REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONNECTEDNESS, BUSINESS AND LEARNING:

CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORS

The Conference Preface

by Associate Professor Margee Hume

The 2012 *Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* colloquia at USQ Springfield campus is the initiative of the School of Management and Marketing and the Faculty of Business and law at the Springfield Campus.   It is designed to advance the current knowledge in the areas of developing regional and sustainable communities and focuses on the associated areas of connectedness, business and learning.

Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning colloquia

Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning conference complies with the academic research conference guidelines as set down by Department of Education, Science and Training, Australia (DEST), and other organisations. For Australian delegates, the Proceedings are Category E, Conference Publications: E1 * Full Written Paper * Refereed. *Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* also complies with the requirements of the Performance-Based Research Fund administered by the Tertiary Education Commission and other organisations. For New Zealand contributors Proceedings are classed as Quality-Assured Conference Papers (Refereed). All papers have been subject to a comprehensive, double-blind peer review process. All such papers which have passed the competitive review process are accepted for presentation at Building Business Communities: Justice, Performance and Change conference.

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THE CONFERENCE PREFACE

by Associate Professor Margee Hume

Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning colloquia at USQ Springfield campus is the initiative of the School of Management and Marketing and the Faculty of Business and law at the Springfield Campus.   It is designed to advance the current knowledge in the areas of *connectedness, business and learning in communities* connecting communities has become one of the latest topical areas of research in particular for regional

areas. The rollout of the national broadband network, the increase in the role of social media and digital devices in work and learning and the ability of socially, emotionally and geographically isolated communities to become connected have positioned this area of research as a vital area of investigation . The colloquia brings together researchers in the area of information technology, management , regional development, education and marketing and engages them in discourse related to community and regional development, digital futures, education in regional environments and sustainability.

Community engagement and connectedness is a term that refers to interaction of people with their community and the connectedness of the community as a whole. Community engagement provides the opportunity for social connectedness, which enables people to achieve shared goals in business and societal values. Social connectedness is linked not only to the health of individuals but to the health of communities. It incorporates employment security   service provision, job satisfaction and esteem, well-being, economic strength, social stability and sustainability. Community engagement and connectedness mean different things to different people and the term is advancing to include how we connect and the impact of connectiveness and the digital world.   Clearly there is a need to enhance connectedness in local communities; it doesn't occur naturally. The aim of this colloquia is to address the many aspects of how to improve, enable and benefit from improved connectedness, learning and build community resiliency and business practice for future development and performance.

This conference expands the research and practitioner focus in the area of connectedness business and learning capturing the new recognition of the changes and public issues for community consumers and business. The set of the papers presented in the proceedings represents works of considered scholarship and have been produced through the process of double blind peer refereeing. Conferences, however, are more than their published proceedings. They represent a valuable venue for formal and informal exchange among academics/ professional / industry / practitioners and community stakeholders. It is through these interactions that we develop both ideas and collaborations that allow us to advance and evolve the important issues and agendas for building sustainable communities.

 We thank the Keynote addresses from Dr Mustafa Ally. We appreciate the interest from international affiliates and research higher degree students including:

City University

SEGi University College – Malaysia

Han Chian College – Malaysia

SEGi College – Kuala Lumpur

SEGi College – Penang

SEGi College – Sarawak

SEGi College – Subang Jaya

Far Eastern Federal University - Russia

Proserve Education Management Development Institute (Thames Business School) – Pakistan

EASB institute of Management – Singapore

The Institute of chartered Accounts – Sri Lanka

AEA Training Centre – Mauritius

South Africa Australian Education Centre (SAAEC) – South Africa

College for Higher Education Studies – CHES – FIJI

UUNZ Institute of Business – New Zealand

And finally, the support and contribution from the Australian centre for Sustainable Business and Development. The many contributions to the conference have focused on the overarching theme of building regions and communities and the drivers of connectedness, business development and learning.   Many of the authors are working with international and national collaborators in major projects that form the basis of the discussions and research papers presented.   We thank the national collaborators for their support and acknowledge the enriched contributions evidenced by the colloquia to support and contribute to the advancing national and international work in the area of sustainable communities. We thank the contributions and interest from the higher research degree students who reside in many diverse international settings.

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Paper Eight: Reprimandable Offences: Defining Employee Misbehaviour for Investigations of Employer Disciplinary Practices

Kim Southey

Faculty of Business and Law
School of Management and Marketing
University of Southern Queensland
Toowoomba 4350
Australia

Tel: +61 7 46311761
Fax: +61 7 4631 1533

Abstract

Even with the abundance of misbehaviour definitions existing in the literature, there still appears to be a void when it comes to describing employee misbehaviours that are judged by the employer to be unsuitable and deserving some form of disciplinary response. This article considers current definitions of misbehaviour with a view to framing a definition for *reprimandable offences*: a concept suitable for examining misbehaviour from an employer's disciplinary viewpoint.

Keywords

Employee misbehaviour; deviant behaviour; workplace discipline

Introduction

This article addresses the questions: how does the literature describe 'employee misbehaviour' and, moreover, can these misbehaviour definitions be used to identify the types of behaviour that attract disciplinary measures from employers? At an intuitive level, one assumes the concept of misbehaviour in the workplace would be straightforward to define by suggesting it means engaging in behaviour that offends or hurts other people within a workplace context. Such a frank definition has not been identified in the literature with scholars developing a fragmented range of definitions, each with their own semantic twist, to capture the dimensions of misbehaviour in the workplace (Ackroyd & Thompson 1999; Bennett, R. & Robinson 2003; Collinson & Ackroyd 2005; Griffin & O'Leary-Kelly 2004; Kidwell & Martin 2005; Lefkowitz 2009; Neuman & Baron 2005; Richards 2008; Vardi, Yoav & Wiener 1996). Even with the abundance of misbehaviour definitions, there still appears to be a void in the literature when it comes to describing employee misbehaviours that are judged by the employer to be unsuitable and deserving some form of disciplinary response. This article considers the definitions of misbehaviour found in the literature with a view to framing a definition for *'reprimandable offences'*: a concept suitable for examining misbehaviour from an employer's disciplinary viewpoint.

Existing Definitions of Misbehaviour

The definition of employee misbehaviour is set within a complex discussion in the literature, as scholars have either developed broad-ranging, umbrella definitions, such as 'dysfunctional behaviour' (Griffin & Lopez 2005), 'insidious workplace behaviour'(Greenberg 2010) or 'counter-productive behaviour' (Spector & Fox 2005, 2010) whilst others have formed definitions that apply to particular sets of behaviours, such as time banditry (Martin et al. 2010), workplace incivility (Penney & Spector 2005; Reio & Ghosh 2009) or workplace violence (Griffin & Lopez 2005; Neuman & Baron 2005). As a result, the overlap amongst misbehaviour constructs is extensive. This criticism is supported by academic commentary that the definitions of misbehaviour are either ambiguous or lack parsimony (Bowling & Gruys 2010; Griffin & Lopez 2005; Neuman & Baron 2005; Raver 2007; Richards 2008) with different constructs taking ownership of the same types of behaviour (Ashforth et al. 2008; Branch 2008; Spector & Fox 2005). As one example, deliberately working slow fits the definitions of organisational retaliatory behaviour, counter-productive work behaviour, organisational deviance, dissent, and insidious work behaviour.

A range of theoretical premises have been used to define workplace misbehaviour. For instance, employee behaviours that are identified in the literature as 'deviant' are those involving:

> ... the voluntary behaviour of organizational members that has the potential to cause harm to the organization or to those within, and in so doing violates significant performance enhancing norms (Bennett, D. et al. 2005, p. 111).

This definition of deviant behaviour requires the violation of an organisational or societal norm. Yet, this requirement is not identified in the definition of employee behaviours that are seen as 'counter-productive'. Counter-productive work behaviours (CWB) are described as:

> Voluntary acts that harm or are intended to harm organizations or people in organizations. Included are acts of aggression, hostility, sabotage, theft and withdrawal (Spector & Fox 2005, p. 151).

Whilst the CWB construct is thought to capture the broadest range of negative behaviours in the workplace (Neuman & Baron 2005), according to Spector and Fox (2005) it overlaps with constructs of deviant behaviour by Bennett and Robinson (2000, 2003; 1995), workplace

aggression (Fox & Spector 1999), and retaliatory behaviour (Skarlicki & Folger 2004). Yet unlike deviant behaviour and workplace aggression, a feature of the CWB is that it is *not necessary* that the transgressor intended to cause harm to co-workers or the organisation (Spector & Fox 2005). For example, a person taking sick leave on the basis of a missed promotion, may not have 'harmful' intentions. In this regard, it aligns more closely with the definition of 'organisational retaliatory behaviour' which suggests misbehaviour is intended to 'punish' as opposed to 'harm'. It states employee retaliatory behaviours are:

> Reactions by disapproving individuals to organisational misdeeds. They are behaviours that demonstrate censure toward either the misdeed, the doer or both (Skarlicki & Folger 2004, p. 384).

This means an employee engages in retaliatory behaviour to restore a sense of equity or justice by 'punishing' the organisation for acts of injustice, regardless of whether they are genuine or perceived injustices in the eye of the perpetrator. This punishment can include actions such as damaging equipment, absenteeism, working slow, spreading rumours and conducting private business during work.

To demonstrate the complexity of misbehaviour constructs and the nuances among them, Table 1 provides a summary of 16 misbehaviour constructs identified in the literature. Fifteen of the sixteen constructs in Table 1 were obtained from the organisational behaviour literature which reflects a range of psychological and sociological influences. Meanwhile, the 16th construct, 'serious misconduct', reflects an Australian industrial relations perspective.

It is evident from Table 1 that the behaviours are all within the same general realm of the 'dark side' of organisational behaviours (Kidwell & Martin 2005; Skarlicki & Folger 2004), yet investigators need to exercise caution when selecting which misbehaviour construct to adopt for an study, as one particular misbehaviour construct over another might limit the study unnecessarily. For instance, both counterproductive behaviour and organisational misbehaviour require the act to be intentional. Thus cases where employees either claimed they made a mistake or denied their involvement would be excluded from the study. As another example, deviant behaviour requires the employee to violate an organisational or societal norm. In this case, it would be questionable whether to include situations where

employees engaged in behaviour accepted by line supervisors but did not have management approval - such as taking home waste product. In this scenario, the employee engaged in behaviour that was accepted by the immediate supervisor and by default, was a behavioural norm for the shopfloor workers, although not for the wider organisational context.

TABLE 1

Constructs describing employee misbehaviour identified in the literature

1. Anti-social behaviour	2. Counter-productive work behaviour	3. Deviance (organisational / employee)	4. Organisational retaliatory behaviour
Any behaviour that brings harm or that is intended to bring harm to an organisation, its employees, or to the organization's stakeholders (Giacalone & Greenberg 1997)	Wilful behaviours by employees that have the potential to harm an organisation, its members or both (Krischer, Penney & Hunter 2010)	Intentional acts initiated by org. members that violate norms of the organisation and have the potential to harm the organisation or its members (Bennett & Robinson 2003)	Adverse reactions to perceived unfairness by disgruntled employees toward their employer (Skarlicki & Folger 2004)
5. Organisational misbehaviour	6. Workplace incivility	7. Organisational resistance	8. Dysfunctional behaviour
Pervasive and for the most part, intentional work related behaviour mostly (yet not necessarily) which defies and violates shared org. norms and expectations, and/or core societal values and standards of proper conduct (Vardi, Y & Weitz 2004)	Low-intensity deviant (rude, discourteous) behaviour with **ambiguous intent to harm** the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect (Pearson, Andersson & Porath 2005)	Action, inaction or process whereby individuals within a power structure engage in behaviours stemming from their opposition to, or frustration with, enactments of power. Deviant behaviour is one such form of resistance (Lawrence & Robinson 2007)	Motivated behaviour by an employee or group of employees that has negative consequences for an individual within an organisation itself (Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly & Collins 1998)

1. Anti-social behaviour	2. Counter-productive work behaviour	3. Deviance (organisational / employee)	4. Organisational retaliatory behaviour
9. Workplace violence Instances of direct physical assault or threats of physical assault (Griffin & Lopez 2005) Covert forms of aggression (Baron & Neuman 1996)	**10. Workplace aggression** Any behaviour directed by one or more persons in the workplace toward the goal of harming one or more (or the entire organisation) in ways the targets would want to avoid (Neuman & Baron 2005)	**11. Mobbing** Harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work ... repeatedly over a period of time ... escalating until the victim ends in an inferior position (Zapf & Stale 2005)	**12. Unethical behaviour** Any organizational member action that violates widely accepted (societal) moral norms (Kish-Gephart, Harrison & Trevino 2010)
13. Corruption Pursuit of interests by one or more org. actors through the intentional misdirection of org. resources or perversion of org. routines (Lange 2008)	**14. Insidious workplace behaviour** Intentionally harmful, legal, subtle but pervasive forms of deviance repeated over time (Edwards & Greenberg 2010)	**15. Non-compliant behaviour** Approaching non-task behaviours (as opposed to focal task behaviours) in a way that produces negative implications for the organisation (Puffer 1987). Conceptually opposite to 'pro-social behaviour'.	**16. Serious misconduct** Wilful or deliberate behaviour by an employee that is inconsistent with the continuation of the contract of employment (Donaghey 2006)

A DEFINITION OF 'REPRIMANDABLE OFFENCES'

Whilst studies that investigate antecedents and triggers of specific behaviours or within situation-specific contexts may require a concise definition of the behaviour they are isolating (Bowling & Gruys 2010), it may be that a wide assembly of misbehaviour constructs is appropriate for understanding the impacts of misbehaviour in the workplace from an employer's disciplinary perspective. Apart from 'serious misconduct' (No. 16) in Table 1, the

remaining misbehaviour constructs have been developed from either the perspective of the perpetrator such as retaliatory behaviour, or the victim such as mobbing. However, when a study seeks to consider the perspective of the employer, misbehaviour incidents become identifiable by the mere fact that the workers engaged in a form of behaviour that their employers deemed to be unacceptable - which can include a variety of defined misbehaviours such as CWB, deviance and retaliatory type behaviours. Thus from a disciplinary perspective, a definition of misbehaviour requires an interdisciplinary and theoretically wide construction of elements.

The 'serious misconduct' definition promulgated by industrial legislation is not entirely suitable for examining misconduct from the employer's disciplinary perspective for two reasons. First, the 'serious misconduct' construct requires the behaviour to be committed by a worker with 'wilful intent'. Second, it requires behaviour that has caused 'serious results or risk'. Whilst this type of definition may provide a guideline for determining if an employee's misbehaviour warranted dismissal, provision needs to be made for situations where the behaviour was neither wilful nor caused serious results or risk yet the employer still sanctioned some form of discipline on the employee. Thus is it necessary to broaden the construct to incorporate behaviours that have been defined in the organisational behaviour literature that incorporate characteristics of being less severe in nature and which also cater for unintentional behaviour. Therefore, on the basis that no single construct of misbehaviour from Table 1 captures appropriately all dimensions of misbehaviour that might prompt an employer to discipline a worker, the concept of '*reprimandable offences*' is proposed. Reprimandable offences can be defined as:

> *Single or multiple incidents committed by one or more employees that, in the opinion of the employer, is worthy of the perpetrator(s) discipline or dismissal from the workplace, after taking into account the intentions and motive of the perpetrator(s) to engage in the behaviour and the frequency, intensity and consequences of such behaviour.*

This definition has scope to cater for misbehaviour that could be single or multiple incidents over time, which was perpetrated by individual or groups of employees whereby the target of the behaviour could range from a colleague or colleagues (including supervisors), to a colleague's property, or directed toward the organisation's property, clients, suppliers or

business in general. It incorporates acts that were either deliberate or unintentional due to ignorance or a mistake, where the motives that underlie the behaviour can range from wanting to cause either harm, retaliate, restore justice, or alternatively, the perpetrator may have been naive to the fact that they are engaging in inappropriate behaviour. It caters for behaviour that is severe enough in nature that it harms or exposes workers or the organisation to risk, however, this is not a mandatory pre-condition for the behaviour to be judged unacceptable by the employer. Finally, it is not a condition of the definition that the actor must have violated a social or organisational 'norm' in order for the behaviour to be judged unacceptable by the employer.

CONCLUSION

A definition of *reprimandable offences* was presented to describe the construct of employee behaviours liable to disciplinary actions because employers judged them to be unsatisfactory. It was pointed out that this definition differs from the wide range of organisational behaviour definitions which may include either intentional motivations or norm-breaking criteria to quality as misbehaviour. Further, the usage of the industrial legislative definition of 'serious misconduct' was also discounted, again, due to the intentional motives behind the behaviour, but also that it required the behaviour to have serious results or risk. This final point restricted from the definition, behaviours that may have less serious consequences but were still judged by the employer to warrant some form of sanction. It is believed that the definition of *reprimandable offences* is inclusive of any conceivable act of misbehaviour. This provides an advantage over the constraints existing in the current misbehaviour definitions in the literature, any of which if used, would limit various misbehaviour incidents from studies pertaining to disciplinary management of misbehaviour.

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Paper nine: Sustainable Competitive Advantage In Regional Councils In South East Queensland

Dr Renee Malan

Faculty of Business, University of Southern Queensland,

Renee.Malan@usq.edu.au