantz, 2006, p. 236) remain prevalent
11
12 (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004). However, violence finds manifestations, for
13
14 instance, in the literature on destructive leadership suggesting how violent acts can harm
15
16 others, create ethical failures and bad decision-making (Tierney & Tepper, 2007).
17
18
19

20
21 *Whiplash* prompts us to contend that violence can be produced by a conscious strategy
22
23 of creating shared meanings necessitating the use of physical violence by one party, and the
24
25 acceptance of physical suffering by another. Overall, most research presents violence as a
26
27 result of organizational dysfunctions or deviance (for background, see Geddes & Callister,
28
29 2007). This view comes from the inability of research to politicize violence; that is, to
30
31 appreciate it as inscribed in specific relationships of domination that correspond to clear
32
33 objectives, rather than to unconscious or unwanted strategies. Moreover, two versions of
34
35 violence need to be distinguished: (i) *progressive* violence for freedom, meaning that
36
37 violence can be curative because “liberation and dignity cannot be recovered unless the
38
39 colonized get involved in violent performances” (Kebede, 2001: 539) and (ii) *repressive*
40
41 violence for domination, being targeted at ‘breaking down’ the oppressed because it sustains
42
43 the power to dominate a territory and the people who inhabit it (Frazer & Hutchings, 2008;
44
45 Merleau-Ponty, 1969), although research mostly focuses upon the second form. The
46
47 challenge is rather to understand how they concretely combine in specific relationships to
48
49 allow violent practices to be productive, not only destructive. In other words, violence can be
50
51 ‘educated’ (Fanon, 1961/2001); that is to say, used for curative goals, so that it becomes a
52
53 practice that is recognized by actors as the potential source of a creative order. Seen in this
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 light, violence can become strategic and positively instrumental (Fanon, 1961/2001) or
3 embodied in a creative way. *Whiplash* clearly shows how violence is a conscious process
4 involving physical bodies, while remaining inscribed in social encounters (Collins, 2013).
5
6 Terence hurts his students, and they in turn live intense moments that will be remembered
7 because it hurts them deeply, creating powerful memories that will make them forget the
8 feeling of submission to violent practices, or that will give sense to this very submission. The
9 creativity of students is partly produced by the intensity of their experience of being both
10 brutalized and pushed upward at the same time.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19

20
21 The initial relationship between Andrew and Terence is one of close physical
22 proximity, intimidation, brute force, as well as of social acknowledgement of status and
23 recognition of a disequilibrium. Terence is powerful because Andrew admits and accepts that
24 he is a great teacher and an accomplished conductor. Terence knows that Andrew wants to
25 learn, and wants to learn *faster and better*. On that, their relationship thrives because of their
26 fundamental agreement on the purpose and circumstances of their violent relationship.
27 Therefore, violence here is both an instrument for achieving a goal, and an energy *sui generis*
28 at the level of the individual. This energy is contained in every gesture and glance of Terence
29 (e.g., his fist movements when he signals the band to stop playing), as well as in Andrew's
30 everyday practice regime. It operates with physical laws that provoke a reaction that can be
31 directed *inwardly* and self-destructively (e.g., when Andrew reaches his corporeal limits), or
32 *productively* against the other party (i.e., when Andrew manages to overcome Terence's
33 power by showing him that Andrew actually *is* the new *Charlie Parker*). It follows that the
34 productive and destructive characters of violence can often work in tandem and coexist
35 (Fanon, 1961/2001).
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52

53
54 Further to this, Krohn-Hansen (1994, p. 370) asserts that "violence is a way to social
55 advancement characterized by the fact that the others - victims and witnesses - are by
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 definition unwilling others". *Whiplash* suggests that it is not always the case. The possible
3
4 unwillingness of Andrew to submit his destiny to the caprices of a violent teacher is largely
5
6 offset by the irreducible power of his ambition. Confident that his actions possess a veneer of
7
8 legitimacy because students are all striving to be the best in their musical practice, Terence
9
10 Fletcher himself is able - with certain equanimity - to pursue his ambitions by performing
11
12 violently. Seeing his acts as intentional performances aiming to push students to go beyond
13
14 their limits, leads us to interpret violence as co-creation of meaning between actors (i.e.,
15
16 leaders and followers, or teachers and students). This meaning creates a common basis for
17
18 certain understandings that are not graspable by common sense, or by individuals that are
19
20 outside of this relationship (i.e., any third party to the situation, see also Corbin, 1976). We
21
22 suspect that there might be some readers who will probably struggle to relate to the Andrew's
23
24 ambition to become the world's best drummer vis-à-vis the violent treatment he experiences
25
26 from Terence.
27
28
29
30

31
32 The movie displays a relentless succession of instances of physical violence,
33
34 providing a focal point around which to discuss how destructive individual behavior (i.e., that
35
36 of Terence) can explain the creative extra-efforts that followers (or mentees, students or
37
38 soldiers) are capable to devote because they *themselves* legitimize violence as a relevant
39
40 means to achieve highly ambitious goals.
41
42

43
44 We must also integrate the complexity and contradictions that beset the theatrical
45
46 performance that Terence puts up; speaking in the name of a collective vision (i.e., what
47
48 renders the conservatory not just a conservatory but an *elite* conservatory) of what is a good
49
50 musician, he manages to impose *de facto* the definition of the musical activity that best suits
51
52 him. Violence is, therefore, a strategy that aims at imposing his truth as the truth of the
53
54 objective relationships between musicians and between students and teachers in a given elite
55
56 school where every student (and teacher) should be gripped with a fury to win and become
57
58
59
60

1
2 the best. In order to make things come ‘true’, the master is authorized to speak with authority,
3
4 to violently treat some chosen students (Terence: “*I didn’t know they allow f***** retards*
5
6 *into the school!*”), thus enforcing his moral and legitimate discourse (Bourdieu & Wacquant,
7
8 1992). Here, the movie demonstrates that violence has actual effects on the efforts deployed
9
10 by followers or students to work harder and better, not only because they are afraid, but also
11
12 because they accept willingly to be part of a political economy of their corporation, school, or
13
14 occupation. They should even be proud to be part of this economy, whatever that takes in
15
16 terms of servitude. This enables us to understand how it is possible that violence can become
17
18 a productive force at work.
19
20

21
22 To be more specific, the combination of repressive and progressive violence that the
23
24 movie displays shows that the teacher/student relationship that is the central focus of
25
26 *Whiplash* is not made of exclusive servitude but of *voluntary* servitude (Abensour, 2011).
27
28 The movie shows practices of physical violence that seems to be acknowledged by Andrew
29
30 as part of a necessary process to reach the summit. This manifests itself in the movie when,
31
32 for instance, Andrew returns to the drum kit, with the flame of passion still flickering for the
33
34 drumming, having abandoned it after a string of violent events (e.g., Terence throwing a chair
35
36 at him and slapping him in the face). He is, therefore, voluntarily submitting himself to
37
38 Terence, seemingly knowing that this very submission involves facing physical violence.
39
40 However, he *gives* his submission to Terence, allowing the possibility of exercising this sort
41
42 of power. This radical view raises not only the question of violence, but also the most
43
44 fundamental question of political theory, namely, why do people *desire* their own
45
46 domination? Deleuze and Guattari (2004) have explored the emergence of politics as relying
47
48 not so much on violent domination and capture *per se*, but also on self-domination of
49
50 individuals at the level of their own desire. Terence is intoxicated by his own power (e.g.,
51
52 Terence speaking to Andrew in the opening scene: “*Do you know who I am?*”). However,
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 simultaneously the obedience of Andrew seems to come easily, almost naturally, and for
3
4 some time in the movie, no signs of resistance against Terence's authority are visible. This
5
6 would require the patient elaboration of practices of freedom, or 'politics of refusal'
7
8 (Newman, 2010) that Andrew does not have on his agenda. As yet, he is fully involved in a
9
10 hand-to-hand combat with his drum kit - and with his ambition. At first, there is no desire for
11
12 autonomy on the part of Andrew, nor a need to overcome voluntary subjection to power. In a
13
14 sense, he *instrumentalizes* his teacher to reach his goal and does not see him only as a carrier
15
16 of brutality, but as a proper catalyst to reach the summit.
17
18

19
20
21 The hypothesis of voluntary servitude has never ceased to haunt modern political
22
23 philosophy (Abensour, 2011). The very idea that individuals could decide to withdraw from
24
25 politics and restrain or give up their power to resist oppression has been the object of
26
27 numerous debates (see, e.g., Fromm, 1981/2010). Servitude means privation of liberty,
28
29 "proceeding from a cause external to the person who endures subjection" (Abensour, 2011:
30
31 332). Voluntary servitude points to a state of no liberty, a subjection in which the cause of
32
33 'slavery'¹⁴ is not

34
35
36 external but internal, as it is the subject him/herself who voluntarily submits to the master,
37
38 and becomes the author of his/her own servitude through his or her own activity. Subjects are
39
40 the very authors of the tyranny:
41
42

43
44 *"It is therefore the inhabitants themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about, their*
45 *own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude.*
46 *A people enslaves itself, cuts its own throat, when, having a choice between being*
47 *vassals and being free men, it deserts its liberties and takes on the yoke, gives*
48

49
50
51 ¹⁴ The term 'slavery' is used by De la Boétie (1975/2008), who was born in the Périgord region of southwest
52 France in 1530 to an aristocratic family. Yet, a major distinction must be made in terms of how de la Boétie
53 used the terms 'slaves' in the respective socio-cultural context, and how we apply it in the context of our essay.
54 Slaves, even in the context of de la Boétie writing, were unlikely to aspire to become world class at something.
55 In the absence of any human dignity, they were often repressed through outright physical violence on the part of
56 their masters or owners. Andrew, while also being exposed to physical violence by Terence, is a slave to *his*
57 *own* ambition. He knows that it can only be realized through the violent treatment of Terence, his music teacher
58 and master.
59
60

1
2 consent to its own misery, or, rather, apparently welcomes it". (de la Boétie,
3 1975/2008: 44)
4

5 With this expression of chosen subjection, one begins to reach what is the most incredible in
6 the human species, what Abensour (2011) calls the 'mysteries of domination'. De la Boétie
7 (1975/2008) explores the subjective bond which ties us to the power that dominates us, which
8 enthralls and seduces, blinds and mesmerizes us. Servitude, then, can be a condition of our
9 own making, except in situations where pure force is exercised, which helps to understand
10 power relationships as practices of self-domination.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

19 According to de la Boétie (1975/2008), far from being assigned to the passive role of
20 accepting the domination without any counter gesture, the 'slaves' participate in it which
21 means that they are its active artisans. Slaves in this sense are never deceived, nor
22 fundamentally abused, but willing. Instead of the idea that consent is 'manufactured' from
23 exogenous forces, acceptance receives active, even fanatical, support. For de la Boétie
24 (1975/2008), humans are made subservient through affects like fascination, through adoration
25 of 'the name of one man alone', by the virtue of someone being 'The One', either being the
26 king, the dictator or the master; subjection is produced by the appearances created around an
27 individual who seems to fulfill the subordinates' or followers desires¹⁵. In *Whiplash*, we
28 observe the dual construction of Terence as both "The One" and as the instrument for
29 Andrew to become the best. Genuine respect and fear, which allows the corporeal dimension
30 of violence to be expressed, goes hand in hand with strategy which allows the instrumental
31 dimension of violence to be expressed.
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 The result of this conception is that the very question of politics of interpersonal
49 relationships at work is less a matter of turning toward the rulers, leaders, or managers and
50 sifting through their system of domination, but more a matter of the *ruled* and the ways they
51 choose to participate in their own subjugation. Put differently, *Whiplash* alerts management
52
53
54
55
56

57
58 ¹⁵ We do see parallels of this argument in relation to what seems to be unfolding in today's US politics.
59
60

1
2 researchers to examine interpersonal relationships through the practices of strategic
3 obedience rather than through the practices of domination. The movie is an interesting
4 instance of that theoretical reversal. It shows a fundamentally self-negating activity which
5 also suggests that it is up to Andrew to put an end to his self-sacrifice, to the self-destructive
6 relationship that he seems to accept for most parts of the movie. This encourages us to think
7 that the key to freedom is in the hands of the people, rather than in any decision from the
8 master to untie the chains of subordinates. In a way, a careful reading of de la Boétie
9 (1975/2008) suggests that there is a central complication in any relationship of power: the
10 individual's will to be free is always surpassed by a will to live in subordination for assumed
11 reasons. This conundrum is central to the political understanding of violence. That is, it helps
12 grasp violence as being permitted by the priorities of individuals to their goals as they see
13 them at a given moment – as opposed to concerns over their dignity or emancipation.
14 Subjection is grounded on the implicit acknowledgment of the rationality and efficiency of
15 the teaching method, a kind of universal recognition that without self-sacrifice and suffering,
16 no true ambition can be achieved. Submission to violent authority does not appear to go
17 against one's self. It is not an assault against reason, nor even a deliberate masochist self-
18 destruction, but rather a way of gaining access - through sacrifice and rational acceptance - to
19 the very world of the teacher, to the possibility of becoming the teacher, of becoming *better*
20 *than him*.

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 **REWRITING THE ROLE OF PASSIONS IN BUREAUCRACIES**

49
50 Weber himself provides some solutions to the conundrum expressed in this essay around the
51 role of violence in the production of efficient bureaucracies. On the one hand, he says that
52
53 *“bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is ‘dehumanized’, the more completely*
54
55 *it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal,*
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 *irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation*" (Weber, 1922/1978: 975).
3
4 Bureaucracy is, therefore, for him a form of organization that requires formalistic
5
6 impersonality: "*sine ira et studio*, without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or
7
8 enthusiasm . . . Everyone is subject to formal equality of treatment; that is everyone in the
9
10 same empirical situation" (Weber, 1922/1978: 225). Since then, most attempts of
11
12 organizational scholarship sought to discuss the difficulties of a dialectic between human
13
14 passions and administrative/organizational regulations. Later, Jaques' (1976) general theory
15
16 of bureaucracy posited "an intensely human situation, founded upon a psychologically and
17
18 emotionally subtle relationship", a situation to be managed properly because otherwise, a
19
20 "potential source of energy for social violence" could arise, which was considered as a
21
22 problem (pp. 66-68). Emotional neutrality, or the 'silence of feelings' (Albrow, 1992) was
23
24 long considered as a condition of efficiency and a hallmark within organization theory,
25
26 although the sociology of emotions (Fineman, 1993; Hochschild, 1983) has permeated the
27
28 rationalistic bulwark of most research in organizations over the last decades.
29
30
31
32
33

34 However, what is related to passionate relationships or interactions is still often
35
36 considered as deviance, or pathological irrationality. Most subsequent writers on bureaucracy
37
38 have insisted upon the faceless official as the central figure of the bureaucratic machinery
39
40 (Du Gay, 2000). This essay shows such characterizations can be misleading because
41
42 bureaucracies are inhabited by individuals whose everyday encounters essentially involve
43
44 vital and passionate experiences. Weber himself was mostly interested in the relations
45
46 between rationality and irrationality (Albrow, 1992). He did not exclude enthusiasm, or
47
48 unreserved dedication to a cause or an exceptional achievement, as possible forms of
49
50 commitment in bureaucracies, even though he simultaneously crafted a political and
51
52 administrative pattern that has been interpreted and translated many times as a counter-
53
54 creative cage. To be sure, the movement of de-rationalization of organizations (and the
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 individuals that make up organizations) started early in the 1980s, when a ‘magical’ rhetoric
3
4 of success emerged that would be theorized as being rooted in values, love and empathy.
5
6 What was then celebrated, among others by Peters and Austin (1986: 292), was
7
8 “commitment, passion, zest, energy, care, love and enthusiasm”, all affective states that can
9
10 be found in *Whiplash*, counterbalanced by the expression of sheer violence. The significance
11
12 of human passion in organizations was made legitimate in post-Weberian scholarship
13
14 (Albrow, 1992). A closer reading of Weber would have revealed that in his work on *Science*
15
16 *as a Vocation*, he already largely insisted upon the processes of frenzy, inspiration and
17
18 passionate devotion which characterized scientific work, in a similar way as artistic work
19
20 (Weber, 1921/1946). He made possible the framing of passions and rules as combinable
21
22 forces, instead of opposing the repressive and drying energy of administrative logics to the
23
24 progressive and creative energy of entrepreneurs (Du Gay, 2000).
25
26
27
28

29
30 As we suggested before, *Whiplash* offers rich and fresh insights into how violence and
31
32 passion can be integral to the everyday functioning of bureaucracies. It provides a nuanced
33
34 understanding of how an artist, however locked in a relation of subordination, disciplining
35
36 himself and being disciplined by the power of his master, unlocks enough creative energy to
37
38 navigate the seemingly rigid instrumental, logical and rational aspects of the discipline that
39
40 often penetrates bureaucracies. Progressing through violence engages Andrew in a broader
41
42 repertoire of sensory experiences; he can feel this experience in the corporeal perturbations
43
44 that he is living (hurting himself, bleeding, crying...), being at one with his drumkit and his
45
46 sticks. Far from minimizing creativity, violence acts here as a creative trigger, because it
47
48 pushes Andrew’s sensorial experience and fusion with his instrument.
49
50

51
52 In this practice, we see discipline as being an obvious main component, as in any
53
54 bureaucracy. Weber saw discipline - for him a necessary characteristic of bureaucracy and a
55
56 simple implicate of hierarchy - as arising from military discipline, or “the womb of discipline
57
58
59
60

1
2 in general”. He says that bureaucracy itself is “the most rational child of discipline” (Weber,
3
4 1922/1978: 642), and that organizations are “great educators in discipline” (p. 647). But
5
6 Merton (1952: 365) demonstrated that “discipline can be effective only if the ideal patterns
7
8 are buttressed by strong sentiments which entail devotion to one’s duties (...) The efficiency
9
10 of social structure depends ultimately on infusing group participants with appropriate
11
12 attitudes and sentiments”. *Whiplash* illustrates how everyday human feelings and vitality can
13
14 be compatible with the discipline that permeates bureaucracies.
15
16

17 18 19 THE FINAL SCENE AND CONCLUSION

20
21 Having woven together key features of *Whiplash* with the literatures on violence,
22
23 passions, and bureaucracies, we can now turn to the final scene. Here, it manifests itself that
24
25 the world-class solo performed by Andrew confirms that Terence’s model of learning through
26
27 productive violence – and its passionate manifestations – can ultimately lead to excellent
28
29 performance in situations when a student appears initially as a willing victim. As the final
30
31 scene underscores, however, Andrew makes the passage from willing victim to a willing
32
33 victor, thus indicating a fundamental reversal of the teacher-student relationship.
34
35

36
37 Consistent with prior ‘needling’ tactics, Andrew had left the stage following the
38
39 deliberate humiliation by Terence in front of a high-profile audience, including talent scouts.
40
41 It is worth recalling that Andrew testified against Terence on condition of anonymity, but
42
43 Terence reveals to Andrew that he knows that it was him who testified against him. So for
44
45 Terence, this was a moment of revenge that is best served cold, the ultimate way to exercise
46
47 revenge in such a way that would bury Andrew’s hope and ambitions for good. He does so by
48
49 leading the band with a piece unfamiliar to Andrew, thereby locating the fault of the failed
50
51 performance exclusively in the hands of Andrew.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 Having left the stage, Andrew is being hugged and consoled by his father, who awaits
3
4 him backstage ready to play the role of the compassionate father. Yet, before he can fully
5
6 play that role, the viewer witnesses a quite discernable metaphorical ‘click’, a release of utter
7
8 resolution and conviction that he can show Terence that he is, after all, the next *Charlie*
9
10 *Parker*. Returning to the stage, Andrew sheds the chains of repression, and literally takes
11
12 charge of the situation by starting to provide the rhythm for the band to cue in – against the
13
14 will of the dismayed-looking and fuming Terence (whose first visceral reaction is “*I’m gonna*
15
16 *gouge out your mother***** eyes*”). As Terence bends over the drum to spit out these
17
18 words, Andrew gives him a slight superior smile and hits the cymbals (which, in turn, hit
19
20 Terence’s face). *Now Andrew inflicts physical violence on Terence*, if only moderately so
21
22 compared to the violence he suffered at the hand of Terence. Terence continues to ask
23
24 “*Andrew, what you are doing?*” to which Andrew astonishingly replies “*I’ll cue you!*”. What
25
26 follows is an extraordinary drum performance – to the point of blood drops being sprinkled
27
28 all over the drum kit. Intriguingly, Terence willingly assumes the role of a passive mentor
29
30 that has relinquished control over his subject, one he previously controlled through violence.
31
32 For Andrew, the ensuing drum solo marks a sudden shedding of all the repression he ever
33
34 experienced under Terence’s rule. On finishing the solo, Terence’s face signals a smiling
35
36 expression of relief and approval, and it is that smile that has a highly cathartic effect on
37
38 Andrew. All that Andrew ever dreamed of, all that physical hardship that he endured, not
39
40 only makes sense now, but, perhaps more importantly, breaks the relationship of voluntary
41
42 servitude and renders Andrew emancipated from the influence of Terence. He has attained his
43
44 cherished goal to become a world-class drummer.
45
46
47
48
49
50

51
52 Early on in our essay we have highlighted that an analysis of *Whiplash* is relevant to
53
54 management and organization studies for at least two reasons. First, the movie shows how the
55
56 everyday practice of violence at work can drive learning and excellent performance. And
57
58
59
60

1
2 second, *Whiplash* permits a new reading of how passions influence the production of the
3 efficiency of bureaucracies. Against this backdrop, the final scene offers a powerful occasion
4 to examine the productive relationship between the exaltation of passions and the discipline
5 of bureaucracy. Passionate experiences and instrumental rationalities intermingle to inform
6 both the efficient organization (because of the success of a teacher), and the individual
7 exceptional performance of one of its students.
8
9

10
11
12
13
14
15
16 However, this creates a conundrum; we see people suffering on the one hand, while
17 acknowledging on the other hand that the harshness of discipline, the choice of willing
18 obedience and their unalterable ambition have produced something they could not even
19 imagine. The very violence of everyday encounters at work suggests once again that their
20 experience in this bureaucracy is fundamentally *human*. Thus, it shows that we are more than
21 rule followers, and that we can avoid institutions draining our agency of its richness and
22 color. Andrew's eventual victory suggests that we have not yet become completely
23 bureaucratized through discipline and honing of technical expertise (Gouldner, 1954),
24 precisely because passions are central in the shaping of success – maybe *more* than rules. It
25 follows that Andrew and Terence's efforts cannot be cut off from their humanity, even
26 though they reflect deep internal tensions (Ashcraft, 2006). The dilemma in the process of
27 organizing is amplified in this movie by the everyday expression of violence. Violence
28 functions amid enduring incongruities arising from the unexpected alliance between a
29 conception of work based on discipline and endured hardship on the one hand, and creativity
30 and imagination on the other. *Whiplash* shows how creativity, when unleashed violently, can
31 “take us beyond bureaucratic boxes” (Morgan, 1997: xxix). By contrast, the tendency in
32 organization and management theory toward abstract and irenic views of organizations makes
33 it possible for everyone involved in specific workplaces to “imagine that the violence
34 upholding the system is somehow not responsible for its violent effects” (Graeber, 2012:
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2 114). Consequently, *Whiplash* helps us to deal more honestly with violence in bureaucracies
3
4 instead of marginalizing the topic. This marginalization, like the marginalization of anger at
5
6 work (Lindebaum & Gabriel, 2016), can indeed have disastrous consequences, especially if
7
8 one party does *not* voluntarily submit to the violent treatment of a leader or teacher (as
9
10 Andrew does). In such cases, organizational violence, when ignored or denied, breeds more
11
12 resentment and turns into a vicious circle of suffering and physical harm in organizations.
13
14

15
16 The question whether not only world-class musicians, superstar footballers,
17
18 researchers, astronauts, or any kind of ‘extreme worker’ (see, e.g., Granter, McCann, &
19
20 Boyle, 2015), but also workers employed in high-commitment organizations, can be
21
22 motivated enough to explore their physical, cognitive and technical *limits*, is a basic
23
24 challenge for contemporary management. Contemporary work situations necessitate more
25
26 and more that we understand the meaningfulness of suffering in contexts where individuals
27
28 experience the inability to withdraw from obligations (e.g., being unable to leave one’s job,
29
30 see Lindebaum, 2017), thus leading to ‘vital exhaustion’ (Preckel, Känel, Kudielka, &
31
32 Fischer, 2005). In response to the duress of the workplace, we may indeed observe the
33
34 development of management practice whose main rhetorical and practical politics would be
35
36 to cynically stigmatize weakness and renouncement, while at the same time develop a cult of
37
38 commitment through self-sacrifice, of freely chosen pain to win or achieve at all costs. This
39
40 would obviously fit the current competitive workplace, where individuals feel everyday the
41
42 brutal pressure of a culture of self-dedication or self-optimization (see, e.g., Cederström &
43
44 Spicer, 2015), where managerial systems permit to evaluate the efficacy of self-sacrifice, and
45
46 where individuals may not dare take the freedom to do anything other than give everything to
47
48 their job.
49
50
51
52

53
54 Therefore, this raises the question of the current *radicalization* of management, and of
55
56 its ethical corollary; that is, the belief that people can become better if - and only if - they
57
58
59
60

1
2 learn to become better through transformative events like the ‘crucibles of leadership’
3
4 (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). These are life-threatening and potentially violent moments in life
5
6 that challenge one’s belief systems and core values, and that would show the ability of certain
7
8 people to conquer adversity, to emerge stronger and more committed than ever. But, as we
9
10 have shown through our analysis of *Whiplash*, the violent relationship between Andrew and
11
12 Terence only functions because Andrew’s participation in that relationship is voluntary. In
13
14 the absence of this voluntary participation, the theorizing presented in our essay is less likely
15
16 to hold. On a practical level, the realities at work for employees facing violent leaders or
17
18 managers may turn proverbially to be a hell. Seen in this light, the analysis of *Whiplash*
19
20 provides both an opportunity and a caution; it invites future theorizing around the role of
21
22 violence – and its passionate manifestations – as a driver for excellent performance in cases
23
24 when both parties to the exchange agreed to it, while also alerting us to the potential suffering
25
26 of employees if violence is inflicted on them without their voluntary consent.
27
28
29
30
31

32 REFERENCES

- 33
34
35 Abensour, M. 2011. Is there a proper way to use the voluntary servitude hypothesis? *Journal*
36 *of Political Ideologies*, 16(3): 329-348.
37
38 Albrow, M. 1992. Sine Ira et Studio — or Do Organizations Have Feelings? *Organization*
39 *Studies*, 13(3): 313-329.
40
41 Antonakis, J., Cianciolo, A. T., & Sternberg, R. J. 2004. Leadership - Past, Present and
42 Future. In J. Antonakis, A. T. Cianciolo, & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The nature of*
43 *leadership*: 3-15. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
44
45 Ashcraft, K. L. 2006. Feminist-Bureaucratic Control and Other Adversarial Allies: Extending
46 Organized Dissonance to the Practice of “New” Forms A previous version of this
47 paper received a Top Paper award from the National Communication Association's
48 Organizational Communication Division. *Communication Monographs*, 73(1): 55-
49 86.
50
51 Bennis, W. G., & Thomas, R. J. 2002. Crucibles of leadership. *Harvard business review*,
52 80(9): 39-45, 124.
53
54 Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. 1992. *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: IL.:
55 University of Chicago Press.
56
57 Cajiao, J., & Burke, M. J. 2016. How Instructional Methods Influence Skill Development in
58 Management Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 15(3):
59 508-524.
60
61 Cederström, C., & Spicer, A. 2015. *The Wellness Syndrome*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
62
63 Clegg, S. R. 2006. Why is Organization Theory so Ignorant? The Neglect of Total
64 Institutions. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(4): 426-430.

- 1
2 Collins, R. 2013. Entering and leaving the tunnel of violence: Micro-sociological dynamics
3 of emotional entrainment in violent interactions. *Current Sociology*, 61(2): 132-151.
4 Confortini, C. C. 2006. Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace
5 Studies/Feminism Alliance. *Peace & Change*, 31(3): 333-367.
6 Corbin, J. R. 1976. An anthropological perspective on violence. *International Journal of*
7 *Environmental Studies*, 10(1): 107-111.
8 de la Boétie, E. 1975/2008. *Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*.
9 Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute.
10 de Tocqueville, A. 1889/2002. *Democracy in America*. Washington, DC: Regnery
11 Publishing
12 Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. 2004. *A Thousand of Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.
13 Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
14 Du Gay, P. 2000. *Praise of Bureaucracy*. London: Sage.
15 Fanon, F. 1961/2001. *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Books.
16 Fineman, S. (Ed.). 1993. *Emotion in Organizations*. London: Sage.
17 Frazer, E., & Hutchings, K. 2008. On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon.
18 *Contemporary Political Theory*, 7(1): 90-108.
19 Fromm, E. 1941/2011. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Ishi Press.
20 Fromm, E. 1981/2010. *On Disobedience: Why Freedom Means Saying "No" to Power*.
21 New York: HarperCollins.
22 Gabrielsson, A. 2001. Emotion perceived and emotion felt: Same or different? *Musicae*
23 *Scientiae*, 5(1_suppl): 123-147.
24 Geddes, D., & Callister, R. R. 2007. Crossing the line(s): A dual threshold model of anger in
25 organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3): 721-746.
26 Gouldner, A. W. 1954. *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy - a case study of modern factory*
27 *administration*. New York: Free Press.
28 Graeber, D. 2012. Dead zones of the imagination: On violence, bureaucracy, and interpretive
29 labor. The 2006 Malinowski Memorial Lecture. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic*
30 *Theory*, 2(2): 105-128.
31 Granter, E., McCann, L., & Boyle, M. 2015. Extreme work/normal work: Intensification,
32 storytelling and hypermediation in the (re)construction of 'the New Normal'.
33 *Organization*, 22(4): 443-456.
34 Hearn, J. 1994. The Organization(s) of Violence: Men, Gender Relations, Organizations, and
35 Violences. *Human Relations*, 47(6): 731-754.
36 Hochschild, A. R. 1983. *The managed heart: commercialisation of human feeling*.
37 Berkeley: University of California Press.
38 Hornstein, H. A. 1996. *Brutal bosses and their prey: How to identify and overcome abuse in*
39 *the workplace*. New York: Riverhead Books.
40 Jaques, E. 1976. *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*. London: Heinemann Educational.
41 Johns, G. 2017. Incorporating Context in Organizational Research: Reflections on the 2016
42 AMR Decade Award. *Academy of Management Review*.
43 Kebede, M. 2001. The Rehabilitation of Violence and the Violence of Rehabilitation.
44 *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(5): 539-562.
45 Krantz, J. 2006. Leadership, betrayal and adaptation. *Human Relations*, 59(2): 221-240.
46 Krohn-Hansen, C. 1994. The Anthropology of Violent Interaction. *Journal of*
47 *Anthropological Research*, 50(4): 367-381.
48 Lindebaum, D. 2017. *Emancipation through Emotion Regulation at Work*. Cheltenham,
49 UK: Edward Elgar.
50 Lindebaum, D., & Ashkanasy, N. 2017. A 'new' heart for institutions? Some elaborations on
51 Voronov and Weber. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(3): 548-551.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2 Lindebaum, D., & Gabriel, Y. 2016. Anger and Organization Studies - From Social Disorder
3 to Moral Order. *Organization Studies*, 37(7): 903-918.
- 4 Lindebaum, D., Jordan, P. J., & Morris, L. 2016. Symmetrical and asymmetrical outcomes of
5 leader anger expression: A qualitative study of army personnel. *Human Relations*,
6 69(2): 277-300.
- 7 Lipman-Blumen, J. 2005. *The allure of toxic leaders - Why we follow destructive bosses and*
8 *corrupt politicians and how we can survive them*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University
9 Press.
- 10 Merleau-Ponty, M. 1969. *Humanism and Terror*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- 11 Merton, R. K. 1952. *Reader in bureaucracy*. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press.
- 12 Morgan, G. 1997. *Imagin-i-zation: New mindsets for seeing, organizing, and managing*.
13 San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- 14 Newman, S. 2010. Voluntary Servitude Reconsidered: Radical Politics and the Problem of
15 Self-Domination *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, 1: 31-49.
- 16 Perttula, K. H., & Cardon, M. S. 2011. Passion. In G. M. Spreitzer, & K. S. Cameron (Eds.),
17 *The Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship*: 190-200. New York:
18 Oxford University Press.
- 19 Peters, T., & Austin, N. 1986. *A Passion for Excellence*. London: Collins.
- 20 Preckel, D., Känel, R. v., Kudielka, B. M., & Fischer, J. E. 2005. Overcommitment to work is
21 associated with vital exhaustion. *International Archives of Occupational and*
22 *Environmental Health*, 78(2): 117-122.
- 23 Ronay, B. 2016. José Mourinho and injuries: a long, public, darkly productive relationship.
24 *Guardian*, 7 November - (Retrieved from
25 [https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2016/nov/07/jose-mourinho-manchester-united-](https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2016/nov/07/jose-mourinho-manchester-united-luke-shaw-chris-smalling-injuries)
26 [luke-shaw-chris-smalling-injuries](https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2016/nov/07/jose-mourinho-manchester-united-luke-shaw-chris-smalling-injuries) on 25 November 2016).
- 27 Sandberg, J. 2005. How Do We Justify Knowledge Produced Within Interpretive
28 Approaches? *Organizational Research Methods*, 8(1): 41-68.
- 29 Smith, L. 2007. *The Few and the Proud: Marine Corps Drill Instructors in Their Own*
30 *Words* New York: W. W. Norton Company.
- 31 Terkel, S. 1974. *Working people talk about what they do all day and how they feel about*
32 *what they do*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- 33 Tierney, P., & Tepper, B. J. 2007. Introduction to The Leadership Quarterly special issue:
34 Destructive leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(3): 171-173.
- 35 Travers, P. 2014. Whiplash. *Rolling Stone*, October 9 (Retrieved from
36 <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/whiplash-20141009> on 21 April 2017).
- 37 Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C., Leonard, M.,
38 Gagne, M., & Marsolais, J. 2003. Les passions de l'ame: on obsessive and harmonious
39 passion. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(4): 756-767.
- 40 Voronov, M., & Weber, K. 2016. The Heart of Institutions: Emotional Competence and
41 Institutional Actorhood. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(3): 456-478.
- 42 Weber, M. 1921/1946. Science As a Vocation. In H. Gerth, & C. W. Mills (Eds.), *From Max*
43 *Weber*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 44 Weber, M. 1922/1978. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretative Sociology*.
45 Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

51 52 53 54 Author details

55
56
57 Dirk Lindebaum is Professor in Organisation and Management at Cardiff Business School.
58 He has developed a wider curiosity for diverse notions, constructs, methods and controversies
59
60

1
2 in recent years. This appetite for learning and searching led him to pursue a significant
3 body of research around emotion at work, the latest culmination of which is his book
4 *Emancipation Through Emotion Regulation at Work* (published by Edward Elgar in 2017). In
5 addition, his interest in emancipation has also led him to engage with the field of
6 organizational neuroscience, where emancipation refers to the liberation from repressive
7 scientific discourses and technologies which have potentially dehumanizing consequences for
8 individuals at work. Read more about his work at dirklindebaum.EU.
9
10

11 David Courpasson is Professor of Sociology at Emlyon Business School, France and
12 Professor at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK. He is the Director of Emlyon-
13 OCE Research Centre. He was the Editor in Chief of *Organization Studies* 2008–2013. His
14 current research and writing interests are focused around the multiplicity of resisting
15 processes and how they permit actors to engage with and modify power relationships. He is
16 also interested in understanding how workplace changes affect identities and social
17 relationships within organizations and institutions. His work has been published in diverse
18 journals such as *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, *Organization*,
19 *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Journal of*
20 *Management Studies*. He has recently edited *The Sage Handbook of Resistance* (with Steven
21 Vallas).
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60