

Misbehavior and Dysfunctional Attitudes in Organizations

Ed. by Abraham Sagie, Shmuel Stashevsky, and Meni Koslowsky. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; 274 pp.

Reviewed by Mauritz D. Blonder

Workplace conflict of one sort or another is inevitable and universal. Some people may clash with co-workers; others may become upset by the behavior of their supervisors or subordinates. There are also occasions when people will disagree with organizational policies, strategies, or governance. Whatever the basis for their frustrations, in most instances individuals react in conventional, socially acceptable ways. *Misbehavior and Dysfunctional Attitudes in Organizations*, edited by Abraham Sagie, Shmuel Stashevsky and Meni Koslowsky, focuses on the more problematic and destructive responses to conflict and dissatisfaction in the workplace. These unconventional and illegitimate reactions, including violence and other deviant behaviors that inflict physical or psychological harm, can cause long-term and even irreparable damage to organizations and their employees. The book, a compilation of selected papers from the seventh biennial meeting of the International Society for the Study of Work and Organizational Values (ISSWOV) held in Jerusalem, Israel in June of 2000, aptly portrays the depth and breadth of research on this compelling workplace problem.¹ The 13 essays in *Misbehavior and Dysfunctional Attitudes in Organizations* carefully examine the scope, predictors, repercussions, and organizational responses to violence, aggression, and other forms of undesirable activities and attitudes at the personal, interpersonal, group, and institutional levels in the workplace. Some of the contributions are descriptive in nature and build impressively on the existing literature to arrive at intuitively appealing insights. Others are empirical in design and base their findings on field surveys. Collectively, the selections constitute a meaningful contribution by refining the present literature on this important management issue.

In the opening chapter of the book, the three co-editors lay out the general landscape for the remaining essays. They note the propitious timing of the Jerusalem conference the year before the Enron scandal broke, spotlighting the depth of corporate greed and egotism and spurring the public's fascination with workplace misbehavior. They likewise consider the corrupt behavior of the white-collar criminals at WorldCom and Adelphia. Underscoring the scope of dysfunctional organizational behavior, the authors also discuss the perpetrators of horrific acts of physical violence, including the transit employee in Ottawa, Canada, who entered the bus depot one afternoon and started firing at the 150 employees deployed

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lament the definitional imprecision regarding organizational misbehavior, which they view as a major impediment to conceptual development within this field of inquiry. The most common classification system differentiates between *occupational* violence and *organizational* aggression. The former term is applied to acts carried out by organizational outsiders including customers, patients and random bystanders. The latter typically refers to activities perpetrated by current or previous employees.

Researchers also distinguish between *physical* violence/aggression against people, property and information (e.g., homicide, rape, bullying, theft, or the destruction or deletion of proprietary data) and *psychological* violence/aggression that uses power to intimidate and humiliate others in order to inflict emotional harm on

aggression. Nonetheless, this comprehensive collection of well-written essays serves up an abundance of theoretical and practical food for thought.

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